



Rooted in Maddock

BY BRITTNEE WILSON

The word “root” carries different meanings. In a physical sense, a root is the underground part of a plant that acts as a lifeline, drawing resources upward to support growth and development.

Metaphorically, roots represent the foundational source or deep, stabilizing connection of a person, idea or community.

For Megan Follman, being rooted means being a deeply connected member of her community, cherishing her hometown and embracing the family values that helped shape her.

Those roots ultimately led her to leave the fast-paced world behind and return home for a simpler rural life. Now, as a young adult, she is putting down roots in more ways than one.

Growing up rural

Follman grew up on a farm in Benson County between Maddock and Esmond. Her father farmed and ranched,

while her mom worked at the local nursing home. During the summer and fall months, she had access to fresh produce from her parents’ and grandparents’ gardens.

Follman never had to worry about where her next meal would come from. It wasn’t until a job with Child Protective Services that she saw firsthand the food insecurity some families faced. That experience left a lasting impression.

continued on next page

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Members gather for annual meeting
- Reducing wildfire risk
- Operation Round Up grants

continued from previous page

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– Megan Follman

After moving back to her family farm, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative member fell in love with gardening, a tradition instilled in her as it was passed down through generations.

A work of the heart

As every gardener knows, when a garden reaches its peak, the harvest comes fast and furious. For this close-knit community, sharing garden surpluses has been a beloved summer tradition.

"Any given day in the summer or late fall, you'll find a bag of zucchini in your car or setting in the entryways of buildings around town," Follman said.

After hearing about a farm stand in a nearby town where anyone in the community could access fresh produce, Follman knew a similar concept would be welcomed in Maddock.

Last year, she wrote a letter to the city council and received permission to set up a temporary farm stand in the Maddock City Park. She named it "Rooted in Maddock" and shared it as a "give-and-take" model, where neighbors can swap produce, share excess harvest and access fresh goods.

"Equality is a big thing for me. People having access to fresh fruits and vegetables is a really important part of addressing food insecurity," Follman said. "We are a farming community, so people love to garden here, and I think they look for others to share their extra produce with. This stand has become a central hub where they can do that. And I think it makes people feel good to share."

The grassroots project has been a huge success. What was intended to be a temporary way for locals to share fresh produce quickly evolved into something much more.

The farm stand remained active through the winter, moving into the entryway of a downtown business to protect it from the elements. Community members pitched in and kept the cart stocked, especially during the government shutdown.

"It filled the gap," Follman said. "We even had our local bakery donate loaves of sourdough bread so people had access to fresh bread. People continued to bring things in. We had everything from dog and cat food to baby formula."



Megan Follman alongside the farm stand she implemented for the community of Maddock to share fresh produce and excess harvested food with one another.

Just as plant roots store excess nutrients to sustain growth during dormant periods or times of stress, the Rooted in Maddock stand helped fill a community need when people needed it the most.

"Maddock is very community-minded," Follman said. "I think this little stand reinforces that sense of community. It's everyone's stand. Everyone can bring, and everyone can take. No questions asked. You don't need to bring something in order to take something."

This summer, with the help of her husband, Follman built a more permanent structure to better protect donations from the elements. They also added a small refrigerator to store items such as farm-fresh eggs.

The farm stand has not only benefited those who rely on it, but has also inspired others to give back.

"A couple people have told me that they've started a garden or expanded the one they already had just so they can contribute to the stand," Follman said. "My hope is simply that the community continues to support it."

Just as roots draw resources upward to support growth and development, the people of Maddock continue to nurture and strengthen their community through generosity and connection.

Community members can follow the stand's activities by following its Facebook page, Rooted in Maddock. ■



Barry Heisler



David Jaeger



Shannon Petersen



Laine Hoyt



Clay LaRocque

Employees recognized for years of service

Every year, Northern Plains Electric Cooperative expresses appreciation to those employees who have achieved a significant work anniversary. This year, we recognize five employees who have put in a collective 75 years of service to the cooperative.

We thank these employees for their commitment to our cooperative and the role they each play in providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric

service. Please join us in expressing appreciation for their many years of dedicated service.

- Barry Heisler – 30 years
- David Jaeger – 20 years
- Shannon Petersen – 15 years
- Laine Hoyt – 5 years
- Clay LaRocque – 5 years ■



Co-op employees step up to challenge

In May, 175 electric cooperative employees from 14 co-ops across the state participated in a wellness step challenge sponsored by the ND REC Benefit Trust. Over a four-week challenge, participating employees were tasked with racking up as many steps as possible to benefit their health while winning prizes and earning money for charity. A whopping \$3,650 was donated to great causes on behalf of participants.

Twenty-four Northern Plains Electric Cooperative

(NPEC) employees totaled over 7,530,000 steps equaling about 3,770 miles. Three NPEC employees step totals earned them donations to their favorite charities.

