



# POWER CONNECTION

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

AUGUST 2019



***On Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2,400 members came out for a high-flying pancake breakfast and family fun at the Freeport Community Center. We were thrilled to have record-breaking attendance at this year's event!***

We invited Chris Cakes to join us again for breakfast and they kept the party going. Pancakes literally flew across the community center left and right as members attempted to catch their own breakfast!

In addition to providing members with breakfast, we offered a School Supply Send-Off to all children in attendance at the event. This was a great start for families preparing for the new school year.

Members were also able to meet our linemen, learn about their safety gear and check out a bucket truck. New this

year, our award-winning electric safety demonstration was performed on-site.

Our goal for each member appreciation event is to create a family-friendly experience for our member-consumers and express our appreciation for your patronage throughout the year.

We couldn't be happier with the turnout for this event and look forward to hosting each of you again next year at our Member Appreciation Pancake Feed on August 15, 2020.



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***Visit our Facebook page for more pictures from the 2019 member appreciation event!***



## CEO'S MESSAGE

# CLEAN ENERGY BALANCED WITH RELIABILITY



***During the 2019 Minnesota legislative session we saw plenty of bills introduced to develop new energy policies. Some of those bills included topics like energy storage pilot programs, energy conservation requirements, clean energy and carbon-free concepts. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has announced his goal for state energy utilities to be 100% carbon free by 2050. He has stated that his energy proposals would address climate change while ensuring "reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity" for Minnesotans. So this month, I wanted to share some information about how Stearns Electric Association and our wholesale power providers are addressing these energy topics while balancing the ability to provide reliable power at a competitive price.***

Stearns Electric purchases power from two main sources, Great River Energy and the Western Area Power Association (WAPA). Approximately 90% of our wholesale power purchases are from Great River Energy, the other 10% are from WAPA. Power purchased from WAPA is carbon-free hydropower from the Missouri River.

Our WAPA allocation is a fixed amount of kilowatt hours based on a power purchase agreement with WAPA. Stearns Electric's WAPA power allocation is a valuable part of our power purchase portfolio and is priced below average market prices. It also provides Stearns Electric with a carbon-free source of wholesale

power. Even though our WAPA allocation is carbon free, we are not able to include it in our renewable energy portfolio. Minnesota only recognizes "new" renewable resources following the 2007 Minnesota Next Generation Act. Stearns Electric has been purchasing WAPA hydropower since the 1970's.

Over the past 10 years our primary power supplier Great River Energy has been aggressively pursuing carbon reduced generation for Stearns Electric. In 2018, seven years early, Great River Energy met a Minnesota state mandate of reducing carbon emissions by 25% by 2025 and has since committed to reduce emissions by 50% by 2050. Great River Energy is able to do this by incorporating renewables into their generation mix.

While incorporating renewable energy and reducing emissions is incredibly important for the future landscape of our state and the energy industry, I'm reminded of Stearns Electric's Mission Statement, which reads "To safely provide competitively priced and reliable electric service, beneficial energy solutions and a positive member experience." Reliability is a key factor of that statement, our focus and your satisfaction. This summer Minnesota residents experienced an extremely hot and humid weather event on July 10. There was high demand for electricity over several days and virtually no wind. If it wasn't for Great River Energy's fossil fuel generation in North Dakota, electric service to our member-consumers would have been

interrupted. On January 29, 2019, Minnesota experienced an extreme cold weather event, the polar vortex. Again, there was no wind generation. If it weren't for Great River Energy's coal and hydrocarbon fueled peaking plants, there would not have been electric service.

Stearns Electric understands the importance of transitioning to less carbon intensive energy generation. We also understand how important electric service reliability is to each of you. We support the government working with utilities to facilitate the transition away from carbon intensive generation, without sacrificing dependability of our services. Our goal at Stearns Electric is to support Great River Energy in this transition, while providing you reliable electric service.

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robin Doege".

**Robin C. Doege**  
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



## COOPERATIVE MEMBERS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS



*Six \$1,000 scholarships were awarded to cooperative members through the Northern Cooperative Foundation. Scholarships were awarded to students who are a member of a cooperative, enrolled full-time at an institution of higher learning and taking courses in business or economics that study the principles of cooperatives.*

### CONGRATULATIONS TO:

**Ethan Crocker, Little Falls**  
**Seth Crocker, Little Falls**  
**Adam Kroll, Royalton**  
Rebekka Paskewitz, Browerville  
Courtney Sand, Cold Spring  
**Brody Uhlenkamp, Osakis**

*(Scholarship recipients must be members of a cooperative in Minnesota. Bold recipients are Stearns Electric members who were awarded a scholarship.)*

## MY CO-OP CARES



## SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As part of the Cooperative's commitment to community, Stearns Electric offers Rural Economic Development Revolving Loans to help fund special community projects throughout our service territory. Most recently, this low-interest loan option was used to help the City of St. Augusta purchase a new fire truck for its fleet. Pictured here with the new truck are Stearns Electric CEO Robin Doege and St. Augusta City Administrator Bill McCabe.

