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Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



The 2023 Youth Tour participants from Montana pose in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. | PHOTO BY RYAN HALL

YOUTH TOUR 2024

WRITE AN ESSAY, WIN A TRIP TO D.C.

THERE is a Facebook post showing a child standing on a stool and leaning over the engine compartment of a muscle car, as if he were working on it. The caption reads, "Get them involved early, they're the future." Early involvement prepares kids for the path ahead and opens their minds to the limitless possibilities of what they can do.

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we believe in helping young people achieve.



Our safety demonstrations have proven to make kids safer and more respectful of electricity. Our scholarship program helps lessen the burden of a post-secondary education that will help them thrive in today's economy. Perhaps the most meaningful offering we have for today's young members is our participation in the NRECA

See YOUTH TOUR, next page

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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YOUTH TOUR

Continued from previous page

(National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

Since 2003, Vigilante Electric has sponsored deserving students for this one-of-a-kind experience. This is a week-long, all-expenses paid event, bringing together students from across the country to experience the history and grandeur that is our nation's capital. This past June, we were honored to have Laura Martin from Dillon, and Kennady Perrenoud from Lima represent Vigilante Electric. The stories of their experience were published in the

August edition of this magazine.

Having been a chaperone on two occasions, it is remarkable to watch the students during this week. You see those kids who are intimidated at first grow in comfort and confidence as the week progresses. You see them in an environment that creates lasting memories with newfound friends. You see them process their surroundings and experience a world that is rich in history and full of possibilities.

In 2023, Montana sent 24 students and four chaperones to Washington, D.C, joining more than 1,800 participants from across the nation. In June 2024, this tradition continues, and we are looking for at least two students who want to represent our cooperative at this event. The dates are set for June

14 – 21, 2024.

To be eligible, a student must be a dependent of a member of Vigilante Electric, currently be a sophomore or junior in high school, complete an application, and submit a brief essay. The topic for the 2024 Youth Tour essay is: *If you could have dinner with one prominent Washington, D.C. figure, whether from the present or past, who would that person be and why? What would you ask them?* The application deadline is November 17, 2023.

Complete details and resource information are available on our website at vec.coop/youth-tour. Here you will also find Laura and Kennady's stories of their experience. Information will also be available at area high schools. RM

SOMETIMES OUTAGES ARE NECESSARY

AT Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we are proud of our distribution system, and we go to great lengths to ensure its integrity. When we find an issue, decisions are made on how to correct the issue in the safest possible manner. Sometimes this requires us to shut down the power temporarily to make the repair. Depending on the situation these outages can take two forms: emergency and planned.

An example of an emergency outage happened just recently in the Whitehall area. Our line crew in Whitehall identified an issue with a piece of equipment within our substation and determined that the best course of action was to shut the power down and take that equipment offline. Because of the urgency of the situation, we were not given enough notice to contact those members who would be affected by the outage. Our line crew did a wonderful job in dealing with the situation and had the power back on inside an hour.

Planned outages also allow us to contact our members impacted by the outage. We make every effort to contact those affected by using several



Pictured is a pole that our line crew replaced where we had to shut down the power in order to replace the pole safely.

different methods. We send email notifications and postcards if time permits. If notifications of planned outages are important to you, there are a couple of options available, and by contacting us we can help you with the option that best fits your needs.

The most important thing is to keep your account information with us up to date. This includes a current

phone number and/or email address. The quickest way for us to contact our members for a planned outage is through email. In fact, you can set up your email address with us to receive a variety of information, or to just receive outage notifications. Call us with your preference.

Another way to stay connected to us is through SmartHub. SmartHub is a web and mobile app that gives you control of your account, with information. Once you register, you have access to a wealth of information about your account and can receive a variety of notifications (including planned outage notifications) from us. You can access SmartHub from our website, vec.coop, or by downloading the app to a smartphone or tablet.

While no outage is convenient, planned outages are beneficial. System upgrades are necessary for optimal performance, and can increase service reliability. With early detection of a problem, we can safely plan the work needed to correct the issue and prevent a longer/larger outage down the road. RM

Interest in net metering on the rise

OVER the past few years, we have seen an increased interest in net metering. While not all inquiries translate into completed projects, we are seeing more of this type of installation in our service territory. Vigilante Electric Cooperative supports the integration of these types of facilities, and we want to help you make an informed decision about a renewable installation.

