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# POWERPOINTS



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*65 years of service and...*

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We have 50 full-time and 14 part-time employees who keep the lights on for more than 10,600 meters scattered throughout a 4,900 square mile area.

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[www.verendrye.com](http://www.verendrye.com)

## **Minot is FMI corporate headquarters' site**

*by Candi Helseth*

Minot business entrepreneurs Abe Sakak and Myron Thompson recently opened two new restaurants in the former Sports World complex: Space Aliens and Up the Creek.

Sakak and Thompson also relocated the corporate offices for their business, Food Management Investors, Inc., (FMI), to the floor above the two new restaurants. Enron Pipelines has leased FMI's former corporate headquarters, built four years ago near Dakota Square Mall. All these properties are located in Verendrye Electric Cooperative territory.

FMI handles business applications for 26 restaurant properties Thompson and Sakak own in North Dakota, Minnesota, Arizona and California. Their first venture was opening the Minot Applebee's in 1990.

They were rewarded with instantaneous success, and now hold the franchise for all nine Applebee's in North Dakota and three Village Inns at Grand Forks, Fargo and Moorhead. In all, FMI employs approximately 1,800 people.

The partners are enthused about their recent decision to open the two new franchises in Minot. Minot's Up the Creek is the first one in North Dakota, and the Minot Space Aliens is the fifth one to be built since Space Aliens became a franchise.

The Minot Applebee's has also undergone a complete remodeling in recent months, and the partners recently opened a third Applebee's in Fargo.

Sakak laughingly calls their partnership "fate." He was researching restaurant concepts that he wanted to develop in North Dakota, and became convinced that Applebee's was a good fit. When he called to inquire about



*Myron Thompson and Abe Sakak are partners in Food Management Investors, a corporation they began building together in 1990.*

it, he learned Thompson had purchased the franchise.

Sakak, who lived in Grand Forks at the time, contacted Thompson in Minot. They found their strengths were complementary - Thompson had fast food experience from having developed the Hardee's concept in Minot and Sakak had been involved in casual dining operations. Sakak joined Thompson as a partner and moved to Minot in 1990.

Applebee's has grown to be the largest casual dining restaurant in the world, according to Thompson. The partners studied several concepts before opening Space Aliens and Up the Creek. Space Aliens originated out of Bismarck, and they liked what they saw. The Applebee's founder began Up the Creek, and so far there are only 14 nationwide. Thompson said they were looking for a seafood restaurant because Minot doesn't have one.

Meanwhile, Sakak and Thompson are turning their interest to new territories. "If you don't expand, you die," Sakak said. "Our goal is to build 50 restaurants."

## DB&G Ranch school goes all-electric

When Dakota Boys & Girls Ranch School administrators began a construction project to add on to Dakota Memorial School at the Minot Ranch campus in VEC territory, they made the choice to go all-electric with the annexation. They also converted the existing school from natural gas to electric heat.

The school serves several purposes. It includes a classroom for the Seegers Cottage (Minot campus) youth who previously attended school at the

Ranch's Western Plains program in Bismarck, and an Independent Living Training Center apartment with kitchen, living room, bedroom and laundry area.

The space also includes classrooms from kindergarten through sixth grade for 16 students, a business and technology area, and additional space to meet students' needs as well as administrative and conference space for confidential meetings.



Member Services Assistant Rob Orts shows off the new boiler at Dakota Boys & Girls Ranch School.

## Consumers have voice in VEC business

Gene Kaseman, Minot Dakota Boys & Girls Ranch president, is among new VEC members named to three-year terms on the Member Advisory Committee. Other new members are Jeff and Jodi Johnson, Carpio, Randy and Naomi Schnase, Anamoose, Travis and Jessica Mowbray, Minot, Cy and Cindy Kittelson, Velva, Jeff Fox, Minot, Keith and Raquel Dibble, Towner, Kevin and Mary Beth Coombs, Martin, and Lee Novak, Minot.

