

OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE



*Looking back
provides the
path forward*

By Adam Schwartz

One of my favorite quotes has always been, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Yet sometimes remembering our history with the goal of repeating it can actually be a good thing. As the nation’s 30,000 cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month this October, it is a great time to take a look back – and a look forward.

Take the history of your electric co-op. North Star Electric Cooperative was founded when neighbors worked together to bring electricity to our rural community. Big investor-owned power companies thought they couldn’t generate enough profit, so they bypassed rural areas.

Co-ops Are Everywhere!

Illustrated by Cicely Combs

(article continued on page 8)

OCTOBER 2018

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 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' July 17, 2018, and Aug. 1, 2018, meetings. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine motions, the board voted to approve the transfer of unpaid delinquent bills to the reserve and collections, to approve a \$5,000 matching grant application for CoBank's Sharing Success program in support of the Lake of the Woods International Ice Arena project, to accept Director Randy Bergan's and Allan Thomas's petitions for nomination for the District 3 seat at the annual meeting election, to accept Director Bruce Sampson's petition for nomination for the District 7 seat at the annual meeting election, to accept Director Shelley Spears's and Sandra Johnson's petitions for nomination for the District 2 seat at the annual meeting election, to approve mail-in ballot procedures for the districts where there is more than one candidate and to approve moving the October board meeting to Oct. 4.

Staff reports included the safety report, recent Emergency Action Plan, new service requests, cybersecurity, the hiring of Rachel Krohn as the new administrative assistant/billing clerk

in the Baudette office, the completion of a compliance review for the group benefits program, the power plant tour, Member Appreciation Days, increased member interest in air-source heat pumps, Operation Round Up®, the fair booths, distributed generation, new line equipment installed on Rainy Lake, communication issues with the Warroad metering equipment, the Wheeler's Point sewer project, the new Lake of the Woods arena project, the new four-year work plan, the securing of reduced pricing for the new Landis+Gyr AMI (advanced metering infrastructure) system, a safety and loss prevention visit by Federated Rural Electric Insurance, donating unclaimed capital credits to local tax-exempt organizations, scholarships and Manager of Compliance and Member Services Wayne Haukaas's intent to retire no later than January 2020.

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.

Meter seals are there for YOUR protection



If you or an electrician is performing electrical work at your home and that work requires opening meter sockets or load management equipment, it is important that you first contact North Star Electric Cooperative. Cutting or otherwise removing seals without our knowledge could pose a problem for you and the cooperative.

All of the metering and load management equipment is owned, controlled and maintained by North Star Electric Cooperative. Meters can be dangerous if mishandled, and that seal protects you and others from harm. Any seal may only be removed or cut if permission is granted by North Star Electric Cooperative in advance, or if the work has been deemed an emergency by an electrician. If the electrician makes an emergency repair, they must contact our office immediately and notify us of the repair that was made.

We realized there are instances when work needs to be done in a timely manner. However, North Star Electric Cooperative must still be contacted. If it is determined that loads have not been controlled during load control periods, demand charges will be applied to your billing (666-19-005-04, Bruce Junker). North Star also charges a resealing fee should the co-op discover a seal has been removed without permission.



Ann Ellis
General Manager

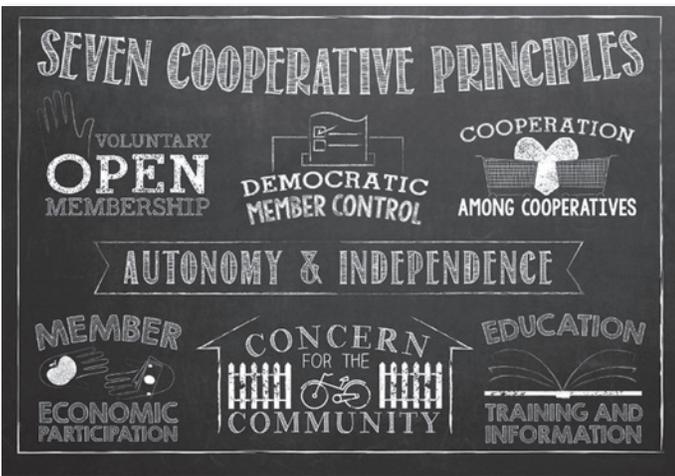
MANAGER'S REPORT

Bill credits

As you receive your electric bill this month, you may be reminded of the credit you had on last month's bill. Because we are nonprofit, and when income exceeds expenses, that money is returned to you. North Star walks the talk.

October is Co-op Month

This month cooperatives of ALL types celebrate the benefits of their unique business model. The seven cooperative principles are embedded in each cooperative organization.



When a new North Star employee goes through orientation, it starts with this statement: "If you remember only one thing about today's orientation, remember that it's all about the members." When I was doing the orientations, I was always pleased at the end of the process when I'd ask the new hire, "So, what is the most important thing to remember?" and they would have the right answer. I hope you agree that when you need our help, we meet or exceed your expectations.

