

Connections

December 2022

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 26, Issue 12

Students: see D.C. for free! Enter Youth Tour Contest Top 10 reasons to apply

Washington, D.C. is the place to be! High school students entering BCREA's 2023 Youth Tour Contest can win the free trip June 13-18.

Let's count the top 10 reasons why your high school student should enter.

1. Visit the national monuments for Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln.
2. Make friends with the other 40 Minnesota delegate and meet 1,000 students from across the nation sent by their local electric cooperative.
3. Meet your Minnesota representative and senators at the Capitol.
4. See history come to life with visits to Mount Vernon, Arlington Cemetery and the Holocaust Museum.
5. Experience how freedom isn't free with visits to the Vietnam, Korean and World War II monuments.
6. Explore the Smithsonian Museum complex — the largest in the world.
7. Expand your cultural experiences with a theater show, riverboat ride, Youth Tour dance and trade state pins.
8. Looks great on your resume for scholarships!
9. Apply to be the Minnesota delegate on the Youth Leadership Council for additional travel to D.C. and San Antonio, Texas.
10. After attending, apply for the national \$10,000 and four \$1,000



"Capitolize" on your summer vacation by earning a free trip to Washington, D.C. as BCREA's Youth Tour delegate, just like Logan Kreilkamp, New Ulm, did in 2022.

Glenn English Scholarships.

These priceless memories are easily achievable. The contest is open to high school sophomores and juniors whose parents/guardians are BCREA members. Write a 300-500 word essay on an energy-related topic, complete the application and submit by March 3.

Finalists will be interviewed in mid-March. Grand prize is the free trip to D.C. Second place earns \$150, while third place receives \$100. Other applicants receive a gift card. Find the application and details at www.browncountyrea.coop or visit your

school counselor for the application.

Last year's winner, Logan Kreilkamp, New Ulm, said this about the trip: "The many monuments, memorials, and museums were fun, but my favorite part had to be meeting the people," Kreilkamp said. "On our last day a friend group got up extra early to watch the sunrise together. It gave us plenty of time for thought and a final moment for bonding. There was something special in the air that morning and to this day I can't even begin to describe it. The only way I can put it — simply amazing." 📍

At A Glance

BROWN COUNTY
REA

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care...

"Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. When what to my wondering eyes should appear? A water heater leaking and that's my worst fear! Don't let your holidays be ruined; schedule your new water today with BCREA. 📍



Plugging new ways to save energy!

Let's try a new "outlet" as a way to save energy that's worth plugging!

Connect your electric items to smart devices that can operate what is plugged into them according to a set schedule or temperature. Then you don't forget to turn things on and off. Check out these two options.

Prime Outdoor Timer

If you have outdoor Christmas lights, they probably run all night. Maybe you would like to turn them off after midnight and save some energy, but who wants to get out of bed and go unplug them outside when it's below zero. Maybe you have other devices outside in the winter that are running; it is a hassle to go out in the cold and turn them on and off. Now you can do it remotely.

The Prime Outdoor Timer gives you the ability to remotely turn on and off devices that are plugged into it. It has seven modes: two hour, four hour, six hour, eight hour, repeat dusk to dawn or on/off override. The timer is photocell activated and resets only after the programming cycle has completed interruption. You can plug up to two devices into the remote timer.

The Prime Outdoor Timer is available from places like Ace Hardware and online for approximately \$25.


Thermo Cube

The Thermo Cube plugs into electrical outlets and turns power on automatically according to ambient air temperature. Therefore, you save money by using power only when temperatures require heating or cooling.

Five models of Thermo Cube are available with different temperature ranges to choose from. Each unit has two receptacles for use with more than one electrical device.

The cold weather model turns on around 0°F, and turns off as temperature rises above 10°F. It is ideal for automotive applications, including engine and battery heaters.

Another model turns on as the temperature falls to approximately 35°F, off as temperature rises above 45°F. It is ideal for home and farm applications, such as pond de-icers, unheated rooms, pump houses, greenhouses, boats and RVs. The Thermo Cube is available online and in stores; it costs approximately \$16.

Check out these two devices if you are interested in giving yourself more options to save money remotely with your out-of-easy reach electrical devices. 



