

# Connections

September 2017

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 21, Issue 9

## Update your life-support member listing with us



For family members or friends with a medical condition electricity is a lifeline for their medical equipment.

Your local electric cooperative likes to know about any members who are on life-support equipment, such as:

- Oxygen concentrators

- Respirators
- Home dialysis or
- Other life-threatening conditions.

Plus, tell us if the medical equipment has battery backup or a generator backup.

Your electric cooperative maintains this list for two reasons. First, in case of a planned outage where crews will work on the lines, the co-op tries to inform these members before the outage. Secondly, during an unplanned outage, priority is given to restore power to these members with such medical equipment.

If you haven't notified your local electric cooperative, please complete this coupon and return it to us with your next bill payment. Otherwise, e-mail, fax or mail the information right away. In addition, if the person with the medical condition moves off the co-op's system, no longer needs life support or passed away, please inform the cooperative so our list stays current. (L)

### Place me on co-op's medical list

Yes, I'm on life support equipment OR

Please remove

from the co-op's life support list

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Your account number (as found on your electric bill)

Type of life support equipment or medical condition:

Battery backup?  Yes  No

If yes, how long will the batteries last? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a generator onsite for backup electricity?

Yes  No

**Return this coupon to your local electric co-op with your next bill payment. Otherwise, e-mail, fax or mail it right away. Thanks! (9/2017)**



## Appreciating electricity a penny at a time

You might be old enough to remember when penny candy actually cost a penny. For a nickel you could buy enough candy to rot your teeth out, as mother used to say.

So what does a penny buy these days? Not much. The government can't even make a penny for a penny anymore. According to the U.S. Mint, it



now costs 1.5 cents to produce a penny.

About the only thing of value you can still get for a penny is electricity. You might call it "penny electricity."

No, we're not kidding. Think about it.

To make the math easier, let's say the average

— Continued on Page 6

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

**Sizzling savings!  
Hot pricing on our  
water heaters —  
soak up the value!**

Buy your next water heater from BCREA. The 2017 pricing is \$500, tax included (\$250 if you go on the storage program). The retail value is more than \$1,000. Plus, it features a lifetime warranty against leaks, thick foam insulation and convenient service from your electric co-op. See Page 2 for more details. (L)

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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# Water heaters offer win-win for members & cooperative; Purchase your next water heater from your co-op

Just like people recharge themselves overnight via sleeping, so do many water heaters. However, these water heaters work through the night to convert energy into heat; this energy is then stored in water heaters that will later provide the hot water for cooperative members' homes and businesses.

Your electric co-op's storage water heater program uses off-peak energy — generated from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. when electricity is lower in demand and less expensive; in addition, it also includes a higher percentage of renewable energy, as much of it is wind-generated electricity during this timeframe.

This strategy of storing thermal energy overnight and using it throughout the day creates a win-win for the consumer and cooperative. As a co-op member-owner who participates in this program, you're helping to shift electricity consumption from peak hours (the weekday morning rush preparing for work or coming home at supertime) to non-peak hours. This cuts the cost of your own bills, while also allowing your cooperative to avoid purchasing power at times of heightened demand when market prices are high.

"This helps keep rates low for the members who participate in these programs and even those who aren't, while providing the same level of reliable electric service they've always experienced," said Gary Connett, director, demand-side management and member services for Great River Energy (GRE). "These types of water heaters also help our cooperatives meet national and state-wide energy-efficiency and conservation goals."

## Everyone wins!



### Storage water heaters

Electric cooperatives recently earned the right to continue using large capacity, electric water heaters as part of their demand-response programs. This was pivotal for cooperatives since water heaters are an essential tool for load control. Even though co-ops sell 10 percent of the nation's retail electricity, electric cooperatives are responsible for 20 percent of the peak reduction.

More than 100,000 of these high-efficiency water heaters are currently under control in the GRE service area for our part in maintaining that 20 percent. Each night more than a gigawatt-hour of energy is stored in them — making up the biggest "battery" in the Midwest.

