

Connections

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 27, Issue 8

Teens transformed by Youth Tour & historical Washington D.C., courtesy of electric co-op

History came to life for two local teens after winning the co-op's Youth Tour Contest. They traveled with 34 Minnesota Youth to our nation's capital June 13-18. Grace Mages, Sleepy Eye, represented Brown County REA, while Katie Hartke, Sheburn, was sponsored by Federated Rural Electric.

Grace Mages' favorite sites

"My favorite memorial was the Lincoln Memorial," stated Mages. "There was a lot of symbolism and it showcased consequential speeches, like the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. I also enjoyed the Washington Monument; it is an important symbol of respect and gratitude for President Washington and everything he did for our country. Plus, I really enjoyed the Museum of Natural History with the 'Eternal Life in Ancient Egypt' section. I learned how every experience, failure or success, got us to where we are today."

The Youth Tour students also expanded their cultural horizons, Mages added. "The performance of 'The Enigmatist' at The Kennedy Center was amazing! There were so many different 'tricks' performed and puzzles for the audience too! An unexpected, but greatly appreciated surprise, was watching the Navy Band practice for their concert later that evening. We got to talk to some of the band members afterwards too!"

Of course a D.C. trip involves a visit to the Capitol and with



Teen travelers! Katie Hartke, Sherburn, and Grace Mages, Sleepy Eye, experienced all Washington, D.C. had to offer. The teens were sponsored by their electric co-op for Youth Tour June 13-18.

legislators. "Even though there was some construction at the Capitol, it was beautiful inside and out," she said. "My favorite part was the mural in the rotunda — beautiful and very symbolic. Visiting with our legislators was my favorite part of the trip! I enjoyed hearing what our Representatives and Senators each do for me and my community. They talked to us about different topics regarding renewable energy sources and their local effects, cooperatives and other local issues."

Mount Vernon was another beautiful stop for Mages. "I enjoyed the gardens, greenhouse and the chance to view the Washington family grave."

"I would highly recommend Youth Tour to anyone who has the chance! It is an amazing trip with amazing people. You will learn so many things about our country and also about yourself! I learned that

everyone plays a part in society no matter how big or small and that putting myself out into the world helps me make a difference. In addition, anytime we would see groups from other states they would always ask us to say something so they could hear our Minnesota accents!

"It was really easy to make friends on the trip because no one really knew each other," Mages said. "I keep in contact with most of the close friends I made on Youth Tour! I would like to thank Brown County REA and all of the chaperones — Continued on Page 6

At A Glance



Play ball!

Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education co-hosted a Minnesota Twins Play Ball! Clinic for area youth to learn ball-playing fundamentals and brush up on skills. See photos on page 4.



Run the numbers on heat pumps

Heat pumps offer energy-savings and money-saving benefits for homeowners. If you need a new heating/cooling system, consider the numerous pros of going with a heat pump.

- Heat pumps are highly energy efficient, especially when compared to traditional heating and cooling systems, like furnaces or air conditioners. They work by transferring heat from one location to another, instead of generating heat directly, resulting in significant energy savings. Heat pumps can provide up to four times more energy than they consume, making them an environmentally-friendly option.

- One major advantage of heat pumps is their ability to heat and cool. By reversing the refrigeration cycle heat pumps can extract heat from the outside air (even in colder temperatures) and transfer it indoors during winter for heating. During the summer, they can extract heat from inside and expel it outside, providing cooling.

- Due to their energy efficiency, heat pumps can significantly reduce energy bills compared to conventional heating and cooling systems. While the upfront cost of installing a heat pump may be higher, the long-term savings in energy costs offsets this initial investment.

- Heat pumps have a lower carbon footprint compared to fossil fuel-based heating systems.

- Heat pumps are known for their durability and lifespan. With proper maintenance and regular servicing a well-installed heat pump can last for 15 to 20 years or longer.

Heat pumps come in various types and sizes, offering flexibility for



SAVINGS CALCULATOR

SEE HOW MUCH YOU CAN SAVE WITH ENERGY STAR

The average household spends more than \$2,200 a year on energy bills, with nearly half going to heating and cooling. HVAC equipment that earns the ENERGY STAR label is independently certified to save energy, save money and help protect the climate.

What type of heating and/or cooling system do you have in your home?

- Central cooling and/or heating delivered through duct work and air vents (i.e. forced air)

What type of heating and/or cooling system do you have in your home?

