

# MiNews

## Operation Round Up grants \$6,000 to local organizations

### 10 ways to save energy this summer

### Annual Meeting Members vote in new board director



**mienergy**  
COOPERATIVE

April 18, 2022

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Ridgeway Fire Department \$ 900.00

nine hundred dollars 00/100 DOLLARS

cascade system

ORU - MiEnergy Coop

## DON'T FALL FOR UTILITY SCAMS

The Ridgeway Fire Department in Iowa recently received an Operation Round Up grant for \$900 for helping maintain their cascade system used for filling air tanks.

# Annual meeting highlights

The MiEnergy Cooperative Annual Meeting on April 13 marked the fifth year of operation as a merged electric cooperative. Members from districts 4 and 5 participated in their director elections using mail ballots, electronic online voting and one ballot was delivered on-site at the annual meeting. Over 1,500 members participated in our voting process – thank you!



Congratulations to retiring Director Dean Fisher, who announced early on that he would not seek reelection when his term was up, allowing the board to reduce the number of directors from twelve to eleven. Director Fisher represented Hawkeye REC and

MiEnergy for 31 years. In recognition of his dedicated service, a meter lamp was presented to him at the annual meeting.

Congratulations are also in order for incumbent directors Jenny Scharmer, Beth Olson and Carl Reicks who were reelected to three-year terms. Special thanks to director candidate challengers, Bob Peterson and Travis Thul, for your interest in serving your local electric cooperative.

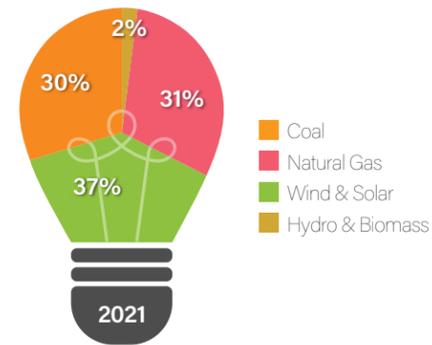
This year's annual meeting also marked a new director, Kyle

Holthaus, of Waukon, Iowa. He was voted in by District 4 members over incumbent Chuck Frana. Kyle has served on MiEnergy's advisory committee prior to running for the cooperative director seat. We look forward to working with Kyle. I would also like to thank Chuck for his contributions and 19 years of dedicated service representing members of his district.

The annual meeting allows me an opportunity to highlight the cooperative's accomplishments that included our stable retail electric rates, including no change in rates for 2022 based on the operating budget approved by our board of directors. I also highlighted that as a critical service organization, our greatest asset is our employees. MiEnergy employees have continued to rise to the occasion during severe weather events and do outstanding work to keep the lights on, no matter the time of day or weather event. I'm grateful to be part of such an outstanding group of employees.

Updates were provided on broadband growth and the development of our local and regional electric vehicle charging networks. Our electric vehicle charging rate is equivalent to purchasing gas at 37¢ per gallon. Unfortunately, the problem today is trying to find an electric vehicle to purchase.

As part of the meeting, a graph was shown of a 2021 United States Department of Energy study indicating utilities "could" likely attain 42% electricity from renewable energy resources by 2050. By comparison, at the end of 2021, MiEnergy received 37% of our generation from renewable resources. It hasn't happened overnight. This is the result of 98 kW in Renewable Rays (community solar), 517 kW Minnesota Three (shared with two other electric



cooperatives), 9 MW of local solar purchased from the Fillinona Solar sites, 730 private member-owned systems and the great work of our wholesale power provider Dairyland Power Cooperative. This is again a leadership position for MiEnergy Cooperative in comparison to other cooperatives and utilities across the country.

As always, thank you for your cooperative support and I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits. If you are involved in agriculture – make it a point to remind your family to be safe around power lines this spring during planting season.

## Board room highlights April 28, 2022

Held the reorganization meeting for MiEnergy:

- All executive committee appointments remaining the same as follows: Dean Nierling, chair; Ron Stevens, vice chair; Dennis Ptacek, secretary; Don Petersen, treasurer; Jenny Scharmer, Dairyland Power Cooperative representative; and Don Petersen, Dairyland Power Cooperative, alternate.
- Recognized new director Kyle Holthaus.

Regular board meeting:

- CEO Krambeer presented a very favorable operating report.
- Received a recap of the annual meeting and reviewed the draft annual meeting minutes.
- Received notification of receiving state disaster recovery funds for the December storm.
- Reviewed the recipient list for the \$1,000 scholarships that will be presented to 70 high school students.
- CEO Krambeer provided updates for the subsidiary organizations.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on May 26 at 9 a.m.

