

# Connections

May 2020

For the member-owners of Brown County REA




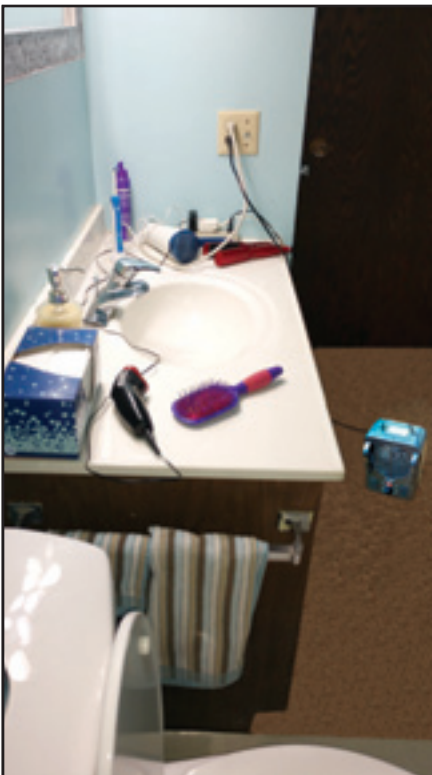
Volume 24, Issue 5

## May is electrical safety month! I spy with my little eye electric safety hazards

I spy with my little eye...

Since May is Electrical Safety Month, demonstrate your electrical safety knowledge. Look in each photo. Can you identify three electrical safety hazards in each one?

Turn to page 6 for the answers and see how well you did. 



**Busy bathroom!** What unsafe electrical safety sights do you see occurring here?



**Living room doom...**  
what three electrical safety hazards can you spy in this photo?




**Outbuilding outlook...**  
can you spot the three safety hazards here?

### At A Glance



**Brown County  
Rural Electrical  
Association**

#### Check out our rebates on cooling systems

Thinking about installing a new cooling system? Heat pumps will keep you cool in the summer and warm for the rest of the year. Check out our cool rebates on air source, ground source and ductless, mini-split heat pumps on Page 5. 

# Escape high energy bills with landscaping

A beautiful front yard (and back yard) can do more than accentuate the looks of your home and improve your property value. Well-planned landscaping can actually enhance your energy efficiency and reduce your energy bills for decades to come. **Every little bit makes things a 'shade' better**

What is the main driver of air conditioning? It's probably not the thermostat. It's the sun!

The sun is high in the sky during the summer. Long days can make for hot days, especially during the dog days of summer. If you can protect your home from the sun, you can reduce your air conditioning bills.

Plant tall trees on the south side of your home to shade it during the day. The key is to plant the trees two to five times the length of the tree away from your home. This will not only provide shade in the summer, but it will also allow sunshine to help warm your home in the winter.

Meanwhile, shorter trees and shrubs on the west side of your house will provide relief from the afternoon sun.

Furthermore, bushes around your home provide additional shade and absorb some of the sun's rays. However, avoid dense plants where humidity is a problem. Air needs to flow freely to prevent the soil around your home from becoming overly damp.

## Wind down the wind

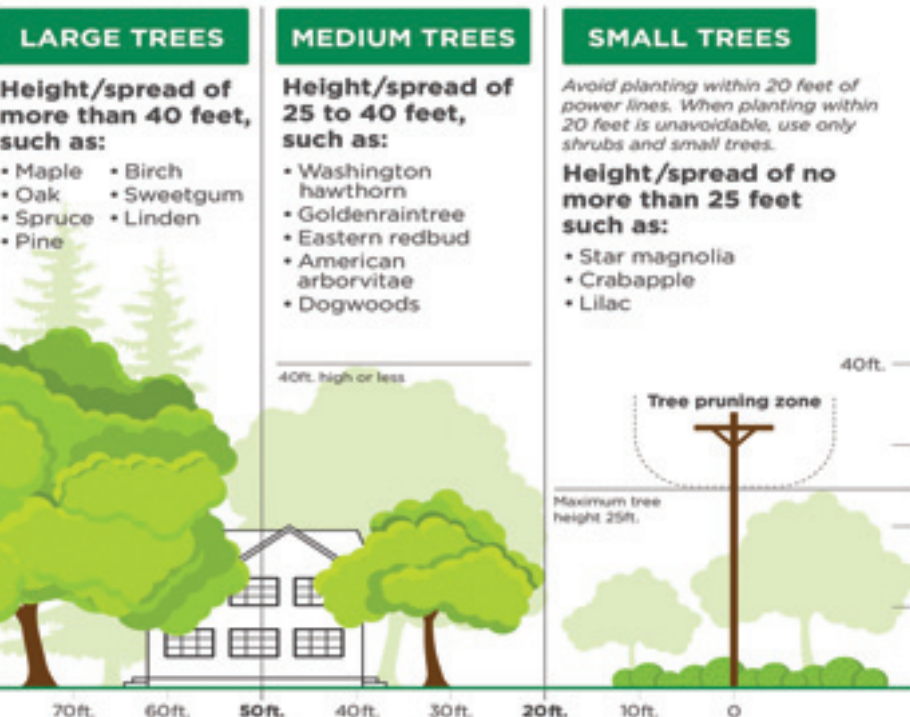
Everyone knows the wind is a big factor during Minnesota winters. It can turn low temperatures into far-below-zero temperatures.

