

# Connections

January 2018

For the member-owners of Brown County REA

Volume 22, Issue 1

## How energy efficient are you?



You want to conserve energy and help the environment, but how do you know if you're doing the right things? Read these 12 questions. (Don't forget the four questions in the graphic above.) Answer true or false. Keep track of the total number of true answers and see how you score at the end.

5. I scrape my dishes before loading them into the dishwasher. No rinsing here!

6. I only run my dishwasher and clothes washer when I have a full load.

7. I wash clothes in cold water whenever possible.

8. Every year I have a qualified professional inspect my furnace and AC system.

9. I change my furnace filter regularly (according to manufacturer's guidelines).

10. I have a programmable thermostat and I program it to save energy.

11. I look for the Energy Star label when I buy new electronics and appliances.

12. I encourage friends and family to use less energy.

### 1-4 true answers:

Don't take this the wrong way, but you're a bit of an energy guzzler. Cut your losses by tackling the items on this list. Next, take the online energy audit at [togetherwesave.com](http://togetherwesave.com).

### 5-8 true answers:

Nice job! You're a power user, but there's still room for

improvement. Start by checking off the remaining items on the list. Next, take the online energy audit at [togetherwesave.com](http://togetherwesave.com).

### 9-12 true answers:

Congratulations! You're an energy star performer. Take it to the next level by requesting a *101 Energy Saving Tips* booklet from your co-op to increase your savings. 

— Information courtesy of Questline

## Line patrol begins



If you see an electric co-op line truck moving slowly down the road, be careful and give them space. Crews are beginning their annual line patrol. During line patrol, the linemen drive the system to inspect it

for any present and future problems. They may also get out of their trucks and test poles for replacement.

Line trucks may also pull into your yard to inspect the service, meter and hardware to make sure it is all working right. Our linemen try to be as unobtrusive as possible during such visits. Thank you for your cooperation. 

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

**Changes to CBS  
channels on CTV;  
do a rescan or  
watch on WCCO 4**

Channels 12.4 and 12.5 are no longer broadcast on CTV's towers due to failed negotiations for a tower lease agreement with KEYC. Viewers may pick up 12.1 and 12.2 directly from KEYC's VHF tower at Lewisville if their antenna has UHF and VHF capabilities. Do a rescan. 

# Count on 2018 energy-efficient resolutions



The New Year is a time for starting over. If you're looking for a change that can benefit your family, your community, the planet and your wallet, how about saving energy?

Just as we began 2018 with the 10... 9... 8... 7... countdown to the clock striking midnight, now you can count down how many of these energy-efficient resolutions you can accomplish this year.

## 10 — Switch things off when leaving your den!

Turn off lights when you're the last one to leave a room. Turn off the TV, game console or any other entertainment device when you're finished using it. The remote is never far away and hitting the power button is fast, free and easy.

## 9 — LED savings are fine!

Switch to energy-efficient, longer-lasting LED bulbs. Remember to recycle your CFL and fluorescent bulbs though.

## 8 — Make an inspection date!

Have your heating and cooling system inspected by a qualified professional.

## 7 — Clean filters help with the savings!

Change furnace filters regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## 6 — Get your thermostat fixed!

Adjust the thermostat to save energy at night or when no one's at home. A programmable thermostat can do the job for you. You could also have a Wi-Fi thermostat installed. Then you'll be able to adjust the temperature of your home from your smartphone or tablet no matter where you are, including your couch. Check out the cooperative's qualifying smart Wi-Fi thermostat rebates too; call or visit the cooperative's website for details. If that still sounds like too much work, some smart models can program themselves based on your habits.

## 5 — Some electronics are always live!

Unplug battery chargers when they're not charging anything. Unplug any other "vampire" electronics you can think of, as well, that use power even when "off."

