

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

Beyond their wildest dreams

The Hedmans' ag and steel supply business continues to grow

Story and photos by

Charlie Denison
Contributing Writer

It all started with the need for a new hay feeder.

The demand ever pressing, Brett Hedman started doing some research.

"I wanted to build a hay feeder myself," he said, "but I didn't have the time to do it."

To Brett's surprise, the mission was more challenging than expected. He found a hay feeder he liked, but it was about 1,000 miles away.

"I had to get it delivered from Oklahoma," he said.

It seemed silly to Brett that there wasn't a hay feeder to his liking any closer, and he had a feeling he wasn't the only one around central Montana who had encountered this problem.

That's when it hit him. Why not become a dealer?

Little did Brett know this side business would soon become Hedman, Inc., an ag and steel supply business that specializes in rancher, farmer, fencer and welder needs, be it hay feeders, hay trailers, cattle guards, gates, portable panels, continuous fence, pipe or steel.

At first, Brett thought this would be something on the side, but now it's a full-time job. He even hired a yard manager, Stuart Williams.

"I didn't expect it to ever grow this big," he said. "It definitely wasn't planned."

Hedman, Inc. was officially established in May 2014. Back then



From left, Jenni Hedman, children A.J. and Leah, Brett Hedman and yard manager Stuart Williams stand in front of the Hedman, Inc. sign by their business on the south side of Highway 87 near Grass Range.

they had a few hay feeders and continuous fence, but now they carry a variety of different products.

Through the years, Brett has added more and more inventory, using his knowledge about metal fabrication and cattle handling to best serve his potential customers.

"I did quite a bit of metal fabricating in high school with my dad," he said. "I enjoy the work."

He also enjoys working with his wife, Jenni, who oversees much of the advertising and booking elements of the business.

"I help the business by maintaining the website, developing ads and doing some of the accounting," she said. "It's fun work."

Hedman, Inc. is also a dealer for GoBob Pipe and Steel, Ranchers

Livestock and Macksteel.

Product interest of Hedman, Inc. varies throughout the year. According to Jenni, post pounders are in demand right now. So are pipe posts. Secondary steel also sells quite a bit, as do more innovative products such as octagon-shaped tubing for posts.

"Shipping containers are popular, too, which we didn't really anticipate," Brett added. "We learn something new every day. That's part of the job. I'm always researching products online and listening to farmers and ranchers. That's what makes this business work: having several different products...you never know until you try it as to whether the product is going to sell. We are always open to new ideas."

No place like Central Montana

As business continues to grow, Hedman, Inc. continues to offer more and more products. And as more people inquire, the Hedmans continue to respond, which keeps Williams busy cutting pipe, welding and keeping up with the inventory.

"I spend most of my time on the phone and he spends a good amount of his time loading trailers and unloading semis," Brett said.

Brett said he's grateful to have Williams, a carpenter by trade, on board.

"He's become an integral part of this business," Brett said. "He's good help and takes pride in what he does."

"We've come a long way," Williams added. "Business has definitely

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

General capital credit retirement checks mailed out!

I am happy to report that on November 16, 2018, the cooperative mailed out 2,003 capital credit checks totaling \$994,705.36 to 856 current members and 1,147 former members based on the power bills they paid the co-op during the years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Each year, Fergus Electric Cooperative allocates capital credits to the membership for the previous year. The allocations become your equity in the co-op and help maintain the financial health of Fergus Electric. As opposed to borrowing more money from a financial institution, the allocated monies are used by the co-op to fund capital needs for items such as transformers, trucks, inventory and other co-op expenses. Allocating capital credits is one of the requirements for an electric cooperative to qualify for its federal tax-exempt status. Capital credits are unique to cooperatives and are a core principle of the cooperative business model.

We thank our membership for providing revenue by paying your power bill each month. This revenue must cover operating expenses, cost of wholesale power, loan repayments and any unexpected expenses such as storm damage and capital expenditures. On condition that the cooperative is financially able, the board of directors and management have set a long-term goal of paying out capital credits.