To protect your home from the wind in the winter, landscape with wind breaks in mind. Dense trees, such as evergreens and shrubs are the best for stopping the wind. Again, do not

## Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact your local electric cooperative or visit [www.ArborDay.org](http://www.ArborDay.org).

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.



**Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.**

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

**A well thought out landscaping plan improves the look of your home and also your energy efficiency. Follow these landscaping tips.**

plant them too close to the home if you want the sun to shine through your windows and give your furnace a slight break.

If you have a problem with snow drifts, plant a row of shrubs on the windward side of your house. These will help stop the snow.

If you are thinking about landscaping this summer, keep these tips in mind to make your home as energy efficient as possible. If you are digging 12 inches or deeper, call Gopher State One Call at 1-800-252-1166 or 811, as well. Utilities will locate any of their underground lines in that area. (C)



## Take a quiet, comfortable '10-hour tour' in electric boat

Electric golf cars, electric bikes, electric lawn mowers, electric cars...now boats are joining the crew! Cruise the lake in style with an electric pontoon from Elux Marine.

The Elux Marine Stealth is a 24-foot fiberglass electric pontoon that features multiple color options, including a coastal white hull with sky blue vinyl wrap. The Stealth offers seating for 12, GPS navigation, slide-out cabinets for cooler, trash and recycling, plus a premium sound system.

The Stealth is powered by a 72-volt, 420-amp lithium battery that propels a direct-drive inboard electric motor at speeds in excess of 12 miles per hour. At cruising speed the Stealth will run for over 10 hours on a single charge.

Recharge the Stealth by simply plugging it into a standard electrical outlet. Charging takes up to 12 hours to charge from half to full. The Stealth has a smart charger system to insure the battery won't overcharge or drain to a point that would damage the battery.

Operating and maintaining the Stealth is simple — no gas tanks to fill, no oil to change, no ignition to fail and no engine to winterize. In addition, enjoy the fresh air and no exhaust fumes, nor emissions in the air or water.


In addition, the Stealth is quiet. Passengers can enjoy the sounds of nature, listening to music or quiet conversation without having to shout over a gasoline-powered engine.

Other features of the Stealth (built in Mayer, Minnesota) include:



The Elux Marine Stealth is an electric pontoon boat that will help make boating quieter, simpler and more enjoyable.

- Two-foot swim platform with telescoping ladder
- TotalScan transducer sonar
- LED bow and stern lighting
- Handheld electric portable vacuum
- Multiple USB chargers
- Lockable storage space for valuables
- Removable shade sail for sun and rain protection
- Removable transom gate and table

The Stealth costs approximately \$85,000. Visit [www.eluxmarine.com](http://www.eluxmarine.com) for more information. 

## Safety

### Keep an eye out for electric equipment this planting season

Planting season is here again. Stay safe for your own sake, as well as for your wallet and neighbor. If a farmer damages electrical equipment, not only can it cause an outage for their neighbors, but the farmer will be charged for the repair work.

Follow these safety tips this planting season:

- Make sure farm equipment safely clears power lines. Keep a minimum of 10-foot distance from power lines in all directions when moving equipment.
- Be especially aware of poles when digging or planting the end rows of a field. Each season multiple poles are damaged in such situations.
- If machinery does come in contact with powerlines and becomes




**Watch out when working the fields, especially the end rows. This pole was damaged when the farmer got too close.**

entangled, contact your electric co-op immediately.

Keep others away and stay calm. Do not try to exit the tractor unless there is a danger of fire. By staying inside, the occupant is insulated by the tractor's tires.

