



BOARD AND *BREWS*

SEPTEMBER
2022

member driven.
community focused.
energy smart.

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(800) 962-0655
WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG

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COOPERATIVE LAUNCHES NEW DISTRICT EVENTS: BOARD AND BREWS

Stearns Electric is a democratically-controlled business, which means the Cooperative is governed by local people and elected by you, our member-consumers. One elected member from each of our nine districts serves on the Cooperative's Board of Directors.

We have heard from our board members that they want to be more engaged with the members in their district. We have also heard from our members that they want more opportunities to meet their directors. So, we are trying something new this year!

Our Board and Brews events provide members with the opportunity to meet their directors, ask questions and mingle with others in their district. These events are designed to be informal, so there is no agenda.

Unlike some of our larger, annual events that are more centrally located, Board and Brews events are district-specific. Therefore, members who want to attend the Board and Brews events

might have a location closer to home than our Annual Meeting or Member Appreciation Pancake Feed.

Join us for the event in your district for coffee and conversation. These events are all hosted at local businesses that are also members of Stearns Electric. A list of events can be found on page 2.

Visit our website or call us at (800) 962-0655 if you have any questions regarding your district event.

We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event!



SAVE THE DATE

*Check out page 2 to
find the event
hosted in your district!*

CURRENT ENERGYWISE PARTICIPANT NOTICE

IS YOUR ENERGYWISE DUAL FUEL SYSTEM WINTER READY?

If you have a Dual Fuel Heating system, now is the time to be sure your back-up heating system is prepared and that you have adequate fuel supply.

When will dual fuel heating systems be controlled?

- During periods of high demand (coldest winter evenings) and when market prices are high, but other factors can lead to load control as well.
- Up to 400 hours during the heating season.
- Any time of the day, but typically in the early evening (4:30 - 9:30 p.m.) and occasionally in the morning.
- This upcoming winter, participants should expect a noticeable increase in controlled days than in years past due to the volatile propane and natural gas markets.

We encourage you to fill your secondary fuel source now (especially if it's propane). Fossil fuel prices are expected to climb over the coming months and peak high during the middle of winter. According to the experts, now is the cheapest time to fill fuel tanks for the coming winter season.

Remember to check before you flip your breaker off.

Are you planning to close up your seasonal home, head out on a long vacation or travel south for the winter? Be sure you don't inadvertently shut off the breaker that supplies power to your off-peak meter for either your electric water heater or off-peak electric heat source. This will cause the electric heat or water heater to be billed at the general service rate instead of the off-peak rate.

If you have an electric water heater, we encourage you to have a qualified installer equip your water heater with a disconnect switch. This would enable you to shut off your water heater at your convenience while maintaining power to the off-peak meter.



BOARD AND BREWS EVENTS NEAR YOU

DISTRICT 1 • GREG BLAINE

Thursday, October 27 | 10 a.m.
Stone Hill Bar & Grill
3554 230th Street, Randall

DISTRICT 2 • ARLYN LAWRENZ

Tuesday, November 1 | 10 a.m.
House of Pizza
1733 Pine Cone Road S Ste 200, Sartell

DISTRICT 3 • MICHAEL CRAMER

Tuesday, October 25 | 10 a.m.
St. Augusta American Legion
1894 247th Street, St. Augusta

DISTRICT 4 • RANDY ROTHSTEIN

Tuesday, October 18 | 9 a.m.
Dino's Eden Lakeside Club
15445 County Road 9, Eden Valley

DISTRICT 5 • JEFF KOEHLER

Wednesday, October 19 | 9 a.m.
Bayer Built Woodworks, Inc.
24614 US-71, Belgrade

DISTRICT 6 • BOB NIEHAUS

Thursday, October 20 | 10 a.m.
Albany Sportsmen's Club
30852 State Hwy 238, Albany

DISTRICT 7 • LONNIE IVERSON

Wednesday, October 19 | 10 a.m.
Shady's Golden Eagle
13218 County 103, Burtrum

DISTRICT 8 • ERIC PETERSON

Thursday, October 27 | 10 a.m.
Tutti Frutti
38914 County Road 186, Sauk Centre

DISTRICT 9 • JERRY FRIES

Thursday, October 27 | 10 a.m.
Neighbors Route 75
2010 County Road 75, St. Joseph

Visit our website or call us at
(800) 962-0655 if you have any
questions regarding your district event.



CEO MESSAGE

A SEASON FOR SAFETY

September marks a changing of the seasons from summer to fall. Kids go back to school, farmers begin their annual harvest, construction companies kick it into high gear to wrap up their road work projects and the days, unfortunately, get a lot shorter. Fall is a season for safety.