## BOARD MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was held on June 27, 2019 at 1:00 p.m. at the Stearns Electric Association office located in Melrose, Minnesota.

Director of Finance, Cindy Anderson, reviewed financial and statistical information with the Board for May 2019.

The Cooperative is undergoing its periodic review of the articles of incorporation and bylaws to ensure outdated language fits current practice and statutes. A review committee consisting of Staff, Board members and attorney Scott Dymoke, is working to provide recommendations for potential changes. Any proposals for change must be presented to the entire membership for approval which would take place prior to the 2020 Annual Meeting.

Stearns Electric was recently awarded the "Leroy Vanderpool Excellence in Safety" Award which is based on incident reduction practices and safety culture activities. Additionally, Cooperative employees reached a major milestone by logging a million miles driven without an accident.

Manager of Operations, Glenn Blommel, provided an overview of an emergency drill held on May 31st. A drill of this nature helps the Cooperative ensure its Emergency Response Plan is complete in the event an actual emergency situation would have occurred.

Attorney Scott Dymoke has been working on proposed modifications to the Stearns Electric Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

The leadership team shared the Cooperative's realignment overview with the Board. Through this process the Co-op reviewed its long-term organizational structure plan, staffing levels, key requirements and alignment of responsibilities for employees to meet the needs of a growing and evolving organization. The Board asked questions about the process, relative costs and affects to employees. The reorganization will take place over the next year. The Board was supportive of the information presented.

Next Meeting: August 29, 2019

## OPERATION ROUND UP

### YOUR SMALL CHANGE MAKES AN IMPACT ON THE SUCCESS OF THE YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITIES:

*Stearns County Youth Explorer Post builds self-worth and self-confidence while exposing young adults to careers in law enforcement.*

**Stearns Electric Association's Operation Round Up® (ORU) program gives our member-owners the opportunity to give back to their local communities by rounding up their monthly electric bill to the nearest dollar. The rounded-up funds are placed in a trust fund and administered by the member represented trust board. Local civic organizations and worthy causes receive ORU funds through an application and selection process.**

#### FORTY YEARS OF IMPACT

Established in 1979, the Stearns County Youth Explorer Post offers a chance for young adults to learn more about law enforcement. Individuals between the ages of 15 and 21 can participate to gain first-hand experience of what it is like to be a police officer in Central Minnesota.

"Over the last 40 years, the Youth Explorer Post has offered a positive environment for young adults who live in Central Minnesota. Youth explorers receive positive mentorship with sworn law enforcement officers, dispatchers and correctional officers," Deputy Sheriff Eric Schultz, Stearns County



Sheriff's Department, said. "The program builds self-worth and self-confidence, which are key to becoming successful members of our communities."

"The goal of the program is for individuals to get a taste of what it is like working as a law enforcement officer," he continued. "To start, we teach explorers the basic skills they need to be successful, such as first aid, how to talk to and communicate with different individuals and how to make quick decisions on their own."

"Once they know the basics, we run through practice scenarios to test the explorers' ability to respond to an incident and provide hands-on education for common events such as traffic stops, domestic assaults and burglaries, to name a few," Schultz said.

Through the program, youth explorers also observe the dispatch department, participate in ride-alongs with the Sheriff's Department and volunteer at annual events throughout the county conducting traffic control and providing security.

#### BUILDING FAMILY

Every year, the Stearns County Sheriff's Department sends as many youth explorers as possible to compete at a state skills competition in Rochester. Each team of four explorers participates in mock

scenarios to test their approach to a scenario, their handling of a situation and the accuracy of charges filed for the appropriate level of crime.

"Allowing our explorers to compete in Rochester is a great way to test their knowledge, but an even better opportunity to grow as a team and a family, which is what law enforcement is all about," Schultz said. "It's a chance for explorers to build on their morals and ethics."

Showing off the skills and knowledge that they've learned in the program is a highlight for many of the explorers.

"My favorite part of the program, besides the ride-alongs, is the scenarios," said Jade, a youth explorer from Sartell. Jade has been involved in the program for three years and competed on a first-place team at the state competition last year.

#### CONTINUED GROWTH

Over the last two years the Sheriff's office has seen an increase in program participation. In 2018-2019, there were 30 youth participants on the roster.

"Once an explorer joins the Post, they are usually in the program until they either age out, go to school or find a paid job," Schultz said.



*Stearns Electric Association is guided by a set of principles that influence our business decisions and ensure that our actions are in the best interest of our member-consumers, which means we should be a responsible member of the community and do all we can to meet the needs of those who live in our service territory. The Operation Round Up grants we distribute improve the quality of life for residents in the counties we serve and the success of this program is a direct result of the approximately 72% of our membership who participate. It's members helping members.*

Several area law enforcement professionals started in the Youth Explorer Post, including Schultz. Stearns County Sheriff Steve Soyka was also a youth explorer from 1984 to 1991.

Although program growth is wonderful, it is not without difficulty. Applying for grants, like the one awarded through the Operation Round Up program, help the Sheriff's Department provide these experiences to area youth every year.

