



MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

CURRENT

Serving Morton, Grant and Sioux counties

NOVEMBER 2017

NEWS

Gratitude — and snowstorms



What's inside:

- Thiem advances electric cooperative movement
- Manager's message on giving thanks
- Now's the time to consider a portable generator
- 2018 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour
- Meetings minutes, and more

PHOTO: E. CARMEN JENNEY



Rebecca Thiem: committed personally and professionally to the wellbeing of the cooperative

BY CARMEN DEVNEY



PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Editor’s note: In commemoration of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative’s 70th anniversary, we looked back on the meager beginnings of rural electrification in July, and why women were perhaps the most motivated to get central station electricity in their homes. In this month’s local pages, we are featuring Rebecca Thiem, the attorney who has worked for the Mor-Gran-Sou board of directors for 26 years. By making sure what happens in the board room reflects the best interest of the members, she is a powerhouse who continues to advance the electric cooperative movement.

Rebecca Thiem says change is occurring in the energy industry. "There are going to be a lot of neat things happening. There's some agony for those who are used to the way things are," she says. She credits Co-General Manager Don Franklund for being creative and innovative, and for educating board directors about the challenges and opportunities on the horizon.

Mor-Gran-Sou members may have only seen Rebecca Thiem at the cooperative’s annual meeting, but she holds a regular presence in the board room every month. An attorney with Serkland Law Firm in Bismarck, Thiem was hired by the board in 1991 to provide legal counsel to the board of directors.

Mor-Gran-Sou is overseen by a board of nine directors who are electric cooperative members. Elected by the member-owners they represent, directors take questions, concerns and suggestions into the board room. During monthly meetings, they exchange information and strategize for the co-operative’s progressive growth.

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative. They exercise care, time and responsibility in reviewing co-op matters. Because they are also owners of the cooperative, they treat the business like their own.

Thiem attends board meetings, reports on what she’s been working on, and listens to the issues the directors are discussing. She says she sees her role as a risk manager.

“Sometimes I might say, ‘There might be a legal issue about that,’ or, ‘We need to be careful about ...,’ or, ‘Maybe we need to investigate more before we’ It is important to the board that they are getting proper advice, and fulfilling their fiduciary duty to do what’s in the best interest of the cooperative, its members and its assets. Ultimately, they are the ones who make the decisions.”

Thiem has become somewhat of a cooperative historian over the past two-and-a-half decades. Only two people in the board room equal her years of co-op experience: Co-General Manager Don Franklund, who worked as a former engineer, and Vernard Frederick, a veteran board member from the Flasher area.

“I’ve seen a lot of changes and comings and goings of board members, and, of course, some members I’ve known since the very beginning. I still remember my first co-op meeting, which was held in a high school gym. It was very down home and wonderful — and totally different,” she says. “Now we have sound systems and power point presentations and videos, and very



Rebecca Thiem recalled some of the women who have made a difference in Mor-Gran-Sou's board room and the electric cooperative movement, including **Arlene Wells**, **Delores Olson** (back row, second from left), **Pam Geiger** and now **Bonnie Tomac**. She says diversity in genders, ages, careers and experiences adds to the decision-making process in the board room. "From the time we are young, women are groomed to think about others. We become wives and mothers; we are always having to look at the big picture or having to think about our jobs and our spouses, our children, our family, our mothers and our grandmothers. We always see that it is our job to take care of the community."

“I feel part of the cooperative, and care about how it is doing and how the members are doing. When I hear talk about ice storms coming, I worry about it all weekend. It’s more than a job. I’m really committed personally and professionally to the wellbeing of the cooperative.”

– *Rebecca Thiem*

nice accommodations with Prairie Knights Casino and Resort,” she says.

While she herself is not a member, Thiem says she strongly believes in the cooperative business model of serving the member-owners, and appreciates the opportunity to visit with members at the annual meeting.

“I’m emotionally tied,” she says.

“I feel part of the cooperative, and care about how it is doing and how the members are doing. When I hear talk about ice storms coming, I worry about it all weekend. It’s more than a job. I’m really committed personally and professionally to the wellbeing of the cooperative.” ■



COURTESY PHOTO

MEET Rebecca Thiem

- Born in Grand Forks to Rev. Alfred and Betty Thiem, while they were serving a Lutheran congregation in Inkster, before moving to Grafton, then Anamoose, and finally Fargo where her family settled;
- Graduated from Fargo North High School in 1968;
- Volunteered with VISTA for one year in Rapid City, S.D.;
- Graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Humanities with a Minor in Urban Studies from Valparaiso University in 1972, and with a Juris Doctor degree from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 1980;
- Former jobs include clerking for the Honorable Myron H. Bright, United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit;
- Interests include fishing, hunting, exercising, reading, and listening to music;
- Married with two adult children



The season of gratitude — and snowstorms — is on the horizon

FRANKLUND, CO-GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

For electric cooperatives, those two seem to go hand in hand.