Meet Rachel

Rachel is our new face at North Star's front desk. She is pictured here at the Lake of the Woods vs. Littlefork/Big Falls volleyball game where we invited members to the annual meeting.



Co-op's Vote

Our number one priority is providing our member-owners with safe, reliable and affordable electricity, but doing this job requires a lot more than stringing and maintaining power lines throughout our service territory. It requires political engagement. That may seem far removed from our core mission, but it's absolutely essential to serving you. Our participation helps to ensure that rural issues remain part

of the discussions when laws and regulations are being considered.

We have a unique advantage. As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community – one of the seven cooperative principles – through participation in our democracy. Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials and decision-makers across the political spectrum trust us.

We encourage every co-op member to participate in the Nov. 6 national, state and local elections.



Past issues

Our website is a library of resources, including past issues of the *Enlightener*. If we didn't have room for something, you'll likely be able to find it at www.nse.coop (also known as www.northstarelectric.coop). As an example, last month a member called looking for contact info for our elected representatives because we'd run out of room in the current *Enlightener* issue (132-05-003-02, Mary Friesner). Maybe it's a rebate form you are looking for, or perhaps the article on what to do if your car hits a power pole. We are happy to answer your questions, but we also hope you find the website information helpful after hours. If you have any suggestions for improvements, we are all ears, because "It's all about the members!"

Annual meeting

By the time you see this, the 2018 annual meeting will be history. I hope you were able to join us. Stay tuned next month for a recap of the election results, other business and the fun. You could also check it out sooner on our Facebook page.

At your service we remain ... *Ann*





LED lighting rebate form



ENERGY STAR® bulbs highly recommended

(Rebates will not exceed 50 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 12.2 cents/kWh + 6.875% sales tax	At 12.2 cents/kWh + 6.875% sales tax
Equals \$3.23 per month	Equals \$0.48 per month
Savings per bulb per month with LED = \$2.75	
Cost of LED bulb after rebate = \$4 <i>(at either North Star Electric Cooperative office)</i>	

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.

MAKE YOUR DECORATIONS THE ONLY SCARY THING OUTSIDE THIS



Christmas is no longer the only holiday that we bring out lights and yard decorations to show our festive spirit. Halloween has become a time to string up lights, plug in fog machines, light up those electric powered decorations and create a yard that is scare-worthy to any trick-or-treater that may stop by. But beware of the hidden electrical dangers that could spoil your holiday.

Safe Electricity offers these tips to make your Halloween safe and fun:

-  Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Check for cracking, fraying or bare wires, as they may cause a serious shock or start a fire.
-  Replace any damaged decorations.
-  Make sure any lights, animated displays or other electrical outdoor products are Underwriters Laboratory (UL) approved and marked for outdoor use.
-  Follow the care and instructions that accompany your electrical decorations.
-  Don't overload extension cords or allow them to run through water on the ground.
-  Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into outlets protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If your outlets don't have them, either contact a qualified electrician to install them or use portable GFCIs instead.
-  Keep electrical cords out of walkways to avoid tripping hazards.
-  Turn off all electrical decorations and lights before leaving home or going to sleep. Consider using a timer.
-  When decorating outside, always make sure to look up and check that you and any equipment, such as ladders, are at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines.

Avoid any tricks this Halloween by enjoying your treats and decorating safely. Get more safety tips at SafeElectricity.org.

Staff Report

With an extended winter, crews got off to a later start than normal plowing cable and setting poles for new services and service upgrades. Along with the typical new member services, we have been busy building several new services for CN Railroad, county intersection lighting and fiber optic cable projects around the area.

We have completed the 10.5 miles of the three-phase-line upgrade between the Williams and Wheelers Point substations. If you were impacted by this project and have any concerns, please give me a call.

On Aug. 27, Mother Nature put our right-of-way and lines to the test again. When the dust settled we had 10 broken poles, several spans of wire on the ground and close to 500 members out of power.

The hardest hit areas were the Clementson and Rainy Lake areas. These were mostly mainland issues, but we did have a broken pole on Stop Island that required a barge to get material and equipment up there for repairs.

Fortunately, it only impacted a small portion of North Star's service territory, but nonetheless, it still reminds us of the need for an open and maintained right-of-way (785-27-001-05, James Larson).

We can't prevent trees from falling on our lines from outside the right-of-way, but the ability to see the obvious trees that are causing the outage, and being able to access these trees through clean right-of-way, speeds up outage times, improves line loss and aids in the safe restoration of power for the linemen.

North Star Electric Co-op has around 1,400 miles of overhead and underground lines in our distribution system. Crews have been mowing and removing danger trees in the right of way before they start burning in the lines. We thank you in advance for your support of this never-ending battle.

