

Operation Round Up helps local programs

The North Star Electric Cooperative Community Trust Board met on Jan. 8 to review the 26 applications, which they had received requesting funding for various programs. The total amount that was requested was \$53,855. The board had \$7,000 to work with so it was not an easy task selecting which group would get funding and what amount they would receive.

Many local programs and organizations benefit from Operation Round Up, a voluntary member-driven fundraising program of North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., that is designed to provide financial assistance for worthwhile projects and charities in the area. Donations are given to individuals or organizations to help make the area a more pleasant and safe place to live.

All funds for Operation Round Up are contributed by the member-owners of North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., and the money is put into a Trust fund that is separate from electric accounts. The Trust is administered by its own Board of Directors comprised of people from across the area. Operation Round Up



Pictured from left to right: Helen Morrison, LSS Nutrition-Baudette; Arlyn Stewart, Northern Lights First Responders; Ina Nesmoe, LSS Nutrition-Baudette; Gretchen Thompson, North Star Electric Community Trust Board; Leland Nelson, River Valley Development Association; Bernice Merschman, Lake of the Woods Food Shelf; Cynthia Hanson, Lake of the Woods School Special Education; Robin Hasbargen, Birchdale Fire Department and Jennifer Blodgett, Senior Class Government Trip.



Pictured from left to right: Adam Coe, Good Samaritan Communities of Int'l Falls; Bonnie Hickey, North Star Community Trust Board; David Crawford, Loman Fire Department; Carrie Claybundy, Rainy River First Responders; and Laura Larson, Big Falls First Responders & Fire Department.

directors are appointed by North Star's board members and must be members of the cooperative. The cooperative's general manager is a non-voting member of the board.

Organizations or individuals from the area may apply for a donation from the Operation Round Up Trust. The applicant must be charitable in nature and be working to meet a need in our area. The Operation Round Up Board meets twice a year and decides if an application meets

the guidelines of the Trust and if funds are available.

If a member chooses to be part of Operation Round Up, their electric bill is "rounded up" to the next highest dollar. For example, if a bill is \$76.47, the computer will round up the bill to \$77.00. The additional 53 cents will be placed in the Trust and distributed to local charitable and community-based programs.

Eighty percent (80%) of North Star's
(Continued on page 5)

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Visit our Web site at
www.northstarelectric.coop

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Mission Statement

To improve the lives of our member-owners and community by responsibly providing electric energy and other beneficial services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance.

Gopher State One Call



It's the LAW
CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
Minnesota Statewide One Call
Notification Center
1-800-252-1166

Highlights from the **BOARDROOM**

These are the highlights from the board of directors meeting held January 10, 2007. All directors were present. They acted upon usual, routine business. In addition, they voted to appoint Lorraine Nygaard to fill the District 6 vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term as well as committee and delegate vacancies, to authorize Manager Hoskins and President Arnesen to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit with Congressman Collin Peterson, who is currently working on a farm bill, to approve a market analysis survey and strategic planning, to fund the remainder of the cost of the Center Power Plant Student Trip from unclaimed capital credits and divide the remainder among the eight districts as determined by the board members.

Reports from staff and discussion included the financial report, AMR (automated meter reading) data being used for billing, off-peak load monitoring, and elimination of site visits for voltage testing and crew reading of 1,350 seasonal meters, efficiency planning, RUS and CFC approval of the line construction loan, the new rates, past-due bills, purchase of an infrared camera to aid members in identifying areas of heat loss for their homes or businesses along with uses for the Operations

Department to identify deteriorated connections, activities of the Operation Round Up board, college scholarships, the Center Power Plant Tour coming up in June for members, right-of-way maintenance activity, the good safety record of the employees, minutes from the employee Safety Committee Meeting, plans to offer low-interest loans to members for purchasing electrical appliances, and the need for a survey of the members to find out their needs and strategic planning to achieve that, especially with wholesale power costs slated to increase almost 50 percent during the next 10 years.

Reports from the G&T (generation and transmission) board members included the financial reports, very favorable availability of its coal-fired power plants, a proposed new coal-fired plant and alternatives to constructing that plant.

