

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. , Lewistown, MT

## Big Spring Market offers local products

*The food co-op stocks items not available in conventional grocery stores*

Story and photos  
by Judy Bryne

If the scent of fresh-baked bread makes your taste buds water, then the Big Spring Market is a place for you. With Sally Karinen in the kitchen three mornings a week, wonderful aromas of cinnamon, honey whole wheat, sourdough, and ciabatta float throughout the store and permeate the entire parking lot every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

“Sally’s bread is to die for!” says working member Constance Berg. “We always have free samples at the check-out counter.”

Laura Singley, who recently joined the newly-formed cooperative, agrees, “For me, the breads and produce are all the reason you need to become a member. I shopped here for a month before deciding to join.”

Having grown up in Texas where fresh produce is always available, Singley is thrilled to find a convenient grocery outlet for locally grown vegetables and has become a frequent shopper at Big Spring Market. Bit by bit, she is trying out other items on the shelves.

Members like Berg and Singley are perfect examples of why the food cooperative was formed – local consumers who have a need or desire that conventional grocery stores do not fill.

General manager Kate Close explains, “Originally, there was a core



*General Manager Kate Close encourages community involvement and with more than 400 members, that goal is being achieved.*

group of people looking for some items not available in Lewistown, and we considered forming a buyer’s club, taking turns on buying trips to Billings and Great Falls. Then my husband Scott and I went to Hawaii and loved all the fresh foods. Driving home, he and I talked about the idea of forming a food cooperative. I knew the co-op in Bozeman was successful, but I was hesitant to start one here all by

myself.”

Close approached John Payne, who offered his warehouse space next to Lewistown On-Line. Sally Karinen had long seen a need for a local bakery. Susan and Scott Lohmuller were also anxious to get things started. In a short time, Close had attracted a core group of a dozen or so people who shared her vision.

With help from Kathie Bailey and Bob Giese at Snowy Mountain Industries, Close acquired a \$50,000 start-up loan, filed a business plan, and drafted an operational finance statement. In June of 2008, the first meeting resulted in an interim board of directors with Clint Loomis as president and a final set of operating and governance guidelines.

Big Spring Market follows the seven guiding principles of cooperatives and focuses on meeting the needs of its members, rather than the traditional profit-driven model of business.

Owned and operated by its members, the co-op is democratically controlled and dedicated to its primary goal. “We want to do one thing really well,” says Close, “and that is offer local and organic products at an affordable price.”

Current president Rachel Stansberry adds, “We are not profit-driven. We want to provide products the community wants.”

Big Spring Market is still in its

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# MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney



## Turtle metering

The new receivers are installed at the Grass Range, Winnett and Winnett Junction substations. This will enable the cooperative to read all the Turtle meters in those substations. For the past several months, the meter readings have been estimated. However, in September when the office dials the receivers, we will be able to pull in the actual readings. I want to thank all of our members in Grass Range, Winnett and Winnett Junction for their patience and I especially thank the many members who graciously called in their readings.

## Highwood Generating Station

Presently, financing and the Air Permit are two main issues being addressed. The decision was recently made to rescind the Air Permit for the coal plant and focus on a permit for the natural gas plant. I believe this will help progress on the Highwood Station.

## Climate change

The U.S. Senate is reviewing the climate change bill that was passed in the U.S. House. NRECA, the cooperative's national organization, is working with

U.S. senators to come up with a bill that works for co-op members. This bill related to carbon dioxide emissions and other emissions that impact global warming or climate change is very complex.

The Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) is working directly with Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester and Rep. Denny Rehberg. Fergus Electric's board is also in contact with MECA and NRECA to make sure the final bill that is approved is one that does not raise electric rates quickly.

If Congress is going to pass a bill on climate change, I believe it needs to be carefully planned with a gradual shift from higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Everything we do will produce some CO<sub>2</sub> – manufacturing, hauling, constructing and maintaining the generation facility all produce carbon dioxide. We need to remain vigilant about doing what we can with the best means available.

More information will be available in the coming months, so stay tuned.

## The future

There will be future pressure on

cooperatives to make some changes in regard to electrical billing. Yes, even little ol' Fergus Electric in the middle of Montana will be affected.

Conservation programs and energy audits are likely to be encouraged, if not required. To lower system peaks and allow for lower rates during off-peak times, time-of-use billing will be encouraged. New smart meters are being designed to connect generation plants to homes so that electric loads can automatically be disconnected, thus, reducing system peaks and saving the need for additional generation plants.

