

**Dan Hoskins** General Manager Ladies and Gentlemen: I would like to visit with you just a little concerning the load control we have experienced so far this year, and I would like for you to know that load control is not my favorite topic, nor is it even a good pastime, but it is something that occurs on our system, so we deal with it. North Star has enlisted the assistance of Lisa Pickard, Communications/Member Services Specialist from Minnkota Power Cooperative, to give you a short article on load control and tube leaks, and then, I will wrap it up.

Through Feb. 26, Minnkota has controlled dual heat for 449 hours, and with that, I will turn it over to Lisa:

# Diff-peak hearing update

### Cold temperatures, unscheduled plant outages lead to increased load control

of North Star Electric Cooperative experienced more control hours in February due to a combination of high loads in extremely cold temperatures, unexpected outages at two major coal-fired generating plants and an expensive wholesale electic market.

You don't have to think too far back to remember temperatures dipping to 25 degrees below zero across the region for several days. Because of these extreme lows and the high demand for electricity, power prices in the wholesale market-place were as high as 35 cents a kilowatt-hour (kWh), well above Minnkota's economical purchase price.

"Minnkota's ability to sell off-peak electricity to the associated systems, like

#### Member Appreciation Days

On Thursday, May 17, please join us at the Littlefork office from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Friday, May 18, at the Baudette office from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. There will be refreshments with brats, chips, popcorn and cotton candy. Register for prizes as there will be drawings for both adults and children. Pick up balloons for the kids and watch an electrical safety demonstration.

North Star Electric, is based solely on our ability to buy it economically, when it's available," said Jim Burley, Minnkota system operations manager. So far this winter, as of Feb. 12, Minnkota has purchased \$4 million of pool energy in order to avoid nearly 500 hours of control.

With market prices skyrocketing, Minnkota made a reasonable and economical choice to control the offpeak loads and avoid costly power pool purchases.

#### Tube leak challenges

During the frigid temperatures, boiler tube leaks at two of Minnkota's primary sources of generation forced some unexpected plant maintenance.

Young 2 at the Milton R. Young Station near Center, N.D., was taken down for repairs on Feb. 4, followed shortly on Feb. 5 by the loss of the Coyote Station at Beulah, N.D., another source of generation for Minnkota.

Tube leaks aren't new to the industry, and despite all of the maintenance precautions that are taken, they are generally unavoidable.

"There are 75 miles of tubing in Young 1 and 125 miles in Young 2," said Tom Anseth, Young Station plant manager – Maintenance. "In short, there are a lot of places in the boilers where a leak - large or small – can develop." At the
Coyote Station, there are an additional
120 miles of tubing.

It is also important to note that tube leaks are not weather related. They can, and do, happen at any time of the year as part of the process of turning water into steam in the boiler of a power plant.

In normal operation, the temperature in the boiler reaches 3,000 degrees F. The boiler temperature has to drop to 120 degrees before Minnkota or contractor employees can enter it. (132-06-005-04 Rodney/Joy Friesner) At first, workers are only able to stay inside for 10 minutes at a time.

A typical outage for repair, from the time the unit is shut down until it is restarted, ranges from 36-48 hours.

"Forced shutdowns, like our recent Young 2 tube leak, can be very expensive," Anseth explained, "and we try to do everything possible to repair them quickly."

#### Load control

The combination of the tube leaks at two major sources of generation, on top of the already extremely cold temperatures, created a situation where off-peak customers were controlled for a longer duration.

(Continued on page 7)



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North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

#### **Mission Statement**

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.

