



POWER CONNECTION

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

DECEMBER 2020

DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS OPEN IN DISTRICTS 4, 5 AND 9

Stearns Electric Association's Board of Directors are member-consumers just like you who understand and listen to the community. They represent you on the Co-op's Board, which is responsible for overseeing the business of the Cooperative and determining its strategic direction.

Our Cooperative business model depends on our members to provide leadership and guidance for Stearns Electric. Each year, an election takes place in three of our nine districts to elect a director to represent each district on our board. The election process ensures that every member has a voice in the operation of this organization, and that any member in good standing may seek election for the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Nominations are now open for the board in districts 4, 5 and 9. If you live

in these districts and are interested in becoming a nominee, please visit our website, www.stearnslectric.org/about-us/board-and-bylaws/director-election/, to view the nominations packet and download the Application for Director.

The nominations packet includes general Cooperative information, director qualifications, a copy of the Stearns Electric Bylaws and the Application for Director. Applications must be returned by 4 p.m. on January 28, 2021 to the secretary:

Email: secretary@stearnslectric.org
Mail: Secretary
Stearns Electric Association
c/o Dymoke Law Office, PA
PO Box 127
Melrose, MN 56352

A full list of director qualifications is posted on our website. If you have additional questions about the nomination process or becoming a director, please contact the Stearns Electric Election Coordinator during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655.

Stearns Electric retains the services of Survey and Ballot Systems, an independent contractor, to conduct the election in conjunction with the Annual Meeting on April 8, 2021.

Review district information and our director qualification overview on page 3.

Complete director nomination information is available at www.stearnslectric.org/about-us/board-and-bylaws/director-election/.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY THE MEMBERS, FOR THE MEMBERS



Stearns Electric Association is a democratically-controlled business, which means the Cooperative is governed by local people and elected by you, the member-consumers. Our board takes this role of governance seriously. We pride ourselves in leading the Cooperative, and we work hard to make decisions that are in the best interest of our members and our local communities.

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The Cooperative's board consists of nine member-consumers, one to represent each of the Co-op's nine districts. Every year, in conjunction with the Annual Meeting, Stearns Electric holds an election in three of the nine districts to elect members to the Cooperative's board. Board members serve three-year terms.

FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY

As elected members and representatives, we serve as fiduciaries for the Co-op and are required to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of the Cooperative and our fellow members.

There are many hours of behind the scenes work that our Co-op board completes. Every month, we prepare for our monthly board meetings by reviewing reports compiled from employees from every Cooperative department and the Cooperative's legal counsel.

Industry knowledge is extremely important to be effective. We are all encouraged to participate in training programs offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to better understand how boards operate, and how to make

strong financial and strategic planning decisions.

Additionally, we undertake special projects annually. For example, over the last year, we have worked to approve the Cooperative's budget, review the articles of incorporation and bylaws, update a portion of the Cooperative's policies and procedures, examine the long-term equity management plan and more.

We are responsible for setting the policies and guidelines for Cooperative management and advocating for our fellow members in Cooperative operations. Therefore, it is important that we continue to do our part to meet the needs of our members.

SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT

In 2020, the members elected to adopt our recommended changes to the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, which adjusted the way Stearns Electric facilitates the annual director nominations process. Additionally, the members voted to remove term limits for directors. With these changes, our board decided that in order to continue serving the Cooperative and our fellow members most effectively, we wanted to implement an annual self and peer review process.

This director-led initiative, which is facilitated by Great River Energy, will allow us to understand our personal strengths and weaknesses when it comes to our responsibilities as directors. The peer review process will also help us clarify our expectations and responsibilities as directors, and identify opportunities for additional

training and education that would be necessary or helpful.

The project development process began in September when we brainstormed the reasons and purpose for the peer review process and outlined our board's top requirements for serving our members. Once the basis was established, we drafted and approved peer review questions. In December, we will complete the assessment and in early 2021, we will analyze the results and take any action as needed.

The anonymous self and peer assessment will collect feedback from each director and allow us to rate ourselves and each other on important board functions such as decision making, industry knowledge, member relations, meeting preparation and participation, and strategic thinking.

We are committed to serving Stearns Electric and our fellow members to the best of our abilities. Our current board is very strong and works well together, but we can always do better. Our new peer review process will help us improve both individually and as an overall board. It will assist us in leading the Cooperative and representing you, our member-consumers, now and into the future.

Cooperatively yours,

Randy Rothstein
Board President

NOMINATIONS CONTINUED

DISTRICT INFORMATION:

District 4 - Serving Minnesota townships: Farming, Zion, Munson, Paynesville, Eden Lake and Luxemburg in Stearns County.

