

Connections

December 2019

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 23, Issue 12

Punch your ticket to D.C. with 300 words

High school sophomores and juniors can earn a free trip to Washington, D.C., courtesy of Brown County Rural Electrical Association.

All the student needs to do is write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic and fill out and submit the co-op's two page Youth Tour application by March 2. Interviews will be conducted in mid-March.

Every summer more than 1,900 bright and talented high school students from across rural America converge in Washington, D.C., for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. These young men and women represent our next generation of leaders. They are the people who will make our communities better places to live and lead businesses that will provide good jobs and valuable services.

Participants in the Youth Tour will spend June 20-25 in Washington, D.C. where they will:

- Visit monuments, memorials and museums.
- Learn about electric cooperatives and the cooperative business model.
- Spend a day on Capitol Hill, including face-to-face meetings with their senators and representatives in Congress.
- Build lifelong friendships with other young leaders from across Minnesota and the country.

This isn't just a field trip to Washington, D.C. It's a transformational experience that shows students the power of democracy and the importance of leadership.

This experience is free for the student. The only out-



Open up your laptop high school students! Write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic and you could win a free trip to Washington, D.C. June 20-25. Visit Honest Abe on the 2020 Youth Tour.



**Ben Nachreiner,
BCREA's 2019
Youth Tour winner**

Find photos from last year's trip at photos.youthtour.org or visit the website www.youthtour.com.

of-pocket expenses are for incidentals, such as souvenirs.

Electric cooperatives have sponsored the Youth Tour for more than 50 years because we believe it is our responsibility as a not-for-profit, community-based organization to invest in our next generation of leaders.

Visit www.browncountyrea.coop to download the application and find contest details. Otherwise, visit your high school counselor to pick up the application. The second place winner earns \$150, while third place receives \$100.

Last year's winner was Ben Nachreiner, Comfrey. "The visit to the capitol was very interesting. When we were looking at the monuments and memorials, I noticed the extreme attention to detail. I also noticed that

everything in a monument has some sort of meaning. It was fun meeting other people and making friends; with technology it will be easy to stay in touch. I would like to thank the Brown County REA, as well as the national organization, for giving me this awesome opportunity. I would also like to thank the politicians and their staff that met with us. I would definitely recommend this trip to other people."

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

Operation Round Up reaches milestone

Operation Round Up continues to make small change add up in your community. Operation Round Up has now donated more than \$200,000 to local organizations and individuals. Become part of making a difference. See Page 4.

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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Great gifts for energy enthusiasts

The holiday season is the time for gift giving, but knowing what to give your loved ones isn't always easy. Here are some gift ideas that are perfect for the energy enthusiast in your life! The costs range from \$25 to \$100.

Kill-A-Watt Meter



The Kill-A-Watt meter allows you to monitor how much energy your appliances are using. Plug in the meter between the appliance and the wall's power outlet; the device can display the energy use in either volts, amps,

watts or Hertz. The large monitor clearly shows the electricity use depending on the type of units you choose. The Kill-A-Watt meter can also calculate cumulative electricity expenses by day, week, month or year, which can help you to plan ahead. This device is perfect to test the efficiency of older appliances, as well as new, efficient appliances to make sure they're meeting the promised energy savings. You can purchase a Kill-A-Watt meter for about \$20 to \$30 online or at local retailers like Wal-Mart and Home Depot. You can also borrow one from your local electric cooperative.

Energy Star-certified sound bar



Imagine listening to great sound while watching television, but also using less energy when doing so. This is what an Energy

Star-certified sound bar provides. The Energy Star-certified sound bar uses about 70 percent less electricity than regular sound bars, which saves you energy and money. They include volume-leveling technology to ensure that commercials are not louder than the actual shows you're watching. These lower volumes also save energy. Sound bars create a 3-D surround-sound effect, reducing the need for multiple speakers around the room, which also means less energy used.

Enjoy curling up to a good movie? The Energy Star-certified sound bar is a great gift. The costs depend on the brand, but Samsung and Vizio offer Energy Star-certified sound bars for about \$100.



Smart power strip

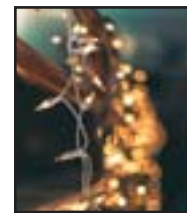
Power strips allow you to increase the number of outlets in your home, but unlike a normal power strip, *smart* power strips help to reduce "vampire power." This is the energy used by

electronics even when they're in standby mode.

