

# Northwest Rural Public Power District

Hay Springs, NE 69347

January 2025

## Rancher Produces 'Puzzling' Woodworking Hobby

A Hay Springs Rancher had never had that much interest in woodworking until he was older, then it was simple rustic furniture like benches, stool and shelves for family. Ryan Hughbanks, who lives southwest of Hay Springs with his family, started looking into another project.

"I started searching the internet for woodworking ideas/projects and every now and then a puzzle box would pop up. I quickly dismissed the idea because of the complexity of them and your knowledge of all the different woods would have to be enormous, not to mention the whole concept of designing a puzzle from scratch. I thought they were cool, but not the project for me," said Hughbanks

But they kept popping up in his searches. "Until one day I decided to give it a shot and make one. The rest is history! I made my first one in 2020," noted Hughbanks. "I mostly learned by trial and error, with the help of the internet a little bit. I read a few woodworking books when I started making puzzle boxes, which really helped."

After his first two designs were complete he posted some pictures of them on Instagram just to see what people thought. "The first two or three days I didn't get much of a response, but then I woke up one morning and had nearly 50 people requesting to order them," said Hughbanks. And every day after that the list grew and grew. "After I got some boxes out there in the public and puzzlers reviewed them I had so many requests I could never fulfill them all in my lifetime. The demand for hand-made puzzle boxes blew my mind," he added.

Right now he has a list of people and which he just contacts the next person on that list when he finishes a box.

"Hughbanks Puzzle Boxes" has six different puzzle box designs: Lockdown box, Side Swiper box,



**Ryan Hughbanks together with his family, wife Katy children, Kynlee and Tyler who live southwest of Hay Springs.**

Bassackwards box, Opposites box, Arbitrage box and Gift box.

Hughbanks uses various types of Hardwood including domestic hardwoods like oak, maple, walnut, cherry and alder. And a lot of exotics like wenge, canarywood, leopardwood, bocote, zebrawood, purpleheart and Padauk to name a few of his favorites. "There are so many woods the list is almost endless! I get most of my lumber from Bell Forest

**(Continued on Page 2)**



**The five beautiful intricate wood puzzle boxes Ryan Hughbanks currently has offered online.**

## Puzzle Hobby--

(Continued from Page 1)

Products out of Michigan, and occasionally from Rockler and Woodcraft. I buy as much of the domestic lumber as I can from local lumber yards."

**How do you come up with the different puzzle ideas?** "I usually get a general idea for a puzzle box in my head and then just start building. As the process progresses I often think of different mechanisms or tricks to add. Maybe there is enough space to add something here or there. They always become more complex (and difficult to build!) as time goes on! With the addition of a CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine to my shop, I am using more computer software to help the design process."

"My boxes are all sequential discovery puzzles, meaning you have to solve them in a specific sequence. One step will lead you to the next. There are tools that you discover along the way that will help you. The boxes are between five and 50 steps to get them completely open," explained Hughbanks.

Hughbanks estimates he has constructed around 40-50 of the labor intensive puzzle boxes. "I only work on boxes in my spare time, mostly at night. Since I enjoy doing it and it is not my main source of income, I don't keep track of the hours it takes. For me, it's a fun hobby!," explained Hughbanks. "My CNC machine will greatly reduce the amount of time it takes once I




The top of this box shows some of the delicate detailing to crack open into the puzzle.

get everything figured out with that. The biggest challenge I have with making boxes is time."

He guesses that around 50 percent of the boxes he has sold have been outside of the U.S. "Puzzle boxes are more popular in other countries, even having an ancient history in some, but the U.S. is gaining popularity at a fast rate. Apart from the U.S. I have sold boxes in Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, Asia, Germany and Australia," said Hughbanks.

Hughbanks graduated from Hay Springs High School in 2001. I began college at WNCC in Scottsbluff and then transferred to Chadron State. He has lived most of his life south of Hay Springs except for briefly in Scottsbluff and Chadron. He and his wife Katy both work on the family farm-ranch and have two children, Tyler, age 7 and a Second Grader, and daughter Kynlee who will be three in February. The Hughbanks live about 7 miles southwest of Hay Springs where they raise mostly wheat, corn, sunflowers, alfalfa/hay and have cattle.



**Countryroad Shot: American Kestrel  
Dawes Co. - Sept. 2010**

**~ by Jim Manternach**

**If you are interested in a print, you can  
contact Jim at [jmm@millcomps.com](mailto:jmm@millcomps.com) or his  
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**Northwest Rural PPD Insert Changes**

*Northwest Rural has chosen to downsize the insert from 12 pages to four to follow the other Power Districts, who only publish four pages which have been relocated to the front of the Nebraska Magazine. With this decision being made, all of the advertising will be eliminated. I would personally like to thank all of the businesses that have advertised in the magazine over the past 28 years I have set up and designed the NRPPD insert. Your support was much appreciated.*

*~ Cindy Peters*



# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION MEMBER COOPERATIVE

## Basin Electric Power Cooperative - Member Cooperative Scholarship Program

### Scholarship Submittal Requirements

The student is responsible for submitting all materials on time. Incomplete applications will not be evaluated.

