

# Connections

June 2017

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 21, Issue 6

## National golden spotlight shines on Connections with recent award



Your electric cooperative recently received recognition in the 2017 “Spotlight on Excellence” national awards program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

*Connections* received a Gold Award in the Best External News Publication

category for electric cooperatives under 20,000 members. Andrea Christoffer, Federated Rural Electric’s marketing & communications manager; and Steve Ruthenbeck, communications specialist; create the award-winning newsletter. Marcia Solie, Brown County Rural Electrical Association’s member services manager, contributes to the newsletter too.

The *Connections* is a shared newsletter for the two cooperatives. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> time that a Federated member-owner newsletter won a Spotlight national award, which was the second year in a row for earning the Gold level. Gold awards were presented to those entries scoring 90 points or more, while Silver winners scored 80 points or more in the finite scoring system.

“Congratulations to Marcia, Andrea and Steve for receiving the Gold award for our newsletter,” stated Mike Heidemann, BCREA CEO. “This newsletter is an outstanding example of two cooperatives working together to communicate to their membership. We are greatly honored to be recognized for the hard work and dedication needed to create this quality publication for our members.”

“The judges noted that electric cooperatives are being



Your electric cooperative caught a gold star for its member newsletter recently! Federated’s Steve Ruthenbeck displays the *Connections* Gold Star newsletter award, while Andrea Christoffer holds up the three entries submitted in the national Spotlight on Excellence awards program.

challenged to communicate to the people they serve in more ways than ever before,” said Scott Peterson, senior vice president communications for NRECA. “Printed news publications, news releases, social media and videos are all more important than ever to keep members updated and informed about information and news that impacts them.”

“Once again it is truly an honor to be a part of this award-winning team,” stated Federated’s General Manager Scott Reimer. “These employees make quality communications to our members a priority and continue to exceed our — *Continued on Page 6*

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

**Join us for a power trip this summer** to see where your electricity is generated. See Page 4.

**Save on energy bills and receive a \$25 bill credit** by having your cooling system tuned up. Details and checklist on Page 8.

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

# Heat pumps: science for savings

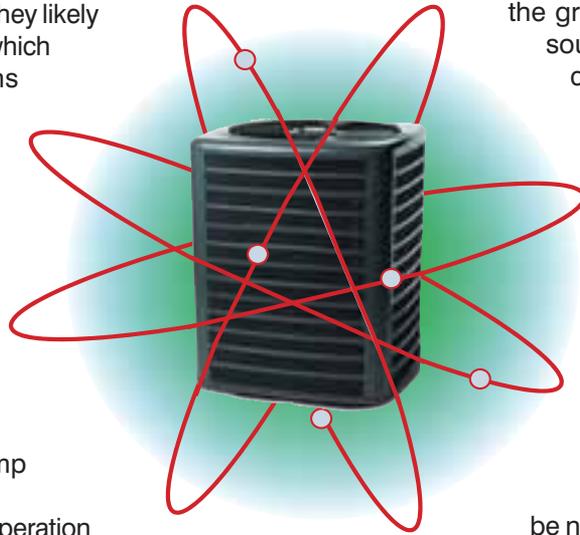
Think of the words "heat pump." They likely conjure all sorts of images, none of which reflect the fact that these systems operate using the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Yes, I hear the groans, but stick with me; it isn't going to be that bad, and you may learn something new!

There are two basic types of heat pump technology — air source and ground source. With an air source heat pump the equipment uses the outside air to provide the means for heating and cooling your home. A ground source heat pump uses plain old dirt.

Since ground source heat pump operation is a little easier to describe, let's start there. Once you get a short distance below the surface, around a depth of four feet, the temperature of the ground stays a reasonably constant 50-55 degrees year-round. Have you ever gone into a cave or toured a cavern? In the summer it is nice and cool. In the winter it seems cozy and warm. What you sense is the difference between the outside temperature and that of the cavern below ground.

Ground source heat pumps use this temperature difference to heat and cool. These systems need some sort of heat exchanger installed underground, either vertically or horizontally, and are filled with a fluid. The equipment at the house itself resembles a typical HVAC system. It uses pumps and compressors to move the fluid through pipes inside the house and in the ground where it picks up or gives off heat, depending upon the need. The process is rather simple, using a fluid to move (or pump) heat from one place to another.

Air source heat pumps may seem harder to grasp. How can such a system cool my home when the outside air is so hot or heat it when it is so cold? Again, the mechanics of the system take advantage of very small differences in temperature using the proper compressor and refrigerant mix. Just like its ground source cousin, the air source heat pump moves heat from one spot to another. The difference is that the tool to exchange heat is the outside air, rather than



the ground. Both air source and ground source heat pumps use refrigerant to capture the heat and carry it to where it is exchanged — either in the ground or using the outside air.