- \$100 – New Rockford School Rocket Boosters donated by Jeremy Risvoi.
- \$100 – Carrington School archery program donated by Chris Mertz.
- \$75 – Robinson Lions Club donated by Dustin Peterson. ■



Members gather for 2026 annual meeting

Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) held its 30th annual meeting June 11 at the Maddock Community Center in Maddock. Seventy-six members registered and received a handheld rechargeable vacuum cleaner as a door prize for attending. A roast beef and mashed potato meal was prepared by Harriman's Restaurant, catering to 120 members and guests.

The business portion of the meeting reflected on

highlights through 2025, including cooperative finances, reliability, system improvements, upcoming projects and updates from our power suppliers. Reports were presented by President Tracy Boe, General Manager Seth Syverson and Treasurer Randy Simon.

One of the primary purposes of the business meeting is the election of three board members. The cooperative received three qualified petitions, with one for each district. Since no competing petitions were filed, ballots



Youth Tour representative **Annabelle Staus** gave the membership a lively review of her experience on the Youth Tour last June.

were not mailed to the membership. Congratulations to incumbents Bruce Olsen, District 1, Curtis Wiesz, District 2, and Lori Carlson, District 3, as they were reelected to the board. Each will serve a three-year term.

Guest speaker Annabelle Staus, who was NPEC's 2025 representative in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, presented her experience as a student traveling in Washington, D.C., on the all-expense-paid trip last June. She included her personal photographs in her lively speech with the membership.

Erin Becker, senior staff writer and editor at Basin Electric Power Cooperative, gave a presentation on the ins and outs of wholesale power and how Basin Electric plays an important role in serving its members. Her breakdown of Basin Electric's energy strategy to meet demand as well as the large load perspective was eye-opening to the membership.

The names of three member dependents were drawn for a \$1,000 luck-of-the-draw scholarship. Congratulations to winners Sara Schmaltz of Rugby, Samantha Lagein of Rock Lake and Olivia Follman of York. After adjournment, cash door prizes totaling \$550 were randomly drawn and awarded to members in attendance.

NPEC directors, management and employees thank

all members and guests for attending this year's annual meeting. We value your interest, and participation is a key element to the co-op's success. We hope to see you at next year's meeting! ■



Northern Plains Electric Cooperative awarded three students, whose names were randomly drawn, with a \$1,000 college scholarship. Left to right are General Manager **Seth Syverson**, **Samantha Lagein**, **Olivia Follman**, **Sara Schmaltz** and President **Tracy Boe**.

Reducing the risk of wildfires

Across the United States, the threat of wildfire has increased significantly in recent years. Rising temperatures, prolonged drought and shifting weather patterns are creating dangerous conditions in places that historically experienced few major fires.

For electric utilities, the danger is all too real, as dry vegetation can ignite from power line contact, and high winds can accelerate the spread of wildfire.

At Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC), safety is our highest priority. That is why NPEC has developed a formal wildfire mitigation plan, which is a proactive approach to help protect our members, infrastructure and communities.

The plan was prompted by a change to North Dakota state law, but much of it outlines what NPEC has already been doing for years – managing vegetation, inspecting equipment and monitoring weather conditions.

One of the most important ways we reduce wildfire threats is through our comprehensive vegetation management program. Overgrown trees and power lines are a dangerous combination, particularly during dry and windy conditions. NPEC line crews proactively trim vegetation that could come into contact with power lines and other critical infrastructure. This work requires careful planning, coordination with property owners and ongoing inspection. While it may not always be visible, it is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent fire ignition and maintain reliable electricity.

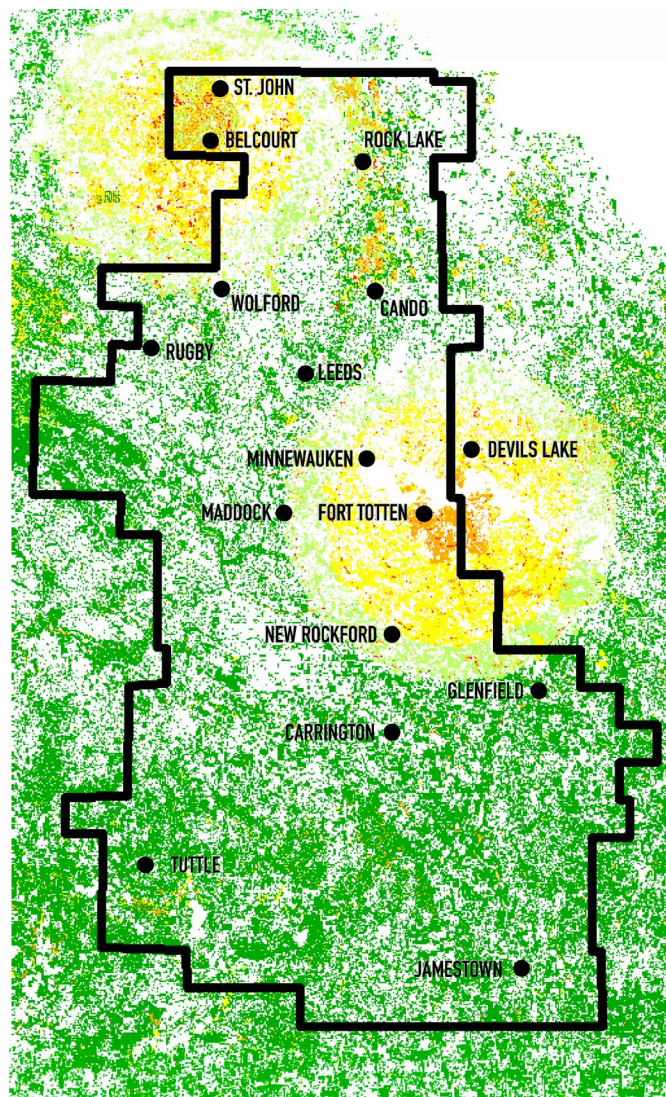
In addition to boots on the ground, our operations department continuously monitors weather conditions and puts crews on high alert during Red Flag warnings.

