



# POWER CONNECTION

AUGUST  
2023

member driven.  
community focused.  
energy smart.

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Operation Round Up®

(800) 962-0655  
[WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG](http://WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG)

VOLUME 23 | ISSUE 08

## STACKS OF FUN!

Thank you to all who joined us at our Member Appreciation Pancake Feed on Saturday, August 5. We had a great day meeting our members, celebrating community and eating a delicious breakfast!

Nearly 1,700 members joined us at the Freeport Community Center for pancakes and sausage, prepared by Kimball Lions Club. In addition to breakfast, we offered a School Supply Send-Off to all children who came to the event. This was a great start for families preparing for the new school year!

Members also had the chance to meet our linemen, learn about their safety gear and sit in a bucket truck.

Thank you, Wild Country 99, for broadcasting live from the event and thank you to our water sponsor, Magnifi Financial, and our milk sponsor, Stearns County American Dairy Association.

*Continued on page 2.*





## PANCAKE FEED CONTINUED...

### \$3 MILLION OPERATION ROUND UP® CELEBRATION

Community is important to the Cooperative, and this year we celebrated our members' commitment to community through our Operation Round Up® (ORU) program! In July, the ORU program awarded its three millionth dollar to local non-profit organizations, community service programs and worthy causes.

Through ORU, participating members round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar. The funds are put in a Trust Fund and used to provide grants within our 2,000-mile service territory. Thank you to all of the members who participate in this program. Your small change makes a BIG difference.

### SAYING THANKS

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 were so excited to see you all this year and look forward to hosting the Member Appreciation Pancake Feed again next year!



**LIKE US ON  
FACEBOOK  
FOR MORE**

Visit our Facebook page for even more pictures from the 2023 member appreciation event!

[facebook.com/stearnsselectric](https://facebook.com/stearnsselectric)

**SAVE THE DATE**

**2024**  
**PANCAKE FEED**  
August 3, 2024



## BOARD AND BREWS EVENTS NEAR YOU

*Do you want to meet the Cooperative's new CEO, discuss the recent rate adjustment or ask questions about our plans for a new headquarters? Join us for our 2023 Board and Brews.*

Board and Brews events provide members with the opportunity to meet their directors and staff, ask questions and mingle with other Co-op members in a casual environment. Soda and coffee will be provided.

Our 2023 Board & Brews events are open to all Co-op members. You are welcome to attend any event, even if it does not align with your district. Visit our website or call us at (800) 962-0655 if you have any questions regarding your district event.

### **DISTRICTS 2, 3 & 9**

Location: House of Pizza  
4040 2nd Street S, St. Cloud  
Date: Tuesday, September 19  
Time: 4:30-5:30 p.m.

### **DISTRICTS 1, 6 & 7**

Location: The Hub Supper Club  
30905 County Road 13, Burtrum  
Date: Wednesday, September 20  
Time: 4:30-5:30 p.m.

### **DISTRICTS 4, 5 & 8**

Location: Woody's Bar & Grill  
111 4th Street N, Greenwald  
Date: Thursday, September 21  
Time: 4:30-5:30 p.m.

# CEO MESSAGE

## ELECTRIC CONNECTION – WHAT EXACTLY IS THE MISO MARKET?

Daily, we use electricity without considering the intricate system behind its delivery to our homes, farms and businesses. The electric grid consists of power plants, wind turbines, power lines, substations and communication tech owned by various utilities, united in the goal of affordable and reliable electricity.

Stearns Electric Association relies on Great River Energy (GRE) for wholesale power, but another vital yet less known player exists: the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). Operating across 15 U.S. states and Manitoba, MISO ensures grid stability by matching power supply with energy demand. MISO helps the region's electricity providers deliver reliable, affordable energy in three ways:

### IT ACTS AS AN 'AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER'

Forty-two million people depend on MISO every day. Think of MISO as the air traffic controller to the region's electric grid. Using sophisticated technology, processes and procedures, MISO maintains a broad view and control of the grid that goes beyond any one utility. This helps utilities maintain reliability on a regional level and prevent emergency operating situations.

### IT MANAGES THE ENERGY MARKET

In the past, generation and transmission co-ops like GRE would generate power and deliver it via power lines to their members. Coordinating the power flows and transactions at that time was a manual process requiring many agreements between utilities. Today, all electricity generation is offered into the MISO market and cooperatives buy back what they need to serve their member-consumers. The MISO energy market helps keep electricity affordable by ensuring the lowest cost generation available is used first to supply member-consumers and minimize flow constraints across the grid. MISO also provides improved price transparency with energy market price changes occurring every five minutes.