This smart grid technology may mean that high-use activities such as operating the dishwasher, laundry and other household appliances as well as recharging electric cars, etc. are set to occur at night.

Electric billing formats are being analyzed to find better ways to encourage homeowners and electric utilities to conserve energy. Also, there is a big push to develop a good, reliable electric automobile or a plug-in hybrid car.

I see many changes coming in the future. How quickly these changes will arrive and what impact they will have on our lifestyles is anyone's guess. Despite the changes, I want to assure co-op members that our goal remains to provide affordable, reliable, safe and clean electric power while keeping the co-op financially stable.

## School begins

I wish the best for all our students as they begin a new school year.

# Brandon Udelhoven represents Fergus Electric in D.C.

Joining 25 Montana youth and more than 1,500 high school students and 280 chaperones from co-ops in 47 states, Brandon Udelhoven visited the nations' capital taking in the sights and learning how government works.

Brandon won the Washington, D.C., trip after writing an essay addressing the following situation: *Pressure is mounting in Congress to do something about climate change. How can electric cooperatives and their members influence the decisions being made in Washington, D.C.?* He wrote: "New energy technologies are being improved. Energy producers need to

invest in ways to create cleaner energy, whether it is investing in wind, solar, tidal-movement, or just cleaning up the current energy producing methods. By supporting clean energy, the cooperative will have a stronger position when they approach Congress with proposed changes, because they have taken the initiative rather than wait for a government directive."



Brandon Udelhoven

Brandon was part of a record turnout of students brought to Washington, D.C., to continue a tradition that began in 1958 when 34 students from Iowa and a handful of chaperones visited Washington for a weeklong study tour.

While Brandon had time for museums, monuments and other attractions, he also spent part of a week on Capitol Hill visiting

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# Market

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infancy, but membership is growing much faster than anticipated and the shelves are stocked with a variety of items. Garden vegetables from local producers fill the walk-in cooler, and bulk items include everything from beans and nuts to pasta and spices. Even liquid products like vinegar, olive oil and maple syrup are available in bulk. Recycled paper products, gluten-free powdered mixes, and eco-friendly beauty items fill another area of the store. Natural cookies and chips, ethnic cooking items, cashew butter, Meadowgold milk and frozen foods also line the well-marked shelves.

Always looking to the future, Close says the co-op is planning to stock Wilcoxsin's ice cream soon and working on getting licensed for beer and wine. "We want to have as many local products as possible. Things taste better when they're fresh, and they're better for you. Since we have a commercial kitchen, we can even do special recipes upon request."

Anyone can shop at Big Spring Market, but membership – for a one-time fee of \$35 – brings several advantages. Most importantly, all members are part owners and are entitled to vote on issues surrounding the co-op.

Further, membership allows discounted prices on over 100 items in the store, and those members who volunteer their time working in the store receive even greater discounts. More information is available on the co-op website: [www.bigspringmarket.com](http://www.bigspringmarket.com) or by calling 708-4141 (local).

Close envisions other enhancements in the near future including a grab-and-



Top left to right: Sally Karinen offers a variety of fresh-baked bread three mornings a week.

Working member Constance Berg greets shoppers several days each week. Right: Joshua Netvern, also a working member, helps with bread-making.

go deli, maybe even a juice bar and sandwiches on a patio out back next summer.

"We might be able to provide classes on brewing beer or cooking with essential oils, even farm tours," she says. "We want to encourage lots of community involvement."

With already more than 400 members, that goal is easily being achieved. In addition to President Stansberry, John Payne, Clint Loomis, and Randy Hoch serve as co-op officers. Board members include Sally Karinen, Jolene Crites, Erann Owen, Susan Teigen, and Anne Barker. Besides Close, three other staff members oversee the daily operations: Evan Sweeney, Emily Hoch, and Margaret Caldwell, who serves as assistant manager.



Working members complete the roster of checkers, bakers, stockers and cleaning crew.

Community members are always welcome to share their requests and suggestions with the co-op board or staff.

"This has been really cool," says Close. "Everyone feels that it's their store, which it is, and the money goes right back into our community."

## Udelhoven

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with Montana's congressional delegation who are dealing with the issues of climate change and energy affordability.

When asked what he liked most, Brandon said, "The Holocaust Museum was special, but the best part was meeting new people and making life long friends."

