

# Connections

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 21, Issue 2

## Help these missing co-op members claim their 'Powerbill' money!

Sometimes winning lottery tickets are sold, but the lucky buyers of the tickets can't be found. Cooperative members can "win" with their cooperative's capital credits every year — just by paying their power bill. However, sometimes those members go missing when they move away.

Help your cooperative find these missing winners. The following list of members moved and their capital credits checks came back as "address unknown".

Share the current addresses for these former cooperative members so they can be reunited with their unclaimed capital credits checks! Reuniting them with their check will make their day!

See Page 6 for the listing of lost cooperative members from last year's capital credits distribution. 

## The cooperative difference: capital credits explained

As a member-owner, you have a share in the earnings of your not-for-profit electric cooperative. Your co-op's rates bring in money to pay operating costs, make loan payments and provide an emergency reserve. Revenues in excess of the cost of doing business are returned to members as capital credits. The co-op holds on to these capital credits for years, according to policy, before returning them to you, the member-owners. The reason your co-op holds on to this money is because your co-op is a very capital-intensive business. It needs to invest a lot of money in substations, transformers, poles, wire, etc... This investment allows your cooperative to provide reliable electricity to you, our member-owners. 

## Lineman lingo — what do you know?



Quiz time...what's the difference among these cylinder-shaped devices and how do they provide reliable electricity?

**Transformers** are something most people can already spot. They're hefty metal cylinders that hang off poles or the green boxes for underground service. The transformer connects your home to a distribution line; it lowers the distribution voltage to what you need in your house — generally 120 volts for your outlets and 240 volts for your central air, water heater and clothes dryer.

**Capacitors** look somewhat like transformers. While transformers change voltage, capacitors improve the power factor on the utility lines; they prevent power from being wasted and help boost the voltage on long rural distribution lines. They can also function like batteries, holding a charge and discharging it when needed, like during drying season when lots of electric motors start.



**Reclosers** protect lines and consumers from short circuits. For example, if a tree branch touches a line, electric current will flow through the tree, burning it and overheating the wire. Eventually, this will result in a fault that causes a protective device, like a fuse or circuit breaker, to operate and interrupt the power. Circuit breakers "open" the circuit, cutting off the power. Because many shorts correct themselves in a few seconds — as the high current will usually burn a tree limb away from the line — most modern circuit breakers have a mechanism that allows them to reclose a moment later (hence the name recloser). 

### At A Glance



Brown County Rural Electrical Association

Would you be interested in serving on the BCREA Board of Directors?  
 Would you like to know when the BCREA Annual Meeting will be held?  
 Would you like to sign up for a Health Fair? All of this can be found on Page 4!

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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# Get the low down on basement energy-savings

When it comes to home energy improvements, most people think upwards — insulating the attic. Most people also think sideways — insulating the walls and perhaps installing new windows and doors. Few people think downward, however. The basement often doesn't register with people looking to save money. Sure, some will get new furnaces, which go in the basement, but what other energy-efficient improvements can be made below?

1. Install LED bulbs in your basement. LED bulbs use up to 80 percent less energy than standard incandescents and CFLs and last much longer.

2. Insulation reduces energy costs and makes for a comfortable living space. A variety of insulation types are available. Fiberglass batt insulation is a good choice for unfinished basements, while blow-in products can be used to add insulation to a finished space.

3. Air can escape through gaps and cracks in the rim joists and where the wall meets the ceiling, as well as through plumbing and wiring holes on outside walls. Caulk is best for sealing small holes or cracks up to 1/4 inch. Use spray foam insulation to fill larger gaps.

4. If you have older single-pane windows in your basement, it's likely they're reducing comfort and increasing your energy bills. Install glass block or Energy Star certified high-performance windows.

5. Your older dehumidifier may soak you with higher energy costs. Energy Star dehumidifiers remove the same amount of moisture and use 15 percent less energy than standard models.

