

Connections

December 2021

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 25, Issue 12

Teens: write your own ticket to D.C.!

Youth Tour is back! Once again, 1,900 high school students from across rural America will converge in Washington, D.C. this summer. Teens: you can write your own ticket to be one of them!

All students need to do to enter the Youth Tour contest is write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic and fill out a two-page application by March 4. The finalists will be interviewed in mid-March. The winner will receive the free trip to D.C., courtesy of your electric co-op, and travel with the other Minnesota delegates.

The Youth Tour event will be held June 14-19. The students that attend represent our next generation of leaders. They are the people who will make our communities better places to live and lead businesses that will provide good jobs and valuable services.

Participants in the Youth Tour spend nearly a week in Washington, D.C. where they will take part in the following activities:

- Visit monuments, memorials and museums.
- Learn about electric cooperatives and the cooperative business model.
- Spend a day on Capitol Hill, including face-to-face meetings with senators and representatives in Congress.
- Build lifelong friendships with other young leaders from across Minnesota and the country.

Youth Tour isn't just a field trip to Washington, D.C. It's a transformational experience that shows students the



Enter the Youth Tour contest to write your own ticket to Washington, D.C. and join teens from across the nation in the experience!

power of democracy and the importance of leadership.

This experience is free for the student. The only out-of-pocket expenses are for incidentals, such as souvenirs.

Electric cooperatives have sponsored the Youth Tour for more than 50 years because we believe it is our responsibility as a not-for-profit, community-based organization to invest in our next generation of leaders.

Visit www.browncountyrea.coop to download the application and find contest details. Otherwise, visit your high school counselor to pick up the application.

Second place earns \$150. Third place receives \$100. Other entrants will receive gift cards.

2019's winner was Ben Nachreiner, Comfrey. "The visit to the capitol was very interesting...we talked to [representative staff members] about their jobs [and] asked questions about various political topics. One thing that stood out to me was that the Smithsonian is huge. The museums were very interesting. It was cool to look at things that were important to the history of our country. It was fun meeting other people and making friends. I would like to thank the Brown County REA, as well as the national organization, for giving me this awesome opportunity. I would definitely recommend this trip to other people!"

Find photos from the Youth Tour trip at www.mrea.org/programs/youth-programs-2/.

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Interested in serving as a BCREA Director?

It is nomination time. BCREA is looking for director candidates to run for election in Districts 1, 4 and 5. If you are interested, or know someone who is interested, check out Page 5 for more details.

Energy Wise

Introducing the 12 days of Christmas, not the song, but bright energy-wise tips!

1

Cooking a holiday feast? Use the oven light to check the progress of your dish.



2

Ask Santa for a smart or programmable thermostat to save energy.



3

Close the fireplace damper when a fire is not burning.



4

When your holiday tree is lit, turn off lamps and enjoy the cozy ambiance.



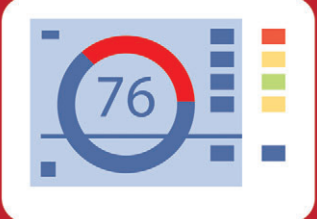
5

Gifting new electronics, gadgets or appliances? Look for the ENERGY STAR® logo.



6

Lower the thermostat when guests arrive.



7

Deck the halls with LED holiday lights.



8

Use a timer to turn off holiday lights at night when you're sleeping.



9

Keep the winter chill outdoors by sealing air leaks around your home.



— Continued on Page 6

Raise the savings bar on sound bars

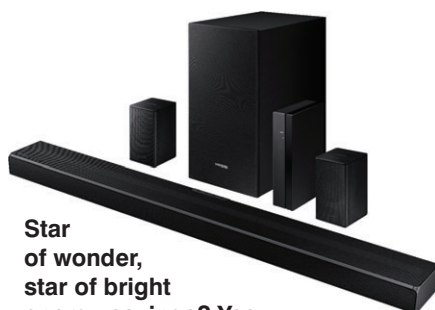
As TVs become bigger, better and more affordable, more people are building their own simple home theaters. The next step is adding great sound to the great picture. Sound bars are great gifts this holiday season. Consider more than just sound quality. Invest in energy-efficiency too. Energy Star-rated soundbars use 70 percent less energy than conventional models.