Many of us look forward to getting together with family for Thanksgiving to eat, watch football and enjoy being together. If you're a lineman who works for an electric cooperative, you may or may not get to eat that pumpkin pie.

This is the time of year when temperatures hover around freezing. If we get moisture that clings and builds on the power lines, conditions are prime for a power outage. The wind gusts, tree branches snap, and the compromised lines underneath give way to the weight. Regardless of the holiday or family celebration, our staff goes to work: informing members and the media, ordering supplies when necessary, and restoring the damaged system.

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative employs 12 linemen who take pride in their jobs. The minute they get called, they are out the door, heading to the office to grab a truck and head to the field.

Missing a meal is unfortunately part of their job. Every lineman I know has missed a holiday celebration, birthday party, sporting event and more, because he was called to fix an outage afterhours. Linemen knew sacrifice would be involved when they choose their job and career, and I rarely hear any one complain; even after working in brutal conditions.

Most of our members can understand the time it takes to drive to a location, assess the situation, make a plan and fix the system. When they see crews working near their homes, they offer a thermos of coffee. They help clear roads to provide access to broken lines and poles. They post on Mor-Gran-Sou's Facebook page to say thanks. Now it's our turn to say thank YOU, for waiting, and helping, and trying to understand.

Sometimes the wait is longer than others. When snow is blinding. When roads are blocked. When no travel is advised. That means no travel is advised for our linemen, too. They can't restore power if they can't see to drive, or if their truck gets lodged in snow. Then, someone else who shouldn't be on the road needs to come to their rescue, and it puts another life in danger.

At Mor-Gran-Sou, we have a culture of safety. We are our brother's keeper, always looking out for one another at the office and in the field. That goes for our members, as well. We share safety messages regularly with you in the local pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine, the *Current News*, on Facebook and with weekly newspapers in our service area. Your safety matters. Nothing matters more to your family than having you home and safe.



Don Franklund

We understand, because the families of our employees feel the same way. Nothing matters more to them than having their loved ones home safe. From an operations standpoint, when there is a power outage and the linemen have been dispatched, we don't ask them, "How long until the power is restored?" The question implies a sense of urgency. We already know they are working on restoration, and will get it done as soon as possible. When the linemen finish the job and return home to their families unharmed, it's been a good day — regardless of the length of the outage.

Thankfully, most power outages, even during difficult conditions, last only a few hours. If you are concerned about being out of power this winter, now's the time to look into getting a portable generator and having a licensed electrician install a transfer switch. If you could use advice on what to buy, consider calling our friends at West Dakota Utility Services in Mandan. They can help you assess your family's needs and order equipment delivered to your door.

As we approach this season of thanksgiving, I want to thank our linemen and staff for always going above and beyond to serve our member-owners.

William Arthur Ward once said, "Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine



jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” We can’t change the bad weather on the horizon, but we can choose not to complain about it. Your electric cooperative employees are ready. When bad weather hits and takes

down parts of our system, we will do our best to restore the power that allows you to enjoy the holiday and every day.

Jim Davis once said, “Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread and

pumpkin pie.” I will sign off now to enjoy one slice of pie, and wish you and your family a warm and safe Thanksgiving. ■

WDUS offers portable generator sales and service

BY JOE MEIER, CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER FOR WDUS, MANDAN



PHOTO BY CARMEN DEVNEY

lapses by installing an automatic standby power generator.

Joe Meier, chief operations officer for West Dakota Utility Services, or WDUS, says some people who might benefit by owning a generator include the elderly, those with health care needs that require electric service, families with young children, and farmers and ranchers who care for livestock.

“We have units that range in size from small to large,” Meier says. “For the farmer who milks cows, he could use a larger unit than someone who lives in the country and is only concerned about heat and water, and being able to cook himself a hot meal.”

A distributor that can order generators, WDUS can work with members to size the generator properly. The process includes filling out a brief questionnaire that rates the customer’s power requirements. Meier stresses it is important to have the unit sized appropriately, so it does not create issues with appliances. It also needs to be installed by a qualified technician, so it does not backfeed electricity into the power grid, and harm the linemen or the general public.