## DISTRICTS 4 AND 5 ELECTION RESULTS

District 4, Seat #1		District 5, Seat #1	
Charles Frana	360	Jenny Scharmer	555
Kyle Holthaus	420	Bob Peterson	190

District 4, Seat #2		District 5, Seat #2	
Carl Reicks	unopposed	Beth Olson	474
		Travis Thul	272

1,547 ballots cast (1,355 mail, 191 online and 1 in-person).

Below pictured L-R: Kyle Holthaus, Carl Reicks, Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer.



**CHARGING FORWARD**

**PRIZE WINNERS IN PERSON**

**\$100 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT**  
DOUGLAS MEYER | CALMAR

**\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT**  
SPRINGSIDE FARMS | CANTON  
ALVIN VOYNA / KAREN VOYNA | CRESCO  
MARK SOLLJEN | DECORAH  
LESTER ERICKSON | MABEL  
NEIL DIERSEN | MABEL  
ROBERT SHATEK | NEW HAMPTON  
ELLEN COLLETT | CANTON  
ROGER MEYTHALER | RIDGEWAY  
GERALD HUMPAL | RIDGEWAY  
MICHAEL HARTZ / JODI HARTZ | DECORAH  
WAYNE HAUG | LANESBORO  
THEODORE HANSON | CALEDONIA  
CHANGING OAKS WELL | DECORAH  
TED KJOS / ALISON KJOS | RUSHFORD

**STREAMING VIEWERS**

**\$50 ELECTRIC BILL CREDIT**  
DALE SCOBIE | DORCHESTER  
LAVONNE SPEER | CHESTER  
SUSIE MAGNUSON | RUSHFORD  
JANELLE MAHR | LIME SPRINGS

# A DAY IN MAY

It was an average day in May – one that started like any other, when Cody Conrady was at work for an ag fertilizer company.

He was an assistant manager, and it was his next-to-last day on the job. They were understaffed that day, and Cody was filling in wherever he was needed.

He jumped in the truck to try and get ahead of the sprayer. Once the sprayer was in position, he hopped out to fill the tank with fertilizer.

He and his coworker inside the cab were unaware that the sprayer boom had either made contact or gotten too close to a power line.

7,400 volts of electricity traveled through the boom and electrified the equipment and ground where Cody was standing. Unfortunately, the unyielding voltage considered Cody's body as part of its electrical path to ground.

Since that day, Cody and his wife, Bailey, began a tough road of recovery, together. For him, it was true grit, determination and living the ups and downs that come with this type of recovery. For her, it was emotional strength and fortitude – witnessing Cody's setbacks and victories and supporting him through them all.

Cody took his first steps as part of his recovery four months later – days before their September wedding.

Cody and Bailey share their experiences to increase awareness about power line safety.

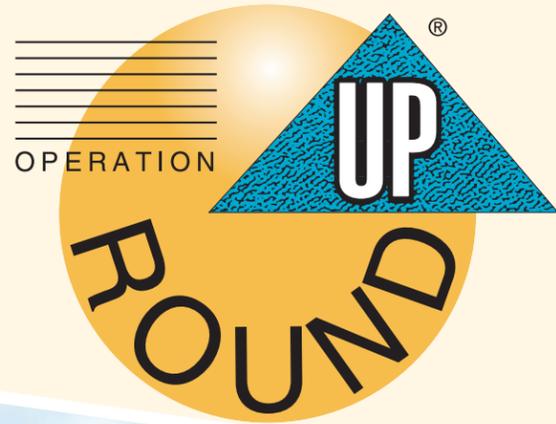
Electricity can travel through anything in its path. Unintended contact can happen in an instant.



Learn more at:



# Members give \$6,000 in local grants



MiEnergy Cooperative's Operation Round Up Trust Board met on March 17 and elected to donate \$6,000 to the following local organizations:

- **\$1,000, City of Ostrander, Minn.,** to assist with purchasing new playground equipment for its city park.
- **\$1,000, Mabel Ambulance, Mabel, Minn.,** to help with the cost of upgrading outdated pagers.
- **\$1,000, Wilson Township Volunteer Fire Department, Winona, Minn.,** to support a program to help purchase smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers to give away locally to residents with homes lacking these safety devices.
- **\$900, Ridgeway Fire Department, Ridgeway, Iowa,** to assist with purchasing replacement parts for a cascade system that refills air tanks.
- **\$750, Caledonia United Methodist Church, Caledonia, Minn.,** to purchase backpacks and school supplies for Houston County students as part of Helping Hands.
- **\$650, Firefighters of Elma, Inc., Elma, Iowa,** to support building an addition to the fire station to provide space to add an ambulance service for the local area.
- **\$500, Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum, Decorah, Iowa,** to help move a one-room schoolhouse to its site in Burr Oak.
- **\$200, Houston Holidazzle Park and Parade Committee, Houston, Minn.,** to purchase supplies to make new decorations and upgrade old ones.