## 4 — Don't spend too much time under the shower!

Take shorter showers. If your water heater is getting old, contact your electric cooperative. We have great prices on energy-efficient electric water heaters, which feature insulation to prevent heat loss. Plus, the cooperative's water heaters come with a limited lifetime warranty against leaks for the original owner!

## 3 — Leaks aren't free!

Fix water leaks at the faucet as quickly as possible. Drippy faucets are a drain on your wallet.

## 2 — Let fixtures do the job for you!

Install water-efficient showerheads and faucet aerators.

## 1 — Go with Energy Star when old appliances are done!

Purchase only Energy Star® certified high-efficiency appliances and devices. For example, Energy Star TVs use up to 30 percent less energy than standard sets. You can shop online and have it delivered and installed. That way, you won't have to lift a finger, other than to pick up the remote! If you buy an Energy Star refrigerator or freezer, fill out the cooperative's rebate form; you must have the old unit recycled to receive this credit.

Looking to save more? Contact your electric cooperative for the "101 Energy Saving Tips" booklet for even more ways to save. Your cooperative's energy expert is here to help. Ask away. If we don't know the answer, we will try and find out for you! 

— Information courtesy of Questline

# Slow cooking is now on the go!

A lot of people love the convenience and ease of slow cookers when it comes to preparing meals. Some even bring slow cookers to family meals and picnics. Unfortunately, most are not designed for travel. They are tall and easily tip. Their covers don't latch. Now slow cookers are taking the next step and being made specifically for travel.

The Nomad Traveling Slow Cooler is based on a "picnic cooler-style" design. Its cool-touch housing and swing-up handle makes carrying easy and prevents tip-overs when traveling. The locking lid also seals tight for spill-proof transportation.

Make soups, stews, casseroles, chicken, roasts and more in this six-quart slow cooker. It is great for buffet-style foods, pulled pork, chicken wings, sloppy joes, hot beef and more. It tenderizes leaner cuts of meat and offers slow-cook settings for high, low and keep warm.

The hinged, removable cover has a large see-through glass window and features a detachable utensil holder with silicone cord that secures a utensil during transport and doubles as a spoon rest when serving. Removable nonstick cooking pot is fully immersible for easy cleaning. Built-in cord storage. A dry



The Nomad Traveling Slow Cooker is the slow cooker designed to take with you! Based on a picnic cooler design, this slow cooker is easy to carry and hard to spill. (U.D.)

erase board on the front is handy for labeling what is inside the slow cooker.

The Nomad Traveling Slow Cooker is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$60. (U.D.)

## Safety

### Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using space heaters doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

**DO:** Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.



**DO:** Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

**DO:** Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.



**DO:** Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over or you forget to shut it off.



**DO:** Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



### Ace space heater math!

#### Ace space heater math!

The typical space heater uses 1,500 watts of power. To figure out how much you'll spend using one 1,500-watt space heater over a period of time, use this formula:

1. Multiply 1,500 watts by X hours of use = A.
2. Multiply A by your electricity rate per kilowatt-hour (kWh) = B.
3. Divide B by 1,000.

So if you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater for 10 hours a day at a 10-cent per kWh rate, the numbers look like this:  $1,500 \times 10 = 15,000$ .  $15,000 \times .10 = 1,500$ .  $1,500/1,000 = \$1.50$  per day. (U.D.)

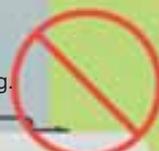
**DON'T:** Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



**DON'T:** Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to overheat and can be a tripping hazard.



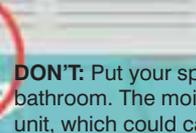
**DON'T:** Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



**DON'T:** Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



**DON'T:** Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.



# Brown County Briefs

## Member Advisory Council

The current Member Advisory Council will meet for its final session 7 p.m. Monday, January 22. Please note the time change.

## Calendars available

Members can now pick up 2018 large pocket farm calendars at the REA headquarters during regular business hours. Available until gone. One per member please.