WDUS technicians can also

inspect the generator annually, to make sure the electrical components are in working order.

“We offer sales *and* service for the customer,” Meier says.

If you are interested in purchasing a portable generator, Meier suggests not waiting until the weather becomes unpredictable and a power outage occurs.

“Now’s a great time to fill out the questionnaire and assess your needs, so we have an understanding of your power requirements and can make sure you have something on hand before the bad weather hits,” he says.

West Dakota Utility Services is an independent business owned by Mor-Gran-Sou, Slope, and Roughrider Electric Cooperatives. It services utility trucks, in addition to contractors and customers who have vehicles that need hydraulic repairs or N.D. Department of Transportation certification. WDUS also repairs welders, engines and utility tools including crimpers and hydraulic tamps, and is a distributor that can order hydraulic tools and generators.

If WDUS can help you with a project or repair, or fix you up with a generator, call 701-663-4365 or email wdus@btinet.net. ■

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative works hard to build what Mother Nature tears down — but in the meantime, electrical service can still be interrupted. While line crews make every effort to keep these interruptions brief, natural disasters and North Dakota’s unpredictable weather may cause extended power outages when people need electric service the most.

If going without power for even a few hours is a concern, you can take a simple, proactive step to avoid



Need Help with Heating Costs? LIHEAP can help.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible low-income households with home heating costs.

- Heating assistance
- Weatherization services (insulation, weather stripping, etc.)
- Furnace and chimney cleaning
- Furnace repair and replacement
- Emergency assistance

Applications are accepted from October 1 through May 31 for each heating season.

For help filling out and submitting the LIHEAP application, call 1-800-823-2417 ext: 158.



www.communityoptionsnd.com



LIHEAP is federally funded and administered by the North Dakota Department of Human Services and county social service offices.

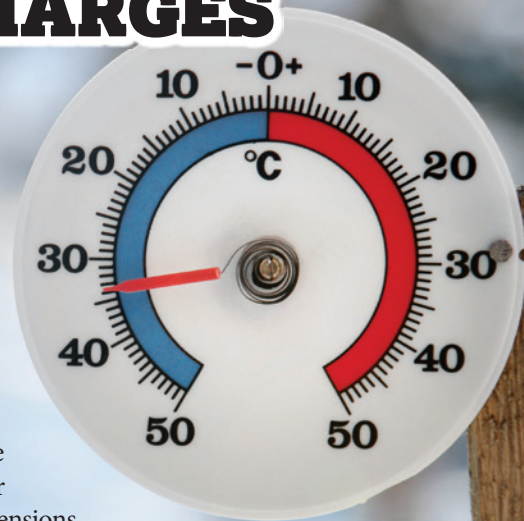
COLD WEATHER CHARGES

One thing that's certain about North Dakota weather is the uncertainty of it, except for the fact that at some point during the winter, it probably will get cold. Our rates are designed around a number of different factors, one of them being an average cost of installing our service. Over the years, we've seen requests for electric service coming in later and later in the construction season and in many years, throughout the winter season. Both equipment maintenance and labor costs are significantly higher during winter weather conditions.

We're not opposed to obliging those requests, however, depending on frost and weather conditions we will assess an additional contribution in aid of construction charge of \$5 per line foot to help offset our increased costs for late-season, cold-weather work. This charge will be made on a case-by-case basis for line extensions requested and built after Nov. 1 and prior to April 1.

Recognizing that everyone is really busy throughout the year, please remember we need sufficient advance notice (two to four weeks) most any time to schedule installing your electric service or service change, but especially just prior to Nov. 1 because everyone is trying to beat the weather.

If you have questions please call Randy Ressler, manager of operations, at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212. ■



WRITE A WINNING ESSAY AND WIN A TRIP OF A LIFETIME!

JUNE 9-15, 2018

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
- If you have a question, contact Jackie Miller, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric, at the address listed below, or call 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is **Jan. 31, 2018**. Emailed entries should be directed to jlmliller@morgransou.com, and hard-copy entries mailed to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 297, Flasher, ND 58535-0297.

