



Reflections on free D.C. trip

Each summer your electric co-op sends a teenager to Washington, D.C. for Youth Tour. They join 1,500 other teenagers from other electric co-ops across the nation and visit the memorials, the Nation's Capitol, meet with legislative leaders and more. The teenagers are chosen through the co-op's Youth Tour contest.

Interested high school students fill out an application and write an essay. The ones who score the highest are then interviewed and the winner is chosen. (See inside for details.)

This year your electric co-op decided to follow up with Youth Tour winners from the past to see how the experience helped shape them as adults.

Jordan Milbrath, BCREA winner 2008

I graduated from Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota with a business administration/entrepreneurship degree. I also played college baseball and was drafted by the Cleveland Indians my junior year. I continue to play in Cleveland's minor league system to this day. During the offseason I live in Springfield, Minnesota, and work with my brother and dad at his financial advising firm.

Going on Youth Tour allowed me to see firsthand the historical sites that made our country as recognizable as it is today. The trip made me more informed on our country's rich history and I am able to share my experiences



The 2008 Youth Tour Group included Jordan Milbrath and Blake Pothoff (circled). You could be part of this year's group. Apply today!

with others to this day.

Seeing the names of all the fallen soldiers engraved in the different historical sites was a really humbling experience. It gave me a deeper appreciation of our country's military. The trip was also my first time getting to know other students outside my friend group from back home. It taught me how to get along and respect each other, even though our opinions differed from time to time on various topics that came up.

Youth Tour was an experience of a lifetime and I will forever be grateful that I was given the opportunity to go. It allowed me to meet new people

and also linked the experience with history textbooks that I learned from my whole life.

Taylor Milbrath, BCREA winner, 2013

I attended the University of South Dakota. In December of 2018 I will graduate with my bachelor's degree in nursing. I hope to go on to become a birth and delivery nurse.

Youth Tour helped me make life-long friends that I am still in contact with today. Funny story — I moved into my dorm the first day of college and my RA was one of the Minnesota representatives on the same trip as me! It was awesome to reconnect with

— **Continued on Page 6**

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Follow these steps to set up Outage Texting:

- 1) Call BCREA to make sure we have your cell phone number(s) in our system.
- 2) Go to www.browncountyrea.coop. Click on *Links* under the *Resources* tab, then select *Outage Texting Registration*.
- 3) You will be given an outage "texting number." Add "texting number" to your "contacts" so it's ready when an outage occurs. 

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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Energy Wise

No-bake recipes packed with savings

Holiday cooking can add to your holiday expenses. Ovens baking, stoves cooking, dishwashers washing and more create higher utility bills. To cut down on energy usage, try these easy, efficient, no-bake recipes to make delicious meals for your family.

Tzatziki

Eat this refreshing dip with pita chips or veggies. You can also add it to some grilled chicken or veggies as a sauce or even add it to a salad to make a creamy dressing!

- 2 c. plus 1 T. of 2 percent Greek yogurt
- 1 c. cucumber grated
- 1½ T. lemon juice
- 1 T. olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 T. dill leaves (plus extra for garnish)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Add all the ingredients to a bowl; stir gently to mix.

Lemon Truffles

These quick and easy lemon truffles from "Premeditated Leftovers" are sure to satisfy any sweet tooth!

- 2½ c. lemon cake mix
- 8 T. melted butter
- 2 T. lemon juice
- Zest of one large lemon

For lemon cake mix:

- 2¾ c. cake flour
- 1¾ c. fine white sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ¾ tsp. salt

Zest of two lemons

Combine the cake mix ingredients into a large bowl; stir gently to combine. Add the melted butter, lemon juice and lemon zest. Use your hands to combine until the flour is moist and flaky. Roll dough into two inch balls; roll in sugar and serve!



Pita with Spiced Chickpea Salad and Whipped Feta

Spread the whipped feta into your pita, add the chickpea salad, and you have a delicious sandwich. Add grilled chicken or even a couple slices of smoked turkey or chicken breast for a heartier meal.