6. If you have a crawlspace, make sure it's properly sealed and insulated. See "Basement and Crawlspace Air



**Your basement offers numerous opportunities for energy efficiency. Follow these eight tips to help reduce your utility bills.**

Sealing and Insulating" from the U.S. Department of Energy's website for more information.

7. How old is your water heater? If it's from the 1940s-1980s, it could spring a leak any day. Then you have to pay for water damage. It probably does not have as much insulation as the new water heater models sold by your electric co-op. Consider upgrading your water heater before

you find a leaky water heater "lake" in your basement.

8. Check thermostat settings of your furnace to be comfortable when home and to save energy while you are away. Plus, inspect, clean or change air filters once a month. A dirty air filter can increase energy costs and damage your equipment, leading to early failure. (E)

— Information courtesy of Questline



**'Water' you waiting for?** Your electric cooperative has great deals on electric water heaters. Features include: stainless steel frame, energy efficient, reduced member price and limited lifetime warranty. Call your electric cooperative today!

# Print pictures on the go, quick and easy

There is a joke going around about taking pictures these days. With film cameras people used to take 24 pictures, develop 24 pictures and look at 24 pictures. With smartphones people take 4,000 pictures, develop 0 pictures and look at 0 pictures. One can change that with the Polaroid ZIP Mobile Printer. It enables you to take a picture with your smartphone and immediately print it.

Sending your photos to the mobile printer is easy. Connect your iOS or Android smartphones, tablets and other devices over Bluetooth or NFC and print wirelessly from anywhere within range. Photos print in a minute or less.

The mobile printer features its own rechargeable battery. After just 1.5 hours of charging time, it is ready to print 25 sheets before needing another charge.



**Print pictures from your smartphone as soon as you take them with the Polaroid ZIP Mobile Printer.**

Download an app and you can edit your photos before printing. Add emojis, voice recordings, general text, links and more. You can even embed a password protected QR code to share secret information with your inner circle or special someone.

Forget messy ink cartridges and ribbons. The Polaroid ZIP Mobile Printer prints your photos onto ZINK photo paper; when this paper is subjected to heat from the

printer, it activates color-forming molecules embedded in the paper's layers. The resulting prints measure 2x3-inch, feature vibrant colors, are smudge-proof and sport a peel-back sticky paper for even more fun!

The Polaroid ZIP Mobile Printer is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$130. (C)

## Safety

### *Don't be left out in the cold during a winter storm*

Ice and heavy snow can bring down tree limbs and power lines. Make sure you know how to weather the storm.

- When outside, stay away from downed power lines. A power line does not need to be sparking or arcing to be energized. Equipment near power lines can also be energized and dangerous.

- Lines that appear to be "dead" can become energized as crews work to restore power or sometimes from improper use of emergency generators. Assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous. If you see a downed or sagging line, contact your electric cooperative.

- Motorists should never drive over a downed line. Snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.

- Be careful approaching intersections where traffic or railroad crossing lights may be out.

- If you live with a child or elderly person, you may need to take them somewhere with power so they can stay warm. If you are healthy enough to stay home safely, stay inside and dress warmly in layered clothing.

- Close off unneeded rooms in the house to retain heat.



- Before a winter storm, you should have supplies on hand and know how to stay warm.

- If you plan to use a generator, know how to operate it safely.

- Always keep a battery-powered radio or TV, flashlights and a supply of fresh batteries. You should also have water, blankets and non-perishable food.

- When power goes out, it may come back in spikes. This can damage electronics. Keep your electronics safe by unplugging them when the power goes out. Leave on one lamp or switch as a signal when your power returns.

- To prevent the water pipes from freezing keep faucets turned on slightly so that water drips from the tap. Know how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.

- Never use a charcoal grill to cook or heat inside the home. Burning charcoal gives off deadly carbon monoxide gas. Charcoal grills should only be used outdoors.