"We provide the uniforms for the explorers, which are very dated - some are perhaps even original

to 1976. The explorers provide their boots and duty belt gear," Schultz explained. "Since many of our explorers come from broken families, we don't want to burden them by asking them to pay for too many items needed for their Youth Explorer Post."

"We are so appreciative of this Operation Round Up Grant – thank you Stearns Electric and Operation Round Up for these funds, which will be used to help replace old uniforms and provide nice polo shirts to the youth explorers this year," Schultz concluded.



*In July 2019, Stearns Electric and ORU contributed \$24,964 to 45 area organizations. View the complete list of recipients online at [www.stearnselectric.org](http://www.stearnselectric.org). Operation Round Up® and Stearns Electric members have awarded over \$2.3 million to local non-profit organizations and community service programs since the program's inception in 1993.*

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

### REMEMBER TO CHANGE YOUR AC FILTER

*Routinely replace or clean your air conditioner's filter. Replacing a dirty, clogged filter can reduce your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5 to 15 percent.*

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKUP

### LIGHT BULBS

*Because CFL bulbs contain small amounts of mercury, if a CFL lightbulb breaks, you should open a window and have all people and pets leave the room and air out the room for 10 minutes.*



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# MINNESOTA FARMFEST

## STEARNS ELECTRIC CONNECTS WITH AGRICULTURAL MEMBERS ON DAY TRIP TO MINNESOTA FARMFEST

*Stearns Electric's bus trip to Minnesota Farmfest took place on Wednesday, August 7, 2019. Thirty-eight Stearns Electric member-consumers with agricultural ties enjoyed a day trip to the largest agriculture trade show in the state.*

Highlights of the trip included the Electric Car Showcase and the US House Ag Committee listening session that was hosted by Congressman and US House Ag Committee Chairman, Collin Peterson. Of course member-consumers also enjoyed the chance to visit with over 500 agriculture vendors at the show, checking out their demonstrations, livestock and equipment. Izaak (6), our youngest attendee, shared that he "loved the John Deere tractors best." Stearns Electric hosted this one day bus trip in order to connect with the strong subset of our membership that work in the agriculture industry about the services and resources the Cooperative can provide to them. After a full day at the show, members on the trip enjoyed a happy hour social at the Willmar Convention Center. A great day was had by all!

View additional pictures from the tour on our Facebook page.

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[www.facebook.com/stearnslectric](https://www.facebook.com/stearnslectric)



## DON'T GET LEFT IN THE DARK

## THREE *easy* WAYS TO REPORT AN OUTAGE



### SMARTPHONE APP:

DOWNLOAD SMARTHUB TO REPORT OUTAGES  
WITH THE PRESS OF A BUTTON.



### ONLINE:

LOG INTO SMARTHUB AND  
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### PHONE:

CALL OUR OUTAGE LINE ANYTIME  
AT (800) 962-0655



## NEWS

### OFFICES CLOSED

The Stearns Electric offices will be closed on Monday, September 2 in honor of Labor Day. If you experience an outage during the holiday, please call us at (800) 962-0655 or report on SmartHub. Crews are on call 24/7, ready to respond to any emergency situation.

### UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

Stearns Electric Association has funds that were returned by the Post Office as undeliverable. We need your help in locating these former members. A searchable list is available on our website at [www.stearnslectric.org](http://www.stearnslectric.org). Any information you can give the Cooperative regarding the location of these members would be greatly appreciated.

#### DO YOU ENJOY THE COOKING CORNER?

Join us on Facebook for some tasty savings. That's right - we're featuring energy efficient recipes each week!



#### Ingredients:

Pre-made Pie Crust  
3/4 Cup Sugar  
2 Tbsp Cornstarch  
1 Cup Water  
1 Package Strawberry Gelatin  
4 Cups Strawberries (sliced)

#### Directions:

Bake pie crust at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Combine sugar, cornstarch, and water in a saucepan until smooth. Bring to a boil, cook for two minutes. Remove from heat and add gelatin. Refrigerate mixture for 20 minutes. Place strawberries on crust. Pour mixture over berries. Refrigerate pie until set. Enjoy!

## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



Protect yourselves and your property against underground utility damage. Find out where the underground utilities might be buried before you begin excavation. Remember to call Gopher State One Call at (800) 252-1166, 48 hours prior to digging.

Anyone working in Minnesota must call before excavating. It's the law! You're not the only one affected when you cut a power line. For everyone's sake call before you dig!

## cookingcorner

### STRAWBERRY PIE

Submitted by: Kim Murphy Ellingboe  
Stearns Electric Member-Consumer

#### CONTEST DETAILS:

One member per account may submit one recipe per month. Recipes will be saved for future publications. The recipe selected each month will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Submit recipes to [communications@stearnslectric.org](mailto:communications@stearnslectric.org) or mail to: Stearns Electric, Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374.



## STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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## LIMITED TIME OFFER

Through November 29<sup>th</sup>, Stearns Electric Association is offering increased rebates up to \$1300\* when you install an air source heat pump with a plenum heater.

LEARN MORE AT  
**[WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG](http://WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG)**

(\*based on SEER level)