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### Highlights from the BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held on Feb. 7, 2007. All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to approve allocating the 2006 margins as members' capital credits, to approve the payment of discounted estate capital credits applied for in 2007, to amend five board policies, and, after advice from Attorney Anderson, and concurrence by both the Statewide and Minnkota attorneys regarding the eligibility issue, to retract the board action taken at the Jan. 10, 2007, board meeting appointing Lorraine Nygaard to fill the board vacancy for District 6, as her signature had not appeared on their membership application, and then, now that the eligibility issue has been noted and corrected, to reappoint Lorraine Nygaard, effective February 7, to fill the board vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term, as well as, to appoint her to committees and as delegates that were previously held by Allan Nygaard. The board will also be sending a letter to the members in District 6 to report the change in representation.

Reports from staff, and discussion, included the year-end financial report, the review of the RUS Form 7, load control hours, billing peaks, the use of the AMR system to identify off-peak loads not shedding during peak time, shopping for the infrared camera to be used to detect heat loss from homes and hot connections on the line, the June Power Plant Tour waiting list, the tour of the power plants for Indus and Littlefork/Big Falls students on April 2 and 3, energy conservation measures, generator malfunctions during the very cold weather, the NRECA and MREA annual meetings, the plans to meet with Representative Collin Peterson to discuss provisions in his Farm Bill that would support electric cooperatives, the in-house staking of work plan projects for this summer, the work order inspections, outages, right-of-way maintenance, line maintenance, the employees' safe working record, plans to construct a high-voltage demo trailer to be used at open houses, fairs and other events that will help the Cooperative educate the public about the dangers of electricity. The RUS BSP (Borrower Statistical Profile) ratios, comparing North Star to other rural electric cooperatives, was also reviewed, and a presentation showing the capabilities of the new AMR (automated meter reading) system was provided.

Reports from the G&T (generation and transmission) level centered around future power supply, Minnkota's 8.5 percent wholesale rate increase, environmental issues and costs that would be associated with a new coal-fired power plant, and the financial report.

Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board, or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.

#### **CURRENT ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS**

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

• St. Louis and Koochiching counties:

**Bob Orgon** 

10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E. Bemidji, MN 56601 Phone: (218) 556-3829 Fax: (218) 751-3535

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

• Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:

Scott Stenvik

16409 State Hwy 1 N.W. Thief River Falls, MN 56701 Phone: (218) 689-5406

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

### U.S. power plants account for less than 1 percent of worldwide emissions

The U.S. House Resources Committee and the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee have released a detailed paper on mercury entitled, "Mercury in Perspective: Fact and Fiction About the Debate over Mercury." Among the findings are that U.S. power plants account for less than 1 percent of global mercury emissions and that mercury emissions in the U.S. have significantly decreased.

The paper is a summary of peer reviewed research from the federal government and private industries used in the debate over regulating mercury. The cumulative body of science supports the Bush administration proposed cap and trade program, the first federal program ever to regulate mercury from power plants.

Cap and trade programs have already proven effective with other emissions. The cap and trade strategy sets a national cap on emissions and then lets organizations sell emissions credits if they have some to spare, allowing competitive markets to determine where the most economically feasible reductions can be made.

"Most strikingly, the conclusions drawn in this paper are not drawn by us, but rather by a vast number of scientific and government studies. We have simply highlighted, in documented fashion, the most important bodies of evidence on this subject. (786-04-004-02 Ed Tomczak) It is clear that research must be continued, and it is very clear that the current knowledge does not support the rhetorical campaigns of special interest groups," said Richard Pombo, chair of the House Resources Committee.

The largest portion of mercury released into the environment is by natural processes. The report states that emissions from these natural sources contribute more than 60 percent of the world's mercury emissions.



## We need your meter reading

If the box where you have always written in your meter reading(s) is still open, you must continue to read your meter as near to the 25<sup>th</sup> as possible. We must receive it by the 5<sup>th</sup> to avoid an estimated bill. If a bill consecutively estimates twice, the crew will read the meter and a \$15 fee will be added to the account.

For the meters that are communicating with the office through the AMR (automated meter reading) system, that box where you entered your meter reading before, is now filled in with the words, "Co-op Reads." In this instance, you do not have to read your meter.