Heat pumps are very efficient, much more so than traditional heating and cooling systems. Let's use a heat pump with a COP (coefficient of performance) of 3.0 as an example. For every unit of energy used the system produces three units of heating/cooling. It's not a bunch of hocus pocus — just that law of thermodynamics.

Efficient as they may be, it should be noted that air source heat pumps can have drawbacks. In extremely cold climates air source models lose their ability to heat effectively around 17 degrees. Below that temperature, they have to use resistance electric heat to keep up or switch to the backup fossil fuel furnace. In temperate climates they are likely your best choice for heating and cooling, especially for forced air applications. While some companies have worked to build a cold climate model, it is still a work in progress.

Ground source systems can operate in nearly any climate and work well with both baseboard hot water and forced air systems. However, they can be expensive to install because of their need for a ground loop.

Heat pumps, properly applied, can make a world of difference to your monthly bill, as well as to your comfort. Talk to your co-op's energy expert and find out if a heat pump is the ticket for your heating and cooling needs. Ask about the cooperative's heat pump rebates too! 

## Energy Tips

### Pumped up about heat pumps for cooling!

- Go with a heat pump for your next cooling system.
  - Heat pumps are better at removing humidity from your home than traditional central air units.
  - Installing heat pumps with two-speed or variable-speed fans can improve efficiency by moderating the flow of air across the coils. 

# WORX Landroid is a Roomba for your lawn

The Landroid from WORX is a pre-programmable robotic mower that lets you customize daily mowing schedules, cutting heights and yard sizes. The Landroid can navigate narrow passages, cut with precision (even on slopes up to 20 degrees) and does its job with zero emissions. If your lawn is up to one-fourth acre and you want it to look great every day, Landroid mowing technology is designed for you.

The WORX Landroid uses an artificial intelligence algorithm that allows it to cover any area of your lawn. This allows the Landroid to make minimal cuts each time, which improves the health of your grass and provides fine mulch to feed your lawn. From a 28-volt lithium ion battery to rain detection sensors and security features, the Landroid uses advanced technology to keep your lawn looking great everyday.

The Landroid comes with everything you need to get it up and running. A charging base plugs into a standard outlet and charges the Landroid within 45 minutes. The Landroid includes 590 feet of perimeter wire to create a perimeter around your yard. You can either create a small trench and bury the wire or use the 200 installation pegs and allow the grass to grow over the wire that sits on top



**Have you ever wished for a robot to mow your lawn? That dream is now a reality with the WORX Landroid.**

of the ground. The Landroid comes with nine replacement blades (three sets of three) so you are ready to go when it is time to replace them.

The WORX Landroid Mower is available for approximately \$920 on Amazon.com. 

## Safety

### *Electric current in the water? Get out!*

If electric current is present in fresh water and someone swims into that water, the result can be an electric shock drowning. If the electrical current is strong enough, the electric shock can cause muscle paralysis, which leaves the affected individual unable to swim to safety. It's a particularly dangerous hazard because it's impossible to tell by sight if the water is energized.



Outdated wiring and a lack of proper safety equipment and routine maintenance on docks and boats can cause situations where electricity "leaks" into the water. Only 10-15 milliamps, which is 1/50 the wattage of a 60-watt light bulb, can cause drowning.

Your electric co-op recommends that individuals do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If a person is in the water and feels electric current (a tingling on the skin or pulsing sensation in the water), that individual should shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck their legs up to make themselves smaller and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not head to the boat or dock

ladders to get out. If possible, swim to the shore.

If people see someone who they suspect is getting shocked, they should not immediately jump in to save them. Throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection at the meter base and/or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible; then call for help.

Follow these tips to help make

water safe.

- Docks should have ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breakers on the circuits feeding electricity to the dock.
- The metal frame of docks should be bonded to connect all metal parts to the alternating current (AC) safety ground at the power source. That will ensure any part of the metal dock that becomes energized because of electrical malfunction will trip the circuit breaker.
- Neighboring docks can also present a shock hazard. Make your neighbors aware of the need for safety inspections and maintenance. 

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

# Brown County Briefs

## Twins Play Ball! Clinic

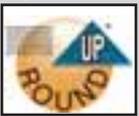


Youth ages 6-13 are invited to participate in the Minnesota Twins Play Ball! clinic, Friday, June 16 at North Park in New Ulm.

- 6-9 year olds: 3 p.m.
- 10-13 year olds: 4:30 p.m.

