



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

A Message from Your General Manager

December Update

Capital Credit Retirement

At the end of every fiscal year we evaluate the financial condition of your cooperative and after that analysis we have, in the past, returned excess margins from a previous year(s) to those members who provided those margins. I am happy to report that is the case again this year. At the October Board meeting, your Board of Trustees approved the retirement of capital credits for years 2002 and 2003 of approximately \$570,000. If you were a member during those years and have not accepted an early retirement of your capital credits, you can expect to receive a check in the mail in the next week. This is the true sign of a not-for-profit cooperative business model, and something we are happy to do every year.

2019 Budget

As I write this we are in the process of preparing our 2019 budget. Typically, the Board of Trustees approves the budget at their December meeting so it is in place prior to the start of the year. I am pleased to report that we are not expecting a retail rate increase for 2019, nor are we proposing any rate structure modifications. The overall budget revenue is estimated to be approximately \$13.6 million. Wholesale power costs are about half the total revenue. We are proposing additional tree-trimming and pole-testing costs to keep up with those normal maintenance items. Numerous capital projects and equipment replacements have been proposed as well. We have accelerated the pole replacement and line rebuilding effort during this low interest rate environment, and expect that to continue into 2019.

Montana Energy Alliance

As you may remember, we own 50 percent interest in a propane distribution company called Montana Energy Alliance (MEA). We recently closed out the books for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, and we received record net margins from them this year, all while keeping retail propane rates very competitive. Gerry Goody, who manages MEA, and his staff, have done an outstanding job of keeping a solid propane supply and rates low. Give them a call at (406) 683-9500 if you are in need of propane. They will deliver local customer service at a competitive price, all while helping Vigilante Electric keep our rates low.

No-Lost-Time Accident Year

At the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Annual Meeting in Great Falls in early October we received a very well-

deserved award for No Lost Time Accidents for the previous year. This is an award the Board of Trustees and I strive for every year, and it is the second we have received in the last five years. Line work is very demanding and very dangerous. The guys and gals deserve kudos for their efforts in not only getting their jobs done, but getting them done safely across the board. I am very proud of all the employees in this effort. I am also very happy with the Board of Trustees being on board with providing a safe working environment for the employees.

Finally, I would like to take this time to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and blessed New Year. And as always, if you need to contact me for any reason, feel free to call me on my mobile phone at (406) 925-1085. I can also be reached in the office or, by email at rollie@vec.coop.



Rolie Miller
General Manager



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 159
Total Contributions: \$1,474.94

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

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

CrossFit Cowboy

By Rod Siring

It has long been a goal of mine to publish interesting, if not heartwarming, stories that involve members, Vigilante Electric trustees, or employees. Recently, I have been blessed to witness a storyline that may be hard to top because it involves one very unique character and a very unlikely location — a CrossFit box.

My journey into CrossFit began shortly after the opening of CrossFit Dillon. CrossFit is a fitness regimen based on functional movement incorporating the best aspects of gymnastics, weightlifting, running and more, while being performed at high intensity. CrossFit centers are not called gyms; they are called “boxes.” Many resemble a box made of cement walls that contain bars, weights and ropes.

I decided to try the CrossFit Foundations class to see if it was right for me. When I walked through the door for my first class, I saw something so out of context that I wondered if I was in the right location. There, inside the back door, sat an old cowboy.

After my initial shock, I recognized him as longtime Vigilante Electric Cooperative member Charlie Hahnkamp. Charlie is a bit of a legend in this area. At 87 years old, he is an area rancher, was a rodeo pickup man for 30 years, supplies stock and helps at area rodeos. All around he is a good guy, but why was he sitting watching a CrossFit workout? It turns out that Charlie wasn't a spectator, he was a participant. In fact, Charlie was CrossFit Dillon's first member.

This was quite a sight: an old cowboy, on oxygen, dressed in jeans, flannel shirt, neckerchief — probably in thermal long johns — and in his stocking feet. Charlie was participating in the workout, doing very basic movements, working on his strength and range of motion.

Charlie's journey to CrossFit started when his wife was doing some physical rehab at our hospital. There he met Vigilante Electric member Deanna Nelson, a spirited nurse in the cardio-pulmonary rehab unit.

Through encouragement from Deanna, Charlie started participating in the workouts with his wife as a means of killing time. Later, he had a bout of pneumonia that landed him in the hospital and placed him on oxygen. Now he was the patient in the cardio pulmonary rehab, under orders from his doctor to exercise and lose weight.

Opening a CrossFit box was a longtime dream of Deanna Nelson. Deanna's ultimate goals with her CrossFit box were unique. She wanted to focus on people dealing with addiction issues, giving them a healthy environment to channel their energies. She also wanted to help seniors retain their independence in a supportive, communal environment. As it turns out, it was Deanna's work with Charlie that was the



Charlie doing what he loves. Eighty-seven years old and still able to saddle his horse.

tipping point in her decision to make her dream a reality.

Over the past seven months, I have witnessed Charlie's progress. Here is an 87-year-old cowboy, whose body has been beat up by a lifetime of hard work, following the instructions of our coaches and putting in the work to make his life better. Every workout, Charlie appears to be growing a little stronger, becoming more mobile and confident in his movements. He no longer needs supplemental oxygen,

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Charlie, early on, put in the work at CrossFit Dillon.