The water heaters used in your cooperative's demand-response programs have ample storage capacity (at least 80 gallons) and can supply a member's hot water needs over an extended period each day. They include an approved radio control that limits the electric usage

to the nighttime recharge period, and are some of the most durable water heaters on the market. Better yet, now many of these water heaters feature a lifetime warranty against leaks so you'll be guaranteed it's the last water heater you'll purchase for your home. Plus, the co-op's water heater features 2-3 inches of insulation to keep the hot water hot with less waste.

"Oftentimes we don't replace our water heaters until they stop working and we're left taking cold showers," Connett said. "By installing an energy-efficient water heater now from your electric co-op, members can save themselves the stress of not knowing when their 10-year-old water heater will fail and be assured that their new water heater will stand the test of time."

### Off-peak water heaters

Sometimes the storage program is not a good fit for co-op members. The next option is off-peak control where the co-op water heater is controlled from approximately 3-10 p.m. on the hottest days of summer, coldest days of winter or peak times in the spring and fall. Those who may need the off-peak program include:

- Families larger than four members
- Families with teenagers or
- Homes with large hot tubs or rainfall showerheads.

### Find out more

By participating in your co-op's water heater programs enjoy savings on your monthly bills and help the co-op provide affordable, reliable electricity. See Page 1 for water heater pricing details and call us to arrange for your next water heater. ☎

## Master cooking eggs with the Rollie Eggmaster

How do you cook your eggs? Get out the frying pan, grease the frying pan, fry eggs, scrape them off the frying pan, break the egg yolk in the process of scraping them off the frying pan and then clean up the frying pan?

An easier way now exists with the Rollie Eggmaster. Just crack an egg, pour it in as it cooks in six to eight minutes. You can even add cheese, onions, bacon etc. for a quick omelet on-a-stick. The Eggmaster's vertical cooking chamber makes it easy to create dozens of fast and delicious treats for breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert.

Other features include:

- 0 percent fat cooking system.
- Cook eggs, omelet rolls, frittatas or other breakfast foods that make it a great companion for breakfast or healthy snacks for the whole family.
- The distinctive design cooks food with



minimum counter space requirements and can be used anywhere.

- Easy to use and clean with included brush.
- No shells to peel, no water to boil, no frying pan or stove.
- Indicator lights: the red light turns on when the appliance is powered up. When it is ready for use, the green light turns on.
- A non-slip, cool-touch, silicon grip for safe handling.
- Cleaning brush
- Supporting skewers
- Over 25 recipes included

The Rollie Eggmaster is approximately \$30 on Amazon.com. (E)

**The Rollie Eggmaster is a quick and easy way to cook eggs in a variety of ways.**

### Safety

## Be aware of power lines this harvest

Harvest is one of the busiest times of year for farmers — and among the most dangerous. Your electric co-op urges farm workers to be aware of overhead power lines and to keep equipment and extensions far away from them. Follow these tips.

- Start each morning by planning your day's work. Know what jobs will happen near power lines and have a plan to keep everyone safe.
- Keep yourself and equipment 10 feet away from power lines in all directions, at all times.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of a grain truck. It can be difficult to estimate distance and sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. Use a spotter to make certain you stay far away from power lines.
- Always lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level, under 14 feet, before moving or transporting them. Wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can cause you to lose control of equipment and make contact with power lines.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting larger modern tractors with higher antennas.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear



a path. If power lines near your property have sagged over time, call your utility to repair them.

- Don't use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside/around bins.
  - As in any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
  - Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.
  - If you are on equipment that makes contact with a power line, do not exit the equipment. When you step off the equipment, you become the electricity's path to ground and receive a potentially fatal shock. Wait until utility workers have de-energized the line and confirmed that it is safe for you to exit the vehicle. If the vehicle is on fire and you must exit, jump clear of the vehicle with both feet together. Hop as far from the vehicle as you can with your feet together. Keeping your feet together prevents you from getting a shock. (E)
- Information courtesy of [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org)

# Brown County Briefs

## Member Advisory Council

The second meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be held Monday, September 18, at 7:30 p.m. in the BCREA Auditorium.

## Energy Tip of the Month

Cooler temps will be here soon! No matter what kind of heating system you have in your home, you can save money and increase your comfort by properly maintaining and upgrading your equipment. Contact a licensed professional to inspect your system before the winter chill arrives.

