

Connections

April 2025

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 29, Issue 4

Celebrating National Lineworker Appreciation Day April 14

Line crews are wired for 24/7 service

In the quiet hours before dawn breaks, while many of us are still nestled in our beds, lineworkers begin their day, often clad in flame-resistant clothing, safety goggles, rubber gloves and thick, heavy boots.

They are the individuals who epitomize dedication to service in its purest form. As we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 14, this is an important moment to reflect on the essential role they play in our daily lives.

Amid towering utility poles and power lines, lineworkers exhibit a strength that goes far beyond the physical work. Whether battling inclement weather, troubleshooting technical problems or navigating treacherous heights, lineworkers demonstrate resilience and a quiet determination to keep our lights on, our homes comfortable, and our communities connected.

Brown County REA's line crews travel across our multi-county service territory, building, maintaining and repairing parts of our system. Their extraordinary skills ensure our homes remain connected to the grid, businesses stay operational, and emergency services remain accessible — a lifeline for us all.

In moments of crisis, when the lights go out and we find ourselves in the dark, lineworkers emerge as beacons



of hope. Their swift response restores normalcy, offering reassurance in times of uncertainty. Whether repairing storm-ravaged power lines or ensuring continuity during emergencies, their unwavering commitment illuminates life when we need it most.

BCREA's lineworkers also answer the call beyond the boundaries of home. Our crews travel to fellow co-ops, near or far, when widespread outages occur and additional support is needed. Cooperation among cooperatives is one of our seven guiding principles; no one embodies this core commitment better than lineworkers.

This month, as we celebrate the remarkable employees who ensure reliable power, let's recognize their unwavering dedication to the local communities they serve.

The next time you flip a switch, please take a moment to remember those who make it possible — lineworkers, who are wired for service and dedicated to illuminating life. ☺

Brown County REA line crews deliver reliable, affordable service to our 4,500 plus member-owners. BCREA thanks its seven dedicated linemen and Operations staff who are there 24/7/365 when members experience a power outage or other service interruption. Thank you for powering our area!

At A Glance



**Beware
of
scams**

BCREA members have reported scam phone calls claiming to be from the cooperative trying to gain access to financial or personal information. Protect yourself and hang up on any suspicious callers. When in doubt, call us at 800-658-2368 to check it out. Learn more on Page 5. ☺

Ready to replace your central air? Go with a heat pump to boost home's energy efficiency

When is the best time to replace an old central air conditioner (AC)? This spring! For equipment older than 15 years waiting too long could mean the equipment breaks when you need it most. This leads to expensive emergency service calls and limited equipment replacement options. Take action this spring to avoid that stress, expense and lack of options. Before you replace your old central air, explore upgrading to a high-efficiency, cold-climate air source heat pump.

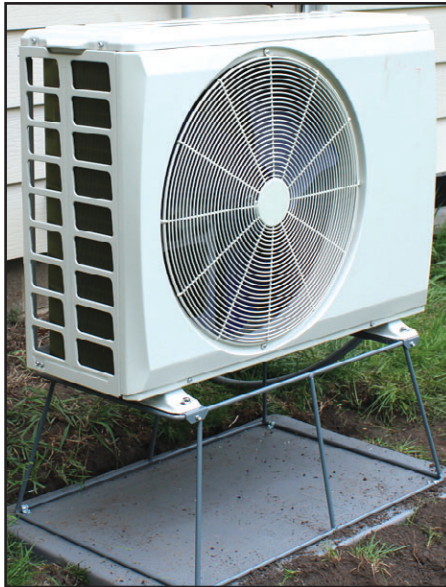
A heat pump is essentially an AC that can run two ways, providing heating and cooling. If you use propane to heat your home, heat pumps are a great investment. Replacing central air with a cold-climate heat pump saves you money on energy bills year-round, increases your comfort and is better for the environment.

Heat pumps slash energy bills

Cold-climate heat pumps are more energy efficient than standard central air. Beyond saving money in the summer, cold-climate heat pumps really show their value in the winter. A cold-climate heat pump can reduce your propane use up to 55 percent. This prevents expensive winter propane refills. It also creates the possibility to fill a tank once in the summer when prices are lower.

According to the Center for Energy and Environment's energy calculations, a cold-climate heat pump that provides heating down to -10°F achieves the maximum savings. The heating source switches from the heat pump to the propane furnace when the outside temperature dips below that switchover temperature.

With this setup and a standard electric rate, you can save up to 30 percent



Upgrade your old central air unit with a cold climate heat pump to maximize your home's heating and cooling energy efficiency. Check out the heat pump rebates on the cooperative's website too!

compared to a traditional propane furnace and standard AC system. Additional savings are possible with your co-op's Dual Fuel program. These programs are for members who have a heat pump with a furnace for backup heat. This allows members who use propane to maximize an investment in a cold-climate heat pump.

Can a single-stage or two-stage heat pump achieve these savings? In this situation, a variable capacity, cold-climate rated heat pump is needed for maximum efficiency and savings.

Search the cold-climate heat pump list to check whether a unit you have been quoted meets the qualifications. If it is listed, it qualifies. Ask the contractor to provide the unit's AHRI's number to make the search easier.

Your electric co-op offers generous air source heat pump rebates that may be stacked with seasonal manufacturer rebates offered in spring through early summer. These incentives bring the higher initial cost down and help ease the transition from a standard central air to a cold-climate heat pump. Over time, this higher upfront cost will be offset by lower annual energy bills.


Heat pumps offer better comfort

In addition to the financial benefits cold-climate heat pumps are quieter and keep living spaces more comfortable than standard ACs. This is due to their special variable capacity compressor.

Single-stage systems that are used in standard AC can only turn on and off. This can create a condition called short-cycling. An AC that is short-cycling will turn on and off frequently, which produces wider temperature variation and hampers dehumidification. Furnaces can also be subject to short cycling during mild temperatures.

Variable capacity compressor units can incrementally ramp up or down to consistently hold the temperature you set.

Not all heating is equal. Electric baseboards and space heaters are 100 percent, while LP furnaces may be 80 to 97 percent efficient, depending on its age. Modern, cold-climate heat pump's advanced technology can reach efficiencies of 200 to 350 percent to stretch your energy dollars.

Visit your electric co-op's website for heat pump rebate details or visit with your local heating/cooling contractor to step up your heating and cooling efficiency. 

— Courtesy of Center for Energy and Environment


Reimagine laundry with washer/dryer combo

Laundry now ventures into new territory with the GE Profile 4.8 cubic foot Carbon Graphite washer dryer combo.

You can place up to 10 pounds of laundry or a king size comforter into the unit. It will wash and dry in the same machine in two hours without having to move it to a separate dryer. Plus, this unit needs only a dedicated 120-volt outlet. No dryer exhaust vent is needed because it uses a ventless heat pump for drying that's 50 percent more efficient. Think of the tight spaces where laundry could now be done: garage, apartment, walk-in closet or move the laundry upstairs to eliminate the steps!

Check out these other clever features. The intelligent laundry detergent dispenser holds detergent and softener for up to 32 loads. Scan the barcode with the SmarthQ app and it uses the right amount of detergent. The app provides even more control at your fingertips: download specialty cycles, receive cycle status notices and initiate updates.

The pet hair removal mode uses filtered high-speed air before the wash cycle. It essentially vacuums and captures the pet hair in the two-stage filter before washing.

This Combo unit uses 65 percent less water and 50 percent less energy than other laundry systems. Find it at a local appliance store or national chain store for about the same price as a separate front load washer and dryer (\$2,200 on sale and white unit is cheaper). 



Imagine this washer and dryer combo unit in your walk-in closet. Never carry laundry up and down steps again!

Safety

See the sign? Move over to keep utility workers safe!


