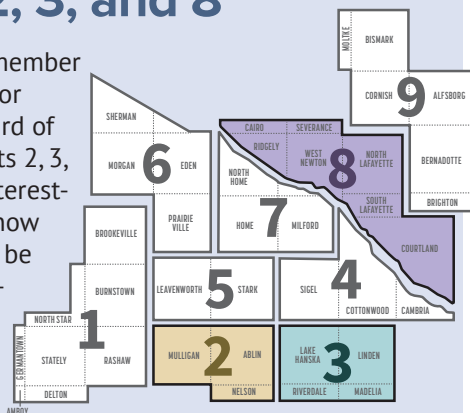




Last Call for Director Candidates in Districts 2, 3, and 8

BCREA is seeking member candidates to run for election to the Board of Directors in Districts 2, 3, and 8. If you are interested in running, or know someone who may be interested, nominations are currently being accepted for these districts.



Members who reside in Districts 2, 3, or 8 and wish to be considered as a director candidate should complete the *Director Candidate Application* available at www.browncountyrea.coop before **February 20th, 2026**. Completed applications will be shared with the nominating committee for consideration. Interested members may also contact the REA office for more information.

Director elections will take place at the 89th Annual Meeting, scheduled for the evening of April 9th, 2026, at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.



All-Expense-Paid Trip to Washington, D.C. for Local Student

Know a high school student who would benefit from an educational trip to our nation's capital? Brown County REA is seeking one outstanding student to represent the cooperative on an all-expense-paid Washington, D.C. Youth Tour, taking place **June 15–20, 2026**.

The Rural Electric Youth Tour brings together approximately 1,500 students from electric cooperatives across the country for a week in Washington, D.C. Participants tour historic monuments, museums, and memorials, spend a day on Capitol Hill, and gain a behind-the-scenes look at how government works.

Students also learn about the cooperative business model, develop leadership skills, and connect with peers from across Minnesota and beyond. The experience offers a unique mix of history, civic exposure, and personal growth, and many participants return home with a deeper appreciation for their community and country.

Application and selection information is available through area high school counseling offices and on our website at www.browncountyrea.coop. Applications must be submitted by **February 27th**.

Adam Mages of Sleepy Eye was BCREA's delegate on the 2025 Youth Tour trip.



SAVE THE DATE
Annual Meeting • April 9th
Sleepy Eye Event Center



Looking Ahead to 2026

This month, I would like to provide an overview of what Brown County REA has planned for the coming year, along with highlighting some of the work our crews accomplished during 2025.

Providing safe and reliable electric service for our members requires regular maintenance and upgrades to our system. Each year, our Operations Department works to replace damaged and outdated equipment to keep our system working smoothly. This work directly impacts the reliability of the electricity our members depend on.

In 2025, we completed approximately 15 miles of power line improvements across our service area. This work focused on rebuilding older lines and making upgrades where needed to better serve members.

Highlights included:

- ◆ Rebuilding approximately 4 miles of line in Eden Township
- ◆ Upgrading approximately 2 miles of line for member-requested three-phase service
- ◆ Additional system improvements to strengthen reliability and reduce future repairs

During the coming year, we are planning to complete approximately 15-20 miles of additional line rebuilds and upgrades. These projects help keep the system dependable for homes, farms, and businesses.

Planned work for 2026 involves:

- ◆ Approximately 4 miles of line upgrades in Lafayette Township
- ◆ Improvements connected to the State Highway 15 roundabout project in Klossner

Other significant projects scheduled for 2026 include a receiver changeout, building maintenance, and a revamped website. The receiver changeout is due to an unsupported former system and will enable the cooperative to better assess whether or not receivers are working. Tuckpointing is planned at our headquarters building, along with the installation of an air source heat pump to upgrade the building's outdated HVAC system. We will also be replacing the roof that is 30 years old. One final project is our plan to work with Touchstone Energy to refresh the cooperative's website.

Each of these upgrades reflects Brown County REA's ongoing commitment to providing our members with safe, affordable, and reliable electricity. By investing in these improvements, we are ensuring we can continue to serve you well for years to come.

Mike Heidemann, CEO



Apply Now for Operation Round Up Scholarships

Brown County REA, through its Operation Round Up program, is awarding scholarships to high school seniors who plan to attend college following graduation. A minimum of eight \$250 scholarships will be awarded to eligible students whose parent or guardian is a Brown County REA member and resides within the cooperative's service area.

Scholarships are funded through Operation Round Up, a voluntary program in which participating members round their monthly electric bill up to the nearest dollar. The extra change is placed into a trust that is administered by a nine-member board. The board meets quarterly to distribute funds to local charitable organizations, individuals and families in crisis, and educational scholarships.

Scholarship guidelines and applications are available through area high school counseling offices.

Application materials are also available on the REA website at

www.browncountyrea.coop.

The application deadline is April 6th, 2026. Scholarship recipients will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting on April 9th, 2026. Applicants must submit a copy of their high school transcript and one letter of recommendation.

Scholarship funds will be distributed following the successful completion of the student's first semester of college.



Operation Round Up Meeting February 17th



The first quarterly Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board meeting for 2026 is set for **February 17th**. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding can submit the application, found on the REA website www.browncountyrea.coop, before that date.

Longevity Awards Presented for 2025

Each year, Brown County REA employees and directors are recognized for each five years of service to the cooperative. For 2025, awards were presented to **Robyn Walter** for 20 years, **Brady Kerkhoff** for 10 years, and **Jennifer Rose** for 5 years.