The Member Advisory Committee provides input to VEC board and staff about new programs under consideration, VEC activities, legislative issues, and other items. Committee members receive education about their role through the National Rural Electric Cooperative newsletter, a statewide newsletter and the VEC newsletter.

The Member Advisory Committee also selects individuals from its membership to serve on the



VE Trust Board members are (l to r) Jim English, Harvey, Suzy Lee, Velva, Kevin Reinowski, Anamoose, Karen Hennessy, Des Lacs, and Jessica Mowbray, Minot.

five-member VE Trust Board, which reviews applications and allocates funding for Operation Round Up.

At a recent committee meeting, Jessica Mowbray, Minot, was elected to the VE Trust Board and Suzy Lee, Velva, re-elected. Other board members are Jim English, Harvey, Kevin Reinowski, Anamoose, and Karen Hennessy, Des Lacs.

Operation Round Up is funded by VEC members who voluntarily "round up" their monthly electric bills to the next dollar. About 81 percent of VEC members support Operation Round Up, generating approximately \$3,400 each month.

## Operation Round Up demonstrates Christmas spirit year-round

At its last meeting, the Verendrye Electric Trust board of directors allocated \$15,400 in funding for 18 projects. Among the recipients were Paul and Annette Foss, VEC consumers who received \$1,500.

The Fosses, who live in the Woodridge Addition south of Minot, have a son, Logan, who was born in May with a congenital heart defect. He has already had major surgery accompanied by an extended stay in Minneapolis, and is scheduled for a second surgery in Minneapolis next month.

The Fosses will need to regularly travel to Minneapolis for follow-up care, and Annette has reduced her work

hours to care for Logan. Westhope Lutheran Church, Annette's home church, submitted an application to Operation Round Up for financial assistance.

VEC businesses that choose to round up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar contribute to Operation Round Up, a charitable fund that accumulates these "pennies a month" that go to help area families and communities with needs. As Christmas approaches, gift giving is on the minds of many of us. Operation Round Up gives year-round and VEC businesses can be proud to be part of that giving spirit.



Logan Foss, held by his sister Hannah, has a congenital heart defect. Operation Round Up funds are assisting the Foss family with expenses.

# Verendrye is committed to developing renewable energy resources

Merry Christmas and the very best of New Year's to all VEC business owners! In the spirit of the holiday season, I'd like to visit about some of the "gifts" that we enjoy in North Dakota: wind, water, sunshine, and the ability to grow crops for fuel.

Verendrye is very committed to renewable energy. Our member resolutions, as passed at the annual meeting, call for promotion of ethanol, biodiesel, wind, solar and hydrogen resources. I am very proud to report major activity in all these areas.

VEC has the privilege of serving the electrical needs of two canola-based biodiesel plants being constructed in our area. A new ethanol plant is being built to the south of us. Basin Electric Power Cooperative generates large amounts of wind energy at five different locations, including two large machines south of Minot.

VEC has also received a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to further promote our solar water pumping lease program - a great alternative to building expensive power lines to remote seasonal accounts.

Our "wind to hydrogen" research project is under construction. Wind is a great resource that North Dakota enjoys, but we do not have the necessary high-voltage transmission system to get wind generation from our state to population centers that desperately need the power like Denver, Chicago and the Twin Cities.

As an alternative, electric cooperatives are going to convert wind-generated power to hydrogen by running it through an electrolyzer, converting water to hydrogen gas and oxygen. The cement pad and electrical service for this project have been



VEC General Manager Bruce Carlson is proud of the hydrogen-powered pickup VEC leases with the purpose of developing data to determine hydrogen power feasibility in our area.

installed at the North Dakota State University (NDSU) North Central Research Extension Center.

We expect that the electrolyzer itself and the fueling station will be installed first thing next spring. Delivery has been pushed back due to a manufacturing delay overseas.

Central Power Electric Cooperative, NDSU Research Center and VEC are leasing three hydrogen-powered pickups, which will burn the wind-generated fuel, to gather data that will help determine feasibility and practicality in our weather conditions.