If you must exit the tractor for life-threatening reasons, jump out and away from the machinery, making sure to land with your feet together. Hop to a safe distance. Never attempt to get back into or touch machinery that is in contact with a power line.

- If you do damage poles or guy wires, don't try to fix them yourself. Call your electric co-op.
- If your farm has a standby generator for summer storms, it must be connected to the farm's wiring system through a transfer switch. The switch disconnects the farm's electrical system from the electric cooperative's lines during an outage and prevents backfeeding, which could injure linemen during restoration work. 

# Brown County Briefs

Mark your calendars for the 2020 BCREA Annual Meeting

**June 2020**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

*BCREA AM!*

The Brown County REA 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting will be reconvened June 25 in the BCREA headquarters parking lot. It will consist of director elections and business meeting only. Additional details, as they are determined, will be communicated to members.

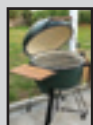
### Community Health Day

The Community Health Day, which was set for March 28, was postponed indefinitely. Organizers have yet to be determine if the event will be rescheduled for this year. ☹️

### Member Advisory Council

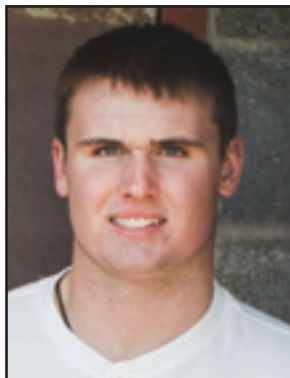
A date has not been determined for the first meeting of the new Member Advisory Council. New members are still being sought. Contact your district director or the REA office if interested.

### Energy efficiency tip

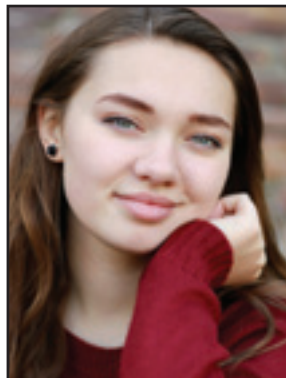


As the weather gets nice, put your grill to use! During summer months cooking outdoors is a great way to save energy and eliminate unwanted heat from cooking indoors. ☹️

## Round Up Trust Board awards 2020 scholarships to six local students



**Russell Hellendrung**



**Emma Henle**



**Lauren Hoffmann**



**Lauren Mages**



**Jake Rosentengel**



**Shaylee Schiller**

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board met via video conference April 7 to review applications and selected six high school seniors to receive the 2020 Operation Round Up scholarships.

Chosen to receive scholarships of \$250 each were:

- Russell Hellendrung, son of Ross & Julie Hellendrung, senior at New Ulm Public High School.
- Emma Henle, daughter of Keith & Tammy Henle, senior at New Ulm Cathedral High School.
- Lauren Hoffmann, senior at Sleepy Eye St. Mary's High School, daughter of Rusty & Tiffany Hoffman.
- Lauren Mages, daughter of Jeremy & Kari Mages, senior at New Ulm High School.
- Jake Rosentengel, Springfield High School senior, son of Jeff & Sue Rosentengel.
- Shaylee Schiller, daughter of Mike & Lynette Schiller, senior at Cedar Mountain High School.

Thank you to all the high school seniors who applied for a scholarship. The winners will receive their funds, to be used for educational costs, after successfully completing one semester of college.

The Trust Board members also distributed \$1,500 to six organizations and one individual family at its meeting. Donations were made to Brown County 4-H Foodstand, Southwest Environmental Fair, Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth SPOTS program, Brown County Free Fair and after prom activities at Comfrey and New Ulm Cathedral high schools. The next Operation Round Up meeting is set for August 18. ☹️



# Rebates will keep you cool this summer and put some extra cash in your pocket!

Since cooling your home makes up a considerable portion of your home's energy use in the summer months, Brown County REA offers rebates for installing innovative, efficient solutions to keep you comfortable.

## Air source heat pump

As a heater in winter and a hyper-efficient air conditioner in summer, air source heat pumps (ASHPs) move heat rather than converting it from fuel, providing the most energy efficient cooling systems available. When you need to cool your home, the ASHP pulls heat and humidity directly from your indoor air and pumps it outside using 72 percent less electricity than conventional air conditioners while doing so.