- When using an alternate heat source, follow the operating instructions, use fire safeguards and properly ventilate. (C)

— Information courtesy of safeelectricity.org

## Brown County Briefs

### Round Up Trust meets February 7 to review applications

The Operation Round Up Trust Board will meet to review applications February 7 at 7 p.m. Organizations wishing to apply for funding should submit before that date. Applications are available on the co-op website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) or by contacting the office.

### Look for the Energy Star



Just a reminder that proof of Energy Star certification is necessary for appliance and lighting rebates. Please submit a copy of your sales receipt, the Energy Star label and proof of appliance recycling. Reminder, members are eligible for one appliance rebate per year.

### 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.

To apply 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. ☺

## Cooperation among cooperatives; BCREA linemen lend a hand in SD



BCREA Linemen Nick Horman (left) and Brady Kerkhoff spent December 27-30 assisting H-D Electric in Clear Lake, SD, to repair its electric distribution system after the Christmas Day ice storm. The two were among 36 line workers from electric cooperatives in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa who spend the days re-setting approximately 400 broken poles. ☺

## Switch gear safety training held

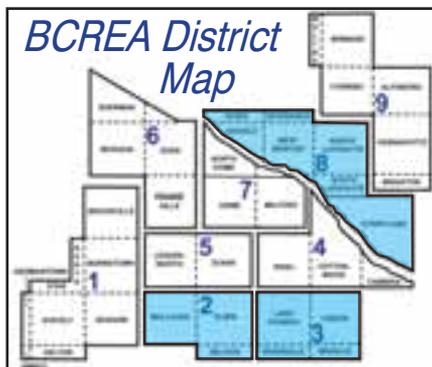


BCREA lineman Drew Hill practiced with switch gear during in-house training provided by Great River Energy. The training reviewed proper procedures and protocol between distribution and generation and transmission co-ops. Linemen from Redwood Electric Cooperative in Clements joined the BCREA linemen for the training. ☺

# Director candidates sought

Nominations are being sought for director candidates to run for election in BCREA's Districts 2, 3 and 8 for 2017.

District 2 consists of Mulligan and Albin townships in Brown County and part of Nelson Township in Watonwan County. Brad Sprenger currently serves as Director for District 2. District 3, currently represented by Director Allen Hanson, 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. Incumbent Director Reuben Kokesch and Allen Lamm have been nominated by the committee.

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 Lupeke, Glenn & Jackie Forst.

Member input to the Nominating Committee is appreciated and helpful in their selection of director candidates. If interested in being a candidate or have a member in mind whom you believe would be a good candidate, please contact a nominating committee member on or before February 24. Please make sure the nominee is willing to have his or her name on the ballot. ☎

## BCREA 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting



**When:** April 6  
**Location:** Civic Center, New Ulm  
**Registration:** 4:30 p.m.  
**Meal:** 5:30 p.m.  
**Meeting:** Immediately following meal

Drawings for attendance prizes immediately following!

## Let BCREA be part of your DG discussions



If you're considering adding Distributed Generation (ie: wind, solar) on your site, please include Brown County REA in the process from the start.

Cooperative staff would like to help members make informed decisions, go over annual usage reports to help size the system to your electric load, explain any service upgrades and associated costs and provide you with the paperwork required to interconnect to our system. The process takes time and may involve multiple agencies.

Contact BCREA at 800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331. Brown County REA has been providing safe, reliable electricity to you, our members for 80 years and plans to continue to do so well into the future. ☎

## Make an appointment for Health Day

Saturday, March 18  
Sleepy Eye Public School  
6:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.



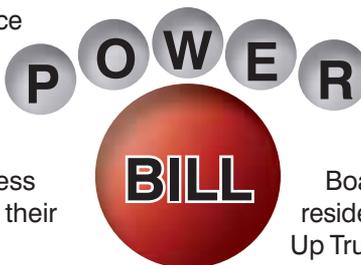
• Blood analysis (includes cholesterol, LDL/HDL, calcium, glucose, etc.): \$40. Requires a 12-hour fast for best results

• Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) screening: \$30  
• Free blood pressure screenings

For appointments call between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday (800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331). Walk-ins will be accepted after 7:30 a.m. Health Day is a joint effort of Brown County REA, Brown County Public Health, Sleepy Eye Medical Center and Sleepy Eye Community Education.

