

Connections

June 2019

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 23, Issue 6

Connections basks in the golden beam's Spotlight of Excellence national award

Your electric cooperative's *Connections* newsletter strikes gold — again!

Federated Rural Electric, Jackson; and Brown County Rural Electrical Association, Sleepy Eye; recently received recognition in the 2019 "Spotlight on Excellence" national awards program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Federated and BCREA received a Gold Award in the Best External News Publication category for the *Connections* newsletter for electric cooperatives under 20,000 members. Andrea Christoffer, Federated's marketing & communications manager; Steve Ruthenbeck, Federated's communications specialist, and Marcia Solie, BCREA's member services manager; create the award-winning newsletter. *Connections* is a shared newsletter serving the two electric co-ops. This is the 16th time that a Federated member-owner newsletter has won a Spotlight national award. Gold awards were awarded to those entries scoring 90 points or more, while Silver winners scored 80 points or more in the finite scoring system.

"The judges noted that electric cooperatives are being challenged to communicate to the people they serve more than ever," said Scott Peterson,



The *Connections* newsletter strikes gold again! Federated's Steve Ruthenbeck displays the Gold Spotlight on Excellence Award, while Editor Andrea Christoffer holds the three 2018 issues that were submitted.

senior vice president communications for NRECA. "Printed news publications, news releases, social media and videos are all more important to keep members updated on issues affecting the electric cooperatives and their members."

"Once again it is truly an honor to be a part of this award-winning team," stated Federated's General Manager Scott Reimer. "Andrea, Steve and Marcia make quality communications to our members a priority and continue — *Continued on Page 6*

At A Glance



Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association

Take a 'power trip' to see the source of your electricity

Members can sign up for a three-day bus trip to North Dakota to tour the Coal Creek Station power plant. The trip also includes other activities of interest. See Page 4 for more details. 

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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Test your energy knowledge

Broaden your mind when it comes to energy savings. Take this nine-question true/false quiz and see how you do. Answers are below. One to three wrong, you know your stuff! Four to six wrong, contact our office to learn

more with a booklet called *101 Ways To Save Energy*. More than that wrong? We won't tell! You can always take this test a second time to improve your score! Improving your energy knowledge is a process and we are here to help.



1. Dishwashers actually use more water and energy than hand washing.

True or False

2. Water heating uses more energy than air conditioning.

True or False

3. Changing your furnace filter regularly will reduce your energy bills.

True or False



4. Setting the thermostat higher or lower will heat or cool your home faster.

True or False

5. Ground source heat pumps are more than 100 percent efficient.

True or False

6. LED light bulbs aren't dimmable.

True or False



7. The largest cause of heat loss in the home is thru the walls.

True or False

8. A clothes dryer uses more energy in a year than a refrigerator.

True or False

9. A 10-minute shower uses more water than taking a bath.

True or False

Answers

1. False. It's widely believed that dishwashers are convenient, but use more water and energy than hand washing. In fact, washing a typical load of dishes in a dishwasher uses 37 percent less water. Also, using a dishwasher, rather than hand washing, can cut your annual energy costs by more than \$40, according to ENERGY STAR.

2. True. Water heating makes up about 19 percent of total energy use in the average home, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Buy your next energy-efficient water heater from your electric co-op. Air conditioning accounts for 9 percent. Space heating at 46 percent uses the most energy in the average home.

3. False. The primary job of an air filter is to keep dirt and dust off the fan blades, motor, and cooling coils. However, a dirty filter won't make your furnace or air conditioner work harder unless it's really clogged. So,

changing your air filter regularly will keep system components clean and improve indoor air quality, but it won't significantly reduce your energy costs.

4. False. Most furnaces and air conditioners work at the same speed, no matter what the thermostat setting. In fact, more energy may be wasted as the system continues to run to reach the further set point.

5. True. Since ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) move or "pump" heat rather than create heat (like a conventional furnace), they can be more than 100 percent efficient. In fact, while gas furnaces are generally 70 to 90 percent efficient, GSHPs can be more than 350 percent efficient. That means that for every unit of energy that the system uses, it produces 3.5 units of energy as heat. Ask about the co-op's heat pump rebates too.

6. False. Dimmable and non-dimmable LED bulbs are available. Look on the package to select the

right bulb for your needs. Dimmable LEDs may not be compatible with older dimmer switches. Check at your local store or with a qualified electrician to make sure you have the right dimmer for the right bulb.