Brown County REA offers rebates based on the Heat Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) of an air source heat pump. Install a new load-controlled ASHP with an 8.2 and greater HSPF and receives a \$1,000 rebate. The rebate grows to \$2,000 if the HSPF is 9.0 and greater.

Rebates are available on ductless ASHPs, as well, with bonus rebates planned for June, July and August.

## Ground source heat pump

Much like ASHPs, ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) combine heating and cooling in one system. However, GSHPs operate with 300-400 percent efficiency. To cool your home a GSHP will take the heat from your house and disperse it through a series of plastic pipes buried 4-6 feet beneath the ground. These ground loops provide a renewable, reliable source of energy, as underground temperatures remain stable. A \$2,000 rebate is available for the installation of a new GSHP. Replacement or retrofit geothermal units qualify for a \$1,000 rebate.



**Installing a new HVAC system. Check out our money-saving rebates! They go up to \$2,000!**

## Cycled air conditioning

For those looking to stick with a traditional air conditioner, Brown County REA offers a cycled air conditioning program for members. It's an energy-conservation program that cycles your air conditioner on and off in 15-minute intervals on specific days when energy demand is higher than usual. There are typically 20 to 25 days when cycling occurs per year, usually occurring in the late afternoons and early evenings. Members who are not already enrolled and would like to sign up can receive a one-time \$50 rebate.

Contact the office or visit [www.browncountyrea.coop](http://www.browncountyrea.coop) for more information on current rebates for efficient electric appliances for your home. (E)

## Learn baseball from the pros at Twins Play Ball Clinic June 19

*At the time of this writing, this event is still being held...*

Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education are again teaming up with the Minnesota Twins to offer a free Twins Play Ball! youth clinic Friday, June 19 at Prairieville Field (behind the public school) in Sleepy Eye.

Youth ages 6-9 are scheduled from 3 to 4:30 p.m. and ages 10-13 should come from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Event is free to participants. 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.

Created to promote baseball and softball throughout the region, the clinic provides hands-on instruction for boys and girls. Youth can register by going to [www.playballmn.com](http://www.playballmn.com). Click *Youth Clinics* and find the Sleepy Eye location. The Twins will provide safe, youth-friendly equipment, but participants are asked to bring their own gloves. The format focuses on throwing, hitting and fielding. (E)



**Youth can improve their baseball skills will help from the experts — the Minnesota Twins. Clinic scheduled for June 19.**

# I spy with my little eye the answers for the electrical safety photos from the front page

— Continued from Page 1

## Living room photo

1. The extension cord runs underneath a rug where it could overheat and cause a fire.

2. A “pet” should not be allowed to chew on electrical cords, as it’s an electrocution hazard.

3. Too many cords plugged into this extension cord, which is also a tripping hazard.

## Bathroom photo

1. A space heater should not be within three feet of a water source. This is an electrocution hazard even if it’s on the ground; it would be even worse on the counter or close to a bathtub.

2. Bathroom outlets should use ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets. (Those are the ones that you can reset the red button.) This way if water mixes with electricity, the current is disconnected before a person could be electrocuted. Sorry, that’s a hard one to see, but take a second look at your bathroom, kitchen and outside



outlets near water. This outlet costs about \$15 and could save a life, making it priceless! Test your GFCI periodically too. Otherwise, have an electrician install a whole house GFCI on the electric panel.

3. Again, too many items plugged into a power strip/outlet, which is near water. This is an electrocution hazard.

## Shed photo

1. The door is missing from this electrical circuit breaker panel. Dust and water can cause safety hazards. Plus, all electrical panels need three feet clearance in front.

2. The face plate is missing on this outlet. Spend the \$6 to put the plate on it so there’s no exposed wiring. Safety is priceless!

3. This orange extension cord should be retired. The green wires are exposed. One small nick and the copper wire is exposed for electrocution.

Plus, extension cords are only for temporary use and are not in place of permanent wiring.

How did your eagle eye do? Congratulations if you caught them all; if not, you are now wiser about some common electrical safety hazards. (C)



## Time for dairy delight...share your sour cream recipes with us

How many ways can you dream up to use sour cream? Do you use it in potato dishes, muffins, breads, cookies, dips and more? Share your favorite recipes using sour cream by sending to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by May 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

### Cinnamon Popcorn by June Salzwedel, Lakefield

3 quarts freshly popped popcorn                      ¾ tsp. cinnamon  
1/3 c. butter    ¼ tsp. salt  
¼ c. sugar

Preheat oven to 300°. Place popped corn in a large baking pan. I use a large roaster.

