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OPERATION ROUND UP CONTINUES TO HELP LOCAL PROGRAMS

LIST OF PROGRAMS THAT RECEIVED FUNDS ON PAGE 2

The North Star Electric Cooperative Community Trust Board met in January to review the Operation Round Up® applications, which it received requesting funding for various programs. The board awarded \$9,532, so it was not an easy task selecting which groups 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 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.

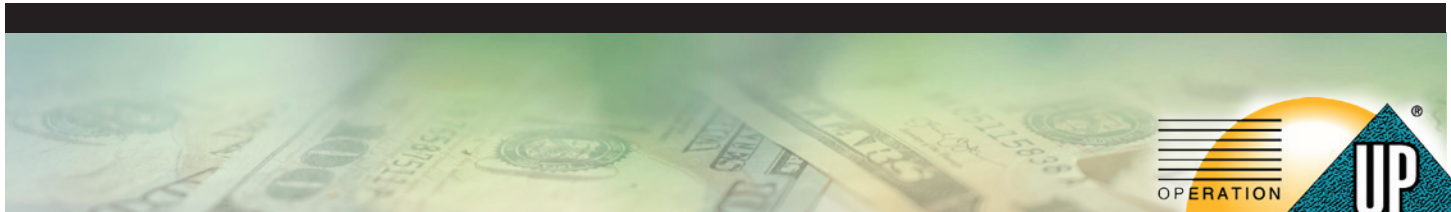
Operation Round Up directors are appointed by North Star's board members and must be members of the cooperative. The cooperative's general manager is a nonvoting member of the board.

Organizations from the area may apply for a donation from the Operation Round Up Trust. The

(ARTICLE CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

NORTH STAR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the lives of our member-owners by providing reliable electric energy services while maintaining the very highest standards of performance and member satisfaction.



OPERATION ROUND UP® CONTINUES TO HELP LOCAL PROGRAMS *(from page 1)*



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.

At the January meeting, \$9,532 in Operation Round Up funds was distributed to various qualifying programs and organizations throughout the area, including:

Roosevelt Recreation Association	..... Toddler addition to playground
Koochiching Technology Initiative	..... G2G Student Digital Navigators
Lake of the Woods School STEAM Room	..... Hands-on learning
Big Falls Food Shelf	..... Food shelf supplies
Moose Creek Quilters	..... Warm the Body to Warm the Heart
Big Falls Open Gym	..... 2023-2024 Open Gym
Littlefork Volunteer Fire Department	..... Individual SCBA masks
Lake of the Woods County 4H	..... County fair supplies
Lutheran Social Services Meals on Wheels	..... Health sustaining meals
Servants of Shelter Koochiching	..... Supportive services and resources
Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church	..... Community service elevator/safety updates
Northern Options for Women	..... Life Connection Groups
Lake of the Woods Food Shelf	..... Food shelf supplies



Operation Round Up directors are appointed by North Star’s board members and must be members of the cooperative. Pictured are the directors from left to right: Margie Sporlien, Larry Warrington, Marlin Ravndalen, Angela Boes, Mary Ellen Lehman, Gretchen Thompson and Jan Imes.

Small change makes a
BIG DIFFERENCE!



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOARDROOM


These are the highlights from the Dec. 6, 2023, regular board meeting. All board members were in attendance (425-14-022-04, Rick Faulkner). In addition to routine actions, the board voted to approve the next annual meeting date for Oct. 4, 2024, to approve the early but discounted capital credit payments to estates and to approve the 2024-2027 Construction Work Plan.

Staff reports included the safety report, the monthly financial report, capital credit retirements, the 2024 budget, new services, service upgrades, service retirements, the status of grant applications, the Minnesota DOT's 2024 road move project between Loman and Indus, outages, right-of-way clearing, disconnected and idle services, substations, winter load control, ripple receiver signal testing, solar installations, off-peak installations, Generlink transfer switch sales, rebates and updates to the video security systems at both offices.

Jeff Liebsch from Power System Engineering was a visiting guest at the meeting by teleconference. He gave a brief presentation of the 2024-2027 Construction Work Plan discussing capital projects and special equipment purchases. Darrick Moe, President and CEO of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, was welcomed to the


meeting to give an update from MREA on upcoming events, their safety program and legislative updates.

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 the co-op at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.



Over the past five years, your electricity prices have remained stable while the average U.S. egg prices have increased by **48%**.

ELECTRICITY – DELIVERING A POWERFUL VALUE EACH AND EVERY DAY.