Your electric co-op line crews work on overhead and underground power lines, at electric substations and use heavy equipment. Electricity can be extremely dangerous and is one of the biggest hazards that our employees encounter. However, another big threat is traffic.

Oftentimes, utility employees must park alongside a road, turn on flashing lights and place traffic cones in the roadway as an indication to passing motorists that work is occurring. Doing this creates a work zone. It's important to move over when you see flashing lights to keep our co-op workers safe. Failing to do so endangers the lives of utility workers and other emergency responders.

Minnesota's Ted Foss Move Over Law states that when traveling on a road with two or more lanes, drivers must



Spring means construction season for our line crews. If you see the sign, move over a lane and slow down to keep our employees safe while they work.

over so that everyone goes home safely at the end of each day. 

move one full lane away from stopped emergency vehicles with their flashing lights activated. Most drivers are aware of this law, as it applies to police officers, firefighters and ambulances; in addition, it also applies to utility, maintenance and construction vehicles.

Working along the roadways can be dangerous. Moving over is the law. If it's not possible to move over one full lane, drivers are required to reduce their speed until their vehicle has completely passed the parked or stopped vehicle.

Your cooperative employees are working to ensure that our communities have reliable electric service. Please follow safe driving practices when you see them; move

Brown County Briefs

Efficiency tip

Turn your suds into savings. Lower your energy use in the laundry room by washing clothes with cold water whenever possible, as heating water accounts for most of the energy used in a laundry cycle. Wash full loads to make the most of energy savings and use high-efficiency detergent designed for cold washes. For drying cycles clean the lint filter before each load to improve airflow and use dryer balls to reduce drying time.

Member Advisory Council

The new Member Advisory Council will have its first meeting on Tuesday, April 22, beginning with a light meal at 6 p.m. Details will be sent to members.



Office closed

Brown County REA will

be closed on April 18 in observance of Good Friday. Crews will be on call in case of outages. ☎



Operation Round Up reorganizes and distributes \$2,500 at first 2025 meeting



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board reorganized and welcomed new trust board members Russ Hacker and Ruth Klossner at its first 2025 meeting February 18.

Trust Board Officers elected at the meeting: President Ann Parker, Vice President Rosie Schwartz, Secretary Pat Roiger and Treasurer Bonnie Seidl.

Contributions totaling \$2,500 were made to 10 area organizations and five food shelves in BCREA's service area. Sleepy Eye Police Department youth safety education, Lake Hanska Lutheran Quilters, Junior Achievement North New Ulm and Sleepy Eye, Brown County Farm Bureau, Sleepy Eye Community Theater and after prom activities for Comfrey, Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop, Sleepy Eye Public, Sleepy Eye St. Mary's and Springfield high schools were recipients of funds this quarter. In addition, donations for March Foodshare Month were made to Sleepy Eye Area, Springfield Area and New Ulm Emergency food shelves, We Care Project in Morgan and Sibley County Foodshare.

Thanks to the REA members who participate in Operation Round Up, more than \$261,000 has assisted organizations and individuals in the service area and provided scholarships to graduating high school seniors. Collectively, your change can make a difference!

If you would be willing to contribute less than \$12 per year by rounding up your bill to the nearest dollar to help Operation Round Up support local area causes, please complete and return the form below or call Brown County REA at 800-658-2368 or 507-794-3331. The Round Up Trusts Board will meet again on April 8 to review 2025 scholarships and other applications. ☎

Sletta achieves Credentialed Cooperative Director



Brown County REA Director Landon Sletta, right, was presented the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certificate by CEO Mike Heidemann. First elected to represent District 3 in 2020, Landon resides in rural Hanska and represents members in Lake Hanska, Linden townships and the City of Hanska in Brown County and parts of Riverdale and Madelia townships in Watonwan County. Congratulations! ☎

Adam Mages selected for 2025 Youth Tour



Adam Mages of rural Sleepy Eye will represent Brown County REA at the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 16-21.

