



A talk with

Minnkota Power Cooperative President & CEO Mac McLennan

Since 2007, Minnkota Power Cooperative, our wholesale energy supplier, has been busy maintaining all the issues at hand, such as a costly upgrade to the Milton R. Young Station power plant, meeting the Minnesota Renewable Energy Standard with wind energy, a successful Young 2 Deal with Minnesota Power and now the construction of a new transmission line in North Dakota. It seems that things should settle down, maybe! There has been both good news and not so good news coming from Minnkota this year concerning generation, the EPA and the possibility of more regulations and wholesale rate costs. Minnkota is not only one of the leaders in renewable energy in our country, but it is also one of the more prominent leaders in load management and is doing all of this and still remaining a competitive wholesale energy supplier. Minnkota management and employees are doing all they can to battle and satisfy any regulation or issues that should arise, and I think after you listen to the remarks of the President & CEO of Minnkota, Mac McLennan, you will have a better feel for the days and years ahead.

In this issue:

Board highlights/Always call before you dig (811)	2
A talk with Minnkota Power President & CEO (cont'd.)	3
Bring in the New Year with lower energy costs	4
State law requires a carbon monoxide detector	5
Staff Report/ North Star Electric donates more than \$12,000	6
Preparing for power outages/Problems paying your bill	7
North Star Electric donates more than \$12,000 (cont'd.)	8

Q: Well Mac if you are ready, let's start with a couple of general questions; give our readers a short overview of Minnkota; amount of generation, types of generation, consumers served, etc.

A: Dan, we have power supply resources that total about 1,100 megawatts. We have a diverse mix, from coal to wind to hydro and biomass. Most of the energy we receive in a year is from our coal-based

units but we get significant wind energy as well. We serve nearly 135,000 consumers in northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota through more than 3,000 miles of transmission line.

Q: I guess the most current question would be what's going on with the Coyote Station and what effect, if any, will that have on generation and costs? Load control? And with the age of these

(continued on page 3)

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e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
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www.northstarelectric.coop

Members' corner

We added a section called members' corner. What we would like is for members to send in questions about your electric cooperative, and we will answer them for you. Please give us your name and a phone number in case we need to clarify the question, and send them to North Star Electric, PO Box 719, Baudette, MN, 56623, Attn: Wayne.

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.

Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the board of directors' December meeting. In addition to routine business, the board voted to approve Manager Hoskins' attendance at the NRECA CEO Close-up, to approve the 2013 delegates, to set the 2013 annual meeting for Oct. 4 and to approve the annual audit report presented by Eide Bailly.

Staff reports included the financial report, presentation of the proposed 2013 budget, unclaimed capital credit donations, software conversion, reduced health care premiums for 2013, load management, CIP energy conservation rebates, power plant tours, upcoming events and a recent meeting with the city of Warroad regarding the new casino scheduled to be constructed in North Star Electric Cooperative's

service territory near Warroad. Director Hanson reported on a meeting with incoming U.S. Rep. Nolan. He was also presented a certificate recognizing his 18 years of dedicated service as a director (Ken Pieper, 242-17-012-01). Director Trueman reported favorably on the CFC conference. Minnkota delegate Arnesen reported on their monthly board meeting.

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 Hoskins at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig. Visit **call811.com** for more information.



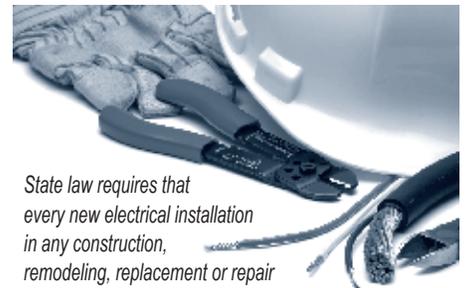
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Current electrical inspectors



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:

Richard Jenko
P.O. Box 523, Buhl, MN 55713
Cell: (218) 258-8338
New hours: Tue., Wed. & Thurs. will take calls from 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Inspection will be on Tue. and Thurs. only.

• 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 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

A talk with

Minnkota Power Cooperative President & CEO Mac McLennan (continued from page 1)

facilities, how long do you believe that Coyote and the Young Station generators will be in service? And is there a long-range plan of replacement?