# Help us find the missing capital credits 'winners' who moved away

Help us locate these missing members. Since we no longer have their current address, their capital credits check was returned — address unknown. If you know the current location for any of these members, call or e-mail the appropriate co-op with their new address and/or phone number. We can then e-mail their checks to them.



Unclaimed capital credits checks are donated to a tax-exempt organization. Brown County REA and Federated Rural Electric give unclaimed capital credits to their Operation Round Up program. Brown's Round Up Trust Board donates to programs that benefit their rural residents and local communities. Federated's Round Up Trust Board awards high school scholarships. 

## Former Brown County members: Call and ask for Dorine at 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368. Otherwise, e-mail [bcrea@bcrea.coop](mailto:bcrea@bcrea.coop).

- Ackerson, Stewart L. Fargo, ND
- Anderson, Jennifer New Ulm
- Anderson, Mary Gaylord
- Anderson, Leilah Winthrop
- Bauer, Lois Darwin
- Bonnes, William M. Cedar Rapids, IA
- Braam, Jerry L. Fairfax
- Cano, Juan R. Crystal City, TX
- %Oscar Surita
- Collum, Calvin C. New Ulm
- Cruz, Ruben Laredo, TX
- Davis, Adeline New Ulm
- Deboer, Dwight & Holly Lafayette
- Frandsen State Bank & Trust New Ulm
- Frederick, Thomas Mankato
- Frohrup, Lester W. Broken Arrow, OK
- Gonzalez, Janpalach Elgin, TX
- Gonzales, Jesus Hanska
- Green, Benhard A. Iona
- %LeAnn Miller
- Hacker, Josephine New Ulm
- Hall, Joshua Forest Lake
- Kautzman, Rebecca Hutchinson
- Keim, Thomas W. New Prague
- Kenefick, Thomas L. Lena, WI
- Kilmer, Charles M. New Ulm
- Knudsen, Lynn A. Scranton, IA
- Kostecky, Anthony G. Gretna, LA
- Kraft, Chris Hutchinson
- Kruse, Wayne W. Bigfork
- Lamere, Anthony R. Champlin

- Lebens, Christine Chaska
- Lee, Martin & Candace Webster
- Lenzen, Dennis J. New Ulm
- Matthew, Mark R. Omaha, NE
- Means, Daniell Baxter, IA
- Meyer, Karyl A. Mankato
- Miller, Leland L. New Ulm
- Miner, Brent J. Litchfield
- Montanye, Harry R. Chaska
- Nelson, Robert P. Little Falls
- Olson, Allen E. New Ulm
- Olson, Oscar M. Madelia
- Paschka, Joel & Tara Alexandria
- Pilot, Joan M. New Ulm
- Ramirez, Herbert Madelia
- Reim, Bud L. St. James
- Reim, Dan North Mankato
- Rodriguez, Jose L. Sleepy Eye
- Sadler, Dewayne Winthrop
- Sanchez, Orlando Sleepy Eye
- Schlomann, Erin Courtland
- Schoener, Steven J. Mankato
- Schroeder, Duane R. New Ulm
- Seitz, Helen M. Watertown
- Sirovy, Thomas R. Backus
- Smith, Robert L. Lakeville
- Solberg, Donald L. Monona, IA
- Spicer, Debbie L. New Ulm
- Stage, David S. Granite Falls
- Stark, Jamie & Nicole New Ulm
- Stocker, Sean Colorado Springs, CO
- Svoboda, Larry M. Martin, ND
- Tina Jero, Araceli Y. New Ulm
- Torres, Nancy Sleepy Eye
- Triax Midwest Ass., L.P. Denver, CO
- Twenty 1st Century Wireless Edina
- U S West Communications Denver, CO
- Warnke, Donald J. Plainwell, MI



- Watson, Kevin L. Hanska
- Wetzel, Russell & Jada North Mankato
- Werner, Kenneth A. Altamonte Springs, FL
- Williams, Ruth Norwood Young America
- Wilson, Bert New Ulm
- Woodward, Laurie Eugene, OR
- Worden, Jerry L. Linwood, NE

## Former Federated members: Call 847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520; ask for Nina or e-mail [billing@federatedrea.coop](mailto:billing@federatedrea.coop).