## Helget part of 2017 HOF class



Congratulations to longtime BCREA accountant and baseball enthusiast, Terry Helget, who was selected for induction into the Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame as part of the 2017 class. The Hall of Fame induction ceremony is Saturday, September 16, at the River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud.

A graduate of New Ulm Cathedral High School, Terry went on to play baseball at the University of St. Thomas. He is being inducted for his involvement in amateur baseball as a player, coach, manager, umpire, league officer and board member. (L)

# BCREA welcomes new lineman Tyler Jensen



Sleepy Eye native, Tyler Jensen, is the newest member of the line crew at Brown County REA.

A second-year apprentice lineman, Tyler began working at the cooperative in June 2017. He is a 2004 graduate of Sleepy Eye Public High School and attended Iowa Lakes Community College where he played baseball for two years while pursuing general studies. He then completed a two-year power lineman training program through Minnesota West Community and Technical

College in Jackson. He worked as summer help at BCREA for two summers while in college.

Following his graduation, Tyler began working for Highline Construction, a powerline construction company based in Paynesville, in August 2008. He worked primarily in Iowa, but also parts of South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska, traveling during the week and coming back home to Sleepy Eye on weekends. Among his most memorable experiences working for the contractor was nearly four weeks spent in Connecticut following a 2012 hurricane.

"It was definitely something to see and experience," Tyler said.

Tyler and his wife, Nicole, met in college and were married in 2010. They reside in Sleepy Eye with their three daughters: Kenley, 7; Madelyn, 4; and Emma, 8 months.

With a growing family Tyler is happy to be working close to home. He enjoys his work and said that's why he stayed at Highline for so long.

"I love what I do," Tyler said. "This [working at Brown County REA] is the best of both worlds."

In his free time Tyler likes to hunt, fish and, since retiring from baseball, he has become an avid golfer. (L)

## The Hidden Battery

Using Your Electric Water Heater for Heating Storage



1

### Electric water heater:

Controllable, high-efficiency electric water heaters are in homes.

2

### During times of high demand:

Co-op cuts power to water heaters.

3

### When demand drops:

Water heaters are turned back on to run during the night and provide warm water for the next day.

### Benefits

Co-ops avoid peak pricing.

Members use power when it's cheaper.

Helps avert need for new power plants.

Electric water heaters are essentially pre-installed thermal batteries that can be used to manage the storage of heat energy, allowing the co-op to take heavy energy loads off-line during peak periods. This saves energy and money for members. Contact BCREA to learn more about our load management programs.

# Coal Creek Tour fun for everyone!



BCREA members George & Marian Altmann, Tom Engel, Warren & Stephanie Mathiowetz, Robert & Barb Sellner, Dave & Ann Wendinger and Dennis & Jeanette Wilson joined members and staff from Benco Electric on a three-day trip to North Dakota to see where much of their power is generated. Participants posed near one of the massive dump trucks that hauls from the pit at the Falkirk Mine the coal used to power the turbines at neighboring Coal Creek Station. They also visited the Fort Mandan Center along the Missouri River, North Dakota Heritage Museum and took a bus tour around the city of Bismarck. (C)

## Members' pennies contribute \$3,300

The Round Up Trust Board distributed \$3,300 to nine organizations and two individuals in the BCREA service area at its meeting August 8.

Funds were awarded to the Southern Minnesota Youth Dairy Show, Brown County 4-H Food Stand, Sleepy Eye Community Theatre, New Ulm Middle School YES Program, Hanska Community Library, Sleepy Eye Police Safety Pup program, Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Sleepy Eye Safety Day and the St. Francis Storm Relief Fund.

Donations are made possible through the generosity of REA members who round up their electric bill each month to the nearest dollar. The difference is placed in the Round Up Trust account and distributed quarterly to charitable causes throughout the cooperative's service area. Contributions are tax deductible.

