



IN THIS ISSUE:

- SmartHub just a click away
- Scholarships awarded
- Events and activities

Manager's moment

SmartHub enhances communication

BY MARK DOYLE, GENERAL MANAGER



Mark Doyle
General manager/CEO

I would appreciate a moment of your time...

Member engagement is one of the more important duties of a cooperative. Here at McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC), we are always striving to find ways to best communicate with you, the member-owners.

Of course, we are always here for you when you email or call.

Even after regular business hours, you can call, and a dispatch center will direct your needs to the appropriate individual. We also have our website and social media platforms. In addition, we utilize SmartHub, which is a mobile and website-based app you can utilize to see your usage and even pay your bill.

We are trying to enhance our two-way communications ability. One of these is through SmartHub. Beyond the current capabilities, we hope to provide additional capabilities, like outage reporting and for MEC to send you notifications on important issues.

All of this hinges on the adoption of the application by you, the member-owner. We will continue to provide you with the opportunity to sign up for SmartHub and encourage you to do so. Please reach out to us for more information. Of course, we will always provide the same level of availability that we always have – just enhanced!

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments. My door is always open.

Regards,
Mark Doyle
General manager/CEO

McLean Electric Cooperative director achieves credential

James Odermann, a McLean Electric Cooperative District 6 director, recently received the credentialed cooperative director certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Congratulations, James!

An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of

changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. McLean Electric Cooperative has a commitment to work through NRECA and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of its electric cooperative consumer-owners. ■



Larry Gessele (left) presents James Odermann, his certification.

My Usage

Usage Explorer

Average Usage

Usage Comparison

View

Monthly | Daily

Date Range

Unbilled | Current Bill | Previous Bill | Year to Date | Past 13 Bills

Show Temperature Line

High Average Low

From: Jan 2020 To: Jan 2021

Monthly Usage Jan 2020 to Jan 2021
Customer since: June 30, 2008



Custom Date Range Selector



Meter(s): 1689272 2659470

The SmartHub app, available on mobile devices and computers, provides the same detailed electric usage information as what McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) has available for an account. For example, this graph illustrates the amount of electricity a MEC member-consumer used in a calendar year.

Cooperative information with the click of a button: SmartHub

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

It's a technological world nowadays.

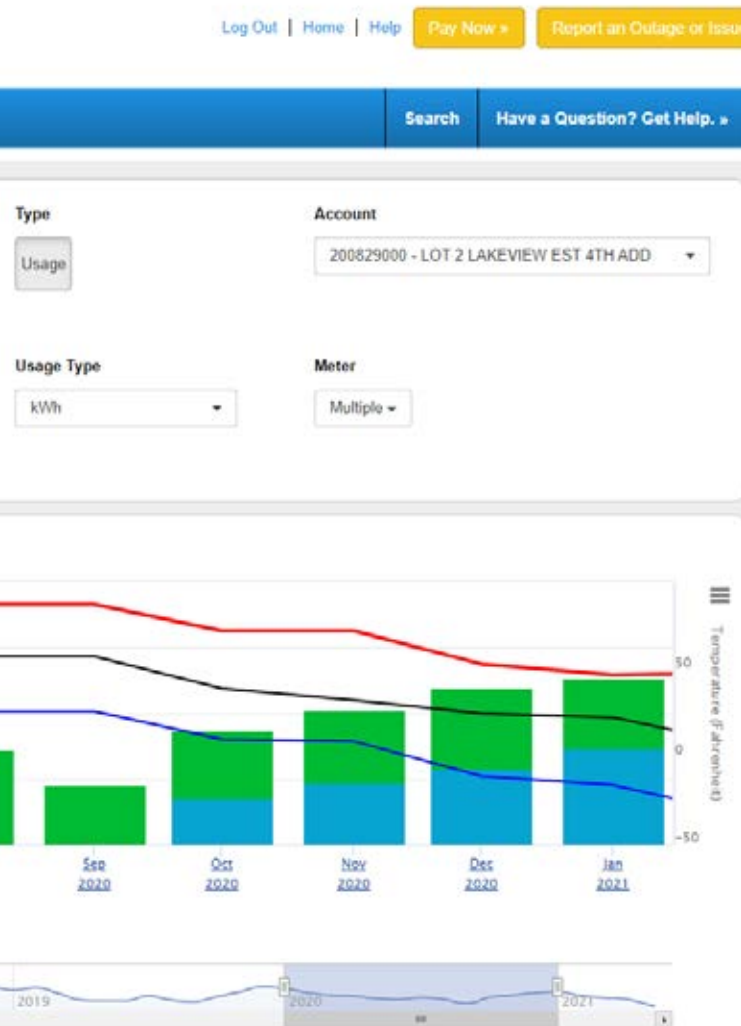
Whether it's tracking a person's bank account, making online purchases or even finalizing a mortgage, apps for smartphones, mobile devices and computers are the choice for doing business for many people in their everyday lives.

