

Connections

October 2023

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 27, Issue 10

October is National Co-op Month! Electric co-ops grow for the communities we serve

October is National Co-op Month and your co-op is joining cooperatives across the U.S. to celebrate. Co-ops come in all shapes and sizes, but they each have a common goal — provide goods or services for the members of the co-op.

Electric co-ops exist to serve their member-owners. Our priority is to provide affordable, reliable energy to our local communities. Because we are led by you, the members we serve, we can evolve to meet your needs. Whether it be providing an efficient electric water heater for your home or assisting you in finding a charger for a new electric vehicle, we strive to meet the changing needs of our members.

This October, as we celebrate Co-op Month, we're focusing on the ways "Co-ops Grow" for their members.

Co-ops grow communities

Co-ops help communities grow by promoting economic empowerment, fostering community engagement and supporting the unique needs of co-op members. We are proud that our Operation Round Up program has provided more than \$241,000 to boost area charitable organizations and help our neighbors in need. "Concern for Community" is one of our core principles — and being community-focused is essential to everything we do.

Co-ops grow together

Co-ops are all about cooperation — not competition. That's why electric co-ops work together to share lessons learned, successful strategies and better ways to serve our members, which includes sharing this *Connections*

newsletter with Brown County REA members. We help our neighboring cooperatives restore power to their members after major storms, as you never know when our cooperative will be in the same situation. Other examples of electric cooperatives working together includes the creation of Heartland Security by 13 electric co-ops and CTV formed by four neighboring co-ops. We're better when we grow together!

Co-ops grow tomorrow's leaders

Electric co-ops serve as fertile ground for growing tomorrow's leaders through a variety of youth engagement programs. Whether through school safety demonstrations and presentations, support of our 4-H members at area county fairs and high school scholarships, we're involved. Plus, each year we sponsor the electric cooperative Youth Tour program sending a

local youth to Washington, D.C. We're committed to providing opportunities for local youth to learn and thrive in our community and beyond.

Co-ops grow for you

At your local electric cooperative your satisfaction is our number one goal. It's why we were formed many years ago to fulfill a uniquely local purpose. We've come a long way since then; your needs continue to evolve. That's why we'll never stop growing for you! ☺



Your electric cooperative has "tree"mendous growth — even after 86 years of service! BCREA supports the community with the Operation Round Up program, member advisory council and high school scholarships too.

At A Glance



Save a tree! Sign up for paperless options

Stay informed while helping your co-op save money on paper and postage. Sign up for electronic statements, newsletters and notification via text message for load control, outages and general information. See Page 4. ☺



Spooked by energy costs? Treat yourself to energy efficiency!

This spooky season we're sharing a few energy-saving tricks so you can treat yourself to lower energy bills. Add these five treats to your bag of tricks to summon the spirit of energy efficiency.

Shoot down drafts with caulk gun

Get rid of goosebumps by eliminating ghostly drafts. The winter chill is just around the corner; now is the time to seal air leaks around your home. Apply caulk and weatherstripping around drafty windows and doors to make your home more comfortable and lower energy use.

Shine with LEDs & scare off the boogeyman



Illuminate your lair with energy efficient lighting. LED bulbs use 75 percent less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent light bulbs. Make the switch to reduce energy used for lighting. Remember to use LEDs when it's time to decorate for the upcoming holiday season too. LED light strings offer an average of 88 percent energy savings, as compared to traditional incandescent light strings.

Smart thermostat avoids being chilled to the bones



Conjure instant savings with a Smart thermostat. One of the easiest ways to save energy is through thermostat control, since home heating and cooling account for a large portion of monthly energy use. Smart thermostats can help you manage heating and cooling costs by learning your daily routine and adjusting the temperature settings accordingly. You can control a Smart thermostat from anywhere (through your smart phone), which allows you to prevent unnecessary energy consumption while you're away. Sorcery! For a bonus treat take advantage of your electric cooperative's \$25 Smart thermostat rebate; find the form on the co-op's website.

