Operation Round Up donates $5,300 to local groups

Co-op hosts mini session for MN legislators

District 1 members needed for 2020 elections

Growing grapes on the vine

A FRUITFUL HARVEST
Across the United States there are over 900 electric cooperatives that provide electric service in 47 of our country’s 50 states. There is a saying in our industry that if you’ve seen one cooperative, you’ve seen one cooperative. While we are similar in programs, service and mission, every cooperative does things differently due to their location, terrain, technology, staffing, etc.

MiEnergy Cooperative has over 18,000 member-owners, and we serve over 24,000 electric service points. While we have members in very similar account classes such as city, suburban, rural or commercial, everyone is different. The number and type of household appliances, heating ventilation and air conditioning systems, insulation levels, thermostat settings and number of occupants can all be different. In turn, these differences result in different energy use.

Farm operations that appear to be similar can be vastly different. The primary voltage, single phase versus three-phase service, motor sizes, drying bins or aeration bins, cattle waterers, heat lamps and lighting are just a few examples. My point in noting these differences is that changes in our cooperative’s retail electric rates can have vastly different impacts to each individual member’s electric bill. For a residential service, a higher kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge will impact a family of four greater than a retired couple, just based on different lifestyles and energy use.

There are market-based energy rates, seasonal rates, time-of-use rates and formula rates that try to accomplish a true energy cost, 5 cents transmission costs and 4 cents cents per kWh on a residential bill is comprised of 3 cents transmission costs and 4 cents recovery of fixed costs.

As we work through the cost-of-service and retail rate review process, the challenge is finding the balance in rate structures to move energy across greater areas, have promoted transmission investments by utilities at a 12% return on their investment, which was recently reduced to 10.8%. For residential accounts that peak billed a demand charge, but rather just a flat basic service charge and a kWh charge, the transmission costs are also rolled into the energy charge and average 4 to 5 cents per kWh.

A simplistic breakdown of the co-op’s energy charge of 12 cents per kWh on a residential bill is comprised of 3 cents true energy costs, 5 cents transmission costs and 4 cents recovery of fixed costs. We have a work to be done, and we are awaiting the results of the new wholesale rate study being undertaken by Dairyland Power Cooperative to update our modeling. In the end, it’s our goal to have retail rates that are price competitive, provide rate choices for our members and be in the members’ best interest.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.
Co-op hosts mini session for legislators

MiEnergy Cooperative hosted two field hearings on October 3 as part of the Minnesota House of Representatives Mini session Co-op hosts for legislators and Economic Development Hearing. The group of nine representatives also heard testimony from the co-op on and Economic Development Hearing. The group of nine representatives also heard testimony from the co-op on disaster relief, broadband and battery storage technology.

The cooperative provided testimony on disaster relief and broadband funding for the Greater Minnesota Jobs and Economic Development Hearing. The group of nine representatives also heard testimony from the co-op on disaster relief, broadband and battery storage technology. The nearly three-hour event kicked off with a tour of the co-op’s headquarters, a fitting place, as it was the recipient of disaster relief funding following the flood of 2007. The tour highlighted the energy efficiency and conservation efforts built into the construction of the headquarters, as well as an up-close look at advancements in the building technology that helps the cooperative’s employees meet the ever-changing needs of its membership. From electronic billing and online apps to pay bills and monitor their energy use, to viewing the live electric mapping of its system, an onsite community solar array, electric vehicles and forklift, MiEnergy showcased why it is viewed as a leader in the electric co-op industry.

According to Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy’s vice president of marketing and external relations, the nearly three-hour event kicked off with a tour of the co-op’s headquarters, a fitting place, as it was the recipient of disaster relief funding following the flood of 2007. The tour highlighted the energy efficiency and conservation efforts built into the construction of the headquarters, as well as an up-close look at advancements in the building technology that helps the cooperative’s employees meet the ever-changing needs of its membership. From electronic billing and online apps to pay bills and monitor their energy use, to viewing the live electric mapping of its system, an onsite community solar array, electric vehicles and forklift, MiEnergy showcased why it is viewed as a leader in the electric co-op industry.

