

# F E R G U S

## FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)



## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

## Thank you members for being patient, kind and understanding

**I**n the last four months, several significant storms have caused significant electric utility outages throughout our great state.

Fergus Electric Cooperative damage was limited but several transmission problems caused widespread outages. Through those events, our members have been resilient, kind, and supportive of our hard-working staff.

When large-scale outages occur, our front-office staff are bombarded with phone calls from members providing outage information. The engineering team then analyzes meter data to isolate outages and prioritize where crews are sent. Our dedicated operations staff are committed to restoring power as quickly and safely as possible.

Our members are always patient, understanding and kind to our staff. During the restoration process, we provide regular updates on social media of the progress made and challenges found. I love reading the positive comments, and I appreciate the support we receive



Right-of-Way Specialist Jake deRosier cuts a hazardous tree in the right of way as part of our fire mitigation plan and outage prevention. | PHOTO BY FERGUS ELECTRIC FOREMAN MARK SCHWOMEYER

from members and nonmembers. We regularly pass along member comments and appreciation to the operations group.

We want our members to have reliable utility power as much as they do. Rural Montana will never have reliability metrics matching those of large urban areas. However, we are certainly trying our best to maintain and upgrade the system in a fiscally responsible manner.

You can always count on the team at Fergus Electric Cooperative to pull together and work diligently to keep your lights on. When the lights go out, I assure you that our team is working effectively and efficiently on your behalf.

We have an excellent group of employees at Fergus Electric, and I am proud to be part of the team. Thank you for always cheering for us. As winter wanes, I hope mother nature delivers moisture throughout our vast service territory. If she also brings outages, I can assure you that we are on top of it. RM



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.





Jasper and Oreo won blue ribbons and a Champion plaque at the Central Montana Fair in Lewistown. Oreo is a Powder Puff variety of the Chinese Crested breed, but the Tholt family prefers a shaved coat for Oreo. | PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE THOLT

# AKC junior dog handler is winning competitions

Prize-winning teen excited for his future in dog sports

STORY BY CATHY MOSER | FOR FERGUS ELECTRIC

**J**ASPER Tholt of Winnett already had Oreo when he started his local 4-H dog project at age 7. With Oreo, Jasper learned and practiced the skills of a dog handler who walks into the show ring with a well-groomed and well-trained dog. By 2024, however, Oreo was too old to be a show dog, as was Trixie, the dog that Jasper's brother, Virgil, handled in 4-H.

"We were kind of looking for a new dog to show," the boys' mother, Nicole, tells me on a Saturday afternoon at the Winnett Bar and Grill. Jasper sits next to her.

"I saw a Chinese Crested on Facebook, and he was an AKC (American Kennel Club) Grand Champion in Conformation," Nicole continued.

Virgil wasn't interested in the Chinese Crested with the registered name of Naked and Famous Bartender's Choice, but Jasper liked him. Oreo was also a Chinese Crested. The family then had to figure out how to get the dog living in Utah to Winnett.

"My grandparents picked him up during a trip they made that was two months long," Jasper says. "I hand fed him for about a month so that he would

bond to me." The dog was 1-1/2 half years old when Jasper, who is now 14, got him.

That was in May 2024. In June, Jasper and his new Chinese Crested debuted in their first AKC Junior Showmanship competition in Casper, Wyoming. Jasper was thinking about a simpler name to call his new dog. He liked the sound of Cosmo the Chinese Crested, and since they were in Casper, he strung together the four Cs. From there, C-4, a type of explosive which Jasper explains the detonation as "Boom!" And so came the new name, Boomer.

## DOES YOUR CHILD WANT TO SHOW A DOG?

The AKC Juniors program offers children and teens under 18 an opportunity to develop their handling skills and learn about good sportsmanship, dogs and dog shows. For more about the program, visit: <https://www.akc.org/sports/juniors/>.

The Chinese Crested breed offers two varieties, the powder puff and the hairless. Boomer's soft, silky coat gives him away as a Powder Puff. The AKC website describes the breed as standing between 11 and 13 inches high. Both varieties are praised for "fine-boned elegance and graceful movement" as well as "playful, loving and devoted to their humans."

Depending on the event, success in the show ring might rest on the dog's performance, or that of the handler, or both. In Junior Showmanship competition, success is "100 percent on the handler," Jasper says. "I'm judged by how well I present Boomer and listen to the judge's instructions."