The results of focusing on functional movements and strength.

We're Thankful for Your Membership

By Anne Prince

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

In the spirit of this quote by author William Arthur Ward, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of your connection to Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we are able to make our communities better.

We generally use these pages to provide updates on a variety of topics. We share these updates so that all of our members have a window into our priorities, progress and challenges. However, during this season of giving thanks, we think it's equally important to let you and other members of Vigilante Electric know just what an impact you have on our co-op and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is “Concern for Community.” While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

We are purposeful in partnering with local groups such as area EMS, providing safety training and donations for equipment.

We work closely with our local schools to provide safety demonstrations and award college scholarships. Vigilante Electric Cooperative also participates in an annual Youth Tour, where we take our community's brightest young

people to Washington, D.C., for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. The trip is inspirational for many students, and we are both humbled and honored to be a part of this leadership development journey. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you! You empower the co-op through your membership and your participation in and support of these programs.

When you attend co-op events, alert us to problems, and provide suggestions online or to our employees, you can help us improve operations and thereby better serve the larger co-op membership.

We are thankful that our co-op board members carve out time to attend important training sessions, participate in planning meetings and keep abreast of industry trends. This investment in time results in better informed advisors who serve the co-op's interests in a way that our members expect and deserve.

We are also thankful for your patience and consideration when we are trying to restore power during challenging situations and prolonged periods.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative was incorporated in 1937 to bring electricity to our service area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local communities and its evolving needs. Together, let's continue making our corner of the world a better place. We can't do it without you, and for that, we're thankful for your membership.

CrossFit Cowboy *Continued from page 4*

and he has lost 30 pounds.

One time when I was heading into the box for class, the first thing I saw was Charlie lying on the floor. My initial thought was that he had fallen. Then I looked at the rest of the class. Charlie had just decided to join them on the floor, where they were using big rubber bands to stretch out their hamstrings.

Having worked out with Charlie, I know that he has a great sense of humor, which keeps the atmosphere light. As his strength has grown, he has become more adventurous in the kind of exercises he wants to do and the amount of weight he can lift. His progress since the box opened has been remarkable. He does ring rows and back squats; he can even make his way onto the floor and knock out 100 crunches.

Deanna believes that Charlie's success has been due to his willingness to adapt, learn and fight back from adversity. I believe that Charlie's success is also due to the very special bond he has developed with Deanna and the supportive community of CrossFit Dillon. This

was never more evident than this past summer when Charlie's wife passed away. He didn't disappear in his grief; he remained diligent in his workouts and found comfort from the support he gets from Deanna, her coaches, and the other members.

Charlie has been an inspiration to a lot of people, and even at 87 years old, he is not the oldest member of our CrossFit box. In fact, there is an entire class dedicated to people who are a little older, or are dealing with an injury or chronic illness and desire the benefits of CrossFit, but need to train at a little less intensity. Many of these people are there because of Charlie. Charlie exercises multiple days a week, and his health and mobility have improved greatly. Not much else has changed about him except for one thing: he still works out in his jeans, flannel shirt, and neckerchief, but he no longer exercises in his stocking feet. He now wears tennis shoes — his first pair EVER!!! Charlie will always be a part of the history of CrossFit Dillon, and he will always be our CrossFit Cowboy.



Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims.....	650
Total Savings	\$24,869.03
Total Savings Percentage....	42.93%
Oct. Paid Claims	3
Oct. Savings.....	\$62
Oct. Savings Percentage.....	16.20%

The Holiday Season and Extension Cords

Remember — Safety First

Not enough cord for your Christmas tree or Christmas lights to reach the nearest outlet? Do you have a stockpile of extension cords hanging on a nail in the garage or stuffed in a junk drawer that haven't been used since last Christmas? While extension cords are useful, there are some safety concerns that need to be considered with their use.

Using extension cords properly is critical to your safety. With continuous use, an extension cord can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. In fact, there are approximately 3,300 residential fires annually attributable to the improper usage of extension cords. These fires account for an average of 50 fatalities and 270 injuries annually.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) offers the following tips for staying safe from electric shock and electrical fires when using extension cords:

- Do not overload extension cords.
- Do not substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Do not run through walls, doorways, ceilings or floors.
- Do not run cords under rugs. If a cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which may result in a fire hazard.
- Do not use an extension cord for more than one appliance.
- A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where you need them.
- Multiple plug outlets must be plugged directly into mounted electrical receptacles; they cannot be chained together.

- Make sure the extension cord or temporary power strip you use is rated for the products to be plugged in, and is marked for either indoor or outdoor use.
- The appliance or tool that you are using the cord with will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord, and do not use a cord that has a lower rating.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can give you an electric shock or burn.
- Never use three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots for the plug. Do not cut off the ground pin to force a fit. This defeats the purpose of a three-prong plug and could lead to an electrical shock. Never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit.
- Use extension cords with polarized and/or three-prong plugs.
- Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

Extension cords are also a tripping hazard. It is estimated that about 2,000 people a year are treated in hospitals for injuries from tripping on extension cords. During the holiday season increased use of extension cords is inevitable. If you remember to use your extension cords the way they were intended to be used, and use the right extension cord for the job, you will keep your home and family safe this holiday season.



**Happy Holidays from
Vigilante Electric Cooperative.
Our office will be closed
Christmas Day And New
Year's Day.**