A: As you know, Dan, we have informed the members of the Joint System (the Joint System is the combined system of cooperatives in the region served by Minnkota and the cities served by Northern Municipal Power Agency) of the major outage at the Coyote Station near Beulah, N.D. The power plant, which is partially owned by the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) and managed on its behalf by Minnkota, is an important resource used to meet the needs of the Joint System participants. On Nov. 19, the Coyote Station experienced a significant generator failure that forced operators to take it out of service. While it isn't clear exactly what caused the issue, it appears that the repairs will take several months to complete.

Minnkota has been working to replace the 120 megawatts of lost energy by making purchases from the regional power market and through the load management program. Many of your members may already have noticed that load management is in use. By using load management, Minnkota avoids making costly energy purchases that would be passed down to its members.

Each winter season, the Joint System develops a plan for the load management program and we are going to try to stay with that plan for the season unless we see abnormally high prices in the regional market.

With respect to your question regarding how long will the power plants be in service, we have been working to maintain those facilities so that they will last into the 2040 time frame. We are looking at possible long-term solutions.

Q: Speaking of generation, I feel that as the energy industry goes to natural gas, that the government will regulate natural gas and the price will skyrocket. And then we could be in a bigger mess, but with the environmentalist attacks on coal-based energy, a burning question is has Minnkota considered retrofitting its coal-based power plants with natural gas?

A: Dan, we are constantly looking at what the future might look like and how we meet the challenges it brings. We have looked at whether it is possible to retrofit our existing units to burn natural gas and the answer is, not easily or efficiently. We share your concern that if we become dependent on one resource like natural gas, that we will increase the risk to our members. That's why we believe we need to keep all fuels, including coal, in the energy mix. We don't believe there is a magic bullet in this debate; all options need to be on the table. In addition, in the near term, Minnkota pays significantly less for its coal than the current marketplace for gas, so switching right now would cost us more, not less.

Q: Minnesota Power had a public meeting about the possibility of a large transmission system moving through Minnesota to the Iron Range from Manitoba Hydro. Obviously, if it does get built, it will pass through some of Minnkota's service territory. If this is cheaper power (hydro), wouldn't it make sense to possibly work out a deal to tap this transmission line?

A: First, the cost to tap this particular line would be very expensive. But with that aside, Minnkota has positioned itself to have enough generation in our system to supply our needs to 2040 or beyond. The bottom line is that with the current projections we have for growth, we don't need more resources right now. We have worked with Manitoba Hydro in the past and found that the cost for new hydropower is not cheaper than continuing to use our existing assets.

Q: Well Mac since we are speaking of transmission lines, what is the progress of the Center to Grand Forks transmission line and how is that going to help our members?

A: Dan, as a reminder to your members, the Center to Grand Forks Project is a 250-mile, 345-kilovolt transmission line across North Dakota that Minnkota has embarked on to bring greater reliability and resources to the upper Red River Valley and northwestern Minnesota. At this point, the project is slightly behind

schedule because of delays in material deliveries, some wet weather and ground conditions. However, we haven't changed our goal of having the line done by the end of 2013 because of these early delays.



Q: Mac, you knew I was coming with politics next and actions of the environmental community, so let's get to it. The last upgrade to the Milton R. Young Station

cost approximately \$425 million and that contributed to about a 35 percent rate increase for Minnkota's members. Despite those investments, in 2011, the EPA proposed that to meet regional haze requirements, Minnkota should consider additional investments at the plants. However in December 2011, the EPA changed its mind and ruled that Minnkota should not be required to make additional investments. But now at the request of several environmental groups, the EPA has indicated that it is going to reopen the issue. If the EPA does reopen this issue and require further controls, what will this ultimately cost Minnkota and how will that affect our members?

A: With our members' help in making their voices heard, we did convince the EPA that the investments they were proposing for our facilities were not appropriate or cost-effective. As you say, the EPA has indicated they want to review the issue. We are not sure yet what the EPA is intending to review, but during this entire debate we have calculated the cost for new controls being requested by the EPA could be near \$500 million for Minnkota alone. This would mean that members could be looking at an additional 20 to 30 percent rate increase across the system.

Q: How about a carbon tax? I understand there is some talk about that and that issue is gaining speed. How will that affect Minnkota and our members?

A talk with ... (continued from page 3)

A: We are continuing to look at the proposals being discussed and the ramifications of those proposals. Our initial assessment is that the regulation of greenhouse gases could greatly impact Minnkota's members. It's too early to tell how much.

Q: And two more questions on this subject: Is there anything else that you or your people see that we should be letting our members know about concerning the emission issues? Like, is the sky falling (global warming) or the world ending because the people want a different calendar, oops, sorry, wrong topic? And what can our members do to help?



