

# Connections

June 2018

For the member-owners of Brown County REA

Volume 22, Issue 6

## Touchstone Energy celebrates 20 years, which is the electric co-ops' national brand

**Touch\*stone:** a test or criterion for determining quality of genuineness

**En\*er\*gy:** the strength and vitality required for sustained activity; abundant power

**Touchstone Energy:** the power to bring people together to stand as the gold standard for electric cooperative culture and performance

For 20 years Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives have stood as the powerful brand of electric co-ops; this is now a network of more than 730 member electric cooperatives that proudly strive to stand as the touchstone in the industry. Together we have a core belief in demonstrating credibility, trustworthiness, solid values and a bold vision for the future centered on serving you, the member-owners, of your electric cooperative.

Being a part of Touchstone Energy provides us with resources to reach this standard of excellence and serve as your source for power and information.

• Maybe you have caught a TV or radio ad sponsored by Touchstone Energy on the local, state or national level. This *Connections* newsletter uses these ads, photos and graphics as well. For example, see the ad on Page 6.

# 20TH



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

• Digitally, your electric cooperative uses the website template from Touchstone Energy for a professional design without the extravagant cost, along with social media content.

• Touchstone Energy also offers training for employees ranging from customer service to key accounts and conferences too. Trained, knowledgeable employees are the front line for serving you, our member-owners, using the latest technology and high customer service standards.

• Your cooperative offers Touchstone Energy booklets ranging from energy-saving tips to buying your next heating/cooling system, along with the website: [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com). Check out the

energy tips, videos and other information about the electric cooperative differences.

• Plus, Touchstone Energy conducts research with surveys and case studies that electric cooperatives can use for benchmarking and planning.

• Touchstone Energy sponsors the #whopowersyou contest, which is a two-year old program to recognize local volunteers.

By standing together as a network, electric cooperatives can accomplish more together and operate more effectively than ever before. Electric cooperatives realize that being best in class takes more than just keeping the lights on. It's also about demonstrating our values in the way we treat our member-owners, collaborate and build our communities. Simply put, it's the Cooperative difference.

As cooperatives move into the future together, your electric cooperative and the other members of Touchstone Energy are committed to serving you with a passion for innovation, a commitment to service excellence and an authentic promise to never underestimate the power of human connections. ☺

### At A Glance



Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association

**We're pumped up on the larger heat pump rebates so you stay cool!**

Time for a new cooling system? Don't go with central air; take the next step in energy efficiency with an air source heat pump. BCREA is offering double rebates this summer to cover the cost difference. Ductless heat pump rebates are also increased for a limited time. See p. 8 for details. ☺



# Environmentally-beneficial electrification works to make the grid greener every year

Many Americans prefer that their energy comes from renewable sources, such as solar or wind power, rather than fossil fuels. As electric utilities shift to more options that include renewable energy sources and make existing generation technologies cleaner, electricity uses less fossil fuel per kilowatt-hour of energy produced. This idea of "environmentally beneficial electrification" means that innovations in energy technology are creating new ways to use electricity, instead of on-site fossil fuels, such as propane, natural gas and fuel oil.

Environmental groups, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), recognize the value of this concept. Sheryl Carter, Co-Director of NRDC Energy Program, commented that, "Beneficial electrification will continue to play a big role in accelerating this transition in an effective and economic way, to the benefit of consumers, energy resilience and the environment."

## Electric appliances can become greener over time

As a practical matter, beneficial electrification means that electric appliances, like your water heater, clothes dryer and oven, have the potential to become greener over time. When your electric co-op takes advantage of advances in technology and the wholesale market at the generation point, it means those efficiencies are inherently passed along to you, the co-op member.

Because large appliances have a typical lifespan of 15 to 20 years, it means that you benefit from the flexibility of the grid, besides the increased efficiency of the particular appliance. In other words, the high-efficiency electric oven you have today could be powered by renewable sources three years from now. This would not be the case with gas appliances, as you are essentially locked into the technology of that gas appliance for 15-20 years. As your co-op taps into more renewable options in the future, member-owners benefit from this trend through using electric appliances.

## Small steps to reduce carbon footprint

For consumers looking for more environmentally-friendly energy options, choosing electric appliances over those powered by fossil fuels is an easy solution. Whether through electric lawn mowers, blowers and weed whackers (plug-in or rechargeable) or through electric water heaters and other

**Innovations in energy technologies are creating new ways to use electricity rather than on-site fossil fuels, like propane, natural gas and gasoline.**



**Beneficial electrification suggests that the use of more all-electric appliances and equipment, like water heaters, weed trimmers and electric vehicles, provide consumers with greener products and benefits the environment.**

appliances, beneficial electrification reduces greenhouse gases and helps the environment.

Electric co-ops across the country are using more renewable resources, bringing wind, solar and geothermal energy into the electric grid; this means electricity is becoming greener. As the overall energy sector evolves, your electric co-op progresses with the advancing technology and the opportunities as they become available. Co-ops can then offer a wider range of renewable power supply sources, while delivering safe, reliable and affordable power.

As NRDC's Carter further observed, "The successful transition to a clean energy future will require substantial reliance on efficient electric technologies like electric vehicles, heat pumps or grid-interactive electric water heaters, powered by an increasingly cleaner and more flexible electric system."

Contact the co-op's energy expert to discuss energy options and learn ways to save energy. 

## Give your tired feet a break with your own foot massager

What's better than a foot massage?

Not much...

Now you don't have to go to the masseuse or trade foot massages with your spouse. The Manur Foot Massager can do the job for you.

The Manur Foot Massager uses a combination of air compression and rolling massage. Two air pockets are built into each heel and instep. Enjoy full coverage and deep muscle massage when you use it. Multiple massage heads also enable manipulation of acupuncture points. The massager even has a shiatsu mode to alleviate foot pain, aches, knots and muscle tension.

Other features include:

- A heat option will warm and relax tired feet.
- The electric foot massager will auto-off after 15 minutes.
- The foot massager fits up to size 10 shoes.
- Removable cover provides easy washing.

Note: women who are pregnant or menstruating should not use the shiatsu foot massager. People with osteoporosis or other feet-related diseases should only use the foot massager after consulting their doctors.

The Manur Foot Massager costs approximately \$115 on Amazon.com. 



Get a foot massage in your easy chair. The Manur Foot Massager features shiatsu mode and heat options.

### Safety

## April showers bring May flowers bring June lightning powers

While lightning is most common in the summer, it can strike year round. According to the National Weather Service, on average, 55 people are killed each year and hundreds of others are injured by lightning in the United States. It is extremely important to take lightning seriously and to stay educated on lightning safety.

Your electric co-op urges parents and other caregivers to make sure children also understand the importance of lightning awareness and how to stay safe. Don't be fooled by blue skies. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to pose an immediate threat. That is why the National Weather Service has adopted the saying: *When thunder roars, go indoors!* Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the area where it is raining, even if you don't see clouds. This means if you can hear thunder,



**Beware of lightning this summer season. It injures hundreds of people each year.**

you're within striking distance. When the storm is over, wait 30 minutes after the last lightning strike you see before going back outside.

If caught outdoors during a thunderstorm and cannot take shelter in a building, take the following precautions:

- Try to take shelter in a vehicle with a solid metal roof. Close the windows and avoid contact with electrical conducting paths, such as the steering wheel, ignition, gear shifter or radio.
- Avoid water, high ground or open spaces.
- Do not seek shelter under tall, solitary trees; canopies; small picnic or rain shelters; or in any open-frame vehicles, such as jeeps, convertibles, golf carts, tractors or mowers.
- Do not stand near power, light

— **Continued on Page 6**

# Brown County Briefs

## Look for the Energy Star



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

## Member Advisory Council

The next meeting of the Member Advisory Council will be Monday, September 10 at 7 p.m. in the BCREA auditorium.

## Operation Round Up

The Round Up Trust Board will meet to review applications on August 21. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding should submit applications prior to that date. Applications are available under the Programs & Services tab on the REA website at [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop), from the office or a trust board member.

## Wait 'til Late

The demand for electricity increases during the summer, causing higher electric costs. BCREA is grateful to all who participate in load management to help keep costs lower.