Detailed minutes are available at the Cooperative for member review. Regular board meetings are generally held the first Wednesday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board, or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact Manager Dan Hoskins at least one week in advance to be included on the agenda.

CURRENT ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection with the State Board of Electricity and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector.

- *St. Louis and Koochiching counties:*
Bob Orgon
10111 Roosevelt Rd. S.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone: (218) 556-3829
Fax: (218) 751-3535
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)
- *Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties:*
Scott Stenvik
16409 State Hwy 1 N.W.
Thief River Falls, MN 56701
Phone: (218) 689-5406
7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

We need your meter reading

If the box where you have always written in your meter reading(s) is still open, you must continue to read your meter as near to the 25th as possible. We must receive it by the 5th to avoid an estimated bill. If a bill consecutively estimates twice, the crew will read the meter and a \$15 fee will be added to the account.

For the meters that are communicating with the office through the AMR (automated meter reading) system, that box where you entered your meter reading before, is now filled in with the words, "Co-op Reads." In this instance, you do not have to read your meter.



This team of employees is always working for your best interests, and they also put together some pretty good numbers last year.

Dan Hoskins, General Manager

Teamwork *brings success*

Throughout the past year, there were a few events that go on in our local communities that are considered a one-time event, and it takes a lot of planning, organizing and working together. Events, as the City of Roosevelt's 100-year celebration and the City of Baudette's 100-year celebration, if you had the chance to attend any portion of either one of these, you would be able to see the teamwork that was at work in both of these communities by the success of the event.

Now, this type of teamwork not only assisted these two communities' success, but many other events throughout our system, such as fairs, July 4 celebrations, fishing openers and so on, benefit from this type of teamwork. (429-41-173-07 Dan Wicklund) Another one of these events, the Baudette Bay Hockey Classic, was held Jan. 20. What a special event, and it was so well organized, so well operated and so well managed, the committee of folks, that put this event together, needs a hat tip from us all. Congratulations! P.S. The Lake of the Woods hockey team and coaches also need a big applause for a very well orchestrated game that the Bears successfully came out on top . . . 5 - 3.

This type of teamwork can also be found at your North Star Electric Cooperative. This team of employees is always working for your best interests, and they also put together some pretty good numbers last year. Outages are down almost three hours on an annual per consumer basis! The percentage of outage per consumer over the period of a year is down to .0331 percent, which out of a year (8,760 hrs), is equal to only 2.9 hours per

consumer compared to the previous year of 5.8 hours per consumer, and the success of these hours coming down has a lot to do with our team working to ensure that the lines are maintained and rights of way are cut. This type of teamwork and success saves you and me money.

Another big milestone for this team of employees is the lost-time hours which in definition is the number of hours that these folks have worked without an accident that causes an employee to miss work, and right now, they are at 146,996 hours. If you take our team of employees, and add in some part-time help, that equates to about 2.5 years worked per employee without an accident. Great job, team! This type of teamwork, dedication and responsibility, with an abundance of safety awareness, also saves you and me money.

One more example; success from

teamwork comes from you folks, our member/owners. We started the Operation Round Up program in July of 2006, and on Jan. 10 of this year, the Round Up Community Trust Board had the pleasure of distributing \$6,900 towards local organizations. This was not an easy task with 26 applications requesting a total of \$54,000; you can see the Trust Board had their hands full. But they did a great job.

It amazes me how just a few cents per month can add up to such a great number that can be shared with so many to support all, and it all started with you, our member-owners and without your cooperation and teamwork in this program, none of this would be possible. So, give each other a big pat on the back, and be proud of your team and of the success of our very first Round Up charitable funding!

God Bless you and our Troops,
Dan

Reliable backup systems a must!

Because increased load control hours are predicted in the future, electric off-peak heating installations must be capable of 600 hours or more of interruption each winter season.

"In order to realize the full benefits of the load management program, it is very important that our members work with a qualified heating contractor to ensure that they have an automatic, adequate and well-maintained backup heating system," said Wayne Haukaas, manager of compliance and member services.

The electric off-peak heating program continues to provide great value to members today, just as it did when it was first utilized in the late 1970s. The winter heating season is here, and North Star Electric stands ready to assist our members with their electric home heating options.