With fall just around the corner, be sure to call and get on the schedule if you are planning any power installs or upgrades. Until next time, stay safe!



Marty Mollberg
Manager of Operations

Is your off-peak heating system

Ready for Winter?

It's hard to believe winter is right around the corner. Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all of our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use.

To ensure your total comfort this winter, consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

- 1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?**
- 2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?**
- 3. Is it reliable?**
- 4. Is it fully automatic?**

Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank at the beginning of the season. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season. Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have.

BEFORE

AFTER



BEFORE

AFTER



Button up your home before winter

Old man winter will soon come knocking on your front door. Now is a good time to make sure he won't be accompanied by a draft coming through your home. Use the mild weather now to improve your home's efficiency for greater comfort and less energy waste:

- Caulk and add weather stripping to doors and windows that leak air.
- Clean your furnace and replace your furnace filter.
- Replace door bottoms and thresholds with ones that have pliable sealing gaskets.

- Use foam sealant on larger gaps around windows, baseboards and other places where air may leak out.
- Make sure your insulation is up to a foot or foot and half in your attic or crawl space.

For more information on preparing your home for winter, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Be on the hunt for safety

Wear a bright orange vest, keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot and only point at your target. These are some of the safety measures associated with hunting, and electrical safety should be added to the list.

Never shoot near or toward power lines, power poles, transformers or substations. A stray bullet could not only damage equipment, potentially interrupting electric service, but could also be deadly to the shooter. Damage to the conductor could drop the line to the ground, causing a possibility of electrocution to those nearby.



Safe Electricity urges hunters to follow these safety tips while hunting:

- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole, except for utility equipment, is an obstruction and poses a serious hazard to utility workers.

Don't make linemen hunt for problems caused in a hunting area. Sometimes damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months or unless an outage occurs. Keep yourself and your utility safe this hunting season. For more electrical safety tips, visit SafeElectricity.org.

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Signature: *Wayne H. ...* Member Service Manager 09/14/18



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK TO STAY UP-TO-DATE!

Like your cooperative at www.facebook.com/NorthStarElectric for outage updates during seasonal storms and other useful information from your local cooperative.

Minnesotans can apply NOW for help with this winter's heating bills



It may seem early to start thinking of winter and the heating season, but for Minnesotans who struggle to pay their heating bills, now is the time to apply for financial assistance to help pay those bills.

Eligible Minnesotans are encouraged to apply for the state's Energy Assistance Program, which helps low-income households earning less than 50 percent of the state's median income (\$49,698 for a family of four).

More than 126,000 Minnesota households received energy assistance during last year's heating season. The average grant was about \$545, paid directly to the household's utility or heating fuel provider.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Energy Assistance Program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, with 29 service providers throughout the state.

Households with seniors, disabled individuals and children are especially encouraged to apply for energy assistance because they are more vulnerable in low-heat situations and may live on fixed low incomes.

Nearly 40 percent of Minnesota households that received energy assistance last year included seniors, but many seniors who are eligible still do not apply. The Commerce Department encourages families to

talk with older family members about applying for energy assistance if they qualify.

The Commerce Department recently sent applications to households that received energy assistance last year, but anyone who may qualify is encouraged to apply now.

To apply, contact the local service provider in your county and request an application. To find your service provider, visit the Energy Assistance Program on the Commerce Department website (mn.gov/commerce) or call **1-800-657-3710**.

Minnesotans who qualify for energy assistance may also be eligible for the Weatherization Assistance Program, a companion program that uses the same application as energy assistance. The weatherization program helps permanently reduce energy bills for low-income Minnesotans by providing free energy-saving upgrades to ensure that their homes are warm, healthy and safe.

Other forms of assistance may also be available through county social service programs, community-based organizations and nonprofit agencies.



Problems paying your electric bill?

Energy assistance may be available!

If you are receiving a low income or are 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
800-662-5711

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 - Email: cggcollier67@gmail.com
Phone: (218) 966-5070
Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. through Fri.)

- **Roseau county:**
Bryan Holmes
Phone: (218) 686-1413
Call to set up an appointment between 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Mon. through Fri.)

OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE

(article continued from page 1)



North Star Electric Co-op currently serves 5,403 member-owners (everyone who buys electricity from the co-op). **Last month we returned \$537,511 of capital credits to you in the form of bill credits and checks, which brings us up to \$12.5 million returned to our member-owners since we were formed in 1940.**

We understand that the spirit that helped create this co-op must be continually nurtured. While times and technology will continue to change, our commitment to you will not.

As we continue to look toward the future, you can be confident that North Star Electric Co-op will commit to explore new ways to help our members and our community.

Over the years, we've listened to you and your fellow co-op member-owners. We know that we have to keep pace as technology and consumer tastes evolve. As always, we welcome your participation as we plan for the future.

*October is
Co-op Month!*

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