District 5 - Serving Minnesota townships: Bangor, Glenwood and Grove Lake in Pope County; Raymond, Getty, Grove, North Fork, Lake George, Spring Hill, St. Martin, Crow Lake, Crow River and Lake Henry in Stearns County; and Roseville Township in Kandiyohi County.

District 9 - Serving Minnesota townships: St. Joseph, Wakefield, Rockville and Maine Prairie in Stearns County.

DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS:

- Nominees must be a member of the Cooperative and a primary resident of the district you wish to represent.
- Nominees cannot be employed by, or have financial interest in, a competing enterprise.
- Nominees must have the time available to attend a minimum of 12 regular daytime board meetings, and additional meetings and training sessions as needed.

ENERGY SMART

INTERRUPTIBLE PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO CI&A MEMBERS

As 2020 nears its end, now is a good time to plan for 2021 project upgrades in energy efficiency and potential ways to reduce your company's overhead costs.

Stearns Electric offers an Interruptible Program exclusively to our commercial, industrial and agricultural (CI&A) members. CI&A members that enroll in the Interruptible Program will not only save money on their monthly electric bill, but also eliminate production disruptions and delays during an unexpected power outage.

Contact John Pantzke, business development and energy services supervisor, at (800) 962-0655 for a custom cost comparison to find out what savings could look like for your farm or business based off your past energy consumption.

Visit www.stearnslectric.org for even more ways to save, including information on efficiency grants available to members making energy efficient upgrades related to their electrical system.



From now through Christmas Day (December 25, 2020) share a photo of your holiday lights on the Stearns Electric Facebook page for your chance to win a new LED holiday light gift pack (a \$100 value)!

BOARD MEETING

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was called to order on October 29, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. at the St. Joseph office of Stearns Electric Association.

Sarah Bullock of Cooperative Finance Corporation provided the annual Key Ratio Trend Analysis, which analyzes Stearns Electric's system operations and trends as compared to other participating cooperatives.

Manager of Finance Cindy Anderson provided an overview of the Cooperative's previous year Form 990 that is filed annually with the IRS by federally tax-exempt organizations.

With the Board's September approval of the annual general retirement, the Capital Credit return in the amount of \$1,625,000 will be distributed to Stearns Electric members near Thanksgiving.

Business Development and Energy Services Supervisor John Pantzke joined the meeting to provide an overview of a GRE E3 (Energy Efficiency and Electrification) loan for a member business expansion. Mr. Pantzke explained how the member will benefit from the efficiencies created by the service upgrade the Co-op will provide. GRE E3 loans are repaid as part of the regular monthly electric bill.

VP of Engineering and Operations Matt O'Shea gave his division report noting the new St. Augusta substation transformer was set in place and should be energized by the end of the month. The substation equipment from that location will replace the existing Little Sauk substation. Exacter, Inc. was retained to perform ultrasound substation inspections to help check insulators, switches, connections and equipment for signs of electrical discharge.

The IT report noted improvements to the Cooperative's disaster recovery equipment are in-process along with the migration to Microsoft Office 365.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

January 28, 2021

OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT; OUR COOPERATIVE CARES



Our employees don't just work here. They live here and care about this community as your neighbors and friends. It's the cooperative way.

'Concern for Community' is one of the seven cooperative principles and something we take very seriously at Stearns Electric Association. Giving back to the communities we serve and that support us is important not only to the Co-op, but to our employees also.

Over half of our employees volunteer their own time throughout our communities. In 2019 alone, Stearns Electric employees volunteered over 2,500 hours! Employees volunteer for a variety of organizations and causes, which include youth enrichment and coaching, emergency services, faith-based programs, education, health and wellness, and more. By participating in these various activities, employees give back in communities all across our service territory and in each of the nine districts the Cooperative serves.

WORK HERE. LIVE HERE. SERVE HERE.

Throughout the year, we've showcased six of our employees in our Work Here. Live Here. Serve

Here. Campaign, highlighting the ways in which they selflessly serve our communities:

- Wayne Senst, Line Worker – Sauk Centre Fire Department
- Deb Hoeschen, Executive Assistant – Melrose Women of Today
- Jake Dooner, Line Superintendent – Youth Sports Coach
- Justin Spanier, Facilities and Grounds Custodian – Holdingford Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Holdingford Fire Department
- Judy Terres-Madsen, Member Services Representative – WW Health and Wellness
- Matt O'Shea, Vice President of Engineering and Operations – Retired Army National Guard and Youth Sports Coach

Although the reasons why these employees started volunteering varies, the reasons why they stay involved rings true among them. It's all about the people.

These individuals continue volunteering because they are able to give back to their local community and impact lives in ways that they themselves were impacted.