 **VALUE OF ELECTRICITY**

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 \$500 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. The odds are good based on the number of students who typically compete.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President

Steve Arnesen

Vice President

Michael Hanson

Secretary-Treasurer

Lorraine Nygaard

Directors

Shelley Spears
Randy Bergan
Tom Smith
Douglas King

General Manager

Kevin Holen

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 BEFORE YOU DIG: 811 or 800-252-1166.
VISIT WWW.CALL811.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.



LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

Past issues of the Enlightener are on our website at

www.northstarelectric.coop

What does it mean to be a part of a cooperative?

Did you know not all electric utilities are the same? Some utilities are investor-owned (IOUs) while North Star Electric Cooperative's members are partial owners of a cooperative. While both provide electrical services to the region, there are some key differences between the two types of utilities – and cooperatives have some impressive benefits!

Being a member-owner of North Star Electric Cooperative means you have a say in how we operate. All our decisions about maintaining reliable, affordable and safe electricity are made with our members – LIKE YOU – in mind.

Thank you for being a member of the cooperative!

Investor-Owned Utilities

Electric Cooperatives

OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE



Investor-owned utilities are **for-profit corporations** that are typically publicly traded in the stock market. Profits are distributed to shareholders.



Cooperatives are **not-for-profit organizations** that are member-owned and controlled. Profits made by co-ops are either reinvested in the co-op or returned to the members as capital credits or scholarships.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



IOUs have a board of directors that is chosen by shareholders with a goal of maximizing shareholder value. The board is often comprised of **folks outside of the communities being served**.



As a cooperative, our board of directors is made up of members from around your region – **your friends and neighbors**. Representatives are voted in by the membership and serve a three-year term on the board.

PRIMARY BUSINESS OBJECTIVES



An investor-owned utility's primary business objectives include **investments that yield the highest return for shareholders**. Their goals are often guided by profit.



Cooperatives operate first and foremost for their membership. Our primary priority is **always to act in the best interest of our members**. A few of the guiding principles for all cooperatives include the prioritization of reliability and the well-being of the community.

WHO THEY SERVE



Investor-owned utilities typically serve more **urban areas** and have many more customers on a mile of power line than a cooperative.



Electric cooperatives were formed to meet the growing electrical needs of **rural communities** when larger utilities wouldn't. They were formed by rural people to serve their rural neighbors, and that service continues today.

WHY IS MY POWER OUT?

We don't like it when the power goes out just as much as you don't like it. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as safely and quickly as possible. Many times, the reasons for outages are beyond our control.

Here are the main reasons the power goes out:

- 1 Storms** — High winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service. Lightning can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can also cause a problem if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer.
- 2 Trees and vegetation** — Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines, and vegetation (such as vines) can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. This is why we work so hard to keep power lines and equipment clear.
- 3 Animals** — An estimated 11% of outages are caused by squirrels. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Turkeys and snakes can interfere with service, too.
- 4 Accidents** — Cars, trucks and farm equipment that have a run-in with a utility pole can cause an outage.
- 5 Public damage** — Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism, or theft can cause interruptions.
- 6 Overload** — This can happen when demand spikes, such as when too many air conditioners run on a hot summer day, causing blackouts or brownouts.
- 7 Equipment** — We maintain and inspect all of our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions (654-31-001-02, George Aitchison). We strive to address any problem as soon as it happens.



Ice that accumulates on lines and strong, high winds can impact distribution.

Please contact us at **218-634-2202** with questions about outages or to learn more about the steps we take to provide reliable service. For more information about electrical safety, visit **SafeElectricity.org**.

PROBLEMS PAYING YOUR ELECTRIC BILL?

ENERGY ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE!

If you recently lost your job or had your hours cut, the following agencies may be able to help you with your electric bill. You may have never needed help before, but maybe today you do.

LAKE OF THE WOODS COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES

206 8th Ave SE, Suite 200
Baudette, MN 56623-2895
218-634-2642

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
218-283-7000

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 – ARE YOU PREPARED FOR AN OUTAGE?



Tim Pelach
Operations Manager

Greetings, everyone. I hope your winter is going well and everyone has had a nice holiday season. Here we are going into February and just starting to see enough snow for the snowmobilers.

The benefits of a winter like this is the ability to get a lot of projects done efficiently with the lack of snow. Our crews have been busy with rejected pole changeouts and right-of-way clearing.

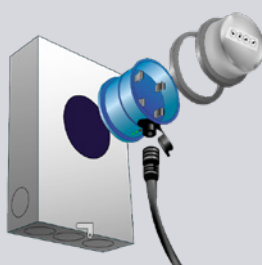
It looks like 2023 was a better-than-average year for adding new services to the system (251-25-082-05, Blake Abbey). Between both ends we added 80, and I would predict this year is going to be about the same as last with the interest shown already. If you think this is your year for work to be done, try to get on the books sooner rather than later.