Estate capital credits are paid throughout the year as members apply for them. By year-end 2018, it is likely that the co-op will have paid out about \$200,000 in estate capital credits. This makes the total capital credit checks issued in 2018 to be nearly \$1.2 million.

The other important aspect of capital credit retirements is as per Montana state law, after a five-year waiting period, the co-op is permitted to use unclaimed capital credits to fund scholarships such as the lineman

scholarship we sponsor, the winning essay scholarships we co-sponsor, and the always popular "Luck of the Draw" scholarships awarded to students during our annual meeting. Unclaimed capital credits or estate capital credits donated by generous heirs are the primary source of funding for the many scholarships given out by the cooperative each year.

It is a rewarding day for me, the board and Fergus Electric's employees to issue capital credit checks knowing that the money will benefit our membership, and it will also be a boost to the local economy!

Energy conservation

The cooperative is happy to sell you all the electricity you need, however we do not want your power bill to be higher than necessary. Now that we are entering the winter/Christmas season, I want to advise members to use electricity wisely.

Several areas to be aware of that

can cause your power bill to increase are using electric heat to warm your home or outbuildings, and stock tank heaters for cattle, horses, sheep, goats, chickens, dogs and cats. Open tanks in the winter operate inefficiently as a lot of heat is radiated in the cold air. A potentially good investment is to purchase an energy-efficient livestock watering system.

Plugging in vehicles, diesel tractors and trucks uses a large amount of energy. I realize that if the weather is 20 below zero you may not have a choice about whether to plug in your vehicles, but if the temperatures are warmer for a week or two, it may not be necessary to continue plugging in equipment every night.

Electricity is wonderful, but excess usage results in larger power bills. We don't want your power bill to be out of line with your budget, so I encourage everyone to take notice of what is plugged in and make sure that it is practical. Use energy prudently and thoughtfully.

Merry Christmas

On behalf of the co-op's board and staff, I want to wish everyone a very, merry Christmas. May God's blessings be yours at Christmas and throughout the New Year.

TIMELY TOPICS

Taming Your "To Do" List

Vangie McConnell, Editor



Too much to do, too many events to attend, too much to eat, too many people to visit, too many gifts to buy... you might start wishing the holidays were over before they even start.

Above all, the holidays are about spending special time with the important people in your life. Don't miss the spirit of the season by working too hard to have a good time.

The following tips, along with some careful planning and thoughtfulness about what is important to you and your family, can help you celebrate with as little stress as possible.

• Realize that you (and your family) can only do so much. Get everyone to write down what will bring them the greatest joy. Then decide on one, two,

or three things that will make those wishes a reality.

• Plan ahead and get organized to avoid burnout, disappointment and fatigue. Ask others to help. Make a prioritized list of things you want to get accomplished, remembering that it's impossible to do everything. Start early on some projects. For example, if baking Christmas cookies is on your list, bake them a month ahead and freeze them.

• Consider catering all or part of your holiday meal. For example, order an already stuffed and roasted turkey, or a smoked ham.

• Don't make eating and drinking the focus of your get-togethers. Walk

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Hedman Ag *Continued from page 3*



From left: Yard manager Stuart Williams cuts pipe at Hedman's, Inc. Pipe posts are a big part of the business. Brett Hedman operates a forklift, assisting Williams with day-to-day operations.

improved.”

Originally from Wyoming, Williams spent the last 12 years in California, and he's glad to be back in a small town.

“Being in California for 12 years was a learning experience,” he said. “I learned I didn't want to be there.”

Jenni also lived in California for a few years after graduating from Montana Tech, and she's grateful to be back in her hometown, living across the street from the very place she grew up — the Westphal Ranch — which she still helps out at regularly.

Brett and Jenni, who met in high school and married in 2010, are both grateful to live close to their families. Brett, who grew up 20 miles away between Grass Range and Winnett,

regularly goes home to spend time with his parents on their ranch as well.

Their children, A.J., 4, and Leah, 6, love spending time on both ranches.

