

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

January 2022

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO
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2021 in the rearview mirror

As one year ends and another begins, it's always beneficial to take a look back and reflect on what the previous year held. 2021 brought numerous positives to Butler County REC (BCREC):

- \$1,213,691.29 in patronage returned to members
- \$2,617,476.77 in excess margins allocated to keep your cooperative financially sound
- A negative energy cost adjustment (ENERGY COST ADJ on members' bills) of -0.00114 was implemented
- We received top ratings for our Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) audit from IAEC—named one of the top two cooperatives in the state for safety
- Our employees celebrated another year of no lost-time accidents
- Employee-donated funds, along with matching funds from the board and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, totaled \$1,400 for our Charity of the Year—Royal Family KIDS Camp, Sumner, for area foster children
- BCREC's solar arrays produced enough energy to power over 45 homes for a year
- Tom Wubbena retired after 43 years and Mike Boomgarden after 31 years of service to our members
- Eight employees volunteered 760 hours to their communities
- Director Allyn Harms, Clarksville, received his National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Director Gold credential
- Our annual meeting was again directors-only with a second successful mail-in ballot election
- 70 members contributed to RECare, our program of members helping members with their power bills during the winter season
- Ethan Schellhorn, Sumner, was awarded a \$1,000 Basin scholarship after we received 18 applications
- Youth Tour scholarships were awarded to Cael Ruzicka, Marble Rock, and Evan Bjelica, Charles City—both interviewed in 2019 for the canceled 2020 Youth Tour
- We provided loans to Butler-Grundy Development Alliance, Allison, and Sarge's Distillery, LLC, Fredericksburg
- Bryce Bruns, apprentice lineman, and Tyler Opperman, energy services advisor, became part of our BCREC family
- The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives held their first Iowa Youth Leadership Academy seminars for high school students to learn more about electric cooperatives, with BCREC having eight attendees
- George North, Allison, was one of three winners of the inaugural Shine the Light volunteer program
- Communication protocols were put in place for lessons learned during the first-ever rolling blackouts
- Your board of directors approved a new metering system to be installed in 2022
- BCREC received mutual aid from four cooperatives after storms and high winds in August
- Three employees and one director were honored for 25 years of service: Craig Codner, John Groen, Lori Roose, and Gerald Schmitt
- Our Facebook likes reached 1,530
- Our line crews: rebuilt 11.23 miles of line through the Construction Work Plan, built or rebuilt 4.84 miles of line through work orders, installed 1.12 miles of underground line, completed 190 work orders, and set 494 poles
- In addition, line crews were dispatched to 116 after-hours calls from the 3,538 calls received by SRS, our after-hours call service
- Rural Utilities Services (RUS) completed a successful Loan Fund and Accounting Review of BCREC and found that we are compliant with their requirements
- Strategic planning was held with employees and directors to discuss and design the best direction for the cooperative

MEMBERS vs REC: What is YOUR responsibility?

With the flip of a switch, electricity illuminates our lives. While it's important to understand how you receive electricity, it's equally important to know the parts of your electrical service that you own and are responsible for when damage occurs or maintenance is needed.

Your electric cooperative provides electricity to numerous points of service at homes, businesses, and organizations. We build and maintain overhead and underground power lines and manage the equipment needed to provide you with safe, reliable power – but we don't own or maintain the power lines that run from your meter pole to your home or building. Those lines belong to the property owner and are the owner's responsibility to have repairs or improvements made when needed.



The power line running from the meter pole to serve a building is owned by the property owner, not the cooperative. That means co-op members also own any service disconnect and breakers that extend from the meter to their property. Your electric cooperative does not provide service or maintenance on this equipment.

What do members own?

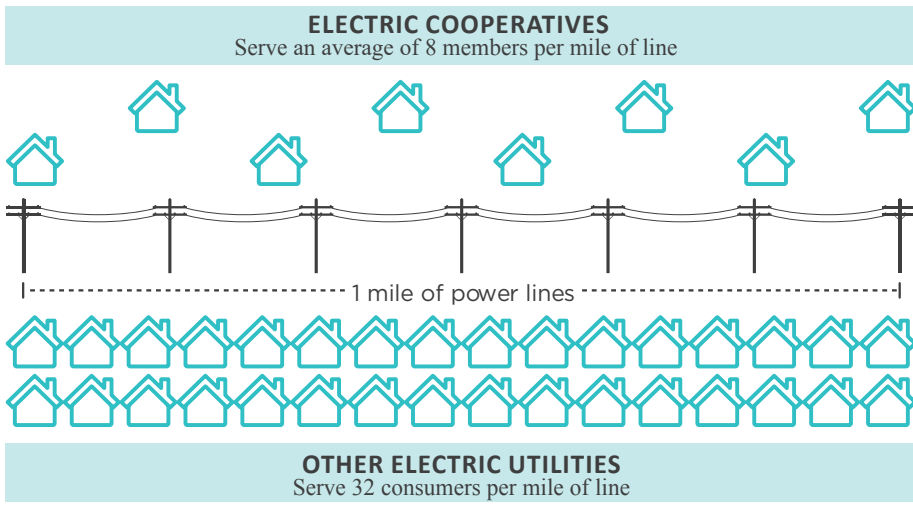
- Service lines from meter pole to property
- Service disconnect breakers on meter pole
- Double throw switch on meter pole (used for a standby generator)
- Breaker boxes or switches inside the property

What does your electric cooperative own?