Spiced chickpea salad:

- 2 cans chickpeas
- 2 T. olive oil
- 3 T. lemon juice
- 2 tsp. cumin
- 2 tsp. dill
- 2 tsp. sumac
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- ½ tsp. red chili flakes
- 3 cloves garlic

- 4 oz. cherry tomatoes
- ½ c. chopped cucumber
- 1 small red onion, finely diced
- 1 T. fresh dill
- 1 T. fresh cilantro, chopped

Add chickpeas, olive oil, lemon juice and spices to a bowl; stir to combine. Allow the mixture to sit for 15 minutes to one hour to let the flavors meld together.

Add the tomatoes, cucumber and onion. Add the fresh dill and cilantro; stir to combine.

For the whipped feta:

- 6 oz. feta cheese
- 2 oz. cream cheese
- ¼ c. olive oil

Combine feta and cream cheese in a blender; slowly drizzle the olive oil into the blender top until the mixture is creamy and smooth.

These no-bake recipes are a great way to save energy and show off your culinary skills. These are just a few examples, but you can find a wealth of no-bake recipes online.

Happy holidays and happy cooking! 🍷



Energy Tips

Be an energy-wise chef with these cooking tips.

- Bake with ceramic or glass pots to lower the oven temperature by about 25 degrees.
- Turn the oven or stove burners off a few minutes before your food is ready — they will remain hot enough to finish cooking the food.

- Efficient microwave ovens use around 50 percent less energy than conventional ovens.
- Don't peek. Opening the oven door can lower the internal temperature as much as 25 percent.
- Defrosting food in the microwave may be convenient, but it costs nothing to defrost in the refrigerator. 🍷

Make omelettes quick and easy

Breakfast is often a meal that is short-changed due to lack of time. People get up in the morning, get ready for work or school and often don't have time for a good breakfast. The Holstein Omelet Maker can remedy that, providing fluffy omelettes in about 10 minutes.

Pour in your mixture, close the lid and the omelette maker does the rest. From egg white and spinach to a Spanish tortilla the options are many.

Features include:

- Non-stick coating keeps food from sticking and makes clean up easy.
- The indicator light lets you know when the maker is done preheating and when it is in use.



- The omelet maker's upright space-saving design allows for easy storage between uses.

- Non-slip base provides a secure grip on the counter top .

- Manual includes recipes.

- Measurement marks, along the inside of the cavities, guide you for a perfect pour every time

- Bakes about two scrambled eggs per cavity

The Holstein Omelet Maker is available on Amazon.com for about \$25. (E)

You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs, but the Holstein Omelet Maker can make that omelet quickly! Enjoy omelettes in 10 minutes. (E)

Safety

Deck the halls with holiday safety

Few things are as unique to the holiday season as decorating your home and yard. Findings from a 2013 Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) consumer survey indicate that more than 86 percent of Americans decorate their homes as part of their holiday celebrations.

Given this statistic, it is crucial that safety is a foremost concern. Follow these tips to make your holiday as safe as possible.

- Unlike incandescent bulbs, which generate most of their energy in heat, LEDs are cool to the touch and are more energy-efficient. LEDs are also made with epoxy lenses, not glass and 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.

- Always purchase electrical decorations and lights from reputable retailers.

- Use lights approved for safe use by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.

- Never connect more than three

strands of incandescent lights together.

- Determine how many outlets are available and where they are located. Plan your displays accordingly.

- Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Cracked or damaged sockets, loose/bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.

- Follow the manufacturer's use and care instructions that accompany electrical decorations.

- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.

- Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.

- Do not mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.

- Always unplug electrical decorations before replacing bulbs or fuses. (E)

— Information courtesy of esfi.org

Brown County Briefs

Member Advisory Council

The final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be Monday, January 22, 2018. Please note, the meeting time was moved up to 7 p.m.

2018 calendars available

2018 large farm pocket calendars are available for members to pick up at the REA headquarters during regular business hours. Limited supply available. One per member please.