The Prime Outdoor Timer allows you to remotely turn on or off the outdoor holiday lights without venturing outside!



The Thermo Cube help homeowners save money by automatically turning off out-of-reach electric devices, according to the surrounding air temperature.

Hang a meteor shower in your backyard


New varieties of LED Christmas lights continue to show up in stores to make the holidays more festive than ever. Now “meteor shower” lights are available. They hang vertically, and the light “drips” down the length of a series of tubes.

Meteor lights are available in stores and online from a variety of manufacturers. Generally, they are built to be waterproof for indoor and outdoor use. Since they are LED lights, they are energy-efficient and long lasting.

Typically, each string has eight tubes containing 24 LED lights. The wire between each tube is about 16 inches, meaning the length of the string is about 10 feet. More than one string can be connected together. It is recommended to connect (at most) four strings to ensure all the lights work well and achieve the best brightness.

The LED lights will not overheat so there is little danger of fire. Just plug them in to turn them on and unplug to turn them off (or check out the remote switch on Page 2).

Meteor lights make a great addition to enhance your outdoor scenery and provide a beautiful, dazzling display at night. Use them for Halloween, Christmas, New Year, weddings, parties and more. Choose from blue or white.

Meteor lights typically cost about \$15 for a 10-foot string. 



LED meteor lights can bring an otherworldly sparkle to your holidays!

Safety

Tis the season to celebrate safely

To make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary, remember these holiday safety tips.

- Keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources — especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles. Remember to blow out your candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Do not run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows or across walkways and sidewalks.
- If you have a natural Christmas tree, water it to keep it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all. Get rid of the tree after Christmas. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage.
- Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping.
- If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, hire a qualified electrician to add more outlets to your home. Extension cords are common causes of home fires.



- Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, don't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights.


- Phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to the muffled crooning of Bing Crosby, but overheated electronics under blankets are dangerous.

- Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside

sleeping areas and on every level, including the basement. Plus, test your own smoke detectors to make sure they're working. Think about giving them as gifts.

- The best gift for your family is to upgrade to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breakers or outlets (AFCIs). It is estimated that half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented by AFCIs.

- If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible, like a blanket or curtains.

- Discard damaged or worn-out decorations. 

— Information courtesy of esfi.org

Your change made a difference in 2022!

Members donated more than \$11,000 through Operation Round Up program



Thanks to monthly contributions from members, Operation Round Up donated \$11,150 to 29 area organizations, seven scholarships and two families in crisis this past year.

These donations are made possible by participating BCREA members who “round up” their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar each month. For example, if an electric bill is \$93.75, the member pays \$94.00. The 25-cent difference goes into the Round Up Trust account and becomes part of the funds distributed to worthy causes throughout the service area. For less than \$12 per year your contribution, when pooled with other members’ small change, helps make a difference to provide support to area charitable organizations, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships.

Among the organizations to receive Operation Round Up contributions in 2022 were Sleepy Eye Legion’s Huey helicopter project, Junior Achievement North New Ulm Area, Southcentral Minnesota Chapter of the Compassionate Friends, Courtland Fire Department, SWWC Student Enrichment Programs, area high schools’ after prom events and five area food shelves.

Since 1995, when Operation Round Up was started at Brown County REA, \$236,375 was awarded to organizations and individuals in the cooperative’s service area. Many thanks to all Brown County REA members who participate in Operation Round Up. The summary of your tax-deductible contributions for 2022 will be printed on your January electric bill.

In this season of giving consider sharing your “change” by joining Operation Round Up if you do not already. Fill out the Operation Round Up Enrollment form on the REA website www.browncountyrea.coop or call the office. ☎

\$2,600 distributed at final 2022 meeting

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust made donations totaling \$2,600 to five organizations at its fourth quarter meeting November 15.

Funds were granted to Minnesota Brain Injury Force, Pro Kinship for Kids Coats for Kids project, Food for Kidz, Sertoma Club Santa’s Closet and Sleepy Eye Holiday Lights in Motion.

Appreciation was given to Trust Board Member Kari Helget who completed the allowed two consecutive three-year terms on the board.

