

# Connections

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 21, Issue 1

## Electric cooperatives ready to work with elected officials

As the nation welcomes a new Congress and Administration, America's electric cooperatives are ready to welcome back old friends and introduce ourselves to newcomers.

The co-ops' message to elected officials, both old and new, Republican and Democrat, will be the same: we all need to work together to protect consumer access to safe, reliable and affordable electric service.

We have reason to believe this message will be well-received. After all, co-ops speak for more than 42 million electric member-owners nationwide, a sizeable constituency by any measure.

Moreover, whatever you thought of the 2016 campaign, one message came through loud and clear: many, many people don't believe their concerns are being heard. For member-owned cooperatives listening to people is at the heart of our business model. We carry our members' concerns to public officials every day.

As co-ops reach out to engage with elected officials, they will build on the strength of *Co-ops Vote*, the grassroots initiative to reverse declining voter turnout in rural areas. *Co-ops Vote* did more than register voters. This initiative sent a strong message to the country's elected officials that rural electric consumers matter.

The Donald Trump wave that swept the country certainly had an impact in Minnesota. Hillary Clinton narrowly won Minnesota by 46.41 percent to 44.96 percent; a margin of only about 43,000 votes in what was considered a reliably Democratic state. Comparisons of the 2016 and 2012 presidential races are revealing. In 2016 Trump exceeded Mitt Romney's 2012 Minnesota vote total by only 990 votes, while Clinton received 182,278 votes less than President Obama did in 2012; it was all about voter turnout this year.

On the state level the Republican momentum assured the Minnesota House of Representatives will stay in Republican hands. Prior to the election Republicans held a 73 to 61



majority. After the election the Republican majority will be 76 to 57 with one vacant seat to be filled in a February special election.

More remarkably, the Minnesota Senate flipped from Democrat to Republican. Democrats held a ten-seat advantage by a margin of 38 to 28 with one vacancy. It now appears that Republicans will control the Senate by a slim 34 to 33 margin.

Cooperatives will remind policymakers to keep the needs of their member-owners front and center:

- Needs such as funding for infrastructure (especially transmission lines),
- Increasing the efficiency of the electric system, and
- Determining the future of hydropower

and nuclear energy.

Elected officials will be making decisions affecting every aspect of the electric system. Advocating for these issues is nothing new. In fact, we've been doing it for years. And we're ready to continue the fight on your behalf.

At your electric co-op we will reach out to local, state and federal officials. We explain the unique member-owned, not-for-profit co-op business model. Plus, we remind long-time politicians of our co-op's commitment to its members.

In Washington, D.C. our national trade association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, will be conducting similar introductions, speaking with key agencies and departments within the new administration. It is likely many of these new policymakers will know little or nothing of the cooperative model.

Forging an energy future that serves rural consumers and protecting access to safe, reliable and affordable electric power will be a bipartisan effort. Electric co-ops are optimistic. As we work with our elected leaders, we hope to renew a spirit of cooperation in the nation's Capital and in statehouses across the country. After all cooperation is what co-ops do best! (E)

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

### Makeover 2017!

The Connections newsletter needed a new look. The CFL light bulb was old technology. Your electric cooperative refreshed the cover to a timeless graphic — the electrical plug — that connects you with your electric cooperative's news, events, safety and energy-efficiency to power your busy lives. Welcome to the New Year and our new look!

This publication focuses on cooperative savings, programs and events. As this is the official member publication, member's story ideas, letters-to-the-editor and comments are welcomed.



Andrea Christoffer, CCC, Editor  
"Owned by those it serves"



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## Put your old fridge or freezer on ice

With the start of the new year people start home improvement projects. Maybe remodeling your kitchen is your New Year's resolution. In that case a new refrigerator might be something you want to consider to help save money on your utility bill.

### Refrigerators

Thanks to recent improvements in insulation and compressors, today's refrigerators use much less energy than older models. With an Energy Star-certified refrigerator you can maximize your energy and dollar savings without sacrificing the features you want. Energy Star refrigerators are about nine percent more energy efficient than models that meet the federal minimum energy-efficiency standard.