In keeping pace with the whirlwind of technological advances, many electric and telecommunications cooperatives around the United States stepped into that world with software technology developed right here in

North Dakota.

The National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) has worked with rural utility and communications cooperatives for decades with billing, engineering, operations, accounting and other IT software and hardware solutions. Established in Mandan in 1966 as North Central Data Cooperative, it became NISC in 2000 when consolidating with Central Area Data Processing Cooperative.

Over the last decade, many of NISC's member



Using SmartHub

Some tips to set up the free SmartHub app on a mobile device or computer:

- Download the free SmartHub app and follow the prompts. It comes up with the words "National Information Solutions Cooperative" next to the logo.
- Choose your desired option for receiving notifications – email, text message or both – when setting up notifications.
- Select the ways you want to manage notifications.

McLean Electric Cooperative isn't currently set up on SmartHub to address outage situations, so member-owners are asked to continue reporting outages by calling either McLean Electric's main office number, 701-463-6700, or toll-free, 800-263-4922, during business hours, after hours or during holidays.

McLean Electric General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle encourages more members to sign up on SmartHub to help facilitate the ability to provide outage information in the future and have it be more viable to provide outage services, such as reporting an outage or receiving outage updates and information on planned outages or when an outage has been restored. It would be beneficial if all members with internet capability participate as SmartHub users, he added.

Contact McLean Electric for more information about SmartHub, what it can provide member-owners or with questions regarding the free app or its installation, either by phone, email (mclean1@mcleanelectric.com) or from the website (www.mcleanelectric.coop).

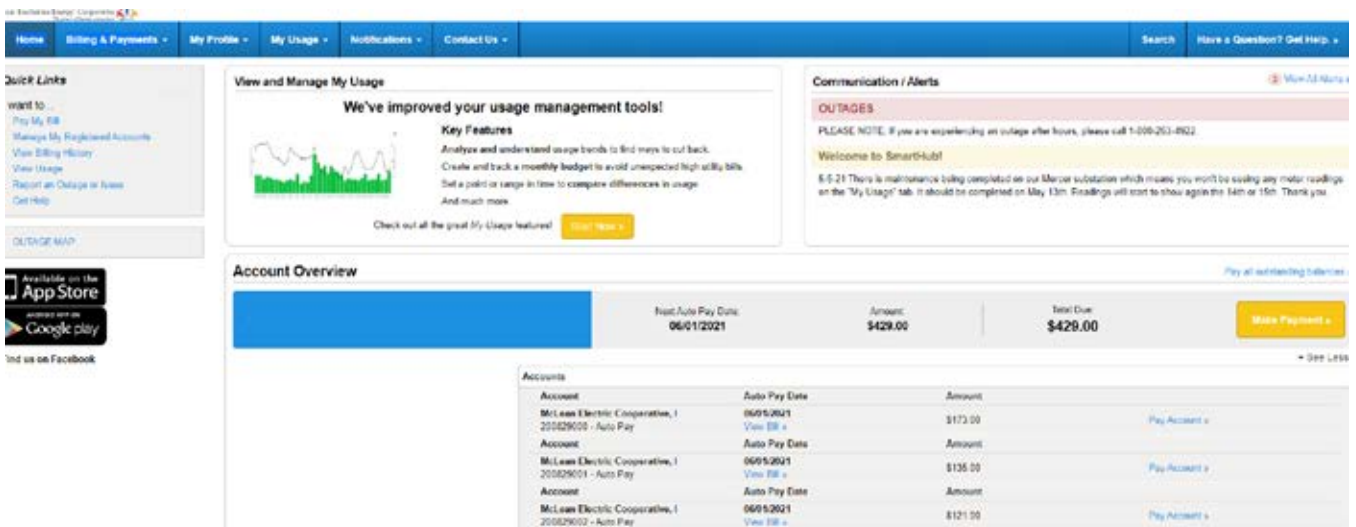
"We will assist them in setting up SmartHub as much as we are able to via a phone call," MEC Office Manager Tonya Graeber added. ■

cooperatives, such as McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC), RTC and West River Telecommunications, implemented SmartHub as a way for their member-owners to become even more connected with their cooperative through technology. NISC launched SmartHub for its members in 2012.