7. True. Typically, 45 percent of a home's energy loss is through walls. About 35 percent is lost through the roof. The rest is through windows, doors, the floor and so on. Insulation and air sealing are your best bets for reducing that energy loss and saving money.

8. True. A clothes dryer uses about 770 kilowatt-hours (kWh) each year. Meanwhile, a standard 21-cubic inch refrigerator consumes 600 kWh per year.

9. False. A 10-minute shower uses about 25 gallons of water. A bath makes a bigger splash, using about 36 gallons, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. 

— Information courtesy of Questline

Call your dog to see how it is doing with PetChatz

Pets become part of the family. Some pet owners don't like to think their pet is home alone all day. PetChatz gives pet parents a way to spend time with their pet, even if they are away from home, such as at work or traveling.

PetChatz is a pet camera that provides two-way video with a full-color LCD screen, but that's not all. PetChatz gives you a variety of ways to interact with your pet remotely using an iOS/Android app on your cell phone or desktop computer.

Check in with your pet anywhere, anytime. A special ringtone tells your pet you're calling. Say hello and share your smile. Dispense snacks and even release calming aromatherapy scents to ease your pet's loneliness. Record and share fun videos with friends and



Missing Fido? Call your pet or let your pet call you when you are away from the home. PetChatz gives you the ability to facetime with your pet and more.

family. Schedule an interactive brain game with an optional accessory to keep your pet entertained when you can't be there. A subscription to

DOGTV can enhance the experience further. Your pet can even contact you with the PawCall.

PetChatz also gives you the ability to monitor your pet's behavior. PetWatch notifications will be sent to your device when sound or motion is detected near the unit. Video is captured in 30 second increments and are available for you to see in real time or when you have the time.

PetChatz features no corners, edges or cords to chew. Simply attach it securely to your wall or kennel for optimal pet safety over an electrical outlet.

PetChatz costs \$400 and is available on Amazon.com. It is made in the USA and comes with a one-year limited warranty. 

Safety

Keep line crews safe when using generators

April's ice storm outages caused many cooperative members to think about installing a generator. If you are one of them, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Never connect generators directly to the household wiring without first installing a transfer switch. This prevents backfeeding, which could electrocute line crews making repairs on downed power lines.

- 67 percent of generator fatalities occurred when a generator was placed in the living area or basement of a home due to the carbon monoxide fumes.

- 26 percent of generator fatalities occurred when the generator was used inside an attached garage or shed. Never operate a generator inside your home or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces, including garages due to this carbon monoxide threat.

- Install battery operated carbon monoxide alarms or plug-in carbon monoxide alarms with a battery backup



During a storm outage is not the time to buy a new generator... Do it now so you are ready for the next one that Mother Nature throws at us. Work with your local electrician to install a transfer switch.

— Photo courtesy of Greg Brooks

inside the home. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent carbon monoxide from entering the home.

- A generator is a temporary power source and should never be used as a permanent solution.

- Make sure your generator is properly grounded and used with a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI).

- Use only extension cords that have a three-pronged plug and are rated for the intended load.

- Your home's generator should be installed by a qualified electrician and bear the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL, Intertek or CSA.

- Do not overload the generator.

- Start the generator first before connecting the appliances. 

— Information courtesy of esfi.com

Brown County Briefs

Member Advisory Council

The second meeting of the Member Advisory Council will be September 16 at the Brown County REA headquarters.

Operation Round Up



The BCREA Trust Board will meet again to review applications for funding August 20. Organizations interested in seeking funding should submit an application before that date. Application forms are available on the BCREA website www.browncountyrea.coop.

Vegetation control under power lines is underway



BCREA has contracted with Central Applicators, Inc. to maintain and control the vegetation along BCREA's right-of-ways beginning in June.