Sponsored by the Twins Community Fund and Great River Energy, Brown County REA's wholesale power supplier, the clinic is designed to teach basic fundamentals, including hitting, throwing and fielding. The event is free and open to all youth ages 6-13. However, participants must complete a waiver on-site. Equipment is provided, but participants are asked to bring their own glove. The event is hosted by New Ulm Park and Recreation.

## Operation Round Up



The Round Up Trust Board will meet to review applications August 8. Organizations wishing to seek funding should submit applications before that date. Application available at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) under the *Programs & Services* tab.

## Member Advisory Council

The next meeting of the Member Advisory Council is set for September 18 at 7:30 p.m.

## Energy tip of the month

Periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it is not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire. Manufacturers recommend using rigid venting material — not plastic vents that may collapse and cause blockages. Source: U.S Department of Energy ☺

# BCREA notice of cogeneration



In compliance with Minnesota adopted Rules Regulating Cogeneration and Small Power Production Chapter 7835, BCREA is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers, which satisfy the conditions and become a Qualifying Facility.

Brown County REA has available and will provide, upon request, free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the Cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the Cooperative.

Members interested in more information should contact the Brown County REA office, 24386 Highway 4 North, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085; otherwise, call 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. ☺

# Travel to see where your power is generated



Members are invited to join Brown County REA and BENCO on a coach bus tour to the Coal Creek Station generating plant and coal mine near Bismarck, ND, August 22-24. The generating plant, owned by Great River Energy, provides most of the electricity members use in our service area.

Members' cost for the tour is \$135 per person. It includes round-trip motor coach, lodging for two nights, tour of Coal Creek Station and Falkirk Mine, lunch on the tour day and two breakfasts at the hotel and entry to the North Dakota Heritage Museum, plus other cultural and historical stops on tour day.

If interested in participating in the Coal Creek Tour, please register by sending in the registration form below and your \$135 per person check payable to Brown County REA, or contact our office by August 1. If you have questions, call 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☺

## Registration for the Coal Creek Tour August 22-24

First & last name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone # \_\_\_\_\_

REA account # \_\_\_\_\_

How many are attending? \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check for \$135 per person

Room preference:

Nonsmoking double (2 beds)       Smoking double (2 beds)

**Send in check with your reservation to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 before August 1. Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368 with questions.**



# Retirement congratulations to Wade



BCREA General Manager Wade Hensel was honored at retirement gatherings leading to his last day on the job in late April. Wade led Brown County REA since 2001 as a shared manager with BENCO Electric in Mankato, where he was employed for 41 years, 36 of them as general manager. Left: Wade shares memories with Meter Foreman Adam Fischer (left) and retired lineman/foreman Dale Domeier. Right: BCREA has had four general managers in its 80-year history. Three of them gathered to celebrate Wade's retirement: Wade, present BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann (center) and former manager Les Schrupp. (C)

## New Member Advisory Council tours BCREA headquarters



The new Member Advisory Council recently toured BCREA headquarters. CEO Mike Heidemann showed them the outage management features of the command center and advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) meters in the Operations Department. The Member Advisory Council will meet again September 18 at 7:30 p.m. (C)

## Drew Hill is newest member of line crew



Although he has been on board for almost a year, Drew Hill is the newest journeyman lineman joining

the crew at BCREA last June.

A native of Verndale, Drew completed lineman training at Minnesota State Community College of Wadena. He worked on the road with a powerline construction contractor for two years before working as a lineworker with the City of Elbow Lake for four years. He and his family relocated to the area to be closer to family two years ago. Drew said he farmed for a couple of years before being lucky enough to get on the BCREA crew.

In his free time Drew enjoys spending time with his wife, Beth, and three-year-old daughter, Ellie, working at home on the farm with the cattle and tinkering. (C)

## Is your power out? Send us a text!

Follow these steps to set up Outage Texting:

- Call the cooperative office to make sure we have your cell phone number(s) recorded in our system.
- Go to [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) and register. Click on *Links* under the *Resources* tab, then select *Outage Texting Registration*.
- You will be given an outage "texting number." Add this number to your contacts on your cell phone so it's ready when an outage occurs. (C)



Visit this website to register. Take a short lighting quiz. Great River Energy, your cooperative's wholesale power supplier, sponsors this contest for the 28 co-ops and their member-owners. See if you can win! The contest runs until August 31, 2017. 

## Federated member wins 2016's \$500 energy credit from power supplier!



And the winner was... A Federated Rural Electric member-owner won the 2016 \$500 electric bill credit from Great River Energy's lighting contest. Congratulations go to Leo Helland, Granada! 

## Newsletter wins national award

— Continued from Page 1

expectations. Congratulations Andrea, Steve and Marcia!"

