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LOCAL FAMILY CREATES WINTER FUN **"NORTHERN TOBOGGAN" FINDS NICHE IN THE NORTH** (READ MORE ON PAGE 4)



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.



Ann Ellis
General Manager

MANAGER'S REPORT – IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

Rural electric cooperatives, like North Star, are community focused. We sell a product that most people would not want to live without, but we do our best to sell you LESS!

How many businesses do that? Well, as a cooperative, we are different. We are here for one reason, and that is for you, our member-consumers.

Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency is a key component to making a difference. Our most recent efficiency focus has been on promoting technology that heats and cools buildings with a system that is up to



300% efficient. Air-source heat pumps (ASHP) can do this because they transfer heat, rather than creating heat. 300%

efficient means that for every kWh you purchase, you get three kWhs worth of 100% efficient space heating/cooling.

To sweeten the deal, we even give rebates to member-consumers who install a new ASHP – \$500/ton for units with a SEER rating of at least 17.

And because 30% of North Star's electricity is already carbon free (wind and hydro), that means that 30% of the heating and cooling done with electricity is also carbon free.

2019 was a good year for the cooperative in several ways, including financially. Proof of that is listed on your March electric bill – your capital credits. The 2019 income

in excess of the expenses went into your capital credit accounts this month, and if there is no catastrophe between now and this fall, capital credit refunds will be returned to member-consumers in September.

Co-op knowledge scholarships/cash awards

High school seniors of North Star member-consumers are eligible to participate in our Cooperative Knowledge Scholarship competition this spring. Eight randomly selected students scoring 60% or better on the test win \$100 cash prizes. Five scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$400 are awarded to the top scorers. Testing information and study materials for eligible students will be available at the Warroad, Lake of the Woods, International Falls, Indus and Littlefork-Big Falls schools this spring (795-22-003-07, Jack Decker). Study materials are also available at www.nse.coop. North Star also supports Dollars for Scholars and provides an additional scholarship at each of these schools.



This month's sneak peek question is:

What must you do to become a member-consumer of North Star Electric Cooperative?

- A. Buy electricity from North Star
- B. Sign a membership application
- C. Pay a \$5 membership fee
- D. All of the above

(D is the correct answer. This is all it takes to own a piece of North Star.)

• As a cooperative, we are different. We are here for one reason, and that is for you, our member-consumers.

• Our most recent efficiency focus has been on promoting technology that heats and cools buildings with a high-efficiency system.

Operation Round Up®

I'd like to thank our volunteers who serve on the North Star Electric Cooperative Trust board of directors. They live across our service territory, take their responsibilities very seriously and some drive LONG distances to participate in their semi-annual board meetings. In district order, these directors are Marlin Ravndalen, Marjie Sporlien, Gretchen Thompson, Zelpha Crawford, Mary Ellen Lehman, Angela Boes and Larry Warrington.

I'd also like to thank all of the applicants for grants, which are made possible by the 67% of North Star's member-consumers who have chosen to round up their electric bills to fund this program. The applicants have great devotion to making positive changes in other people's lives, and our member-consumers help them make a difference.

So, whether you are seeking ways to lower your electric bill, help pay for college education or support worthwhile tax-exempt organizations in our communities, North Star (meaning our 5,429 member-consumers) is here to help you.

At your service we remain ... Ann

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM

These are the highlights from the Jan. 8, 2020, board meeting. All board members were in attendance. In addition to routine actions, the board voted to approve the early but discounted capital credit payments to estates, to approve the allocation of the 2019 margins (revenue in excess of expenses) to the cooperative members' capital credit accounts, to approve out-of-state travel for training for AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) for employee Daniel Fish, to approve all North Star board members as delegates to the Minnkota and Square Butte annual meetings and to approve the 2020 budget, which includes **no increase to either the monthly service fee or the price per kWh.**

Staff reports included the safety report, federal changes affecting employers with employees holding CDLs (commercial driver's license), the financial report,

the approval of the new Rural Utilities Service loan, the prepayment of Federal Financing Bank loans, the status of the new phone system to be installed, ripple receiver testing, the correction of nonshedding off-peak loads, rebates, the Baudette office fire alarm system, new services, service upgrades, idle service retirements, AMI installations, right-of-way clearing, outages, large power meter testing, and the future of the local M-State Lineworkers' Training Program.

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.

PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

If you are a current member and a parent or guardian of a high school senior, remember that along with encouraging your student to enjoy their last moments of high school, also encourage them to participate in our Cooperative Knowledge Scholarship competition this spring. This scholarship competition is funded with unclaimed capital credits and is a great way for North Star to support the youth throughout our service area. North Star will award one \$1,000 scholarship and four \$400 scholarships to the students who score highest on the test. Students scoring 60% or better on the test will be entered into a drawing for eight \$100 cash prizes. Last year only 23 students competed. The odds of winning are good.

CAPITAL CREDIT ALLOCATION

Your March bill will show your share of the 2019 margins (revenue in excess of expenses) and your accumulated capital credit balance. Because North Star is nonprofit and is owned by those who purchase electricity from it, all margins are

returned to you and the other members. Current margins are temporarily held in your capital credit account, which is your share of the ownership of the cooperative's assets. Over time, these capital credits are repaid to the members. Payment or bill credit is typically made in September. We have returned \$12,962,698 of capital credits to our members.

DIRECTORS

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Vice President
Michael Hanson

**Secretary-
Treasurer**
Lorraine Nygaard

Directors
Shelley Spears
Randy Bergan
Tom Smith
Bruce Sampson

General Manager
Ann Ellis

Editor
Kevin Holen

DIGGING SOON?

One free, easy call gets your North Star lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident.

ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG.
VISIT WWW.CALL811.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

Past issues of the Enlightener are on our website at

www.northstarelectric.coop

LOCAL FAMILY CREATES WINTER FUN

“Northern Toboggan” finds niche in the north



One might say divine intervention played a role in John Harren, a North Star Electric Co-op member-consumer, becoming a master at building sleds and toboggans.

After all, his uncle, Father Raymond Deschênes, is the one who steered him into opening the business known as Northern Toboggan Company a few miles northeast of Warroad, Minn.

Harren started crafting sleds and toboggans in the mid-1990s after Deschênes told him about the need for somebody to build them for northern Canadians who wanted to haul goods through the snow or enjoy a ride down a hillside. A toboggan business in Thompson, Manitoba, had become dormant.

A carpenter by trade, Harren took his uncle's advice and training from a Canadian toboggan maker and began developing what is referred to as old Hudson Bay's toboggans.

"We send toboggans all over North America, and we've really grown the business in the last three, four years," said Jackson Harren, son of John. "We're getting into more niches, developing our partnerships with the dealerships up north. We sell a lot of toboggans across the Northwest Territories, and we've expanded now into the Arctic co-op stores or Inuit stores up in Nunavut, a massive, sparsely populated territory in northern Canada."

Jackson, his wife Solveig and his brother

Gabriel have given Dad a hand running the business the past few years. Jackson, a manufacturing engineering manager at Marvin Windows and Doors in Warroad, helps with the processes. Solveig keeps the books and handles shipping logistics. Gabriel, who works for a software development and IT consulting firm in the Twin Cities, has expanded the marketing effort by optimizing reach in search engines. When you search for toboggans on the internet, Northern Toboggan surfaces near the top.

"This is kind of our family farm business we help out with," Jackson Harren said with a smile.

Jackson acknowledges that you can find a mass-produced toboggan for \$100 at some online outlets, but he says they can't match Northern Toboggan's craftsmanship and detail.

Northern Toboggan's downhill series red oak toboggans range from about \$350 for a 4-foot model to \$775 for an 8-foot model. The winter essential series red oak cargo toboggans range from \$760 for a standard model to nearly \$1,500 for a fully-rigged model with a sleigh box and canvas wrap.

"To get the quality of the product that we want and need typically requires a lot of hands-on work," Jackson said. "We take advantage of power sanding and planing, and we have a good band saw and joiner and those types of things. But there's still a lot of time that goes into them."

The Harrens have a tradition of gathering over the holidays and testing out their snowshoes, sleds and toboggans (132-25-001-05, Cecil Robbins). Several years ago, when a contractor was looking for a place to haul dirt from ditches he was cleaning nearby, John Harren agreed to take the dirt with one stipulation: He wanted the man to flatten the top of the dirt hill.

With that came a 30-foot spot where the family can test and enjoy sleds and toboggans in close proximity to the shop. They call it Harren Mountain.

