

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)

## Fergus County Council on Aging — A friendly place

Story and photos by

Charlie Denison  
Contributing Writer

Stepping inside the Fergus County Council on Aging (COA) building on a Wednesday afternoon, it's safe to expect a party.

Seniors from in and around Lewistown gather for bingo, a meal and a good time, visiting with friends new and old. Tables fill up fast as a jovial crowd pours in, happy to socialize, get out of the house and take in some of Joy Sullivan's cooking.

"She can cook almost anything and make it taste good," said Russ Hodge, 95.

Hodge is one of many regulars who comes to the COA Monday through Friday for lunch, often meeting with his friend Joe Rogers.

"I love the meal and the companionship," said Rogers, 81. "It sure beats my home cooking."

Men and women alike are crazy about the atmosphere the COA presents. For Maxine Burton, 87, the camaraderie plays a large role in her devotion to the lunch outings. The same goes for her friend Theresa Robinson, 89, who wouldn't even think of missing a meal, and if she did, she'd have some explaining to do.

"This is like a second family," she said. "If someone doesn't come, we check on them."



Russ Hodge and Joe Rogers



*Council on Aging Executive Director Staci Auck addresses residents at the COA during a lunch gathering last month.*

### Offering a variety of services

Seeing regulars grateful for the opportunity to congregate and enjoy a meal is what makes this all worthwhile for COA Executive Director Staci Auck. It's one thing to provide the services, it's another to have people excited to take advantage of them, be it lunch, getting a ride on the Central Montana Shuttle or coming in for the bimonthly foot clinic.

"We have a variety of services to help those who are aging and those with dis-

abilities," Auck said. "I would say we are most known for our meals and our transportation, but we also have other services, and try to help people find the correct place to go if they have some questions."

Questions are expected, as Auck says getting old has its fair share of challenges.

"We all hope and plan to grow old, but we don't really plan on how our brain ages," Auck said. "We don't really think we are going to have Alzheimer's or dementia or a different kind of debilitating mental illness. That's what I am learning right now: how to help those struggling with this reality. We want to be an advocate for them and try to do the best we can."

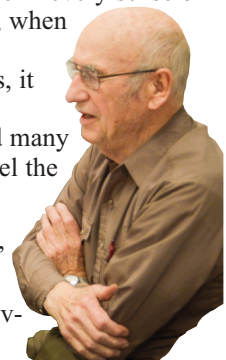
Ultimately, Auck said the goal of COA is to help seniors be independent, whether it's to give them a ride, deliver food for them at home or even arrange housekeeping.

"What we try to do is keep people home as long as they're able," Auck said, "and we are also happy to provide social time for them here."

The COA staff, be it Transportation and Activities Coordinator Nancy Fry-Moline, Personal Services Manager Kerri Smith, office manager Donna Thornton or Sullivan in the kitchen, are just happy to provide in every sense of the word. For Auck, when she sees the seniors enjoying themselves, it doesn't seem like work, and many of her employees feel the same.

"I really love driving the seniors," said Central Montana Shuttle driver Patricia Carter.

*Continued on page 5*



Frank Hruska



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

### District 4 Trustee will not seek reelection

Mike Vlastelic, a nine-year trustee from District 4, serving co-op members in the Grass Range, Winnett and north of Roundup areas is not running for reelection due to relocating to Lewistown. Mike has been a true workhorse since his election to the Fergus Electric Cooperative Board in 2008. He has been the co-op's representative on the Members 1st Power Cooperative and PRECorp boards as well as being our representative on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association board.

Mike helped Fergus Electric slowly and successfully work through the bankruptcy of our former power supplier, Southern Montana Electric, and move successfully to a new power supplier Members 1st Power Cooperative.

On a personal note — Mike, you have been great to work with the last nine years. I sincerely appreciate all of the hours of work and miles traveled to help all of us at Fergus Electric. It has been a true pleasure to work with you. We will all miss you!

### Districts 2 & 4 Nominating Committees announce candidate selection

On March 20, the District 2 nominating committee, Tiffany Mikkelson, Russ Lode and Keith Weinheimer, selected David Dover as the candidate for District 2.

On March 27, the District 4 nominating committee, Bonnie Tuss, Sam Holmes and Jack Barisich, selected Kathy Kombol as the candidate for District 4.

### Solar project update

Project Designer and Consultant Rusty Harris, Vice President of ThinkOne Construction Management in Bozeman, met with Fergus Electric Cooperative Board members at the March 30th board meeting to give a status update and answer questions regarding the cooperative's solar project.

Fergus Electric Cooperative's solar project was let in mid-April, and bids will be called in mid-May. Bidders will be asked to provide pricing for both a 70-kW and 105-kW system. After bids are received, the project size will be determined.

Fergus Electric Co-op has applied for three grants, which will be awarded in early summer. If we are privileged to receive grant money, the total cost to construct the solar system will be reduced.

Once the size of the system, grant determinations and actual construction costs are verified, the total price per panel will be finalized. The cost per panel will not exceed \$850.

