



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



STRIKING 'GOLD'

Local woman creates venue for Montana artisans

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **CHARLIE DENISON** | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

WHAT started as a hobby has become a new career endeavor for Marigold Market owner/operator Shanna Swanson, whose business — which provides Montana artisans of all talents a venue to sell goods — continues to thrive.

It's hard for Shanna to believe how many vendors she has at Marigold Market, but she wouldn't have it any other way. She loves providing the space for so many Montana-made goods. And as a vendor of homemade candy and syrup, she also understands the needs of her clients and wants to give them the appreciation they deserve.

"I know how hard it can be to find a place to sell goods, especially when you don't have time to go from vending show to vending show, so that's why I created



Shanna Swanson is the owner of Marigold Market, a shop that gives local and statewide artisans a place to show and sell their wares. | **PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC**

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

RECENTLY, over the course of a few weeks, OnSite Energy from Bozeman completed construction on the 72 kilowatt (kWh) Phase 2 roof-mounted solar array made up of 192 solar panels installed on our truck garage roof.

Our engineering department has been busy receiving and reviewing purchase agreements from interested members. By mid-October we sold 81 panels at \$215 each. If you are interested in purchasing a solar panel, please call our engineering department at 538-3465.

Speaking of the co-op's solar power interests, I want to provide an update on the status of the 100kW Phase 1 ground-mounted solar array that was installed west of the office in 2017.

From September 2019 to August 2020, the solar panels generated 147,514 kWh of energy, (2,038 kWh above expected output) and \$14,751 in total savings (\$44.97 per panel) for those members who purchased panels.

The total energy generated is enough to power approximately 14 homes for an entire year. We are very thankful and pleased with these numbers, and look forward to our members seeing additional savings on their billing statements for years to come.

Welcome two new linemen

We are excited to have Owen Thatcher, journeyman lineman, join our team in the Roundup area. Owen started with Fergus Electric Cooperative on October 5. Owen is an excellent addition to our staff and will provide great input from his years of experience in the trade.

We are also excited to welcome Darek Dygert, journeyman line-



OnSite Energy completed construction on the 72kw Phase 2 roof-mounted solar array on Fergus Electric Cooperative's truck garage roof. | PHOTO COURTESY OF FERGUS ELECTRIC

man, to the Fergus Electric team in Lewistown. Darek started with us at the beginning of this month. Darek is a Lewistown native who recently passed his journeyman's exam. Congratulations on your recent accomplishment Darek. We are grateful to have you join our professional and hard-working team.

MECA Annual Meeting

Fergus Electric staff and board members recently participated in the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) Annual Meeting held in Great Falls. This meeting is a unique opportunity for the 25 statewide cooperatives to come together and work on cooperative initiatives. We were updated on legislative issues by elected officials from both our federal and state governments. The group was thankful to meet in person while following local health requirements.

Solar update

I was honored to accept a safety award on behalf of Fergus Electric commemorating two years without a lost-time incident. Congratulations to all the employees for being aware of your surroundings and helping each other accomplish every task safely.

Office Hours

Following the time change with daylight savings we will move to our winter hours of Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Due to COVID-19 our office is still closed to walk-in traffic. Please give us a call at 538-3465 with any questions you may have.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the perfect time to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for the members we serve. This year has been unlike any other year for everyone. Throughout

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the year, we have taken numerous precautions to keep our members and employees safe in the midst of the pandemic, and although it has required us to conduct some aspects of our business a little differently, we are continuing to construct new power lines, safely restore power outages, and provide assistance to our members in any way we can. It is

often during challenging times that the kindness and goodness of people shines the brightest. We have seen that this year as members reached out to members who suffered loss during the recent fires. We often receive words of encouragement and thanks from members and it is appreciated immensely. Our members are the best! In every circumstance, there is something for which to be thankful. On behalf of the Board and staff of Fergus Electric, I want to wish all of you a very happy Thanksgiving! RM

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 358925 ● Account 357895
- Account 348198 ● Account 321854
- Account 396390 ● Account 317642

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

Lisa Dillman of Roundup was last month's winner!