TOP 3 REASONS

TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST

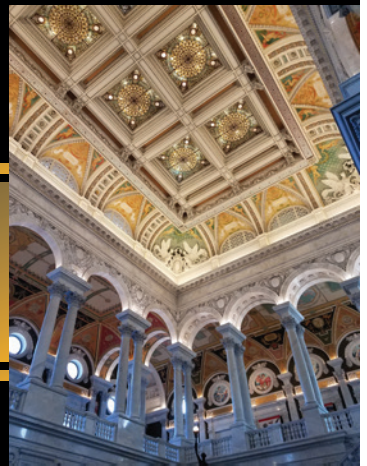
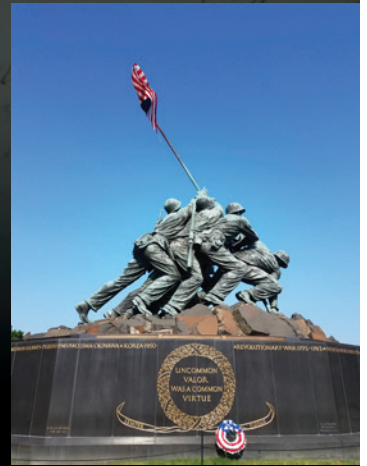
1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative.
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.
3. A learning experience you'll never forget.

ESSAY QUESTION:

There are approximately 20 million military veterans in the United States today. How shall fellow U.S. citizens honor and look after these veterans, who have served and sacrificed on our behalf? Describe any special connection you may have to a veteran or active-duty member of the military.



CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
www.ndyouthtour.com



MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

board meeting highlights



Meeting date: Sept. 27, 2017

- Approved the August 28, 2017 regular Board meeting minutes
- Approved a work order inventory and a special equipment inventory
- Approved capital credit refunds to estates and those age 80 and over
- Approved employee benefit plans
- Heard report on IBEW negotiations and proposed settlement
- Approved enhancement to the scholarship award program
- Approved joint support of noted applicant for NDAREC awards
- Accepted MGS Board Committee appointments
- Approved funding for a 2017 general capital credit retirement
- Reviewed documentation for the MGS Electric Charitable Foundation, Inc. (Operation Round Up program)
- Reviewed RUS Form 300 "Review Rating Summary"
- Reviewed the preliminary 2018 operations budget
- Reviewed comparison of possible venues for 2018 Annual Meeting
- Approved date of July 20, 2018 for the MGS Annual Meeting, and the location of Prairie Knights Casino Pavilion
- Reviewed and re-approved annual Director Meeting Guidelines
- Set the 2018 MGS Board meeting dates and locations
- Appointed/confirmed director attendance for various meetings
- Heard the Co-General Manager/CEO update, and reports on several meetings attended
- Heard and accepted the August financial report
- Approved bad debt write-off
- Reviewed and accepted the director's expense report for August
- Reviewed department reports
- Held Executive Session

Upcoming regular board meeting date:

Nov. 29 in the NDAREC board room in Mandan at 10:30 a.m. CT

Dec. 19 in the NDAREC board room in Mandan at 10:30 a.m. CT

Members are welcome to attend the board meetings at any time. Please contact Mor-Gran-Sou at cternes@morgransou.com, or call 800-750-8212 or 701-597-3301 to confirm the meeting date and location if you wish to attend.

To place an item on the agenda, please contact Board Chair Leland "Judge" Barth or Co-General Manager/Chief Executive Officer Donald Franklund at least one week in advance.

Members may obtain a copy of approved Board minutes by completing and returning the "Request for Information or Data" form. You can find this form at www.morgransou.com, or call the office for a copy.

THE HOLIDAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Gift certificates are available at Mor-Gran-Sou. Light up someone's holiday season!

How long is your Christmas list? If a certain someone on your list is a member of Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative and you need a bright idea on what to buy for Christmas ... why not wrap up a gift certificate he or she can use toward an electric bill?

Call Mor-Gran-Sou at 701-597-3301, 701-663-0297 or 800-750-8212 and ask for Julie or Jackie.

We can help you "lighten" up the holidays.



Holiday Closings

In observance of the holidays in November, Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative will be closed: Friday, Nov. 10 for Veterans Day Thursday, Nov. 23, and Friday, Nov. 24, for Thanksgiving The directors and staff of Mor-Gran-Sou ask you to keep our military in mind as we celebrate the holidays.

Members: Line crews will be available in case of an electrical emergency outage.



MOR-GRAN-SOU ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

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701-663-0297 Mandan

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Email us: info@morgransou.com
UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATES
800-795-0555 OR 811

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Chair..... Leland "Judge" Barth
Vice Chair..... Casey Wells
Secretary-Treasurer..... Bonnie Tomac
Directors Mark Doll,
Vernard Frederick, Lance Froelich,
Chad Harrison, Jay Larson, Bob J. Leingang

MANAGEMENT

Co-General Mgr./CEO.... Donald A. Franklund

www.morgransou.com

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