OPERATION ROUND UP® HELPS LOCAL PROGRAMS

The North Star Electric Cooperative Community Trust Board met in January to review the Operation Round Up® applications, which they received requesting funding for various programs. The board awarded \$11,950, 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 (556-14-006-03, Jacque Promersberger). 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, and the money is placed 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 directors are appointed by North Star's board members and must be members of the cooperative.



The 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.



Operation Round Up recipients – Baudette

Left to right: Troy Kalk, Boy Scouts Troop 4062; Marlin Ravndalen, Operation Round Up board member; Mike Hovde, Baudette Community Foundation; Karlene Stay and Jennifer Hovde, Lake of the Woods Suicide Prevention; Susan Jochim, Lake of the Woods Food Shelf; Ann Ellis, North Star Electric Cooperative general manager; Margie Sporlien, Operation Round Up treasurer.



Operation Round Up recipients – Littlefork

Left to right: Larry Warrington, Operation Round Up board member; Lila Lehman, Koochiching Aging Options; Thomas Holm, Northern Options for Women; Crystal Lewis, Moose Creek Quilters; Michael Silvers, United Way for Northeastern Minn.; Karina McLellan, Falls Hunger Coalition; Captain Karla Salsbury, International Falls Salvation Army; Ariana Daniel, Servants of Shelter of Koochiching County; Ann Ellis, North Star Electric Cooperative general manager; Zelpha Crawford, Operation Round Up board member; Mary Ellen Lehman, Operation Round Up board president.

At the January meeting, \$11,950 in Operation Round Up funds were distributed to various qualifying programs and organizations throughout the area, including:

True Friends	Support of people with disabilities
Boy Scouts Troop 4062	General camping supplies
Servants of Shelter of Koochiching County	Temporary shelter
Koochiching Aging Option	Senior Wheels Program
LOW Area Suicide Awareness and Prevention	Suicide Outreach and Education Campaign
Moose Creek Quilters	Warm a Heart 2020 - quilts

International Falls Salvation Army	Emergency services
LSS Senior Nutrition - Baudette	Meals - continued support
Northern Options for Women	Community outreach
Baudette Community Foundation	Update and repair digital projector
LOW Food Shelf	Food for the hungry
United Way for Northeastern Minnesota	Imagination Library
Falls Hunger Coalition	Hams for Easter

"Each member's small change can make a BIG difference in our local communities."

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 56623-2895
634-2642

NORTHWEST COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

PO Box 67
Badger, MN 56714-0067
800-568-5329

KOOCHICHING COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES

1000 5th St
International Falls, MN 56649-2243
283-7000

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

703 3rd Ave S
Virginia, MN 55792
800-662-5711

STAFF REPORT – CAPITAL CREDITS



Robyn Sonstegard
*Manager of Finance &
Administration*

Do you ever wonder who owns your power company? If you get power from North Star Electric Co-op, the answer to that question is easy – look in the mirror! A portion of the electric bill you pay each month goes into building infrastructure – poles, wire, transformers and substations – that brings you a steady and reliable supply of power. At this time of year, it is time for you to get the credit – capital credits, that is – for helping to build, sustain and grow your local electric cooperative.

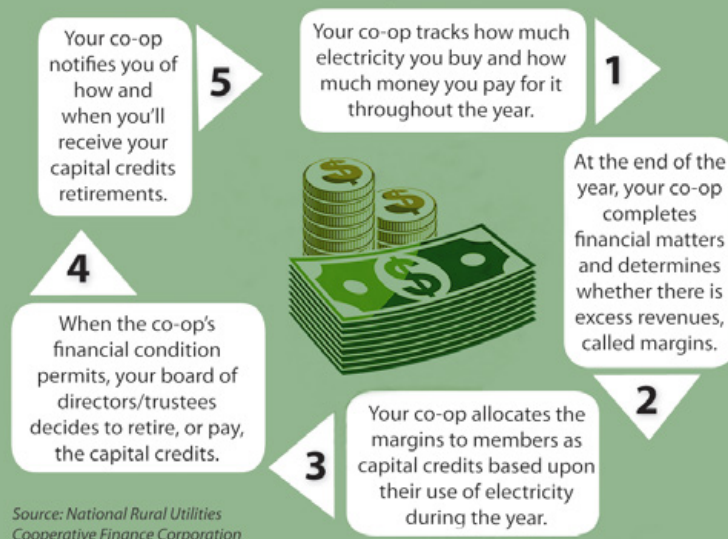
Every February, we allocate capital credits to our members. This allocation is based on how much electricity you purchased during the year. You will see your allocated share of the 2019 margins printed on your electric bill this month in the **Additional Information** area.