- Distribution power lines and poles
- Transformers, switches, and all equipment in the distribution service
- Meters and meter sockets (metal housing) on service poles

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Electric co-ops maintain more miles of power lines per consumer than other electric utilities. Even though we power fewer consumers on our lines compared to other utilities, we'll always go the extra mile for you, the consumer-members we proudly serve.



Are you wasting your money on

DIRT?

Dirty air filters cause a heating and cooling system to work harder and break down faster. That's because unfiltered dust and grime works into critical parts, creating friction that causes unnecessary wear and, eventually, failure.



How does a dirty air filter cost you?

- Reduces air flow in the home, leading to up to 15 percent higher operating costs
- Leads to costly duct cleaning or replacement
- Lowers system efficiency

To avoid these expenses, change filters monthly when your heating and cooling system's in regular use. Discuss cleaning the unit and ductwork with your heating and cooling service professional.

Learn more ways to save at www.energysavers.gov.

Source: High Performance HVAC, U.S. Department of Energy



- Dependents of cooperative members are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship for tuition at a two-year or four-year college. Contact your electric cooperative for information.
- Corn Belt Power Cooperative partners with Northwest Iowa Community College (NWICC) in Sheldon, Iowa, to offer four \$500 scholarships. Recipients must be students at NWICC studying Industrial and Commercial Wiring, Powerline, or Powerline Technology. Contact Sheila Van Engen, 800-352-4907 ext. 246, or svanengen@nwicc.edu. Application deadline is March 1, 2022.
- Corn Belt Power also partners with Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville, Iowa, to offer one \$500 scholarship for students enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program. For more information, contact Institutional Advancement, 712-362-0450 ext. 0491, or institutionaladvancement@iowalakes.edu. Application deadline is March 1, 2022.

Visit our website for additional information on scholarship opportunities.

Need a new electric water heater for the new year?

Contact us for information on the Marathon--offering durability, lightweight design, and a limited lifetime tank warranty for original purchaser.

Generous rebate available!



Are portable space heaters efficient for my home? By Abby Berry

Small space heaters are meant to do just that: heat a small space. But many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can take a toll on energy bills.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping.

Maybe your home is energy efficient but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a

space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and make sure the heater is properly sized for the space.

A word about safety: the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths.

If you use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place

the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, be sure to contact us.



TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.





YOUR 2022 ANNUAL
MEETING IS SET FOR
SATURDAY, MARCH 26.
DETAILS COMING SOON.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO
SEEING YOU!

BCREC's Katie LaBree and her Youth Tour experience



"Life changing" is how Katie LaBree, Butler County REC's business development manager, describes her Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. between the summer of her junior and senior years at Elk River High School, Elk River, Minnesota. "The trip takes students out of their comfort zone, and history becomes real."

Katie's trip was through Anoka Electric Cooperative (now Connexus Energy), Ramsey, Minnesota, of which her parents were members. She had to write a paper and was then interviewed before being chosen, along with two others, for the trip.

"The trip is one memory from high school that really stands out to me," Katie commented. "It gives students, especially rural students, the opportunity to see the history of the United States." While in Washington, D.C., the students saw the Smithsonian Institute; George Washington's home, Mt. Vernon; the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; and the Lincoln Memorial at night. In addition, they attended the musical *The Phantom of the Opera*. "It was an impactful trip," she added.

While on the trip, Katie also learned about the cooperative business model. "The sessions really stuck with me. And the way cooperatives are set up, the culture is passed on through the trip. You're immediately friends with the others on the trip—much like working for a cooperative."

In an interesting coincidence, Butler County REC board director Share Brandt of Allison was a chaperone for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association on the same Youth Tour trip that Katie attended!

If you are a high school junior whose parent or guardian is a member of Butler County REC or resides in Aplington, Fairbank, Fredericksburg, or Readlyn, you are eligible to apply for the **FREE Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.** June 18-24, 2022. In addition, Butler County REC offers **\$500 college scholarships** for the top three students applying for the Youth Tour.

Are you ready for your life-changing trip? Visit our website at www.butlerrec.coop, or call us at 888-267-2726 for more information and an application!

Honored for 25 years of service

Congratulations to these 25-year BCREC employees and director, honored at the annual meeting of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. Thank you for your service to our members!



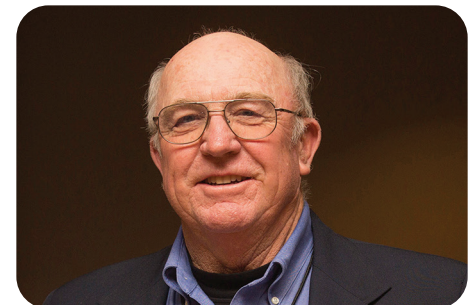
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John Groen, GIS coordinator



Lori Roose, accounting clerk



Gerald Schmitt, director

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