

Connections

Nominate an inspiring person in our co-op community.
The person you nominate could win up to \$5,000!

Visit WhoPowersYou.com



Enter #WhoPowersYou Contest Help spread positive energy for a chance to win!

At your local electric co-op we do more than deliver electricity. We also believe it's important to recognize the people who power our lives. That's why, in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, we're running the #WhoPowersYou contest. This is an opportunity to honor inspirational people in our community.

Who has made a positive difference in your life? The person you nominate could win up to \$5,000! A person who is out there every day doing good things in the community, often quietly and without recognition.

That's the focus of a new campaign this fall called "#WhoPowersYou." The goal is to honor people who "inspire, motivate and empower members of our co-op communities," said Mary Ann Cristiano from Touchstone Energy.

Submit entries for contest

Entries will be accepted between October 19 and November 27. Enter via www.whopowersyou.com or through Twitter and Instagram with the hashtags #WhoPowersYou and #Contest. Both the website and Instagram will accept photos and videos, while Twitter will be limited to photos.

Voting runs from November 28 to December 18. Winners

will be announced in early 2017.

A panel of Touchstone Energy judges will decide the winners based not only on the voting, but also the quality of the submissions.

Prize amounts

Winners will be announced early next year. Those who are nominated are eligible for one of 10 prizes. The grand prize is \$5,000; second place is \$2,000; third place is \$1,000. Those finishing in fourth through tenth place receive \$150.

Let's recognize our Minnesota volunteers, community leaders and people who make a difference. Enter your favorite positive person today! 🗳️



Your electric co-op will be closed for Thanksgiving November 24 & 25. Crews will be on call in case of outages.



Brown County Rural Electrical Association

Connecting our co-ops & members to a progressive future

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Energy saving tips for the winter months



Energy bills typically go up during the winter. The cold weather is the biggest factor. Furnaces run to keep the house warm. Shorter days also contribute to more lighting, as do the holidays if one decorates. The holidays can also increase the use of ovens as people prepare to celebrate. What are some ways to help keep your electric bills down this winter? Check out these tips.

Take advantage of the sun

Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home. Close them at night.

Cover drafty windows

Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the winter. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly to help reduce infiltration.

Plus, install tight-fitting insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.

Adjust the temperature

When you are home and awake, set your thermostat as low as comfortable.

When you are asleep or out of the house, turn your thermostat back 10° to 15° for eight hours and save around 10 percent a year on your heating and cooling bills. A programmable thermostat makes it easy to set back your temperature.

Find and seal leaks

Seal the air leaks around utility wires, plumbing holes for pipes, gaps around chimneys, recessed lights in insulated ceilings and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

Add caulk or weatherstripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows.

Maintain your heating system

Schedule service for your heating system and find out what maintenance is required to keep your heating system operating efficiently.



Replace your furnace filter once a month or as needed.

If using wood- and pellet-burning heaters, clean the flue vent regularly; clean the inside of the appliance with a wire brush periodically to ensure that your home is heated efficiently.

Reduce heat loss from the fireplace

Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a window open; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.

When you use the fireplace, reduce heat loss by opening dampers in the bottom of the firebox (if provided) or open the nearest window slightly — approximately one inch — and close doors leading into the room. Lower the thermostat setting between 50° and 55°F.

If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue. If you do use the fireplace, install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room.

Check the seal on the fireplace flue damper and make it as snug as possible.

Purchase grates made of C-shaped metal tubes to draw cool room air into the fireplace and circulate warm air back into the room.

Add caulking around the fireplace hearth.

Lower your water heating costs

Water heating accounts for about 18 percent of the energy consumed in your home.

Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120°F). You'll not only save energy, you'll avoid scalding your hands. If you have an old water heater, call your electric co-op for a new energy-efficient and insulated electric water heater.

Lower your holiday lighting costs

Use light-emitting diode — or "LED" — holiday light strings to reduce the cost of decorating your home for the winter holidays. 🌟

— *Information courtesy of energystar.gov*

Open your wine bottle, electrically



Stop the twisting, grunting and pulling when opening a wine bottle. Whether relaxing solo after a long day at the office or hosting a dinner party, Oster's electric wine bottle opener makes it easy to start the wine flowing.