- Central air conditioning only
 Central air conditioning and heating delivered through duct work and air vents (i.e. forced air) using a heat pump

Split system or single package?

- Split System
 Single Package

Enter your zip code?


56161

To get a better idea how much you can save with a new heat pump, visit the Energy Star website. They have a savings calculator at https://www.energystar.gov/products/heating_cooling/guide/savings-calculator.

different applications. They can be used in residential homes, commercial buildings and even industrial settings.

The amount of electricity and money saved by heat pumps will vary based on several factors, including the size of the home, heat pump rating (SEER), and the homeowner's energy patterns. To estimate cost savings you need to compare the operating costs of a heat

pump to the alternative heating system you would be using. (See the image above.) The Energy Star website offers a savings-calculator to give potential heat pump buyers an idea of savings.

Additionally, your electric co-op offers rebates on heat pumps. Contact your co-op's energy expert or visit your electric cooperative's website to learn more. 

EGO fan brings portable power to cooling

The EGO Power+ Fan is a revolutionary portable fan that takes outdoor comfort to a whole new level. Equipped with a high-efficiency brushless motor, this fan operates using EGO's industry-leading 56-volt lithium-ion battery system. This ensures long-lasting performance without the hassle of cords, allowing you to enjoy the cool breeze wherever you go. The battery, which is compatible with other EGO tools, provides a significant runtime, enabling extended periods of use before recharging is necessary.

One feature of the EGO Power+ Fan is its portable design. With its lightweight construction and ergonomic handle, it's easy to carry and maneuver the fan to your desired location. The adjustable tilting head allows you to direct airflow precisely where you need it, ensuring maximum comfort on hot summer days. The fan's compact size makes it ideal for various settings, whether you're camping, tailgating, simply relaxing in your backyard or working in the shop.

The EGO Power+ Fan offers three settings to customize the airflow according to your preferences. Whether you need a gentle breeze or a powerful gust, this fan delivers. The variable speed controls allowing you to adjust the settings effortlessly to adapt to changing conditions. The EGO Power+ Fan also offers a misting function.


In addition to its powerful airflow capabilities, the EGO Power+ Fan operates with minimal noise. The advanced engineering of the brushless motor ensures quiet opera-



The EGO fan uses the same rechargeable batteries as other EGO products, offering long life and quick recharging.

tion, allowing you to enjoy the cool breeze without any disturbances. This makes the fan perfect for use in quiet environments, such as during an evening on the patio or while working on a project that requires concentration.

Run time per charge varies. The fan will run two hours on turbo, four hours on high and up to 60 hours on low.

Embrace the freedom of a cordless fan. The EGO Power+ Fan costs about \$280 and is available at hardware stores and online. Charger (\$99-\$399) and battery (\$179-\$500) sold separately. The EGO battery/charger works with other EGO devices/tools so you may not need it to buy if you already have for their other tools. 

Safety

Make yard work safe work around electricity

Summer is the season for yard work. Be aware of electrical safety when maintaining your landscaping.

- Before starting any yard work task, inspect your electrical tools. Check for frayed cords, damaged plugs or any signs of wear and tear. It is crucial to repair or replace faulty equipment immediately to avoid potential accidents.

- When working outdoors, use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs). GFCIs monitor the flow of electricity and can quickly shut off the power if they detect a fault.

- Avoid running electrical cords across walkways or under carpets; never nail or staple them to walls or fences, as this can lead to insulation damage and expose live wires.

- Before using ladders or long tools, always check for overhead power lines.


- After completing your yard work, store your electrical



tools and equipment in a dry, protected area. Exposure to the elements leads to corrosion and increase the risk of electric shock during future use.

- Using electrical tools during wet weather is extremely hazardous. Water is an excellent conductor of electricity and can create life-threatening situations. Wait until the weather clears up before yard work occurs. Wet grass can also conduct electricity. Ensure the grass is dry before using any electric tools.

- Use only outdoor-rated extension cords. These cords are designed to withstand exposure to the elements and reduce electrical hazards.

- If digging more than 18 inches deep, be sure to call Gopher State One Call 48 hours in advance (1-800-252-1166 or 811). Locators mark any underground utilities in the area. 