Krambeer addressed the importance of disaster relief funding by the state and the critical role Representative Gene Pelowski, who chaired the day’s event, played in the legislative process following the Rushford flood. The co-op suffered significant flood damage in 2007 to its office, warehouse, inventory, fleet and distribution system. Krambeer explained that at the time of the flood, electric cooperatives were not defined in statute so the cooperative was unable to initially apply for disaster relief assistance from the state. MiEnergy’s predecessor at the time, Tri-County Electric Cooperative, eventually received $2.3 million in state assistance as a 90 percent forgivable loan, which helped cover the remainder of replacing its fleet. “Thank you legislators and Rep. Pelowski who led the way to rework the disaster relief language so it includes electric cooperatives and allows for relief to be dispensed without the necessity of a special session,” Krambeer said.

Legislators also heard testimony on what led to the creation of MiBroadband, which was formed by three cooperatives (Mabel Cooperative Telephone Company, MiEnergy and Spring Grove Communications) looking to serve high-speed internet needs of those living in unserved and underserved areas of southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. Vassil Vutov, MiEnergy’s vice president of information technology, explained how the co-op built a network backbone with a combination of fiber and wireless technology to connect its Rushford and Cresco offices. As the electric industry evolves, communicating via broadband to its 43 substations in Iowa and Minnesota is a necessity for MiEnergy. This combination of fiber and wireless technology, known as fixed wireless broadband, is the solution for the electric co-op’s needs and the ample amount of expandability is how the joint effort with MiBroadband can help make reliable, high-speed internet service a reality for residents living in rural areas. MiEnergy currently has wireless towers in Cresco, Rushford, Peterson and Fountain. As MiEnergy expands its communications technology to all substations, MiBroadband service can be offered in those areas. MiBroadband CEO Jill Fishbaugh noted its Minnesota Border-to-Border grant application request of $2.2 million of a $5 million project that would bring broadband to 12 townships in Fillmore County and three townships in Mower County. It would add 417 fiber passings and over 10,000 wireless passings.

MiEnergy’s final presenters were Kent Whitcomb, member service director, and Kjos on the co-op’s residential battery storage pilot. The purpose of the five-year pilot is to gain insight on battery technology. Whitcomb explained how MiEnergy is one of four electric cooperatives in the nation taking part in the pilot. The co-op has six battery units in the homes of members in Minnesota and Iowa. The 16 kilowatt-hour batteries were the largest capacity available for purchase at the time, but really are not ready for mainstream as it is still cost prohibitive for the average user. On average, the units can cover about 30 percent of a home’s energy use, but that number can fluctuate depending on how much power a home is using. The co-op is researching the battery as a tool for energy management with the idea of taking a home off the grid to be powered by the battery during peak energy demand periods. With advances in battery capacity technology, the costs could go down and batteries could be the future for reducing energy costs, while providing backup power during outages.

Kjos then led a discussion on energy policy in relation to the challenges and opportunities for storage batteries, transportation, renewable energy, distributed generation and grid reliability.

“It is important for policymakers to see firsthand how legislation affects the communities of greater Minnesota. This mini session afforded legislators and the community a time to discuss issues of importance,” Kjos stated.

Director receives credentials for Gold Certificate

Ron Stevens, one of MiEnergy’s board of directors, recently received his Director Gold Certificate. This program offered through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is geared toward directors who are committed to continuing their education to achieve a tangible credential that reinforces their stature as part of a group of experienced and educated directors. Directors must earn education credits by attending various conferences, continuing educational courses and must have previously earned certificates for the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) programs. Congratulations to Ron for completing this program and for your continued dedication to your local electric cooperative.

MiEnergy Cooperative Director Jeff Redalen and employees Johanna Stayskal, Steve Oian and Ted Kjos spent three days in September participating in the electric cooperatives annual Fall Legislative Fly-in to Washington, D.C. It was a successful event as they were able to meet with all Minnesota and Iowa congressional and senator offices to discuss legislative priorities and how these impacts our electric cooperative’s members.

The group was able to meet with Minnesota Congressman Jim Hagedorn, Congresswoman Angie Craig, Congressman Thomas Emmer, Senator Tina Smith and legislative assistants from the offices of Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Congresswoman Ihan Omar, Congresswoman Collin Peterson and Senator Amy Klobuchar. The group met with Congressman Steve King, Congressman Dave Loebsack, Senator Joni Ernst, Senator Chuck Grassley and the legislative assistant from the office of Congresswoman Abby Finkenauer.