Energy Star



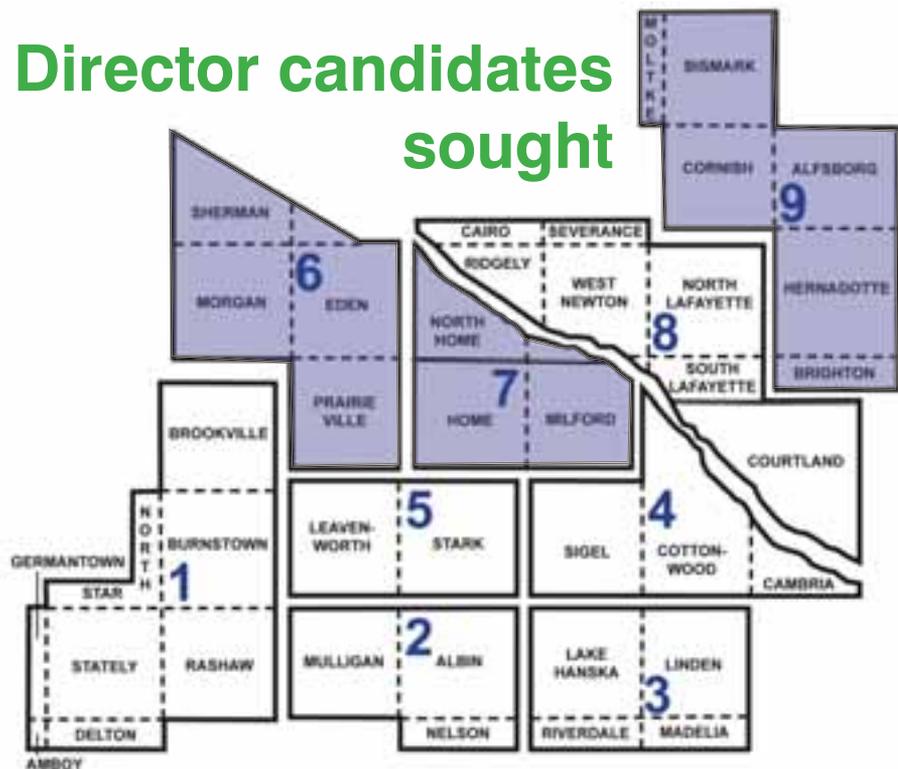
Are you purchasing electronic gifts this holiday season? Remember to purchase Energy Star®-certified electronics and give the gift of energy efficiency. (E)

Donate to Santa's Closet



Brown County REA headquarters is again collecting donations of unwrapped toys, books and mittens to be used as part of the Santa's Closet project to help provide gifts to area children who may not otherwise receive gifts this Christmas. The date to drop off donations in the box at the office has been extended to December 15. Thank you for your generosity. (E)

Director candidates sought



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 6, 7 and 9.

District 6 consists of Edén and Prairieville townships in Brown County, a portion of Sherman and all of Morgan townships in Redwood County. District 7 covers North Home, Home and Milford townships in Brown County. District 9 is a portion of Brighton and Bernadotte townships in Nicollet County, plus portions of Alfsborg, Cornish, Bismark and Moltke townships in Sibley County.

Nominating committees are made up of members from each of the districts up for election. 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.

If you have questions or would like to be a candidate, please contact Brown County REA. The 81st Annual Meeting will be held the evening of April 5, 2018 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center. (E)

Apply for the trip of a lifetime!



Want to win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June 2018? High school sophomores or juniors whose parents or guardians are Brown County REA members are eligible.

Apply by writing a 300-word essay on electricity or any energy-related topic. Submit the essay, along with the application form, to Brown County REA by the close of business Friday, March 2, 2018. The application form and selection procedures are available from area high school counselors and on our website at www.browncountyrea.coop.