- Alexander, Jim Jackson
- Beaver, Michelle Armstrong, IA
- Dean, Dallas Silver Bay
- Ennen, Craig Perris, CA
- Hacklander, Rosie Mrs. Winnebago
- Hogan, Maureen Sisseton, SD
- Horkey, Rickey Trimont
- Hotzler, Steve Lakefield
- Howard, Dorothy Winnebago
- Kinn, Richard Trimont
- Kirschmann, Randy Windom
- Larson, Kathy Welcome
- Lenz, James Jackson
- Love, Val Jackson
- Madsen, Brian Byron
- Martin, Lori Truman
- Schueler, Brad Dickinson, ND
- Sederquist, Shelly Adrian
- Stedman, James Madelia
- Weerts Ziemer, Teresa Fairmont 

## Heed our call for cauliflower recipes! Haul out your favorites

How do you serve up cauliflower? Do you make soup, vegetable side dishes, salads or only as relish? Serve it fresh or freeze it? Send us your cauliflower recipes by February 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! ☺

### Quick Skillet Supper by Gloria Martin, Welcome

1 lb. seasoned beef  
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
2 cans mixed reg./frozen vegetables  
1 can tomato paste  
3 c. hash browns  
½ c. grated cheddar cheese, optional

Brown meat and add Worcestershire sauce. Drain vegetables. Add tomato paste, vegetables and salt to meat. Heat thoroughly. Stir occasionally. Spread hash browns over meat mixture. Top with cheese and paprika. Place in oven until the hash browns are brown and cheese is melted. Serves 6 to 8. ☺

### Cheesy Hash Brown Casserole for Slow Cooker by Doreen Schmitt, New Ulm

32 oz. pkg frozen shredded hash browns  
10¾ oz. can cream of chicken soup or cream of celery  
¼ c. onion, chopped (or more)  
½ c. shredded cheese (cheddar, Mexican or other)  
8 oz. sour cream  
½ c. melted butter  
salt and pepper, optional

In a large bowl combine all ingredients. Spoon mixture into a four-quart slow cooker that was sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Cover and cook on low setting four to five hours, until hot and bubbly throughout and crisp on the sides. This works great during the holiday season when you are short of oven space. ☺

### Frozen Hash Browns by Pat Stenzel, Heron Lake

2 lb. bag frozen hash browns (thawed)  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
½ c. finely chopped onion  
10 oz. grated cheddar cheese  
1 pint sour cream

Mix together and put in 9x13" pan. Pour melted ½ c. margarine on top. Then sprinkle with 2 c. crushed corn flakes. Bake 1 hour @350°. Note: Put THAWED hash browns in last. Can freeze and bake later. ☺

### Hash Brown Frittata

by Elizabeth Shimon, Granada

1 sm. package shredded hash browns  
½ c. butter, melted  
2 c. shredded hot pepper cheese  
2 c. shredded cheddar cheese  
2 c. breakfast sausage, cooked (or diced ham)  
1 c. milk  
9 eggs  
salt & pepper

Preheat oven to 425°. Place hash browns into lightly sprayed 9x11" pan and press down evenly to form a crust. Drizzle butter evenly over crust and bake for 25 minutes. Place cheese and meat over hash browns. Beat milk, eggs, salt and pepper. Place over cheese and meat. Reduce heat to 350° and bake for 30-45 minutes. Extra yummy if you lightly brown the top. ☺