The legislative priority discussed was the Reinvigorating Underserved Rural Areas and Lands Act. This bill would ensure cooperatives don’t lose their tax-exempt status if they accept government grants to restore power after natural disasters or promote economic development projects in their communities. In addition, discussions were also held regarding cooperative pension plans, energy storage, electric vehicles and electrification of the U.S. economy.

Building and maintaining relationships with Washington policymakers is important because it allows us to share the cooperative point of view on important federal issues that impact our members.

Participation in national legislative fly-in

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Farm-to-bottle series:

**Fruits of-the Earth tenderly nurtured & gathered**

Grapes, berries and fruit from local vines and trees produce award-winning wines and ciders

As the holidays approach, we anticipate sitting around our tables to celebrate Thanksgiving with family and friends giving our utmost thanks for a bountiful harvest and plentiful meal. This year, let’s consider giving further appreciation to local wine makers who work diligently to grow and produce unique tasting wines to add to our holiday gatherings. We are blessed to have a handful of vineyards in close proximity that have mastered the art of quality wine making, putting Midwest vineyards on the map. This month we feature two wineries located within our service territory who utilize fruits-of-the-earth that are grown to make wine, hard cider and wine coolers with local distinction and merit.

Travel down MiRoads to Riceville, Iowa and Spring Valley, MN to discover Frisky Fox Vineyards and Four Daughters Vineyard and Winery. Two families had the drive and desire to bring additional value-added agricultural life to their generational family farms. You will find more than just wine and grape fields. Both are home to event centers. They have the capability to host special events for public use as well as renting the facility for private groups. Imagine the possibilities. Doesn’t “Dine in the Vines” on a warm summer evening by candlelight or a New Year’s Eve 4-course meal with delicate wine pairings sound appealing? Or how about weddings, showers, art classes and so much more. Visit their websites and social media pages for detailed event and contact information to arrange your next festive happening.

**Frisky Fox Vineyard** is a family owned and operated vineyard & winery located on a farm near Riceville. They specialize in small batches of fruit and grape wines. Pictured is Richard Fox and Zachary Fox. Other family members include siblings Kendall Fox and Whitney Andersen.

Below left: Petite Pearl grapes ripen on the vines at the Frisky Fox one-acre vineyard. They grow nine varieties of grapes and press grapes gathered and harvested from 11 vineyards in Iowa and Minnesota.

Below right: Rhubarb Delight is made by fermenting white grapes with whole rhubarb stalks. This wine retains fresh rhubarb flavors and the grapes provide body with a smooth finish. Over 2,000 pounds of locally grown rhubarb was used this year for the Rhubarb Delight batch.

**Habanero Heat** is the perfect blend of sweetness from white grapes and spiciness from home-grown habanero peppers.

**Loon Juice**, Four Daughters Winery exclusive hard cider line, can be found on tap at hundreds of locations and is distributed in seven states. There are six different kinds of loon juice to choose from along with seasonal options.

Four Daughters’ sprawling estate includes a six-acre vineyard nestled next to their winery. Pictured below is Kristin Osborne and Vicky Vogt. Four Daughters Winery was named in honor of getting Vicky and Gary’s four daughters back to rural Minnesota and involved in an agricultural adventure together. A family that works together, stays together. Even Vicky’s sons-in-law are active team members. “We work very well together and collaboration has become a very valuable asset in our family run business,” says Kristin. “We wouldn’t have it any other way. We are bringing visitors from all over the world to our family’s farm. It’s definitely a family way of life.”

At left, Four Daughters Winery grows cold climate grapes to produce exclusive, distinctive wine for the region. They use their vineyard and locally-sourced grapes and fruit throughout Minnesota to complete production for all of their products.

Below, Frisky Fox Vineyards assortment of wines are available for purchase at local merchants. The complete list can be found at www.friskyfoxvineyard.com. “We typically have between 20-25 wines available at any given time. We are always thinking of new and different flavor options as well as seasonal preferences,” says Zachary. “One of our popular selections is our Roof Raiser Rose which is in honor of the tornado that ripped through the family farmland in 2011 and took the roof right off the farmhouse.”