**Numbers are drawn monthly.*



Marigold Market has a wide variety of local and Montana-made seasonal and organic food products for sale. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC

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Marigold Market," she said. "I want this to be a harboring atmosphere for artisans of the area. There are a lot of them. There is so much talent in central Montana."

Shanna started this journey two years ago, in the basement of her mother-in-law's Parr Creek Bakery. Vendors started coming forward from the start, grateful for an opportunity to have their products available on consignment.

The business was off and running in no time. In less than a year, Shanna had more than 50 vendors. By then she knew a new location was neces-

sary. Fortunately a spot came available around the same time and she jumped on it, opening her doors at 210 W. Main Street, Lewistown (formerly Lewistown Pharmacy) last August – just in time to host the Lewistown Area Chamber of Commerce Ladies' Night Out.

Business has continued to boom for Shanna, who currently has more than 115 vendors, only 10 of whom are from outside central Montana.

She really doesn't want to turn any artisans away, but she's starting to run out of room again.

"I have yet to say 'no' to anybody that wants to be part of Marigold Market, but I am getting close to start-

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Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.

LEWISTOWN, MT

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 Rikala.....406-366-3374
- Bret Ophus.....406-366-7523
- Scott Olson.....406-366-5822
- Carson Sweeney.....406-366-0971
- Bret Nellerhoe (Roundup).....406-939-0636
- Melanie Foran.....406-462-5650
- Dan Balster.....406-366-0975

FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT
59457-2058
Tel: 406-538-3465

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

Website: www.ferguselectric.coop

E-mail: ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ferguselectric

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Fergus Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.

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ing a waiting list,” she said. “This is a good problem to have.”

She already has a little bit of everything: art, organic herbs, all-natural essential oils and cleaning supplies, jewelry, cutting boards, homemade soaps and much more, including books from local authors and CDs from local musicians.

Marigold Market also offers a wide variety of seasonal organic foods such as hamburger, steaks, sausages, eggs, specialty cheeses, lentil soup, garlic, honey and more.

“It’s an eclectic mix,” Shanna said. “There’s really no rhyme or reason to it.”

So far, the response has been overwhelmingly positive, especially when it comes to essential products. She’s a self-proclaimed “herb nerd,” with a particular affinity for the oils, teas, smudge sticks and organic medicine, which sell fairly well.

But nothing seems to sell better than the 50 or so varieties of soap.

“We must have a very clean community,” she said.

Talent is a big part of becoming a successful artisan, as Shanna knows firsthand. Hard work is also essential, which is certainly the case at home, as well, where Shanna is busy raising four boys with her husband, Bryan.

“That’s my real passion,” she said.

Another passion of Shanna’s is her hobby farm, which is harder and harder to make time for these days.

“Sometimes I can get overwhelmed with my small operation, which



Marigold Market in Lewistown has more than 115 vendors from around the state selling a vast array of hand-crafted items. ‘I want this to be a harboring atmosphere for artisans of the area,’ owner Shanna Swanson said. | PHOTO BY CHARLIE DENISON FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC



Open Tuesday through Saturday,
9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

For more information, call Shanna Swanson at (406) 350-3204.

Find Marigold Market on Facebook or go to marigoldmarketmt.square.site

Curbside pick-up is available upon request.

makes me really admire the ranchers who produce beef, lentils and other products on a large scale,” she said. “That goes for other artisans, too, like the ones I’ve seen at Helena’s Made in Montana show. It’d be cool to be at that level, but that’s a major

commitment. For now, I’m just taking it step by step. I go with the flow, which in turn creates a more flexible atmosphere.”

There’s a lot to be said for flexibility, Shanna said. After all, she’s still a vendor at heart, and she’d like to take her goods on the road again when the opportunity arises.

“I can take other vendors with me,” she said. “Marigold Market on the go. Hopefully next year I’ll have the opportunity to do that some more.”

In the meantime, however, she’s open for business on Main Street, where she welcomes customers and vendors alike.

Editor’s note: Shanna and Bryan Swanson have been members of Fergus Electric Cooperative since 2017. 

