

MiNews

February 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 2
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

A
JOURNEY
DOWN
MiRoads
WITH MEAGAN MOELLERS

Kindness matters

Share the love and give compassion

Electric water heaters can be the smart energy choice

**FACTORS
THAT IMPACT
ELECTRIC
BILLS**

Know the hidden risks
of mylar balloons



Member questions

Over the past few months, I have received a few calls from members asking questions about their electric cooperative after reading the newsletter or hearing a 'comment' at the local coffee shop. I thought they were questions that would be good to share with the entire membership.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MiEnergy is very engaged in economic development across our electric cooperative service territory. Development and growth support the creation of new jobs, provide essential services and increase energy sales for your electric cooperative. MiEnergy is a federal borrower under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), a division under the Rural Utilities Services (RUS). USDA has a host of programs for rural development that MiEnergy is eligible to participate in on behalf of our membership.

Specifically, USDA has a Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program (REDLG) that provides zero percent loans for new businesses and existing business expansions. Applications compete with other applications in each state for funding. MiEnergy has been very successful in attaining REDLG funds. Some projects that received federal funding include the Upper Iowa Beef and Sunflower Childcare and Discovery Center.

Under the REDLG program, there are loans and grant applications. Under the grant application, funded projects are paid back to a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), which is reloaned to other smaller projects within the service territory. Some of the smaller RLF projects approved by the cooperative include Winona Area Industrial Development Association, Canton Heating and Cooling, Featherstone Fruits & Vegetables, Decorah Jobs and PIVO Brewery.

The funding for these projects comes from the federal USDA program. Generally, they are structured with a 10-year amortization at 0-5% interest. To ensure that MiEnergy and its members are not on the hook if a loan should default, the board of directors has requested a guaranteed letter of credit to

secure each loan from either the REDLG or RLF program. This protects the membership from a loan that could go into default. At year end, we had 26 loans varying in original loan amounts from \$27,000 to \$2 million totalling \$8.7 million, and no loans have defaulted in the decades we've been operating the program.

CITY OF WHALAN

The city of Whalan held an election in November and voted to disband its municipal-owned electric system and transfer it to MiEnergy. They have less than 60 electric accounts. The city had been a wholesale member of MiEnergy for 37 years. MiEnergy provides electric service wholesale to 10 communities in southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. They include Caledonia, Eitzen, Harmony, Lanesboro, Lawler, Mabel, Peterson, Rushford, Spring Grove and St. Charles.

MiEnergy supports these municipal-owned utilities through a power supply contract from Dairyland Power Cooperative, along with operations and maintenance agreements, billing, metering, collections, construction, outage restoration, customer service, energy management, or anything else necessary for their municipal system operations.

CITY OF DECORAH

An investor-owned utility, Alliant Energy, provides electric service to Decorah's residents and businesses. Decorah's city council has set a special election for March 4, during which residents will vote on the opportunity to establish a municipal-owned electric utility. What does this have to do with MiEnergy? The city has asked if we would be willing to enter into a maintenance and operation agreement, similar to what we do for our 10 wholesale members with municipal-owned systems.

MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING

Last month, the nominating committee accepted director applications for districts 4 and 5. Due to the vacancy on the board created by the passing of Jeff Redalen, the board is accepting District 1 director applications until March 3 for an appointment.

The cooperative bylaws state applicants must be a "member in good standing" with the cooperative. The question was asked: what is a member in good standing? MiEnergy's board policy lists the duties, standard of conduct, expectations and responsibilities. A member must comply with MiEnergy policies and not have been delinquent more than once in the past 12 months, nor delinquent in electric bill payments as a current member. The board of directors may approve such requests due to extenuating circumstances.

With the state of mail delivery, we encourage members to consider automated payments via credit card or bank account to prevent late payments, especially when mail delivery is out of anyone's control.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails, and personal visits.

A JOURNEY DOWN MiRoads WITH MEAGAN MOELLERS

SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

A common fiber in life is through the simple act of being kind. Find ways to bring joy in the little things that you do

done without any thought of recognition or praise, just from the kindness of your heart. After all, February is well known for being the "heart" month, with things like Valentine's Day on February 14 and Heart Health Month on February 5. So why not show positivity and inspiration to do good during the entire month?