The Frankenstein old water heater needs to be ousted

Quit adding parts to your old beast of a water heater that's 25-plus years old. Upgrade to a new energy-efficient one that features inches of foam insulation to keep your hot water's heat in the water versus disappearing into your dark dungeon.

Turn to your local electric co-op for your next water heater. It features a lifetime warranty against leaks for the original owner with a larger tank for plenty of hot water. Plus, it is made in the USA! Your electric cooperative sells the water heater below retail pricing as it helps the cooperative save money when a radio control is installed on it. The radio control talks to the water heater on the hot days of spring and summer and cold mornings or evenings of fall and winter. The radio control shuts off the power during the peak so the cooperative and you do not need to buy power on the open market at higher prices.

Stir up countertop cauldron cash



Cooler weather summons our favorite soup recipes. Small countertop appliances, like slow cookers, use less energy than cooking meals on the stovetop. Grab your book of spells (or recipes) and start stirring up savings in the kitchen.

By looking around our homes many opportunities arise to save energy. This spooky season check your home and unlock a different kind of magic — the kind that brings energy savings. ☺

Sharp steam oven cooks the competition with many ways to make meals fast & easy

A new cook has entered the kitchen! Introducing the Sharp superheated steam countertop oven. It's the size of microwave, but is more powerful, offering more ways to cook.

This unit combines superheated steam and conventional, radiant heat to save time, energy and money. Temperatures up to 485 degrees use superheated steam to cook food both crispy and browned, while remaining juicy and tender. It's easy to fill the front-loading tank with water for 60 minutes of steam cooking. Just plug it into a 120-volt outlet.

While regular steam is 212 degree Fahrenheit, the superheated steam goes up to 485 degrees. The instant-on feature and smaller cooking body heats up quickly and keeps food closer to the heating elements. Be amazed with the five cooking modes:


- broil/grill
- pizza
- toast
- bake/reheat
- warm.

Create sheet pan meals on the crisper pan (12.5" by 12.5") or use the broiling pan. It is large enough to cook a 12" pizza or nine pieces of toast at once. Food up to 4"



"Fast food" is at your fingertips with the Sharp superheated steam countertop oven. No preheating nor defrosting are needed!

tall can be cooked inside. Yes, a cookbook is included.

The unit is 9.3" tall by 19.7" wide and 19.3" deep. The unit can be bought on Walmart.com for \$199. If you are interested in a larger version, three wall-oven models exist. Review those prices and sizes at www.SharpUSA.com. 

Safety

Never do the power line limbo dance!

"How low can you go?" We know of these lyrics associated with the limbo dance where you bend backwards to boogie under a horizontal pole.

In terms of fall harvest safety your electric cooperative encourages you to take it slow and low — as low as you can go! It's a matter of life and death.


- Lower your auger before moving it around the farm yard from bin to bin or to another bin site. The few minutes could be a lifesaver by avoiding overhead power lines and an electrocution accident.

- Lower the auger on the grain cart, combine and yes, even feed trucks. Being in a hurry with the forgotten auger sticking out, while doing end rows, can damage a pole and the auger even more.

- Look up and look out for the guy wires and the overhead power lines too as you enter or exit a field with your newer, larger combine.



How low can you go with an auger? Take it down low — every single time! Don't risk entanglement, electrocution or death with power lines using your auger, whether on a feed truck, combine or grain auger.

Just remember to take it slow and low as you go about harvest when near the power lines in the yard and fields. 

Brown County Briefs

Energy-efficiency tips



Did you know using your dishwasher is more energy efficient than washing a load of dishes by

hand? To maximize efficiency wash full loads in the dishwasher and don't block the arms or other parts that move, while the appliance is in use. For additional savings turn on the "air dry" setting instead of using the "heat dry" setting and use a rinse aid to help dishes dry faster without spotting and streaking.