## Operation Round Up

The BCREA Trust Board will meet February 20 at 5:30 p.m. to review applications for the next round of funding. ☎

## Recycle your old holiday lights



As you take down your Christmas lights, remember to recycle any you don't plan to use again. Brown County REA is again working with the Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect strands of old holiday lights to be recycled. The light strands will be taken to Jobs Plus, Inc. of Waseca, where adults with disabilities will dismantle and process for recycling through a Twin Cities facility. Lights will be collected in the REA office entry area during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through mid-January. ☎

## Jefferson Elementary students learn through War of the Currents



Students at Jefferson Elementary in New Ulm were treated to a fast and fun presentation on electricity and electricity generation through “War of the Currents,” given by staff from the Bakken Museum of Minneapolis. Students helped Bakken Museum employees Siri Hellerman (left) and Nathan Meyer demonstrate the difference between alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC) and learned about Nikola Tesla and Thomas Edison’s battle to control the electrical future with their respective inventions. The presentation was provided courtesy of Brown County REA and its wholesale power supplier Great River Energy. ☎

## Operation Round Up scholarships



BCREA, through its Operation Round Up program, is pleased to announce a new scholarship opportunity. Five \$200 scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors planning to attend college after graduation whose parents/guardians are members and live in BCREA’s service area.

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

Guidelines and applications are available from high school counselors and can be found on the REA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop).

The deadline for submission is April 2 and winners will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting April 5. A copy of the student’s high school transcript and one letter of recommendation are required. Scholarship funds will be awarded after successful completion of the first semester of college. ☎

## D.C. trip available to lucky student

Brown County REA is looking for one exceptional student to represent the cooperative on an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. June 9-14. Visit our website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) to learn more.

The application and selection procedures are available on the website and from high school counselors. The application deadline is March 2; then we will interview the top three candidates and select one to travel to Washington, D.C. in June. A \$150 prize will be awarded for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and \$100 to 3<sup>rd</sup> place. ☎

# Seeking director candidates

Nominations are being sought for candidates to run for election to the Brown County REA Board of Director in Districts 6, 7 and 9.

District 6 is made up of Eden 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 consists of a portion of Brighton and Bernadotte townships in Nicollet County and portions of Alfsborg, Cornish, Bismark and Moltke townships in Sibley County.

2018 nominating committees are District 6: Andrew & Julie Seifert, Allen Mathiowetz, Amos Vogel; District 7: Wayne & Gina Nienhaus, Jeremy Portner, Lance & Tonya Wendinger; District 9: Joe Sondag, Brent Johnson, Kevin Johnson.

If interested in being a candidate or have a member in mind who you believe would be a good candidate, please contact a nominating committee member prior to the January 22 Member Advisory Council meeting with your suggestion or contact the REA office. Please make sure the nominee is willing to have his or her name on the



ballot. The 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting will be held the evening of April 5 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center. ☎

## Do you want to be a BCREA director?

Brown County REA's nine-member Board of Directors meets monthly, usually the last Thursday of each month, during the day at the cooperative's headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Other meetings may include the Annual Meeting, annual and other meetings of our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) district and annual meetings, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting, other meetings and training to learn and stay current on policies and procedures of the electric industry.

The board is responsible for governing the cooperative. It will establish policies, approve major plans, programs and budgets, receive management reports, plus establish broad objectives for the General Manager/CEO.

Among responsibilities of a Director:

- Develop knowledge and skills as a board member and stay informed of all relevant and material matters affecting the business and operations of the cooperative.
- Authorize the money, facilities and equipment necessary to carry out the objectives of the cooperative including the review and approval of the operating budget.
- Establish controls that can be used in appraising the effectiveness of the cooperative and review periodic reports from the General Manager/CEO and staff to ascertain conformity with the board's policies and objectives.
- Assure the financial affairs of the cooperative are being conducted and recorded in accordance with all prescribed laws and regulations, plus that the financial records accurately

reflect the financial condition of the cooperative.