### Reliable backup systems a must!

Because increased load control hours are predicted in the future, electric off-peak heating installations must be capable of 600 hours or more of interruption each winter season.

"In order to realize the full benefits of the load management program, it is very important that our members work with a qualified heating contractor to ensure that they have an automatic, adequate and well-maintained backup heating system," said Wayne Haukaas, manager of compliance and member services.

The electric off-peak heating program continues to provide great value to members today, just as it did when it was first utilized in the late 1970s. The winter heating season is here, and North Star Electric stands ready to assist our members with their electric home heating options.



# Help prevent fatalities and injuries this year by following these steps:

- X Don't tailgate: Most crashes in work zones are rear-end collisions.
- X Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers.
- X Be patient: Traffic delays are sometimes unavoidable.
- Merge early and be courteous to other drivers.
- X Turn on your headlights.
- X Keep up with the traffic flow: Don't become distracted just because your vehicle is stationary for a moment.
- Minimize distractions: Avoid using a phone or radio.

### Driver inattention, carelessness, cause safety hazards for both motorists and workers

lectric utility vehicles and workers often share streets and roadways with motorists in order to access overhead power lines and other electrical equipment. In observance of National Work Zone Safety Week (April 1 - 7), Safe Electricity and North Star Electric Cooperative urge motorists to slow down and pay close attention to these work crews while driving.

"Power poles and electrical equipment line our streets and highways; narrow right-of-way areas often require crews to place their equipment in traffic lanes," says Molly Hall, director of Safe Electricity. "Their work activities benefit all of us, and like everyone, they deserve a safe workplace.

"Be alert to utility crews and other work zone workers for their safety as well as yours."

According to statistics from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the number of persons killed in motor vehicle crashes in work zones has risen in recent years, and now averages more than 1,000 deaths each year. In addition to the fatalities, more than 40,000 people are injured each year in motor vehicle work zone crashes. Many of these accidents could be prevented if motorists simply slow down and pay attention.

Fatal work zone crashes, regardless of whether a large truck was involved or not, occurred most often in the summer and the fall. Almost three times as many work zone crashes happen on weekdays compared to weekends, so be extra cautious driving to and from work.

The most common crash in a roadway work zone is the rear-end collision, so remember to leave two seconds of braking distance between you and the car in front of you. The amount of space required to provide two seconds of stopping time will increase the faster you're driving.

Make sure to slow down when the sign says to. A car traveling 60 miles per hour (mph) travels 88 feet per second. If you're going 60 mph and pass a sign that states, "Road Work 1,500 Feet," you'll be in that work zone in 17 seconds.

For more information on work zone safety, visit the Federal Highway Administration Web site at **www.fhwa.dot.gov**. Find information on safety around electrical facilities at **www.SafeElectricity.org**.

Safe Electricity is an electrical safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of several dozen organizations, including electric utilities and cooperatives, educators and other entities committed to promoting electrical safety.

# Polar bears

#### AND CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Counts have risen fivefold since the 1970s

n late December of 2006, environmental lobbyists persuaded the Bush administration to recommend that the polar bear be listed as a threatened species due to climate change.

In lieu of scientifically based evidence, environmentalists offered mostly anecdotes that polar bears are at risk. Lobbyists then proclaimed that humaninduced global warming, through the burning of fossil fuels, will melt most of the ice at the North Pole within 50 years, and that without the ice, polar bears will be unable to hunt seals, their preferred prey.

"Fortunately, both for policy and the polar bears, the plight of this one population does not reflect the population trend as a whole," said H. Sterling Burnett, a senior fellow and energy expert at the National Center for Policy Analysis, www.ncpa.org. "Indeed, since the 1970s, while the world was warming, polar bear numbers increased dramatically from around 5,000 to as many as 25,000 today – higher than at any time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century."

Historically, polar bears have thrived in temperatures even warmer than at present, during the Medieval Warm Period 1,000 years ago and during the Holocene Climate Optimum between 5,000 and 9,000 years ago.