"I was involved in FFA as a student and now I'm able to show today's students that there are different options and opportunities for them by being involved in the program," Spanier explained.

O'Shea and Dooner shared similar experiences, both having impactful coaches in their lives when they were younger. As adults, they also experienced time away from their kids while either deployed or away for work. Now that they have the flexibility to coach their own kids, they understand the importance of their roles.

"I've been able to build relationships with the team of kids I've coached for years and know that I've made a positive impact on their lives," O'Shea detailed. "I get many 'thank you's' from the parents, many of whom aren't able to help coach," Dooner added. "I used to be away from home a lot myself and now I'm grateful to give back and hopefully have a similar impact on the kids that my coaches had on me growing up."

Employees also love doing things that they enjoy, while also fulfilling their passion for helping others. "My passion is in helping people and being able to make real differences



in their lives,” Terres-Madsen said. “I enjoy sharing my passion for wellness while adding human connection to the generosity.”

Our communities have benefitted greatly from the service of many of our employees. The intrinsic rewards our employees receive, and the awareness to the community that their volunteering provides, helps get even more community members involved.

“People appreciate and respect us for our work with the fire department,” Senst said. “And in return, they are more willing to help at community events and support us through our fundraisers and other activities.”

“Community members see you involved and even if they aren’t able to volunteer their time, they are more willing to donate to a cause and help in their own way,” Hoeschen added.

MY CO-OP CARES

We have amazing employees who not only volunteer in their own time, but during work hours also. Stearns Electric recognizes the importance of giving back to our local communities. We also understand that life is busy, and sometimes employees can’t allot

the personal time that they would like to volunteer. In 2019, Stearns Electric created the ‘My Co-op Cares’ program to provide employees the opportunity to volunteer during normal business hours throughout the year.

The ‘My Co-op Cares’ program offers three events during the year, in partnership with local organizations, where employees volunteer during the work day. Employees don’t know where they’ll be volunteering when they sign up, so it’s truly just for the heart of giving back. These events have had a great impact throughout our local communities, and a direct impact on our employees, too.

“It’s heartwarming to know that we’re making a difference,” Terres-Madsen said. “Hearing the joy expressed from both the organizations we serve, as well as Stearns Electric employees who participate, make our ‘My Co-op Cares’ program an overall success.”

As we wrap up our campaign for the year, you can be assured that the Co-op’s concern for, and commitment to, our communities will never change. We work here. We live here. We serve here.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

THINK ABOUT THE SMALL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water, can help you save.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKUP



MAKE SURE YOU HAVE FUNCTIONING CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning increase during the winter months due to the use of common fuels like propane, natural gas and wood. Installing a simple carbon monoxide alarm can save your family’s life.



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www.facebook.com/stearnslectric

SMALL CHANGE MAKES AN IMPACT

STEARNS ELECTRIC MEMBERS DONATED \$74,100 TO 66 LOCAL WORTHY CAUSES IN NOVEMBER

Over 70% of Stearns Electric members participate in the Operation Round Up® (ORU) program by allowing their monthly electric bills to be rounded up to the next highest dollar. The donated money is placed in a trust fund and administered by the Stearns Electric Trust Board. Funds are given to local civic organizations and worthy causes through an application and selection process. The trust board uses special guidelines and policies to choose recipients.

To see the list of all 66 November 2020 ORU recipients, please visit www.stearnselectric.org. The deadline for the next round of funding is February 19, 2021. More information, including the application for funding, is available online.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS IN DISTRICTS 5 AND 9

The Operation Round Up® (ORU) Trust Board oversees Stearns Electric's ORU program. The trust board meets three times per year to distribute funds to worthy causes. Additional meetings include annual photo calls and special meetings as needed. Terms of office are three years, with a term limit of two terms (or six years).

Trust board member duties include:

- Attending regular meetings of the trust board (March, July and November) and other meetings as needed
- Reviewing of Operation Round Up® applications via use of a provided iPad
- Administering Operation Round Up® funds
- Participating in distribution events with funding recipients

Members interested in serving on this volunteer board should fill out an Application for Trust Board Director on our website, or contact our ORU Coordinator during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655 or wditlevson@stearnselectric.org. Applications are due by January 15, 2021.

SAFETY FOR LIFE

STAY SAFE IF YOUR VEHICLE HITS A POWER POLE



Over the last year, Stearns Electric responded to 24 accidents involving vehicles and electrical distribution equipment, such as power poles and transformers. Although accidents can happen any time of year, as the roads get icy, we want to remind you to stay safe. Knowing what to do if you find yourself in a situation involving high voltage equipment could save your life.

In traumatic situations, such as a car accident, it may be instinctive to flee as soon as possible. However, if you are in a car accident with a power line, or other electrical equipment, the safest place you can be is most likely in your vehicle.