At right, Vicky and her daughters drive to host events throughout the winter months to keep their patrons entertained. The winery has a great location. It’s close to the city, but yet far enough away from all of the hustle and bustle. A great place to come and unwind and snuggle up next to their large inviting fireplace. And don’t forget about their gorgeous patio for summertime outings that encompasses a great view of their vineyards.

At left, Four Daughters Winery offers a great view of their vineyards. They provide a great location. It’s close to the city, but yet far enough away from all of the hustle and bustle. A great place to come and unwind and snuggle up next to their large inviting fireplace. And don’t forget about their gorgeous patio for summertime outings that encompasses a great view of their vineyards.
Heat and cool with air-source heat pumps

Air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) use electricity to heat and cool. ASHPs work like air conditioners to cool, and in reverse to move warmth from outside air into your home to heat. ASHPs heat homes up to three times more efficiently than forced air and electric resistance heating systems.

If you want an ASHP to be your primary heating system, you'll need a cold climate ASHP (ccASHP) and a back-up heating system. While ccASHPs are more expensive upfront than ASHPs, there is a potential for heating fuel cost savings if you already heat with electricity or propane. ASHPs' heating performance is noted with its HSPF (heating season performance factor).

ASHPs and ccASHPs offer the same cooling benefit as a air conditioner (A/C). ASHP's cooling performance is noted with its SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio), same as you would see for A/C units. Look for SEER 15 or higher for improved energy efficiency.

STANDARD PERFORMANCE AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMP (ASHP)

- Meets cooling and some heating needs
- Highly efficient down to 32°F
- Look for HSPF 8.5 or higher

COOLING SEASON

HEATING SEASON

PREMIUM PERFORMANCE COLD CLIMATE AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP (CCASHP)

- Meets cooling and most heating needs
- Highly efficient down to 5°F
- Look for HSPF 9 for Central or HSPF 10 for Ductless

Information courtesy of Clean Energy Resource Teams, visit CleanEnergyResourceTeams.org/ASHP for more information.

COOLING WITH ASHPS

- ASHPs provide heating and cooling in a single system.
- Units, central ASHPs provide both heating and cooling in a single system.
- Ductless ASHPs don't require ductwork and can be connected to an existing ductwork system.
- Central ASHPs require a dedicated condenser and ductwork.

HEATING SEASON

COOLING SEASON

SEND IN YOUR 2019 REBATE FORMS

MiEnergy has a variety of rebates available to members that purchase energy efficient products and appliances that meet or exceed specific criteria. Those rebates are only available until funds are depleted, or December 31, whichever comes first. Rebate forms are available online at www.MiEnergy.coop or by calling 800-432-2285.

MiEnergy Cooperative’s Operation Round Up Trust Board met recently and donated $5,300 to the following local organizations:

- $200, Decorah Quilts of Valor, Iowa, to purchase fabric for quilts for veterans.
- $250, Mobile Mamma, Cresco, Iowa, to support educational materials for children.
- $300, Peace Lutheran Church, Ridgeway, Iowa, to purchase an automatic external defibrillator.
- $300, Peace Lutheran Church, Ridgeway, Iowa, to purchase an automatic external defibrillator.
- $500, Wykoff Fire Department, Minn., to help purchase road safety equipment.
- $500, Lawler Lions Club, Iowa to support building a new shelter and Croell Park improvements.
- $500, Wykoff Fire Department, Minn., to help purchase road safety equipment.
- $750, Fillmore County Emergency Management, Winona, Minn., for winter survival kits for children program.
- $750, Winona County Emergency Management, Winona, Minn., for winter survival kits for children program.
- $750, St. Charles Public Library, Minn., to help purchase a speaker system.
- $750, Lawler Lions Club, Iowa to support building a new shelter and Croell Park improvements.
- $750, St. Charles Public Library, Minn., to help purchase a speaker system.
- $1,000, St. Lucia Fire Association, Iowa, to support the building of a new fire station.
- $1,000, St. Charles Public Library, Minn., to help purchase a speaker system.
- $1,000, St. Charles Public Library, Minn., to help purchase a speaker system.

Donations to Operation Round Up are tax deductible. The next application deadline is February 15.