Polar bears have thrived in warmer climates because they are omnivores, just like their cousins the brown and black bears.

#### **Better habitat**

Dr. Mitchell Taylor, a biologist with Nunavut Territorial government in Canada, pointed out in testimony to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that modest warming may be beneficial to bears. It creates better habitat for seals and

dramatically increases blueberry production, on which bears gorge themselves when available.

Alaska's polar bear population is stable, and Taylor's research shows that the Canadian polar bear population has increased 25 percent from 12,000 to 15,000 during the past decade, with 11 of Canada's 13 polar bear populations stable or increasing in number.

Where polar bear weight and numbers are declining, Taylor believes the reason may be too many bears are competing for food, rather than Arctic warming. So the problem confronting polar bears may actually be overpopulation instead of extinction, as some environmental groups have claimed.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, there are 22,000 polar bears in about 20 distinct populations worldwide. Only two bear populations – accounting for 16.4 percent of the total number of bears – are decreasing, and they are in areas where air temperatures have fallen, such as the Baffin Bay region.

By contrast, another two populations – 13.6 percent of the total number – are on the increase, living in areas where air temperatures have risen, near the Bering Strait and the Chukchi Sea.

As for the rest, 10 populations – comprising 45.4 percent of the total number of bears – are stable, and the status of the remaining six populations is unknown.

For now, the U.S. government will be taking public comments on the proposal.

"Many Americans may view this polar bear gambit as just another backdoor attempt by dedicated greens to restrict energy use in the United States," Burnett said. "They might well be right."

#### *About the polar bear*

Scientists believe that Ursus maritimus. the "sea bear," evolved about 200,000 years ago from brown bear ancestors. The bears are superbly adapted for survival in the Far North. Polar bears range throughout the Arctic in areas where they can hunt seals at open leads. The five "polar bear nations" where the ice bears are found include the U.S. (Alaska), Canada, Russia, Denmark (Greenland) and Norway. Polar bears are the world's largest land predators. They top the food chain in the Arctic, where they prey primarily on seals. Adult male polar bears weigh from 775 to more than 1,500 pounds. Females are considerably smaller, normally weighing 330 to 550 pounds.

### Manager of Finance and Administration



Ann Ellis

#### Hours of off-peak control

I understand the need, and it is part of the off-peak program, but it didn't stop me from grumbling a little about the amount of control time this winter. Yes, it costs more to burn propane (or other backup fuel sources), but I have to remember that I am using half-price electricity during a lot of the winter season. I'm just usually asleep or at work when that happens during heavy control time.

We have dual fuel at our home, which means that it can be controlled continuously for days, if need be. As of Feb. 26, dual heat loads have been controlled for 449 hours this heating season, but that means off-peak electric has been heating our home two-thirds of the time since the beginning of October. So, if you are like me, knowing that I'm saving all that money a majority of the time makes me feel better. I hope these numbers make you feel better, too.

#### Capital credits

North Star had a good year in 2006. The board has approved allocating \$495,890 of margins (revenue in excess of expenses) to members' capital credit accounts. Your allocation will be printed on your March billing statement.

Capital credits represent your share of the ownership of North Star Electric Cooperative and will eventually be paid out to you. North Star has returned (paid) \$5.8 million to members and has \$11.5 million yet to return. On average, a member has been paid back one-third of their capital credits earned. Your money, which we temporarily hold on to, is invested back into the Cooperative to help fund improvements to the electric distribution system.