Brown County Briefs

Energy-efficiency tips

Did you know ceiling fans can make a room feel 4 degrees cooler? To save energy through ceiling fan use raise your thermostat a few degrees while fans are on. Ceiling fans help improve comfort year-round. In the summer operate ceiling fans in a counterclockwise direction. Reverse the direction to clockwise during winter months and set fans on a low speed so warm air can circulate from the ceiling to the lower levels of the room. Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not spaces. Be sure to turn them off when you leave the room.

Source: energy.gov

Summer maintenance

A reminder that Central Applicators is working to maintain and control vegetation at Brown County REA's substations and along rights-of-way.

In addition, Southwood 2000 is inspecting cooperative-owned poles in Milford, Prairieville and Eden townships and may be coming onto members' property, either with a pickup or ATV.

Round Up meets August 16

The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board will meet again on August 16 at 5:30 p.m. to consider funding applications. Organizations interested in seeking funding may submit an application before that date. Application form is available on the BCREA website www.browncountyrea.coop.

Member Advisory Council

The next meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be September 18 with a light meal at 6 p.m. ☎

Introducing summer help for 2023



Austin Nosbush, left, and Caden Evers are assisting BCREA crews as summer helpers this year. Austin is from the St George area and will be a junior at New Ulm High School, and Caden is from Sleepy Eye and will be a senior at Sleepy Eye Public School. ☎

Kids had a ball at Twins Play Ball clinic in Sleepy Eye July 7



More than 60 area youth participated in the MN Twins Play Ball! Clinic co-hosted by Brown County REA and Sleepy Eye Community Education. Clinician Scott Morris, top photo, worked with the groups to hone their throwing skills. Kevin Nunn assisted a youngster with his batting form. The clinic was free to participants and sponsored by Great River Energy and the Twins Community Foundation. ☎



4 KEY FACTORS That Impact Energy Bills

You pay for the electricity you consume each month, but there are additional factors that impact your energy bills.



Fuel Costs

Before electricity can be delivered to your home, it must first be generated at a power plant or from a renewable source. The cost of fuels used to generate electricity fluctuates, which is why you see a power or fuel charge on your monthly bill. This monthly charge covers cost fluctuations without having to continually restructure electricity rates.



Service Costs

Your bill includes a monthly service charge, which recovers part of the co-op's ongoing investments in poles, wire, meters, system maintenance and additional costs necessary to provide electric service.



Weather

When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling or heating equipment must run longer and at maximum capacity, which can greatly increase your energy use. Extreme temperatures can also affect electricity market prices. When the need for electricity increases due to extreme heat or cold, the price of power typically rises.



Energy Consumption

This is the amount of electricity you use each month to power your home's cooling/heating system, appliances, lighting, electronics and more. The amount of electricity you consume is measured in kilowatt-hours, or kWh. You have control over how much energy you use, which can ultimately help manage your monthly costs.

YOU HAVE CONTROL

Striving for beneficial electrification translates into improving energy efficiency

The term “beneficial electrification” refers to the transition from fossil fuel-based technologies to electric options for everyday uses, such as transportation, space heating, cooking and water heating, as the power sector continues to decarbonize.

Beneficial electrification occurs when switching to an electric device satisfies at least one of the following conditions, without negatively affecting the others:

- Saves money over time
- Benefits the environment
- Improves performance
- Fosters a more robust, resilient and economically efficient electric power grid.



Install an air source heat pump that works year round, instead of replacing an old central air with another central air unit. Heat pumps also provide heat and are 200-400 percent efficient. Check out BCREA's rebates for heat pumps too!

As utilities add more renewable resources, beneficial electrification becomes an attractive strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In Minnesota all electric utilities must serve 100 percent of retail electric sales without carbon dioxide emissions by 2040.

Beneficial electrification also enables demand response programs, which help balance electricity supply and demand. Great River Energy (GRE), Brown County REA's wholesale power provider, helps manage these programs.

“By intelligently managing the timing of energy usage, it becomes possible to optimize electricity consumption during off-peak hours or when renewable energy generation is high, lowering electricity costs, reducing stress on the grid and promoting grid stability,” said John Reinhart, manager of GRE's distributed energy resource portfolio.

Beneficial electrification will continue to play a crucial role in reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency and promoting a resilient energy system.

Library story time!



BCREA Foreman Adam Fischer and Member Services Manager Marcia Solie shared electricity and safety information, including line worker gear, with children gathered for story time at the Dyckman Free Library in Sleepy Eye.

