



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

A D.C. Adventure Awaits

Each year the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association hosts the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. During this event, participants from across the country tour Washington's historic treasures, visit with their state's congressional delegation and participate in youth rallies and socials. Starting on June 14th, two students from our service territory will embark on this one-of-a-kind experience. We would like to congratulate Sarah Welborn and Kassidy Broere, who attend Beaverhead County High School.

Our two participants were selected based on an application and essay. This year's topic was "What would your day be like without electricity?" Each participant's essay is featured below:

By Sarah Welborn



Sarah Welborn

I would give anything to be able to go back to the "good old days!" Just a few short years ago, my life was so nice in so many ways. I remember when getting out of bed was not a shock to my system.

My room was nice and warm, I had running water, and the best was my indoor bathroom. The day that we lost all sources of electricity in this country was the worst day of my life.

Today, I woke up, grabbed a robe and slippers, ran outside to the outhouse as quickly as possible, and ran back into the house. Luckily, Dad had been up for hours, had several kerosene lanterns lit, the wood stove stoked and breakfast cooking on the wood-burning cook stove.

My favorite thing in the mornings used to be Dad getting after me for taking a 20-minute hot shower. Today is Monday, so it isn't quite as bad. I just had my weekly bath on Saturday. I had to heat the water on the stove and pour it into the galvanized tub in the middle of the kitchen. At least I am old enough that I get my own tub of water and don't have to share it with the rest of the family. Saturday is the official bath day, but I have a daily sponge bath throughout the rest of the week.

It doesn't take nearly as long to get ready for school these days. I eat the breakfast that Dad cooked for me, help clean up the

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By Kassidy Broere



Kassidy Broere

Imagining a day without power...on the ranch-- what if it was February 23? I wake up to the alarm on my phone. When I shut it off, I see that my phone is at 40 percent, even though it was plugged in all night. My bedside clock is not on. Irritated, I flick on the light switch by my bed, but no light comes flashing to life. Right then, I know that this is going to be a long day.

Nobody was downstairs, so I knew that they had already figured out that the power was out and they were out in the calving shed. I bundled up with my warmest clothes and ruffled through the mud room in the dark to find my insulated winter boots. I fumbled for a flashlight out of the cabinet and made the short but chilly trek to the shed. The moon and stars were covered by a thick patch of clouds, and the bright yard light was as black as the sky above. The whole ranch was too silent to seem real, until I hit the plane of the tall sliding door. Cows were bawling, doors and gates were slamming left and right, and there was little light to be able to take in the scene. The only light was from the weak, dim flashlight. Once I was closer to the wood stove room in the shed, I could see the heat waves radiating out of the hot room window from the stove.

My mom is in the room looking for more

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D.C. Adventure

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batteries for the flashlights, and my sister is sleeping on the cot. Dad must be out going through the cows. Calving is a grueling season; but when it is 20 below zero and no electricity — that changes the pace of the day, and the mood. The room in the calving barn has a wood stove, and it can keep the room 80 degrees with the door wide open — sometimes it can warm the barn up another 10 degrees. Power gives us water, extra light and tons of heat for calving. In extreme cold, newborn calves need to be carted into the barn or they can freeze to death. My dad built a fully enclosed warming box for calves when we get this cold — but it runs off power. We do have one generator that would be able to keep the warming box going.

When the sun came up, it was time to do chores. All of the horses are on automatic water systems so my dad had to go shut them off in hopes it wasn't too late already. A horse can go for a while without water, but sooner or later they will colic. The cows and calves that are out in the field already need to eat. The tractor that we feed them with was plugged in, but since the power went out so early there will be a chance that it will not start. Luckily it did start, and the hungry cows were eager to see it coming toward them.

Once everything outside was running somewhat smoothly, I came into the house to see what I could cook. When I walked in, I realized that the fire had gone out and it was freezing. Right away I had to start a fire because I was

afraid that the water pipes could start to freeze at any moment. After the flame started to burn the cold, wet log, I returned to my original mission. The stove and ovens both run on electricity so that left the fire. We had peanut butter, jelly and bread, but if my family wanted any meat it would have to be cooked in a cast iron over a fire. I decided that either a peanut butter and jelly sandwich would be good, or the leftovers from last night's tacos.