Brandon is a Winifred high school senior and the son of Fergus Electric members Bruce and Cheryl Udelhoven.

## What you need to know about energy efficiency tax credits

With the passing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, known as the stimulus bill, tax credits are now available for energy efficiency upgrades to your home.

The stimulus plan provides a tax credit of up to \$1,500. You can install an efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to weatherize your home. Hold onto your receipts – 30 percent of your investment in 2009

and 2010 up to \$1,500 is eligible for the tax credit. For more information visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org).

Note: By offering this information, Fergus Electric is not providing or intending to provide members with legal or tax advice. To the extent you have questions concerning legal or tax issues, you should consult a lawyer or accounting professional.

# “What the Hay” festivities set for Sept. 13

The annual “What the Hay” (hay bale art) contest and related festivities are gearing up for a better-than-ever display, so mark your calendars for Sunday, Sept. 13.

Visitors may view hay sculptures along Highways 231 and 54 driving toward Utica, starting either at Windham or at Hobson. Signs will point the way.

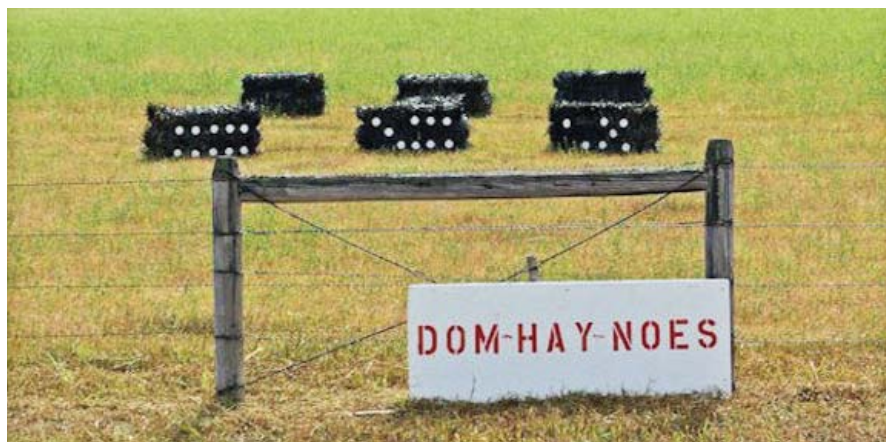
For those wishing to vote in a people’s choice contest, Hobson FFA members will distribute ballots at both the Windham and Hobson entrances.

Travelers can get a bite to eat at the Midway Caf-Hay (on Hobson side of route) sponsored by the Friends of the Hobson Library/Museum or eat Super Nachos offered by the Hobson/Utica

Fine Arts Society or enjoy hamburgers and pie at the Utica women’s club house.

Crafts, entertainment, and a Native American teepee with games are part of the day’s activities. Parking is readily available and porta potties will be located at the Midway Caf-Hay and at Utica. Fifty vendors will be part of the Utica Fair. The Utica Museum will be open and historical sites around town will be marked. A barbecued beef dinner and raffle is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Utica Rod and Gun Club’s renovated hall.

For a full weekend in Central Montana, Lewistown’s Chokecherry Festival, with a variety of vendors, is set for Saturday the 12.



This is a good example of the contest requirement to use the word ‘hay’ when describing an entry.



## Kids participate

Experienced linemen conducted high voltage safety demonstrations at the recent HRDC Kids Fair in Lewistown. Lineman Tyson Ruff helps two participants try on the rubber gloves linemen wear for protection when they work with electricity.

*You only need two tools in life - WD-40 and Duct Tape.*

*If it doesn’t move and should, use the WD-40. If it shouldn’t move and does, use the duct tape.*

## Identify account number

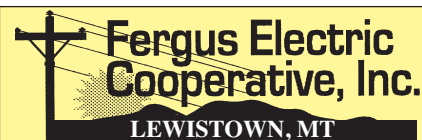
*Win a \$30 credit*

If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

*Account 320885 • Account 321332  
Account 318481*

You will receive a \$30 credit on next month’s statement.

**Last month’s winners were Avery and Marcella Stager of Roundup.**



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 .....406-538-5192  
Guy Johnson.....406-535-5132  
Scott Sweeney .....406-538-7218  
Don Criswell (Roundup) .....406-323-3426  
Monte Obert .....406-538-9705

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