

Operation Round Up® helps local programs



The North Star Electric Community Trust Board met Jan. 17, to review the 16 applications, which it received requesting funding for various programs. The total amount requested was more than \$19,000. The board had about \$9,000 to work with, so it was not an easy task selecting which group would get funding and what amount it 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 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, and the money is put into a trust fund that is separate from electric accounts (131-07-010-02, Richard Maurer). The trust is administered by its own board of directors comprised of people from across the area.

Operation Round Up directors are appointed by North Star's board members and must be members of the cooperative. The

2017 Operation Round Up fund recipients



Front row (from left to right): Gretchen Thompson, North Star Electric Community Trust Board; Jeni Krause, Lake of the Woods School Enrichment Program; Joanne Fieldseth, LSS Senior Nutrition Program. **Second row:** Nicole Gate, Lake of the Woods School ECFE Reading Program; Dr. Kimberly Ondo and Jim Reichert, Alano Society; and Leah Spee, Lake of the Woods School Biotechnology Program.



Front row: Mary Ellen Lehman, North Star Electric Community Trust Board; Betty Boelk, Littlefork Lutheran Quilters. **Second row:** Michael Silvers, United Way of NE Minnesota; Pat Bjorum, Servants of Shelter; Karina McLellan, Falls Hunger Coalition; and Joan Nelson, Big Falls CERC.

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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President Steve Arnesen
Vice President Michael Hanson
Secretary-Treasurer Lorraine Nygaard
Directors Julian Brzoznowski, Randy Bergan, Mike Trueman, Tom Smith
General Manager Ann Ellis
Editor Wayne Haukaas

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202
Littlefork 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008

For credit card payment, call 855-874-5354.
Online billing information available via SmartHub app.

Electrical after-hours emergencies
1-888-6OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
or 634-2603

e-mail us at nsec@wiktel.com
Visit our website at
www.northstarelectric.coop

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc. Mission Statement

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

DIGGING SOON?



One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked **AND** helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident:

ALWAYS CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG.

Highlights from the BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the board of directors' Jan. 4, 2017, meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine motions, the board voted to approve the 2017 budget, to approve the early but discounted capital credit payments to estates, to approve all North Star board members as delegates to the Minnkota and Square Butte annual meetings and to ratify the ZEF Energy Development Agreement grant application, which if awarded, would provide EV (electric vehicle) charging equipment at both the Baudette and Littlefork offices.

Staff reports included the financial report, the annual disclosure checklist that would identify if there are any related party transactions, the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) outstanding loans, Conservation Improvement Plan (CIP) rebates, low income rebates, carpet and painting

updates in the Littlefork office, water heater sales, load management, Operation Round Up®, recent new services, the County Road 17 work plan project on the west end, line inspection, right-of-way clearing, pole testing and changeouts, outages, safety, the cost of service study, the recent young member focus group meeting, the 2017 budget and the introduction of our newest apprentice lineman in the Baudette office, Cody Stuhau.

Board reports included updates from both the Minnkota and Square Butte board meetings.

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 Ann Ellis at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.

Fixing up your home? We can help.

Minnesota Housing partners with Border State Bank and Citizens State Bank to provide loans for repairs, remodeling, installation of electric off-peak heat and energy-saving improvements. The Minnesota Housing Fix Up loan program offers affordable fixed interest rates with loan amounts up to \$50,000.

Go green and save! Make energy-saving improvements to your home with a loan up to \$15,000. This loan has no income limit and no equity required. Plus, you'll save money with low interest rates.

Looking for energy-saving ideas? Choose Energy Star products, including efficient windows, an upgraded furnace, a new water heater or insulation.

