



Celebrate local heroes with the 2020 #WhoPowersYou Contest

The #WhoPowersYou Contest is back! Help us celebrate local heroes who empower co-op communities across the country!

This contest is a chance for electric co-op members and employees to nominate someone making a difference in our community and to celebrate the power of human connections.

Every electric co-op has unsung heroes who energize the residents of their communities. Through their nominations, co-op members have the opportunity to thank them for their efforts and impact on the area. Besides receiving national recognition, contest winners may also be awarded cash prizes to further their cause.

Receive recognition & prize money too

The grand prize winner: \$5,000 awarded in the form of a check.

Second place: \$2,000 awarded in the form of a check.

Third place: \$1,500 awarded in the form of a check.

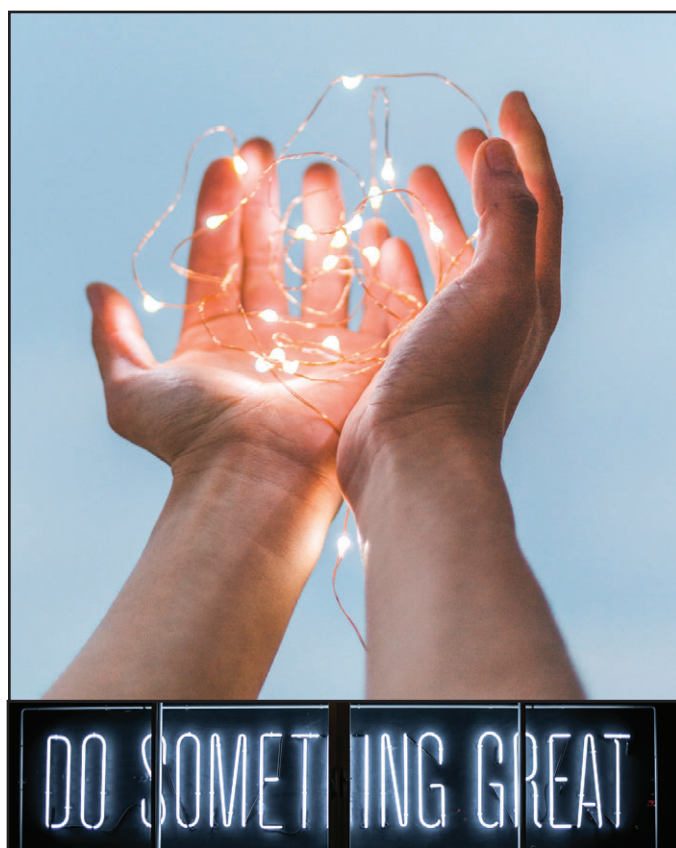
Honorable mention: \$500 awarded in the form of a check.

How to enter

To nominate a local hero in the electric co-op service area, members and employees can go to whopowersyou.com and submit their nominee's name, photo and a brief description of how they make a difference in our community. Nominations open September 8 and must be submitted by October 9. Only members of Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, including your electric cooperative, are eligible to nominate.

Winners will be selected on or around November 19. An independent panel of judges will select winners based upon the positive impact they make on the community, creativity of the entry and the number of votes they receive.

The #WhoPowersYou Contest is an excellent opportunity



to showcase those making a difference and to promote the Touchstone Energy core value of commitment to community. Celebrate the power of human connections by recognizing your fellow member-owners and honor those who are making a difference in your communities, especially during these pandemic times. ☺

At A Glance



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**

What is the Power Cost Adjustment

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is a way for your electric co-op to adjust electric bills according to the actual cost of wholesale power. How does this affect your electric bill? Learn more about the PCA on Pages 4 and 8. ☺

View energy-saving tips on new windows

See the light with Energy Star windows and see your utility bills lightened as well. Replacing old windows lowers household energy bills by an average of 12 percent nationwide.

The problem with old windows

On cold winter nights do you avoid sitting by the window? The cold, inside surface of an inefficient window pulls heat away from your body, so you feel chilly even with the thermostat set at 70. With newer windows, the interior glass stays warmer, so you can sit by the window even when the temperature outside is below freezing.

Do some of your rooms feel like a sauna in the summer? A standard double-pane window allows approximately 75 percent of the sun's heat into your home. Newer windows reduce this "heat gain" without reducing the light.

In addition, air can leak in or out of your house around old windows. If you add up all of the hidden air leaks, they can equal a hole the size of an open window in your home!