### IT PLANS TRANSMISSION

Maintaining a reliable high-voltage transmission system requires ongoing planning efforts. Utilities conduct their own transmission planning, and they collaborate with MISO, which plans the transmission system that serves the entire region. MISO ensures the system is prepared to meet future needs from a regional perspective. It works with the region's electric utilities to minimize the cost of transmission, generation and the energy on the system. Using advanced modeling and research, MISO helps ensure reliable and efficient electricity transmission in the region and beyond.

GRE works closely with MISO to make sure when it designs a plan for the region's electric system, it will serve cooperative members well in terms of both reliability and affordability.

The MISO market ensures regional electricity stability, available 24/7. During extreme weather like scorching summers or polar vortexes, MISO, including GRE, communicates constantly. They collaborate with other facilities, deploying resources to safely lower energy demand, ensuring reliability for millions and maintaining affordability. A crucial partner to Stearns Electric, MISO and GRE play pivotal roles.

Visit [misoenergy.org](https://misoenergy.org) to learn more about MISO.



Sincerely,

Matt O'Shea  
Chief Executive Officer

# BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Stearns Electric Association was called to order on June 29, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph office of Stearns Electric Association.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- The Social Media policy, Corporate Policy 50, was approved.
- Manager of Finance Cindy Anderson presented the revised 2023 Co-op budget, which was updated following the rate adjustment that went into effect on May 1, 2023.
- Board members executed the 2023 RESCO Board Election Ballot.
- The contract with GLTArchitects for the new headquarters facility was reviewed. After a lengthy discussion, the Board approved the contract.
- Regarding the new headquarters, Board members also discussed and approved moving forward with a process to request proposals and interview potential construction managers.
- Board members voted to allow a six-month deferral for a rural economic development loan that is being overseen by the Cooperative. The Co-op will collect an administrative fee during the deferral period.
- VP of Administration and Finance Vicky Herkenhoff provided an update on the ongoing property tax dispute with the MN Department of Revenue. This is impacting several Cooperatives in Minnesota. Co-op Attorney Scott Dymoke advised the Co-op to retain legal counsel that specializes in tax litigation as this dispute moves forward in the appeals process.

### NEXT BOARD MEETING

August 24, 2023





Noah, Lynx National Golf Course, drives EVO Lawn Mower

## EVO ELECTRIC LAWN MOWER: Q&A WITH TIM HINNENKAMP, LYNX NATIONAL GOLF COURSE

Stearns Electric Association, in partnership with our wholesale power provider Great River Energy (GRE), leased a 74-inch electric lawn mower from Mean Green Electric Mowers to replace a diesel-powered machine at Lynx National Golf Course in Sauk Centre.

The electric mower has been mowing areas of the course daily, and employees have been tracking hours used, battery charge, energy cost and user experience, among other things. We sat down with The Lynx owner Tim Hinnenkamp to ask about the experience so far this summer.

**Q: On average, how many hours per day are you mowing with the electric lawn mower?**

**A:** We average about 3 or 4 hours per day on the EVO mower. That's less than we want, but it's been a very dry summer and the grass is only growing so much without any rain. We get about 20 hours total per week.

**Q: How long does it take to charge and what does the charging process look like?**

**A:** Charging is pretty simple – you just plug it in. We plug it in at the end of every day, and by morning it is charged and ready.

**Q: What have you most enjoyed about the machine?**

**A:** The cost savings of the energy used to charge it compared to diesel fuel, which is not cheap. My wife takes care of the finances, so I personally haven't looked at our electricity bill, but I also haven't heard her say it has noticeably increased or decreased.

The machine is also very quiet compared to the other mowers, which is nice.

**Q: What do you least enjoy about the machine?**

**A:** There is no floating deck or rollers, which are necessary when mowing a golf course. There is also no suspension on the seat.

You can feel every bump and hump when mowing with it, and you have to be careful not to char the hills.

**Q: What do your employees say about it?**

**A:** Some really enjoy it and some prefer the diesel machines. I think if there was some suspension for a smoother ride, it would be more enjoyed by our more seasoned staff.

**Q: What has been most surprising to you about the electric lawn mower?**

**A:** I'm surprised by how fast it can go. Thirteen miles per hour is quick for a lawn mower. However, you can't mow at 13 miles per hour because the blades simply cannot keep up with the speed of the machine.

It also doesn't get hot. We can mow for several hours in a row and the mower is not burning up. It's warm, but not really hot.