A: We encourage members to talk to their state and national legislators about energy and how rate hikes on the heels of regulatory mandates impact their lives. We want to do the

right thing when it comes to the land and air. We believe clean, clear air and affordable energy can coexist if we all use common sense in our decisions. What the EPA was trying to do with regional haze, putting in Selective Catalytic Reduction equipment at the Young Station in our case, wouldn't have discernibly changed visibility in the Class I areas such as Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Spending \$500 million for no benefit doesn't make sense.

Q: Mac, we have talked about a number of things here today and I have been telling our folks that the cost of electricity, although stable for a year or two, will eventually be rising in the next few years and we have given them a number of reasons. But can you give us a forecast of the next five years of what the rate structure will look like, projected rate increases and anything else, including surcharges, that is or could cost our members more money?

A: Dan, we are working now to get through 2013 and 2014 without any or minimal wholesale rate increases. After

2014, the forecast looks like we might need some smaller rate increases in

2015 and 2016 before things settle back down in 2017. The bottom line is many factors, such as regulatory issues, prices in the marketplace, performance of our plants and others could threaten that outlook. I believe we have done a good job of mitigating risk in the past several months that should help protect us against some of these issues but there are a lot of moving parts in the utility industry.

Q: And speaking of surcharges, can you give us the status of the surcharge that our members are paying? How much longer? Will it remain at the same level?

A: The current surcharge is scheduled to be in place until the end of 2014. However, the Minnkota board will continue to review the surcharge and the need for it each year. Right now, conditions that necessitated the need for the surcharge remain intact.

Q: I know you and the rest of your management team at Minnkota are doing everything possible to control costs; can you give us an example of what Minnkota is doing in this area.

A: We have been implementing numerous projects to automate processes that help us be more efficient in our operations. We are working on partnerships that bring additional benefits to our plant operations. You might remember the Clean Coal Solutions event we had at the Young Station last year. We have good reason to believe that this project will help reduce our operating costs at our plants.

Q: Mac, I would like to thank you for your time and I believe that you have been very patient while I have asked you some very pointed questions; so, would you like to add any closing comments for our member-owners?

A: I would like to thank Minnkota's consumers for being engaged in our effort to keep power rates affordable in the region. We all need to make our voices heard on issues when they threaten our rates.

Bring in the New Year with lower energy costs

A new year is a chance for a new beginning. If you want a new beginning that involves saving money, the Energy Education Council has the following tips, organized by how much certain costs contribute to your energy bill:

- **Heating and cooling – 46 percent:** Since heating and cooling is such a big cost, it is a good place to begin your savings. During winter, dress warmly and keep the temperature in your home moderate. In the summer, wear light clothing and use fans to keep cool instead of running the air conditioning. You can save money any season by closing off rooms that you do not need to heat or cool. Visit EnergyEdCouncil.org to learn how to properly insulate your home.
- **Water heating – 14 percent:** We need warm water throughout the day to shower, cook and clean. We do not need warm water every moment of the day. However, many people's water heaters work hard to keep water warm constantly. You can give your water heater a break by setting its temperature to 120 degrees.
- **Appliances – 14 percent:** Do laundry in cold water, when possible. Keep your refrigerator at 37 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep attached freezers at 5 F, and separate freezers at 0 F. Air dry dishes and line dry clothes as often as possible.
- **Electronics and other devices – 14 percent:** Let ENERGY STAR® help you cut costs. ENERGY STAR products use at least 20 percent less energy than other products. Even if you are not replacing electronics, you can save money by unplugging products that are not in use.
- **Lighting – 12 percent:** Lighting is one of the easiest ways to increase your home's efficiency. Switch to Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs or Light Emitting Diode (LED) light bulbs (Robert Promersberger, 556-25-001-04). Both types use significantly less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs. CFLs and LEDs also last longer than incandescent lighting, so you will not have to replace light bulbs as often.

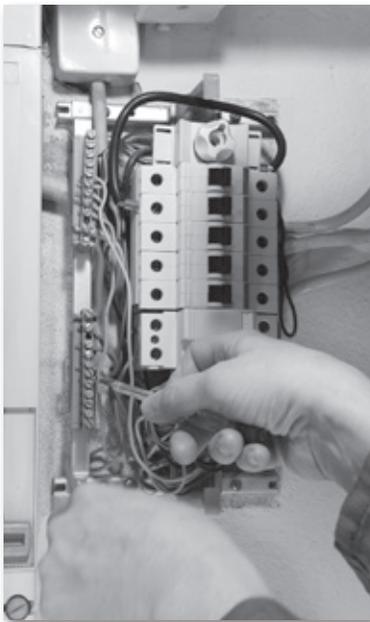
For more energy-efficiency tips, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.