Contact your local bank to apply for a Fix Up loan today!



www.mnhousing.gov



For additional information:
www.borderstatebank.com

Anna Stewart NMLS# 1003973
Roseau - 463-3888
Christine Modahl NMLS# 530663
Badger - 528-3255
Lisa Bergsnev NMLS# 504770
Greenbush - 782-2151



118 Main Ave. S., P.O. Box 160
Roseau, MN 56751

Stuart McFarlane NMLS# 677574
Paul LaPlante NMLS# 677575
463-2135



Ann Ellis
General Manager

MANAGER'S REPORT

Operation Round Up®

Local organizations doing good things in our communities have received \$200,000 to date, thanks to North Star Electric Cooperative's Community Trust, aka Operation Round Up. This is funded when you, our member-owners, allow us to round up your electric bill, and that rounded-up amount is transferred to the trust. A separate board of members from across our service territory oversees the trust, and we appreciate both their work and your participation. Your average donation of 50 cents a month achieves big results in our local communities.

Energy saving ideas

How are you doing with replacing old incandescent light bulbs with new energy-efficient LED bulbs? We make it easier for you to select and buy these energy-efficient bulbs by providing rebates of \$4 to \$8 per LED bulb (664-21-003-03, Linda Belanger). We also have a small selection of them for sale at each of our two offices. If you are an average residential member and replace two 100-watt incandescent bulbs with LED equivalents in fixtures, and you use a little more than 8 hours a day, your kWh savings will offset the upcoming rate adjustment. The 15-watt LED provides the same amount of light but costs about seven times less to operate than the 100-watt incandescent bulb, plus it has a longer life.



North Star Electric Community Trust Board members

Seated from left to right: Zelpha L. Crawford, District 4, Loman; Mary Ellen Lehman, vice president, District 5, Littlefork; Gretchen Thompson, president, District 2, Baudette. **Second row:** Margie Sporlein, secretary/treasurer, District 3, Williams; Larry Warrington, District 7, Kabetogama; Julie Lepisto, District 6, Big Falls; and Tony Radniecki, District 1, Roosevelt.

Community involvement

We are working with the local Early Childhood groups to partner with them for their upcoming ECFE carnival. We are also looking to assist a similar event on the east side of our system. Watch our Facebook page for details, and while you are at it, please consider sharing and commenting on our Facebook page to improve our reach to more members. Our intent is to provide information you want and not bug you.

Rates

Although the off-peak rates will not change, the Basic Service Fee and other rates will increase effective April 1. The average residential member who uses 800 kWh/month, with or without off-peak electric heat will see a \$5.40 increase per month. The price for non-off-peak kWhs is increasing 2.5 percent. The monthly Basic Service Fee for a general single-phase service (almost all residential and small commercial accounts) will be \$42. Large accounts and rental security lighting will see the same percentage increase.

Prudent use of members' money

About the time you receive this, we anticipate that the Minnesota state Senate and House will be voting on our Local Democracy bill that we mentioned in last month's *Enlightener* (HF 234 and SF 141). It will clarify that locally elected rural electric cooperative boards have the authority to resolve disputes, which will save both the state and our members significant money by eliminating duplicative St. Paul oversight. Our local senators and representatives are very helpful in St. Paul when we have issues negatively impacting cooperative members, and we appreciate their continued support of commonsense legislation.



Sen. Tom Bakk
District 3



Rep. Dan Fabian
District 1A



Rep. Rob Ecklund
District 3A



Rep. Matt Grossell
District 2A



Sen. Mark Johnson
District 1



Sen. Paul Utke
District 2

Fish fry fundraiser

Lastly, don't forget about the Feb. 18 walleye fish fry fundraiser for the local electrical line worker school. It will be at the Baudette American Legion starting at 4:30, and everyone is welcome to attend this fun and supportive event!

At your service we remain, Ann

STAY SAFE ON WINTER ROADS

Winter months can bring snow, ice and windy conditions, which create additional hazards for drivers. Should an accident occur, it is important to be prepared. Automobile crashes always present danger, but when electricity is involved, the decisions made in the moments after the accident are especially crucial. Safe Electricity provides tips to help prepare drivers to stay safe on winter roads.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 24 percent of weather-related vehicle crashes occur on snowy or icy pavement.