**Q: Have you had to complete any maintenance on the mower?**

**A:** Besides sharpening the blades, we have not had any maintenance on the machine. Every evening we blow off the grass and plug it in to charge. This is much different than our diesel-powered machines, which we need to clean, refuel and grease often, especially when it's been so dry like this summer because the radiators get so much dust that it takes more time to clean them properly.

**Q: Is there anything else you'd like to share?**

**A:** It's definitely served its purpose so far this summer!

*Check out page 7 to compare the stats in June of the EVO mower to the Golf Course's Sidewinder diesel-powered lawn mowers.*

*Visit our Facebook page for more photos and videos of the EVO mower at the Lynx National Golf Course in Sauk Centre.*



## A YEAR OF SAVINGS WITH INNOVATIVE ENERGY SOLUTIONS **ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

*member since 1997*

**JEFF AND  
GAYLE GIBSON**

### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PURCHASE AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE?**

We bought our Ford Mustang Mach E in October 2021. It was actually never our intention to purchase an electric vehicle, but we got to test drive the Ford Mustang MachE and instantly loved it. We purchased a higher model with a premium battery and it is so fun to drive and ride. It's sporty, powerful and really comfortable for everyone in the vehicle.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST BENEFIT?**

The lack of maintenance is such a benefit because we don't spend the time and money on oil changes. Additionally, the overall cost savings on fuel is a great benefit as well.

### **ARE THERE ANY INCONVENIENCES?**

The "range anxiety" that people talk about is a real thing, but we do our best to plan our trips accordingly. It would be great to have more fast chargers available along I-94.

### **HOW MUCH DID YOU RECEIVE IN REBATES?**

We received a \$500 ChargeWise rebate on our in-home electric vehicle charger. We also received a federal tax rebate.