State law requires a carbon monoxide detector near every bedroom of your home



Each year, more than 200 Americans die and several thousand are treated in emergency rooms for CO poisoning. The risk of CO poisoning increases during the winter, as more people run furnaces, gas space heaters and use fireplaces. Remember – Minnesota law requires CO detectors within 10 feet of every sleeping room in all existing single-family homes. If you haven't installed a detector yet, please don't wait. Lives may depend on it. For more information go to: www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal/PublicEducation or call the State Fire Marshal's office at 651-201-7200.

2013 contractor training dates set



Minnkota and the associated systems will host contractor continuing education workshops again in 2013 (Gregg Plochocki, 795-18-004-01). This marks the 25th year of the successful program, which is aimed at providing area trade allies with the latest information in building and electrical practices.

Dates for the 2013 sessions are: Wednesday, Jan. 23, at the Hampton Inn, Bemidji, Minn.; Thursday, Jan. 24, at the Ramada Inn, Grand Forks, N.D.; Wednesday, Jan. 30, at the Doublewood Inn, Fargo, N.D.; and Thursday, Jan. 31, at the Bigwood Events Center, Fergus Falls, Minn.

For more information about the program, contact Sue Black, Minnkota communications/member services specialist, at (701) 795-4292 or email questions to sblack@minnkota.com.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

North Star Electric Cooperative, Incorporated is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

The person responsible for coordinating this organization's nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Ann Ellis, Finance Manager. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call toll free (866)632-9992 (voice) or (800)877-8339 (TDD) or (866)377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

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.

The value is electric!

One tank of gas for your car
20 gallons at \$3.15/gallon = **\$63.00**

19 days of electricity for your entire home = **\$63.00***

*Based on North Star Electric average residential usage of 875 kWh per month at the residential rate of \$.113/kWh + Minnkota surcharge of \$.003/kWh (Does not include the \$36 basic service fee)



Staff Report



Ann Ellis
Assistant General Manager

Before a construction season is over, we are already working on plans for the upcoming year, as we prepare the next year's budget. I'll tell you right now, we are NOT budgeting a rate increase in 2013, meaning we expect to go at least three years without a rate adjustment. Now that's good news!

With this stability in mind, I want to thank all of our off-peak electric heat members. With the lower price of LP nearing the break-even point with off-peak, be aware of the hidden impact of your choice for heating fuel. If we lose the off-peak sale, there is pressure to increase the rates for all your other uses. All of those poles and wires out there have the same fixed cost we must recover, regardless if you use 500 kWh, or 5,000 kWh each month. Thank you

for your patronage and support.

Speaking of patronage, that reminds me of capital credits. Most businesses must send unclaimed property, like abandoned bank accounts, to the state. I know, you are thinking, "Who would forget they had money somewhere?" but they do — especially if they have moved around.

North Star, as a rural electric cooperative, has a unique opportunity to choose between sending unclaimed capital credits to the state, OR we can donate them to tax-exempt organizations. We choose to keep these dollars here at home, distributed across

all seven board districts spanning from Warroad to Orr. You will see examples of this in the *Enlightener* issues. Each summer on our website you will also be able to see which former members have unclaimed capital credits about to be donated. This will be our last effort to find the rightful owners before they are donated.

So, if you've moved around, and you want to see if you have any kind of unclaimed property sitting at the state of Minnesota Department of Commerce, check it out at <http://mn.gov/commerce/topics/Unclaimed-Property/>. At the bottom of the state website you will see a "Missing Money Locator." Be sure you are on the mn.gov website. I hope you find some long lost cash!

In the meantime, stay warm, and know that we are doing our best to bring you safe and reliable electricity at a stable price.