MEC began offering SmartHub in 2013, MEC Office Manager Tonya Graeber described, with most people using it to pay their monthly bills. MEC is one of nearly 850 NISC member cooperatives providing SmartHub opportunities for its member-owners.

But it's so much more than that, added MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle. "It's an opportunity to reach our diverse membership. It's a great way to reach out and communicate," he described.

While more than 28 percent of MEC member-owners



The SmartHub opening screen can help guide users to the information they're seeking, as well as provide opportunities to communicate with McLean Electric Cooperative – or the cooperative communicate with members on things such as annual meeting notices. The app is a free download for mobile devices – Android and iPhone – and computers.

have already signed up for the free SmartHub app – available on any mobile device, or laptop and desktop computer – Doyle and Graeber would love to have all MEC member-owners with internet capability to use SmartHub.

The ability to provide more timely communication is one distinct benefit, Doyle explained. For example, he only has to flashback to a major storm that walloped Texas in February, causing rolling blackouts throughout a wide swath of the United States, including North Dakota and MEC

Rather than sending an automated telephone recording, advising all MEC member-owners of a potential controlled outage, SmartHub would have allowed MEC to notify those member-owners who would be impacted, rather than having all of its member-owners wondering if and when they would have an outage.

“It would have provided more specific, real-time information,” Doyle suggested.

SmartHub is also a way for the cooperative to communicate directly to each member-owner, whether it's about an annual meeting, board of director elections, community projects such as the Washington, D.C., Youth Tour essay contest for high school juniors and seniors, holiday office closures or Operation Round Up grant updates, for example.

“I think it's important to stay in touch with our members,” Doyle added.

Member-owners determine how they want to receive communications from MEC, whether through text message, email or both, and set it up in SmartHub accordingly.

The ability to expand ways to communicate with member-owners beyond print media, its MEC website or Facebook page is important to MEC. However, SmartHub is more for the benefit of MEC member-owners, Doyle emphasized. “It's primarily for you, an MEC member-owner, to communicate for us,” he said.

That's because SmartHub can tell member-owners anything and everything they might want to know about their electric usage, billing and anything in-between over a recent three-year history.

SmartHub users have the same usage and billing data MEC has.

It can even provide daily outside temperature highs, lows and daily average.

Seriously.

Temperature is so important because it's the number one factor influencing homeowner electric usage in North Dakota, especially for any member-owners with electric heat on the discounted heat rate.

When tracking electric usage, SmartHub shows graphs of weekly usage, previous billing cycle, current billing cycle, previous calendar year, current calendar year and unbilled usage, which are almost in real-time, for example.

“If there are multiple meters like a heat meter, it shows each one,” Graeber added, which is especially beneficial when analyzing heating costs.

Actually seeing in graph form the way a household or business uses electricity could provide opportunities to identify ways to potentially reduce energy costs.

Essentially, SmartHub is a way for member-owners to profile their usage, especially when it trends upwards.



McLean Electric Cooperative Office Manager **Tonya Graeber** encourages MEC member-owners to download the free SmartHub app to help them track their electric bills more efficiently and communicate with the cooperative.

For seasonal accounts, SmartHub is a good way to be reassured the electricity is on or if there could be problems should something such as a spike in usage occur in one's absence, Doyle added.

Outside temperature information might prompt a family to lower the thermostat a couple of degrees in the winter or set the air conditioner higher so it doesn't run

as much in the summer.

It's equally important for MEC member-owners to be able to communicate with the cooperative, not just MEC communication with them. In addition to all of the electricity information it provides, SmartHub is a way for member-owners to contact MEC, sign up for automatic payments or make billing payments, for example, as well as notifying MEC of any contact information changes to their account.

"It's a benefit to the member," Graeber added.

Plus, SmartHub participants receive notifications once billing statements are available and the three-year billing history can help for tax purposes.

Yet, that doesn't mean traditional, tried-and-true methods of communicating with MEC have gone the way of the threshing machine or kerosene lanterns.

Member-owners can still call, email or stop in at MEC's Garrison headquarters. It simply is one more option to help better serve MEC member-owners – a win-win for both.

"It's our way of doing business with our virtual members," Doyle concluded. ■



McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

McLean County community food pantry distributions:

- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** July 22, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., former Lazy J's building back door.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** July 19, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. July 8 and 10 a.m.-noon July 24, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full distribution, 4-6 p.m. July 15, Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

Area food pantries often experience high needs for the following items: baked beans, pork and beans, canned fruit, tuna, chicken, cereal, oatmeal, granola and breakfast bars, juice, mac and cheese, hamburger and tuna helper, pancake mix, syrup, pasta, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, rice side dishes, soups and household items such as body wash and soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, toothpaste and toothbrushes. Contact local food pantries for drop-off information or a list of additional needs in your community.