- Determine and adopt key issues, strategic initiatives, objectives, major goals and monitor the results.
- Review and approve broad operating programs of service and activities developed and recommended by the General Manager/CEO.
- Maintain compliance with all legal requirements.
- Conduct meetings and other activities to inform members and obtain their ideas and suggestions.
- Review participation in outside activities that enhance the cooperative's prestige, strengthen the cooperative's operations, and fulfill the cooperative's obligations to its members and the communities where the cooperative serves and operates. ☎

## Is your TV past its prime time (energy wise)?



Americans love their TVs. More than 115 million U.S. households have at least one television set, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Many of these TVs, however, are not as energy efficient as they could be; the extra cost can make a regular appearance on your monthly energy bills.

The best solution is to upgrade to an Energy Star® certified TV, which averages 27 percent more energy efficient than a conventional model. You can find the Energy Star® label on every type of TV, from standard sets to large screen models with the latest features and internet connectivity.

In addition to being more energy efficient, today's TVs are flatter, lighter and brighter than older models, providing a better viewing experience. You can happily binge-watch your favorite shows without seeing your energy costs go up.

Looking to save even more? These cost-cutting tips can help:

- Consider seating recommendations before purchasing a large screen TV. A smaller screen (that uses less energy) may be fine for the size of your room.

- Increase your savings by purchasing Energy Star® rated electronics, as well, such as set-top boxes, soundbars and digital media players.

- Turn off your TV and other connected components when they're not in use. Plug your entire home entertainment center into an advanced power strip, which automatically shuts off power to idle equipment.

By upgrading to the latest high-efficiency products, you can enhance your viewing pleasure and enjoy lower energy bills. 

— Information courtesy of Questline

# DO NOT TAMPER WITH YOUR ELECTRIC METER

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.



-  Never break a meter seal.
-  Never open a meter base.
-  Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.

If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.

## You 'butter nut' forget to share your best butternut recipes!

Gardens yielded another good harvest, with lots of treats ready to be prepared into delicious meals. Butternut squash can be served a variety of ways: baked, glazed, mashed and more... Share your favorite butternut squash recipes and send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christof-fer@federatedrea.coop by January 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! (U)

### Black Bean Brownies (gluten free) by Laurie Sherman, Truman

15 oz. can black beans, rinsed & drained      ½ tsp. baking powder  
 2 large eggs      pinch of salt  
 ¼ c. cocoa powder      ¾ c. chocolate chips, divided  
 2/3 c. honey      4 drops of peppermint essential oil (if desired)

Blend together until smooth everything except the chocolate chips; stir in ½ c. of the chocolate chips. Pour into 8x8" pan; top with the ¼ c. chocolate chips. Bake 350° for 30-35 minutes. Store in refrigerator. (U)

### Rice Pudding by Grace Gerken, Fairmont

Add 1/3 c. rice in 1 c. boiling water, ½ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. butter. Steam 20-25 minutes. Scald 3 c. milk. Mix 2 rounded T. cornstarch, ½ c. sugar, pinch of salt. Separate 3 eggs. To the yolks add a little hot milk. Add to the dry ingredients. Add to hot milk. Stir and cook until thick. Add vanilla. Add rice to the custard mixture.

#### Meringue:

Beat 3 egg whites, 6 T. sugar and a dash of salt. Spread meringue on top and brown at 350° for 15 minutes. (U)

### Pumpkin Nut Bars by Kay Sandersfeld, Fairmont

½ c. shortening      ¼ tsp. ginger  
 1 c. brown sugar      ¼ tsp. nutmeg  
 1 c. flour      2/3 c. pumpkin  
 ½ tsp. soda      2 eggs  
 ½ tsp. baking powder  
 1 tsp. vanilla      1/4 tsp. salt  
 1 tsp. cinnamon      1/2 c. nuts

Combine all ingredients except nuts in a large mixing bowl. Beat two minutes with electric mixer at medium speed. Fold in nuts. Spread evenly in a 13x9x2" pan. Bake in a 350° oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Cool; spread with frosting.