Update life-support listing

Do you or someone living in your household require life-support equipment, such as an oxygen concentrator, respirator or home dialysis? Do you have battery back-up or a back-up generator in case of a power outage?

Brown County REA maintains a list of members with life-support equipment. An enrollment form is available on the website at www.browncountyrea.coop under the "Forms" tab or can be requested by calling the office. A portion of the form must be completed by a physician. If the person with the medical condition moved from the co-op's system, no longer needs life support or has passed away, please inform your co-op so our list stays current.

2024 calendars available

Members can stop by the REA office during business hours to pick up a 2024 large, farm pocket calendar, one per member please. A small number of pocket-size calendars are also available.

Next Board meeting date:

October 31, 2023. ☎

Save paper and postage costs

Stay in the know with electronic statement, newsletter and messaging

Interested in receiving your monthly statement and *Connections* newsletter in your Inbox rather than your mailbox? How about getting general notifications and outage information sent to your cell phone via text message?

Brown County REA is encouraging members to help us reduce paper usage. With paperless billing, you receive an e-mail each month when your statement is available. Log in to the "Member Account Access" on the cooperative's website at www.browncountyrea.coop where you can view your monthly statement. If you have not already done so, you will need to set up an account name and password in the website portal to access.

To view the *Connections* newsletter electronically, share a valid email address where you'll receive notice that the newsletter is available each month. Click on the link to view the newsletter. A link to the newsletter is also posted monthly on the co-op Facebook page and you can access the most recent 12 months of *Connections* issues on the website by clicking on "Newsletters" under the "Resources" tab.

Members can also sign up to receive text/email messages regarding outages, load control and general information to a phone number or email address you provide. Use the form below to sign up. You can also use the "Update My Information" form on our website at www.browncountyrea.coop. ☎

Sign me up for electronic notifications and messages from BCREA

Name: _____

Account: _____

Email: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Select all that apply:

I would like to receive monthly billing statements electronically

I would like to receive the *Connections* newsletter electronically

I would like to receive text notifications from BCREA

I would like to receive emails from BCREA



Send to BCREA, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085. Questions?
Call 794-3331 or 1-800-658-2368.

Board approves \$541,000 for the members

At its September 28 meeting the Brown County REA Board of Directors approved 2023 payment of capital credits to members in the amount of \$541,703.

A decision was made to issue checks for amounts of \$250 and above. Amounts less than \$250 will be paid to current members as a credit on the November electric bill for October usage. Checks will be mailed around November 17. ☎

Make sure to play it safe online

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identity, banking and health records and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, October Cybersecurity Month is the perfect time to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Brown County REA is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

Here are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

1. Use multi-factor authentication (also known as two-step verification) on your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled.

2. Update your software. This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.

3. Think before you click. Most successful cyber attacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait



when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.

4. Create strong passwords, using long, unique and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager to save time, work across all devices, protect your identity and notify you of potential phishing websites.

For the young people in your household


Just as you would talk with your children and other young people in your life about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know early on, that what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. Help your children learn about and use the privacy and

security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

Keeping the electric grid and your data secure

We're doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Brown County REA, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues.

We also work together with co-ops across the country to develop new technologies and infrastructure, learn from each other and keep the grid's network secure.


While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone. 

Prepare back-up heating system for season

Members with a Dual Fuel Heating System (electric heat or a heat pump with non-electric backup) are reminded to be sure your back-up heating system is prepared and that you have adequate fuel supply.

- Dual Fuel Heating Systems are usually controlled during periods of high demand (such as frigid winter evenings), but other factors such as high market cost can lead to load control as well.

- Participants should anticipate 20 days/108 hours of control this winter season (October 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024). Control typically occurs late afternoon/early evening through 9-10 p.m. Morning control may be necessary at times.

- Control times at individual receivers randomly staggered by up to 30 minutes. 

Member Advisory Council visits Sleepy Eye substation

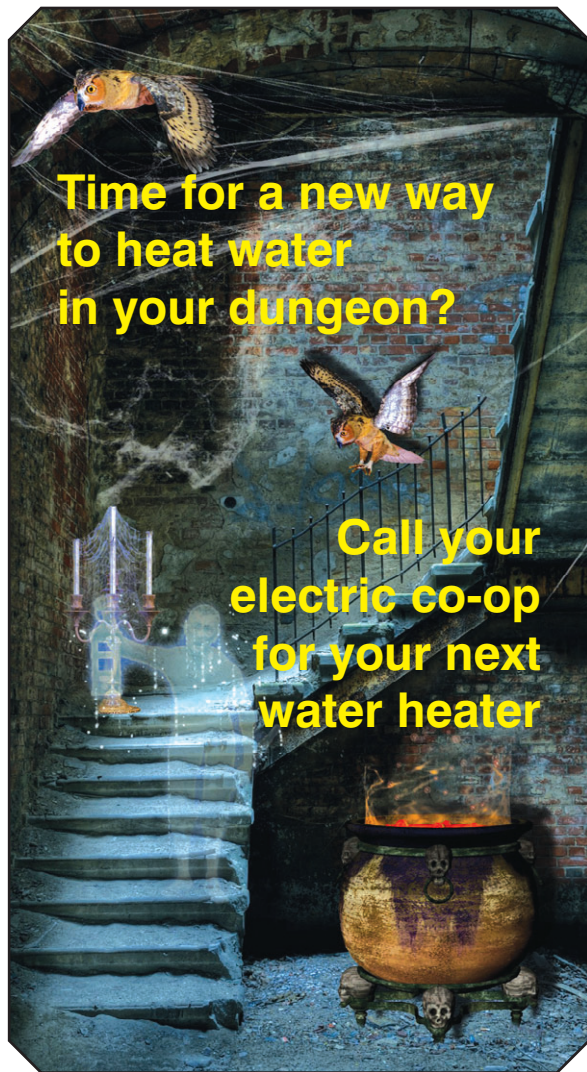


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Annual Connections Post Office form posted

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Let us lend a hand for energy savings: Smart thermostat rebate

Install a Smart thermostat. Use your cell phone then to adjust the temperature whether you are home or away. Your electric co-op offers a \$25 rebate. Find the form on our website or call to request it.

Peeking around for some new pecan recipes? Crack out your favs

Get cracking! Shell out some of your favorite pecan recipes, whether for pie, bars, rolls, cookies, tarts or other family favorites. Share your pecan recipes with us. Mail your favorite recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by October 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Carrot Casserole by Sandy Kalfs, Okabena

16 carrots, sliced 1/8 to 1/4" thick (8 c.)	1/2 tsp. dry mustard
1/4 c. margarine	1/4 tsp. celery salt
1/4 c. flour	1/8 tsp. pepper
2 T. minced, dried onion	2 c. milk
1 tsp. salt	8 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, thinly sliced
	1/4 c. dry bread crumbs

Grease a two-quart rectangular baking dish; set aside. In a large saucepan cook the carrots in a small amount of boiling water, covered, for seven to 10 minutes or until tender; drain. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan melt the margarine. Stir in the flour, onion, salt, mustard, celery salt and pepper. Add milk. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until mixture is thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat. Place half of the carrots in the prepared pan. Layer half of the cheese slices over the carrots. Repeat with remaining carrots and cheese. Pour the sauce over all. Sprinkle with bread crumbs. Bake in a 350° oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until heated through. Makes 10 servings. 📧

Zucchini Carrot Cake by Denice Evers, Springfield

2 eggs	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 c. sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
2/3 c. oil	1 c. grated carrots
1 1/4 c. flour	1 c. grated zucchini, squeezed & tightly packed
1 tsp. baking powder	1/2 c. chopped nuts, optional
1 tsp. baking soda	

Beat eggs with sugar until frothy. Gradually beat in oil. Add dry ingredients. Beat at high speed for four minutes. Stir in carrots, zucchini and nuts. Pour into a 9x13" pan that has been greased and floured. Bake at 350° for about 35 minutes or until the top springs back when lightly touched.

Frosting: 4 oz. cream cheese 3 T. of butter
1 tsp. vanilla 2 c. powdered sugar

In a small mixing bowl blend the cream cheese with the butter. Add the sugar and vanilla; beat until smooth. Spread evenly over the cooled cake. 📧

Carrot Cake

by Joann Wink, Fairmont

2 1/2 c. flour	
2 tsp. baking soda	
1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice	
1 tsp. cinnamon	
1 1/2 c. sugar	1 1/4 c. oil
4 eggs	1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
3 carrots, shredded	
1 can crushed pineapple, not drained	
1 c. walnuts, chopped	
1/2 c. golden raisins	

Beat sugar, oil, eggs and vanilla. Stir in flour, soda, pumpkin spice and cinnamon. Stir in carrots, pineapple with juice, nuts and raisins. Bake in a 9x13" pan at 350° for 40 minutes.

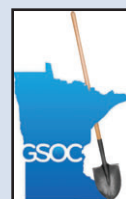
Frosting:

8 oz. cream cheese	
4 T. butter	1 tsp. clear vanilla
3 c. powdered sugar	

Beat cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Add powdered sugar. Frost. 📧

**Just make the 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 and tiling. Register at www.gopherstateonecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧

Rain or shine,
day or night,
we're here for you.

**October is National
Co-op Month.**

#PowerOn



Staff Notes



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive
Officer

Power in your hands; electric co-ops are different from other types of utilities

Because we're a co-op, we operate a little differently than other utilities. Brown County REA's decisions are made locally, by directors who also live right here in our service area. Everyone who pays to receive electricity from the co-op is a member. When you pay your electric bill each month, your money stays here — to pay for the electricity used or to make improvements to our local system to strengthen service reliability. The money you pay the co-op doesn't line the pockets of shareholders five states away. We're

a co-op; we exist to provide a service to you, our local members.

You may notice that throughout the year we schedule opportunities for you to attend co-op events, like our Annual Meeting and Member Advisory Council meetings, so we can hear from you. We welcome your feedback on co-op services so that we can plan and adjust for the future.

Our success lies in your satisfaction, which is why we offer these opportunities to engage and listen to what you have to say.

Because you're part of an electric cooperative, you can count on our team to maintain local jobs, at-cost electricity and first-class service, no matter what the economy — and supply chain issues — throw at us.

Brown County REA is striving to keep our costs as low as possible so we can keep more money in your pocket. We want to help you maximize the value you can get from our services and offerings. For example, we can help you save on energy bills through our load management programs and efficiency rebates.

If you want to receive important information from Brown County REA, such as power restoration updates, load management notices, or general notifications, you can sign up for our text message notifications in your customer account portal, using the form on our website, or the form on Page 4 of this newsletter.

You can also stay in the know by visiting our website, Facebook page and read the monthly newsletter.

Please know that you — the members of Brown County REA — are at the heart of everything we do. Co-ops adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service.

We exist to serve you and provide the quality, reliable, friendly service you expect and deserve. While we've grown over the years, we're still driven by the same guiding principles to serve our community. This co-op was created for you, the members.

The power is in your hands. ☎️



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: 7:30 a.m. to 4 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
David Wendinger — 276-3166
Greg Mages — 794-3540
Joel Christensen — 828-4550
James Mickelson — 794-6298
Landon Sletta — 439-6559
The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on August 31, 2023.

Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the July 27, 2023 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed the July 2023 payroll and July 2023 financial statements.
- Discussed plans for the September 18 Member Advisory Council meeting.
- Updated on progress with billing statement design and upgrade.
- Reviewed and approved a sub-metered Pilot Time-of-Use rate.
- Updated on construction projects, including the Highway 14, Schilling substation and overhead project in Eden Township.
- Reviewed recent employee safety training.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

The next meeting is set for September 28, 2023 at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☎️