July events:

- **July 9-11:** Turtle Days, Turtle Lake. July 9 events feature fun night, kids parade, soapbox trail runs, Turtle Lake's Got Talent, egg toss and ski races. July 10 events include parade, soapbox car races, turtle races, horseshoe and cornhole tournaments, and street dance with music by County Road 7.
- **July 9 and 11:** White Shield Powwow and Celebration, White Shield Powwow Grounds.
- **July 16 and 17:** North Dakota Governor's Cup Walleye Tournament with launching from Fort Stevenson State Park beginning at 7 a.m. Weigh-in beginning at 3 p.m., Garrison City Park, Main St.
- **July 17:** North Dakota Junior Governor's Cup, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **July 17 and 18:** Wild in Wilton with an array of family activities. ■

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill, (stockdill.patricia@gmail.com) or telephone, 701-337-5462, to submit community events.

**Always assume
downed lines are**

energized

- Downed power lines can energize the ground up to **35 feet away**. Even more in wet conditions.
- **Never drive over** downed power lines or through water that is in contact with them.
- **Never try to move** a downed power line.
- If you see a downed line, **call 911**.

If a vehicle or farm equipment contacts a power line or utility pole, stay away and call 911.

- Consider **all lines** to be live and dangerous.
- Stay in place or inside your vehicle unless you see fire or smoke.
- Warn others to stay at least **35 feet away**.
- **Tell others** not to approach vehicle, downed lines, or anything that may be in contact with downed lines.
- **Call 911**

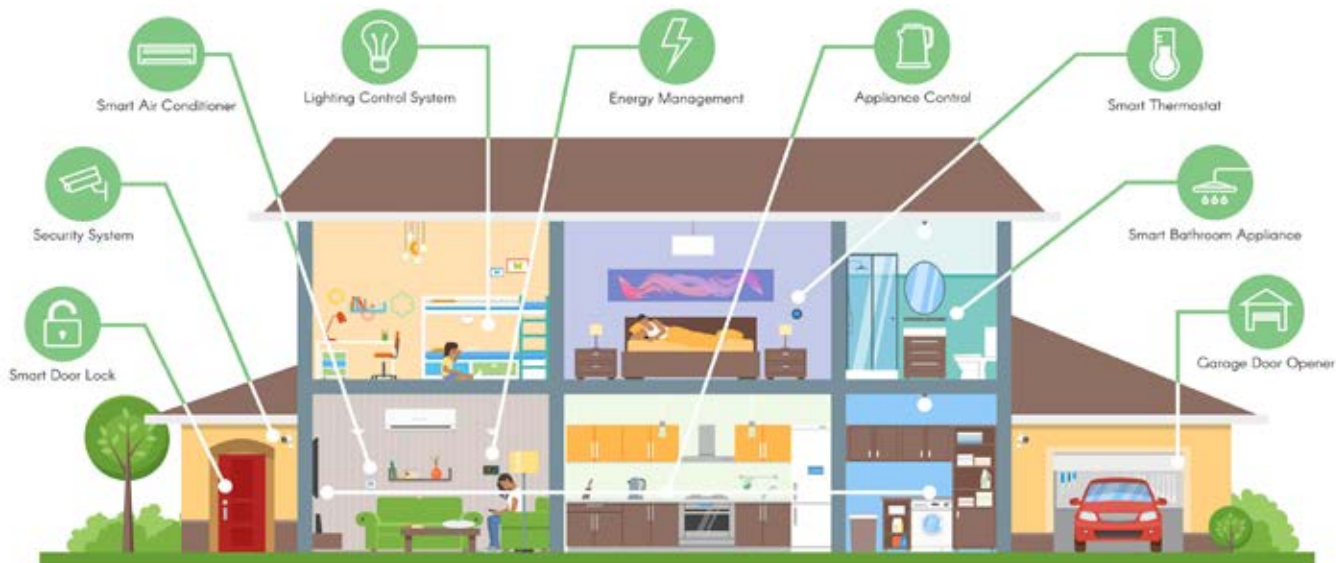


In the event of fire or smoke

- **Do not** touch the ground and vehicle at the **same time**.
- Jump from vehicle with your **feet together**.
- **Shuffle away**, avoid lifting your feet.

If a vehicle contacts a power line
or utility pole...

***stay away
and call 911***



Smart home technology **CAN HELP YOU SAVE**

All kinds of devices and appliances are getting smarter. Everything from lightbulbs to refrigerators to security systems are available with internet capabilities that allow for easier and more automated control.