Remember, renewable energy is not free. Each of these projects has a cost, and ultimately that determines feasibility.

While I am very excited about the idea of creating our own usable renewable energy here in the Midwest as compared to importing oil from the Middle East, it is not a cure-all. We will always need our coal-fired base load electrical generation. I commend Basin Electric Power Cooperative for having some of the cleanest, most efficient power plants in the world.

Basin has also done a good job keeping prices stable and providing rebates to distribution cooperative member-owners. As a result, VEC has been able to give you rate stability, rebates and accelerated capital credit retirements. Basin's commitment to renewable energy is real with a goal of 10 percent of member electrical needs coming from "green" generation sources by the year 2010. Verendrye's membership in the 25 X '25 partnership calls for a national goal that 25 percent of our energy needs come from renewable energy sources by the year 2025.

This group also recognizes the critical importance of hydropower as being renewable, if we can get enough rain and snow moisture.

As we build additional renewable energy sources and new base load generation, costs will need to increase at some point in the future. For this holiday season, I would hope we all truly appreciate the gift of our reliable and nonprofit, member-owned power supply system that stretches all the way from the mine to your meter.

## Minot businesses have easier access to engineer



Brian Johnson

New construction in the Minot area will have the advantage of faster response time for engineering assistance with the relocation of Brian Johnson from the Velva office to the Minot office.

Johnson, an engineering assistant, has worked for Verendrye for 29 years out of the Velva office. Bringing power lines into new construction projects, placement of lines, and planning the electrical

flow into businesses and residences is Johnson's specialty.

With the continuing growth in the Minot area, VEC thought it prudent to have an engineer located full-time in the Minot office.

Johnson invites anyone contemplating new construction to give him a call at 701-852-0406 or send an email: [brianlj@verendrye.com](mailto:brianlj@verendrye.com).

## Verendrye Electric Cooperative

1225 Hwy. 2 Bypass East  
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### MISSION STATEMENT

*Our goal is to provide information about your power supplier and generation cooperative, to offer ideas on power quality and conservation, and to suggest ways we can work together for our mutual benefit.*

## Community rallies to build home

In just five days, a home was erected and completely furnished in VEC territory under the direction of ABC's crew from the television show, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. Verendrye Electric Cooperative and many businesses in VEC territory helped make the home a reality for its recipients, Bill and Michelle Bliven and their three children.

VEC donated the labor and kilowatt-hours of energy associated with three temporary electrical services VEC installed for the project. VEC also provided the permanent electric service upgrade for the new home and, together with Cass County Electric Cooperative, donated an electric water heater. VEC employees personally donated to the project, raising \$460 that was deposited at First Western Bank & Trust for the Blivens.

Mike Pankow, who owns Dakota Custom Furniture in VEC territory, donated labor for a custom bedroom set. He met show personality Paige Hemmis when she visited his shop to be filmed using a lathe. Woodturning was a first for Hemmis, and Pankow said he was favorably impressed with her performance.

Additional VEC businesses that contributed to the Extreme Home Makeover project include Aggregate Construction, Applebee's, Best Western, Border States Electric, Burger King, Cenex of Minot, Dakota Fence, First Western Bank & Trust,



▶ ABC TV personality Paige Hemmis works with Mike Pankow, owner of Dakota Custom Furniture.

Grizzly's, Hebron Brick & Block Supply, Kelly Inn, Kohler Communications, MarketPlace Foods, McDonalds, Midwest Trucking, Miracle Mart, Newman Outdoor Advertising, Pepsi Northern Bottling, RDO Equipment Company, Ready

Builders, Sammy's Pizza, Sleep Inn & Suites, Space Aliens Bar & Grill, SRT Communications, Strata Corporation, Subway Sandwiches and Salads, Sundre, Target, Tharaldson Lodging Companies - Fairfield Inn, and Vanity.

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