If you are part of an organization or project, you can apply for funding using the application found on the Brown County REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop; otherwise, contact the office at 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☎

Operation Round Up offering 6 \$250 2023 scholarships



Brown County REA, through its Operation

Round Up program, is offering scholarships to high school seniors planning to attend college after graduation and to non-traditional students.

Six \$250 scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors whose parents/guardians are members and live in Brown County REA’s service area or adult REA members pursuing a degree.

Funds for the scholarships come from members who choose to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar each month. The difference is placed in a trust, which is administered by a nine-member board; they meet four times each year to distribute funds to charitable causes, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships.

Scholarship guidelines and applications are available from area high school counselors. Application materials are also located at www.browncountyrea.coop.

The deadline for submission is April 10, 2023. Winners will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting on April 13. A copy of the student’s high school transcript and one letter of recommendation are required. Non-traditional students will need to provide a transcript and recommendation letter. Scholarship funds will be awarded after successful completion of the first semester of college. ☎

Frosty the Snowman melts with co-op's energy-efficiency tools

If you are a frozen “Frosty the Snowman” in your own home (as you try to reduce your heating costs), turn to your electric cooperative.

Warm up with these ways to save energy. First, how old and how inefficient is your ancient heating system? If it's beyond 15-20 years, pull the trigger to invest in a 300-400 percent energy efficient heat pump. No ductwork? Go with a ductless air source heat pump. Tired of the high fossil fuel heating costs? Add an air source heat pump for year-round energy-efficient heating and cooling. Talk to the co-op's energy expert. Tell us the type of fossil fuel furnace and the age. We can tell you what the heat pump heating costs would be equivalent with your fossil fuel system. Frosty, of course, prefers the cold-climate heat pumps's higher efficiencies that work as the temperatures drop outside. Plus, hot cash heat pump rebates from your co-op will warm your wallet and



Go from a frosty snowman to thawed and a happy one with your cooperative's money saving programs.

heart too. The thumpity thump thump, thumpity thump thump from your old heating system can then go over the hills of snow to retirement.

Is a heat pump on your New Year's resolution do list? You'll begin to dance

around as details on incentives are finalized on the federal legislation passed this year. Pair the new heat pump with a Smart Thermostat with WI-FI connection and cash in on the co-op's rebate!

Plus, Frosty likes to go star gazing. Check out the Energy Star rebates for refrigerators, freezers and dehumidifiers from your electric cooperative's website.

If you have to hurry on your way, as your old water heater waved and said goodbye as it konks out, the co-op replies, “Don't you cry!” We have energy-efficient water heaters so you can enjoy hot water again right away. Thumpity thump thump, thumpity thump thump, look at the old rusty water heater go up the basement steps and over the hills of snow too.

You too can be a jolly, happy soul again after implementing these money-saving measures. Just look at Frosty go over the hills of snow! 🎅

Enjoy affordable holiday cheer with LEDs & inflatable decor

Do not fear! Holiday cheer is affordable with LEDs and inflatables in your holiday gear.

Switch to LEDs for all your holiday lighting. LED holiday lights consume 70 percent less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. For example, it costs 27 cents to light a 6-foot tree for 12 hours a day for 40 days with LEDs compared to \$10 for incandescent lights.

Pick up a few light timers so you don't have to remember to unplug your lights every evening. (See related story on Page 2). Upgrade to smart holiday lights that offer a wide range of app-controlled options, including time, colors, music and modes.

According to www.yardinflatablelife.com, electricity costs vary based on the inflatable's size. These estimates are based on the manufacturer claims.



Ho, Ho, Ho! Holiday lights are more affordable than you think when using LEDs and inflatable displays.

- 4-foot Inflatable – 52 watts per hour x 12 hours = .624 kilowatt-hour (kWh) per day. If used 31 days in December for 12 hours a day, this inflatable would add \$2.32 to your electric bill.

- 6-foot Inflatable – 60 watts per hour x 12 hours = .72 kWh per day. If used all 31 days of December for 12 hours a day, this inflatable would cost an additional \$2.68 on your electric bill.

- 8-foot Inflatable – 76 watts per hour x 12 hours = .91 kWh per day. If used all 31 days of December for 12 hours a day, this inflatable would add \$3.39 to your electric bill.