There are roughly 19,000 members of MiEnergy. Imagine what February would be like if all these individuals did just one nice gesture for someone! What a concept. Maybe traveling down MiRoads in February will be the best gift we will ever receive or give this year. Doing something nice can make us just as happy. Best of all, some acts of kindness don't need to cost you a penny and can be expressed at any age!

WAYS TO SPREAD KINDNESS:

- Share your favorite homecooked meal with someone and handwrite the ingredients and directions on a special recipe card for them to keep.
- Give your server an extra tip if they go above and beyond to make your experience memorable.
- Hold the door open and greet that person with a genuine smile and greeting.
- Write positive/motivational messages on sticky notes for others to find in random places.
- Purchase a heart-shaped cookie or specialty donut at your local bakery and gift it to someone.
- Read a book to someone.
- Share a favorite memory with a loved one.
- Buy someone popcorn or a treat at a sporting event from the concession stand.
- Compliment a stranger.
- Leave quarters at a vending machine.
- Sign up to be an organ donor.
- Bake cookies for your local medical center, police station or fire station.
- Let someone go in front of you in line.
- High-five someone at your work or school.
- Visit elderly residents at a nursing home or assisted living facility to offer companionship and a listening ear.
- Make a unique card and send it to someone across the state, nation or world or to a military base.
- Play with someone who is alone at recess or the lunchroom during your school day.
- Return a shopping cart for someone at a store parking lot.
- Buy a box of chocolates at your local gift store in town and share it with your co-workers.
- Shovel snow for a neighbor.
- Help a friend get active.
- As a MiEnergy member, you can sign up for our Operation Round Up program and feel good knowing you are helping numerous community causes. Or donate to our RECare fund to help a fellow member who might be struggling during hard times to pay their electric bill.

You have heard the sayings, "Minnesota Nice" and "Is this heaven – no it's Iowa." Let's live up to those historic and classic adages and simply be kind. No matter where we find ourselves on MiRoads, find a way to make the day special for someone in your world today.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." ~Maya Angelou

Join the kindness conversation on MiEnergy's Facebook page for a chance to win a kindness basket. Deadline to comment is February 28.



Board room highlights | Jan. 29, 2025

- CFO Shelly Hove reviewed year-end financials that tracked very close to 2024 budget.
- Management provided updates on legislative issues, the year-end audit, Houston County solar moratorium, ongoing cost-of-service study, and new electric accounts.
- Approved the 2025 operating budget.
- Reviewed the nominating committee report for director districts 4 and 5, and received an update on the District 1 candidate vacancy and application process.
- Approved the 2025 safety committee goals and objectives following a presentation by Safety and Compliance Manager Brad Pecinovsky.
- CEO Brian Krambeer reviewed the cooperative subsidiaries.

The next board meeting will be held at the Cresco office on February 27 at 9 a.m.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT ENERGY BILLS

February brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

Your monthly bill from MiEnergy provides a summary of how much electricity you used. Members who are registered with MiEnergy's SmartHub account can view data to see which days you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

There are also external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

FUEL PRICES

The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partner Dairyland Power Cooperative accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses and prices fluctuate based on supply and demand.

EXTREME WEATHER

When temperatures become extremely cold or extremely hot and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, members pay a monthly basic service charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered.

ENERGY POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Federal and state energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with state and federal representatives to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

YOU HAVE CONTROL

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest or highest comfortable setting (depending on the season) can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

EFFECTIVE WAYS

To Lower Home Energy Use

Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.



Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Dept. of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



Seal Your Home

According to ENERGY STAR®, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.



Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES | ENERGY EFFICIENCY RENEWABLE ENERGY

YOUR SOURCE FOR POWER AND INFORMATION



mienergy[™]
COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Electric water heaters, a smart energy choice

If you've been a co-op member for a while, you likely know that MiEnergy has been selling electric water heaters for decades. Member surveys show that 69% of our members see the co-op as their go-to resource for electric water heaters.