When a car crashes into a power pole, the pole may fall down, or power lines may fall on your car or on the ground nearby. When this happens, your car and/or the area around your car may become charged with electric energy. If you step out of the car in this scenario, your body would become the path to ground for the electricity, and you could be electrocuted.

Unlike what you might see in the movies, downed power lines rarely show they are live by arcing and sparking with electricity. You cannot see, hear or smell electricity, which makes it even more dangerous.

Downed power lines can be live and just as lethal, even though they might appear de-energized.

If you find yourself in a car accident involving a power pole or other electrical equipment, stay in your vehicle. Warn those around you who try to come near your car that they must stay far away. Call 911 for help and wait until a professional from Stearns Electric, or other electric utility provider, tells you it is safe to leave your vehicle.

The only exception to this rule is if your vehicle is on fire. In the rare case of a vehicle fire, the people in your vehicle will need to jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Once you are safely outside of the vehicle, shuffle at least 200 yards away with your feet together. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which could give electricity the chance to flow through your body, causing electrocution.

If you witness a car collision with a power pole, do not approach the accident. By trying to help, you will put your own life at risk. The best thing to do is contact emergency responders and stay far away from the accident.

NEWS

NOTICE TO ALL IRRIGATION MEMBERS

Farmers who plan to install electric irrigation systems or convert their system from diesel to electric for the 2021 growing season must contact Stearns Electric Association. The information is used by our Engineering Department to determine supply needs for the 2021 construction season. Materials and transformers will be ordered soon. Please call the Engineering Department during business hours at (800) 962-0655.

OFFICES CLOSED

The Stearns Electric offices will be closed on Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 in observance of Christmas, and Friday, January 1 in observance of New Year's Day.

If you experience an outage or emergency during the holiday, please call us at (800) 962-0655 or report your outage via SmartHub. Crews are on call 24/7 and ready to respond to any emergency situation.

HOLIDAY WISHES

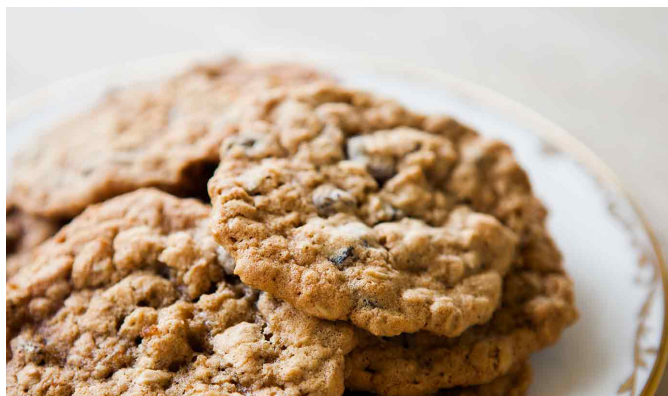


*Merry
AND
Bright*

WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS AT
STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION



COOKING CORNER

OATMEAL RAISIN COOKIES

Submitted by: Kim Murphy Ellingboe

Ingredients:

½ C butter
¼ C brown sugar
½ C white sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
1 ½ C flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp salt
1 C raisins
3 C oatmeal

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray cookie sheets with non-stick cooking spray and set aside. Mix butter, brown sugar and white sugar until fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla and mix. Add flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Mix together. Add oatmeal and raisins. Spoon out Tablespoons of cookie dough onto cookie sheets. Bake 8-10 minutes, until the edges of the cookies turn golden brown. Enjoy!

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 or mail to: Stearns Electric, Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374.



STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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www.stearnselectric.org

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID

The Power Connection (USPS 016053) is published monthly (plus an Annual Report) by Stearns Electric Association, P.O. Box 40, Melrose, MN 56352, Subscription rate: \$4 annually. Stearns Electric Association is an equal opportunity employer.

Periodicals Postage Rate is at Melrose, MN, 56352 and additional mailing offices.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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TONY AMPE

Vice President, District 5

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Secretary/Treasurer, District 6

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District 1

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CONTRACT DESIGNER

AMANDA GROETHE

Fuller Creative

WORK
HERE
LIVE
HERE
SERVE
HERE



***Our employees don't just work here.
They call our community home.***

Stearns Electric Vice President of Operations and Engineering Matt O'Shea makes our community a better place by volunteering as a hockey and baseball coach in Alexandria. He is intentional about teaching his athletes a strong work ethic and respect, in addition to other important life lessons. Although he is now retired from the military, Matt has also served to keep our community and our country safe in the Army National Guard. He enlisted as a junior in high school, joined ROTC in college and served two tours of duty in Baghdad and Kuwait.