Examples of beneficial electrification:

- Replacing your heating system with an electric heat pump can save you on your heating and cooling bills.
- Replacing your gas water heater with an electric water heater allows for smart controls to lower energy usage and eliminates the need for external venting to meet building code requirements.
 - The cost of powering an electric car is less than half the cost of a gasoline-powered vehicle.
 - Electric induction stoves, which cook food without any flame, reduce indoor air pollution and can boil water twice as fast as a gas stove.
 - Switching to an electric lawnmower eliminates noise and emissions, as well as the need to fill up the gas can.

From monuments to museums Youth Tour makes memories for local teens

— Continued from Page 1
on the trip for everything. I had an amazing time!”

Katie Hartke’s D.C. highlights

“I loved the Jefferson Memorial because I admired how parts of the Declaration of Independence were on the walls surrounding his statue,” she said. “I was reminded of the values and rights that we, as Americans, should all cherish and appreciate. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, some of the most important rights are: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As Americans, we need to respect, value and cherish life.”

Hartke explained her favorite D.C. site-seeing stops. “My favorite monument was Arlington Cemetery. It is amazing how so many soldiers dedicated their lives to fight for freedom in America. Specifically, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was striking because I was amazed by the selfless dedication of the military guards. I appreciate how the Tomb is guarded 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is such a neat symbol of humble service and sacrifice.

“I enjoyed learning more about specific facts and details within the Holocaust Museum,” she added. “I thought it was interesting and scary how certain themes of the Holocaust are present in the world today. I was reminded how it’s important to be thankful for the gifts and opportunities we have. We also went to the Smithsonian. I saw the museums of American History, Air and Space, and Natural History. The National Cathedral was another cool site we saw. I loved the American details and designs involved in the architecture and layout.”

Hartke appreciated Capitol Hill. “I thought the Capitol was huge. I liked how our tour guide talked about the Nation’s motto of ‘Out of many, we are One’. I think it’s important to understand how we are all Americans, even



Minnesota Youth Tour delegates pause after a busy day in Washington, D.C.

though we have different beliefs and backgrounds. I also enjoyed getting to see the House and Senate Chambers, as well as how the members of Congress communicate and vote.

“It was a great experience getting to talk with the Minnesota legislators,” Hartke stated. “I really appreciated how all of the legislators valued respect and the importance of working together, especially as Democrats and Republicans. In addition, the legislators were all excited to see us and thanked us for coming because they want the next generation to get involved and understand politics. Thank you Representatives Brad Finstad, Dean Phillips, Pete Stauber and Senator Amy Klobuchar for meeting with us.”

Hartke’s national pride grew due to the trip too. “If I had to pick one thing to be my favorite, I would say being able to see and feel the Nation’s pride and honor. The media does not always talk about positive things, so it was gratifying for me to see the symbolism of sacrifice and freedom within the memorials, and the honor and respect that we should have for our country. I was inspired to be more thankful and to uphold the freedoms and opportunities given to me in America.

“This trip helped me to be more responsible and forced me to interact with others in different ways. I am a

little more shy and introverted, so I had to make more of an effort to make friends, as well as voice my opinions. I refined my communication skills to grow in compassion and understanding. This trip also helped me become more grateful for all the freedoms and opportunities we have in America. Electricity, protection, shoes, food and clean water are all things that we take for granted in America. I was reminded of how to be thankful and how the simplest things can bring you joy.

“I met many new friends and my roommate was originally from Ukraine,” Hartke commented. “I became closest with my roommate and enjoyed getting to hear her story and experiences. It was such a cool experience to meet lots of different people for the first time and become friends with them by the end of the trip. I plan to keep in contact with my roommate, as well as other friends I met.”

Hartke encourages other high schoolers to enter the cooperative’s Youth Tour Contest. “The process of applying and interviewing was a great experience and practice; the opportunity for a free trip to D.C. is so humbling and rewarding. A huge thank you to Federated for the opportunity. It was very humbling and inspiring. I am forever grateful to all who granted me this experience.” 🗣️

Let's ham it up! Share your favorite ham recipes for your family

Alakazam! Make some ham recipes appear out of thin air! Share your favorite ham recipe, whether it's for sandwiches, egg bake, ham balls, hot dishes and appetizers. Share your ham 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 August 28. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Buster Bar Dessert by Bonnie Seidl, Sleepy Eye

- 1 small package of Oreos
- 1/4 c. melted butter
- 1/2 gallon softened vanilla ice cream
- 1 small jar of fudge topping
- 1/2 small jar of caramel topping/sauce
- 10 oz. can of salted peanuts
- 8 oz. Cool Whip

Crush the package of Oreos, but set aside 1 cup. Mix the balance with melted butter then put in a 9x13" cake pan.