The great thing about the smart power strip is that you can leave all of your electronics plugged in without having to worry about them using standby power because the smart power strip shuts off electricity to those devices when they are in standby mode. This helps you save a significant amount of money over the year, and depending on your home, potentially 10-20 percent of your home's energy consumption.

There are three types of outlets in the smart power strip. The first is the "always on" socket, which is meant for things like Wi-Fi or a cable modem; the second is the "main" socket, which is meant for televisions or computers; and the final is the "secondary" socket, which should be connected to electronics, such as printers, speakers or gaming consoles.

Some smart power strips include additional features, like the ability to connect to smart home assistants through voice control or an app. With some you can schedule it to automatically turn certain devices on or off. You can buy a smart power strip for about \$25 on Amazon.com or at your local hardware store.



LED Holiday Lights

If you want to celebrate the holidays, but also save 80 percent of the energy you use while doing so, then LED

holidays lights should be on your gift list. Get festive this holiday season without taking a toll on your energy bill.

The benefits of LED holiday lights aren't limited to energy savings. They are safer since they don't get as hot as incandescent lights. They are also sturdier since they aren't made of glass. In addition, LEDs last much longer than incandescent lights. They're easier to install because they're less likely to overload a wall socket. To manage your energy use more efficiently add a timer that shuts off the lights when you go to bed.

Whatever you wrap for under the tree, have a safe holiday season! (E)

The Ninja Foodi: the pressure cooker that crisps

Regular pressure cookers create quick-cooking, tender wonders, but where they stop, the Ninja Foodi just gets started. The Ninja Foodi crisping lid allows you to air fry, bake, roast and broil. That means you can pressure cook to lock in juices and finish with a crisp. Only the Ninja Foodi gives you the best of pressure cooking and air frying in one pot. Transform frozen foods to crispy meals. Create numerous meals by cooking proteins, veggies and grains all together. Elevate your favorite stew and chili recipes by adding a crispy or bubbly top to make one-pot wonders.

Features include:

- 6.5-quart ceramic-coated pot, nonstick, PTFE/PFOA-free that's easy to clean. Enjoy enough capacity to cook a roast for your family.
- Four-quart cook and crisp basket, large-capacity, ceramic-coated, PTFE/



The Ninja Foodi can pressure cook, crisp and dehydrate food all in one package. What a perfect holiday gift for your loved one!

PFOA-free basket holds up to a five-pound chicken or three pounds of french fries to feed your whole family.

- Love the nonstick coating for easy cleanup. Never clean the cooker

base in the dishwasher. Always use a non-abrasive sponge or cleaning tool when washing your unit

- The dehydrate function creates delicious homemade snacks, like healthy potato chips, jerky, apple slices and more.

• Relax with the 14 levels of safety, including UL-safety certification, giving you confidence and peace-of-mind while cooking.

• Frozen to crispy: skip thawing and save time. Evenly cook frozen food from the inside out. You can start with pressure cooking and finishing off with a crisping method of your choice to create delicious meals.

- Features 1,400-watt unit, a stainless steel reversible rack and a recipe book.

The Ninja Foodi costs approximately \$200 on Amazon.com or find it at your local big box store. (U.S.)

Holiday Tree Safety Tips

Ensure a merry and bright holiday season by safely maintaining your tree with the following tips. (U.S.)

Keep away from heat:

Make sure your tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like an air duct, fireplace or space heater.



Examine cords:

Examine extension cords and lights for signs of damage. Frayed electric cords should be discarded.



Inspect lights:

Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and/or loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.



Trim the stump:

Trim the tree's stump by at least two inches on freshly cut trees. Allow it to absorb water for 24 hours before bringing it inside.



Keep it watered:

Fill the water reservoir daily and check the condition of the trunk bark and branches for moisture. Shedding or dry needles could mean the tree is drying out, increasing overall fire risks.

Source: National Fire Protection Association

Brown County Briefs

2020 calendars available

Pick up your 2020 large farm pocket calendars (one per member please) at the office. There are also a small number of pocket-size calendars available to members, while supplies last.

Member Advisory Council

The final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be Monday, January 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Give the gift of electricity this Christmas

Need a gift for that hard-to-buy-for person this holiday season? Purchase a Brown County REA gift certificate that can be applied toward a member's electric bill. Gifts certificates can be purchased for any amount. Stop by or call the office to get yours.