Operation Round Up is funded by donations made by members of MiEnergy Cooperative who voluntarily have their electric bill round up to the next dollar. The average donation is \$6 per year and 2,031 MiEnergy members participate.

The program is based on the idea that small change adds up. Currently, the program gives away approximately \$12,000 each year to local organizations.

The Operation Round Up Trust Board chooses where the funds get donated and the amount of the donation based on an application process. The trust board members include Neil Broadwater, of Winona; Beth George, of Houston; Roy Kryzer, of Lewiston; Janelle Mahr, of Lime Springs; Teresa Ross, of Hokah; Shannon Schmelzer, of Cresco; Perry-O Sliwa of Decorah; Tom Tibor, of Minnesota City; and Mike Tuohy, of Chatfield.

Donations to Operation Round Up are tax deductible. Organizations receive grants through an application process. The next application deadline is August 15. To learn more about Operation Round Up or to round up your electric bill, visit [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop) or call 1-800-432-2285.

# 10 ideas for summer energy savings

A hot home and high energy bills can take away from summer fun. Here are 10 tips to prepare your home for high summer temperatures.

## 1 SERVICE YOUR AC UNIT

Air conditioning (AC) units work by moving air over fins or coils that contain refrigerant. When the coils or fins get dirty, the unit doesn't work as well and uses more energy.

Whether you have a portable unit, central AC or a ductless/mini-split, get your system ready for summer by cleaning the filter, coils and fins. If you are tackling this yourself, always disconnect power to the unit.

Central AC systems have two sets of coils: one inside and one outside. Both should be cleaned annually. If you hire a professional, they can check refrigerant levels during the process.

## 2 SEAL YOUR WINDOW AC UNIT

If you have a window or portable AC unit that vents through a window, seal the area between the window sashes. Water heater pipe insulation is a great way to seal this spot. It's available at your local hardware store and is easy to cut for a snug fit.

## 3 THERMOSTAT SETTINGS

Keeping your thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature will save you money. If you aren't home during the day, increase your thermostat 8 to 10 degrees. There's no need to cool an empty house.

## 4 KEEP YOUR COOL

Before heading to the thermostat, turn on a fan in the room you're in, change into lighter clothing and drink something cool. This may be enough to make you comfortable without spending more to cool your home. Finding the balance between comfort and savings is key.

## 5 LOCK WINDOWS

After opening your windows at night or in the morning to let in fresh air, ensure your windows are closed and locked. This reduces gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts. If your locks don't form a tight fit, add weatherstripping. Most products are easy to install.

## 6 WEATHERSTRIPPING & CURTAINS

Covering and sealing windows may seem like a wintertime efficiency practice, yet these help in the summer, too. Windows are typically the least-insulated surface in a room. Add weatherstripping to form a tight seal and curtains you can close during the hottest times of the day to block out the sun.

## 7 COOK AL FRESCO

Keep your home cool or your AC from working overtime by cooking outside. My grill has an extra burner on the side that lets me do stovetop cooking outside, too.

## 8 ADD INSULATION

Even in the summer, adding insulation can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your air conditioning system. As a general rule, if you can see the joists in the floor of your attic, you need more insulation.

## 9 TURN OFF GAS FIREPLACES

Reducing the amount of heat entering your home can keep it cooler, especially if you don't have AC. If you have a gas fireplace, your pilot light lets off a small amount of heat into the room. Consider turning it off during summer months.

## 10 ADD SHADE OUTSIDE

Several years ago, we planted a hedge on the south side of our home. I was surprised by how much cooler it made the house in the summertime. Planting trees and shrubs strategically around your home can shade the roof, walls and pavement, reducing heat radiation to your home. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, tree-shaded neighborhoods can be up to 6 degrees cooler in the daytime than treeless areas. Before buying a tree or shrub, check with your city or utility about free tree programs.

Applying a few of these ideas to your home will help keep you comfortable and provide summer energy savings.

Miranda Boutelle is the director of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She also writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

# DON'T FALL VICTIM TO UTILITY SCAMS

Every day, millions of Americans are targeted by scammers through phone calls, emails, text messages, online or in person. Scammers' tactics can change daily, which is why it's important for consumers to stay on top of the latest scam reports from local and national news outlets, as well as your local utility companies.

In the last year, there appears to be an uptick in this activity not only at MiEnergy Cooperative, but across the country at other co-ops, municipals and investor-owned electric utilities. The most popular scams demand immediate payment and threaten to shut off power if the money is not received. Remember, MiEnergy will never call you and demand immediate payment without notice. Other members have received phone calls promoting savings of up to 30% on their electric bill. Some promise dinner events with companies selling products that claim great energy savings if you attend their event. It's important to always do your own research.

