

CurrentConnections

CEO Column October 2026

Thankful for Our Members

Each October, we join cooperatives around the nation in recognizing *National Cooperative Month*. An interesting fact about the annual celebration is that Minnesota was the first state to declare an official Co-op Month proclamation back in 1948. It has been a nationally recognized celebration since 1964, when U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, a former Minnesota governor, proclaimed October Co-op Month.

What makes a cooperative different from other forms of business? Cooperatives are governed and owned by those they serve. When you purchase electricity from Brown County REA, you are more than just a customer – you are a member-owner of the cooperative.

Electricity can be something we don't spend much time thinking about until we need it. We flip a switch, turn on an appliance, or adjust the thermostat, and expect the power to be there. Behind that simple action is a cooperative made up of thousands of members who share something in common: Brown County REA belongs to you.

As a rural electric cooperative, we are here to serve our members and adapt to their changing needs. Our employees and your member-elected board of directors live and work in our community, providing insight into local priorities and challenges.

I want to take a moment to thank our members for their involvement in the cooperative. When you attend our

annual meeting or participate in director elections, you are making sure your voice is heard. By participating in programs, providing feedback, reporting outages, and taking part in community initiatives, you help strengthen our rural electric cooperative.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, it is important to reflect on how Brown County REA exists because of its members, is governed by its members, and works for the benefit of its members and communities. It is a privilege to serve you!

During harvest season, stay alert around power lines and help make this a safe harvest.

Mike Heidemann,
BCREA CEO



Look Up This Harvest



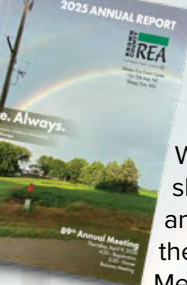
Harvest is a busy time, making it easy to overlook hazards. Before moving equipment, grain augers, or other tall machinery, always look up for overhead power lines.

Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines. If equipment contacts a line, stay inside the cab and call 911 and your

electric cooperative. If you must exit because of an emergency, jump clear without touching the equipment and ground at the same time, then shuffle away with small steps.

A few moments of awareness can help keep everyone safe this harvest season.





Help Us Choose Our Next Annual Report Photo!

We're looking for photos that showcase the beauty, people, and rural communities within the BCREA service territory! Members are invited to submit their favorite high-resolution photos for a chance to be featured on the front cover of our next Annual Report.

Photos can be taken at any time - even before 2026 - as long as they were taken within the BCREA service territory. We encourage you to share scenic views, farms, fields, wildlife, sunsets, sunrises, power lines, substations, or anything else that captures the character of our cooperative community.

Please submit your high-resolution photos by emailing them to bcrea@bcrea.coop by 4:00 p.m. on December 31, 2026.

We can't wait to see the BCREA service territory through your eyes!



Member Advisory Council Tours Substation

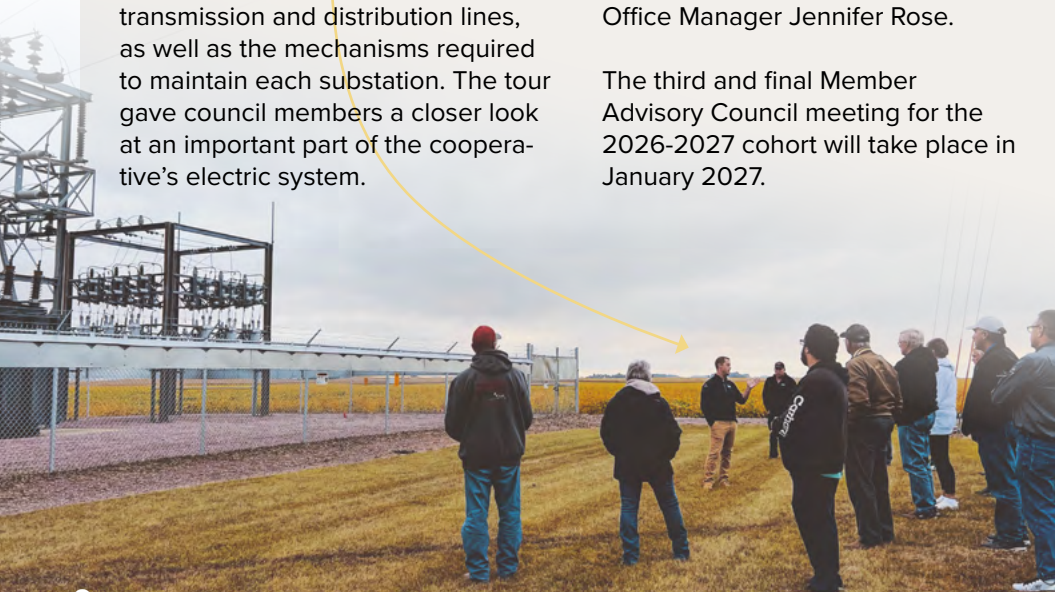
The 2026-2027 Member Advisory Council met for its second meeting on September 14 at the Sleepy Eye Community Center. Council members gathered for a light meal before touring a substation with Operations Manager Brandon Havemeier.

During the substation tour, Brandon explained the difference between transmission and distribution lines, as well as the mechanisms required to maintain each substation. The tour gave council members a closer look at an important part of the cooperative's electric system.

After returning to the community center, members learned about various member-focused programs from Member Services Manager Laura Fischer.

The night ended with a detailed look at the cooperative's finances and various office services, presented by Chief Financial Officer and Office Manager Jennifer Rose.

The third and final Member Advisory Council meeting for the 2026-2027 cohort will take place in January 2027.



Building Renovation Planned

BCEA is planning a building renovation to replace our current HVAC system.