"We take the extra effort to make sure our equipment is deemed safe before reenergizing to make sure there are no additional issues on the line," said Justin Kollman, NPEC's operations manager.

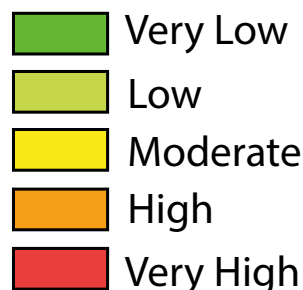
While we are committed to doing our part, wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility. There are important steps each of us can take to protect our homes and neighborhoods.

Properly extinguish fires by dousing them with water, stirring the ashes and ensuring they are cool to the touch before leaving the area. Avoid outdoor burning on windy or excessively dry days. Maintain a defensible space around your home by clearing dry leaves, dead branches and other flammable debris. Use lawn equipment carefully, particularly during hot conditions, and always check local regulations for burn bans or restrictions.

Wildfire mitigation is not seasonal work at NPEC. It is a year-round commitment embedded in how we operate and invest in our local system. Our members depend on us not only for reliable power, but for leadership in safeguarding the communities we call home. To view NPEC's wildfire mitigation plan, visit our website at nplains.com. ■



Wildfire Risk to Communities Wildfire Hazard Potential



Keep campfire from becoming a wildfire!

There's nothing like enjoying the great outdoors with a roaring fire, gooey s'mores and a night sky full of stars. But that wonderful campfire is also a big responsibility. Learn how to be safe with your campfire with these tips.

BEFORE

- Choose a spot protected from wind gusts and at least 15 feet from your tent, gear and anything flammable.
- Clear a 10-foot diameter area around your campfire spot by removing leaves, grass and anything burnable down to the dirt.
- Don't build your campfire near plants or under tree limbs or other flammable material hanging overhead.
- If allowed, dig a pit for your campfire, about 1-foot deep, in the center of the cleared area.
- Build a fire ring around the pit with rocks to create a barrier.
- Don't use any type of flammable liquid to start your fire.

DURING

- Keep your fire small.
- Always keep water and a shovel nearby to put out your campfire.
- Be sure an adult is always watching the fire.
- Keep an eye on the weather! Sudden wind gusts can blow sparks into vegetation outside your cleared area, causing unexpected fires.

AFTER

- If possible, allow your campfire to burn out completely – to ashes.
- Drown the campfire ashes with lots of water.
- Use a shovel to stir the ashes and water into a "mud pie." Be sure to scrape around the edges of the fire to get all the ashes mixed in.
- Drown the ashes with water again.
- Check that your campfire is cold before leaving. Hold your bare hand just above the wet ashes, especially around the edges of the fire.
- If you feel heat, stir more water into the ashes.
- When the ashes are cold, disassemble your fire ring and scatter the rocks.
- If you built your campfire in a fire pit, be sure it's filled with wet dirt. ■

Source: U.S. Forest Service



Operation Round Up grants

At the June meeting, the Northern Plains Electric Cooperative (NPEC) Operation Round Up board of directors approved grants totaling \$9,200 to help support worthy causes.

These charitable grants are made possible through the generosity of NPEC members who voluntarily elect to have their electric bills rounded up to the next dollar. The donated amount averages about 50 cents a month for each participating member and raises approximately \$37,000 each year. Since the program's beginning in October 1998, grants totaling \$1,020,937 have been awarded to 1,418 local charitable causes.

Grants approved in June include:

- Wayne F. Morris, Sutton, medical expenses
- Jonathan Guthmiller, Pettibone, medical expenses
- Faye Creager, Cando, medical expenses
- Maddock Memorial Home, convection oven project for senior meals
- St. John's Academy, Jamestown, audio/speaker project
- Mt. Pleasant School District, Rolla, school playground project
- Jamestown Area Grief Support Team, grief support group project
- Benson, Eddy, Foster, Griggs, Kidder, Pierce, Rolette, Stutsman, Towner, Wells and Ramsey counties, food bank programs

If you would like additional information about this worthy program, please contact NPEC by calling



800-882-2500 or you may obtain guidelines or download applications at nplains.com. The board will meet again in September to review applications. The application deadline is Aug. 20. ■

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