WHAT TO KNOW:

- Building a new home? Switching from gas to an electric water heater? Members are eligible for a **FREE** 85- or 105-gallon electric water heater if they join the cooperative's energy management program. All other members can get a significant rebate on the purchase of a water heater from MiEnergy if joining the energy management program.
- MiEnergy provides **FREE** service calls during normal business hours (7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday).
- Members registering the water heater online within 90 days of installation qualify for a **FREE** lifetime tank and six-year parts warranty.
- When combined with the co-op's energy management program (all water heaters sold by the co-op must be on a program), the water heater runs like a smart appliance. It provides stability and efficiency to the power grid by heating water when the electricity demand is low and storing it for later use. The water heater is wired to a device that is pre-programmed, and you don't have to do anything but enjoy hot water.
- Upon request, all water heaters on the storage strategy can be powered by four 100 kWh Evergreen blocks for **FREE**.

The co-op's energy management program controls your water heater's energy use so that it heats your water during off-peak hours when the cost of electricity is lowest. And, because the new electric water heaters are larger and better insulated, they'll keep all the water you want hot until you need it. The life expectancy of an average water heater is 10-15 years for electric and 8-12 for gas. Prepare now, so you know your options.

An electric-powered water heater is a smart energy choice for your water heating needs. It is safe, reliable, clean, predictably priced and adaptable to many uses.



101 ENERGY MANAGEMENT

It's like pushing snooze
on your water heater

Energy management programs, also known as load control, help balance supply and demand. It consists of interrupting electric water heaters, electric heat systems, air conditioners, irrigation pumps, grain drying systems and whole farm operations during critical times. It reduces electricity demand during peak use hours and in turn helps keep electric rates affordable.

Dairyland Power Cooperative, MiEnergy's wholesale power supplier, operates a network of radio transmitters which send out load-control signals to interrupt power. These signals are received by a special receiver installed at a member's home or business.

Rather than starting up a power plant for a short period of time or purchasing more expensive power from the market, electrical demand is reduced by "snoozing" the devices of members who participate in MiEnergy's energy management programs.

How do I know if devices are being controlled? Check the status 24/7 by calling 877-437-6130 or clicking on Load Control Status at www.MiEnergy.coop.



Focus on what matters most

with cameras from
Heartland Security



Heartland Security 888.264.6380 • heartlandss.com
Security | Automation | Cameras | Medical Alerts

Call MiEnergy at 800-432-2285 today!

Know the hazards of mylar balloons

Metallic mylar balloons are great indoors and can brighten the bleakest and most dreary winter day. They are great at birthdays, graduations and other special occasions.

However, you must know how to use and dispose of metallic balloons properly, or you could cause a power outage and damage to utility electrical equipment. Because of the metallic coating, they conduct electricity well and can short out circuits in your community's power system.

You and your neighbors could lose power, traffic lights could go out, and entire blocks of homes and businesses could go dark. To prevent this, keep metallic balloons secured. When done with the balloons, deflate them and throw them in the garbage. Do not release them.

Here are tips to help you make sure metallic balloons are used and disposed of safely:

- Always tie your balloons down or use a weight.
- Do not intentionally release the balloons.
- It is safest to keep metallic balloons inside. In fact, some parks have banned metallic balloons on their property, so be aware of these warnings.
- If you see a metallic balloon in contact with a power line, never attempt to disconnect it yourself. Notify the electrical company immediately.
- Never tie a metallic ribbon on your balloon. Also, never tie a metallic balloon to a child's wrist. If the balloon comes in contact with electricity, it will travel through the balloon and into the child. This could cause a serious injury or even death.

Metallic balloons have been known to float for several days before losing their helium and returning to Earth. If one lands within the fence of an electric utility substation, it can cause electrical fires and untold dollars' worth of damage after high transmission circuitry goes down.



out & about in your COMMUNITY

mienergyTM
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

OFFICE INFORMATION
Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.