Brown County REA will select three finalists, who will be interviewed, and award the trip to our nation's capital to one of the three. The second place winner will receive \$150 and \$100 will be awarded for third prize. (E)

Pooling pennies has provided funds for many; more than \$10,600 distributed locally in 2017

Thanks to monthly contributions from members who round up their electric bills, Brown County REA's Operation Round Up contributed more than \$10,600 to 31 organizations and individuals in 2017.

Each month, participating BCREA members "round up" their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar. For example, if your electric bill is \$78.63, you pay \$79.00. The extra 37 cents is deposited in the Round Up Trust account and becomes part of the funds distributed to worthy causes throughout our service area. For less than \$12 per year you can help make a difference when your pennies are pooled with other members' contributions to help support charitable organizations and individuals in crisis.

Among the organizations to receive Operation Round Up contributions this year were the Kiwanis Coats for Kids, Hanska Community Library, Izaak Walton League, Brown County Free Fair, Sleepy Eye Safety Day Camp, Food for Kidz, Sertoma Club Santa's Closet, New Ulm Middle School YES!, Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Brown County and Nicollet County 4-H, projects of police departments, fire and rescue squads throughout the service area and area schools' scholarship programs.

Since the Round Up program began at Brown County REA in 1995, just over \$183,565 has been contributed to organizations and individuals in the cooperative's service area.



Brown County REA, City of Sleepy Eye and Zinniel Tree Service each contributed bucket truck time to assemble lights for this year's Holiday Lights in Motion at Sportsman's Park. Pictured from left: City of Sleepy Eye employees Vickie Kral and Tom Hillesheim, BCREA Foreman Mike Suess and Zinniel Tree Service Owner Jeff Zinniel. Not pictured: a lift from Sleepy Eye Electric which was used to string lights.

A heartfelt "thank you" to the Brown County REA members who participate in Operation Round Up. The summary of your tax-deductible contributions for 2017 will be printed on your January electric bill. During this season of giving, please consider participating in Operation Round Up if you do not already. Simply fill out the form below and return to the office. Please call 794-3331 or 800-658-2368 with questions. ☎

More than \$1,800 awarded in final 2017 Operation Round Up meeting



The Operation Round Up Trust Board met for its fourth quarter meeting November 14 and awarded \$1,800 to four area organizations. Funds were granted to the Kiwanis Coats for Kids, Sertoma Club Santa's Closet, Food for Kidz and Sleepy Eye Holiday Lights in Motion. Thank you to Rhonda Mickelson who completed her second three-year term on the Trust Board at this meeting.

Trust Board members also decided to offer scholarships to 2018 high school seniors through the Round Up Trust. Children of Brown County REA members will be eligible to apply. Details and applications forms will be available in January 2018.

If you are part of an organization or project that would like to apply for funding through Operation Round Up, you may use the application found on the Brown County REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop or contact the office at 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☎



Brown County REA Line Foreman and Holiday Lights in Motion Committee Co-chair Mike Suess accepts a \$300 donation from Round Up Trust Board Secretary Vickie Kral. The display is lit from 5 to 10 p.m. daily through New Year's Day.

Youth Tour gives lasting memories to alumni

— Continued from Page 1

her and get to know where she was in life. I also learned a lot about the history of our country and the Capitol.

My favorite memory was the 9/11 museum. Visiting the Pentagon Memorial at night was also impactful. I didn't realize how many people died and it was very touching to me. I also enjoyed seeing the changing of the guard, learning its history and how trained those guards had to be to guard, not only the Unknown Soldier Memorial, but also the rest of the cemetery and the country. I even wrote a paper about it in college. Other highlights included the dance, touring the Capitol and the individuals in charge of our group. They made learning fun and were very knowledgeable about Washington, D.C. The bus driver was also very knowledgeable as we drove around and learned more about the district.

Youth Tour was a life-changing trip full of knowledge about our country and history of the United States. I would encourage other students who wish to be active in the community and share their experience with others. I would tell them to get out of their comfort zones; meet as many people as possible. Every person you meet has a different story and it is unique to learn more about various types of people across the country.

