

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc., Lewistown, MT ♦ www.ferguselectric.coop

Those who create together, stay together

Roundup couple combines interests to make art

Story and photos by
Charlie Denison
| Contributing Writer

ERIC Eliasson of Roundup has always been fascinated with fossils.

“Like any little kid, I was fascinated with dinosaurs,” he said. “And that interest eventually drove me to start researching more and taking the hobby to the next level.”

An electrician married nine years, this passion remains. He often finds himself enjoying time out in the country searching for fossils like he did when he was a child.

His wife, Kendall, a nurse from Columbus, has noticed his fossil fascination become more a part of him.

“I think she was originally a little perturbed,” he said. “I had a lot of rocks lying around the house.”

But Kendall didn’t mind. As a jewelry maker, she found many of the rocks intriguing . . . even inspiring.

Eric started to sense this and came up with an idea: why not combine their talents and work together?

“When he told me he wanted to turn fossils into jewelry I thought he was crazy,” Kendall said. “But it’s cool what they can look like after you’ve polished



Kendall and Eric Eliasson of Roundup have created their own small business combining their talents of fossil collecting and jewelry making.

them up.”

The team approach came together naturally, Kendall said. It made a lot of sense and has been really convenient.

“It’s been pretty smooth,” she said. “Our workshops are right next to one another, so it was just a great way to mesh our passions.”

Eric agreed, adding that he feels

like the experience has brought the couple closer together.

“I think what I love the most about it is we get to work together,” he said, “and we get to share in the finished product.”

Their business — K and E Creations — is gaining a following at trade shows and on Facebook and Instagram, as the happy couple continues to add to their repertoire of items.

“I’d say right now our top sellers are the Montana-shaped pendants,” he said. “They take a lot more time and a lot more attention to detail, but it’s worth it in the end.”

“It seems anything Montana-shaped sells well,” added Kendall.

This is especially the case for something found and made in Montana.

“We collect all our own stones,” Eric said. “Our favorite fossils to work with are baculite and ammonite. Some of the other stones we work with are chert, chalcedony, jasper, calcite, petrified wood and agates from the Yellowstone River.”

Nearly all the fossils come from around Roundup, Melstone and Winnett. Eric does much of the exploring himself, but he’s happy to say he’s not the only one looking for them these

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Carson Sweeney

Appreciation

This time of year brings with it a renewed sense of energy and appreciation. The budding trees and fields of green strengthen our spirits as we anticipate longer and warmer days. The sting of cold dark mornings seems to fade from our memory quickly and easily. This sense of energy and appreciation is certainly felt within my family. We recently moved back home to Lewistown and are fortunate to be given an opportunity to once again live and work within central Montana near family and friends. To the Fergus Electric Cooperative Board of Directors: Thank you for this opportunity.

On the morning of Wednesday, June 3, 2020, I arrived at Fergus Electric Cooperative's headquarters and entered through the employee door for the very first time. A brief 14 hours earlier I had walked out of the employee door at NorthWestern Energy's Control Center in Butte. Upon entering the cooperative's facility, I received a warm welcome from mostly unfamiliar faces. Complete strangers introduced themselves with a firm handshake and kind eyes. After brief introductions, the team covered the morning business and continued about their day. Like a well-oiled machine, each person took their place, ready to continue meeting the needs of their members. To the Fergus Electric Cooperative employee group: I look forward to working with each of you to earn my spot on the team.

Thank you, Scott

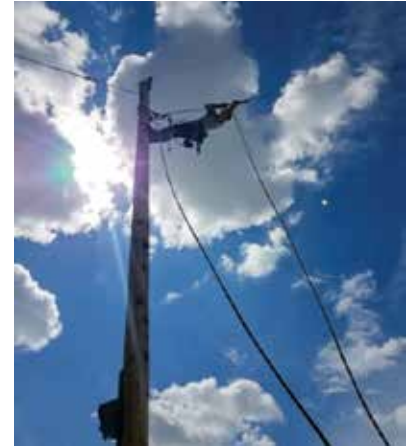
A calm and competent presence is felt within the walls of the cooperative's facility. He walks around with a cup of coffee and greets everyone with a sincere and caring smile.

He speaks with decades of knowledge and actively listens with intent. His laughter is frequently heard as employees jab each other with a friendly familiarity likely developed from years of working together through countless outages and broken poles. With great insight and planning, he allowed for us to spend the month of June working together to help me plant my feet. Those feet have incredible shoes to fill. To a caring and gracious leader, Scott Sweeney: Thank you for sharing your time and wisdom. I hope retirement treats you as well as you have treated Fergus Electric Cooperative during your 41 years of dedicated service.

Serving the membership

My time with each of you thus far has been brief, but one thing is obvious. Behind the curtains of Fergus Electric Cooperative are individuals who all possess three qualities I personally hold in high regard. Kind, honest, and hardworking individuals who are working together to meet the needs of the members now, and long into the future. To our members: I can assure you that your cooperative is collectively being held in good hands. I look forward to serving as your general manager.

As of this writing, our annual meeting has not occurred, so I look forward to telling what it was like to hold our annual meeting in a parking lot with the membership seated inside their vehicles – our creative way of hosting our annual meeting in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic. I will close this month's message by telling all of you that I hope to have an opportunity to meet many of you in person sometime soon.