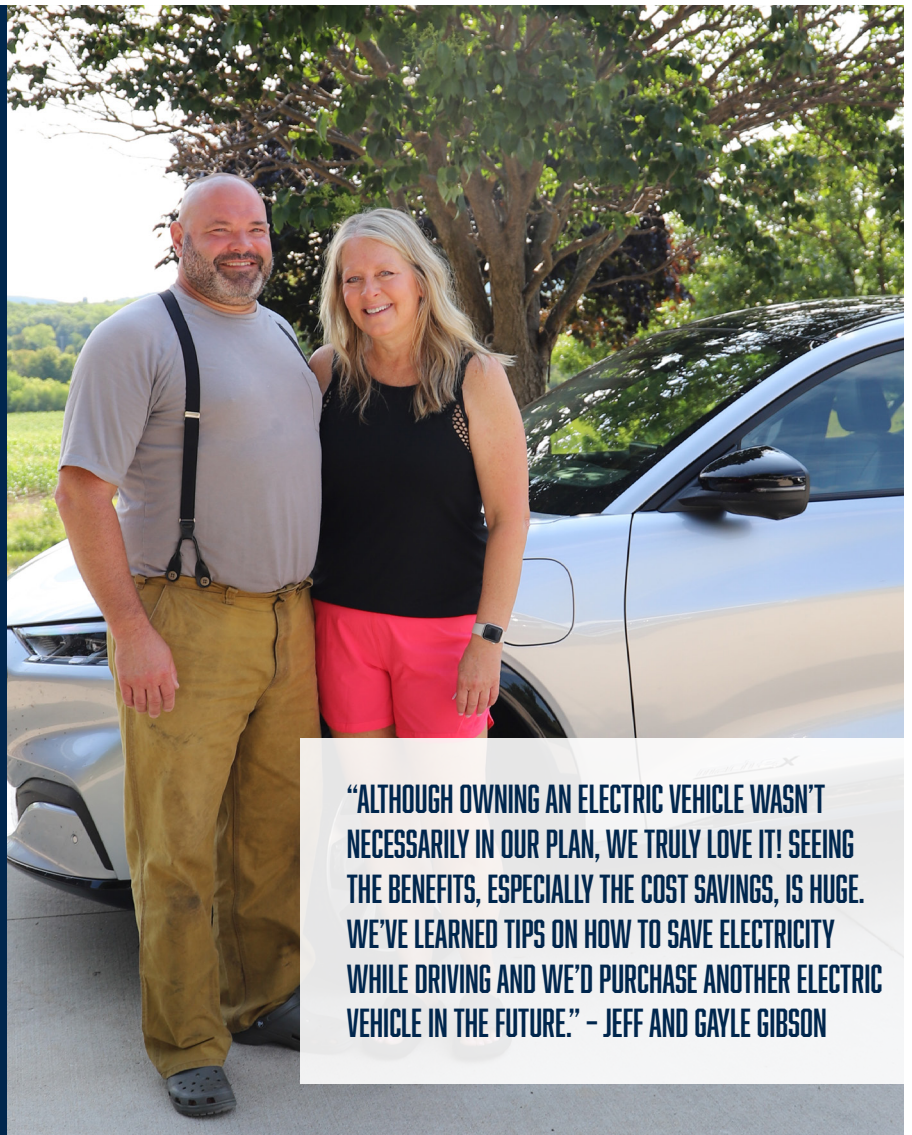
### **HOW MUCH MONEY HAVE YOU SAVED?**

We've saved about \$5,000 a year just in the cost of gas, plus not having to pay for typical maintenance on a gas-powered vehicle. We haven't purchased gas once since owning this vehicle.

### **HOW MUCH ENERGY HAVE YOU SAVED?**

Although we use more electricity charging our vehicle, we save with the lower energy rate by participating in the ChargeWise program. We've saved over 1,300 gallons of gas and by converting both gas and electricity to BTUs of energy, we've saved over 110 million BTUs of energy by driving an electric vehicle versus a gas-powered vehicle.

**ENERGY WISE** 



**"ALTHOUGH OWNING AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE WASN'T NECESSARILY IN OUR PLAN, WE TRULY LOVE IT! SEEING THE BENEFITS, ESPECIALLY THE COST SAVINGS, IS HUGE. WE'VE LEARNED TIPS ON HOW TO SAVE ELECTRICITY WHILE DRIVING AND WE'D PURCHASE ANOTHER ELECTRIC VEHICLE IN THE FUTURE." - JEFF AND GAYLE GIBSON**

## **STEARNS ELECTRIC ENERGYWISE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGEWISE PROGRAM**

ChargeWise is a voluntary program for qualified members who own or lease an electric vehicle. The program allows members to charge their vehicle at home during off-peak hours. Members simply plug in their vehicle and it charges during these off-peak overnight hours at a reduced rate.

### **OFF-PEAK CHARGING TIMES:**

Daily from 11 p.m. – 7 a.m.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

- Electricity for charging your electric vehicle is only available during off-peak hours. This option requires a separate metered circuit installed.
- To qualify for the ChargeWise program, you must be a Stearns Electric member-consumer and own or lease an electric vehicle.

The total cost of installation for the ChargeWise equipment varies depending on current electrical design, code requirements and charging options you choose, among other factors. Stearns Electric will provide the meter and load control demand response unit receiver for free, and members are eligible for a \$500 rebate for the in-home EV charger.

*Stearns Electric offers residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural rebates for our member-consumers. By upgrading to more efficient equipment and enrolling in our EnergyWise programs, you will save money and energy every month. Contact Stearns Electric at (800) 962-0655 for more information.*

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# LOOK UP AND LIVE: POWER LINE SAFETY

Harvest season is right around the corner as tractors, combines and tillage machinery come out of the barn and get ready to do their work. We at Stearns Electric want to remind the community to look up and look out for power lines.

"We know during harvest everyone is busy bringing in produce and grain," Matt O'Shea, CEO, said. "But we want you to be aware of your surroundings and remember to look up. Those power lines are energized, bringing electricity to your farm, family and business. If you do come in contact with a power line, stay in your vehicle or machinery and call 911 right away."

## STAY SAFE THIS HARVEST SEASON BY FOLLOWING THESE TIPS:

- Physical contact with a power line is extremely hazardous and may cause a lethal shock. Equipment should not be operated under a power line in a manner that would cause contact or near-contact with the wires.
- Keep equipment, antennas and people at least 15 feet from power lines at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always set extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads to prevent contact with overhead power lines.
- Equipment that can be extended, such as a stack mower or grain elevator, requires the utmost care when near a power line. Look up and use care when moving any equipment, such as extending augers or raising the bed of grain trucks, around power lines.
- Grain augers should always be positioned horizontally before being moved.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.
- If a power line is sagging or low, contact Stearns Electric Association.

## IF YOU DO COME IN CONTACT WITH A POWER LINE:

- Call 911 as soon as possible and keep the area clear until help arrives.
- If you can do so without risking your machinery or damaging utility infrastructure, drive at least 40 feet away.
- If you cannot drive away, be sure to stay in your cab or on your equipment and keep others away from the area until line crews de-energize the power line. The only exception to this is if your vehicle starts on fire.
- If the vehicle is on fire, then you must get to safety. Exit your equipment by crossing your arms over your chest and jumping clear so that no part of your body touches the equipment and ground at the same time. Land with your feet together and shuffle to safety to avoid electric shock by breaking the current's path.