Blake Potthoff, Federated winner 2008

Youth Tour was quite the experience. I made lifelong friends, gained confidence as an individual and made connections with people from across the country. When I won the trip to Washington D.C., I never imagined that I would be chosen to be the Red Shirt representative (youth leadership council delegate) for the state of Minnesota. In fact, I wasn't even going to complete the interview to try. However, I learned an important lesson, which I still use today in my job as Executive Director at the Fairmont Opera House; if you don't give someone an opportunity to say yes, it will always be a *no*. Being one of the youngest on the trip was a



Taylor Milbrath (center) was part of the 2013 Youth Tour group.

challenge, but I put myself out there and gave it a shot. I was blown away that I was chosen, but it very easily could have been someone else. Amazing things can happen because you put yourself out there and take advantage of an opportunity.

With my selection to the Red Shirt contingency, I had the opportunity to travel back to Washington D.C., to New Orleans and return to Washington D.C. twice as a Red Shirt staff. I met people that I still have conversations with on a weekly basis. I have been invited to weddings of my peers in other states. I have grown my professional network to include people who have varying levels of success, from teachers and non-profit directors, all the way to advisors for presidential nominees. Even through the years, we all remain close friends, regardless of how far apart we are or how busy our lives may be.

My advice is simple: ask yourself, "What do I have to lose?" The worst anyone can ever say to you is "no." Even when people say "no," take it as an opportunity to grow, improve yourself and find new and exciting ways to utilize your talents. If I hadn't applied for the Youth Tour, someone else would have won and I would have missed out on an amazing opportunity. But by putting myself out there, I gave someone the opportunity to say "yes." Until that point, there would have been no chance of my success in the program.

Cole Milbrath, BCREA winner, 2012

I graduated from Springfield High School in 2013. From there I attended Augustana University in Sioux Falls, SD. At college I played baseball as well as earned my degree in Business Finance. Since graduation in May of 2017, I am working as a financial advisor in Spencer, IA.

My trip to Washington, D.C. was something I will never forget. Being able to see the numerous monuments is what really made a difference for me in my life. Going to the Vietnam Memorial, the World War Memorials and also Arlington Cemetery brought into perspective the reality of all of the brave men and women who fought and died for our country. These memorials are a truly emotional experience that I will never forget.

My favorite memory of the Youth Tour trip was meeting so many new kids my age from around Minnesota. We all clicked right away and had a wonderful time honoring America's history by visiting all of the memorials and museums that Washington, D.C. has to offer.

Everyone should apply for this contest. It is an experience of a lifetime. This opportunity is not available anywhere else. Washington, D.C. needs to be experienced by everyone in their lifetime. My REA made that possible for me at 16 years old.

Apply today

High school students: be a part of the Youth Tour June 9-14, 2018! Learn more about how to apply inside or visit your electric co-op's website. It could be a trip of a lifetime! ☺



Cole Milbrath was part of the 2012 Youth Tour group.

Stop loafing around! Share with us your best meatloaf recipes

Meatloaf might be a simple dish, but there are a lot of varieties out there: turkey meatloaf, cheese-stuffed meatloaf, glazed meatloaf and more... Share your favorite meatloaf recipes and send 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! ☺

Creme de Menthe Angel Dessert by Roxanne Zimanski, Courtland

½ angel food or 1 loaf angel food	½ tsp. vanilla
1 quart vanilla ice cream	½ c. water
1 can sweetened condensed milk	8 oz. Cool Whip
2 squares baking chocolate (semi-sweet)	2 T. creme de menthe
dash of salt	

Layer 1: Slice angel food to cover bottom of 9x13" pan.

Layer 2: Spread 1 quart softened ice cream over the cake and freeze firmly.

Layer 3: Take the can of sweetened condensed milk, add 2 squares of chocolate and dash of salt; cook in double boiler til thick. Remove from heat. Add ½ tsp. vanilla and ½ c. water. Pour over the frozen ice cream and freeze.

Layer 4: Mix Cool Whip and creme de menthe; spread on top of layer 3. Freeze again.