- 12-foot Inflatable – 85 watts per hour x 12 hours = 1.02 kWh per day. If used all 31 days of December for 12 hours a day, this inflatable would add \$3.80 to your electric bill.

An animated inflatable likely uses two to three times the electricity. 🎅

Patty cake, patty cake, make me some pancakes as fast as you can

Flip over some new pancake recipes! Do you add fruit or potatoes to your pancakes? Have a homemade syrup recipe worth sharing? Have an oven pancake recipe that you bake? Share your pancake recipes and mail to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by December 28. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Chicken on Sunday by Cindy Koep, Lakefield

1 c. Minute Rice
 1 can mushroom soup
 1 can celery soup
 1 c. milk
 1 whole fresh or thawed chicken, cut up into pieces
 ½ pkg. Lipton onion soup mix
 Butter 9x13" pan and spread rice on the bottom. Heat soups and milk; pour over the rice. Place uncooked chicken over the top of soups and rice. Sprinkle the half package of the dry onion soup mix over the top of the chicken. Cover with aluminium foil; bake at 325° for 2.5 hours.

You may substitute one can of the canned soup with a can of water, if desired. ☺

Rice Pudding by Cheri Drever, Granada

1 c. water – bring to a boil and add 1/3 c. rice (not instant)
 Add: ½ tsp. butter
 ½ tsp. salt
 Reduce heat and simmer about 20 minutes until the water is absorbed and rice is tender.
 Scald 3 c. of milk
 Mix: 2 rounded T. cornstarch
 ½ c. sugar
 1/8 tsp. of salt
 Separate 3 eggs
 Beat yolks and add about 1/3 c. of the hot milk to them. Using a fork, add to cornstarch mixture. Slowly add this to the hot milk; stir and cook until thickened.

Add: 1 tsp. vanilla
 Mix with steamed rice. Cool and refrigerate.

I triple this recipe when the family comes home, using a 9x13" pan. ☺

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Marcia Solie
Member Services
Manager

Staff Notes

Small change can change lives

The holiday season is fast approaching. Some call it the most wonderful season of all. That's because we associate it with family traditions and gathering with friends and loved ones. It's a time of giving and spreading joy.

Giving back reminds us of the many good things we have right here and why it's so important to spread the good as far as we can, especially to the most vulnerable in our local area. We're

also reminded of what a big impact we can have when we work together.

As a member of Brown County REA, you can help us spread the good throughout the year. Through our Operation Round Up program, your donations help local families and individuals in crisis, as well as charitable organizations that work with those in need.

When you "round up" your monthly bill from Brown County REA and donate to this fund, you're making a big difference in someone's life. You are you helping to meet a need, but just as importantly, you are telling people the community cares.

Over the years, our community-focused programs, food shelf donations and other giving projects have supported local schools and young people, fed hungry families, assisted families with medical expenses, helped brighten the holidays and so much more.

Brown County REA also participates in the electric cooperative Youth Tour, sending young people to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you and your neighbors.

You've likely heard it said that the cooperative principle "concern for community" is part of your cooperative's DNA. It defines who we are as an organization. When electricity was first brought to the rural area in 1937, the quality of life improved. Other things also needed to be addressed and through the years, this co-op has helped bring improvements to the quality of life for those we serve.

To date with your help we've given \$236,375 to local organizations, families and individuals through the Operation Round Up program. For just pennies each month you can collectively make a big impact. ☺



Happy Holidays!

**BCREA will be closed
December 23, 26 & January 2**



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 board meeting November 22, 2022, at the REA headquarters in Sleepy Eye.

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

- Reviewed and approved the October 2022 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, and member cancellations.
- Reviewed and approved October 2022 financial statements and September 2022 payroll.
- Held discussion on recent additions of member-owned Distributed Energy Resources.
- Set January 16, 2023, as the date for the final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council with January 30 as a snow date.
- Updated on progress of pole replacements and tree trimming. Carr's Tree Service will be working in the service territory at the end of December and again in January, February and March 2023.
- Updated on Highway 14 expansion progress. All three-phase underground cable is installed and work on the project has wrapped up for 2022.

The next meeting is set for December 28, 2022, at the REA headquarters. ☺