All members can help keep costs down by voluntarily reducing energy consumption in the late afternoon and early evening hours during the hot summer days. Refrain from using dishwashers, washers and dryers between 5-9 p.m. You can also curb your electricity usage by keeping curtains, blinds and drapes closed, turning off excess lights and preparing meals that don't contribute additional heat to the home during the warmest days. (E)

# Join us on a power trip



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 much of the electricity members use in our service area.

Members' cost for the tour is \$135 per person, which includes round-trip motor coach, lodging for two nights, tour of Coal Creek Station and Falkirk Mine, lunch on the tour day, two breakfasts at the hotel and entry to the North Dakota Heritage Museum and 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 3. If you have questions, call 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. (E)

## 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 3. Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368 with questions.**



# Notice of cogeneration



In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and Small Power Production, Chapter 7835, Brown County REA is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers, which satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

Brown County REA will provide 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 parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Members interested in further information may contact Brown County REA at 800-658-2368. (E)

## *Memorable Memorial Day for some members*



BCREA, Great River Energy and contract crews had their work cut out for them to replace 28 GRE transmission line poles snapped off by straight line winds in a Memorial Day storm south of Hanska. Effecting Linden, Dotson, Cobden, Leavenworth, Albin and Hanska substations, power was temporarily restored to all but three services the same day. Work was hindered by additional rain and thunderstorms on Tuesday, but the task of replacing broken poles and restoring power to all was completed Thursday, May 31. (C)

## *Twins Play Ball! clinic is a 'hit' with youth*



More than 80 area youth brushed up on their throwing, hitting and fielding skills at the Twins Play Ball! Clinic May 12, at Sleepy Eye Public School. John Wilkens (left photo) and K.O. Paulson (right photo) worked with participants on the fundamentals. The event was sponsored by Brown County REA through its wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy, and hosted by Sleepy Eye Community Education. (C)

# Follow these tips to stay safe during electrical storms

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or flag poles, machinery, fences, gates, metal bleachers, or even other people. If you are in a group, spread out so that you are at least 20 feet apart.

- If your skin tingles or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Squat down low to the ground with your head between your knees making yourself the smallest target possible.

- Plan outdoor activities around the weather and be prepared to seek shelter if the weather turns threatening. If thunderstorms and lightning are approaching, the safest location is indoors away from doors and windows with the shades drawn.

- Avoid water, electric appliances and other objects that could conduct electricity; use only cordless or cell phones to make emergency calls.

- A direct strike is not necessary for lightning voltage to enter your home through phone lines, electrical wires, cables and plumbing.

- Turn off and unplug appliances well before a storm nears — never during. Don't expect a surge protector to save appliances from a lightning strike; unplug it as well.

- Stay away from electrical outlets, appliances, computers,

power tools and TV sets. Take off headsets and stop playing video games.

- Turn off your air conditioner to protect the compressor from a power surge and avoid a costly repair job.

- Avoid water and contact with piping, including sinks, baths and faucets. Don't wash dishes, shower or bathe during a thunderstorm. Plus, avoid washers and dryers since they not only connect with the plumbing and electrical systems, but also contain an electrical path from the outside through the dryer vent.

- Do not lie on the concrete floor of a garage as it likely contains a wire mesh.

- Basements typically are a safe place to go during thunderstorms, but avoid concrete walls that may contain metal rebar.

- Don't forget your pets. Dog houses are not lightning-safe, and dogs chained to trees can easily fall victim to a strike.

- If a person is struck by lightning, call 9-1-1 and care for the victim immediately. You are not in danger of being electrocuted by the victim. More information on lightning safety can be found at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website at [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov). 

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



## Working side by side

Touchstone Energy cooperatives work side by side with member-owners to make decisions locally that best serve your area. That's the way we've always done it and the way we'll always do it.

**Touchstone Energy  
Cooperatives.**  
Your source of power  
and information.



## Let's eat a whole lot of granola so share your favorite recipes

Granola is a tasty, healthy treat. It tastes great on yogurt, topped with milk or can even be enjoyed by the handful while watching TV. Share with us your granola recipes; send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by June 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

**Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July!**

The cooperative will be closed. Crews will be on call in case of outages.

Make it a safe holiday!



### Confetti Cake Batter Cookies

by Lois Lendt, Sleepy Eye

½ c. butter, softened

2 large eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

1 pkg. Funfetti cake mix

In a large bowl beat the butter, eggs and vanilla until combined. Beat in the cake mix. Refrigerate covered two hours or until firm enough to roll.