Adam will travel with approximately 40 students representing other Minnesota electric cooperatives on the all-expense-paid trip to the nation's capital. While there, he will participate in leadership training, engage in one-on-one conversations with elected officials, and tour museums, monuments and memorials in Washington, D.C.

The Minnesota delegation will join youth representing electric cooperatives from across the United States during the Youth Tour. Participants gain a first-hand understanding

of the legislative process, learn about advocating on behalf of their community and make connections with others that will last a lifetime.

Adam is a junior at New Ulm Public High School. He is the son of Greg and Mary Kay Mages.

Second place and a \$200 check were awarded to Gavin Bergstad of Hanska. Third place and \$150 prize went to Blaine Kral of New Ulm, while a gift card was awarded to Carter Wilson, New Ulm.

Posting the Notice of Cogeneration

In compliance with Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA)'s adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Brown County REA is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogeneration and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Brown County REA is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members, upon request, regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Brown County REA Board of Directors. Interested members should contact Brown County REA, 24386 State Highway 4, PO Box 529, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085 or call 800-658-2368.

War of the Currents visits Gibbon- Fairfax-Winthrop school



GFW Elementary students were treated to the War of the Currents presentation, courtesy of Great River Energy and Brown County REA. Bakken Museum staff Lilly Keefe-Powers, left, and Heather Meyer, called upon students to help illustrate movement of AC and DC power and electrons as part of the assembly.



Always protect your personal and financial information

Brown County REA members reported scam phone activity. The scammers call claiming the member overpaid an electric bill and asks you to provide bank account or credit card information to facilitate a refund. This is a scam.

If you receive this type of call, hang up; do not provide your card, bank account or any personal information. Your co-op

may apply any overpayments you have made to your account as a credit to cover future charges, or if requested, may refund by mailing a check. If in doubt, hang up and call us at 800-658-2368.

- Never use the call-back number provided by a suspicious caller to verify billing or account information.

- Never provide any payment (bank account number, money wiring, prepaid, credit or debit card) or personal infor-

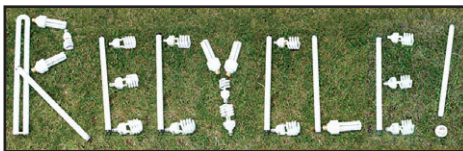
mation (Social Security number, date of birth) to a caller you do not know.

- Never be fooled because your caller ID makes the call look like it came from your utility. If in doubt, call BCREA.

- Hang up if you receive a call requesting immediate payment of a utility bill to avoid immediate disconnection. Call the co-op at the phone number printed on the monthly bill or on the website if you have questions.

Spring into fluorescent bulb recycling locally

State law requires the recycling of fluorescents and compact fluorescent bulbs due to the mercury. Check out these recycling options this spring. Put these dates on your calendar!



Jackson County

Residents of Jackson County can recycle their fluorescent bulbs at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility in Lakefield (605 S Hwy 86), which will have scheduled drop-off dates from the months of June through October. A fee applies for bulb (75 cents each) and PCB Ballast recycling (\$5 each).

Other electronics are not accepted at the HHW. An E-Waste Collection for residents and businesses will be held September 12-13 at the Jackson County Fairgrounds. You can find more information about the HHW Facility and the E-Waste Collection advertised in the *Livewire*; on the Land Management website: www.co.jackson.mn.us/land; or call the Land Management Office at 507-662-6682, extension 4.