### Presale of solar panels underway

Presale of solar panels began on April 17. Solar panels will be sold to co-op members on a first-come, first-served basis. I encourage interested members to sign up and pay the \$250 per panel as a guarantee of purchasing the number of solar panel(s) planned.

Based on language contained in the Internal Revenue Service's Notice 2013-70 dated November 18, 2013, it appears that the expense to participate in the cooperative's solar program may be eligible for a federal tax credit up to 30 percent, if there is a tax obligation. As federal and state tax laws are very complex and often change, members are encouraged to consult with a tax accountant to determine if payments made to Fergus Electric to purchase solar panels in the Cooperative's Solar Program are a qualified deduction eligible for tax credits.

The 105-kW system will be comprised of 324 photovoltaic panels. Each panel is approximately 3 feet by 5 feet. The project will be constructed on site at Fergus Electric's headquarters, stacked in groups of four in landscape orientation. The panels will tilt at 30 degrees facing due south, the optimal angle to get the most efficiency out of the panels.

Each panel produces approximately 450 kWh/year, with production varying each month. Members who purchase panels will be credited monthly at a rate of \$0.10/kWh generated. The overall energy produced by the system each month will be divided by the number of panels in the system. Members will be credited based on the number of panels purchased. The credit can only be used to offset kWh charges. Credit exceeding monthly kWh charges will be "banked" for later use in the current 12-month period. The annual billing period for cooperative solar begins on April 1st and ends on March 31st of the following year.

Co-op members interested in participating in the cooperative's solar program will want to stop by or call Fergus Electric Cooperative at 406-538-3465 to request an application, or print and complete the presale purchase agreement posted on the co-op's website and submit it along with a prepayment of \$250 per panel to guarantee obtaining the number of panels desired. Fergus Electric will continue to sell any remaining panels to members after the system is in operation.

Since the cooperative first announced our plan to build a solar energy system,

we have seen a flurry of interest in the project from our membership. If you are among the members of Fergus Electric interested in renewable energy, invest in your energy future and buy solar from your electric cooperative.

## Scholarship drawing at annual meeting

*Must be present to win*

Fergus Electric Cooperative will offer 10 - \$1,000 scholarships in a drawing at this year's annual meeting, on Thursday, June 8, 2017.

Rules for the scholarship drawing are: 1) The applicant or applicant's parent/guardian must be a member of Fergus Electric Cooperative; 2) The applicant must be present at the annual meeting; 3) The applicant must be accompanied by a parent/guardian; 4) The applicant must have at least a "C" grade average; and 5) The scholarship may be used for undergraduate college, vo-tech or for graduate studies.

No support documentation is required. Winners are determined by "the luck of the draw." Checks will be written to the college or school of the winner's choice.

Please complete the following application and return it to: Fergus Electric Scholarship Drawing, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457.

### Fergus Electric Scholarship Application\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

College/Vo-Tech attending/  
will attend \_\_\_\_\_

I maintain at least a "C" average \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\*Application due by June 2, 2017



## Council on Aging

Continued from page 3



*Chef Joy Sullivan dishes out Swiss steaks. Seniors often rave about her cooking. Grace McNaught, left, Rachel Park and Teresa Robinson enjoy bingo. Wednesdays are usually packed as seniors get excited for the game, the fellowship and the food.*

“They have my heart.

I totally feel appreciated and that makes me feel great. I always enjoy going to work.”

Sullivan agrees.

“It’s the best last place I want to be,” she said. “They are a lot of fun. I can tease them and they can take it.”

Auck said she really couldn’t do what she does with COA if it weren’t for her staff or her volunteers.

“They all enjoy what they do and feel good about what they do,” she said.

“That’s why I came here, too: because I care about the people.”

Auck said she is especially impressed with the retired nurses who help with the foot clinic.

“It’s great to have them,” Auck said.

### Notice of annual meeting

Pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws of Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., notice of the 79th annual meeting is hereby given.

The member meeting will take place at the Fergus County Trade Center, Lewistown, Montana, on Thursday, June 8, 2017. Registration begins at 11 a.m., with lunch at noon.

The business meeting convenes at 1 p.m., with the order of business as follows: report of members present, reading of notice and proof of publication, election of two trustees and transaction of other business.

“You don’t think about what it is like for people who can’t touch their toes. Your toenails keep growing even though you can’t touch them.”

Ted Hoagland, 76, said he particularly benefits from the foot clinic.

“It’s an invaluable program and another reason the COA is such a blessing,” he said. “I’ve been coming here just about 20 years. I love the fellowship, love the food and try to take advantage of all it has to offer.”

#### A growing need

A private, nonprofit organization, the COA has been part of the central Montana community for more than 35 years, and Auck said she believes now is a critical time for such a program to exist.

“I can’t imagine our numbers decreasing,” she said. “Our population in Lewistown is going to keep aging.”

According to Auck, 23.5 percent of Fergus County has a population age 65 or older, and the number is growing. National trends suggest the same.

“In the United States, 10,000 people turn 65 every day,” Auck said. “Some are calling this the Silver Tsunami. They might not need our help now, but 10-20 years from now, approximately 20 percent of our population will be at the age where people rely on our services the most.”

