

## *Municipal Utilities: Good For All of Us*

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Most kids my age utilize but have no idea what municipal utilities are or how critically important they are to our communities. As digital natives, what is something we can't live without? Electricity. In our ever-connected world, utilities arguably are more important than ever. However, they are often expected and under-appreciated. Growing up with a municipal utility in your community, you really don't give this sort of thing much thought. I've learned that Delano is on our own power grid and what that means for our community. When other towns around us are out of power for hours, sometimes days, our service comes back on quickly with minimal interruption. Municipal utilities are a pillar in communities, both in infrastructure and providing economic development and jobs for the community. Another thing that most youth don't realize is that our local utility ensures and monitors that our drinking water is always safe. Municipal utilities work to provide electricity and water affordably and sustainably. They are not-for-profit so we reap the benefits in many ways including giving back to the community.

In these unprecedented times, we are in right now with COVID-19, electricity, water, and sewer services are more critical than ever. These utilities literally fuel our technologies, our communication platforms, our devices, and our homes. Without electricity and gas in our homes and in our community, we would not be able to navigate stay-at-home orders without relative ease. We're using our utilities to complete our distance learning so we can stay on track to graduate, to connect with family and friends, to monitor news and updates on the pandemic, and to stay entertained with Netflix and Hulu. Truly, distance learning and graduation would be impossible without

electricity from our municipal utility.

Electricity is also critical for the healthcare field and for my career goal of obtaining a nursing degree from the College of Saint Benedict. In particular, with the coronavirus being a virus that attacks our respiratory system, many patients are ending up in the hospital and needing ventilators. Ventilators are obviously powered by electricity. Although we don't have a hospital in Delano, our nearby hospitals are relying on their local utilities to service patients and keep up with the growing number of hospitalizations. They are also powering our manufacturing district and keeping essential businesses in a full operation like our grocery stores, pharmacies, and clinics. These essential businesses are keeping the economy in Delano as strong as possible with jobs and critical items to support our families at home and those on our front lines.

Even water is even more critical at this time. Being homebound, we are relying on clean drinking water, water to cook, clean and especially water to wash hands to control the spread of the virus. The scariest part is that the future of this virus is unknown and uncertain. But, being able to have reliable electricity and water in a time like this is comforting and removing one stress from the equation. We are incredibly fortunate to have municipal utilities in these times, because municipal utilities are not just good for all of us, they are crucial for all us and could mean the difference between life and death.