**Pick up the phone  
before the shovel; call  
before digging!**

**1-800-252-1166**

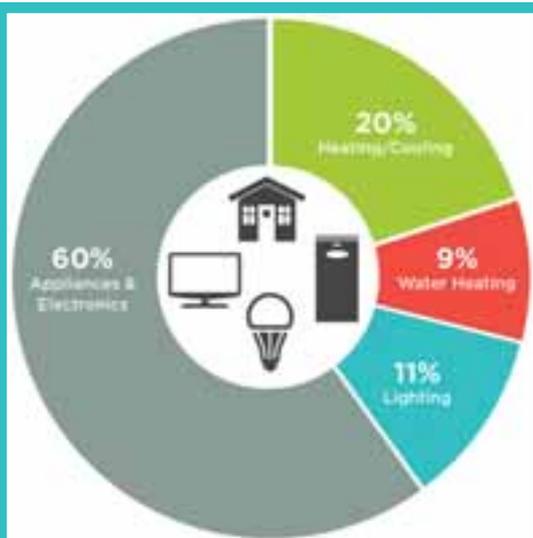


Contact Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12-inches deep — 48 hours before digging

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. ☺

**How Americans use electricity**  
The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows that appliances and electronics account for the largest amount of electricity use in American homes. ☺





**Brandon Havemeier**  
**Operations & Engineering Manager**

# Staff notes

## Winter maintenance in full swing

Our line crews are done with construction projects for the winter and are in maintenance mode over the next few months.

Line patrol started in the southwest portion of the system and will progress to the east and north and finish in the center of the service territory. During annual line patrol, the crews look for maintenance issues that could cause a power outage. This includes looking at poles to see if any need replacement, checking for loose

guy wires, damaged wires and proper line clearance. The crews perform maintenance on OCRs and overhead and underground lines. They are also reading a sampling of the meters to verify data with our automated meter reading system.

In addition, the linemen are checking load control receivers to make sure they are connected and working properly to shed load and help keep power costs lower across the system.

Brown County REA again contracted with Carr's Tree Service who began tree trimming projects in January and will continue to work in the southwest part of the service territory until March. Tree issues are addressed by cutting the tree down to eliminate the problem or trimming to allow at least 15 feet of clearance from the power line. This is a requirement of the Rural Utility Service (RUS), one of our lenders. We also want to be as efficient as possible with the tree trimming budget and trim for a four-year rotation.

## Galloping lines causing blinking lights

Already this winter, we have experienced a few winter storms which included ice, and have caused numerous power "blinks" due to galloping power lines. According to SafeElectricity.org, this is caused by ice that builds up on one side of a power line due to strong winds. The build-up creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the normally round line. This change in air flow can cause the power line to start to bounce and buck enough to hit another line. The damage can cause a power outage or even cause power lines to fall to the ground.

Once the galloping starts, there is not much your power company can do to alleviate it until the winds die down. If weather conditions like this exist and your lights blink, it is not necessary to call us to report unless it causes a power outage. If you see downed power lines, keep your distance and call your cooperative. Always assume a line is energized and stay away to stay safe. ⚠️

**Under construction**

Please bear with us as our website undergoes some changes while live. We hope to finish it soon. Thank you for your understanding. ⚠️



**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.

# Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting January 24 at the Brown County REA office, Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action was taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved December 2016 payroll and November 2016 financial statements.
- Reviewed and approved the Safety, Reliability and Service Quality report for 2016.
- Reviewed the 2016 OSHA 300 Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses.
- Approved the appointment of Kari Berg to a term on the Round Up Trust Board for District 4.
- Discussed the 2016 financial audit to be conducted February 6-10.
- Discussed plans for the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting to be held April 6 at the New Ulm Civic Center. Registration begins at 4:30 p.m., meal at 5:30 p.m. followed by the business meeting.
- Reviewed and approved staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting will be February 23 at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ⚠️