The trust board will meet again November 14. Organizations interested in applying for funding through the Round Up Trust can request an application from trust board members Arlene Helget, Vickie Kral, Jim Lilleodden, Kari Berg, Rhonda Mickelson, Lee Johnson, Michelle Strate, Ann Wendinger or Michelle Oswald. Applications



Jim Lilleodden, Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board Treasurer, presented a \$1,000 check to Hanska Community Library Director Darlene Nelson. The donation will go toward electric appliances, a DVD holder and a children's rug for the new library location in downtown Hanska.

are also available on the REA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop), under the Programs & Services tab, or by contacting the office at 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. (C)

### Join Operation Round Up

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to join Operation Round Up and have my electric bill rounded up to the nearest dollar.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send (or include it with your electric bill) to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085.

# Electricity remains a great value

— Continued from Page 1

rate for a kilowatt-hour of electricity is 10 cents. That is 60 minutes of 1,000 watts of electricity for a dime, so a penny of electricity equates to 100 watts. It's enough to power a 9-watt LED light bulb — the equivalent of a 60-watt incandescent bulb — for 11 hours, all for only a penny.

Where else can you get that kind of value?

How many eggs will a penny buy? How much milk, bread, coffee, medicine or gasoline?

Gas has come down from its stratospheric levels of several years ago, but there is still no comparison to the value of electricity. For example, if a gallon of gas costs \$2.50 and your car gets 25 miles to the gallon, you can drive 176 yards — about two blocks — on a penny's worth of gas.

We will take 11 hours of lighting for a penny over a two-block drive any day.

The value is just as evident when powering things other than lighting. Take, for instance, your smartphone. Using the same 10 cents per kWh price, penny electricity allows you to fully charge your iPhone more than 18 times for a penny. You can charge it once every day of the year for about 20 cents total.

Not impressed? Well, how about these other examples of what you can do with just a penny's worth of electricity: power a 1,000-watt microwave on high for 6 minutes; run a 200-watt desktop computer for 30 minutes; watch 2.5 hours of your favorite shows on a 40-watt, 32-inch, LED television or 1.3 hours on a 75-watt, 75-inch mega TV.

The examples are endless. We are fortunate electricity is such an excellent value because we have a huge appetite for it. We tend to forget that.

Electricity is not expensive. It's that we use it for so many different things: lighting, heating, cooking, cooling, refrigeration, cleaning, washing, pumping, entertainment, communications — even transportation these days.



Few corners of our lives are left untouched by electricity.

Unfortunately, we don't always appreciate it. When our monthly electric bill comes, we open it and may complain about the cost. It's a knee-jerk reaction ingrained in us as consumers. We don't stop to think about the value we received for the money.

Someone once had the pleasure to interview an elderly woman who remembered the day electricity came to her farm. She showed the worn, dog-eared membership certificate the co-op issued to her husband. "You young people will never know what it was like to have electricity for the very first time," she said. "It was glorious. Nowadays, you take it for granted."

Her farm was energized in 1940. She said the price of electricity at the time was slightly less than a penny a kilowatt-hour — true penny electricity.

A lot has changed since then. Wages and the cost of living today are a far cry from 1940, when the average annual wage was less than \$150 a month and the average cost of a house was \$3,920.

But one thing that hasn't changed is the value of electricity. In the many years since its price has risen much slower than the rate of inflation.

A penny in 1940 had as much buying power as 17 cents today, which means the residential price of electricity — which now averages 12 cents a kWh nationally and as the Minnesota average — is actually a better deal today than it was in 1940.

To our way of thinking, the value of electricity is like the bygone days of penny candy and it's okay to indulge yourself a little. But, unlike penny candy, penny electricity won't rot your teeth out. ☺

Some programming changes may occur in the near future from the Godahl tower. With the price increase watching CTV channels amounts to about 26 cents a day — still a bargain. CTV thanks you for your continued support. ☺

“With the steady operating cost increases over the years and the challenges with quality programming ahead of us our board thought it prudent to initiate the increase now to stay on top of the business and to be ready for the financial challenges,” said Dave Sunderman, CTV general manager.

## Cooperative Television of Southern Minnesota (CTV) \$1 rate increase effective on next bill

Cooperative Television of Southern Minnesota (CTV) is increasing rates effective on the next bills.

The price for more than 40 digital channels is moving from \$7 a month to \$8 a month. The last price increase was in April 2011 — more than six years ago.