With smart home technologies, you can use voice command or an app on a phone, computer or tablet for remote control, giving you more freedom to customize parts of your home. In turn, you'll receive alerts and information about an action being finished (the dishwasher cycle being complete) or a potential issue (a water leak).

Smart technology makes running a home easy and convenient, but that's not all. Check out these five smart home gadgets that can also save money.

- 1. Energy monitors.** Energy monitors provide real-time feedback on home energy use. They can even analyze trends and make recommendations for future savings.
- 2. Smart thermostats.** Smart thermostats heat and cool a home on a personalized schedule. Save more by controlling temperatures remotely from an app on a mobile device.
- 3. Smart lighting comes in a few forms.** Color-changing smart LED bulbs are a great way to go green. The bulbs can be controlled through apps, smart speakers and switches. Some can even play music.
- 4. Advanced power strips.** Advanced power strips shut down devices that are in standby mode. They can also make homes safer by turning off fire hazards, like irons and space heaters in case they are forgotten.

- 5. Smart safety detectors.** Carbon monoxide, fire and flood detectors help monitor potential dangers. Insurance companies often offer policy discounts for homes with these systems. With so many ways to save, it's easy to see why investing in smart home technology is a wise move.

What are the benefits?

Convenience and comfort are the primary advantage you'll gain with smart home technology. You get a remote and sometimes hands-free way to control devices and customize a variety of actions, from scheduling to automating to occupancy sensing.

Related to convenience is accessibility, which is a particularly big perk for an aging population. Being able to shut off lights or change the temperature via voice command can be especially helpful for those with mobility, dexterity, memory or vision issues. Some smart speakers also allow family members to check in with each other to keep in touch.

Smart home technologies can produce energy and cost-savings, thanks to their added control and automation. For example, you can avoid wasting electricity by setting up your thermostats and lights to operate only when you need them. Some thermostats can even monitor the health of your heating and cooling system and alert you before a system failure.

Advanced security comes from being able to monitor your home remotely via cameras and motion sensors. ■

McLean Electric Cooperative awards scholarships

The McLean Electric Cooperative Scholarship Committee chose Ashlee Ketterling and Addyson Hughes as recipients of the McLean Electric Cooperative/Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarships. These scholarships were awarded based on academic excellence, which includes the following criteria: ACT scores, work experience, and participation in school and community activities. Both scholarships were \$500 each.

This year, 13 applications were received. All applicants were rated favorably, which is an indication of the quality of students we have in McLean Electric's service territory. These scholarships were presented at the 76th annual meeting June 22 in Garrison.



Ashlee Ketterling

ASHLEE KETTERLING

Ashlee will graduate from Turtle Lake-Mercer High School and is the daughter of Melissa and Todd Ketterling of Mercer. She will be attending Bismarck State College (BSC) in the fall, with interests in music, photography, history and psychology. Ashlee has been active in the spelling bee, acalympics,

math meets, band, choir, volleyball, volunteering for the Special Olympics and has served as class president and vice president.

She is on the honor roll, and was invited to the Masonic honors and the National Society of High School Scholars. She is also active with 4-H, church youth group, taught Sunday school and Bible school, was a youth synod delegate and completed mission work through her church.

ADDYSON HUGHES

Addyson will graduate from Des Lacs-Burlington High



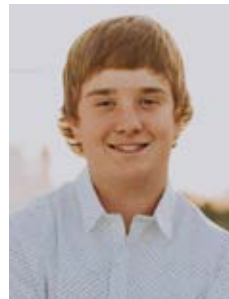
Addyson Hughes

School and is the daughter of Todd and Sara Hughes of Minot. She will be attending Minot State University in the fall, pursuing a degree in biology and business and a doctorate in optometry.

Addyson is in the National Honor Society, varsity volleyball, softball, student council, Future Business Leaders of America, Lutheran Youth Organization and was named to the honor roll and as student of the month. She volunteers at the soup kitchen and domestic violence crisis center, Burlington food pantry, the Minot Zoo, helps homebound elderly, caroling at nursing homes, and many more community activities.

McLean Electric scholarship

Each entry had to include a short statement for an essay question to be eligible for the \$500 scholarship. This year's essay question was: "Describe how cooperatives can be economic engines for their local communities." The Scholarship Committee chose James McElwain as this year's recipient. This scholarship was presented at the 76th annual meeting June 22 in Garrison.



James McElwain

JAMES MCELWAIN

James is the son of Holly and Jeffrey McElwain of Minot. He will be a sophomore at BSC in the fall, pursuing a career in power plant technology. After graduation, he hopes to obtain a job in North Dakota, working for one of the coal or gas plants, living in a rural area and being a vital member of the community in the state he loves. ■

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