Combine the remaining ingredients and melt; cook until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat. Add to the popped corn. Toss lightly to mix well. Bake until hot and crispy for 15 minutes. Stir it once during this baking time.

Makes three quarts. 40 calories for each half cup.

Our family loves this. Keeps a long time so it's good to send to kids in college or people in the military. ☺

### Mushroom Hors d'oeuvres by Cheryl Bass, Windom

1 tube crescent rolls  
3 oz. pkg. cream cheese  
4 oz. can mushrooms, chopped  
1½ tsp. Lawry salt

Spread the crescent rolls out in four squares and pinch the seams together. Mix the cream cheese, salt and mushrooms and spread on the dough.

Fold the dough in half and pinch the ends and sides together. Cut into half-inch pieces and put on a cookie sheet sprayed with cooking spray.

Bake in oven at 375° until brown or about 8 to 10 minutes. ☺

## Win \$ 500 electricity bill credit



Take a short heat pump quiz for chance to win \$ 500 electric bill credit.

Go to our website's home page or visit <https://energywisemn.com/quiz>. Contest ends June 30.

Contest is sponsored by Great River Energy, a wholesale power supplier to your electric co-op and 27 other co-ops.

**Pick up the phone  
before the shovel;  
call before digging!**

**1-800-252-1166**



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging

for foundations, trees, tiling and more. You can also register at [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://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](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 — 766-1497  
James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756  
Brad Sprenger — 317-5576  
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 via phone conference April 30. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Approved the March 2020 board meeting minutes, new member applications, member cancellations, assignment of transfers and payments to estates.
- Reviewed and approved the 2019 margin allocation of \$1,108,027.
- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2019 financial audit as presented by Aaron Clayton of Eide Bailly, LLP.
- Approved reconvening the 2020 Annual Meeting June 25. Members will attend from their vehicles to take part in director elections and a brief business meeting.
- Informed of results of pole inspections, conducted by Southwood 2000 in Stark, Sigel and Lake Hanska townships. 53 of the 2,495 poles tested were rejected and will be replaced.
- Updated on construction activities, including the completion of annual substation inspections and work on underground patrol and maintenance.

The next meeting is set for May 28, at the BCREA headquarters in Sleepy Eye. ☎



**Brandon Havemeier**  
Operations Manager

## Staff notes

### Construction season on deck

As the temperatures rise and conditions improve, Brown County REA line crews and contractors are ready for construction and maintenance projects throughout the service area.

Crews will be working to replace three miles of overhead line with three-phase underground line south of Leavenworth and another 3.5 miles of overhead line with 3.5 miles three-phase underground line northeast of Comfrey. In addition to the work plan projects for the summer, we will replace overhead services throughout the year and focus on areas where we have had recent tree issues via tree trimming or replacing line with underground.

We continue to have Southwood 2000, a subsidiary of our neighbor's at Redwood Electric Cooperative in Clements, do our locating services. We have also again contracted with Southwood 2000 to perform our pole testing, which started in late March. Poles are being tested in the south eastern portion of the service area in Stark, Sigel and Lake Hanska townships.

Pole inspection involves visually inspecting the pole, checking for cracks, equipment damage and burn marks from ditch fires. If the pole passes that part of the inspection, they dig down 18 inches to inspect the base of the pole. To check for internal decay, they drill into the core of the pole. The base of the pole is also visually checked for decay. If the pole does not pass inspection, it is rejected and will be replaced. We test the poles periodically to meet requirements of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and to improve service reliability.

Carr's Tree Service will be back in the service area trimming trees in Ridgely, Eden, and Morgan townships beginning in July. Central Applicators, Inc. will be spot treating unwanted brush, noxious weeds and volunteer trees to maintain and control vegetation in the co-op's substations beginning in June.

Please keep in mind that healthy line crews are critical. We ask that if you see linemen or operations staff on the job, please keep your distance. It is important that they stay healthy and avoid exposure risk during this COVID-19 threat.

As always, we remind you to be aware of Brown County REA equipment as you are working in your fields and yards. Be aware of transformers and other equipment while out mowing, riding ATV or working in the fields. Plus, know where the poles and overhead lines are when planting, spraying and moving equipment. Remember to call Gopher State One Call at 800-252-1166 before doing any digging more than 12 inches deep.

All of us at Brown County REA wish you a safe and healthy spring and summer. ☎