Be generous to Santa's Closet



Brown County REA headquarters is again collecting donations of new, unwrapped toys, books and mittens to be used as part of the Sertoma Club of New Ulm Santa's Closet project. The collection helps provide gifts to area children who may not otherwise receive gifts at Christmas. Please drop off donations in the box located in the REA office lobby by December 12. Thank you for your generosity to those who are less fortunate. ☎️

Operation Round Up donations surpass \$200,000 since inception



Round Up Trust Board member Ann Wendinger (left) presented a \$500 Coats for Kids donation to New Ulm Kiwanis Club President Julie Wilson (center) and Kiwanis Club member Lara Fletcher.

Thanks to contributions from members whose electric bills are "rounded up" to the nearest dollar each month, Brown County REA's Operation Round Up contributed more than \$8,600 to 26 organizations, individuals and scholarships in 2019. Since the Round Up program began in 1995, \$201,775 was awarded to organizations and individuals in the cooperative's service area.

Each month participating BCREA members "round up" their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar. For example, if your electric bill is \$97.52, you pay \$98. The extra 48 cents goes into the Round Up Trust account and becomes part of the funds distributed to worthy causes throughout our service area. Your less than \$12 annual contribution helps make a difference when your change is pooled with other members' contributions to provide support to area charitable organizations and individuals in crisis.

Among the organizations to receive Operation Round Up contributions this year were Southwest Minnesota Crisis Nursery, Minnesota Music Hall of Fame, Comfrey Community Healthcare Building, Brown County Free Fair, Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Foundation Farm, Brown County United Way, Imagination Library plus Brown County and Nicollet County 4-H.

A heartfelt "thank you" goes to the Brown County REA members who participate in Operation Round Up. The summary of your tax-deductible contributions for 2019 will be printed on the electric bill you receive in December. During this season of giving, please consider participating in Operation Round Up, if you do not already. ☎️

Trust Board donates \$3,050 at final 2019 meeting

The Operation Round Up Trust Board met for its fourth quarter meeting November 19 and awarded \$3,050 to six area organizations. Funds were granted to Kiwanis Coats for Kids, Sertoma Club Santa's Closet, Food for Kidz, Sleepy Eye Holiday Lights in Motion, Sleepy Eye Safety Pup and Hanska Community Library. It was the final meeting for Trust Board Member Arlene Helget, rural Comfrey, who was thanked for her service after completing her second three-year term on the trust board.

If you are part of an organization or project that would like to apply for funding through Operation Round Up, you may use the application found on the Brown County REA website (www.browncountyrea.coop) or contact the office at 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☎️

BCREA Director candidates sought

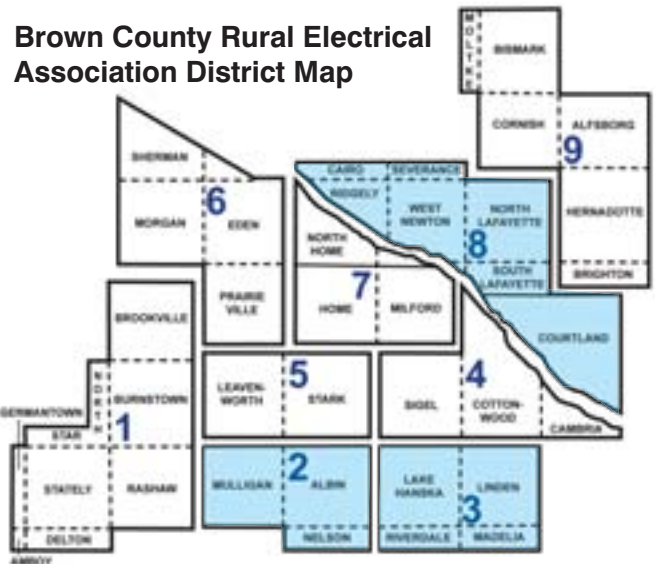
Districts up for election include 2, 3 & 8

Interested or know of someone who may be interested in running for a position as a Director for your electric cooperative? Nominations are being sought for candidates to run for election in BCREA's Districts 2, 3 and 8.

District 2 consists of Mulligan and Albin townships in Brown County and part of Nelson Township in Watonwan County. District 3 is made up of Lake Hanska and Linden townships and the City of Hanska in Brown County, plus parts of Riverdale and Madelia townships in Watonwan County. District 8 includes Ridgley, West Newton, North and South Lafayette townships, portions of Cairo and Severance, plus part of Courtland townships in Nicollet County.

Nominating committees are made up of three members from each of the districts up for election. Per the cooperative's by-laws, the nominating committee will nominate at least two candidates for each directorship at least 35 days before the Annual Meeting. In addition, any 10 or more cooperative members residing in the district may submit a nomination with their signatures for a director in their district. Nominations may also be made for a member residing in the district by another member who resides in the district at the Annual Meeting.

Members who reside in District 2, 3 or 8 and are interested in being a director candidate, please complete and return



the Director Candidate Application below. Your name will be shared with the nomination committee for consideration as a candidate.

Directors will be elected at the 83rd Annual Meeting to be held the evening of April 2, 2020 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center. ☎

Brown County Rural Electrical Association Director application

By signing this application, I certify that I am a member of Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA) and I hereby apply as a nominee for director in District _____ and request my name be considered by the Nominating Committee to be placed on the ballot for election at the April 2, 2020 Annual Meeting. I certify that the following statements are true and accurate as to my qualification to be a candidate for director.

- I am a member in good standing of the cooperative, receiving service at my primary residence, which is in the district for which I am seeking election.
- Within the last five (5) years I have not been adjudged to be guilty of a felony.
- Within the last three (3) years I was not an employee of the cooperative.
- During the last five (5) years I have not been employed by a labor union, which represents or has represented, or has endeavored to represent, any employees of the cooperative.
- I am not a spouse, co-habitant, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, whether by blood or in-law, of an employee or director of the cooperative.

- I am not in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the cooperative or any cooperative-affiliated business.
- I am not a full-time employee or agent of, nor am I the full-time employer or principal of, another director.
- I will notify the appropriate authority of the cooperative in the event that any of the foregoing certification should change prior to the upcoming election or, should I be elected a director, should any of the foregoing certifications not continue to apply to me as serving director of the cooperative. ☎

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Merry electric co-op Christmas!

'Twas the week before Christmas, and all through the halls,
Co-op workers stood ready to answer your calls.
Power was needed to illumine Christmas lights,
In hopes that St. Nick could see in the cold, dark night.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
With video games dancing in front of their heads.
With snow coming down, the remote in dad's lap,
He knew he forgot something, but wanted a nap,

When out on the lawn, there arose such a clatter,
Dad sprang from the couch to see what was the matter.
To security footage he flew like a flash,
Then out the front door he rushed in a dash,

Mom pushed the snowblower through new-fallen snow,
"I meant to do it," Dad apologized, "After my show!"
Before mom could scowl, the lights disappeared,
It must be a burned-out fuse...or worse, Dad feared

Dad went to the basement to fix the fuse quick,
Still no power — nary a water heater click.
He realized the problem when down the kids came,
"We don't have power for our video games!"

Dad grabbed his phone to make the outage call,
Dead (he also forgot to plug his phone in the wall),
*A predicament, Dad thought to himself, Wow,
I sure miss the power I took for granted now!*

Then the rev of an engine, Dad heard with great cheer.
He looked outside — the electric co-op was here!



Out stepped linemen dressed in safety protection,
"It's not just your house, it's the whole section!"

Linemen worked fast and safe to bring back the light,
They spliced and fixed wire with all of their might.
With a twinkling glow, the lights flashed back on,
Before anyone knew it, the linemen were gone.

Thank goodness for dedication and customer care,
Now Dad can do his chores under Mom's patient stare.
As the electric co-op truck disappeared out of sight,
The linemen exclaimed:

Merry Christmas to all and to all good LIGHT!

Use your portable electric generator safely

With winter upon us we never know what Mother Nature will send. Icy conditions often create havoc on our power lines. It is during these times, and if we have lost power, that we turn to portable generators to power our homes.

Yet, improperly using a portable generator can introduce hazards into your home. For instance, generators produce carbon monoxide (CO), which is an odorless, colorless and tasteless poisonous gas. CO is called the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without the use of CO alarms.

The numbers don't lie when it comes to injuries, as stated at Electrical Safety Foundation International's website.



- Storms account for many of the fatalities associated with generator use with ice/snowstorms accounting for 46 percent.

- 67 percent for the fatalities occurred when a generator was placed in the living area or basement of the home.

- 26 percent of the fatalities occurred when a generator was used inside an attached garage or shed.