#### AMR – How it's already saved you money

Our automated meter reading system

is already saving your Cooperative money. All meters on the system had been read by a line worker at least once every year. With 1,376 miles of line and 6,347 accounts, that was a time-consuming, fuel-burning project. In addition, office personnel no longer have to manually check and enter that data into the computer system. The line crews, also, used to make a monthly trip to mini-max meters, which were placed at the furthest away points of our electric system, to check for proper voltages. The AMR meters monitor voltage, so again, these trips have been eliminated. This has freed up time for other projects that needed attention, such as line and right-of-way maintenance. (303-34-004-05 Mark A/Lorraine Hasbargen)

The AMR system will also find offpeak loads that are not being controlled during peak time, so those "needles in the haystack" can be easily identified and corrected, and save the Cooperative, which is you, about \$75 for each kW of corrected electric heat, not to mention eliminating the trips to test off-peak equipment that is working properly.

We are still working some bugs out of the AMR system, but we are pleased to be in the position that we are after just one short year of our own employees implementing this project and changing out more than 9,000 meters (yes, we have about 3,000 off-peak accounts).

#### Billing cycle changes this summer

Without having to wait for members to read and report their meter reading(s), we will be bringing our billing more current by about 26 days. What does this mean to you? Beginning this summer, you will owe for your electricity sooner than in the past. We will spread this catch-up over three summer months, when most members' bills are lowest. You will see an additional 10 days of electrical use the first month, 10 more days the second month, and the balance with the third, catch-up month. We realize that this might cause hardship for some of you, so be sure to contact us if you would like to make special payment arrangements. This measure alone will save us about \$27,000 a year in interest expense.

#### Rebates on new ENERGY STAR® appliances

Are you thinking about buying a new refrigerator? You could be eligible for a \$100 ENERGY STAR rebate from North Star if it is on the list of qualified models. There are also rebates for other ENERGY STAR appliances, such as freezers, clothes washers and more. Contact Steve Polkinghorne at 1-888-258-2008 for more information, or find our Rebate Form, and the link to find the list of qualifying products, appliances, lighting, heating, cooling and more, on our Web site www. **northstarelectric.coop** under the Tips and Forms link.

While we're talking about saving money and energy conservation, the IRS is allowing up to a \$500 income tax credit over 2006/2007 for certain "energy-conscious" purchases that make your home more efficient - windows, doors, insulation, etc. Be sure to check with your tax professional about this.

#### Safety on thin ice

Many of you venture onto the ice for work or pleasure, but do you know what to do if you fall through? This link, http://www.exn.ca/video/ ?Video=exn20020325-icewater.asx will take you to a short Discovery Channel video that, if you ever find yourself in ice-cold water, could save your life. Share it with your loved ones/friends/employ-

At your service, we remain....

Ann

## Uff-peak hearing update

(Continued from page 1)

Nationwide, coal-fired power plants operate at generating capacity approximately 80 percent of the year. In contrast, the Young Station and Coyote Station are available to generate electricity 90 percent, or more, annually. This percentage is based on a year in which a major maintenance outage does not occur.

"It is very important for North Star Electric Cooperative members to have adequate, well-maintained backup heating systems to carry them through control times like we recently experienced," emphasized Wayne Haukaas, compliance and member services manager at North Star Electric, noting that the off-peak program is a strictly voluntary one.

"In exchange for discounted electric rates, Minnkota controls off-peak loads whenever it is not economical to purchase the energy to serve them," Haukaas added.

Minnkota is a winter-peaking wholesale power supplier, meaning the greatest demand for energy occurs during the winter months. The load management system continues to be a valuable power supply tool, allowing Minnkota to balance available economical supplies with system demand.

There you have it, and I would like to add a couple of noted items; you are wondering about maintenance of these plants. There are scheduled maintenance programs at each plant, but if you look at some of the events that go on inside those units when they are up to speed, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it is no wonder that things come apart. First of all, as Lisa stated, the temperature inside the boiler runs from 2,000 to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Those tubes have approxi-

mately 2,400 to 2,650 PSI going through them with ash and coal particles flying by continuously at 50 to 300 mph, and as far as age wise, some of those tubes are 30 years old.