At your service, we remain ... Ann

North Star Electric donates more than \$12,000 in unclaimed capital credits

Recently North Star Electric donated more than \$12,000 of unclaimed capital credits to local charitable organizations. This money either has to be sent to the state of Minnesota or be donated to charitable organizations. These are the charitable organizations we gave the money to this time: Kabetogama First Responders, Kabetogama Fire Department, Williams Ice Arena Association, Williams Area Senior Citizens Center, Lake of the Woods Humane Society, Lake of the Woods School/Special Olympics,

Littlefork VFW Post #9641, Littlefork VFW Post #9641 Ladies Auxiliary, Big Falls Lions Club, Big Falls American Legion, Big Falls Community Ed., Indus School Christmas Programs, River Valley Development Association, Lake of the Woods Food Shelf, Falls Hunger Coalition, Loman Fire Department, Birchdale Fire Department and the Grand Theater of Baudette.



Nancy Anderson, director of the Falls Hunger Coalition, receives a check from Mike Hanson, board member from District 4.



Brian Lindvall, commander of Littlefork VFW Post #9641, receives a check from Bruce Polkinghorne, board member from District 5.



Gretchen Thompson accepts a check for the Lake of the Woods Special Olympics from Mike Trueman, board member from District 2.

(continued on page 8)

Preparing for power outages from winter storms



Winter can be a beautiful time of the year with white snow and sparkling ice, but that same winter weather can also wreak havoc on communities. It can cause roads to be treacherous, schools to be closed, and sometimes your power to go out. Making plans now for a potential power outage can make riding out a prolonged power outage safer and more comfortable.

A good way to help keep your family safe and comfortable during a winter storm is to put an emergency kit together. Safe Electricity offers the following list of items to help you prepare your kit:

- ✓ Water – stock up on bottled water for consumption
- ✓ Food – have at least enough for three to seven days that includes non-perishable packaged or canned foods, juices, foods for infants or the elderly and snack foods
- ✓ Utensils – include a nonelectric can opener, cooking tools, paper plates and plastic utensils
- ✓ Blankets, pillows and warm clothing items
- ✓ First aid kit, medicine and prescription drugs
- ✓ Toiletries, hygiene items, moist towelettes
- ✓ Flashlight and batteries – be sure to include extra batteries
- ✓ Radio and clock – use battery-operated radios and clocks; also consider purchasing a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio

- ✓ Telephone – keep cell phone chargers (wall, car and/or solar) on hand and, if you have a landline, a traditional (not cordless) telephone set
- ✓ Emergency numbers – keep a list of emergency telephone numbers, including the local utility company
- ✓ Cash and credit cards
- ✓ Important documents
- ✓ Tools – keep a set in your kit; can include duct tape, screwdrivers, pliers, wrench, work gloves, safety goggles, etc.
- ✓ Toys, books and games
- ✓ Pet-care items
- ✓ Supplies for any alternate heating methods your home may have, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove

When outside, stay away from downed power lines.

- ✓ A power line does not need to be sparking or arcing to be energized, even if it is sagging close to or on the ground. Be aware that other utility lines can also become energized by being in contact with an electrical line.
- ✓ Lines that appear to be “dead” can become energized as crews work to restore power or, sometimes, from improper use of emergency generators. Assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous. If you see a downed or sagging line, contact your utility.
- ✓ Motorists should never drive over a downed line as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.
- ✓ Be careful when approaching intersections where traffic or crossing lights may be out.

If you plan to use a generator, know how to operate it safely.

For more information on how to prepare for a winter storm and how to keep your family safe during and after a winter storm, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Problems paying your electric bill?

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 Social Services

206 8th Ave. SE, Suite 200
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

North Star Electric donates more than \$12,000 in unclaimed capital credits (continued from page 6)



Lori Reierson, president of the Littlefork VFW Post #9641 Auxiliary, receives a check from Bruce Polkinghorne, board member from District 5.



Directors Randy Bergan, District 3, Steve Arnesen, District 1, and Mike Trueman, District 2, present a check to David Cassi, Nancy Jewell, Velma Lund and Judith Senkyr for the Williams Area Senior Citizens Center. This donation will be used to temporarily reduce the cost of lunches for members of the center as a way to encourage new participants, as well as help existing members. For more information about the Senior Center and the meals, please contact Velma Lund at 386-1123.



Brian Brown, principal of the Indus School, receives a check from Mike Hanson, board member from District 4.



Mike Hanson presents a check to Joan Heinrich for the Lake of the Woods Food Shelf.



Deb Vaagen accepts a check for the Baudette Community Foundation from Mike Hanson.



Jack Charlton accepts a check for the Williams Arena from Randy Bergan.



Soren Olesen, chairman of the River Valley Development Association, receives a check from Mike Hanson.