An estimated 170 million refrigerators and refrigerator-freezers are currently in use in the United States. More than 60 million refrigerators are more than 10 years old, costing consumers \$4.4 billion a year in energy costs. By properly recycling your old refrigerator and replacing it with a new Energy Star refrigerator, you can save approximately \$250 over the next five years. If your refrigerator is around 20 years old, that number could be nearly \$500.

For example, a twenty-year-old 18-cubic foot refrigerator uses about \$140 worth of electricity each year. A new model would use around \$40 worth of electricity. To figure out your savings visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov); search for the refrigerator cost calculator.

Energy Star refrigerators use less energy and help us reduce our impact on the environment. If all refrigerators sold in the United States were Energy Star-certified, the energy-cost savings would grow to nearly \$700 million each year and 9 billion pounds of annual greenhouse gas emissions would be prevented, equivalent to the emissions from more than 870,000 vehicles.

Your electric co-op also offers rebates on new Energy Star refrigerators and freezers (with recycling of the old one). Call your electric cooperative for more information or



**Does your New Year's resolution include a new refrigerator or freezer? Seek out Energy Star models and your cooperative's rebates!**

visit the website about the rebate details.  
**What about freezers?**

The same principle applies. Try to find an Energy Star model. Use the yellow energy label to determine the model's energy use, compare the energy use of similar models and estimate annual operating costs.

Generally, the larger the freezer, the greater the energy consumption. Plus, consider whether an upright or chest freezer better meets your needs. An upright freezer has a front-mounted door like a refrigerator and shelves that allow for easy organization. While a chest freezer typically requires more floor space, it's usually more energy-efficient since the door opens from the top and allows less cold air to escape. Manual defrost freezers use half the energy of automatic defrost models, but must be defrosted periodically to achieve the energy savings. Don't allow frost to build up more than one-quarter of an inch.

Follow these guidelines to reduce the amount of energy your freezer uses:

- Keep the temperature at 0 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid extreme temperatures.
- Keep your freezer indoors, such as in the basement. Extreme temperatures are hard on the compressor and can reduce the life of your freezer.
- Allow air circulation behind the freezer.
- Leave a few inches between the wall or cabinets and the freezer.
- Check the door seals. Make sure the seals around the door are airtight. If not, replace them.
- Keep the door closed. Minimize the amount of time the freezer door is open.

If you buy a new freezer, be sure to recycle your old one. Replacing and properly recycling your 15-year old freezer could reduce your carbon footprint by 6,800 pounds. Many appliance retailers will pick up and recycle your old freezer when you purchase a new one for a small fee.

# Cooking under pressure — electrically!

The Elite Platinum Digital Pressure Cooker is not your momma's pressure cooker! It allows flexibility for a busy lifestyle without sacrificing the food quality. Cook stews, rice, meat and more.

A compact design takes up minimal space. The pressure cooker features stainless steel material with a dual-layer thermal exterior. Vents and a rubber sealing gasket ensure quiet operation and pressure maintenance. An automatic float valve adjusts with pressure build up and secures the lid, preventing it from being opened during use. The adjustable airtight and exhaust valve enables the manual release of built-up pressure.

Clean up easily with the four-quart interior non-stick pot. The pressure cooker includes a stainless steel wire rack, tongs, measuring cup and spatula.



**The Elite Platinum Pressure Cooker brings pressure cookers into the digital age. It features nine pre-programmed cooking modes, countdown LED timer and more.**

Use the adjustable timer for the desired cook time up to 99-minutes. A delay timer allows you to delay the start of cooking up to 24 hours. Nine preset menu functions include: brown/saute, slow cook, soup and stew, beans and grains, desserts, steam, meat and chicken, rice and keep warm. Not only does the pressure cooker reduce cooking time by 70 percent, it also works as a slow cooker. Plus, keep cooked foods warm up to 12 hours.

Make yogurt, oatmeal, cheesecake, vegetable broth, boiled eggs, sloppy joes, meat and chicken, applesauce, risotto, beans, rice, chili and stew.