First, a foil cutter removes the wine seal. Second, place the wine bottle opener on top of the bottle. Next, press a switch to start opening the bottle. The unit's corkscrew will enter the cork and remove it. Finally, lift the opener away from the bottle and remove the cork by pressing the switch again. The corkscrew then turns in the opposite direction to release the cork.

Features of the Oster Electric Wine Bottle Opener include:

- Opens up to 30 bottles on a full charge. A full recharge takes about six to eight hours.
- UL-listed.
- The LED charging light exists on the top of the unit and a power indicator light on the base, which takes up minimal space on a kitchen counter, bar or table.
- Available in a silver, merlot or champagne finish.



Opening a wine bottle is as easy as 1, 2, 3 with the Oster Electric Wine Bottle Opener. Open up to 30 bottles on a single charge! Bring on the holidays!

The Oster electric wine opener is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$20. 🍷

See the light when it comes to holiday safety



Brighten your holiday season with lighting, but do it safely!

According to the National Fire Protection Association, holiday lights and other decorative lighting with line voltage are involved in an estimated average of 160 home fires each year, which caused nine deaths, 13 injuries and \$9 million in property damage. Failures or malfunctions were factors in two-thirds of those fires. In addition, 12 percent of home candle fires occurred in December — 1.5 times the monthly average.

When planning and implementing your lighting design, keep these holiday lighting safety tips in mind to help reduce your risk of property damage, injury or death.

- Unlike incandescent bulbs that generate most of their energy in heat, LEDs are cool to the touch, which also indicates greater energy-efficiency.
- LEDs are made with epoxy lenses and not glass so they are more durable.



- When hanging lights outdoors, use a wooden or fiberglass ladder.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor holiday lighting before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Never drape anything over a light bulb or lamp shade.
- Avoid using candles when possible. Consider using battery-operated candles in place of traditional candles.
- Never leave an open flame unattended. Keep burning candles within sight.
- Extinguish all candles before you leave the room or go to bed.
- Place lighted candles away from combustible material and areas where they might be knocked over.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper. Do not burn wrapping paper as a means of disposal. 🕯️

— Information courtesy of esfi.com

Brown County Briefs

Operation Round Up



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board will meet for its final 2016 meeting November 15. Area charitable organizations wishing to seek funding are encouraged to complete and submit the application found on the Brown County REA website www.browncountyrea.coop prior to that date.

Santa's Closet drop-off site



Members are encouraged to drop off donations of unwrapped toys, books, hats and mittens in the box near the front counter at Brown County REA as a collection site for Santa's Closet. Gifts will be given to children in the area who may not otherwise receive gifts this Christmas. Donations will be collected until December 8. Thank you for your generosity! 🍻

Remember— pay by the 20th



Please remember to pay your electric bill by the 20th of each month to avoid late charges. Bills will be mailed out around the 5th of each month and the due date/last day to pay is the 20th. 🍻

Member Advisory Council



The final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be held January 23, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. Council members from Districts 2, 3 & 8 will serve as the nominating committee for the Director elections to be held at the April

6, 2017 Annual Meeting. Nominating committees are asked to nominate at least two candidates to be on the ballot for each district. Watch for details in the mail.

Interested in learning more about your co-op and getting an inside look at the operation? Current Advisory Council members and Directors in each REA District will be looking for new members to serve one year on the Member Advisory Council. The council meets three evenings during the year, typically in April following the Annual Meeting, September and January the following year. Contact the Director or a current council member for your District or the REA office to learn more. 🍻

District #1

Director James Hanson
Kevin Ludewig
Richard & Susan Evers
Linda Wallin

District #4

Director William Berg
Curt Helget
Daryl & Amanda Ulrich

District #7

Director Greg Mages
Clete & Jan Zinniel
Jason & Sarah Seifert
Nick & Ashley Schwab

District #2

Director Bradley Sprenger
Kent Augustin
Gary & Jean Rathman
Robert Sprenger

District #5

Director James Mickelson
Gary & LeAnn Domeier
Paul & Julie Anderson
Loren Braulick

District #8

Director Reuben Kokesch
Aaron Klossner
David Luepke
Glenn & Jackie Forst

District #3

Director Allen Hanson
Tom & Ellen Byro
Larry & Karen Haala
Brian & Pam Kjelshus

District #6

Director Joel Christensen
Dan Kettner
Lee Johnson
Gary & Mary Jo Schroeder

District #9

Director Tom Hayes
Ruth Klossner
David & Sandy Martin

Are you planning to add electric load?