Junior Showmanship offers children 9 to 18 years old the opportunity to compete with others their own age. They are judged on how well they present their dogs.

In September 2024, Jasper and Boomer debuted in Conformation during a Helena show. Conformation events are all about the dog. Judges evaluate how well the dog meets the breed standard.

"It's a tense time," Jasper says of the show ring, and although he's focused on the judge and Boomer, "I might look over at Mom to break the tension."

Jasper has showed Boomer in Casper, Helena, Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Rapid City, Bismarck and the



**ABOVE:** In the show ring last December, Jasper won Best Junior Handler with this Chinese Crested named Boomer at the Owner-Handled National Finals in Orlando, Florida.  
**BELOW:** Jasper and Boomer display the Christmas-themed ribbon they won during the American Chinese Crested Club Specialty Show in Orlando. | **PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICOLE THOLT**



Central Montana Fair in Lewistown. They typically compete in Conformation and Junior Showmanship, but Jasper is trying out other dog sports, such as Fast CAT (Coursing Ability Test). In this competition, a dog makes a 100-yard dash after a lure, such as a plastic bag at the end of a rope. The

fastest dogs win. Jasper loves the sight of Boomer running flat out because his coat "flies out like a parachute." The sport is open to both pedigree and mixed-breed dogs.

When a dog and handler win a competition, they earn points, and points help to decide who competes in the big AKC shows. Points also create Champions and Grand Champions. By last December, Jasper and Boomer had accrued enough points for the Owner-Handled Finals at the AKC National Championship in Orlando.

"It is the biggest show in America," Nicole says. "There were over 5,000 entries."

While they didn't place in Conformation, they still had a chance for a win in the Chinese Crested Specialty for Junior Showmanship, a part of the National Championship. Jasper scored big in that one winning, "Best Junior Handler." He placed first out of nine competitors.

"I was surprised and excited because

*See DOG, next page*



14-year-old Jasper and one of his dogs, Oreo, won blue ribbons and a Champion plaque at the Central Montana Fair in Lewistown. | PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE THOLT

# DOG

*Continued from previous page*

there were older, more experienced juniors competing against me,” Jasper says.

For handlers who are new to the show ring, Jasper offers these tips.

“Look at the judge and listen to instructions carefully. Look happy. Handle different breeds of dogs, and don’t be afraid to talk to other handlers.”

At the Great Falls show last June, he showed ten different breeds in the Conformation rings.

In addition to the support Jasper enjoys from his family, experienced dog handlers Braxton Hernandez and Brandon Jones of Utah, and Sarah and Mack

Moore of Ennis coached and helped the young handler develop showmanship skills. Members of the Yellowstone Valley Kennel Club have believed in Jasper, cheered him on and provided extra dogs to show.

He’s always looking for opportunities to deepen his connection with the rich tradition of dog shows. On his list for 2026 is a big goal, “I want to join the Crested Club of America and compete in the Chinese Crested National Show in Ohio,” he says, and already he’s eyeing the grandest stage of dog shows. “I want to qualify for Junior Showmanship in the Westminster.”

And if all that isn’t ambitious enough for a 14-year-old, he’s excited to continue his work with his new pup, Bruno, a Bracco Italiano. RM

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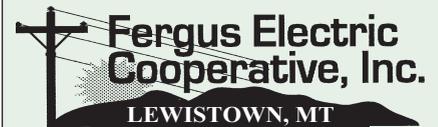
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### CONGRATULATIONS!

**Donna Rowton** of Winnett, **Gerald Hinz** of Hilger, **Glen ‘Ted,’** and **Judith Thompson** of Roy and **Emily Cassell** and **Alex Schultz** of Roundup were last month’s Winners.

\*NUMBERS ARE DRAWN MONTHLY



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### 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:

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Bret Nellermoe (Roundup).....	406-939-0636
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### FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

84423 US Hwy. 87, Lewistown, MT  
59457-2058

Tel: 406-538-3465

Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. M-Th.

Website: [www.ferguselectric.coop](http://www.ferguselectric.coop)

E-mail: [ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop](mailto:ferguselectric@ferguselectric.coop)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ferguselectric](http://www.facebook.com/ferguselectric)

**Carson Sweeney.....General Manager**  
**Bret Ophus.....Line Superintendent**  
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