Central Applicators, Inc. will be using an EPA approved herbicide to treat only the unwanted brush, noxious weeds and volunteer trees that may, in the future, interfere with the power lines and possibly cause an outage. They will be doing a selective spot treatment only, which consists of treating each plant individually, insuring minimal usage and maximum control. No applications will be done to any trees or brush in maintained areas, like yards. The primary purpose of the application is to treat stems of brush that have sprouted from the stumps created during past clearance work.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping Brown County REA to maintain our right-of-ways in order to prevent outages and minimize delays in power restoration. (6)

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 13-15. 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 \$150 per person and 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 the Coal Creek Tour, please register by sending in the registration form below and your \$150 per person check payable to Brown County REA, or contact our office by July 29. If you have questions, call 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. (6)

Registration for the Coal Creek Tour August 13-15

First & last name(s) _____

Address _____

City/zip _____

Phone # _____ Cell phone # _____

REA account # _____

How many are attending? _____

Enclosed is my check for \$150 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 July 29. Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368 with questions.



We'll help you keep your cool this summer



Bonus heat pump rebates and credit for cooling system tune ups to keep things running smoothly

Let BCREA 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 that are more than three years old and 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 on Page 8. 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

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Area youth invited to Twins Play Ball Clinic June 14

Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education are teaming up with the Minnesota Twins to offer a free Twins Play Ball! youth clinic Friday, June 14 at Prairieville Field (behind the public school) in Sleepy Eye.

Youth ages 6-9 are scheduled from 2 to 3:30 p.m. and ages 10-13 should come from 3:30 to 5 p.m. There is no cost to participate. The program is presented in partnership with Great River Energy, which is made up of Brown County REA and 27 other rural electric cooperatives in Minnesota.

The summer of 2019 marks the 59th year the Minnesota Twins, Twins Community Fund and Play Ball! Minnesota, in partnership with Great River Energy, have offered free youth baseball and softball clinics to boys and girls throughout the Upper Midwest. More than 800,000 youth have participated in a clinic since the program began.



The clinic provides hands-on instruction and focuses on throwing, hitting and fielding. The Play Ball! Minnesota Youth Clinics are available to participants and communities free of charge. Registration can be done

online by visiting www.mlb.com/twins/play-ball/programs/youth-clinics and finding the Sleepy Eye June 14 listing. The Twins will provide safe, youth-friendly equipment, but participants are asked to bring their own gloves. (C)

Scholarship presentation



Sleepy Eye Public High School Senior Cassidy Hoffmann (left) received a scholarship certificate from Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board Secretary Vickie Kral. A total of six \$200 scholarship were awarded through Operation Round Up to area graduating high school seniors. (C)

Cogeneration notice



In compliance with Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA)'s adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Brown County REA is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogeneration and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Brown County REA is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members, upon request, regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the BCREA Board of Directors. Interested members should contact Brown County REA, 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 or call 800-658-2368. (C)

Connections newsletter shines under national award spotlight

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to exceed our expectations. Congratulations!”

“Our co-op members tell us all the time that they enjoy *Connections*,” added Mike Heidemann, BCREA CEO. “This award shows the quality and great content that our members gain. While we may take the newsletter for granted, this award shows the hard work we do for our members.”

A special reception honored the award recipients during the CONNECT ‘19 Conference held in Houston, Texas, May 7. 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 16 categories. Electric cooperative communicators and marketing professionals submitted more than 640 entries in the Spotlight on Excellence program. Faculty members from the University of Missouri in Columbia and the University of South Carolina, as well as noted professionals in the fields of marketing, web design and digital communications judged the event. A finite scoring system determines the winners.

The Council of Rural Electric Communicators was organized in 1982 and seeks to advance the recognition, education and professionalism of electric cooperative communicators and their affiliated organizations. It is a volunteer association working on behalf of more than 4,000 electric cooperative communicators across the United States.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing the national interests of cooperative electric utilities, coordinates the Council’s activities. Federated serves 6,700 member-owners, while BCREA serves 4,500. 

Who is watching your home while you are at the baseball game?



Our smart home security systems protect your home and valuables from intruders, fire and other threats. Let us do the work. Use your smart phone as one way to stay ahead of bad guys. 

An advertisement for heat pumps. The background shows a modern house with a large window and a white heat pump unit on the exterior wall. Overlaid on the image is the text "SOME CALL THIS OFFER COOL. OTHERS CALL IT HOT. WE SAY, IT'S BOTH." in large, orange, outlined letters. At the bottom, another line of text reads "Cool & heat your home with an energy-saving heat pump AND receive a HOT rebate!" in the same orange, outlined font.