One such model is the Samsung 7.1-Channel Soundbar with Dolby 5.1/DTS Virtual: X. You'll love these features.

1. Volume leveling technology — sound bars can ensure commercials are not louder than the shows you watch. This feature is good for late-night watching, as loud sound effects won't wake sleeping family members. In addition, the lower volumes will save energy.

2. 3D sound — soundbars use multiple audio channels with discrete sounds assigned to each channel to create a three-dimensional surround effect. Surround sound from one soundbar avoids the need for and the extra energy use of a multi-speaker surround sound system.

3. Acoustic beam — get pulled into what you're watching



Star of wonder, star of bright energy savings? Yes, look for the Energy Star logo on even sound bars for energy savings year-round.

with panoramic sound that moves with the action on-screen.

4. Adaptive sound — forget rewinding to catch what was said. Enjoy dynamically optimized audio with enhanced voice clarity for whatever you are watching, including sports, games, movies and more.

5. Q-Symphony — audio that tracks with each scene with perfectly synchronized sound with a compatible Samsung TV for a harmonious, cinematic experience.

6. Wireless Rear Speaker Kit — let the sound flow around you with wireless rear speakers, taking surround sound to next level for more dynamic entertainment.

7. Game Pro Mode — level up with 3D directional audio from up-firing speakers. Acoustic Beam® and powerful woofers automatically sync sound with the on-screen action, while crosstalk cancellation minimizes distractions.

The soundbar includes remote, HDMI cable, wall-mount kit, power adapter and rubber feet.

This type of sound bar ranges from \$300 to \$400 and is available from Best Buy, Amazon or Walmart. 

Safety

Tis the season to celebrate safely

December tis the season for Santa, singing and safety too! Unfortunately, this is the season for the most household accidents and fires. Make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary with these safety tips.


- Keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources — especially those with an open flame. Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Do not run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows, or across sidewalks.
- If you have a natural Christmas tree, water often keeping it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all.
- Always turn off your lighting decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping.
- If you use lots of extension cords or adapters, hire a qualified electrician to add more outlets to your home.



• Phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to Bing Crosby, but overheated electronics under pillows and blankets are dangerous.

• Need a perfect gift idea? Go with a smoke alarm. All homes need a working smoke alarm outside of sleeping areas and on every level, including the basement.

• If using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible, like a blanket or curtains.

• The best family gift involves upgrading to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI) breakers or outlets. About half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented by AFCIs. All upgrades should be completed by a qualified electrician. 

— Information courtesy of esfi.org

Brown County Briefs

2022 calendars available

Members can now pick up the 2022 large, farm pocket calendars (one per member please) from the table in the entry to the REA headquarters. A small number of pocket-size calendars are also available, while supplies last.

Energy efficiency tip



Heading out of town for the holiday season? Unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load.

Some TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet — even when not in use.

Line patrol season is underway

Brown County REA crews are starting line patrol and will be coming onto yards and property throughout the service area. Crews patrol the lines each year in the winter months checking overhead and underground lines and equipment. Linemen will be looking for maintenance issues that need attention, such as loose or missing guy wires and guards, damaged wires and proper line clearance. They will perform maintenance on OCRs and overhead and underground lines.

Line patrol is just one more way your co-op strives to meet its mission to deliver safe and reliable electric service to its members.

Recycle old holiday lights

BCREA is working with the Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect old holiday lights to be recycled. Drop off old lights in the box in the office entry, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., through mid-January. Do not place cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL bulbs in box.

Small change makes a big impact in 2021; more than \$11,000 donated through Operation Round Up



BCREA Trust Board members include (front, left to right): Lee Johnson, Vickie Kral, Michelle Oswald. Back (left to right): Lisa Schmitz, Jessie Beranek, Kim Hensch, Kari Helget, Pat Roiger, Lynnae Pelzel.