Martin County

Recycle fluorescent bulbs Thursday, May 1, at the Tractor Supply (1215 N State St., Fairmont) parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The other date is Thursday, October 2, from 9 a.m. to

Brown County

The dates are set for May 7-8. A fee applies for recycling bulbs. Recycling occurs at:

- Springfield Market, 101 W. Central St., Springfield, May 7 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Brown County Fairgrounds in New Ulm, May 8 from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- River View Sanitation will sponsor an *Electronics & Appliance Recycling Day*, which will include fluorescent bulb recycling, May 21, from noon to 6 p.m. at the Sleepy Eye Hockey Arena parking lot. Fluorescent lamps 8' and under: \$1, ballast — PCB: \$7.50/lb. and PCB capacitors: \$7.50/lb. Most household appliances, including water heaters, refrigerators and freezers, computer CPUs, phones, keyboards, etc. and car batteries are free. Battery backups, printers, DVD/VCRs, copiers/scanners and stereos: \$10. Computer monitors and TVs: \$25. RV appliances: \$75. ♻️

1 p.m. at Fairmont's Tractor Supply lot. Bulbs are accepted from the homes and businesses in the county. A fee applies for recycling bulbs. Call Prairieland Solid Waste Facility at 507-776-3232.

Use 'tree'mendous care near power lines

Spring mean landscaping and tree planting time. Before you plant that tree or shrub, keep some "powerful" safety tips in mind.

Don't dig up trouble

April is safe digging month. That means before doing your landscaping project, adding a deck, planting trees or tiling be sure to call Gopher State One Call. Call 811 or 1-800-252-1166. If you prefer to do the underground locate online, go to www.gopherstateonecall.org. Do this step at least 48 hours in advance (excluding weekends) so the utilities, like your electric cooperative, plus phone, fiber and gas lines, can be located by each utility. You may also need to have a licensed electrician locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. The extra time for safety can prevent a shocking experience.

Look up for powerlines too

Besides considering what's below, look up for powerlines too. Will that tree planted underneath powerlines in several years be growing up into the



overhead power lines? Then during a bad wind or ice storm those branches could touch the powerlines and blink the lights or even snap off to cause a power outage.

Your electric cooperative patrols its overhead lines each winter noting where tree limbs have grown into power lines for the co-op's contracted tree trimmer, Carr's Tree Service. This creates an

added expense to your co-operative that is passed along to you, our member-owners through our rates. By looking up and moving that tree further away from power lines before planting, you avoid the risk of outages in the future and save your electric cooperative and ultimately yourself money too.

Take a close look at the tree tag when shopping. It will state how tall and wide the tree typically grows. That will help you decide proper placement. Otherwise, google it. A good rule of thumb is to plant far enough away so that at least a 20-foot clearance remains after the tree has matured.

If your property has trees growing into powerlines, call or e-mail the cooperative and someone will come and evaluate the tree(s).

Carr's Tree Service, which is a subsidiary of several electric cooperatives, can also be hired for private tree trimming or removal. Call 1-888-470-3355 or go to their website at www.CarrsTreeService.com. ♻️

Pucker up! Share some of your favorite lemon recipes with us!

"Squeeze" some lemony flavor into your next recipes! Share your favorite lemon recipes with us, whether it's for lemon cookies, bars, pie or to sauce up pasta, fish and main courses. Send your favorite lemon recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by May 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! ☺

Rhubarb Meringue Dessert by Sandy Kalfs, Okabena

Crust: 2 c. flour 4 T. sugar 1 c. butter

Mix together 2 c. flour, 4 T. sugar and butter. Press in a 9x13" pan; bake 10 minutes at 350°.

Filling: 2 c. sugar ½ c. flour ¼ tsp. salt 6 egg yolks

1 c. cream or evaporated milk 7 c. rhubarb

Mix together 2 c. sugar, ½ c. flour and ¼ tsp. salt. In a different bowl beat the egg yolks and add cream. Stir in the dry ingredients. Add the rhubarb. Pour onto crust. Bake 50 minutes or more at 350°.

Meringue: 6 egg whites dash of salt ½ c. sugar 1 tsp. vanilla

Beat six egg whites until frothy. Add a dash of salt. Gradually add ½ c. sugar, beating until stiff. Fold in vanilla. Bake about 12 minutes at 350°. ☺

Lemon Pie Supreme

by Cheri Drever, Granada

Pie filling: 4 egg yolks

½ c. sugar

4 T. cornstarch

6 oz. can frozen lemonade concentrate

1 T. butter

1 c. boiling water

baked pie shell

Beat yolks, add sugar mixed with cornstarch. Add lemonade concentrate. Put boiling water and butter in a pan over low heat. Slowly add the egg yolk mixture stirring constantly until thick. Remove from heat.