In early October, contractors will begin preparing the auditorium ceiling to make it safe for office staff to work downstairs.

At this time, our offices are expected to be relocated to the downstairs auditorium in November. When office staff transition to working in the auditorium, the main floor of our building will need to be temporarily closed during construction. Members visiting the office should follow the posted signage and use the South auditorium doors to enter the building at that time.

We will continue to share updates in this newsletter as we learn more details. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we are making improvements to our facility.

BCEA is a cooperative partner in Cooperative Television of Southern Minnesota (CTV),

bringing Twin Cities UHF TV channels to our service area for just \$8 per month on your electric bill. **Sign up today!**



2026-2027 Energy Assistance Program

Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC)



Energy assistance for Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan county residents is available through MVAC. You can apply by printing an application from their website at www.mnvac.org or by calling to request an application.

Completed applications and supporting documents can be dropped off at your local MVAC office location. For general questions, please call MVAC at (800) 767-7139 or email eap@mnvac.org. Deadline is **May 31st, 2027**.

Max Income Guidelines (Annual / 1-Month Max):

1 Person:	\$38,464 / \$3,205
2 People:	\$50,299 / \$4,191
3 People:	\$62,134 / \$5,177
4 People:	\$73,969 / \$6,164
5 People:	\$85,804 / \$7,150
6 People:	\$97,639 / \$8,136
7 People:	\$99,858 / \$8,321
8 People:	\$102,077 / \$8,506
9 People:	\$104,296 / \$8,691

United Community Action Partnership



Energy assistance programs for Cottonwood, Redwood, and Renville county residents are administered through United Community Action Partnership.

An application must be completed in order to receive energy assistance. A link to download applications can be found at their website at www.unitedcapmn.org. Once an application is complete it can be dropped off at any of their locations or mailed to: *United Community Action Partnership, Willmar Office, PO Box 1359, Willmar, MN 56201*.

Max Income Guidelines (1-Month Max):

1 Person:	\$3,205
2 People:	\$4,191
3 People:	\$5,177
4 People:	\$6,164
5 People:	\$7,150
6 People:	\$8,136
7 People:	\$8,321
8 People:	\$8,506
9 People:	\$8,691
10 People:	\$8,876

Scam Alert: Protect Your Utility Information

We recently heard from a member who received a phone call from someone asking for a copy of their electric utility bill. The caller claimed the information was needed to determine whether the member qualified for additional discounts.

Please be cautious when anyone unexpectedly asks for personal or account information. Your electric bill contains information that should be kept secure.

If you receive an unexpected request for a copy of your electric bill or other account information, contact Brown County REA directly at (800) 658-2368 to verify whether the request is legitimate. When in doubt, stop and verify. It's better to be cautious than to give scammers information they can use.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- ◆ Secure any paper or electronic copies of your utility bills.
- ◆ Never share personal or account information with an unsolicited caller or other untrusted source.
- ◆ Be especially cautious if you did not initiate the conversation.
- ◆ If someone claiming to represent an organization asks for your utility information, verify who they are before providing anything.



Co-op members
are eligible for
\$100 OFF on a
doorbell camera

**Secure your
home today!**

*Offer valid through
10/31/2026 with a new
3-year agreement.*



Call us at **888.264.6380** or visit our website at heartlandss.com to get started!

*A subsidiary of
Brown County REA*



Have a Recipe to Share?

We'd love to feature your favorite recipes in an upcoming newsletter! Whether it's a family favorite, a go-to weeknight meal, a convenient snack, or a delicious dessert, send it our way for a chance to share it with fellow BCREA members.

Board Meeting Highlights

September Board Minutes

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting on September 24th, 2026, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye.

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

- Reviewed and approved the August 2026 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates, and assignment transfers.
- Reviewed and approved August 2026 payroll and August 2026 financial statement.
- Reviewed Key Ratio Trends Analysis (KRTA) with Allison Dellstra from CRC.
- Reviewed options for capital credit retirement and approved a 3% retirement.
- Reviewed and approved the Goodwin Formula for discounting capital credits for estates.
- Reviewed and approved revisions to policy 206 regarding capital credit policy.
- Reviewed and approved 2025 Draft 990 & 990T.
- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports, and individual director reports.

The next meeting is set for October 29th, 2026, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye, or at the SE Event Center if construction is underway.

Mike Heidemann – Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, *President* – (507) 276-2260

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.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SLOW COOKER ROOT VEGETABLES SAUSAGE STEW **RECIPE**

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large potato**, (peeling optional) and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 large sweet potato**, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes. Rough cut is okay – this will likely break apart and become part of the stewed broth
- 2 carrots**, peeled and coarsely chopped. Add or replace with any other desired root vegetables (beets, turnips, extra potatoes, parsnips, radishes, yams, rutabaga, etc.)
- 1 onion**, finely chopped
- 1 pound sausage**: full ring, slices, or chunks depending on preference
- 1 can (14 to 15 oz) stewed tomatoes**, with juices
- 1 1/2 cups broth** (use similar meat to sausage—beef or chicken)
- 2 teaspoons sugar**
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme** and/or any dried spices that would complement seasonings in sausage
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper**, freshly ground

DIRECTIONS

1. In your slow cooker, combine the potato, sweet potato, carrots, parsnip, onion, sausages, tomatoes (with their juices), broth, sugar, thyme, and pepper.
2. Stir well to mix. If sausage is left in a ring, do not let it sit on the bottom of the crockpot.
3. Cover and cook on LOW for 7 to 9 hours or on HIGH for 3 to 4 hours, or until the vegetables are tender and can easily be pierced with a fork.
4. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



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.