Thanks to monthly contributions from members who “round up” their electric bill to the nearest dollar, Operation Round Up was able to donate \$11,350 to 25 area organizations, seven scholarships and five families in crisis this past year.

Each month participating BCREA members “round up” their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar. For example, if your electric bill is \$87.54, you pay \$88. The extra \$.46 goes into the Round Up Trust account and becomes part of the funds distributed to worthy causes throughout the service area. For less than \$12 per year, your contribution helps make a difference when your change is pooled with other members’ contributions to provide support to area charitable organizations, individuals, families in crisis and scholarships.

Among the organizations to receive Operation Round Up contributions in 2021 were Junior Achievement of the New Ulm Area, Comfrey Auxiliary Quilts of Valor, Avenue of Flags, Southern Minnesota Youth Dairy Show, area high schools after-prom events and five area food shelves.

Since 1995, when Operation Round Up was started at Brown County REA, \$224,725 has been contributed to organizations and individuals in the cooperative’s service area. Many thanks to all Brown County REA members who participate in Operation Round Up. The summary of your tax-deductible contributions for 2021 will be printed on your January electric bill.

In this season of giving, please consider sharing your “change” by participating in Operation Round Up, if you do not already. Fill out and submit the Operation Round Up Enrollment form on the REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop.



Accepting donations from the final 2021 Round Up meeting were (left photo) Kari Beran with Coats for Kids (left) and Round Up’s Kari Helget. Right photo: Rick Mages of Food for Kidz with Trust Board Member Vickie Kral.

\$4,000 distributed at last ORU 2021 meeting



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust made donations totaling \$4,000 to seven organizations and one family at its fourth quarter meeting November 16.

Funds were granted to Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Pro Kinship for

Kids Coats for Kids project, Healthy Community Healthy Youth SPOTS program, Food for Kidz, Dyckman Free Library, Sertoma Club Santa's Closet, Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Sleepy Eye Holiday Lights in Motion, and one co-op family in crisis.

Appreciation was given to Trust Board Members Vickie Kral, Lee

Johnson and Michelle Oswald who all completed the allowed two three-year terms on the board.

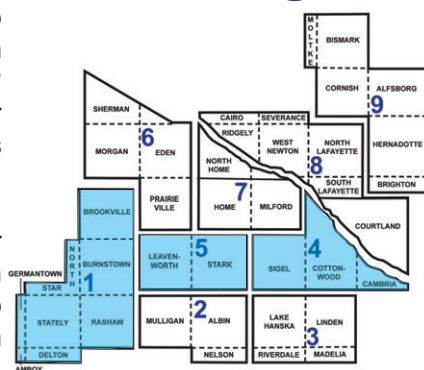
If you are part of an organization or project which would like to apply for funding through Operation Round Up, use the application found at www.browncountyrea.coop, or contact 794-3331 or 800-658-2368.

Director candidates sought for 2022 election

Interested or know of someone who may be interested in running for a position as Director for your electric cooperative? Nominations are being sought for candidates to run for election in BCREA's Districts 1, 4, and 5.

District 1 is made up of Stately, Bashaw, Burnstown and portions of North Star townships, the city of Comfrey in Brown County, a portion of Brookville Township in Redwood County and part of Delton Township in Cottonwood County. District 4 covers Sigel and Cottonwood townships in Brown County and part of Cambria Township in Blue Earth County. District 5 consists of Stark and Leavenworth townships in Brown County.

Nominating committees are made up of three members from each of the districts up for election. Per the cooperative's



by-laws, the nominating committee will nominate at least two candidates for each directorship at least 30 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 from the floor and write-in candidacy are not permitted at the Annual Meeting.

Members who reside in District 1, 4 or 5 and interested in being a director candidate,

please complete and return the Director Candidate Application. Your name will be shared with the nomination committee for consideration as a candidate.

Directors will be elected at the 85th Annual Meeting set for the evening of March 31, 2022 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.