Another very easy creme de menthe recipe is to bake your favorite brownie; when you take them out of the oven, take half of a package of Andes mints and shave them over the top of the brownies. ☺

My Mint Refrigerator Dessert by Ardis Brolsma, Sherburn

Crush 20 cream-filled chocolate cookies. Add ¼ c. melted butter. Press in the bottom of a 9x13" pan.

Combine: 1½ c. colored marshmallows
 ½ lb. pastel-colored after-dinner mints
 1½ c. whipped cream

Press over crumbs. Refrigerate at least one day. ☺

Use only co-op's website, app or bank site to pay bills

For safe and timely electronic payments of your electric cooperative bill, please use the cooperative's website portal, co-op's Smartphone app or your bank's website.

Some companies, such as doxo.com, encourage customers to pay through their websites. These payment sites send your payment, but these alternative websites are not affiliated with your cooperative. If you submit through an alternative website, it can cause a delay in submitting your payment and therefore, you could incur late fees.

Remember, you can also sign up for paperless bills to be e-mailed to you through the cooperative's website or Smartphone app — perfect for snowbirds. ☺

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

1-800-252-1166



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling & more. You can also register at www.gopherstateonecall.org. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺



**Your electric co-op
 will be closed for
 Christmas, December 25
 and New Year's Day, January 1.
 Crews will be on call for outages.**



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

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

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 November 22 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following items:

- Reviewed and approved the October 2017 board meeting minutes, new member applications, member cancellations, disbursements and payments to estates.
- Reviewed and approved October payroll and September financial statements.
- Updated on the co-op's participation in the Rural Cooperative Cyber Security Capabilities Program (RC3) through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.
- Informed that the Eide Bailey firm will begin pre-audit activities for the 2017 audit in early December.
- Reviewed construction activities and pole replacements.
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and employee training.

The next meeting will be on December 28 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☺



Marcia Solie
Member Services
Manager

Staff notes

Rebates still available

Thinking about replacing your old refrigerator or freezer with a new Energy Star model before hosting your holiday gatherings? Brown County REA still has rebate funds available for 2017. You can receive a bill credit of \$75 when you replace and recycle the old appliance. Provide us with a copy of your invoice, Energy Star label and proof of recycling.

Brighten up your home all year by replacing your old, less efficient light bulbs with Energy Star LED bulbs and enjoy better lighting and energy savings. Energy Star bulbs are rebated at half the cost of the bulb, with a \$3 maximum per bulb. Just bring in your receipt and proof of the Energy Star certification. We will issue a credit on your next electric bill.

Rebate funds also remain for heating and cooling upgrades. If you've purchased a new air source heat pump from a Quality Install contractor this year, you can receive a rebate of \$480 for 14.5 SEER; \$580 for 15 SEER and \$630 for 16 and higher SEER. With a heat pump you will benefit year-round from one of the most energy efficient and cost effective heating and cooling solutions. Whole house air source heat pumps must be placed on the cooperative's load control program to receive the rebate. You receive an additional \$50 for load control. New geothermal heat pumps are eligible for a \$1,000 rebate.

Members who install ductless mini split heat pump units are eligible to receive a \$300-\$500 rebate, depending on their primary heating source. HVAC systems equipped with an electronically commutated motor (ECM) qualify for a \$50 rebate. Submit a copy of your invoice or the form available on our website www.browncountyrea.coop.

If it is too late to make these purchases for this year, don't worry, Brown County REA will offer commercial and residential energy efficiency rebates again in 2018.

Don't forget to recycle your old holiday lights



Upgrading your holiday lights to LEDs? Remember to recycle the old lights. Brown County REA is again working with the Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect strands of old holiday lights to be recycled. You may drop off your old lights in the box in the

office entry area during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The collection begins November 20 and runs through mid-January. Please do not put cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL light bulbs in the collection box.

From all of us at Brown County REA — wishes for a very Merry Christmas and the best in the New Year! ☺