- 1. Complete this application (*attach additional sheets if necessary*). Your name and address should be on all attachments. Completeness and neatness ensure your application will be evaluated appropriately.
- 2. Recent academic transcript whether it is from a high school, college, university, or trade school. **CURRENT COLLEGE FRESHMAN** - Judges will screen and require more than one semester or quarter of grades. If this applies to you, submit your high school transcript.
- 3. Copy of your college entrance examination (*ACT and/or SAT*) scores. (*College Freshman Only*)
- 4. Essay - How does the electricity provided by your electric cooperative improve the quality of life in your community?
- 5. Applicant appraisal.
- 6. Send this application and all supporting documentation to your member cooperative. (*Each member cooperative will be responsible for selecting finalists in these categories*).
  - Cooperative applications **MUST** be sent to the cooperative.

**DEADLINE: Submit Application to NRPPD by Feb. 13, 2025 by 5:30 p.m.**

Member cooperatives' must submit their finalists to Basin Electric Power Cooperative by **March 1<sup>st</sup>**.

All scholarship entries are confidential and will only be viewed by the Basin Electric Power Cooperative or member cooperative selection committee.

### Applicant Information

Applicant Name:		Home Phone:	College Phone:	Last 4 Digits of SSN#:
Permanent Address ( <i>Street/PO Box</i> ):		City:	State:	Zip:
Mother's Name:		Father's Name:		
Student's Parent is:		<input type="checkbox"/> Member Cooperative Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Member Cooperative Consumer		
Cooperative System Name:				
Cooperative Location ( <i>City, State, Zip</i> ):				
High School Name and Address from which you graduate or will be graduating this spring:				
Activities, Community Involvement, Achievements, and/or Honors:				

Sending a resume does not replace any part of this application. If space provided in any section is inadequate, you may continue on additional sheets. Attachments must follow the same format. **DO NOT** repeat information already reported on the application form. Your name, address, and name of this scholarship program should be included on all attachments.

### Work Experience

Describe your work experience (*e.g. food server, babysitting, lawn mowing, and office work*). Indicate dates of employment for each job and approximate number of hours worked each week.

Employer/Position	From (Mo/Yr)	To (Mo/Yr)	Hours per Week

## January Historical Anniversaries....

### 1 Jan 1985 - 40 years ago

New York became the first U.S. state to introduce a mandatory seat-belt law. All car drivers, front-seat passengers and children under ten were required to wear them, or face a \$50 fine.

### 2 Jan 1955 - 70 years ago

Death of José Antonio Remón, President of Panama (1952-55). (Assassinated). He was succeeded by José Ramón Guizado, who was swiftly deposed when it was discovered that he had been involved in the assassination.

### 4 Jan 1965 - 60 years ago

U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson announced the details of his Great Society program in his State of the Union Address. Its main goal was to eliminate poverty and racial injustice. The programs included Medicare, Medicaid, Civil Rights, Voting Rights, Food Stamps, Public Broadcasting, Clean Air and Water Legislation, Consumer Protection, and several more.

### 6 Jan 1945 - 80 years ago

The cartoon character Pepé Le Pew made his first appearance, in the Warner Bros. cartoon Odor-able Kitty.

### 7 Jan 1950 - 75 years ago

The Mercy Hospital fire, Davenport, Iowa, USA. A fire broke out in St. Elizabeth's ward, which housed 62 female patients. The doors were locked because it was a psychiatric ward, the windows were barred, there was no evacuation plan, and no sprinkler system in the 80-year-old building (though the fire department had recommended installing one for more than 25 years). 40 patients and a nurse were killed.

### 9 Jan 1995 - 30 years ago

Russian cosmonaut Valeri Poliakov became the first person to spend an entire year in space in a single mission. His mission to the Mir space station lasted for a total of 437 days.

### 10 Jan 1985 - 40 years ago

The Sinclair C5 electric tricycle was launched in the UK. Immediate concerns were raised about its safety in traffic, and it was ridiculed in the media. It was not a commercial success.

### 11 Jan 1935 - 90 years ago

American aviator Amelia Earhart became the first person to make a solo flight from Hawaii to California, USA.

### 13 Jan 2005 - 20 years ago

Britain's Prince Harry was forced to apologize after being photographed at a costume party wearing a Nazi uniform. The photograph was published in The Sun newspaper.

### 14 Jan 1900 - 125 years ago

The première of Italian composer Giacomo Puccini's opera Tosca, in Rome, Italy.

### 15 Jan 1945 - 80 years ago

World War II: the Soviet Red Army liberated the city of Krakow, Poland.

### 18 Jan 1975 - 50 years ago

The first episode of the television sitcom The Jeffersons

was broadcast on CBS in the USA. It ran for eleven seasons until 1985.19

### Jan 1955 - 70 years ago

U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave the first televised presidential news conference. The conference was filmed in the morning and broadcast on television that evening. The first live conference was given by John F. Kennedy in January 1961.

### 24 Jan 1935 - 90 years ago

The first canned beer went on sale, in Virginia, USA. The beers were Krueger's Cream Ale and Krueger's Finest Beer. They were an immediate success.

### 25 Jan 1945 - 80 years ago

Grand Rapids, Michigan became the first city in the USA to fluoridate its drinking water to prevent tooth decay.

### 26 Jan to 2 Feb 1925 - 100 years ago

The serum run to Nome, Alaska, USA (also known as the Great Race of Mercy). With a diphtheria epidemic threatening the city of Nome and no planes available to carry an anti-toxin, dog-sledders worked in relays to carry a canister of serum 674 miles in five days. This event is now commemorated in the annual Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

### 31 Jan 1950 - 75 years ago

U.S. President Harry S. Truman announced that he had ordered the Atomic Energy Commission to develop a hydrogen bomb. The first prototype, 'Ivy Mike', was detonated in November 1952.

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## Northwest Rural

### Public Power District

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