By signing this application, I certify that I am a member of Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA) and I hereby apply as a nominee for director in District _____ and request my name be considered by the Nominating Committee to be placed on the ballot for election at the March 31, 2022 Annual Meeting. I certify that the following statements are true and accurate as to my qualification to be a candidate for director.

- I am a member in good standing of the cooperative, receiving service at my primary residence, which is in the district for which I am seeking election.
- Within the last five (5) years I have not been adjudged to be guilty of a felony.
- Within the last three (3) years I was not an employee of the cooperative or a subsidiary.
- Within the last five (5) years I have not been party in a mediation, arbitration, lawsuit or other legal action against or by the cooperative.
- During the last five (5) years I have not been employed by a labor union, which represents or has represented, or has endeavored to represent, any employees of the co-op.

- I am not a spouse, co-habitant, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, whether by blood or in-law, of an employee or director of the cooperative.
- I am not in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the cooperative or any cooperative-affiliated business.
- I am not a full-time employee or agent of, nor am I the full-time employer or principal of, another director.
- I have earned a high school diploma or equivalent and I will achieve cooperative director certification through NRECA within six years of becoming a director.
- I will notify the appropriate authority of the cooperative in the event that any of the foregoing certification should change prior to the upcoming election or, should I be elected a director, should any of the foregoing certifications not continue to apply to me as serving director of the cooperative.

Signature _____

Date _____

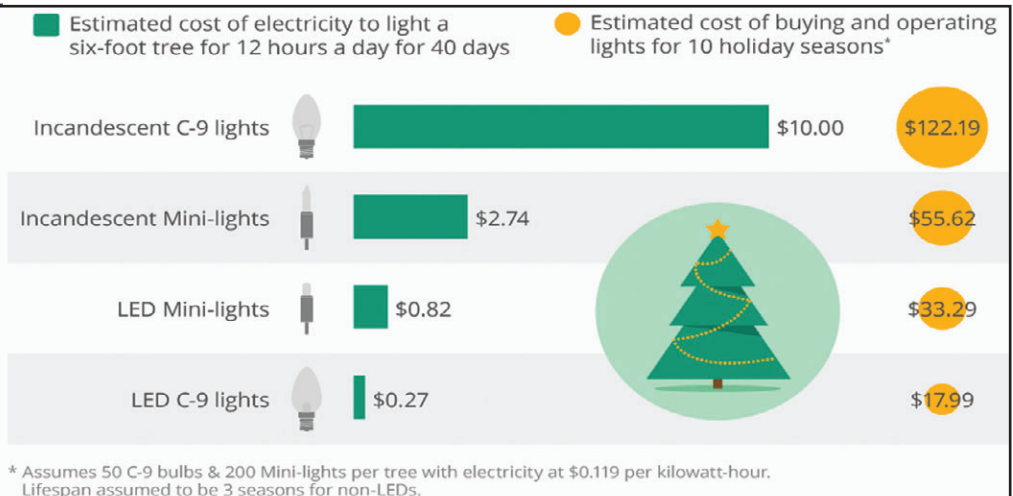
Upgrade to an energy-efficient model

Give your home the gift of energy efficiency! Buy from www.energywisemn.com for the \$25 instant rebate OR submit the rebate form from your co-op's website.



What's the cost for your holiday lighting? LEDs vs. incandescents comparison

— Graphic courtesy of Statista & Energy Star.gov



Wrap up the season with last of 12 days of energy-saving tips

— Continued from Page 2

10

Consider rechargeable batteries and chargers. They make great stocking stuffers!

11

Heading out of town? Unplug appliances and electronics.

12

Open blinds and curtains during the day to let natural sunlight warm your home.