#### Orange frosting:

Blend until smooth:

2 T. shortening  
 1 ½ c. powdered sugar  
 1 T. grated orange peel  
 2 T. orange juice.

Yields about 1 cup. (U)



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and 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. (U)



## 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 board meeting December 28 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed November 2017 payroll and October 2017 financial statements.
- Approved the appointment of Lynnae Pelzel to the Round Up Trust Board representing District 5.
- Approved the cooperative's 2018 Operating Budget, as presented.
- Approved the nominating committees for the 2018 director elections: District 6: Andrew & Julie Seifert, Allen Mathiowetz, Amos Vogel; District 7: Wayne & Gina Nienhaus, Jeremy Portner, Lance & Tonya Wendinger; District 9: Joe Sondag, Brent Johnson, Kevin Johnson.
- Reviewed and approved the Safety, Reliability and Service Quality report for 2017.
- Updated on recent construction and maintenance activities.
- Reviewed recent safety meetings and employee training.

Next meeting will be January 19 at the BCREA headquarters, Sleepy Eye. ☺



**Marcia Solie**  
Member Services  
Manager

## Staff notes

### 2018 rebates save you money and energy

Thinking about updating your refrigerator or freezer in 2018? Maybe it's time to replace your old air conditioner with an energy-efficient air source heat pump. Not only can you save money by going to more energy-efficient models, you may also qualify for BCREA rebates.

Rebates have increased for high-efficiency air source heat pumps when installed and placed on the co-op's load control program:

- Air Source Heat Pump — 14.5 SEER \$580
- Air Source Heat Pump — 15 SEER \$680
- Air Source Heat Pump — 16 SEER & higher \$730

Add \$50 to each rebate for load control and figure in up to 300 percent efficiency to help make the decision an easy one.

Installing a new geothermal heat pump qualifies for a \$2,000 rebate. Place it on load control with whole house storage or non-electric backup heat and receive an additional \$50 rebate. A replacement geothermal unit qualifies for a \$1,000 rebate. Residential electric thermal storage heat may qualify for a rebate when placed and left on true storage control (7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily with overnight recharge).

No ductwork in your home? No problem. Install a ductless mini-split heat pump, which heats and cools your home. If electricity is your home's primary heat source, you qualify for a \$500 rebate; pair with delivered fuel heating system to earn a \$300 rebate. Members who install or upgrade existing HVAC systems equipped with an Electronically-Commutated Motor (ECM) can receive a \$50 rebate. Upgrade to a WiFi/smart thermostat for your heating and cooling equipment to receive a \$25 rebate. Please provide a copy of the invoice and AHRI certificate for HVAC rebates.

Look for the Energy Star label when purchasing appliances and lighting products, which qualify for rebates. If you purchase an Energy Star full-size refrigerator or freezer and recycle the replaced unit, you qualify for a \$75 rebate. One appliance rebate per member per year. Not valid on dorm-size appliances. Please submit proof of purchase, Energy Star certification and proof of recycling the replaced unit to receive the rebate. It will be issued as a bill credit.

Energy Star clothes dryer rebates decreased to \$25. Energy Star LED light bulbs qualify for rebates as well. LED bulbs are rebated up to 50 percent of the bulb cost, but the 2018 maximum has dropped to \$2 each. A member-owned Energy Star LED yard light qualifies for a \$30 rebate. Limit one per member.

Commercial or agricultural energy-efficient lighting projects, electric forklifts, robotic milking systems, variable-frequency drives, heating ventilation and cooling, compressed air efficiency evaluation and other custom electrical applications may qualify for commercial rebates. Please call or stop by the office to learn more. ☺