## ELECTRIC SAFETY

### AVOID ELECTRICAL WIRING WHEN HANGING A PICTURE

Know that electrical wiring typically runs either vertically, up and down the side of a stud or horizontally. Avoid drilling or nailing above a receptacle or light switch. Use a stud finder to locate a wall stud to firmly anchor the picture support.

## MEMBER NEWS

### LAST CHANCE: AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP SPECIAL PROMOTION

Stearns Electric members can receive up to \$1,300 in rebates when they install a qualifying air source heat pump and enroll in our EnergyWise® Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs for the first time. Learn more at [www.stearnslectric.org](http://www.stearnslectric.org) or call our Energy Services team at (800) 962-0655.

### OFFICES CLOSED LABOR DAY

The Stearns Electric offices will be closed on Monday, September 4 in observance of Labor Day. If you experience an outage during the holiday, please call us at (800) 962-0655 or report your outage via SmartHub. Line crews are on call 24/7 to respond to any emergency situation.



## EVO LAWN MOWER CONTINUED...

We compared the stats of the EVO Electric Lawn Mower to the Sidewinder diesel-power lawn mowers used at the Lynx National Golf Club. In June, mowing with the EVO electric lawn mower saved between 85 and 90 mow hours for the Sidewinder diesel-powered lawn mower.

EVO ELECTRIC LAWN MOWER

Hours Mowed  
**69.75**

**119.2 kWh** used to Charge

Overall cost to charge: **\$15.76**

Average cost to charge EVO  
**\$0.23/hour**

SIDEWINDER LAWN MOWER (DIESEL-POWER)

**85 Mow Hours**  
Saved by using EVO Instead

Cost for Diesel:  
**≈ \$4 PER GALLON**

(Per Hinnenkamp, the Sidewinder Mower uses 1 gallon per hour to mow)

Cost Savings: **\$340**

## OPERATION ROUND UP® AWARDS OVER \$33,000 IN JULY, \$3 MILLION SINCE INCEPTION

The Stearns Electric Association Trust Board of Directors met on Wednesday, July 12 to award funds through the Cooperative's Operation Round Up® (ORU) program. They distributed \$33,300 to 39 local organizations and charitable causes. Since it began in 1993, ORU and Stearns Electric members have awarded over \$3 million to local non-profit organizations and community service programs.

Through the Operation Round Up® program, members of the Cooperative round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar. The rounded-up funds (between 1¢ and 99¢) are placed in a trust fund that is administered by the Trust Board.

Any local non-profit organization or charitable cause can apply for funding. The next deadline is Friday, October 13.

## COOKING CORNER ORANGE CRÈME DESSERT

*Submitted by: June Puchalla*

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 C orange sherbet, softened
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ C orange juice
- 1 8 oz. tub cool whip (thawed)

### DIRECTIONS

Line a 9 x 5" loaf pan with foil. Spread sherbet on bottom and freeze for 10 minutes. Beat cream cheese until creamy. Gradually add milk and orange juice and beat until well blended. Gently fold in cool whip. Pour over top of sherbet. Freeze 3-5 hours or until set. Invert pan onto plate and remove foil. 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@stearnsselectric.org](mailto:communications@stearnsselectric.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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# LAST CHANCE TO SAVE UPGRADE YOUR AIR CONDITIONER

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF REBATES UP TO  
\$1,300 WHEN YOU INSTALL A QUALIFYING,  
ENERGY-SAVING AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP!

DUCTED UNITS		
ASHP	Standard Rebate	Promotional Rebate
8.2 – 8.9 HSPF	\$500	\$1,000
≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$800	\$1,300
DUCTLESS/MINI SPLIT UNITS		
ASHP	Rebate w/ Resistive Electric Heat	Rebate w/ Delivered Fuels
Min. ≥ 9.0 HSPF	\$750	\$450
CALL (800) 962-0655 TO LEARN MORE!		

NOTE: Only new ducted and ductless installations qualify for the 2023 Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) promotion. Ducted units must also be installed on the EnergyWise Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning programs for the first time to qualify. EnergyWise programs must be checked out by Stearns Electric on or before December 31, 2023.



All members who install a  
new ASHP by August 31 will  
receive a chance to win a  
Milwaukee electric  
leaf blower.



Visit [energywisemn.com/promotions](https://energywisemn.com/promotions) to learn more and  
complete a quiz for your chance to win a \$500 energy credit!

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