If you have recently installed or plan to install electric heat or other equipment (ie: tankless electric water heater), please call our office to inform us and discuss your options. It is necessary that we know before you install and start using this equipment so we can ensure the transformer and other equipment are available and sized properly. If equipment is not sized properly, you may experience problems such as blinking lights or loss of power. 🍻

Switch to LED holiday lights; recycle the old!



As you're upgrading your old holiday lights to LED, remember to recycle the old lights. Brown County REA will again be collecting strands of old holiday lights in the office entry area. You may drop off your old lights during business hours, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., beginning November 23. The collection will be combined with those collected by the Sleepy Eye YES! Team.

Please do not put cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights and CFL light bulbs in the collection box. 🍻

CapX2020 — a vision realized

Utilities invested 12 years and \$1.85 billion to fortify the Midwest electric grid and enable renewable development. With the late-September completion of a 345-kilovolt transmission line between Hampton and La Crosse, WI, the original vision for the massive CapX2020 grid expansion was completed.

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. They formed to upgrade and expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service.

CapX2020 was the largest electricity transmission project in Minnesota since the 1970s. The value delivered by the projects in terms of reduced congestion, market access, improved reliability and system resiliency are expected to far exceed the \$1.85 billion investment in the projects.

CapX2020 also has opened new outlets for renewable energy (initially wind and now also utility-scale solar) to be delivered to the market.

A new era

A report released in April by the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs described CapX2020's accomplishments as "an example that other utilities can and should emulate as they cooperate on regional projects."

Researchers said the CapX2020 partnership was the first instance of a large group of utilities working collaboratively to address the transmission needs of an entire region. The report said CapX2020 achieved success by building a strong coalition of utilities that had the resources to finance and manage large-scale projects and the political influence to ally with a broad range of stakeholders to change laws and regulations.

CapX2020 also provided an opportunity for all the participating utilities to invest in the projects to benefit the



CapX2020 includes the largest transmission projects in Minnesota since the 1970s. These projects benefit the electric grid, co-op members and all Midwest utility customers.

customers they serve. This was innovative considering that there were multiple simultaneous large-scale projects and diverse business structures among the participants.

An economic force

During construction of the projects, local communities received an economic boost. An economic impact study was conducted by the University of Minnesota Duluth's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. It estimated the CapX2020 projects would result in the creation of thousands of construction and related jobs, as well as collectively provide nearly \$50 million in tax revenue to the four states where the projects were built.

CapX2020 continues

The CapX2020 utilities continue to assemble periodically to discuss regional transmission needs and policy. In 2011 MISO awarded a fifth project, the Big Stone South-Brookings County project, which will be completed in 2017. The CapX2020 utilities are Central Municipal Power Services, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Great River Energy, Minnesota Power, Missouri River Energy Services, Otter Tail Power, Rochester Public Utilities, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, WPPI Energy and Xcel Energy. 📢

What is Power Cost Adjustment (PCA)?

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) reflects the fluctuation in the cost of wholesale power to Brown County REA with the difference passed through to the members as either a charge or a credit on their monthly statements. The wholesale power cost is typically highest in the summer months.

Brown County REA had a PCA calculation error on July bills where a credit was given when there should have been a PCA charge instead. The adjusted dollar amount from the error was collected on the August, September and October bills. We apologize for the error. Please contact the office if you have questions. 📢

The high and low on the differences between overhead and underground power lines



Pros:

- Lower cost, quicker construction, easier to spot damage and faults, less expensive to repair and upgrade, can be built anywhere, any voltage can be placed overhead.

Cons:

- Susceptible to wind, ice and snow; more vulnerable to damage from trees and vegetation, which requires right-of-way trimming; vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines; susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions; less attractive.



Pros:

- Not vulnerable to damage from tree branches; no right-of-way trimming required; less susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions; not impacted by wind, ice and snow; less vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines.

Cons:

- More expensive to build (twice as much); susceptible to flooding; difficult to locate faults; expensive to repair; fed by overhead lines at some point, making the lines vulnerable to outages and interruptions; limitations on voltages (transmission lines) that can be buried underground; can be vulnerable to dig-ins.

Two methods of installing the power lines exist: overhead and underground. Electric co-op members sometimes wonder why one is used versus the other. Why aren't all power lines installed underground? Isn't that better than overhead? These are great questions; the answer is that each method has its place.

Overhead line construction starts with the setting of utility poles. Poles can be set in nearly any type of terrain, even rocky ground. In the case of heavy rock, special equipment is used to auger out the hole. If placement occurs in boggy or wet terrain, many techniques are available to set poles securely. Once the poles are in place, wires can be strung and then equipment like transformers, fuses and reclosers are installed.

Underground line construction requires digging a trench that is deep enough to keep the lines well away from surface activities. Where the terrain is extremely rocky, underground lines may not be an option. Next, wires are laid in the trench directly or placed in conduits for protection. The trench is filled in and the surface is restored to its original condition. Padmount transformers and additional equipment are installed as needed. Typically, underground costs twice as much as overhead installation.

Let's take a look at the photos for some the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Determining if power lines should be overhead or underground boils down to what is best for the situation. Underground lines might be ideal in situations where there is a desire to keep the poles and wires out of sight, such as a residential neighborhood, park or historical area. Some cities and towns construct only underground lines for a variety of reasons, but it costs more.

Overhead systems work well when appearance is not a major concern. Examples include extremely long line distances across country or where the voltages are higher than the limitations set for underground lines.

The best mix of underground and overhead construction used by your co-op provides you, our members, with the highest possible quality of service at the lowest possible price. Cost, appearance, reliability, maintenance and future upgrades drive which is the better approach — overhead or underground. The co-op's operations manager assists members with questions on what's best for your property. 🛠️



Share your oodles of noodles recipes with all of us!

What's your favorite pasta dish: Alfredo, spaghetti, lasagne, mac 'N cheese, pasta salad or homemade noodles? Send us your pasta recipes by November 23 to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Creole Seafood Bisque by Jeff & Julie Halvorson, Madelia

- 2 steamed lobster tails; cooked, removed from shells and coarsely chopped
- ½ lb. cooked, medium-sized shrimp, chopped (we use frozen)
- ½ lb. crab meat, chopped (we use canned)
- 4 T. butter
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 c. flour
- 3 c. chicken broth
- 2 c. half and half cream
- 2 tsp. Creole seasoning

Assemble the seafood and set aside: lobster (make sure all bits of shell are removed), crab meat and shrimp. In a large sauce pan melt the butter. Add the onion, celery and garlic; cook for five minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in the flour and cook for two minutes. Stir in the chicken broth; cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until thickened. Add lobster meat, crabmeat and shrimp. Stir in cream and Creole seasoning. Cook for 10 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve. (We always hope for leftovers. It's just as good the next day!) 📧



Spicy Baked Shrimp by Cheri Drever, Granada

- ½ c. olive oil
- 1 T. Cajun or Creole seasoning
- 2 T. fresh lemon juice
- 1 lb. uncooked large shrimp, peeled & deveined
- 1 T. honey
- 1 T. soy sauce
- 2 T. chopped fresh or dried parsley

Combine the first six ingredients in a 9x13" baking dish. Add the shrimp and toss to coat. Refrigerate for one hour.

Preheat oven to 450°. Bake until shrimp are cooked through, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Garnish with lemon slices. Serve with rice or French bread. 📧

Creamy Crab Alfredo

by Terese Gruber, New Ulm

- 2 T. butter
- 4 tsp. flour
- 1½ c. half and half cream
- ¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 pkgs. (8 oz.) Crab Delights
- 6 oz. fettuccine noodles
- 1 T. fresh chopped parsley

Melt butter in saucepan. Stir in flour. Gradually add cream and stir until thick. Add Parmesan cheese, cook; stir until smooth. Fold in crab. Heat three minutes more, stirring occasionally. Toss sauce with noodles. Thin with two to four T. milk if desired. Garnish with parsley and serve. 📧



Marinade for Salmon

by Nancy Katzer, Fairmont

- ½ c. butter
- ½ c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. soy sauce
- 1 T. fresh lemon juice

Melt butter in small sauce pan over low heat. Add brown sugar, soy sauce and lemon juice; stir until sugar is dissolved.

Place salmon skin side down in glass dish. Pour marinade over, cover dish and set in refrigerator for two to four hours. Grill or bake in oven. 📧

— From ORCA Point Lodge, Alaska



Dirty dishes await! Co-op's water heater to the rescue!

Behind a great holiday feast, your electric co-op's water heater tackles the dirty dishes beast! Call your electric cooperative for details. Clean up easily & effortlessly with the electrifying power of energy-efficiency and a limited lifetime warranty for the original owner.

Call before digging



1-800-252-1166

Contact Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12-inches deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tilting and more. You can also register on www.gopherstate-onecall.org. 📧





Darla Ruschen
Office Manager

Staff notes

More than \$545,000 in capital credits payments will be issued

This year, again, the check is in the mail!

When you pay your electric bill each month, it's nice to know that someday, because we are a cooperative, you will get a portion of your payment back in the form of a capital credits refund.

But first we must pay our bills. Any margins or profits remaining are a significant source of equity for the cooperative. In addition to paying the expenses member equity helps buy necessary equipment and repay debt. When the bills are paid, any profits related to the sale of electric service are "allocated" to members' capital credits accounts in proportion to their electrical use. Unlike an investor-owned utility, our profits are returned to you, the owners of the cooperative, who use the electricity, rather than stockholders.

At the September board meeting the Brown County REA Board of Directors approved the payment of \$545,752 in patronage dividends, also known as capital credits, to its members. This amount is broken down as 20 percent to 2015 members (\$109,150); 100 percent of remaining 1998 balance (\$233,243); and 53 percent of 1999 balance (\$203,359).

Anyone who was a member of the co-op in 2015 will receive a portion of the \$109,150. Those who were members in 1998 and 1999 will receive a check for their share of the amounts being retired from those years. Checks will not be issued in amounts of \$15 or less. Amounts under \$15 are credited to the electric bill of current members. For former members these amounts will be paid in future years when the balance reaches at least \$15.

This retirement of capital credits brings the total retired to Brown County REA members over the years to more than \$14.6 million.

This year again, instead of being handed out in person, the checks will be mailed directly to each member around the third week of November. We ask that you please cash your capital credits check as soon as possible after receiving it.

Returning capital credits to members is a practice unique to the cooperative form of business and represents one of the cooperative principles — members' economic participation. And perhaps best of all, the benefits of this economic participation return to our local communities. 🌱



**Want to learn more about our co-op and its programs?
Visit our website at www.browncountyrea.coop!** 🌱



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop

Website: www.browncountyrea.coop

Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368

Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

Wade Hensel, General Manager

Board of Directors

James Mickelson, President — 794-6298

William Berg, Vice President — 354-4895

James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756

Brad Sprenger — 877-2633

Allen Hanson — 276-0691

Thomas Hayes — 228-8954

Reuben Kokesch — 359-2112

Greg Mages — 794-3540

Joel Christensen — 828-4550

The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting October 27 at the BCREA headquarters, Sleepy Eye.

Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the September 2016 board meeting minutes, new member applications, member cancellations, disbursements and payments to estates.

- Reviewed and approved September 2016 payroll and August 2016 financial statements.

- Approved the write-off of \$3,846.85 in uncollectible electric bill balances.

- Reviewed recent construction activities and pole testing progress.

- Reviewed results of infrared testing on cooperative substations and largest three-phase consumers.

- Informed of newly interconnected and pending member-owned distributed generation projects on the system. .

The next meeting will be held jointly with the BENCO Electric board November 22 at the BCREA headquarters, Sleepy Eye. 🌱