Stearns Electric Association prioritizes safety not only for our employees, but for our members, too. This month, remember to stay safe!

HARVEST SAFETY

Fall is a time for harvest. Pay attention to your surroundings and make sure to stop, look up and look around you while working with large equipment. Look Up and Live!

Make sure your farm equipment can clear the line. Some farm equipment may be able to pass under power lines only when in its lowest position. Also be sure to carry or move long items horizontally, if possible, to avoid contact with power lines.

Use caution when loading grain bins. Enter only if you must and always have another person present if you do so. Use a fall protection harness or a boatswain's chair to reduce fall risks. Never allow children in grain bins, beds or wagons.

LOOK UP AND LIVE!

This is not limited to farmers. Being aware of overhead power lines is important for all members. Power lines can be lower to the ground than they appear, especially in residential areas. Please always look up and be aware of overhead power lines while you are working on top of your roof or climbing a ladder. Never climb trees near overhead power lines and make sure there are no overhead power lines where you plan to build hunting stands or tree houses.

BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY

School is in session, which means there are buses, walkers and bike riders commuting to and from the classroom. Stay alert and avoid driving distracted. Obey school zone speed limits and never pass a bus that is loading or unloading children.

SAFETY ON THE ROAD

Traffic is a big safety concern of our line crews and it's the law in Minnesota to move over, if possible, to protect emergency workers. This includes utility crews. It can be hard to see crews in the early mornings or later evenings now that the days are getting shorter, so pay extra attention. Thank you for moving over for our crews!

Lastly, if you ever find yourself in a vehicle accident involving any sort of electrical equipment – including power poles, green transformer boxes, or substations – please stay in your vehicle and call 911 for help. Do not exit your vehicle until an emergency responder or a utility line worker tells you it is safe.

There is only one exception to this rule and that is if your vehicle starts on fire after an accident. If your vehicle is on fire, you must exit the vehicle by crossing your arms over your chest, getting to the edge of the vehicle and jumping with both of your feet together, making sure not to reach back to the vehicle for any reason. With your feet still together, shuffle at least 100 yards away.

Thank you for doing your part to help keep both you and our employees safe.



Sincerely,

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 July 28, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. at the Melrose office of Stearns Electric Association.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Due to a conflict with the Melrose Area High School, the 2022 Annual Meeting date was changed to Thursday, March 30, 2023.
- Allison Deelstra of Cooperative Finance Corporation shared the 2021 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA). The KRTA is an industry report developed to analyze distribution system operations, help gauge past and present performance, and support predictions of future performance.
- Member Engagement Group members for each district were appointed by the Board.
- The Board approved a Cost of Service and Rate Study, and the restatement of the Co-op's 401k and RS Plan.
- Following recommendation by the Facility Committee, the Board approved a land title survey and geotechnical soil borings for land that has been indicated as a potential site for a new headquarters facility.
- CEO Robin Doege reported that the Cooperative has petitioned the apportionable value of attachments with the Minnesota Department of Revenue.
- The dissolution of SEA Development LLC was approved.

NEXT BOARD MEETING
September 29, 2022



WHERE ANGELS REIGN

SAFE. PEACEFUL. PEOPLE-FOCUSED. ANGEL REINS STABLE IN ST. AUGUSTA IS ON A MISSION TO HEAL HEARTS, HELP HORSES AND MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

Located in the southeastern portion of Stearns Electric Association's service territory, Cooperative member Angel Reins Stable provides a peaceful refuge for those that need it most. Through equine therapy, Angel Reins is serving veterans, survivors of human trafficking and others suffering from PTSD, depression, anxiety, grief and more.

Though officially established in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, Angel Reins Stable has been working its mission for over four years.

"Angel Reins Stable was not my idea; It was a mission placed in my heart from God," founder and executive director Katherine Zachman explained. "It sounds made up, but it's true. When I started this journey, I had a completely different plan in my head. And as I proceeded forward, some doors closed shut but others, the right doors, opened wide."

Zachman has always loved horses and has always had a heart for helping. These traits merged to create Angel Reins Stable.

THE ANGELS

Angel Reins Stable wouldn't be possible without the horses, or "angels." Though the organization is known for helping people, Angel Reins is all about helping horses, too.

"Most of our horses are rescued," Zachman explained. "Horses come to us when people contact me when they see a horse in need, or we see a horse online who needs us. We do our very best to rescue horses as we can."