Shopping for new windows

Shop for Energy Star windows. Energy Star windows are certified to perform at levels that meet or exceed guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

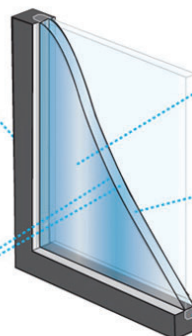
Next, determine your climate zone and make sure windows are rated for the area. We are in the "Northern" climate zone. Window labels should contain information showing they are rated for this zone.

Consider window orientation. In colder climates, the ideal window for a south-facing wall has a higher solar heat gain coefficient (SHGC) and a low U-factor to reduce heat loss. Windows that face east and west should have a low SHGC or be shaded. This is especially true for

Durable, low-maintenance framing materials reduce heat transfer and help insulate better.

Anatomy of an energy-efficient window

Two panes of glass with an air or gas filled space insulate better than a single pane. Some Energy Star windows have three or more panes for even greater efficiency.



Coatings reflect infrared light, keeping heat in or out, depending on the season. They also reflect ultraviolet light to protect your interior furnishings from fading.

Some windows have argon, krypton or other gases between panes. They insulate better than regular air.

A spacer keeps the glass panes the correct distance apart. Spacers also insulate pane edges, reducing heat transfer through window.

Energy-efficient windows have a variety of parts to reduce utility bills and protect your home from heat transfer, condensation and ultraviolet light.

west-facing windows, since they get hit by summer sun at the warmest part of the day. North-facing windows don't get much direct sun, so SHGC is less important. Instead, buy the lowest U-factor you can afford to minimize heat loss through these windows.

The cost of window replacements can vary. Get quotes from several installers. Break down the price quote by labor and materials. Energy Star windows may cost more than non-certified products, but the labor should be comparable for both.

Proper installation

Even the best windows can be drafty if they are poorly installed. Stick to the manufacturer instructions. Energy Star windows are required to have installation instructions packaged with the product or available online. Some manufacturers will void your warranty if you do not follow these instructions. Some warranties also require that you use a certified installer.

The Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov) consumer protection website offers more advice under *Consumer Information*; just click

"Shopping for Products & Services."

Prevent condensation

Water condenses on interior window surfaces when the surface temperature of the window is below the dew point of the humid indoor air. To minimize condensation follow these tips:

- Make sure the space between the window frame and rough opening is insulated during installation.
- Choose window treatments that allow air flow over the window surface.
- Make sure dryers, kitchen and bathroom fans vent directly outside. Use fans during showers or when cooking; leave these fans running for 20 minutes after you're done.

Protect your valuables

Drapes, wood floors, a favorite photograph — all of these things fade or discolor after repeated exposure to direct sunlight. Energy Star windows have coatings that keep out the summer heat and act like sunscreen for your house without noticeably reducing visible light. These coatings reduce fading by up to 75 percent. ^(E)

— Source: [Energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)

Rivian electric truck available soon

Electric vehicles continue to hit the road in a variety of styles. Now trucks are added to the choices. The Rivian electric truck is currently available for pre-order and will start shipping by the end of 2020.

The Rivian Electric Truck has a range of 400-plus miles per charge. The quad motors send instant power independently to each wheel to maximize traction under all driving conditions.

One reason to own a truck is to have the ability to haul whatever needs to be hauled. The Rivian Electric Truck has 12-cubic feet of lockable storage in the back. A flexible crossbar system has one rack that easily expands and collapses so you can mount gear on the roof, the bed and the bed floor.

A full-size spare tire is also stored beneath the truck bed. In addition, the Rivian Electric Truck has three 110-volt outlets to plug items into, plus a built-in air compressor.

Stadium-shaped headlights use less power and cast a wide beam for better visibility. The Rivian electric truck's daytime running light also doubles as



The Rivian Electric Truck combines refinement, function and power in one electrifying package. Its 400-plus mile range offers a wide variety of possibilities.

a charge-level indicator. A green bar means the vehicle is fully charged.


The interior of the Rivian electric truck is built with ruggedness and simplicity in mind.

Other features include:

- Wheelbase: 135.8 inches
- Acceleration: 0-60 in three seconds
- Total power: Up to 750 horsepower
- Combined motor torque: 829 ft-lb

- Water fording: 42.7 inches
- Towing capacity: 11,000 pounds
- Battery: 105/135/180 kilowatt-hour; the battery can go from a five percent to 80 percent charge in about 50 minutes.