Excited to continue helping seniors, Auck said she is ready for the challenge that lies ahead. As far as she is concerned, “The more the merrier.”

For more information on the COA and their services, call Auck at (406) 535-7486 or go in and check it out at 307 W. Watson St., preferably on a Wednesday for bingo.

## May is National Electrical Safety Month — Plug into safety

- Remember H2O? Keep liquids far away from plugs and outlets to avoid shock hazards.
- Overloaded outlets? You’re playing with fire. Multi-outlet converters are no substitute for needed electrical upgrades.
- Be the brightest bulb in the box.

Avoid bulbs that exceed your lighting unit’s recommended wattage.

- Don’t dig yourself an early grave. Dial 811 to avoid hitting underground utility lines.
- Here’s one test you can’t afford to fail. Check and change smoke alarm batteries regularly.

# Meet your board candidates

In accordance with Fergus Electric Cooperative Bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.3, the nominating committees met and elected candidates for the Board of Trustees.

In addition to the procedure set forth above, any 15 or more members acting together from the district in which a trustee is to be elected may make other nominations by petition not less than 30 days prior to the meeting, and the secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the aforesaid committees are posted. No other method of nominating candidates for trustee shall be permitted.

## David Dover – District 2

Incumbent David Dover has been a member of the cooperative for 24 years. He has served on the board for the past 15 years, and is currently vice president. He completed educational courses to become a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Credentialed Cooperative Director and represents Fergus on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Communications Committee. David also served six years as one of Montana's representatives on the Northwest Public Power Association (NWPPA) Board of Directors, headquartered in Vancouver, Wash.



NWPPA is an organization of more than 150 public utility districts, electric cooperatives, municipalities and crown corporations in the Western U.S. and Canada. NWPPA serves the interests of members and the millions of electric customers they serve.

David was born and raised in the Buffalo area, and graduated from Hobson High School. He attended Montana State University, earning a degree in business finance. David is involved with various church, community and ag-related organizations. He also is an EMT with the Hobson Ambulance Service.

David says, "Fergus Electric has long held the motto of providing quality, reliable and affordable power to its members while following sound business practices. I believe this motto will continue to serve us well as we move into a future filled with challenges."

David and Michele were married in 1988. They have four grown sons. The family lives on a ranch south of Buffalo, where they raise cattle and sheep.

## Cathy Kombol – District 4

Cathy Kombol says, "I am pleased to be considered as a candidate for the Fergus Electric Co-op Board of Trustees." She further notes that she has been a member of the cooperative for nearly 40 years.



Her past work experience includes more than 16 years at Montana Bank in Roundup, and six years assisting two CPAs during tax season.

She is currently serving on the Farm Service Agency county committee as chairman, and has held office for 23 years, serving on other special committees as needed. Cathy says she has worked as an advocate for the elderly, doing court appointed guardianships, since 2000. She adds, "I enjoy doing 4-H interview judging at the Billings and Roundup fairs."

She and her husband Terry have lived on the family ranch since 1982, and raise cattle, sheep, goats and hay. They have two grown sons, Casey and Bo, and two grandchildren, Tyler and Kayla. When time allows, Cathy indulges in her passion — quilting.

## Join us for your Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 8, 2017 at 11 a.m.  
Fergus County Trade Center

### Register for a chance to win:

- Grand prize — solar panel
- Ten \$1,000 scholarships
- Base charge credits
- Cash prizes
- Gift cards
- Small electric appliances

Enjoy a table-top safety demonstration.

Mark your calendars for  
Thursday, June 8

## Identify Account Number\*

### Win a \$32.50 credit

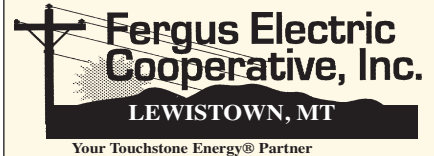
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

Account 334694  
Account 318573  
Account 320948

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

Last month's winners were Eldon Snyder and Shane Ruckman of rural Lewistown.

\*Numbers are drawn monthly.



## 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 Rikala .....406-535-5192  
Guy Johnson .....406-366-9170  
Scott Sweeney.....406-538-7218  
Don Criswell (Roundup) .....406-366-3465  
Monte Obert.....406-425-1288  
Melanie Foran .....406-462-5650

## FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-F

Website: [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)

E-mail: [ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop](mailto:ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ferguselectric](http://www.facebook.com/ferguselectric)

Scott Sweeney.....General Manager

Dale Rikala .....Operations Supervisor

Sally Horacek .....Office Manager

Vangie McConnell .....Editor

Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1: Paul Descheemaeker,  
Lewistown, 428-2417

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Buffalo, 374-2315

District 3: Brad Arntzen, Hilger, 462-5555

District 4: Mike Vlastelic, Grass Range,  
428-2160

District 5: Terry Frost, Sec./Treas.,  
Roundup, 323-3415

District 6: Jason Swanz, Judith Gap, 473-2462

District 7: Bob Evans, Jr., President,  
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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.