Their "angel" Cowboy, for example, was rescued from a kill lot in

Louisiana. Zachman saw a video of Cowboy posted online and knew he had to come to Angel Reins Stable in Minnesota.

"Unfortunately, horses, like pets, often end up being sold only to end up in bad places after an owner cannot take care of them any longer, for whatever reason," she explained. "Often times, they end up in what are called kill lots, where they are essentially shipped to other countries for slaughter."

In the case of Cowboy, Zachman happened to see a video posted of him at the right time. She only had two days before he was to be shipped out, so she acted quickly and was able to rescue him.



Veteran Alan with Cowboy.

"Cowboy is a favorite of many of the clients," Zachman explained. "The little buttermilk buckskin is well trained, has a heart of gold and a great sense of humor."

Though Zachman wishes she could rescue all of the horses in need, it's just not feasibly possible. Horses need shelter and space, food and water, farrier and veterinary care, and attention. All of this is readily available to the "angels" at Angel Reins Stable, but space and financial resources can only go so far to keep all of the horses comfortable.

"The horses are so sweet and forgiving, even after everything they have been through," Zachman said. "Before they arrive at Angel Reins, their world is often quite ugly. I think that's one of the reasons why they are so helpful to the clients we serve, who have lived through much trauma and an ugly world themselves."

THE PEOPLE

Angel Reins Stable serves many different people, but especially focuses on veterans and victims of human trafficking.

"The people we serve have experienced a lot of abuse and trauma, and the horses help them in so many ways," Zachman explained. "The horses really seem to see through to each person's soul and connect with each of them in unique ways. Angel for example, an elderly blind horse, actually sees with her heart and has helped many people find peace and healing."

"We've seen it time and time again. The horses add a clarity that these people haven't been able to find in other places. People heal here," she continued. "Horses don't judge. They have no agenda. They just allow people to heal on their own time."

And once you come for therapy and lessons, you become part of the family. In fact, during our meeting at Angel Reins Stable, two veterans, Joe and Ben, and Joe's service dog Gerda, arrived for their riding lessons. They might have been strangers at some point, but on this day, it was obvious that the Angel Reins Stable team is a family who would do anything for one another.

"This whole experience at Angel Reins is changing my perspective for the better! I can't put into words how grateful I am!! This is truly a place of peace and healing, not only that, it's a place of growth, and great friends!" Jack Curtiss, United States veteran, said.

"We really are a family. We have an atmosphere that allows everyone who is at the barn to relax, smile, laugh and feel again," Zachman explained. "It's a safe space here and there is no negative energy. We are grateful for our amazing board of directors and wonderful volunteers."

ONGOING SUPPORT

Angel Reins Stable offers its equine therapy services and horse-riding lessons to their clients at no charge. But like every operation, there are still plenty of expenses.

One of the ways Angel Reins Stable raises money is through fundraisers. The first annual Angel Reins Stable fundraiser, Boots and Blue Jeans, is coming up on October 8 in Clearwater. It will feature a dinner and dance, plus performances by veterans, including Joe and Ben, and the horses. There will be a silent auction and raffle. Additionally, the 4th Annual 5K run/one mile walk is October 22. More information is available at angelreinsstable.org.

Another way they raise funds is through community support, such as the Stearns Electric Association Operation Round Up® program.

Stearns Electric'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 (between 1¢ and 99¢) are placed in a trust fund and administered by a Trust Board appointed by the Cooperative's elected Board of Directors. Operation Round Up® and Stearns Electric members have awarded over \$2.8 million to local non-profit organizations and community service programs since the program's inception in 1993.

"The Operation Round Up® program helps us in so many ways. We are just really grateful for the continued support," Zachman explained. "If we can provide a little peace and healing for the heart of our clients, we are fulfilling our mission. Through programs like Operation Round Up®, we help each other do good things in our communities."



Part of the Angel Reins Stable Team: Bev, Carmen, Joe (sitting on DanDee), Kathy, Ben (sitting on Sir Lancelot) Abbie and Brumby.

Angel Reins is currently in the process of purchasing 10 acres of land next to its current property. The organization plans to build an additional facility there, which includes an office space, indoor riding arena and additional stalls.

"When the expansion is complete, we will be able to serve more people and horses," Zachman explained.

"There are so many emotional connections made here at Angel Reins Stable and so much that happens on an unspoken level," she concluded. "Angel Reins Stable is truly an amazing place."

85
years

Since 1993, Stearns Electric members, through the Operation Round Up® program, have awarded \$2,849,216 to 5,206 local organizations, individuals and worthy causes.