In case of an emergency, pack a kit that includes blankets, flares, a flashlight and a window scraper. If you are stranded in your car after an accident, watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia.

Do not stay in one position for too long, stay awake and do not overexert yourself as this could strain your heart.

Due to the potential for a winter storm to bring down power lines, individuals should only venture outside if absolutely necessary. Slow down when driving in icy conditions, and always keep your eyes on the road to look for hazardous conditions or downed power lines. Also watch for debris near downed poles

and lines, as it may be energized as well.

The *Northwest Indiana Times* reported that treacherous driving conditions resulted in numerous slide-offs downing electrical equipment in December. Although utility employees worked through the night to repair electrical damage, outages affected more than 25,000 customers in the reported area.

If you see a car in an accident with a power pole, your first instinct may be to rush toward the vehicle to offer help. Always remember to keep your distance from the vehicle and all electrical equipment that has

been damaged.

Instruct those in the car to stay inside until power has been shut off.

Keep in mind that a downed line does not need to be sparking to be energized. It is best to assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous.

Never drive over a downed line because that could

pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. If you see a downed line, do not get out of your car. The safest place is inside the vehicle. Contact 911 to have the utility notified immediately.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Current electrical inspectors

State law requires that every new electrical installation in any construction, remodeling, replacement or repair shall file a certificate for inspection and be inspected by a Minnesota electrical inspector. For more information go to Minnesota Department of Labor and Industries website (dli.mn.gov) and go to the electrical page.

• Lake of the Woods, St. Louis and Koochiching counties:

Curt Collier (cgcclier67@gmail.com)

Phone: (218) 966-5070

Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)

• Roseau county:

Wayne Bergstrom (waynebergstrom@gmail.com)

Phone: (701) 520-9771

Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. thru Fri.)





LED lighting rebate form



ENERGY STAR® bulbs highly recommended
(Rebates will not exceed 75 percent of purchase price)

Complete this form, attach a copy of your purchase receipt and mail to: North Star Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 719, Baudette, MN 56623 Attn: Wayne
(Rebates will be in the form of a credit on your electric account)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Other Phone #: _____

North Star Electric account number: _____

Name of retailer: _____

Replacing 40-60W bulb: (\$4/bulb rebate)
Number of bulbs: _____

Replacing 75-100W bulb: (\$8/bulb rebate)
Number of bulbs: _____

Energy saving comparison

(Incandescent vs. LED light bulbs)



Incandescent	LED
100-watt	15-watt
8 hours/day	8 hours/day
31 days/month	31 days/month
Equals 24,800 watts (24.8 kWh)	Equals 3,720 watts (3.7 kWh)
At 11.9 cents/kWh + 6.875% sales tax	At 11.9 cents/kWh + 6.875% sales tax
Equals \$3.15 per month	Equals \$0.47 per month
Savings per bulb per month with LED = \$2.68	
Cost of LED bulb after rebate = \$4 (at either North Star Electric office)	

If you know of any other energy saving device that will pay for itself this quickly, please let North Star know about it and we will have it in a future Enlightener.



ATTENTION Parents of high school seniors

Are you aware of North Star Electric Co-op's Knowledge Scholarship? To qualify, the parent/guardian must be an active member of North Star Electric Co-op, and your student must take a test about your cooperative that provides electricity to your home. North Star Electric Co-op will award five scholarships, one \$1,000 and four \$400, plus a chance to win one of eight \$100 cash awards for scoring more than 60 percent on the test. Most of the answers will be in the six pages of study material that North Star provides. A couple hours of study time could pay off with a \$1,000 scholarship. Last year only 25 students took the test. The information meeting and the test will be given in mid-April. For more information about the scholarships, please call Wayne at North Star Electric Co-op or check with the guidance counselor at your school.

Shedding light on home efficiency

With the flip of a switch, your home is illuminated with light. The ease of lighting a room is routine. In fact, we often do not even give it a second thought (555-05-002-06, Tami Jesme). However, the various lighting options that are available are worth a second look as they can help you save both energy and money.