IOWA 24049 Highway 9, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136
MINNESOTA 31110 Cooperative Way, PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PHONE NUMBERS
LOCAL 563-547-3801 (Cresco); 507-864-7783 (Rushford)
TOLL-FREE & 24/7 OUTAGE REPORTING 800-432-2285
PAYMENT LINE 24/7 855-941-3631
UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE
WEBSITE www.MiEnergy.coop
SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DISTRICT 1 Dennis Ptacek, secretary and vacant seat
DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair
DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser
DISTRICT 4 Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks
DISTRICT 5 Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

MANAGEMENT STAFF
BRIAN KRAMBEER president/chief executive officer
SHELLY HOVE chief financial officer
JILL HUFFMAN broadband chief operating officer
STEVE OIAN vice president of electric operations
VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology
MIKE WALTON vice president of engineering and planning
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF
MEAGAN MOELLERS communications specialist, editor
ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist
BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2025 OFFICES CLOSED
MARCH 25 Employee Development Day
APRIL 18 Good Friday
MAY 26 Memorial Day
JUNE 24 Employee Development Day
JULY 4 Independence Day
SEPT 1 Labor Day
SEPT 9 Employee Development Day
NOV 27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC 16 Employee Development Day
DEC 24-25 Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
DEC 31 New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.
JAN 1 New Year's Day



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – RUSHFORD VILLAGE

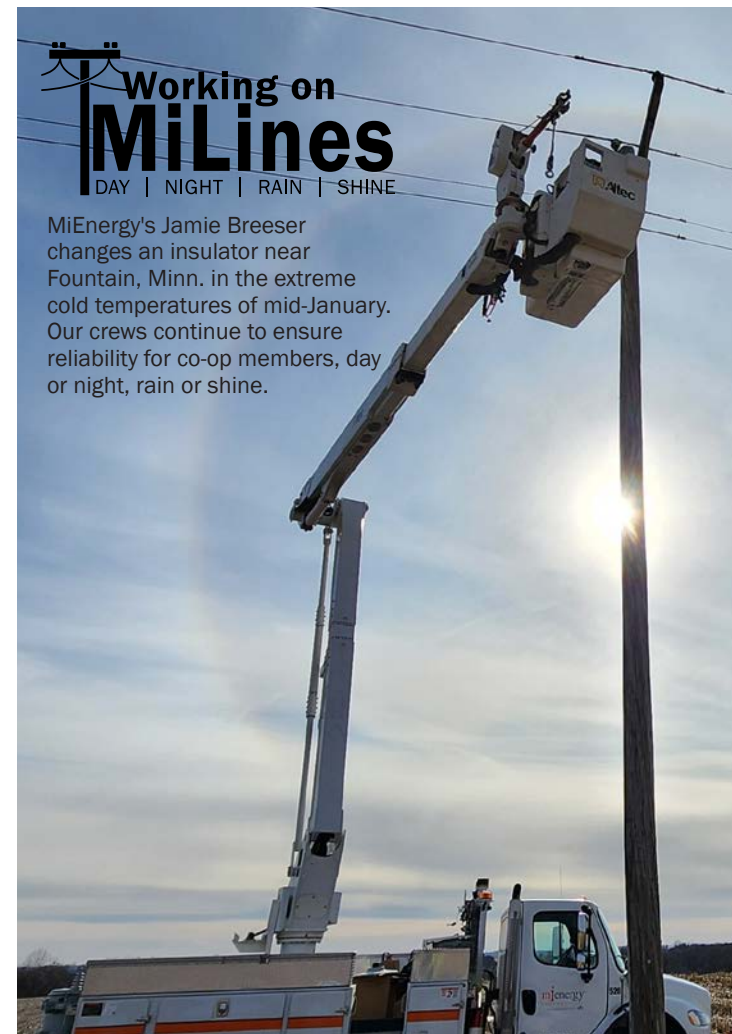
MiEnergy collaborated with Featherstone Fruits & Vegetables LLC, of Rushford Village, to support their business expansion through the USDA's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund program. Featherstone will use the \$50,000 loan to remodel, retrofit and expand two new sections to their existing facilities which include processing and cold storage areas. This remodel and expansion will enable greater distribution of their Minnesota-grown vegetables. Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables is located on 225 acres alongside the Root River and grows more than 95 varieties of certified organic fruits, vegetables, salad greens and herbs.

Pictured above l to r: Representing Featherstone are Nathan Manfull, Tanya Betthaus, Abby Benson, James Mabry and Jack Hedin; representing MiEnergy are Lori Clobes and Kent Whitcomb.