Let's go wild with wild rice recipes for hot meals on cold nights

Whip up a warm, hearty meal with your favorite wild rice recipes! Share your favorite wild rice recipes with us, whether it's a soup, a side dish or with wild game! Mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by December 23. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Oriental Cashew Chicken Appetizer by Lesley Christoffer

- 2 - 5 oz. cans canned chicken
- 1 c. cashew halves
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ c. shredded carrots
- 3 T. chopped green onions
- 2 T. soy sauce
- ½ tsp. ginger
- 2 T. milk
- 2 - 8 oz. pkgs. cream cheese
- ½ c. cashew halves
- ½ bottle Kraft Sweet & Sour sauce

Mix first seven ingredients; marinate overnight. Cream cheese and milk; spread on large platter. Top with marinated chicken topping. Drizzle Kraft sauce on top. Top with another ½ c. cashews. Serve with tortilla chips or Fritos Scoops. ☺

Buffalo Chicken Dip by Lesley Christoffer, Okabena

- 2 - 12 oz. cans chicken breast
- 1 c. ranch dressing
- 8 oz. container whipped cream cheese
- ¾ c. buffalo Sweet Baby Ray's sauce
- 2 c. Mexican shredded cheese

Mix all together. Serve with tortilla chips, scoops, crackers or veggies. ☺

Peach Brandy Slush by Amber Sommerfeld, Sleepy Eye

- 4 tea bags
- 2 c. boiling water
- 2 c. sugar
- 7 c. boiling water
- 12 oz. can frozen orange juice
- 12 oz. can frozen lemon juice
- 1 pint peach brandy

Steep together for 15 minutes the first two ingredients. Stir 7 c. of boiling water and sugar together until the sugar is dissolved. Add tea, juices and brandy. Mix well.

Freeze two days in a plastic container. Serve a scoop or two, along with 7-Up or Sprite. ☺



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Operation Round Up offering six \$250 scholarships in 2022



Brown County REA, through its Operation Round Up program, is offering scholarships to high school seniors planning to attend college after graduation.

Six \$250 scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors whose parents/guardians are members and live in Brown County REA's service area.

Funds for the scholarships come from members who choose to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar each month. The difference is placed in a trust, which is administered by a nine-member board. They meet four times each year to distribute funds to charitable causes, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships.

Scholarship guidelines and applications are available from area high school counselors and can also be found at www.browncountyrea.coop.

The deadline for submission is March 28, 2022. Winners will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting March 31. A copy of the student's high school transcript and one letter of recommendation are required. Scholarship funds will be awarded after successful completion of the first semester of college. ⁽⁶⁾

Your power on 99.99% of time



At its November meeting the BCREA Board of Directors was presented the cooperative's 2020 Key Ratio Trend Analysis which looked at the co-op in relation to its peers, nationally, statewide and among fellow GRE co-ops.

The average amount of time BCREA members went without power was less than one hour (56 minutes) all year. That is just another way to say that members' lights are on 99.99 percent of the time.

BCREA employees work hard so the lights turn on and stay on in your home. Your electric service is reliable so agricultural facilities and businesses can thrive. The conveniences we often take for granted are there — without a second thought.

The number is even more impressive when you consider the journey electricity must make to get to you. Power flows through our lines at almost the speed of light, ensuring it is ready to use at a moment's notice. And if an issue occurs, line workers are ready to brave the elements and return service to homes, farms, schools and businesses throughout the area we serve. It's all part of the efforts we make every day to improve reliability and add new technology to better serve you — our member-owners. ⁽⁶⁾



**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: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954
William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756
Brad Sprenger — 317-5576
David Wendinger — 276-3166
Greg Mages — 794-3540
Joel Christensen — 828-4550
James Mickelson — 794-6298
Landon Sletta — 439-6559

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

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on November 23, 2021, at the REA headquarters.

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

- Amanda Seger, Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Regional Vice President, virtually presented the cooperative's 2020 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA).

- Discussed and approved returning \$300,000 of BCREA 2021 margins to the membership as a negative Power Cost Adjustment on November power bills payable in December.

- Reviewed and approved Great River Energy's purchase of an additional 68 MW of energy, for a total of 368 MW, with Rainbow Energy Center.

- Reviewed and approved an amendment to increase the wind energy price and delay anticipated start date for GRE's Buffalo Ridge Wind Purchase Agreement.

- Informed that 2021 construction and new service installations are complete.

- Reviewed employee safety training.

The next meeting is set for December 28, 2021, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ⁽⁶⁾