Everyone had been working hard and felt like they needed a shower, but there is no water, so we melted snow and heated it up so we could at least get the first layer of dirt off of us. Laundry was also out of the picture. Everyone's warm clothes were wet and dirty, and they are making the cold in on our bodies solidify. In between all the other tasks I gathered warmer, drier clothes.

The day stretched on, but finally the sun was starting to go down. The night was going to be harder than the day because it would be dark and start to get cold again. I went outside to help my dad in the barn, when the outside light started to flicker. Finally things were up and running again! It was the longest 13 hours I have ever spent. On a ranch people depend on electricity for a ton of things, but especially during the cold season when calves are born. Being able to flip a light switch on is taken for granted, but when you don't have that instant light it makes you realize how lucky everyone really is. Electricity plays a major role in many businesses and everyday households, and without Vigilante Electric Cooperative the lives of rural Montana families would be different.

From a Grateful Organization

Thanks on Administrative Professionals Day

For an organization such as ours to run effectively, it takes a team effort. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative we are blessed with a wonderful staff, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank one group in particular for their time and dedication to our organization. On April 24th, Vigilante Electric joins businesses across the country in celebration of Administrative Professionals Day.

We would like to publicly thank Jackie Clark, Barb Delano, Joy Britton, Emily May and Chelsey Hutchison for their devoted, valued work. Every day, these individuals display the work ethic and skill to keep our office organized and running smoothly.

"In my time at Vigilante Electric, it has been an honor working with the administrative professionals in our office," said General Manager Rollie Miller. "Their individual qualities,

dedication and ability to work as a team create a wonderful work environment. If you get the opportunity, please take time to thank these people when you see them next."



Emily May, Chelsey Hutchison, Barb Delano, Jackie Clark and Joy Britton.

D.C. Adventure

Sarah Welborn continued from page 3

dishes, pack my lunch, and I am out the door. Instead of driving my car, I ride my horse to school because fuel is hard to get. School hours vary depending on the time of year. When it is really cold, school is canceled as it is too hard to keep the school heated. On cloudy days, it can be difficult to concentrate on school work because it isn't easy seeing the board, or even the papers and books on my desk.

I used to be able to write my essays on my computer, but now I write them by hand. Writing it out by hand takes much longer, so I had better start my paper now.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative

In the beginning, most people didn't believe there would be a benefit to supplying electricity to the rural areas of the country. This is difficult for me to understand because most of the food we eat and the products that factories need to produce items such as clothes, shoes, etc. were, and continue to be, produced in rural America. We were fortunate to have a president that had a goal to supply electricity to everyone in the nation. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Act (REA). The REA allowed small rural electric cooperatives the ability to borrow money from the government to build electric lines and supply electricity to the many people living in rural areas. Jefferson Valley Rural Electric was founded within three years of the passing of the Rural Electrification Act. Two years later it was named Vigilante Electric Cooperative and became a non-profit membership cooperative.

Vigilante Electric initially had its main office in Whitehall, then Twin Bridges, and finally Dillon, Montana. With each move, the service area grew. By 2018, Vigilante Electric provided electricity to more than 9,700 consumers, and maintained more than 2,700 miles of power lines.

Besides supplying electricity to rural Montana, Vigilante Electric had been an important member of the communities that it served. They were great supporters of many organizations, which included the Beaverhead County Fair, rural fire departments, The Community Wood Bank, FFA alumni, and many more.

I think that this is a good start. I hope I didn't leave out any information. I wish I could finish, but it is lunch time now. I used to have a choice between the school's hot lunch and a sack lunch. Now, we all bring our lunch from home because it isn't realistic to cook lunch on a wood stove for a large group of students.

When school is finally out for the day, I ride my horse home. Then my chores begin. I have to restock the freezer with ice from the ice house. At least I don't have to assist with cutting and hauling ice to the ice house for storage. I carry wood into the house for the wood stove and the wood-burning cook stove. Once again, at least I don't have to chop the wood. Dad did that sometime in the past few days. The chickens need fed and watered, eggs collected, and the livestock needs fed. The windmill is working fine so the livestock have water. When it gets colder outside, it really becomes a problem to keep water thawed for the cows and horses.

We are one of the lucky families because we have a hand pump in the kitchen that pumps water from the cistern where our water is stored. Some of my friends have to haul water into the house in buckets from the well or some sort of storage in their yard.