Last month's outage in the International Falls area was a harsh reminder of how much people have become dependent on electricity. While North Star does its best to keep outages to a minimum, sometimes events happen that are out of our control and it takes a while to repair. Now, we have been very fortunate to not have any outages that last for days like the recent ice storms around the Red River Valley. Although unlikely, it could happen. I would like to encourage you to ask yourself, am I prepared to lose power for a few days? If not, what steps can I take to be ready? Of course, everyone will say a generator, but it could be something like a gas or wood fireplace that doesn't need electricity. It will keep the house from freezing in the winter, and I can remember the candles and lanterns at night during outages. And use it as a good excuse to let the cellphone go dead and play a game of cards. For some, a generator may be the right answer, but the day you need it isn't the day to figure it out.

And with spring right around the corner, just a reminder we will be starting our annual line inspections soon, so you may see our trucks in your neighborhoods looking things over.

Take advantage of the longer days and get out and enjoy what we have left of winter, as spring will be here soon. That's all for now, Tim

CONNECT YOUR PORTABLE GENERATOR



GenerLink

GenerLink provides members a safe and easy way to connect their portable generator during outages.

- No rewiring needed
- Ready to use when you need it
- Flexibility and control to select what you want to run using your home's circuit panel
- North Star's electric technicians will install the device at your electric meter

Contact North Star for more information and current pricing at **218-634-2202**.

North Star is now selling portable generators.
Contact our office for more details.



NORTH STAR ELECTRIC POLITICAL LEADERS

FEDERAL LEGISLATORS

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

Senator Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.klobuchar.senate.gov
202-224-3244;
Fax: 202-228-2186

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

Congresswoman Michelle
Fischbach, U.S. House (7th
District)
1004 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
fischbach.house.gov
202-225-2165;
Fax: 202-225-1593

Congressman Pete Stauber,
U.S. House (8th District)
145 Cannon House Office
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
stauber.house.gov
202-225-6211

STATE OF MINNESOTA LEGISLATORS

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King,
Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-201-3400

Minority Leader
Senator Mark Johnson (01, R)
2401 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5782
sen.mark.johnson@senate.mn

Senator Steve Green (02, R)
2319 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-297-8063
sen.steve.green@senate.mn

Senator Grant Hauschild
(03, DFL)
3111 Minnesota Senate
Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-1789
sen.grant.hauschild@senate.
mn

Representative Matt Grossell
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371 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-4265
rep.matt.grossell@house.mn

Representative Matt Bliss
(02B, R)
311 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-5516;
Toll Free: 877-838-5537
rep.matt.bliss@house.mn

Representative Roger Skraba
(03A, R)
221 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-2190

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.

ST. LOUIS and KOOCHICHING COUNTIES

Keith Tillotson
218.245.9087

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

LAKE OF THE WOODS and ROSEAU COUNTIES

Ronald Ditsch
651.368.2195

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

HOME COOKING

Turkey Dressing Bake

This hearty casserole transforms two holiday essentials into one comforting meal to enjoy all year long – so much flavor baked into one dish.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time	Servings
10 mins	40-45 mins	50-55 mins	6-8

INGREDIENTS

- (1) 7-8 ounce package herb-seasoned stuffing mix
- (1) 10½ ounce can cream of mushroom soup
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 well-beaten eggs
- 2½ cups cooked and diced turkey (or chicken)

- ½ cup milk
- 2 Tbsp chopped canned pimento

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toss stuffing mix with ½ can of the soup, chicken broth and beaten eggs.
2. Spread mixture in 11x7x1½ inch pan.
3. Top with diced turkey (or chicken).

4. Combine remaining ½ can of soup with milk and pimento. Pour over all.
5. Cover with foil. Bake in 350° oven for 40-45 minutes, or until set.

From the kitchen of Sandra Sindelir.



Receive a \$20 energy credit if you submit a recipe and it is selected to run in a future issue of the Enlightener newsletter.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

North Star Electric Cooperative donates unclaimed capital credits to local charitable programs and organizations



Doug King, North Star Electric board director (*left*), presents an unclaimed capital credit check to Lois Lundin with the Backus Community Center in International Falls.

"Commitment to community is a driving force behind your cooperative as we support programs that improve the lives of those who live in the communities we serve."

UPCOMING DATES/EVENTS

19
FEB

North Star Electric's Baudette and Littlefork offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 19, in observance of Presidents Day.

06
MAR

North Star will hold its next monthly board meeting on Wednesday, March 6. Please contact us ahead of time if you would like to be added to the agenda.

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
For credit card payment 855-874-5354 | **Online billing** info available via SmartHub app
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' US ON FACEBOOK TO STAY UP TO DATE

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

 /northstarelectric

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.