The price of the Rivian electric truck starts at \$69,000. That cost is before the \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Visit www.rivian.com to learn more about the new electric vehicle. 

Safety

Social-distance from electric poles this harvest

Soon farmers will return to the fields for harvest. Be sure to give electric poles plenty of room this fall season.

Each year your electric co-op has numerous instances where electric poles are hit by farm equipment. At the very least this can impact your wallet. Farmers who hit electric poles are responsible for the cost it takes to repair the damage. At worst, hitting a pole can lead to power outages for you and your neighbors, who are also trying to get the crop harvested.


Take heed this harvest season. Give electric poles plenty of space



when working in the field, especially along end rows where large equipment can nick poles when turning.

Not only that, but be aware of power lines in all locations. If you recently purchased a new tractor or combine, use care when entering field approaches and make sure the height of the new machinery will not catch power lines.

The same rule applies when moving machinery around your yard. In addition, make sure augers are lowered as far as possible before moving them so they do not snag overhead lines.

Make this harvest season a safe harvest season. Be aware of any electric cooperative equipment in your area when working. 

Brown County Briefs



Touchstone Energy®

What makes your electric co-op membership so valuable?

Brown County Rural Electrical Association is a Touchstone Energy Cooperative. What does this mean? A Touchstone Energy Cooperative is...

1. Member-owned. With co-op members making decisions you know they'll do work to keep your electric bills as affordable as possible.

2. Meets needs and creates value. Cooperatives exist to meet the needs of their members — not to make a profit. Always know that BCREA is working with your best interests in mind.

Member Advisory Council postponed until 2021

Just a reminder to members who agreed to serve on the Member Advisory Council in 2020 that the council will not meet until 2021. You will receive notice, by mail, once the meeting date is set.

Energy efficiency tip

Clothes dryers make up a large portion of your appliance energy consumption. Clean the lint filter after each cycle and scrub the filter with a toothbrush once a month to remove film and increase air circulation.

Check out our new website

New look, same web address. We are pleased to announce the launch of our new website at www.browncountyrea.coop. Check out some of the new functionality and features. ☺

Understanding Power Cost Adjustment



Each month Brown County REA includes a line item on members' electric bills called the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). The PCA reflects an adjustment for the actual cost of wholesale power during each billing period — above or below Brown County REA's base rate.

Why is a PCA necessary?

In order to generate the electricity you consume, our wholesale power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE), obtains electricity from many sources, including coal, natural gas, wind and solar. GRE sets its rates each year based on variables, including the cost of fuel and amount and cost of power purchased in the market. GRE also estimates the amount of power to be sold into the market.

If GRE's costs are greater or less than its base rate, the difference is passed through to Brown County REA and other member cooperatives on the monthly wholesale power bill. The co-op in turn, passes on the difference to you, the members. If it is an additional charge, it is added to your bill in the form of a PCA. If it is a credit, you will see a PCA credit on your bill.

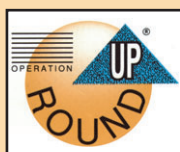
How is my total PCA calculated?

Members can calculate their own PCA each month by multiplying the PCA line item amount by the kilowatt hours used for the billing period. This formula charges all Brown County REA members equally for the increase or decrease in the cost of generating electricity, based on fluctuating costs.

Do other electric utilities use a PCA?

Wholesale power cost is Brown County REA's largest expense item and the PCA is a pass-through from the wholesale power bill to members' bill. But this is not unique to cooperatives, in fact, all energy suppliers have a monthly adjustment for fluctuating fuel costs related to power production. The terminology may vary. You may hear PCAs referred to as a "Wholesale Power Adjustment" or "Fuel Cost Adjustment," or other terms, but they are all fundamentally the same. ☺

Next Operation Round Up meeting



The next meeting of the Brown County Rural Electric Trust is set for November 17. Because there were no funding applications to consider by early August, the Trust Board did not hold its third quarter meeting. Applications received since the April meeting will be reviewed in November.

Donations to area charitable organizations, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships to high school seniors are made possible through the generosity of BCREA members whose electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar each month. For example, a member whose bill is \$144.48 pays \$145. The extra 52 cents is placed into the Round Up Trust Account, combined with other members' "change" and is distributed to worthy causes throughout the cooperative's service area. For less than \$12 per year, members can help make a difference by supporting worthy causes. Round Up contributions are tax deductible.