Responding to Power Outages

IF a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. In this photo, taken during a spring storm-related power outage, Fergus Electric Cooperative Apprentice Lineman Danyon Rice works to repair the powerline and restore power to members in the Red Hill Road area.

Fergus Electric Cooperative's objective is to provide reliable, safe and affordable energy services to the communities we serve. Occasionally, events happen that are beyond our control such as lighting and windstorms, fallen trees on lines, heavy snow, ice on lines, equipment failures and automobile accidents.

The safety of our members and our employees working on our power lines is our top priority. Always assume downed power lines are energized and dangerous. Consider any object touching lines energized as well. If you see a downed power line, or other electrical hazard, call us at (406) 538-3465 and call 9-1-1 to report it to local authorities.

Fergus Electric Co-op's line crews respond to outages and emergencies 24/7/365. Call us at (406) 538-3465 to report an outage or emergency.



Through some husband and wife teamwork, a fossil becomes a necklace.

Eric and his son, Dylan, celebrate finding a plesiosaur vertebra in a dry creek near Melstone recently. Dylan loves to help his dad hunt for rocks.

Create together

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days. Kendall joins in sometimes, as does their 5-year-old son Dylan, their favorite K and E creation.

“He’s getting into it,” said Kendall. “He constantly brings me rocks from the driveway.”

Eric’s mother, Sharon, also helps with the hunting.

“She’s a lifelong rock collector,” Eric said. “I guess I get some of that from her.”

Despite the pandemic, Kendall and Eric are hopeful to sell their items at trade shows this year.

“We’ve done shows in Billings, Lewistown and Roundup,” Kendall said. “We have some jewelry on display at a

few locations, as well.”

It’s hard to anticipate what trade shows will take place this year, but the couple hopes for the best and looks forward to getting more of their jewelry out there for the public. One way they can do this is by donating their jewelry to local fundraisers, National Rifle Association banquets and more.

“It’d be great if we could do more shows, though,” Eric added. “Last year we did three shows in four weeks. We can really buckle down and make quite a few pieces.”

After all, they have plenty of fossils at their fingertips.

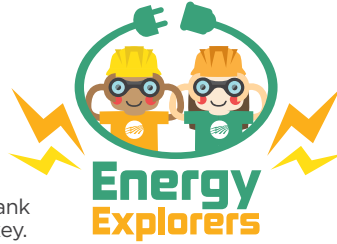
“There are still a lot of rocks laying around the house,” Kendall said. “It turns out that’s a good problem to have.”



Kendall and Eric said their Montana-shaped pendants are their hot sellers right now, as people love Montana-shaped items, especially ones that were found and created here.

Fergus Electric Cooperative offices will be closed, Monday, July 6 in observance of Independence Day.

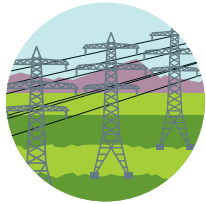
POWER RESTORATION FILL-IN-THE-BLANK



When the power goes out, line crews work hard to restore service as quickly and safely as possible. Complete the fill-in-the-blank activity below to learn about the steps of power restoration. Use the word bank if you need help, and check your work in the answer key.

Word Bank:

distribution pads transformer substations transmission



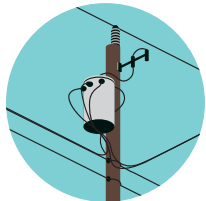
1. High-voltage _____ lines are the large towers and cables that supply power to the greatest number of consumer-members. They rarely fail, but if they do, they have to be repaired first.

2. Next, crews inspect distribution _____ for damage. They determine if the problem stems from the lines feeding into the equipment itself, or if the problem is further down the line.

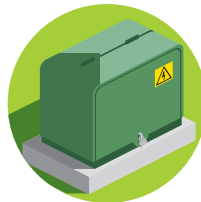
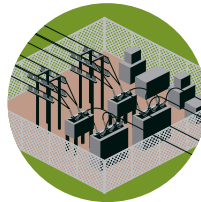


3. If the problem still can't be pinpointed, _____ power lines are inspected. These are the lines you typically see on the side of the road that deliver power to communities.

4. If the power outage persists, supply lines (also known as tap lines) are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers that are either mounted on poles or placed on _____ for underground electric service.



5. If your home remains without power, the service line between the _____ and your home may need repairs.



Answer Key: 1) transmission 2) substations 3) distribution 4) pads 5) transformer



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When the weather is nice, put your grill to use! During summer months, cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors.



Identify Account Number*

Win a \$32.50 credit

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

**Account 387120 ● Account 47700
Account 395091 ● Account 395852
Account 396902 ● Account 395113**

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.

Jerry Ballard and **Emil Gremaux** of Lewistown, and **John O'Reilly** of Roy were last month's winners!

*Numbers are drawn monthly.



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 406-366-3374
- Bret Ophus 406-366-7523
- Scott Olson 406-366-5822
- Carson Sweeney 406-366-0971
- Don Criswell (Roundup)..... 406-366-3465
- Melanie Foran..... 406-462-5650

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Fergus Features is an award-winning newsletter.