I usually start dinner and when Dad comes in from working, he helps finish it. We eat, do some homework and occasionally play a board game by the light of the lantern. Bedtime is welcomed because there isn't a lot to do to keep me busy in the evenings. I used to think that I couldn't survive without the TV or my cellphone. It might have been easier if I had never experienced those luxuries.

I do not know anyone in my community who has not benefited from the support of Vigilante Electric. Even those who got their power from other sources still enjoyed the community participation of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. I didn't know it at the time, but Vigilante Electric was involved in organizations that benefit me such as The Beaverhead County Fair/4-H, FFA and school scholarship programs to mention a few.

I know that Vigilante Electric is working hard to restore our power. The latest news said that we can look forward to having power restored within the next six months. I never gave much thought to all of my conveniences, but Vigilante Electric took care of us in so many ways, made our lives easier and opened up doors of opportunity every day.



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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker
Participating members: 212
Total Contributions: \$2,039.83

*To apply contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327*

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Proposal Deadline Extended

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is extending the deadline for proposals for funding for safety related projects within our service territory until further notice. For a project to be considered, a letter detailing your request must be sent to Vigilante Electric General Manager Rollie Miller.

In the letter, we want to know about the organization requesting a grant and its location. We want to know specifics regarding the equipment or project that the funds are being requested for, how it will improve community safety, the timeframe in which the funds will be used, and contact information for the organization and writer of the request.

The Commitment of an Electric Lineworker

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 8.

National studies consistently rank power line installers and repairers among the most dangerous jobs in the country, and for good reason. Laboring high in the air wearing heavy equipment and working directly with high voltage creates the perfect storm of a dangerous and unforgiving profession, but electric lineworkers are up to the task. These brave men and women are committed to safety, as well as the challenges of the job.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative's linemen are responsible for keeping power flowing day and night, regardless of national holidays, vacations, birthdays, weddings or other important family milestones. Beyond the years of specialized training and apprenticeships, it takes internal fortitude and a mission-oriented outlook to be a good line worker.

Monday, April 8th is Lineworker Appreciation Day. Given the dedication of Vigilante Electric's linemen, we would like to thank Tyler Arnio, Clint Begger, Jess Davidson, Andrew English, Vance Forsman, Zach Maershbecker, John Moos, Austyn Paulsen, Chuck Romerio, Cody Tarter, Charles Wharton and Chase White for their dedication to the job. We also encourage you to take a moment and acknowledge the many contributions they make to our communities.

"I would like to thank our linemen for their dedication to their jobs and their ongoing commitment to doing their jobs safely."

— General Manager Rollie Miller



Townsend Linemen - Clint Begger, John Moos and Chase White.



Whitehall Linemen - Austyn Paulsen, Chuck Romerio and Zach Maershbecker.



Dillon Linemen - Vance Forsman, Andrew English, Tyler Arnio, Charles Wharton, Cody Tarter and Jess Davidson.

2019 Leadership Award Winners

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we believe in the value of education, and support the aspirations of area students wanting to expand their horizons through further education. This is why we offer the Vigilante Electric Cooperative Leadership Award.

Each year Vigilante Electric provides scholarships to students who are dependents of members that have distinguished themselves in the classroom and their communities. This year's applications continued the tradition of academic achievement, hard work and commitment to school and community.

For the 2018-19 academic year, Vigilante Electric's board of trustees has decided to award 16 \$500 scholarships. This year's Leadership Award recipients are:

- Monika de los Rios, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Savannah Hansen, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Harleigh Johnson, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Ti'el Lochridge, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Jordyn McKay, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Alfred Peterson, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Bradley Rakich, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Bryce Stewart, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Larkin Voss, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Shelbie Wolfe, Beaverhead Co. High School
- Cody Graveley, Broadwater High School
- Louis Ingalls, Broadwater High School
- Justin Martinell, Lima High School
- Blulynn Keim, Twin Bridges High School
- Max Feight, Whitehall High School
- Karlie Wagner, Whitehall High School

We again paired our Leadership Award with the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association Memorial Scholarship, giving students the opportunity to win two scholarships while filling out only one application. The top application is forwarded to our statewide association for consideration for one of four Memorial Scholarships. This year we selected Harleigh Johnson's application. At the time of this article, the winner of the MECA scholarship had not been announced.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to congratulate this year's scholarship winners and wish them the best in their future endeavors.