2025 state legislative session priorities

The top legislative priority for Iowa electric cooperatives is protecting the state's defined electric service territories. Your location determines which electric utility will serve your home, farm or business. For almost 50 years, these defined electric service areas have provided certainty to electric cooperatives as we work to maintain affordable rates, foster a resilient electric grid and invest in economic development throughout rural Iowa.

Minnesota electric cooperatives are focused on responsible energy policy. Every piece of legislation should be viewed through the lens of reliable, affordable and safe energy for our members. We have three priorities: lift the nuclear moratorium (Minnesota is the only state with a full moratorium), net metering reform and clarity of property tax exemptions when it comes to attachments and appurtenances.



MiEnergy's Jamie Breeser changes an insulator near Fountain, Minn. in the extreme cold temperatures of mid-January. Our crews continue to ensure reliability for co-op members, day or night, rain or shine.



Personnel changes at the co-op

EMPLOYEE RETIREMENTS

Eric Vitse retired from MiEnergy on January 2. He began his employment with



Tri-County Electric Cooperative on April 19, 1993, as a utility person and retired as an equipment operator/technician. Thanks for your 31 years of dedication and service to MiEnergy!

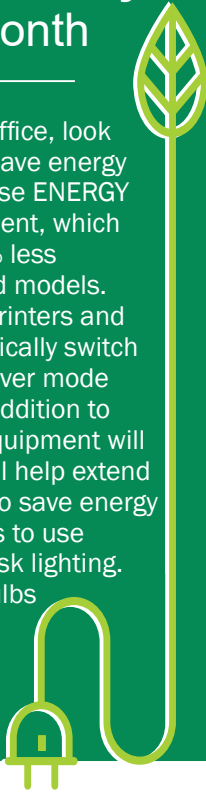
Lori Clobes retired from the cooperative on January 31. She began her employment with Tri-County Electric Cooperative on May 22, 1989, as a secretary. She then moved to payroll clerk in 1992, accounting supervisor in 2001 and retired as the director of accounting with MiEnergy. Thank you Lori for your dedicated 35 years of service!



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: energy.gov



mienergy[™]
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

IOWA PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

MINNESOTA PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage

PAID
DPC

Deadline approaching for youth opportunities

Community Service Scholarships

MiEnergy gives scholarships to high school seniors to help them further their education. Applications are due **March 3**. Must be a son, daughter or legal dependent of a MiEnergy cooperative member.



As a cooperative, MiEnergy has a strong commitment to youth and community. The program recognizes high school seniors who demonstrate cooperative spirit through service to others. Up to 80 \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded this year. Scholarships are funded with unclaimed capital credit funds that would otherwise be forfeited to the state.

Visit MiEnergy.coop/scholarships for details.



Leadership trip to D.C.

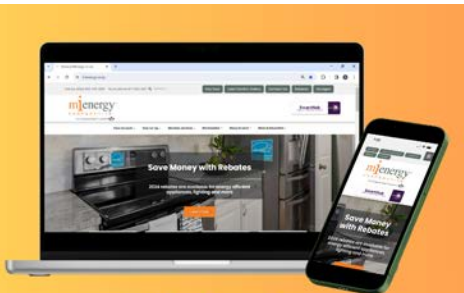
Two students, one from Minnesota and one from Iowa, will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2025 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. We are accepting applications until March 3. Must be a son, daughter or legal dependent of a MiEnergy cooperative member to apply; the student must be a current sophomore or junior in high school.

Minnesota - June 16-21
Iowa - June 15-21

Students who meet the application requirements must attend an in-person interview at **8:30 a.m. on March 24** at the Rushford office for students of Minnesota members and at **8:30 a.m. on March 26** at the Cresco office for students of Iowa members.

Visit www.MiEnergy.coop/youthtour to apply.

mienergy[™]
COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Online Resources

- PAY YOUR BILL
- VIEW ENERGY USE
- SEE CURRENT OUTAGES
- TIPS FOR SAVING ENERGY
- WAYS TO STAY SAFE
- LATEST NEWS

Discover more at
www.MiEnergy.coop