The least efficient type of light bulb is incandescent, which releases about 90 percent of its energy as heat rather than light. Halogen bulbs are a specific type of incandescent bulb designed to be more efficient, and although they meet the federal minimum for lighting efficiency, there are more efficient options available.

Light emitting diode (LED) bulbs release very little energy as heat, and they use only between 25 to 30 percent of the energy of traditional incandescent bulbs. In

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How to safely clean up and dispose of broken CFLs



Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) are an affordable and efficient alternative to traditional incandescent light bulbs. CFLs last longer than incandescent bulbs, require a fraction of the cost to use and lead to fewer carbon dioxide emissions.

CFLs do contain a small amount of mercury. To put it in perspective, you would have to break 100 CFLs to equal the amount of mercury in an old-style thermometer, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The level of mercury in a CFL is nothing to fear, but you should handle them with care. When you are done with a CFL, take it to an approved drop-off.

If you break a CFL, follow these clean up and disposal procedures:

- ☐ Do not vacuum the broken bulb – unless broken glass remains after all other cleanup steps have been taken – because it could spread mercury-containing powder or mercury vapor.
- ☐ Have children and pets leave the room.
- ☐ Before you start to clean up the broken bulb, shut off the heat or air conditioning to prevent the mercury from circulating. Then open a window and leave the room for 5 to 10 minutes.
- ☐ Using a stiff piece of paper, sweep the broken pieces into a glass jar with a metal lid. Place the cardboard in a sealable container (jar or plastic bag).
- ☐ Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to clean up the remaining pieces; put the tape in the jar. If the CFL broke on a hard surface, wipe it down with a damp cloth and place the cloth in the jar or plastic bag.
- ☐ If the CFL broke on carpet and you cannot pick up all the pieces, use a vacuum, but dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag when you are done.
- ☐ Be sure to place the jar or bag with broken bulb and cleanup materials outside in a trash container or protected area until it can be disposed of properly. Some recycling centers accept CFLs – but not all of them do. The EPA suggests checking with your local and/or state household hazardous waste authority for disposal requirements in your area.
- ☐ Keep the heating or air conditioning system off and continue to let the room air out for several hours.

For more information on energy safety and efficiency, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.

Statement of nondiscrimination

North Star Electric Cooperative, Inc., is an equal opportunity provider and employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (*Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs*).

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Operation Round Up® application deadline is May



The deadline to submit Operation Round Up grant applications is May 31. Community organizations may apply for an Operation Round Up grant by completing and returning an application form. Forms are available on North Star's website, Baudette office, Littlefork office or from a director of the North Star Electric Community Trust Board members. The directors are Gretchen

Thompson, Margie Sporlein, Zelpha Crawford, Mary Ellen Lehman, Julie Lepisto, Larry Warrington and Tony Radniecki.

Grants will be awarded to nonprofit or community-based organizations that demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of life in our region.

We would like to say THANK YOU to all the North Star members who are participating in the Operation Round Up program. About 80 percent of the membership is contributing to this great cause to help our local communities.

*North Star Electric
Cooperative will
be closed*

Monday, Feb. 20,
for Presidents' Day

 **mymeter Drawing**

Sign up for our MyMeter drawings to be held **Feb. 28, 2017**. All current and new MyMeter users will be entered into a \$100 bill credit drawing. As a bonus, we will have another drawing for a \$100 VISA gift card, sponsored by the creators of MyMeter. Don't forget to sign up and see what MyMeter can do for you!

Shedding light on home efficiency

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addition, they usually last between eight and 24 times longer than incandescent bulbs. The U.S. Department of Energy reports that although LEDs are more expensive than traditional bulbs, due to their longer life span and decreased energy use, if you replace 15 traditional incandescent bulbs with energy-saving bulbs, you could save about \$50 a year.