A new scam trend is the overpayment trick, where a scammer contacts you and claims that you have overpaid your utility bill. The scammer will say they need your



personal banking information to deposit the credit back to your checking account. Don't fall for this scam! If you make an overpayment on your energy bill, MiEnergy will automatically apply the credit to your account, which will carry over to your next billing cycle.

Another trending scam is smishing (short for SMS phishing). Many consumers know to watch out for suspicious emails, but we tend to trust text messages sent to our smartphones.

Always question suspicious texts, especially from someone claiming to represent a utility. MiEnergy will only send a text if you've signed up for this type of communication. These are just a couple examples of trending scams, so it's important to watch for any red flags.

Here are a few reminders on how to take control of the situation when you've been targeted by a scammer:

## TAKE YOUR TIME

Utility scammers try to create a sense of urgency so that you'll act fast and hand over personal information, especially over the phone. Take a moment to think about the situation before acting.

## BE SUSPICIOUS

Scammers typically request immediate payments through prepaid debit cards or third-party apps. Unusual requests like this should raise red flags. Remember, if the request seems strange and out of the ordinary, you're likely being targeted by a scammer.

## CONFIRM BEFORE YOU ACT

If you're contacted by someone claiming to represent MiEnergy or another utility but you're unsure, just hang up the phone and call the utility directly. You can reach us at 800-432-2285 to verify the situation.

Working on  
**MiLines**  
DAY | NIGHT | RAIN | SHINE

MiEnergy's construction crew adds a power line to an existing two-phase service to create a new three-phase service for a grain operation south of Lawler. Pictured in the bucket is lineworker Kyle Quam. MiEnergy works with our members year-round to meet expanding energy needs at local homes, businesses or farms.



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### OFFICE INFORMATION

Open Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
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 24/7 877-853-6517  
UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

### ONLINE

WEBSITE [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop)  
SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1 Dennis Ptacek, secretary and Jeff Redalen  
DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair  
DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer, Skip Wieser and Dennis Young  
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  
STEVE OIAN vice president of operations - Minnesota  
VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology  
MIKE WALTON vice president of operations - Iowa  
KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

### MINEWS STAFF

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

### 2022 OFFICES CLOSED

MAY 30 Memorial Day  
JUN 9 Employee Development Day  
JUL 4 Independence Day  
SEP 5 Labor Day  
SEP 8 Employee Development Day  
NOV 24-25 Thanksgiving Holiday  
DEC 8 Employee Development Day  
DEC 23, 26 Christmas Holiday  
DEC 30 Close at 11:30 a.m. (New Year's Eve observance)

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FROM THE CO-OP

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**MiEnergy Cooperative will be closed Monday, May 30 to observe Memorial Day.**

**To report a power outage, call 800-432-2285 or use the Report an Outage feature in SmartHub.**

**Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$2,000 for their charity!**

Contest entries accepted during June at [IowaShineTheLight.com](http://IowaShineTheLight.com)

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## Shining the Light on Community Volunteers

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Iowa's electric co-ops are excited to bring back our Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, they will accept nominations and select three winners who will each receive a \$2,000 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

Go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) to review the contest rules. Contest entries will be accepted at this website starting on June 1. Help us shine the light on community volunteers this summer and consider making a nomination.

## Curb energy use in June, July & August Keep electric rates affordable

Keeping electric rates affordable is a top priority for MiEnergy. One way to help is to reduce electric use on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the months of June, July and August.

Historically, about two-thirds of MiEnergy's operating costs are for purchasing wholesale power. The cooperative is considered a summer peaking system. The cost for power is highest during the summer months on weekdays between the hours of 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Members who can shift or reduce their energy use during this timeframe can help the co-op save on wholesale power costs. It means smaller rate increases and/or less frequent rate increases in the future for the membership. It is as easy as delaying the dishwasher, shifting the start of laundry and setting your thermostat for air conditioning a few degrees higher.

Members will be able to hear and see reminders of this summer's campaign in the form of bill inserts, radio ads, print ads, website content and social media posts. This is the eleventh year the co-op has committed to running a campaign to encourage members to shift electric use during the summer months.

# POWER OUTAGES GET NOTIFIED

MiEnergy offers power outage text notifications. Sign up online at [www.MiEnergy.coop/outages](http://www.MiEnergy.coop/outages). Select Power Outage Notification Sign Up and be prepared with your electric account number. The site will walk you through the set-up to have a text message sent to you when your power is out and another when power has been restored.

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Wed, April 18, 8:57 PM

MiEnergy: Your service location is currently involved in a power outage. Service Address: 12345 POWER LINE RD

MiEnergy: This number is opted in to receive power outage notifications from MiEnergy Cooperative. Reply STOP to cancel.

Wed, April 18, 10:06 PM

MiEnergy: Our system shows your power has been restored. If not, please call 1-800-432-2285. Service address: 12345 POWER LINE RD