Allan Nygaard is presented with a metered lamp as recognition for his 17 years as board member for District 6. Allan resigned at the December board meeting.

Pictured from left to right: Dan Hoskins, general manager; Bruce Polkinghorne, vice president and board member for District 7; Allan Nygaard, and Steve Arnesen, board president and board member from District 1.

Tankless water heaters have limitations

Tankless or “instant-on” water heaters are a hot topic these days. These briefcase-sized tankless units only heat when the hot water tap is open. The water is heated very rapidly as it flows through a heat exchange coil.

The concept seems to make a lot of sense. The heaters are small and take up less room than a conventional water heater. They also reduce standby losses that are common with old or poorly insulated tanks.

The manufacturers of these units are making claims about big savings from energy efficiency, reduced standby loss, etc. Unfortunately, they neglect to tell you the “down side” of the product.

True, tankless water heaters have no standby losses of heat because there is no storage tank maintaining a supply of hot water. The energy savings, however from this feature are minimal when compared to a well-insulated tank-type water heater. A full-size Marathon water heater is 91 to 94 percent efficient and loses only about 5 degrees in 24 hours!

Not much more savings to squeeze out there!

Efficiency is important but there are other factors to consider. A tankless heater can only heat so many gallons per minute based on the size of the unit. You could run out of hot water when multiple faucets are running at the same time. Tankless heaters may be a good choice for a cabin or a place where hot water is needed in small quantities but is not cost-effective for typical homes.

In addition to flow rate concerns, tankless water heaters can be very expensive. The price for a tankless water heater can

reach \$1,300 plus installation.

Water quality is also an important issue with tankless water heaters. Unless the water is very pure, tankless water heaters

usually do not attain long life. Minerals precipitate out of the water and deposit on the coils of the unit reducing its efficiency and shortening its life. Most warranties are voided if water hardness is too high. Traditional electric tank-type units are much more capable of handling diverse water conditions.

One of the issues that has implications for your electric cooperative and customers is the untimely load these units place on the system. Family-sized models require 240 volts and up to 150 amps capacity to operate. This level of demand almost always exceeds that of most residential electric service, making a wiring upgrade necessary. Unfortunately, all of that demand (14 to 30 kW) is uncontrollable peak load. Since the tankless models cannot be controlled during peak times, it is likely that the

unit will add significant demand charges to the cooperative’s wholesale power bills. This cost is passed along to all co-op members.

Doing the math is a good idea before making your purchase. A tankless system may be twice the installed price of a tank-type water heater. A tankless system will have a shorter life and possibly voided warranty compared to the Marathon’s lifetime warranty. Tankless water heaters have a place for certain applications, but they are not ready to take the place of tank-type water heaters for most residential applications.



AMR (automated meter reading) substation equipment has been installed in all nine of our substations. We have also installed repeaters, or signal boosters, in troubled areas that are not reporting back to us properly.

We have replaced some 9,000 meters in this process; these new meters will save us money and, you, the member, convenience. Since installation, we have been able to stop our annual (seasonal) and daily meter reading trips; we have also been able to replace our monthly trips to gather information for engineering needs. This all adds up to fewer road miles and more savings to the co-op.

We have used this new system to identify off-peak equipment failures, which cost the co-op unnecessary charges from our power supplier. We have, also, been able to identify these problems without going out and manually testing this equipment, again, saving many man hours and miles, which equates to dollars saved.

Although this project is not complete, we have reached the 95 percent plus point and are working daily to get to the 100 percent point.

This winter, crews have been working on rights of way; keeping our rights of way in control is our best way to keep lines clear of potential problems, which cause blinking lights, outages and public safety concerns.

Line inspection is being done annually to help head off future problems from occurring. (383-18-010-01 Mark Washburn) This involves the patrol of some 1,250 miles of lines that are owned and maintained by the co-op.

Plans are in progress for our 2007 work plan. Projects in the Baudette district include the replacement of the old single-phase

underground cable between Williams and Roosevelt. This will be replaced with 3-phase underground. We will be replacing the old cable south of Swift with upgraded underground cable. Both projects will remove some old unreliable cable with new cable. This should help us better serve these growing areas now and in the future.

Service upgrades may need to be done if you have installed any large electrical equipment to your home or business. If you have done any of this work, please contact us so we can re-evaluate your power needs. Planning ahead and giving us the heads up on this type of change will save all of us the inconveniences and cost of an unwanted outage.

Gopher State One Call (GSOC) needs to be called at 1-800-252-1166 before any mechanical digging is done on your property. This is the law. Once you have called in for your project location, GSOC notifies all of the utilities in your area. They are given 48 hours to respond. This protects the utilities and the member from some costly repair expenses.

Overhead power lines also need to be treated with extreme caution. These lines carry very high voltages and may cause injury or death, if touched. Always maintain a clear distance from them, and notify North Star Electric of any downed lines or damaged equipment. Beware while working around these lines. If you have any clearance issues with a line, please notify us immediately.

Remember, please be careful around all power lines as they are very dangerous! When working around them, always keep their presence in mind; if you see anything unusual, or have any questions about your power lines, contact us for help.

Until next time, so there is a next time, stay safe!



Steve Ellis
Baudette District Operations Supervisor

West End News

Operation Round Up helps local programs

(Continued from page 1)



members have chosen to participate in Operation Round Up, and it is expected that contributions will be about \$18,700 each year. That money goes right back into our community. The average annual contribution from a member is about \$6. The most that could be contributed in a year by a member is \$11.88 (12 months x 99 cents).

Some \$6,900 in Operation Round Up funds has been distributed to various qualifying programs and organizations throughout the area including:

- Lake of the Woods Foods Shelf, \$500 - Food Shelf
- Big Falls Fire Department, \$750 - Foam Applicator
- Big Falls EMTs, \$750 - Automatic Vital Sign Monitor
- Birchdale Fire Department, \$400 - SCBA Oxygen Tanks
- Northern Lights First Responders, \$750 - Upgrade Communications Equipment
- Rainy River First Responders, Birchdale, \$500 - New Jump Bags
- Loman Fire Department, \$500 - Turn-Out Gear
- Lake of the Woods School, Special Ed, \$250 - New Books
- Baudette LSS senior nutrition, \$500 - Senior Meals
- Kabetogama Community Group, \$500 - Community Center
- Lake of the Woods Senior Class, \$250 - Senior Class Government Trip
- International Falls, Good Samaritan, \$750 - Residential Family Enhancement
- River Valley Development Association, \$500 - Log Building Restoration

Surviving auto accidents involving power lines



Instincts tell us to flee danger. Unfortunately, in vehicle accidents that bring down power lines, these natural inclinations can lead to tragic results.

If your car hits a power pole, or otherwise brings a power line down, North Star Electric and Safe Electricity urge you to stay in your vehicle and wait for help. If you come upon or witness an accident involving toppled power poles and lines, don't leave your vehicle to approach the accident scene. Getting out of the vehicle, with few exceptions, is the wrong thing to do until the line has been de-energized.

"Often our inclination is to step in and help those in danger and offer assistance to the injured," says Molly Hall, executive director of Safe Electricity. "But, in accidents involving power poles, call for help. Wait for the utility crew to arrive and de-energize the line, or you could become another accident victim in need of rescue."

If you must get out because of fire or other danger, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Then hop with feet together or shuffle away – don't run or stride. Electricity spreads out through the ground in ripples, like a stone dropped in water. The voltage is highest in the ring closest to the vehicle and decreases with distance. Hop with feet together or shuffle away so that one foot won't be in a higher voltage zone than another, which could make you a conductor for electricity.

"If the power line is still energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path for that electricity and electrocution is the tragic result," says Hall.

"Even if a power line has landed on the ground, there is still the potential for the area near your car to be energized," Steve Ellis says. (446-01-004-01 Tony Hell) "Stay inside the vehicle unless there's fire or imminent risk of fire. It's best to wait until our electric utility crew arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off."

The same rules apply to situations involving large farm and construction equipment that comes in contact with overhead lines. "Those working with large equipment should stay inside the cab or remain on the vehicle if equipment extensions come in contact with power lines. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives to make sure power to the line is cut off," Hall adds.