First, what is net metering? Net metering is defined as the interconnection of member owned generation from a renewable source to the cooperative's facilities, in which the generation output of energy not used at the service is netted against the energy delivered by the cooperative.

When considering installing wind or solar for a net metered installation there are not only requirements that need to be met from the State of Montana, but Vigilante Electric has contractual obligations that need to be satisfied as well. The interconnection agreement spells out the legal and engineering side of the requirements. To ensure this process flows smoothly we require the specifics of a proposed

project be submitted to us prior to installation for our approval. A qualified installer can lead you through this process. We maintain a list of installers that have successfully completed projects with us if you are interested in making inquiries.

Our net metering contract contains the details of the process and explains the financial side of a qualifying installation. When considering this type of investment, you should fully understand the elements of this document before you commit. The following are some of the important points of our net metering program. For copies of these agreements, we ask members to contact us first.

Vigilante Electric does not purchase energy produced by the member's net metering facilities. This production is intended to offset part or all the member's electrical needs from us. Member generation in excess of that delivered by Vigilante Electric will be rolled to the next month and so on until the excess has been used or until the end of the net metering period at which point any excess will be reset to zero.

Our net metering period is January 1 to December 31.

Charges for energy delivered by Vigilante in excess of the energy flowed back onto our system will be billed monthly at a retail rate determined by the rate class the service is in at the time of the interconnection and is subject to the same patronage requirements.

Finally, the nameplate generating capacity shall not exceed 10 kW DC (direct current). This is the most asked question, especially by potential contractors and is the maximum size that we will allow for net metering.

As you educate yourself on this kind of investment, there are a couple of questions that should be asked of potential installers. What is the life expectancy of the system, does the output degrade over time and based on our requirements, what is the basic payback period? This is the period needed to cover the cost of the system from the energy savings from the generation. Remember, we have the lowest residential energy rates in the state as well as one of the lowest in the country. RM



CONGRATS TO ELLA BEGGER

Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to congratulate Ella Begger on recently becoming the 2023 World Champion Pole Bender at the High School National Finals Rodeo in Gillette, Wyoming. Ella is the daughter of our Townsend Area Forman, Clint Begger and his wife Jada. In the October edition of the *Rural Montana* magazine, Ella will be featured in the statewide pages.

THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS

PEOPLE often wonder what makes Vigilante Electric Cooperative different than another electric utility. Frankly, there are a lot of things that make us unique. Starting with the fact we exist to serve you, our members.

Vigilante Electric's decisions are made locally, by trustees and a management team that call our service territory home. Everyone who pays to receive electricity from our cooperative is a member. When you pay your electric bill each month, that money is used to cover costs and make improvements to our system and strengthen service reliability. Once all costs are covered, excess revenue is returned to the membership in the form of capital credits.

Vigilante Electric wants well-informed members, and we have a variety of ways of getting our message out. Unique to cooperatives are the opportunities for members to attend co-op events such as our Annual Meeting, district meetings and our member-appreciation barbecues. These events not only give members the opportunity to hear information about their cooperative, but gives members the platform to ask questions about their cooperative. More standard methods include our monthly newsletter, featured in the *Rural Montana* magazine, our website at vec.coop and our Facebook page.



Pictured are Vigilante Electric Trustees Dean Peterson, Tom Mitchell, Norm Tebay and Dean Hanson participating in our member appreciation barbecue in Whitehall on August 19th.

When communicating time-sensitive or urgent information, we use social media and send alerts to personal emails and SMS messages via our SmartHub application. Regardless of how you wish to receive alerts, we can help get started by contacting our Dillon office.

Members of Vigilante Electric can count on us to maintain local jobs and provide reliable service at the lowest possible cost, no matter what the economy — or supply chain issues — throw at us.

Vigilante Electric's trustees and management team strive to keep our costs as low as possible. We want to help you maximize the value you get

from our services and offerings. For example, we can help you save on energy bills through our free energy audit program and efficiency rebates. Our members are at the heart of everything we do. We adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service.

We exist to serve and provide quality, reliable and friendly service that our members expect and deserve. While we have grown over the years, we are still driven by the same guiding principles to serve our communities. Our cooperative was created by members, for the members. The power is in your hands. RM

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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 813
 Total Contributions: \$21,535.94

To apply, contact our office at
 (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327
 An online application is available at www.vec.coop.