A special reception honored the award recipients during the CONNECT '17 Conference held in Tampa, Florida, May 2-4. Winning entries were displayed during the event.

The annual Spotlight on Excellence Awards competition recognizes the top-rated communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related organizations. Entrants competed with electric cooperatives of similar size in 17 categories. Electric cooperative communicators and marketing professionals submitted more than 780 entries in the Spotlight on Excellence program, now in its 29<sup>th</sup> year. Professors from accredited Schools of Journalism and Marketing, along with top communications professionals in the private sector, were judges.

Peterson commented that, "this award program represents our industry's leading practices. The Spotlight competition not only recognizes excellence, but more importantly, it provides a platform for collaboration and the exchange of ideas and best practices that can help co-op communicators across our network of more than 900 co-ops."

The Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) was organized in 1982; CREC advances the recognition, education and professionalism of electric cooperative communicators and their organizations. It is a volunteer association for more than 4,000 electric cooperative communicators across the U.S. 

**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](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org). Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 

## Dig out the fork! Time for some pork recipes! Share your best!

Time to “pig out” on some of your favorite pork recipes. Share with us your family favorite recipes for pork chops, roasts, ribs, pulled pork, sausage and even bacon! Mail 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! ☺

**Your electric cooperative is closed July 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**Crews will be on-call in case of any outages!**

**Have a fun & safe holiday!**



### Zesty Italian Onions

by Carron Klukow, Sherburn

Cut one red onion lengthwise in half and then crosswise in thin slices.

Combine with:

½ c. Zesty Italian dressing  
 ½ c. white vinegar     1 T. sugar  
 minced garlic

Add onions and mix lightly. Refrigerate two hours or overnight.

Great to serve at cookouts! ☺

### Raw Onion Salad

by Veronica Studer, Sherburn

2 large onions (or more), sliced & soak overnight with next three ingredients; mix well: 1 c. sugar     1 c. water  
 1 c. vinegar

Drain and then cover with mayo. Add 1 tsp. celery seed or more for your taste. ☺

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### Connections correction

Editor’s note: The phone number was missing a number for Welcome TV last month. The complete phone number is 728-8767. Our apologies! ☺



**What’s the secret behind every ‘Super Clean’ hero? A water heater from your electric cooperative!**

Whether it’s dirty kids, piles of laundry or stacks of dishes, the water heater from your electric cooperative brings the heat! Call us for your next water heater! ☺



## 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

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 meeting May 31 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on these items:

- Reviewed and approved April 2017 payroll and March 2017 financial statements.
- Updated on recent activities of the Minnesota Legislature, which impact electric cooperative members.
- Reviewed and approved participation in the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Integrity Fund at 5 percent with a cap of \$1,500.
- Informed of recent hires for the Operations Department. Tyler Jensen was hired as a full-time Apprentice Linemen. Collins Rewitzer and David Surprenant were hired as temporary seasonal lineworkers.
- Reviewed progress on Cost of Service Study being conducted for the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative members.
- Reviewed safety meetings and trainings attended by linemen and operations staff.
- Discussed progress on spraying of the cooperative's rights-of-way, which will continue in June.

The next meeting will be June 29 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎



**Marcia Solie**  
Member Services  
Manager

# Staff notes

## Tune up to keep your cooling system running smoothly

Brown County REA is again offering a \$25 electric bill credit to members who have their home cooling system tuned up.

Brown County REA encourages members to have your central air conditioner or air source heat pump unit tuned up regularly by a licensed, professional HVAC contractor. If the unit is more than three years old and has not

had a tune-up during the last two years, have it serviced by a qualified contractor who must perform the tasks on the checklist below. Submit a copy of the checklist, along with a dated copy of the contractor's bill to Brown County REA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085, or drop it off at the office. Even if members have a tune-up done annually, a rebate will only be credited if it has been two years since the last tune-up. ☎

## Cooling system tune-up check points

Member name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_

### Technician Checklist:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean condenser coil   | <input type="checkbox"/> Test all controls                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check coolant level    | <input type="checkbox"/> Blow out drain lines               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check coolant pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Perform a visual inspection of the |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check indoor filter    | entire cooling system                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check belt and lube    | <input type="checkbox"/> Educate member on proper system    |
| motor, if needed                                | operation and maintenance                                   |



List cooling unit's brand, model and serial number: **Return coupon**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **to BCREA with**  
 List the approximate age of unit \_\_\_\_\_ **HVAC tune-up**  
 List EER rating and BTU rating \_\_\_\_\_ **invoice; re-**  
 Technician's name and signature \_\_\_\_\_ **ceive \$25 bill**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **credit. Thanks!**