Preheat the oven to 350°. On a well-floured surface roll the dough to ¼" thickness. Cut with a floured round 2½"-cookie cutter. Place 1" apart on ungreased baking sheets. Remove from pans to wire racks. Bake 8-10 minutes. Decorate as usual.

Freezing option: transfer dough to a resealable plastic freezer bag and freeze. To use thaw dough in the refrigerator until soft enough to roll. Prepare and bake cookies as directed. Decorate as desired. ☺

## Move Over Bill signed by Gov. Dayton



Electric line crews are working ahead as you drive down the road. What do you do?

According to a new Minnesota law passed and signed May 19, you need to move over. The Move Over bill was passed by the Senate and House, plus was signed by the Governor.

In 2015 Minnesota electric cooperatives promoted and the legislature passed, legislation that expanded Minnesota's Move Over law to include parked utility vehicles with their emergency or warning lights activated. This legislation applied to a highway having two lanes in the same direction (four-lane highway).

The new legislation this year adds to the statute streets or highways having only one lane in the same direction (two-lane roads). The legislation requires that drivers slow down, maintain a safe speed for traffic conditions, and operate the vehicle at a reduced speed until safely past the parked utility or emergency vehicle.

Safety is a priority for electric cooperatives, who have employees working alongside roadways every day. Traffic is always an issue. This additional piece of legislation will further increase the safety of our line crews. ☺

**Call Gopher State One 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 and more. You can

also register at [www.gopherstate-onecall.org](http://www.gopherstate-onecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺



## 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.

# BCREA will help you keep your cool this summer!

If May trends continue, it could be a hot summer. Let Brown County REA help you stay cool and offer some cold cash with higher air source heat pump rebates and cooling system tune-ups.

Brown County REA encourages members to have their central air conditioner or air source heat pump unit tuned up regularly by a licensed, professional HVAC contractor. We are again offering a \$25 electric bill credit to members who have their home cooling system tuned up.

Units more than three years old that have not had a tune-up in the last two years are eligible for a rebate if serviced by a qualified contractor who performs the tasks on the checklist below. Submit a copy of the checklist or have the contractor complete the tune-up portion of the HVAC rebate form on our website, 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 tune-ups done annually, a rebate will only be credited if it has been two years since the last tune-up.

### Replace your old unit with a heat pump

In the event that your cooling system needs to be replaced, take advantage of our double rebates in June and July when you install an air source heat pump (ASHP). Efficiently enjoy the best of both worlds as a heat pump provides home cooling and supplemental heating with 72 percent less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces. You can switch between cooling and heating directly from the thermostat, putting you in complete control. Rebate amounts are \$1,160 (14.5 SEER), \$1,360 (15 SEER) and \$1,460 (16 & higher SEER) during the promotion. Heat pump must be placed on the co-op's load management program to qualify. Bonus rebates available on ductless air source heat pumps too. Contact the office to learn more. 

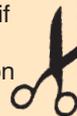
## Cooling system tune-up check points

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Technician Checklist:

Clean condenser coil;  Check coolant level;  Check coolant pressure;  Check indoor filter;  Check belt and lube motor, if needed;  Test all controls;  Blow out drain lines;  Perform a visual inspection of the entire cooling system;  Educate member on proper system operation and maintenance



List cooling unit's brand, model and serial number: \_\_\_\_\_

Age of unit \_\_\_\_\_; EER rating and BTU rating \_\_\_\_\_

Technician's signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting May 30 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved April 2018 payroll and March 2018 financial statements, new member applications, member cancellations and capital credit transfers.
- Approved the appointment of Reuben Kokesch as director representing the co-op on the Great River Energy board and James Hanson as voting delegate.
- Reviewed the cooperative's water heater program and heat pump rebate promotion.
- Reviewed and approved updated contracts with Western Area Power Association (WAPA).
- Discussed the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, to be held April 11, 2019 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.
- Updated on construction activities including work at Searles and Dotson substations and along County Road 8.
- Reviewed recent employee training and safety meetings and operations maintenance activities.

The next meeting will be June 28 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. 