Organizations interested in applying for funding through Operation Round Up can request an application from Trust Board members Pat Roiger, Vickie Kral, Landon Sletta, Kari Berg, Lynnae Pelzel, Lee Johnson, Michelle Strate, Ann Wendinger or Michelle Oswald. The application form is also available at www.browncountyrea.coop under the *Programs & Services* tab or by calling 800-658-2368 or 794-3331. ☺

Prepare now to stay cozy this winter

As temperatures start to drop outside, it's a good time to make sure your heating system is ready to keep your home toasty warm inside during the months ahead.

If you have a heat pump or electric heat and participate in the BCREA's dual fuel or off-peak heat program, make sure your back-up systems are operating correctly. When your electric heat is controlled you will need to have an automatic, non-electric or storage back-up heat source to keep your home comfortable until the electric heat is restored.

Take time now to perform routine maintenance and make sure you have plenty of fuel for your back-up heat source.

- Make sure your system is sized to keep your entire home comfortable during control periods.



- Tune up your heating source to make sure it will be available when you need it.

- Check your LP or fuel oil supply now and fill up while prices are lower.

- Regularly clean or replace your furnace filters.

- Test the system to make sure the back-up source starts automatically when electric heat is controlled.

Remember, electric heat is controlled during periods of high

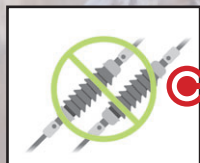
demand (coldest winter evenings) and when market prices are high, but other factors can lead to load control. Check the daily load control schedule on our website (www.browncountyrea.coop) by clicking the *Load Management* tab at the top of the homepage. ⓘ

Electrical safety tips for hunting season



This hunting season we encourage all members to be aware of electrical equipment and take necessary precautions while hunting. Keep these safety tips in mind as you enjoy the great outdoors:

Take notice of posted warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment. ⓘ



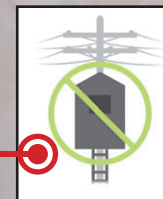
Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.

Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land where you hunt. ⓘ



Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.

Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution. ⓘ



Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Any non-electrical equipment attached to a pole can pose an obstruction and serious hazards to our line crews. ⓘ

Cold weather rule outlines process to avoid winter disconnection and loss of electricity

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule guides utilities on winter disconnections, as long as customers follow these three main guidelines.

Residential customer notice

An electric cooperative must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a home between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit **and all of the following conditions are met:**

1. The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. The electric cooperative may verify income on forms it provides or obtain verification of income from the local energy-assistance provider. A customer meets the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any public assistance, including energy assistance that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income;

2. A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household; and

3. A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills. In addition, an electric cooperative must, between August 15 and October 15 of each year, notify all residential customers of these provisions.

Before disconnecting service to a residential customer between October 15 and April 15, an electric cooperative must provide:

1. A notice of the proposed disconnection;
2. A statement with the customer's rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy-assistance providers;
4. Forms on which to declare an inability to pay; and
5. A statement explaining available time-payment plans and other options to secure continued utility service.

Restrictions for disconnection

1. If a customer must be involuntarily disconnected between October 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with residential disconnection provisions, it must not occur on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by the electric cooperative;

2. The disconnection must not occur on a weekend, holiday or the day before a holiday, when utility offices are closed, or after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative from the electric cooperative who is authorized to enter

Local emergency energy-assistance agencies provide help to members facing disconnection



If you live in an area that is not listed, call your electric co-op for details

Blue Earth County	507-345-6822
Des Moines Valley Human Services (Jackson & Cottonwood)	847-4000
Martin County Human Services.....	238-4757
MN Dept. of Energy Svcs (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3805
Minnesota Valley Action Council.....	1-800-767-7139
Brown County.....	508-4041
Martin County.....	238-1663
Nicollet County.....	934-5224
Sibley County.....	237-2981
Watsonwan County	375-5748
Nobles County Family Services Agency.....	372-2157
Renville County	320-523-1842
Salvation Army's Heat Share (Jackson, Martin & Brown Co.)	1-800-842-7279
Sibley County Human Services	237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.)	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.)	376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties) .	1-800-658-2448

into a payment agreement, accept payment and continue service offers a payment agreement to the customer; and

3. If a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice, the customer must not be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the home is occupied. If the unit is occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy-assistance provider before disconnecting. If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved. Ⓢ

Be a serial baker — mix up some of these cereal recipes & share!