- 50 percent of generator-related

deaths occurred during November through February.

As you try to solve one problem (loss of power), don't create another one by using your portable generator in an unsafe way. Follow these safety tips:

— *Continued on Page 7*

'Soup's on!' Warm up with our members' soup recipes

What is your favorite kind of soup for warming up or when you feel under the weather? Chicken noodle, chicken rice, vegetable beef, tomato? Share your favorite soup recipes with us. Send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by December 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Roxie's Tom & Jerrys by Roxanna Anderson, Hanska

One dozen large eggs, carefully separate and beat yolks first.

Add to the yolks: 1½ T. real lemon juice ½ tsp. maple flavoring
2 lbs. powdered sugar. Beat together until smooth.

Then beat separately the egg whites until foamy. Sprinkle a shake of cream of tartar on top; continue beating until stiff. Fold the two mixtures together.

Put spoonful of the mixture in a cup.

Pour ¾ oz. of rum and brandy over mixture. Fill with hot water up to 1 inch of the rim. Put another spoonful on top. Sprinkle with nutmeg. ☺

Cozy Mulled Wine by Denice Evers, Springfield

Do not boil — make in your crockpot!

1 bottle of red wine (750 ml) like Merlot, Cabernet, etc.

1 orange, peeled and sliced OR 3 Clementines, separated into sections

2/3 c. honey or sugar

¼ c. brandy, optional

3 cinnamon sticks

8 whole cloves

½ inch of fresh ginger OR 1 tsp. of ground ginger or allspice

Could put the spices in a cheesecloth bag so when ready to serve they can be lifted out. Combine everything in the crockpot and set on low until the wine is steaming...should be in about 20-25 minutes. Do NOT boil...can turn off crockpot when it looks like it is going to simmer and turn on again when it gets cooler to heat up again. Serve with a cinnamon stick and a slice of orange over the rim of the mug. ☺

Generators must use transfer switches

— Continued from Page 6



- Never operate a generator inside your home or in other enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces, including garages.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded and used with a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI).
- A generator is a temporary power source and should never be used as a permanent solution.
- Use only extension cords that have a three-pronged plug and are rated for the intended load.
- Your home generator should be installed by a qualified electrician and bear the mark of a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL.
- The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent CO from entering the home.
 - Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in alarms with a battery backup.
 - Do not overload the generator.
 - And, one tip that is most important to protecting electric cooperative lineworkers, never connect generators directly to household wiring without first installing a transfer switch (pictured above). This prevents backfeeding which could electrocute utility workers making repairs. ☺

Hot Butter Rum

by Denice Evers, Springfield

10-12 servings — Heat your cups before making drinks so it won't cool off the drink too much!

1 stick of butter
2 c. brown sugar
1½ tsp. cinnamon

(The next two ingredients, I am not a fan of...but use them if you like the flavor.)

½ tsp. nutmeg
pinch of cloves
pinch of salt
dark rum
boiling water

This mixture will keep in the fridge for two weeks or for a year in the freezer. ☺

**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. ☺



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

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

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William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497
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.

Members enjoy Open House



Members, including Myron "Whitey" Helget (left) and Ron Domeier, gathered for coffee, cider, cookies, conversation and calendars during the pre-holiday open house November 19-20. Thank you to all who joined us. Congratulations to Karen Peterson, Hanska; and Marilyn Deibele, Sleepy Eye. Both won a \$25 electric bill credit. (E)

Recycle your old Christmas lights



Brown County REA is again working with the Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect strands of old holiday lights to be recycled. You may drop off your old lights in the box in the office entryway during regular business, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The collection runs through January 18.

Please do not place cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL bulbs in the collection box. (E)

Have a bright holiday season!

Crews will be on call in case of outages.

**The co-op will be closed
December 24-25 & January 1**

Board meeting highlights

The BCREA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting November 21 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the October 2019 board meeting minutes, new member applications and member cancellations.
- Reviewed and approved October 2019 payroll and September 2019 financial statements.
- Updated on recent activity with new member-owned Distributed Energy Resources.
- Informed of the upcoming financial audit work to begin in early December.
- Reviewed and approved revisions to the co-op's *Line Extensions, Construction Guidelines* and *Stray Voltage* policies.
- Reviewed recent all-employee safety training.
- Informed that construction activities have finished for the year.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The Board will meet again December 19 at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. (E)