“They are involved all the time,” Jenni said.

This is one of many reasons they all enjoy central Montana.

“I've traveled all over the U.S., and there is no place I'd rather live,” Brett said.

Jenni said she and Brett take pride in ranching backgrounds and regularly notice how much their upbringing helps them understand their customers.

“Our ranching background really helps us communicate with our customers and helps them come up with the best game plan for their various

products,” Jenni said. “We work hard to help our customers with their needs. Much of these needs involve building corrals or windbreaks. We appreciate the questions and ideas.”

And, most of all, the Hedmans appreciate the patronage of the farmers, ranchers and fence builders, and others from all around central Montana.

“We'd like to thank the communities and our customers for all of their support,” they said.

For more information, go to www.hedmaninc.com or call Brett Hedman at (406) 390-1110. The business is located near Grass Range on the south side of Highway 87.

TIMELY TOPICS *Continued from page 4*

through a neighborhood viewing Christmas lights, join a caroling group or go for a hike.

- If you don't have time to write a personal note on each holiday card, but want to personalize them, send out a photo greeting. Select a favorite family photo and have it made into a greeting card.

- Plan some alone time for yourself.
- Don't feel guilty about saying “no” to some of your holiday invitations.
- Say “no” to yourself if you don't really want to bake cookies or decorate your home.
- Don't burn your candle at both ends. Save time for daily exercise and a get good night's sleep.
- Plan an out-of-town trip if you'd rather get away from it all. It's something many of us would secretly like to do.



Fergus Electric's offices in Lewistown and Roundup will close for Christmas Dec. 24 and 25 and for New Year's Dec. 31 and Jan. 1

Basin Electric Power Cooperative offers scholarships

Fergus Electric Cooperative's power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, is offering a \$1,000 scholarship to the dependent of a member/consumer.

The applicant must be a student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Scholarship recipients are selected based on academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation

in school, and community activities, honors, work experience, a statement of education and career goals, and an outside appraisal.

A scholarship application and essay topic are on Fergus Electric's website www.ferguselectric.coop. Contact Vangie at 406-538-3465 for more information or to request a copy of the application. Mail completed applications to Basin Scholarship, Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457 postmarked no later than February 1, 2019.

Co-op Month Winners

John Runestad of Roundup, Kandis Nielsen of Lewistown, and Leah Negaard of Grass Range each won a \$50 electric credit in the Co-op Month drawing. Congratulations! Your interest in the cooperative is appreciated.

He said, "There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. One is called yesterday and the other is called tomorrow, so today is the right day to love, believe, do and mostly live." — The Dalai Lama

Why do electric bills go up in the winter

Even if you are prudent in the use of electricity, you may notice that your bills are higher during the colder months. This can be due to several factors:

- Heating extra water for those warm baths or showers on cold days can increase your consumption and your bill. Be sure your water heater is properly insulated if it's in an unheated space and check for leaks.
- The winter holidays mean additional cooking and baking, and those holiday lights also add to your electrical usage.
- Shorter days and longer nights mean lights stay on longer both inside and out.
- Most heating systems use electricity for some functions, such as operating the fan – many of them

run almost continuously when it's very cold.

- Space heaters used in garages, basements or other unheated spaces are often our unseen and forgotten kwh users. Never leave them unattended and unplug when not needed.
- Electric blankets cost extra to operate.
- Engine block heaters on cars and tractors may be winter extras that you forget about.
- The clothes dryer usually operates much more often in the winter months.

For all these reasons, your winter electric bills may be higher. But it bears reminding ourselves that electricity remains one of the best values around.

Identify Account Number*

Win a credit

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

**Account 22351 • Account 391304
Account 316572**

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

Last month's winner was **Marilyn Stanley** of Forest Grove.

**Numbers are drawn monthly.*



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala406-366-3374
Bret Ophus406-366-7523
Guy Johnson406-366-9170
Scott Sweeney406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)406-366-3465
David Dover406-366-1975
Melanie Foran406-462-5650

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Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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