What are margins? Margins are the revenues left over at the end of the year, after all the bills have been paid.

When the financial condition of the co-operative allows, your board of directors approves the retirement (or payment) of capital credits, which usually happens in the early fall. At that time, you will see a credit on your bill for your share of the retirement. How much money you get back depends on how much electricity you have used in the past. This refund is to you what dividends are to stockholders at for-profit companies. The difference is that we don't aim to make a profit. Our goal is to provide you with electricity that is as close to cost as possible, so more of your money stays in your pocket – up front!

How Do Capital Credits Work?

Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are returned to members in the form of capital credits.



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 the 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
cgcollier67@gmail.com
218.966.5070
Call to set up an appointment
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
Monday - Friday

ROSEAU COUNTY

Ronald Ditsch
218.779.6758
Call to set up an appointment
7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
Monday - Friday



NORTH STAR ELECTRIC POLITICAL LEADERS

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Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov
president@whitehouse.gov
202-456-1111

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

Senator Amy Klobuchar
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www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244
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Fax: 202-228-2186

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2366 Rayburn House
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Washington, D.C. 20515
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Congressman Collin Peterson
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Governor Tim Walz
Capitol Building, Room 130
75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
800-657-3717
Gov.elect@state.mn.us

Senator Tom Bakk
2221 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-8881
www.senate.mn/members

Senator Paul Utke
3403 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
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651-296-9651
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Senator Mark Johnson
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WHERE YOUR POWER COMES FROM:

CAPACITY

34% wind
8% hydro
55% lignite coal
3% other

ENERGY

19% wind
11% hydro
67% lignite coal
3% other



HOME COOKING

BLACK BEAN ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

This hearty dish has all the great taste of traditional enchiladas – beef, beans, chiles and sour cream, without all of the fuss. It's a fast and easy favorite!

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time	Servings
25 mins	15 mins	40 mins	8 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. hamburger
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning mix
- 2/3 cup water
- 1 Tbsp. oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- Garlic
- 1 - 15 oz. can black beans drained and rinsed
- 1 - 10 oz. can enchilada sauce
- 1 - 4.5 oz. can chopped

green chiles

- 3 green onions, sliced
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 7-8 flour tortillas
- 1/2 cup shredded cheese
- 1 cup chunky salsa

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Brown hamburger; drain; add taco seasoning and water; stir until thick.

3. Heat oil in skillet; add chopped onions and garlic; cook until tender.
4. Add beans, enchilada sauce and green chiles; cook and stir.
5. Remove bean mixture from heat and stir in sour cream.
6. Spoon the hamburger down center of tortillas. Roll up tortillas and place in ungreased 9x13 pan with seam side down.
7. Spoon bean mixture over rolled tortillas. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 10-15 minutes.
8. Spoon salsa down center of dish and sprinkle with sliced green onions.

From the kitchen of Marge Block



COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

North Star Electric Co-op donates unclaimed capital credits to local charitable organizations.



Jeff Nelson, principal of Lake of the Woods School, receives an unclaimed capital credit check from Todd Higgins, line sub-foreman, representing North Star Electric Cooperative for the backpack program.

BACKPACK PROGRAMS

Overview

What is a backpack food program? Backpack food programs provide nutritious, nonperishable, easy-to-prepare food to children to ensure they get enough food on weekends and holidays to avoid hunger when they can't depend on school meals. Every backpack food program is unique to the community and school it serves. By providing kids with the nutrients they need when they're away from school, they show up on Monday morning healthy and ready to learn.



Take action

Not sure where to start? Follow these steps to start a backpack food program at your school:

- Contact your local food bank to determine if existing backpack food programs are available and other resources they can provide.
- Set up a meeting with the principal to discuss the possibility of starting a backpack program in your school.

OFFICE HOURS | 7:30 A.M. - 4 P.M. | MONDAY - FRIDAY

Baudette 218-634-2202 or 888-634-2202 | **Littlefork** 218-278-6658 or 888-258-2008
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Electrical after-hours emergencies 1-888-60OUTAGE (1-888-668-8243)
Email us at nsec@wiktel.com | **Visit our website at** northstarelectric.coop

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Like your cooperative for outage updates during the winter season and other useful info.

 **/northstarelectric**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.