Visit the co-op’s website or talk with our energy expert on rebates for air source, ground source and ductless heat pump rebates. Limited funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Rebate amounts are subject to change without notice. 

How sweet it is! Share recipes using candy as an ingredient!

Give your sweet tooth a work out. We crave recipes that incorporate candy as the ingredients, whether it is Snickers, Butterfinger, M&Ms, red hots, Kisses or Hugs. Just don't tell the tooth fairy! 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! ☺

Blueberry French Toast Bake by Pat Steuber, Fairmont

12 slices day old French Bread 1" thick	½ tsp. ground nutmeg
5 eggs	1 c. chopped pecans
2½ c. milk	¼ c. margarine or butter, melted
1 c. brown sugar, divided	2 c. frozen or fresh blueberries
1 tsp .vanilla	

Arrange bread in a greased 9x13" pan. In a bowl combine the eggs, milk, ¾ c. brown sugar, vanilla and nutmeg; pour over the bread. Cover and refrigerate eight hours or overnight.

Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Sprinkle pecans over egg mixture. Combine melted butter and remaining ¼ c. brown sugar — drizzle over the top. Bake uncovered at 375° for 25 minutes. Sprinkle with blueberries. Bake an additional 10 minutes or longer until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Serve with warm syrup and/or whipped topping. ☺

Caramel French Toast by Lenora Zitzman, New Ulm

1 c. firmly packed brown sugar	1½ c. milk
½ c. margarine or butter	6 eggs, slightly beaten
2 T. light corn syrup	1 tsp. vanilla
12 slices white bread (you can remove crusts)	1/8 tsp. salt

In a 1 quart saucepan combine the brown sugar, margarine and corn syrup. Bring to a full boil, reduce heat to medium and simmer until thickened (2-3 minutes). Pour mixture into a greased 9x13" baking pan. Place six slices of bread over mixture; top with remaining bread. In a large bowl combine milk, eggs, vanilla and salt; mix well. Pour over the bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Heat oven to 350°. Remove cover and bake for 40-50 minutes or until light brown and knife inserted in center comes out clean. Invert slices onto plate.

This works well as a substitute for egg bake or an addition at showers. ☺

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.gopherstateonecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ☺



Have a safe
Independence
Day!

Your co-op will be
closed July 4th

Crews will be on-call in case of outages. Enjoy a safe, fun holiday! ☺



You provide the dirty
laundry...

...we'll provide the
hot water

Call your electric
co-op for your next
water heater

Get your AC tuned

— Continued from Page 4

REA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085, or drop it off at the office. Even if members have tune-up 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 bonus rebates through the end of June when you install an air source heat pump (ASHP) in your home. 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. Residential rebate amounts are \$580 for 14.5 SEER and bonus amounts of \$1,360 for 15 SEER and \$1,460 for 16 & higher SEER during the April 1-June 30 promotion. Heat pump must be placed on the co-op's load management program to qualify. Bonus rebates are available on residential ductless air source heat pumps too. Contact the office to learn more. 

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 entire cooling system |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check indoor filter | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check belt and lube motor, if needed | <input type="checkbox"/> Educate member on proper system operation and maintenance |



List cooling unit's brand, model and serial number: _____ **Return coupon to BCREA with HVAC tune-up invoice; receive \$25 bill credit. Thanks!**

List the approximate age of unit _____

List EER rating and BTU rating _____

Technician's name and signature _____



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop
Website: www.browncountyrea.coop
Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368

Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

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Reuben Kokesch — 359-2112

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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 May 30 at the BCREA office, Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved April 2019 payroll and March 2019 financial statements.
 - Reviewed the cooperative's 2019 annual meeting and selected April 2 as the date for the 2020 meeting. It will be held at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.
 - Reviewed results of pole testing conducted by Southwood 2000 in Albin, Nelson, Mulligan and Stark townships. 71 of the 2,595 poles tested were rejected and will be replaced.
 - Reviewed and approved Policy 204 Authorized Signatures and Policy 206 Capital Credits.
 - Approved participation in the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Integrity Fund at 5 percent patronage with a cap of \$1,500.
 - Approved the appointment of Reuben Kokesch as director representing BCREA on the Great River Energy Board and James Hanson as voting delegate.
 - Reviewed recent employee training and safety meetings.
- The next meeting will be on June 27 at the BCREA office in Sleepy Eye. 