Left to Right: Brady Kerkhoff, Jennifer Rose, and Robyn Walter.

Save with Energy Efficiency Rebates

Whether you're planning a major home upgrade or a small efficiency improvement, Brown County REA offers rebates in 2026 that help make energy-saving projects more affordable.

Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) provide efficient cooling and supplemental heating while using significantly less electricity than traditional systems. Rebates are available based on system efficiency tiers using HSPF2 and SEER2 ratings, with additional incentives for systems placed on the cooperative's load control program with non-electric or storage backup heat. Hybrid systems may also qualify. Energy Star® rated ductless mini-split heat pumps are eligible as well, with incentives based on size and efficiency level. Geothermal

Heat Pumps are another high-efficiency option, with rebates available for new installations, replacement units, and systems enrolled in load control.

Additional residential rebates are available for select HVAC components, including electronically commutated motors (ECMs) and smart Wi-Fi thermostats. Members installing a Level 2 home EV charger may qualify for a rebate when enrolled in an off-peak or time-of-use charging program. The coop also offers rebates on Energy Star® appliances, rechargeable electric yard tools, and certain electric lawn and snow equipment. Commercial rebates may be available for lighting retrofits, heating and cooling upgrades, electric equipment, and other custom projects.

Full details, eligibility requirements, and rebate forms are available at www.browncountyrea.coop.

Rebate Description	Amount
Air Source Heat Pump 7.5 HSPF & 14.3 SEER or more (with load control)	\$1,500
Air Source Heat Pump 8.5 HSPF & 16 SEER2 or more (with load control)	\$2,000
Air Source Heat Pump (no load control, rebate dependent on efficiency)	\$750–\$1,000
Ground Source Heat Pump (rebate for up to 8 tons)	\$400/ton
Ground Source Heat Pump (replacement unit)	\$1,000
Ductless Mini-split Heat Pump 7.5 HSPF2 & 14.3 SEER2	\$300
Ductless Mini-split Heat Pump 8.5 HSPF2 & 16 SEER2	\$500
Ductless Mini-split Heat Pump (less than one ton)	\$150
Energy Star® smart thermostat or ECM gas furnace motor rebate	\$25
Energy Star® refrigerator or freezer (with proof of recycling of old unit)	\$75
Energy Star® dehumidifier or electric clothes dryer	\$25

Go, with Confidence

With easy-to-use wearable devices and long battery lives, **Heartland Security** medical alert systems can help you maintain your independence and go with confidence.



Learn more about our medical alert systems on our website at heartlandss.com



A subsidiary of Brown County REA

Did you know?

BCREA does more than deliver electricity—it's also a cooperative partner in operating *Cooperative Television of Southern Minnesota (CTV)*, bringing a wide selection of Twin Cities UHF TV channels to our service area for just \$8 per month, conveniently added to your electric bill.



Annual Meeting Details and Schedule

89th ANNUAL MEETING
Thursday, April 9th
Sleepy Eye Event Center
110 12th Avenue NE, Sleepy Eye, MN

4:30 p.m. Registration
Music by *Marv Nissel Band*
5:30 p.m. Meal catered by Tommy's
Business meeting immediately following meal
Election of Directors in Districts 2, 3, & 8

Board Meeting Highlights

January Board Minutes

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting on January 22nd, 2026.

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

- Reviewed and approved the December 2025 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates, and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved December 2025 payroll and financial statement.
- Reviewed and approved the 2025 Cogeneration Report for member-owned Distributed Energy Resources.
- Reviewed and approved the 2026 Cogeneration and Small Power Production rate schedule for member-owned Distributed Energy Resources less than 40 kW, effective January 1, 2026.
- Reviewed the 2025 Safety, Reliability, and Service Quality report and the 2025 OSHA 300 Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses.
- Reviewed and approved 2026 Rebate Summary.
- Reviewed and approved changes to BCREA Schedule of Charges.
- Updated on operations activities, including overhead maintenance and pole replacements.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports, and individual director reports.

The next meeting is set for February 26th, 2026, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye.

Mike Heidemann – Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, *President* – (507) 228-8954
William Berg, *Vice President* – (507) 766-1497
James D. Hanson, *Secretary-Treasurer* – (507) 829-6756
Brad Sprenger – (507) 317-5576
David Wendinger – (507) 276-3166
Greg Mages – (507) 276-0325
Joel Christensen – (507) 828-4550
Keith Hoffmann – (507) 227-8006
Landon Sletta – (507) 276-1899

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

RICH, HOMEMADE HOT COCOA **RECIPE**

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 8 oz milk or milk alternative of choice | 1 pinch kosher salt |
| 1 tablespoon confectioner's sugar | ½ oz semi-sweet chocolate (this is one square of a baking bar) |
| 4 teaspoons cocoa powder | |

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place all the ingredients in a mug. Microwave on high 1 minute. Whisk gently to begin incorporating all the ingredients into the milk. They won't completely combine at this point and that is okay!
2. Microwave an additional minute on high and whisk to combine. At this point, the chocolate should be melted and the cocoa should be completely mixed—but perhaps not as hot as you'd like. Continue heating in 30 second intervals until it is as hot as you prefer!
3. Add marshmallows if desired.



BROWN COUNTY REA

Owned by those it serves

Brown County Rural Electric Association
24386 State Hwy. 4 | P.O. Box 529
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

Email: bcrea@bcrea.coop

Website: www.browncountyrea.coop

Phone: (507) 794-3331 or (800) 658-2368

Payment Line (PSN): (833) 250-4481

Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mon.–Fri.