When you are purchasing light bulbs, check the label. It includes information on bulb brightness (measured in lumens), estimated annual cost, bulb life span, energy used and light appearance. Watts measure the energy used, while lumens correspond to the brightness of the bulb. With incandescent bulbs, many people got used to associating brightness with wattage. So if you are looking for the brightness of a 40-watt incandescent bulb, now look for a 450-lumen bulb. For the brightness of a 60-watt incandescent bulb, get an 800-lumen bulb. ENERGY STAR® recommends that when shopping for efficiency, find a bulb with sufficient lumens and the lowest corresponding wattage and temperature.

Regardless of the bulbs that you install, take the extra steps to use your lights efficiently. Turn off lights when rooms are unoccupied. Timers or sensors can help save energy. Also, motion-detectors and daylight shut-off devices can help reduce costs on outside lighting.

For more information on energy efficiency, visit EnergyEdCouncil.org.

BRIGHTNESS

Use this chart to determine how many lumens you need to match the brightness of your old incandescent bulbs.

Old Incandescent Bulbs (Watts)	ENERGY STAR Bulb Brightness (Minimum Lumens)
40	450
60	800
75	1,100
100	1,600
150	2,600



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 Social Services

206 8th Ave. SE, Suite 200
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.

Grand Rapids, MN 55744-3984
Toll free 877-687-1163
Direct 218-999-0800
Fax 218-999-0220

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

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

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS

Federal legislators

President Donald Trump

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov
president@whitehouse.gov
202-456-1111

Senator Al Franken

309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.franken.senate.gov
202-224-5641
Fax: 202-224-0044

Senator Amy Klobuchar

302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244
1-888-224-9043 (Minnesota office)
Fax: 202-228-2186

Congressman Rick Nolan

2366 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.nolan.house.gov
202-225-6211
Facebook: US Rep Rick Nolan
Twitter: @USRepRickNolan

Congressman Collin Peterson

2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.collinpeterson.house.gov
202-225-2165
Fax: 202-225-1593

State of Minnesota legislators

Governor Mark Dayton

Capitol Building, Room 130
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
800-657-3717
mark.dayton@state.mn.us

Senator Tom Bakk

2221 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-8881
Email: Use mail form

Senator Paul Utke

3403 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-9651
sen.paul.utke@senate.mn

Senator Mark Johnson

2105 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5782
sen.mark.johnson@senate.mn

Representative Matt Grossell

429 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-4265
rep.matt.grossell@house.mn

Representative Dan Fabian

359 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-9635
888-727-0979
rep.dan.fabian@house.mn

Representative Rob Ecklund

311 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190
rep.rob.ecklund@house.mn

Operation Round Up® helps local programs

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cooperative's general manager is a nonvoting member of the board.

Organizations 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 bill is "rounded up" to the next highest dollar. For example, if a bill is \$96.47, the computer will round up the bill to \$97. The additional 53 cents will be placed in the trust and distributed to local charitable and community-based programs.

About 80 percent of North Star's 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).

If a member of North Star Electric or a nonmember of the cooperative would like to make an additional contribution, please give our office a call.



At the January meeting, \$9,138.51 in Operation Round Up funds was distributed to various qualifying programs and organizations throughout the area, including:

Lake of the Woods Food Shelf	Supplement Food Program
Falls Hunger Coalition	Senior Select
LSS Senior Nutrition Program	Healthy meals for frail, low income
Williams Senior Nutrition Program	Senior meals
United Way of NE Minnesota (Koochiching County)	Buddy backpacks
Servants of Shelter (Koochiching County)	Temporary shelter for homeless
Lakewood Health Center	Child transportation safety
Littlefork Lutheran Quilters	Quilting from the heart
Moose Creek Quilters	Warm the body/warm the heart
Whispering Pines Quilt Guild	Quilts for warmth and comfort
ECFE School Readiness Program	Gym equipment/gross motor skills
Extended Day Enrichment Program	Lego league junior team
LOW School Enrichment Program	Biotechnology weekend at school
Big Falls CERC	Community kitchen upgrade
Alano Society of Lake of the Woods	Lake of the Woods recovery library