But, those tubes, as Lisa stated. run for miles and to replace them costs millions of dollars, as in 1995 and 1997 when Minnkota replaced a total of 37 miles of tubing. That maintenance project, alone, took the forced outages due to tube leaks from 11 in 1997 down to 3 in 1998. Their plan now is to replace 19 miles in Milton R. Young 2 in 2007 and 21 miles in Young 1 in 2009, and these estimated costs are about \$25 million.

If you look at the tube leak forced outages over the last three years, they were 2004 - 1, 2005 - 3, and 2006 - 3, and although the forced outages due to tube leaks are low, we must remember that forced outages are not always the culprit in load control. It's the old adage when demand of energy exceeds the supply of energy, the energy that Minnkota has to purchase on the open market is very expensive most of the time, and therefore, control is needed.

I would like to tell you that Minnkota Power Cooperative is always working to ensure that the flow of energy is at the highest level of reliability and dependability, while still maintaining the lowest energy cost possible. North Star Electric Cooperative would like to thank Lisa Pickard for her assistance with this article.

Well, there you have it; I hope this information helps you understand some of the situations that create tube leaks and load control.

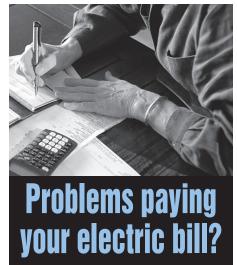
> God Bless you and our Troops, Dan

#### **Notice to Cogenerators**

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and small Power Production, chapter 7835, North Star Electric Cooperative is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

North Star Electric has available and will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Any disputes over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. For more information, please call Wayne Haukaas at 218-634-2202.



Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

#### Lake of the Woods County **Community Services**

P.O. Box G-0200 Baudette, MN 56623 634-2642

#### **Northwest Community Action Council**

P.O. Box 67 Badger, MN 56714-0067 800-568-5329

#### **Koochiching County Community Services**

1000 5th St. International Falls, MN 56649 283-7000

#### **Kootasca Community** Action, Inc.

2232 2nd Ave. E. P.O. Box 44 International Falls, MN 56649 283-9491 or 800-559-9491

#### **Kootasca Community** Action, Inc.

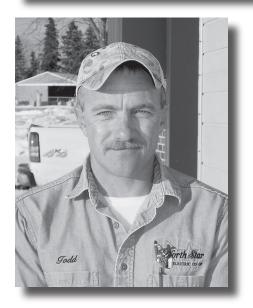
1213 SE 2nd Ave. Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984 800-422-0312

#### **Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency**

702 3rd Ave. S. Virginia, MN 55792-2797 800-662-5711

## **Employee Todd Thydean**

### Helping keep the power on



For Todd Thydean, lead line worker at our Littlefork office, keeping the power on for our members is Priority #1. And since September of 1988, he has been doing just that! After graduating from high school in Littlefork, Todd worked in the area for a year and then decided it was time to go back to school. Todd went to Wadena AVTI to become a line worker. After graduating from line school in 1985, he was hired with a construction company building power lines in Georgia. Todd was hired as a fourth-year apprentice line worker at North Star in 1988 and obtained his line worker license the next year. What he likes

best about his job is new construction activities and getting the power restored for members after a storm. The job he likes the least is repairing cable under the lakes during the winter. Besides working on power lines, Todd also does some of the heavy equipment repair on North Star's vehicles.

Todd is a lifelong resident of the Littlefork area where he lives with his wife, Rana. They have three children – Eric, 10, Gina, 8, and Levi, 5 months. In Todd's spare time, he enjoys hunting, fishing, four-wheeling and being with his family.



## Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric's Know-ledge Scholarships? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be a member of North Star Electric, and your child must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric will be awarding five scholarships, one \$1,000 and four \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$50 cash awards for scoring more than 50 percent on the test.

Most of the test answers will be in the study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year only 37 students took the test. The information meeting and test will be given in mid-April.

For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric or check with the guidance counselor at your school.