Cereal is not just for breakfast. It can be used in a variety of tasty treats. Serialize these cereal recipes for Rice Krispie bars, Special K bars, Puppy Chow, Chex Mix, trail mix and more. Share your cereal recipes with all! Send to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📞

Join your electric co-op at the polls

Our co-op's number one priority is providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. This requires more than maintaining power lines. It requires political engagement.

Your electric co-op is democratic in nature. Each member has a vote. As important as it is to vote at the Annual Meeting, it is also important to vote at the local, state and national levels. That's why your electric co-op participates in a national program called Co-ops Vote.

Co-ops Vote encourages all co-op members to participate in elections, while educating political candidates and elected officials about the important role played by electric cooperatives.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association launched Co-ops Vote in 2016. It started as a national non-partisan get-out-the-vote initiative that helped drive rural voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election.



Through this program, electric co-ops realized they had a unique advantage. As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community — one of the seven cooperative principles — through participation in our democracy.

Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials and decision-makers trust us due to the work the electric cooperative family puts into political engagement. When we all get involved, we can make things happen politically and in our local communities.

You can participate by casting your ballot in November. If you're interested in getting more involved, visit www.vote.coop to learn more about the upcoming elections and access online tools that can help you participate. We look forward to seeing you at the polls on Election Day! 📞

Active military personnel: bill payment options exist



Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change. Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 📞

**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 or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📞



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive
Officer

Staff Notes

Power Cost Adjustment raising bill amounts this summer

You may have noticed a higher electric bill each summer. Members tend to use more electricity in the summer and your cooperative has to pay more for wholesale power too. That increase in wholesale cost is passed on to the membership through the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA). The PCA represents the difference between the power cost that is part of the base electric rate and what

actual power cost is in any given month.

When the cost of wholesale power rises above the base rate, the additional amount is charged to members. When the cost of wholesale power is below the base rate, the difference is subtracted from members' electric bills as a credit. Looking back at the past few years, the PCA has been high in July, August and September. In April and May of this year and often in the fall months, the PCA was a credit rather than a charge on the bill. PCA is charged or credited based on the number of kilowatt hours used. The PCA charge is calculated monthly and allows Brown County REA to keep members' monthly rates consistent rather than changing them every time the cost of energy fluctuates.

As fall approaches, the temperatures outside will go down and power cost and PCA will likely follow. Fall also means harvest season is just around the corner and we at Brown County REA want to remind the community to look up and look out for power lines. While we know it is a busy time and you are focused on getting the crop out, we want you to be aware of your surroundings and remember to look up. Those power lines are energized and bringing electricity to your farm, family and business. If you do come in contact with a power line:

- Call 911 as soon as possible and keep the area clear until help arrives.
- If you can do so without risking your machinery or damaging utility infrastructure, drive at least 40 feet away.
- If the vehicle is on fire or you must exit for other safety reasons, jump clear so that no part of your body touches the equipment and ground at the same time and land with feet together. Hop to safety in small steps to avoid electric shock by breaking the current's path.

We wish you all a safe fall! ☺

Protect your home, business & cabin 24/7



Heartland Security can stand guard when you are gone. Environmental sensors protect from fire, carbon monoxide and freeze-up. Use your Smart phone to monitor video cameras or check temperature. Co-op members receive discount. Call 1-888-264-6380 or visit www.heartlandss.com ☺



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

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954

William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497

James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 829-6756

Brad Sprenger — 317-5576

Allen Hanson — 276-0691

David Wendinger — 276-3166

Greg Mages — 794-3540

Joel Christensen — 828-4550

James Mickelson, 794-6298

The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting on August 27, 2020 at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Established \$100 as the new minimum amount for issuing capital credit checks. Amounts less than \$100 will be credited to current members' electric bills.
- Approved submission of the loan letter, property schedule, Form 740C cost estimates and loan budget to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for the construction work plan loan.
- Updated on construction projects, including extending three-phase service to Comfrey and work at the Searles Substation.
- Approved CEO Mike Heidemann submitting to Rural Utilities Service (RUS), data required by Rural Development Utilities Program Form 674.
- Approved a rate change to the unclaimed property charge and updated the BCREA schedule of charges.
- Set director per diem rates for attending virtual meetings at the cooperative headquarters and from individual homes.

The next meeting will be on September 24, 2020 at the Brown County REA office. ☺