Soften the ice cream and spread on crumbs. Then pour fudge topping and caramel topping on ice cream. Sprinkle peanuts on top followed by Cool Whip. Sprinkle reserved Oreo crumbs on top. Freeze. 📧

Grandma Edna's Ice Cream by Lynda Weilage, Sleepy Eye

Dissolve 2 T. of cornstarch in 1/2 c. whole milk. Beat in 6 egg yolks, 2 c. sugar and 1 1/2 c. whole milk. Cook custard over low to medium heat, stirring constantly. When mixture simmers and thickens, remove from heat and set aside, lightly covered.

When the custard is cool, put 1 quart real cream (whipping) in freezer canister and then add the cooked custard. Whip the 6 egg whites until soft peaks form. Fold the egg whites into the custard mixture and 2 T. of the best vanilla available. Lastly, fill the ice cream can three-fourths full with the whole milk. Freeze according to machine's directions. 📧

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. 📧

Staff Notes



Mike Heidemann
Chief Executive
Officer

Higher wholesale power costs impact summer electric bills for member-owners

Brown County REA pays its power bill each month for the purchase of wholesale power used to provide electricity to you, our members. During months of extreme temperatures, the power supplied may cost more than the set rate, resulting in an additional charge on members' bills.

Brown County REA's base electric rates have not changed since 2020, but to adjust for the fluctuating wholesale power costs, a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is applied to members' bills each month. 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.

Wholesale power is purchased from Great River Energy (GRE) and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), along with Southern Minnesota Electric Cooperative (SMEC) under an existing contract to serve former Alliant Energy territory and distributes that power to our members.

Why is a PCA necessary?

Because fuel prices change daily, wholesale power costs vary from month-to-month. Brown County REA's base electric rate stays the same, while the PCA adjusts based on fluctuations in fuel cost. Think of it like fueling your car. The price of gasoline changes every time you fill up. That very same thing happens to the price of fuel and other resources used to create your energy. During the summer months, PCA amounts are typically higher.

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Do other electric utilities use a PCA?

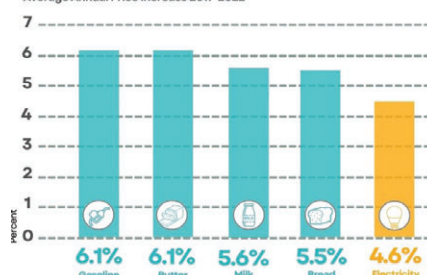
Wholesale power cost is Brown County REA's largest expense item and the PCA is a pass-through from the wholesale power bill to members' bill. While the terminology may vary, most energy suppliers have a monthly adjustment for fluctuating fuel costs related to power production. Some refer to it as a "Wholesale Power Adjustment," "Fuel Cost Adjustment" or other terms, but they are all fundamentally the same.

How is my PCA calculated?

Members can calculate their own PCA each month by multiplying the PCA on the electric bill by the kilowatt-hours (kWh) 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.

ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

Average Annual Price Increase 2017-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index

BROWN COUNTY REA

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

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Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954
William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497
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David Wendinger — 276-3166
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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 June board meeting on July 5, 2023.

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

- Reviewed the May 2023 payroll and May 2023 financial statements.
- Discussed plans for a substation tour, as part of the next Member Advisory Council meeting on September 18.
- Reviewed a summary of the cooperative's sales and use tax liability audit for May 2019 to July 2022 conducted by the Minnesota Department of Revenue.
- Reviewed and approved Amendment No. 3 to the January 2008 Power Purchase Contract with Great River Energy.
- Approved and accepted an Offer to Extend the Power Purchase Contract term with Great River Energy to December 31, 2055.
- Reviewed employee safety training.
- Updated on construction project progress, operations and maintenance activities, including system-wide rights-of-way spraying.
- Reviewed staff and director meeting reports, plus individual director reports.

The July meeting is set for July 27, 2023 at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye.