



JULY
2022

member driven.
community focused.
energy smart.

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(800) 962-0655
WWW.STEARNSSELECTRIC.ORG

VOLUME 22 | ISSUE 07

THE STACKS ARE BACK!

JOIN US FOR OUR
MEMBER APPRECIATION
PANCAKE FEED

MEMBER APPRECIATION PANCAKE FEED RETURNS AUGUST 6!

We are excited for you to join us in person at our annual Member Appreciation Pancake Feed on Saturday, August 6, 2022. Bring your family for pancakes and sausage from 8-11:30 a.m. at the Freeport Community Center.

FREE PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Join us for all you care to eat pancakes and sausage prepared by the Kimball Lions Club. Milk provided by Stony Creek Dairy. Coffee, juice and water will also be available.

SCHOOL SUPPLY SEND OFF

Each child, ages 2-18, that attends will receive an age-appropriate bag of school supplies while supplies last.*

MEET A LINEMAN

Don't miss your chance to meet a lineworker, learn about their tools and get your picture with a bucket truck.

You may be wondering, 'why does my electric company have an appreciation event?' We want to say THANK YOU!

85
years

On July 29 and 30, 1940, Stearns Electric and other regional cooperatives sponsored a visit from the REA Traveling Circus, or Farm Equipment Tour. Over 6,100 people attended. For the first time, many attendees saw a variety of electric powered equipment and household appliances at work.

POWER THAT PERSISTS

We're a Cooperative, and that makes us different than other energy providers. You are a member of Stearns Electric Association – not just a customer. Our member appreciation event is an opportunity for us to meet our members and thank each of you for your business, your support and your involvement in shaping and directing the future of this Cooperative.

We look forward to seeing you Saturday, August 6!

*Children must be present at the event in order to receive a bag of supplies. Offer available while supplies last.

STILL TIME TO SAVE! AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP PROMOTION EXTENDED THROUGH AUGUST

Take advantage of enhanced rebates when you install a qualifying, energy-saving air source heat pump!

From now until August 31, 2022, Stearns Electric members can earn up to \$2,000 in rebates when they install a qualifying, energy-saving air source heat pump (ASHP) and enroll on our EnergyWise® Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs for the first time.

Members receive more rebate dollars based on the ASHP's heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF) and whether or not you also have an electric resistive heat source (i.e. base board heat, plenum heater or boiler).

If you're constructing a new home or replacing an aging air conditioner, an air source heat pump might be a good choice for you!

We also have a promotion for ductless/mini-split ASHPs with a HSPF rating of 9.0 or higher. Members can receive up to \$750 when a new unit is purchased and installed before August 31, 2022.

Visit www.stearnslectric.org or call the Energy Service department at (800) 962-0655 during regular business hours for more information.



ASHP	REBATE
≥ 9.0 HSPF Ductless ASHP w/ Delivered Fuels	\$450
≥ 9.0 HSPF Ductless ASHP w/ Electric Heat (9kW min.)	\$750
≥ 8.2 HSPF Ducted ASHP w/ Delivered Fuels	\$800
≥ 8.2 HSPF Ducted ASHP w/ Electric Heat (9kW min.)	\$1,000
≥ 9.0 HSPF Ducted ASHP w/ Delivered Fuels	\$1,600
≥ 9.0 HSPF Ducted ASHP w/ Electric Heat (9kW min.)	\$2,000



2022 YOUTH TOUR

Cambel Shepherd, daughter of Linda and Col Shepherd of St. Cloud, recently returned from her trip representing Stearns Electric Association at the Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. June 14-19, 2022.

During the trip, Cambel and the other Minnesota delegates visited Capitol Hill and met with several of Minnesota's congressional leaders. Delegates also toured Washington D.C.'s famous monuments, visited Arlington Cemetery, took a Potomac River cruise, attended a baseball game and toured the Smithsonian Museums.

Cambel will provide a recap of her Youth Tour experience for members at the 2023 Annual Meeting.

CEO MESSAGE

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RISING GENERATION COSTS

Last month I wrote about energy demand and the potential for temporary power outages in Minnesota this summer. As a follow-up, I want to share more about the economic impacts we experience with our existing power generation resources.

We all know that the price of fuels are at an all-time high. This impacts us in several different ways, not just when we fill our vehicles up with gas.

When it comes to energy purchases, about 25% of the energy we purchase from our wholesale power provider Great River Energy (GRE) is from the general energy market and 61% comes from renewables. Since more and more of these market purchases are generated by wind and natural gas, it has led to higher energy pricing across the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO).

When the demand for energy increases and supply is tighter, such as during a summer heatwave, energy prices increase even more.

GRE plans annually for rising energy demand during the summer. However, the unprecedented price hikes have far exceeded the plan for the current year. When that happens, the extra cost gets rolled up into the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) and passed along to our members on their power bills. (You can read more about that in the April 2022 CEO Column.)

If you recall, GRE also has peaking stations throughout Minnesota that go into service when energy demand is projected to reach close to capacity. These peaking stations are designed to run on both natural gas and diesel fuel. Peaking stations can provide energy in any amount when needed.

Though these stations allow us to meet demand for our member-consumers, during this time in our history when both prices for natural gas and temperatures are so high, running the peaking stations has an economic impact on our Cooperative and our members.

But it's not all bad news. Even though the demand for electricity in Minnesota approached record levels in June and MISO implemented conservative operations on June 15 in anticipation of a prolonged heatwave, emergency measures to maintain system reliability were not implemented.

From June 19-21, wind generation sources performed extremely well in Minnesota, which helped keep market energy prices in our region down even despite the heat. Plus, the wind energy allowed GRE's peaking stations to remain idle.

"Wind resources provided low-cost energy much of the time [during the heatwave], but our natural gas peaking plants were ready to ensure reliability for the grid and provide energy hedges for our member-owners as market prices escalated," Greg Padden, GRE Market Strategy Director, said.

We realize it is a challenging and volatile time. Stearns Electric continues to work daily on our members' behalf to serve you with reliable, affordable energy.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Doege".

Robin C. Doege
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was called to order on May 26, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph office of Stearns Electric Association.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Board policy 40, Board of Director Meetings, was approved.
- Manager of Finance Cindy Anderson presented an update on the Power Cost Adjustment charges from Great River Energy (GRE) for the year. Even with GRE refunds, a significant PCA will be passed along to members on their June bills.
- Darrick Moe of MREA presented on programming available to cooperatives and provided a brief legislative update.
- Two guests from GLTA presented a pre-design report for a new Stearns Electric Association headquarters facility, as outlined on the prior strategic plan. Board members created a facilities committee to further discuss future Cooperative facility needs.
- Contracts for Integrity Contracting and Highline Construction were approved.
- CEO Robin Doege briefly presented an update on the MISO market and the cost of power generation resources in his CEO Report.

NEXT BOARD MEETING
July 28, 2022



ENERGY AND INNOVATION

Nestled in the country outside of Little Falls, Myron Czech and his wife Debbie own and operate Pike Hills Dairy. Their son Brent is also part-owner. In the last several years, Pike Hills Dairy has taken advantage of new technologies and innovative farming solutions to help with daily operations. The Czechs plan to add even more innovative operations into the future.

Myron Czech grew up on the family farm in Little Falls. Owning and operating the farm was always the plan, ever since he was little. Once he graduated from college, he came back to Little Falls to help run the family farm.

"When I graduated, we had 27 stalls. The first thing I did when came back to the farm was increase that to 66 stalls," he recalled.

When his neighbors down the road retired 25 years ago, the Czechs purchased their farm, too. Today, they operate a 1,000-cow dairy farm and 1,300 acres of farmland at the Pike Hills Dairy location.

INNOVATIVE MINDSET

Myron has always had a vision for his farming operation and has taken advantage of new technologies and energy efficiency rebates to help grow the farm and provide comfort for his livestock.

"I don't mind being on the cutting edge of a new project, but I don't want to be on the bleeding edge," he explained.



Debbie and Myron Czech in the basement of the milking parlor.

"I'd rather let others get the kinks out before implementing something new."

This mindset has led to some well thought out and innovative upgrades at the farm.

One of those things is the basement of the milking parlor, which helps keep equipment safe and allows for future technology to be installed.

Though the barn looks like something you'd expect to see from the outside, as you walk around the new barn, which was completed in June 2021, you'll notice several other upgrades which provide enhanced comfort for the cows and time-saving measures for employees.

These include a ventilation system that keeps wind speeds controlled to around 7 mph at all times, essentially keeping the cows cool, and polycarbonate siding, which protects the cows against the elements in Minnesota but still allows natural sunlight into the barn.

The most innovative addition, however, is the automated manure management system. Though not unique to farms in Central Minnesota, this installation is phase one of a larger project to eventually install a methane digester on the farm.

Partly economically driven and partly environmentally driven, Czech says "it's the right thing to do with what we know today."

SO, HOW DOES IT WORK?

The manure from the barn is scraped across the floor to an electric auger, which carries it across the barn into a pit. Once there, it is transferred through a manure room and pumped out into a manure pit.

Future plans are to haul the manure 16 miles away to another farm where they are currently in the planning stages of a methane digester, which will extract the methane from the manure. The manure will then come back to Pike Hills Dairy where it will be stored until it is time to spread over the fields.

The extracted methane will eventually be sent to an injection point and introduced to the natural gas pipeline. That same natural gas gets sent across Central Minnesota and beyond to heat homes and businesses.

If things continue to develop, it's possible a methane digester could be installed at Pike Hills Dairy in Little Falls so they would no longer have to transport the manure 16 miles both ways. This is an extensive process, however, which would take several years to implement.

Additionally, they have plans to install a separating system in the existing manure room. This will allow the Czechs to separate the sand, which is used for cow bedding, from the manure. From there, the manure will continue along the process outlined above while the sand will be dried and reused again for bedding.

"There is always a chance technology will change throughout the process and you will need something additional that you didn't plan for initially," Myron explained. "With farming, the greatest challenges for me are the unintended consequences of implementing new equipment and technology. There's always the 'next thing' that surprises you."

CONSIDERING AN UPGRADE?

If you are considering implementing any new technology into your farm, don't forget to call Stearns Electric Association. The Cooperative is committed to providing reliable electric service and innovative energy solutions for our members. In order to help our commercial, industrial and agricultural (CI & A) members save money and use energy more wisely, we provide an extensive rebate program in partnership with our wholesale power provider, Great River Energy.

"Our rebates and grants assist our members with the initial cost of energy efficient installations," John Pantzke, Stearns Electric's Business Development Representative, said. "When we connect with our members as they plan or complete their project, it's our goal to ensure that operational changes and new equipment are as energy efficient as possible. We are also able to help determine energy and cost savings by calculating the anticipated return on investment before the project gets underway."



The ventilation system and polycarbonate siding on the barn help keep the cows comfortable.

Czech provided this advice for others who are looking at automated technologies or new energy solutions:

"Implementing labor-saving efficiencies is a tremendous value. Just remember, it doesn't always replace people. It does, however, reallocate your time to do the things you want to do," he explained.

"I've always enjoyed farming and evolving the farm," he concluded. "Every time we grow another step, I have to grow too."

STEARNS ELECTRIC HAS REBATES AVAILABLE FOR:

- Dairy free heaters
- Dairy plate coolers
- Robotic milking systems
- Variable frequency drives
- Livestock waterers
- Ag ventilation
- Engine block timers
- Hog farrowing mats
- LED lighting
- Electric forklifts
- Heating and cooling systems
- And more!

*Rebates for custom projects are also available.
Visit www.stearnslectric.org or call us at
(800) 962-0655 to learn more.*

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CO-OP: JOIN THE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT GROUP

Stearns Electric is looking for members to serve on the Cooperative's Member Engagement Group (MEG). The MEG gives members a chance to learn more about the Cooperative and our services. The MEG also serves as a sounding board for the Cooperative, helping the Co-op board and staff gain ideas and proposals for new and existing programs.

Serving on the committee is a two-year commitment for a total of 8 meetings. Meetings are typically held on the second Wednesday of September, November, February and May at 6:30 p.m. A light supper is provided.

In return for your participation, committee members receive a \$50 honorarium for each meeting attended, plus mileage. There are limited spots available in each district. If you are interested in joining, visit www.stearnselectric.org to apply by August 1, 2022. If you have any questions, call our office during regular business hours at (800) 962-0655 or email the MEG Coordinator at communications@stearnselectric.org.



The Member Engagement Group learns more about power generation at the May 2022 meeting.



ELECTRIC SAFETY

USE LIGHTS THAT ARE RATED FOR OUTDOOR USE

If you plan on sprucing up your patio or other outdoor areas with string lights or hardwired light fixtures, make sure the lights are rated for outdoor use. This means that the components will be less susceptible to sun damage, wear and tear, and may also be safe to use in a wet location.

MEMBER NEWS

BEWARE OF SCAM CALLERS

We have been informed of an increased number of scam callers recently. Please know that Stearns Electric will always ask you to verify your account with specific personal information such as account number, name, address, etc. when we call you. We will also never call and allow you only a few minutes to pay your utility bill prior to being disconnected. Please stop and think before releasing personal banking information over the phone. Call us at (800) 962-0655 with any questions.

 **LIKE US ON FACEBOOK**
www.facebook.com/stearnselectric

CAPITAL CREDITS

When Stearns Electric Association experiences financial success, we return cash to our members in the form of Capital Credits. As a Cooperative, Great River Energy (GRE), Stearns Electric's generation and transmission (G&T) partner and wholesale power provider, does the same by returning payments to our Cooperative.

In 2022, GRE once again retired patronage capital through cash payments to its member-owner cooperatives. Stearns Electric received over \$799,500 in G&T Capital Credits in March. These funds, along with any Cooperative Capital Credits, will be returned, less estate retirements, to Stearns Electric member-consumers in November.

Currently Stearns Electric is on an estimated 20 to 25-year schedule for Cooperative Capital Credit payouts. The G&T payout schedule mirrors payments from Great River Energy. Checks are only mailed out if they are \$10 or higher. Not all members will receive a Capital Credit check annually.

You can learn more at www.stearnselectric.org/capitalcredits.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know it costs Stearns Electric approximately \$40,000 to install one mile of standard single-phase overhead line and approximately \$70,000 to install one mile of standard three-phase overhead line?

Stearns Electric has 2,605 miles of primary overhead line on our distribution system. We add or replace an average of 15 miles of overhead lines annually.

Overhead wires typically have a steel core for strength and multiple strands of aluminum for conducting electricity. There are many factors to consider when deciding to install overhead lines or underground cable, but one of the pros to overhead construction is that the material and installation costs are quite a bit less than underground construction.

COOKING CORNER

PINEAPPLE BARS

Submitted by: Ramona Fedor

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ C oatmeal | 1 tsp baking powder |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt | 1 can (20 oz) crushed pineapple |
| 1 C brown sugar | $\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar |
| 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C flour | 3 Tbsp corn starch |

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix together oatmeal, salt, brown sugar, flour and baking powder until crumbly. Save $\frac{3}{4}$ C for the topping. Pat remaining mixture as a crust into a greased 9x13-inch pan. On stovetop, cook crushed pineapple, sugar and corn starch until clear, stirring often. Spread the pineapple mixture on the crust. Sprinkle remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ C of oatmeal mixture on the top. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until brown. Enjoy!



SUBMIT YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A \$10 BILL CREDIT

Members may submit one recipe per month by email at communications@stearnselectric.org or mail to: Stearns Electric Cooking Corner, PO BOX 816, St. Joseph, MN 56374. The recipe selected each month for publication will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Recipes not selected will be saved for consideration in future publications.



STEARNS ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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TIME FOR A TUNE UP

WITH A \$25 REBATE FROM STEARNS ELECTRIC



INCREASE
EFFICIENCY



SAVE
MONEY



EXTEND LIFE
OF A/C UNIT



LOWER
HUMIDITY

From now through September 1, Cooperative members can receive a \$25 rebate when an air conditioning contractor performs a central air conditioning tune up.

- The AC tune up must be performed within the Stearns Electric service territory.
- A completed rebate form and receipt must be submitted no later than September 1, 2022.
- The rebate will be issued as a credit on your electric bill.

Learn more and download our rebate form at www.stearnselectric.org.