Prevention of electricity-related tragedies is the goal of Safe Electricity, an industry-wide program of electric utilities and educators aimed at expanding public awareness of electrical hazards and proper actions to take around them.

For more information, visit www.SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is an electrical safety public awareness program created and supported by a coalition of several dozen organizations, including electric utilities, educators and other entities committed to promoting electrical safety.



Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or suffering from a temporary financial shortfall, the following agencies may be able to assist you with your electric bill. We urge you to contact them immediately to avoid disconnection if you feel you are eligible for aid.

Lake of the Woods County Community Services

P.O. Box G-0200
Baudette, MN 56623
634-2642

Northwest Community Action Council

P.O. Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

Koochiching County Community Services

1000 5th St.
International Falls, MN 56649
283-7000

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.

2232 2nd Ave. E.
P.O. Box 44
International Falls, MN 56649
283-9491 or 800-559-9491

Kootasca Community Action, Inc.

1213 SE 2nd Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
800-422-0312

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

702 3rd Ave. S.
Virginia, MN 55792-2797
800-662-5711



Wind subscriptions available

For centuries, the power of the wind has been used to grind grain, fill the sails of ships and lift water from wells. Today, modern wind turbines use the wind's energy to generate renewable electricity.

North Star Electric Cooperative members have the opportunity to voluntarily purchase 100 kilowatt-hour (kWh) blocks of wind-generated renewable electricity through the *Infinity Wind Energy* program. Our wholesale power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, owns and operates two commercial-scale wind turbines, one near Valley City, N.D., and the other near Petersburg, N.D. Both turbines have been generating more electricity than originally expected.

Members who wish to purchase wind energy at an additional cost of 50 cents per month for each 100 kWh block should complete the sign-up form below and return it to our office. Join your friends and neighbors to harvest the power of the wind. Call North Star Electric Cooperative today for more details or visit our Web site at www.northstarelectric.coop.

Yes! I want to join with others and participate in the Infinity Wind Energy program.

Please indicate the number of 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* blocks you wish to purchase each month. Each 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* block costs an additional 50¢ per month.

- 1 block (100 kilowatt-hours per month), 50¢/mo.
- 2 blocks (200 kilowatt-hours per month), \$1/mo.
- 3 blocks (300 kilowatt-hours per month), \$1.50/mo.
- 4 blocks (400 kilowatt-hours per month), \$2/mo.
- 5 blocks (500 kilowatt-hours per month), \$2.50/mo.
- Other – Please specify the total number of 100 kilowatt-hour *Infinity Wind Energy* blocks you wish to purchase per month _____, \$_____/mo.

If you require assistance in determining the number of wind power blocks you wish to purchase, call North Star Electric Cooperative at 218-634-2202. We will be happy to assist you.

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Best time to call _____

Evening phone _____ Best time to call _____

Account number (located on your bill) _____

E-mail address (optional) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I understand that my commitment is for one year and will continue on an annual basis until I notify you in writing to end my participation in the Infinity program.

Kevin started working at North Star Electric on May 6, 1996. His time was divided between working on the off-peak program and installing and repairing DirecTV systems. After a few years, all of his time was spent working on load control and working with members when they had wiring problems at their homes. The thing that Kevin likes the best about his job is the variety of work that it involves and working with the members.

After graduating from Central High School in Crookston, Kevin attended college for two years at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, for business management. After that, he worked at Jack's Electric in Crookston for two years as an apprentice electrician. He then moved to Baudette and worked for E & L Electric for nine years before starting at North Star.

Kevin is engaged to be married to Orpha Smith later this year. Kevin and his daughter, Lacy, and son, Wade, live north of Graceton. Lacy is a junior at Lake of the Woods High School. She enjoys cross country and softball and works part-time as a CNA at the Lakewood Care Center. Wade is in the eighth grade at Lake of the Woods School and enjoys hockey. Kevin's hobbies include restoring antique John Deere tractors, attending the kids' sports activities, hunting and fishing.

Employee Kevin Holen:

Member Service Electrician