Some programming changes may occur in the near future from the Godahl tower. With the price increase watching CTV channels amounts to about 26 cents a day — still a bargain. CTV thanks you for your continued support. ☺

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With the price increase watching CTV channels amounts to about 26 cents a day — still a bargain. CTV thanks you for your continued support. ☺

## Mmmm...that's 'gourd!' Welcome fall with best squash recipes!

It's getting close to harvest time. Gardens are full of bounty. Go out there and pick your squash! Share your family favorites! Do you enjoy squash baked, mashed, mixed or made into bread? Mail to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

### Salsa by Laurie Sherman, Truman

6 qts. tomatoes (diced)      4 c. onions (chopped)      ½ c. canning salt  
 Let sit three hours and then drain.  
 Add: ½ c. sugar      12 oz. tomato paste      ½ c. vinegar  
 Mix with optional ingredients: ½ c. celery, chopped  
 2 c. green peppers, chopped      4 oz. jalapeno peppers      4 oz. green chilies  
 Makes nine pints. ☺

### Salsa by Gail Rogers, Heron Lake

15 lbs. tomatoes      1½ c. white vinegar  
 4 large or 6 small onions      2 whole cloves garlic, chopped  
 ½ c. canning salt      hot peppers: jalapeno, bell, banana or bell  
 ½ c. lemon juice

Wash, scald and take skins off tomatoes. (I put mine in a pressure cooker without the cover; it won't burn so easy in a pressure cooker). Cut the tomatoes into bite-sized pieces. Chop garlic and onions. Cut and remove seeds from peppers; chop into small pieces. Cook on fairly high heat until it starts to boil and then simmer until thick — anywhere from 2½ to 4 hours. Stir often to start and then every 10 minutes. Add salt, lemon juice and vinegar anytime. After it is thick put it in hot sterilized jars and seal. Black beans and corn can also be added. ☺

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

## Members see the light on electrical safety



The Touchstone Energy booth at FarmFest drew more than 1,000 members from 11 electric cooperatives, including your utility. This shared booth handed out LED bulbs to members that brought along their co-op's free bulb coupon. Thanks for stopping, visiting with us and learning about electrical safety too. ☺

## Military personnel gain electric bill payment options

Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to cooperative members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change. Call or e-mail us for more details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. ☺



## 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.



**Marcia Solie**  
Member Services  
Manager

# Staff notes

## Member engagement is the key to the co-op

Brown County REA is a member-owned, member-governed cooperative. When the co-op was founded back in 1937, rural residents of the area knew that we are a locally-owned business — likely because they or someone they knew played a part in helping found the cooperative. Over time as the novelty of receiving electricity waned, the founders passed on and new people moved into the area, viewing the electric co-op like any other energy provider.

But we are different and the key to that difference is you, the member-owner of our cooperative. Without your support and commitment, we would not exist. Research proves that when people own something they treat it differently, which is why we encourage Brown County REA members to act as an owner, rather than a customer. As an owner, you play a critical role in our success. Each year, if our revenue exceeds our expenses (which is always our goal), a certain percentage is allocated back to you — because you are a member of the co-op.

With that ownership comes certain rights like the opportunity to seek election to serve on the Board of Directors. If that seems like too big a commitment, we still want and need you to participate in the annual elections.

We welcome your advice and counsel as we continually look for innovative ways to help you use energy efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner. As a local business, we have a real stake in the area, just as you do.

While electric power is the commodity that your co-op sells, the real power is that together, we empower this local area. When people feel empowered they accomplish great things.

True, the world is different today than it was 80 years ago when Brown County REA was founded, but our mission of serving you and our local area is constant. Working together with your active, inspired engagement, we can continue to accomplish great things. ☎

# Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting August 31 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved July 2017 payroll and June 2017 financial statements.
- Reviewed and approved, by roll call vote, a resolution adopting the authority of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in Minnesota Statute Section 216B.164.
- Updated on progress with underground construction projects.
- Reviewed cooperative purchases made at Brown County and Tri-County fair live-stock auctions.
- Informed of a \$1 per month increase in CTV charges to members. The last increase was in 2011.
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and employee training.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting will be September 28 at the Brown County REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎



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