To learn more about Operation Round Up or to round up your electric bill, visit www.MiEnergy.coop or call 1-800-432-2285.
Summer projects wrapping up

As cold weather sets in, we take a look at a few projects going on. At bottom, crews work on a line transfer involving the City of St. Charles’ substation and MiEnergy’s substation.

Crews have been working in the City of Lanesboro. At top right, they are stringing new line and at bottom right installing an anchor in a back yard for the City of Lanesboro project.

At left, crews change out a pole for a new underground service northeast of Witoika.

CEO appointed to Governor’s Task Force on Broadband

Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy’s president/CEO, has been appointed to the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband. The Task Force appointments were announced by Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan and includes community leaders throughout the state of Minnesota.

Krambeer has worked in the rural electric cooperative industry for 31 years, of those with MiEnergy and its predecessors. Most recently he has led MiEnergy’s broadband initiative by partnering with Mabel Cooperative Telephone Company and Spring Grove Communications to create a limited liability corporation, MiBroadband, that launched to provide fixed wireless internet service to rural and underserved areas. Krambeer also serves as board president of MiBroadband.

The purpose of the Task Force is to put forth policies to help ensure every Minnesotan has access to high-speed internet, no matter their zip code.

“I’m honored to be selected to serve on the Governor’s Broadband Task Force. Quality broadband service for greater Minnesota is a priority for Governor Walz and cooperatives across Minnesota, Krambeer said.

Other Task Force members include: Tewodros Bekele, Lake Elmo; Nolan Cauthen, Crystal; Dale Cook, Minneapolis; Rhonda Bauer, Chad Chaffee, Kent Whitcomb and Lori Glissues (center).

A blood drive will be held at the Rushford MiEnergy office on Wednesday, Dec. 11. The drive will be from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. MiEnergy’s Rushford office will be hosting an American Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, Dec. 20, from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. This drive also has a special promotion of a free long-sleeved Red Cross shirt while supplies last! The blood drive is open to the public. You are encouraged to secure an appointment time; however, walk-ins are also welcome. Call 1-800-RRED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter MiEnergy to schedule an appointment. Power Red appointments are available at this drive.

ATTENTION SNOWBIRDS

If you are planning to leave your home for an extended period of time this winter, remember to make billing arrangements while you are away. MiEnergy has a number of options to offer:

• Automatic checking/savings withdrawals or credit/debit card payments.
• Online payments, readings, account management and daily/monthly power use available through SmartHub at www.MiEnergy.coop or download the SmartHub App for Android and iOS users.

*: This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
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SUPPORT A TREE STAND

NEVER USE POWER POLES TO SUPPORT A TREE STAND

If you’re using a portable generator on your trip, electrical equipment. If you’re using a portable generator on your trip, electrical equipment. Never shoot at power lines or electrical equipment. Dense trees can especially when placing a tree stand.

For more information, visit www.mienergy.coop.

TRUNK-OR-TREAT – CRESCO

Pat Boyle handed out candy to more than 500 kids during Cresco’s Community Trunk-or-Treat event at the Cresco Fitness Center parking lot.

TRICK-OR-TREAT – RUSHFORD

MiEnergy employees also handed out candy to 300 trick-or-treaters inside the St. Charles Mall during the Rushford/Peterson Valley Business Trick-or-Treat event. Pictured is Brenda Tesch with her son Riley (l) and student volunteer Alexis Mindalavi (r).
Interruptible heat test Nov. 20

If you participate in MiEnergy’s interruptible heating (also known as dual fuel or load management), your system will be tested on Wednesday, Nov. 20 beginning at 5 p.m.

At that time, the electricity powering your electric heating system will be interrupted and cause your backup heating system to operate. All power will be restored by 11 p.m.

This annual test is conducted to ensure that your backup heating system is working and will adequately keep your home at a comfortable temperature during control periods this winter. The test also ensures the control equipment is functioning properly.

In honor of Veterans Day and to thank our veterans, until Nov. 30, 2019, we are offering all active and former military members a 15% discount on the purchase of a base package. Thank you for serving and protecting our country.

Even if you’re not a veteran, as a co-op member, you’ll receive a 10% discount on the purchase of a base package.

Our smart home security systems protect against threats and help automate your life. Let us help you!