

SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC Cooperative



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Dahl Memorial Hospital opened in 2021 in Ekalaka and offers state-of-the-art facilities. | SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC PHOTO

EKALAKA

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

COLUMN BY VICKI L. FIX | SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

I have lived in Ekalaka for 39 years (okay maybe 56), and I am very excited about what I am seeing in my hometown. When other towns are struggling to keep businesses, hospitals and schools open, Ekalaka is building on the future.

Several new buildings have been built in Ekalaka, including Southeast Electric Cooperative in 2015. Coming in quickly behind Southeast Electric was

Ekalaka Public Schools. The elementary school had been deteriorating so the board decided it was time to build a new elementary school that was near the high school. Although the two buildings were not connected at that time, a connecting breezeway that included offices was added in 2021.

The Carter County Commissioners faced a tough decision on upgrading or building a new hospital. The number

of upgrades needed to the current nursing home, hospital and clinic was becoming unattainable. On November 11, 2021, Dahl Memorial opened the doors to its new facility. The new building has a long-term care facility, clinic, a state-of-the-art lab, emergency room, X-ray (including CT Scans), physical therapy and pharmacy.

On September 14, 2021, Ijkalaka Grocery opened their doors. The new

Continued from previous page

grocery store has coolers with frozen goods, dairy and produce. The aisles are lined with everything from potato chips to toilet paper.

The community also believes in revitalizing current structures. The courthouse was remodeled and added a large addition to accommodate more offices and an elevator. The Community 1st Credit Union bought the old post office, which was built at a new location. The Credit Union uses one side of the building and the Carter County Senior Center uses the other half. The attorney's office got a flashy mural painted on the side of its building. The old bank and locker plant went through historical renovations and now hold the Town of Ekalaka office and the Ekalaka Library.

Moving down the street, the old propane office and barbershop is now a Financial Office, and Stompin' Grounds Coffee, which also serves pizza, soups, salads and sandwiches. The old pharmacy building is now the Dawg House Pub, which serves your favorite beverage and burgers, salads and sides. The TSO Cantina, which is Ekalaka's first Mexican restaurant, is located in the old *Ekalaka Eagle* building.

The Town of Ekalaka and Carter County Chamber of Commerce are



There is a mural painted on the side of a building in Ekalaka. This is part of a local revitalizing effort. | **SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC PHOTO**

involved in the Montana Main Street program.

"The program helps communities strengthen and preserve their historic downtown commercial districts by focusing on economic development, urban revitalization and historic preservation through long-range planning, organization, design and promotion," the business website states.

They held their first community meeting and presented a wonderful visual of some easy upgrades to make Main Street more appealing to visitors.

We offer four places to dine, a grocery store, a bank, a credit union, balloons and flowers, the local paper, the local propane and hardware store, gas and parts station, five places to get your hair done, car dealership, meat processing, an amazing museum and more.

Our community is resilient and determined.

The younger generation is stepping up to make sure that our little town will be here for their children as well. Ekalaka is building for the future. **RM**

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