POWER THAT PERSISTS

MN COLD WEATHER RULE

EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule, under statute (216B.097), protects residential utility customers during the cold winter months. Under this rule, your electric service will not be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 through April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and you meet Cold Weather Rule (CWR) requirements.

To qualify, you must meet ALL the following conditions:

- You declare an inability to pay by completing the "Inability to Pay Form".
- Your total household, not individual, income is at or below 50% of the state median income. You must provide the necessary documentation to support this condition.
- Your account is current for the billing period immediately prior to October 1, or you mutually agree to a payment arrangement with the Stearns Electric billing department.

If you do not meet all of these listed conditions, then you do not qualify for the winter shut-off protection. However, you can still continue to receive electric service if you call us to make a mutually acceptable payment arrangement.

The law does allow for Stearns Electric to disconnect when it is necessary from October 1 to April 30, so please act promptly. Before disconnecting electric service during this time, Stearns Electric must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

To avoid a disconnection under the CWR, you must make and keep an acceptable payment arrangement with the Cooperative and meet all the conditions listed above. This applies to all residential customers, including senior citizens and families with young children. If you make and keep a CWR payment arrangement, you are protected until April 30.

Stearns Electric works closely with members during the CWR period, just as we do throughout the year. We don't want to interrupt service to any member, but in a cooperative, all members suffer when any bill remains unpaid. Stearns Electric would rather work with members to establish and maintain adequate payment arrangements of their past due bill, but sometimes a disconnection must take place.

Please contact Stearns Electric during regular business hours if you have any questions about the CWR or Energy Assistance Programs.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

SAVE ON WATER HEATING

Our faucets and appliances use a lot of hot water. To save energy (and money!) used for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR®-certified.

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.

STORED WATER HEATING AND STORAGE HEAT CONTROL PERIOD CHANGES THIS WINTER

Reminder: For the winter season, the electric thermal storage schedules for water heating and space heating are controlled from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. from October 1, 2022, through April 30, 2023.

MREA RECOGNIZES STEARNS ELECTRIC LIFEGUARD

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) recognizes Cooperative employees throughout the state who go above and beyond the expectations of keeping individuals safe through their LIFEguard program. Recently, Stearns Electric lineman Mike Siemers was recognized.

In July, Mike was working in the field when he looked up and noticed two contractors installing metal posts for a chain link fence. As he noticed them, he realized they were about to start driving a post right on top of where the three-phase line was buried.

Mike told his crew lead Bob Barutt, who ran over to stop them. Bob asked if they had any locates in that area and they replied they were told they were all clear. However, this was not the case.

If the posts had been driven in before Mike spoke up, it's likely someone could have been seriously injured or killed. Because Mike was paying attention to what was going on with his surroundings, he was able to stop them before anything bad happened.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know one new overhead transformer on the Stearns Electric distribution system costs an average of \$1,100?

There are approximately 12,000 overhead transformers of various types on our distribution system. We replace or add an average of 320 overhead and pad-mount transformers annually.

A transformer is a device typically used to lower voltage along electric distribution lines to safely provide electric service to homes and businesses. The most common application of a transformer on Stearns Electric's distribution system is to transform single-phase primary voltage of 7,200 volts down to service voltages of 120 and 240 volts.

COOKING CORNER

SWEDISH NUT CAKE RECIPE

Submitted by: Marie Omann

INGREDIENTS

2 C sugar

2 C flour

2 eggs

½ tsp baking soda

1 can (20 oz) crushed pineapple, including juice

1 C brown sugar

½ stick margarine, softened

1 package (8 oz) cream cheese, softened

½ C nuts, chopped

Additional nuts for topping

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix sugar, flour, eggs, baking soda and pineapple in a mixing bowl add ½ C nuts and pour into 9x13" greased baking pan. Bake for 40 minutes. For topping, mix brown sugar, margarine and cream cheese in a bowl. Spread on cake while it is hot and sprinkle top with nuts. 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@stearnslectric.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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MELROSE, MN

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CONTRACT DESIGNER

AMANDA GROETHE

Fuller Creative



CAPITAL CREDITS

CASH BACK IN YOUR WALLET!

Stearns Electric Association refunds capital, above the cost of operations, to its members in the form of Capital Credits. Capital Credit checks, for both Stearns Electric and our wholesale power provider, Great River Energy, are mailed to members in November.

THAT IS THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE!

LEARN MORE

Get your Capital Credit questions answered online at: www.stearnselectric.org/capitalcredits or contact our Capital Credit Coordinator at (800) 962-0655.