Meringue: 4 egg whites

½ c. sugar

Beat egg whites until frothy; gradually add sugar and beat until stiff. Fold half of the meringue into filling. Pour into baked pie shell. Top with remainder of meringue and brown in 350° oven for 15 minutes. ☺



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Get warned about water

Get alerted before a leak becomes a flood with monitored water sensors.

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A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

Always call first:
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. ☺



Brandon Havemeier
Operations Manager

BCREA gears up for summer construction and maintenance

The 2025 construction season for Brown County REA is shaping up to be a busy one. With ground conditions improving, our line crews and contractors are preparing for construction and maintenance projects throughout the service area.

This summer, the BCREA crews will be completing their work in Eden Township replacing the single-phase line with three-phase URD. In addition to the work plan projects planned for the summer, we will be replacing overhead services and upgrading services as necessary throughout the

year. We will also focus on areas where we have had recent tree issues via tree trimming or replacing the overhead line with underground cable. Work is already underway inspecting all underground locations and equipment in Milford, West Newton, North Home and Ridgely townships.

Brown County REA contracted with Central Applicators, Inc., to maintain and control vegetation at all of our substations this year. Work is expected to begin in early June, depending on weather conditions. Central Applicators uses an EPA-approved herbicide to treat unwanted brush and noxious weeds.

Southwood 2000, a subsidiary of Redwood Electric Cooperative in Clements, continues to locate our underground cable throughout the year. In addition to locating, Southwood 2000 will inspect poles in Morgan, Upper Eden and Sherman townships. Pole inspection involves visually inspecting the pole, checking for cracks, equipment damage and burn marks from ditch fires. If the pole passes that part of the inspection, then they dig down 18 inches to inspect the base of the pole. To check for internal decay they drill into the core of the pole. The base of the pole is also visually checked for decay. If the pole does not pass inspection, it is rejected and will be replaced. We test the poles regularly to meet requirements of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and to improve service reliability.

Carr's Tree Service will be back in the service area in July trimming trees system wide. Much of the planned work will require crews and contractors to enter members' property to access and inspect equipment.

As always, we ask you to be aware of Brown County REA equipment as you are working in your fields and yards. Be aware of transformers and other equipment while out mowing, riding an ATV or working in the fields; know the location of poles and overhead lines when planting, spraying and moving equipment. Remember to call Gopher State One Call at 800-252-1166 or 811

or enter ticket information online at www.gopherstateonecall.org before starting any digging more than 12 inches deep.

Brown County REA wishes you a safe spring and summer. ☺



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

Payment Line (PSN): 833-250-4481

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 507-228-8954

William Berg, Vice President — 507-766-1497

James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 507-829-6756

Brad Sprenger — 507-317-5576

David Wendinger — 507-276-3166

Greg Mages — 507-794-3540

Joel Christensen — 507-828-4550

James Mickelson — 507-794-6298

Landon Sletta — 507-276-1899

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 on February 20, 2025. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the January 2025 Board meeting minutes, new membership applications/cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.

- Approved January financials and payroll.

- Reviewed and approved the cooperative's 2025-2028 Construction Work Plan as presented by Southwood 2000 Consulting Engineer Bryant Tauer.

- Reviewed the 2024 Cogeneration Report for member-owned Distributed Energy Resources.

- Updated on progress with the audit of the cooperative's 2024 financials being conducted by Eide Bailly.

- Heartland Security Services President Wendy Youngren presented a review of the security company, which is a subsidiary of Brown County REA.

- Updated on operations' activities including completion of line patrol and maintenance.

The next meeting is set for March 27, 2025, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. ☺