The pressure cooker comes in black or red. Enjoy a limited one-year warranty; find it on Amazon.com for about \$80.

Now get cooking without any of the pressure — mental pressure — that is! 

## Safety

### *Fly drones safely, especially around power lines*

Drones are unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) used for recreation and work. This increases the need to fly these craft safely, especially around power lines.

If a drone flies into a power line, it could cause power outages. It could also result in downed lines, which pose a dangerous electrical safety hazard. The resulting falling debris could also endanger public safety.

Flying a UAS for business purposes requires approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The federal government requires individual hobbyists who own drones that weigh more than 0.55 pounds to register with FAA. Failure to register these drones could result in expensive civil and criminal fines, as well as prison time. The hope is that this requirement results in drones being used more responsibly. For more information on drone (UAS) registration go to [www.faa.gov/uas/registration](http://www.faa.gov/uas/registration).

Follow federal guidelines for registering your drone or getting business approval. Plus, be aware and abide by community and state-specific legislation.

Keep these safety guidelines from the FAA in mind:

- Never fly drones higher than 400 feet.



- Before flying the drone, check it for damage. To reduce the chance of an accident, have a damaged drone repaired before use.
- Do not fly the drone beyond your line of sight.
- Do not fly near airports, manned aircraft, stadiums or people.
- Do not fly for commercial purposes unless specifically authorized by the FAA.

- Do not fly in bad weather conditions, such as low visibility or high winds.

- Never fly your drone in a reckless manner. You could be fined for endangering people or other aircraft.

- When selecting the space to fly your drone, always use common sense and keep safety in mind.

Never touch downed power lines or objects in contact with those lines. Just because power lines are damaged does not mean they aren't conducting electricity. Touching a downed line or anything it has fallen on, like a fence or a tree limb, could get you injured or even killed. Stay away; instruct others to do the same. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and your electric cooperative immediately. 

— Information courtesy of [safeelectricity.com](http://safeelectricity.com)

# Brown County Briefs

## Member Advisory Council



The final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will occur January 23, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

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 council member for your District or the REA office to learn more.

## Operation Round Up

The Round Up Trust Board will meet to review applications for funding on February 7 at 7 p.m. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding during this round should submit application by that date. The Operation Round Up application is available on the website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) under the *Programs & Services* tab.

## Community Health Day



Saturday,  
March 18, 2017  
6:30 a.m. to  
10 a.m.

Sleepy Eye

Public School

- Blood Analysis \$40, requires 12-hour fast
  - Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) \$30
  - Free blood pressure checks
- Call BCREA at 800-658-2368 or 794-3331 during business hours to schedule an appointment.

## Brown County Rural Electric Association announces Mike Heidemann as new CEO



Brown County Rural Electrical Association's (REA) Board of Directors announced that Michael Heidemann was selected as the new CEO, effective January 1, 2017.

Heidemann was serving as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) since June 2016. He succeeds Brown County REA's current General Manager Wade Hensel. Hensel will continue to serve in his role as General Manager until his retirement in April after 15 years at the cooperative.

"Mike has done a great job for the last 10 years and I look forward to working with him in the CEO position. Mike will be the fourth person to lead Brown County REA in its 80-year history and I will have the privilege of working with three of them," said Board President Jim Mickelson.

"I'm confident that Mike will do a great job leading Brown County REA," Hensel added.

Michael has 26 years of experience in the electrical utility field. For the last 10 years he served as Brown County REA's Operations and Engineering Manager. During the last four years of that time, he fulfilled the position at both Brown County REA and BENCOC Electric Cooperative in Mankato.

"I'm humbled and honored to serve Brown County REA's members in the CEO position," Heidemann said. "I look forward to continuing the work the past managers have established by bringing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to Brown County REA's members."

Brown County REA serves more than 4,000 member-owners in Brown County, and portions of Sibley, Nicollet, Renville, Redwood, Watonwan, Cottonwood and Blue Earth counties.

## Teens: win a trip to D.C.!

The trip of a lifetime awaits one lucky high school sophomore or junior whose parents or guardians are members of Brown County REA. Eligible youth can win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. June 10-15, 2017.

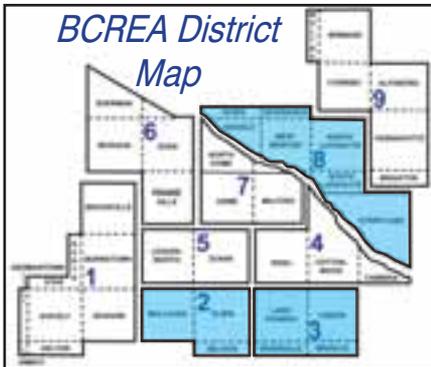
Interested youth are asked to write a 300-word essay on any energy-related topic and submit it, along with the application form to Brown County REA by the close of business on Friday, March 3, 2017.

Brown County REA will select three finalists who will be interviewed and award the trip to Washington, D.C. to one of the three. The second place winner will receive \$150 and serve as first alternate for the trip. \$100 will be awarded for third place.

## Drop off Christmas lights before January 20

As you're taking down your holiday lights, remember you can recycle your old and non-working lights. Brown County REA will again collect strands of holiday lights in the office entry area through January 20. After that date you'll have to hang on to your old lights until November. You may drop off your old lights during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 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 or CFL light bulbs in the collection box.

# Want to be a BCREA director?



Nominations are being sought for candidates to run for election to the Brown County REA Board of Directors in Districts 2, 3 and 8.

District 2 consists of Mulligan and Albin townships in Brown County and part of Nelson Township in Watonwan County. District 3 is made up of Lake Hanska and Linden townships and the City of Hanska in Brown County, plus parts of Riverdale and Madelia townships in Watonwan County. District 8 includes Ridgley, West Newton, North and South Lafayette townships, portions of Cairo and Severance, plus part of Courtland townships in Nicollet County.

The nominating committees are made up of the people currently serving on the Member Advisory Council and represent the respective districts, which are up for election. Your input to the nominating committee members is appreciated and helpful in their selection of director candidates. If you are interested in being a candidate or have a member in mind who you believe would be a good candidate, please contact a nominating committee member prior to the next Member Advisory meeting January 23, 2017. Nominating Committee members are: District 2: Kent Augustin, Gary & Jean Rathman, Robert Sprenger; District 3: Tom & Ellen Byro, Larry & Karen Haala, Brian & Pam Kjelshus; District 8: Aaron Klossner, David Luepke, Glenn & Jackie Forst. Please make sure the nominee is willing have his or her name on the ballot.

Brown County REA's nine-member Board of Directors meets monthly, usually the last Thursday of each month, during the day. Meetings are held at the REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Other meetings possible events include the Annual Meeting, annual and other meetings of our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) district and annual meetings, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) annual meeting and other meetings to learn and stay current on policies and procedures of the electric industry.

The board is responsible for governing the cooperative. It will establish policies, approve major plans, programs and budgets, receive management reports and establish broad objectives for the General Manager.

#### Among responsibilities of a Director:

- Develop knowledge and skills as a director and stay informed of relevant and material matters affecting business and operations of the co-op.
- Authorize the money, facilities and equipment necessary to carry out the objectives of the cooperative, including the review and approval of the operating budget.
- Establish controls that can be used in appraising the effectiveness of the cooperative and review periodic reports from the General Manager and staff to ascertain conformity with the board's policies and objectives.
- Assure that the financial affairs of the co-op are being conducted and recorded in accordance with all prescribed laws and regulations and that the financial records accurately reflect the financial condition of the co-op.
- Determine and adopt key issues, strategic initiatives/objectives, major goals and monitor results.
- Review and approve the broad operating programs of service, along with activities developed and recommended by the General Manager.
- Maintain compliance with all legal requirements.
- Conduct meetings and other activities to inform members and obtain their ideas and suggestions.
- Review participation in outside activities enhancing the cooperative's prestige, strengthen the cooperative's operations and fulfill BCREA's obligations to its members and the communities where the cooperative serves and operates.

The nominating committee will nominate at least two candidates for each directorship at least 35 days before the Annual Meeting. In addition, any 10 or more cooperative members residing in the district may submit a nomination with their signatures for a director in their district. Nominations may also be made for a member residing in the district by another member who resides in the district at the Annual Meeting. The 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will be held April 6, 2017 at the Civic Center in New Ulm.

If you have questions or would like to be a candidate for the Board of Directors, please contact Brown County REA at 1-800-658-2368 or 794-3331 during business hours. ☎

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# What does it cost to run that appliance?

Appliance	Monthly Energy	Monthly Cost
Top Freezer – 1993-2000	71 kWh	\$8.17
Top Freezer – 2001-2008	43 kWh	\$4.95
Top Freezer – ENERGY STAR	34 kWh	\$3.91
Dishwasher	30 kWh	\$3.45
ENERGY STAR Dishwasher	26 kWh	\$2.99
Oven	45 kWh	\$5.18
Range Top	37 kWh	\$4.26
Microwave Oven	17 kWh	\$1.96
Coffeemaker	10 kWh	\$1.15
Clothes Washer	8 kWh	\$0.92
Clothes Dryer	83 kWh	\$9.55
9-Watt LED Lamp	1.1 kWh	\$0.13
18-Watt CFL Lamp	2.2 kWh	\$0.25
100-Watt Incandescent Lamp	12.4 kWh	\$1.43
Water Heater – Family of 4	400 kWh	\$46.00
Dehumidifier	81-690 kWh	\$9.32-\$79.35

Appliance	Monthly Energy	Monthly Cost
Ceiling Fan	7-30 kWh	\$0.81-\$3.45
Portable Heater (1,500 Watts)	280-1080 kWh	\$32.20-\$124.20
Well Pump	7-108 kWh	\$0.81-\$12.42
Desktop PC	20 kWh	\$2.30
Notebook PC	6 kWh	\$0.52
Stereo System	10 kWh	\$1.15
Engine Block Heater	62 kWh	\$7.13
<40" Analog	15 kWh	\$1.73
>40" Analog	26 kWh	\$2.99
<40" Digital HD	25 kWh	\$2.88
>40" Digital HD	38 kWh	\$4.37
DVD Player/VCR	7 kWh	\$0.81
Video Game System	3.4 kWh	\$0.39
Cellular Phone	1-3 kWh	\$0.12-\$0.35

## Focused on your street. Not on Wall Street.

Think of your not-for-profit Touchstone Energy cooperative as your very own local energy adviser. After all we're owned by you and the other members in our community, which means you'll always have a say in how your co-op runs. To learn more, visit [TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://TouchstoneEnergy.com)

## Your source of power and information



## No matter which way you hash it, hash brown recipes are tasty

How do you like your hash browns? Do you shred your own, add to an egg bake, hot dish or as potato pancakes? Send us your hash brown recipes by January 26 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! ☺

### Old Timer's Angel Food Cake by Roxanna Anderson, Hanska

1½ c. of egg whites (about a dozen of eggs)    ¼ tsp. almond extract  
 ½ tsp. salt    1 c. white granulated sugar  
 1 tsp. cream of tartar    1 c. powdered sugar  
 1 tsp. white vanilla    1 c. sifted cake flour (measure after sifting)

Set oven at 475°. Set angel food tube pan in oven to heat while preparing the batter. Note: this is not an error!

Beat the egg whites with salt, cream of tartar, vanilla and almond extract until it stands in stiff peaks. Then add the white granulated sugar folding in 2 tablespoons at a time. Sift powdered sugar and cake flour together five times. Then fold in 2 tablespoons at a time. Remove the hot pan from the oven and pour the batter into the pan. Return to the oven.

Note: oven temps may vary. Bake approximately 28 minutes.

Turn pan upside down on the cupboard to cool.

This is so tasty and does not taste like the cake mix we buy today. I feel no need exists for added frostings or topping, but do as you desire.

Instead of 475° I prefer to bake at 425° for 17 minutes and then turn it down to 375° and bake 11 minutes more (I didn't like the brown taste) or use a convection oven at 400° for 28 minutes. I bake with an oven thermometer and have good results. Enjoy this third generation recipe...updated for today's living! ☺

### Strawberries & Cream Torte by Rose Freking Heron Lake

1 baked Angel Food Cake, cooled and sliced into three layers

**Filling:** 1 envelope prepared Dream Whip Topping. Stir in a package of drained strawberry halves (save the sugared strawberry juice for the topping). Spread the topping between the two layers.

**Topping:** Combine ¾ c. reserved strawberry juice or juice plus water; add 1 T. cornstarch and cook until thick. Cool and pour over the top of the cake. Trim the top with six reserved strawberry halves.

Refrigerate. ☺

## Industry Best Lifetime Warranty\*

Built to last longer!



- No anode rods needed
- Resists scale build up

\*Lifetime warranty on tank. Six-year warranty on parts.

Call your electric cooperative for more information on the money-saving water heater program today!

**Pick up the phone before the shovel; 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, tiling and more. You can also register on [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org).

Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺



## 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](mailto:bcrea@bcrea.coop)  
Website: [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://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.



**Marcia Solie**  
Member Services  
Manager

# Staff notes

## 2017 residential rebates

Will 2017 be the year you replace your aging heating and cooling system with more energy-efficient equipment? Or is it time to update your refrigerator, freezer or clothes dryer with Energy Star-certified models? In addition to the potential savings on your electric bill, you may also qualify for rebates through Brown County REA.

Rebates are available on high-efficient air source heat pumps when installed by a Quality

Installed (QI) contractor and placed on the co-op's load control program:

- Air source heat pump: 14.5 SEER \$530
- Air source heat pump: 15 SEER \$630
- Air source heat pump: 16 SEER & higher \$680

To find a list of QI contractors, go to <http://HVACReduction.net/gre/publicsearch.cfm>. A new geothermal or ground source heat pump, qualifies for a \$1,000 rebate. Place it on load control with whole house storage or non-electric backup heat and receive an additional \$50 rebate.

No ductwork in your home? No problem. Install a ductless mini-split heat pump, which heats and cools your home. If electric is your home's primary heat source, you qualify for a \$500 rebate; pair with delivered fuel heating systems to earn a \$300 rebate.

New in 2017 is a \$25 rebate available to members who install a WiFi smart thermostat. Install or upgrade existing HVAC systems equipped with an electronically commutated motor (ECM) and receive a \$50 rebate.

Look for the Energy Star label when shopping for appliances and lighting products to qualify for cooperative rebates.

If you purchase an Energy Star full-size refrigerator or freezer and recycle the replaced unit you qualify for a \$75 rebate. One appliance rebate per member per year; not valid on dorm-size appliances. Please submit proof of purchase, Energy Star certification and recycling of the replaced unit to receive the rebate. Another new rebate this year is \$75 when you purchase an Energy Star-certified electric clothes dryer.

BCREA now has a rebate form that includes residential lighting available on our newly updated website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop). Energy Star compact fluorescent (CFL) and LED light bulbs are rebated up to 50 percent of the bulb cost with a \$3 per LED bulb maximum and CFL \$.50 each. A member-owned Energy Star LED yard light qualifies for a \$30 rebate. Limit one rebate per member.

Energy-efficient lighting projects, electric forklifts, robotic milking systems, premium-efficiency motor retrofits, variable-frequency drives, heating ventilation and cooling, compressed air efficiency evaluation and other custom electrical applications may qualify for commercial rebates as well. Please call or stop by the office to learn more. ☎

# Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting December 15 at the BENCO office in Mankato. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2017 Operating Budget.
- Reviewed and approved a resolution naming Michael Heidemann as Chief Executive Officer effective January 1, 2017.
- Updated on continuing activities of the Southern Minnesota Electric Cooperative (SMEC) related to the acquisition and operation of former Alliant Energy service territory.
- Reviewed recent maintenance activities and linemen safety training. Carr Tree Service will resume work in BCREA service area in January.
- Held a discussion on participation in Operation Round Up.
- Reviewed and approved staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting will be January 24, 2017 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