

August 2022 Vol. 6 Issue 8  
A monthly publication for members of  
MiEnergy Cooperative.

# MiNews

## Co-op releases sustainability dashboard

Co-op and contractors  
work together on  
distributed generation  
challenges

Construction  
begins on  
fiber projects

**DIRECTOR SCHARMER  
MAKES HISTORY**

Members may have noticed sheep at Filinona Solar's Rushford site in July. They help reduce vegetation under and around the solar arrays.

# Co-op discusses distributed generation challenges with local contractors



On July 19, MiEnergy Cooperative hosted a solar contractor meeting that included the CEO of the Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association (MnSEIA) to discuss the challenges the cooperative and area solar contractors are facing with members installing privately-owned solar generation systems.

Currently, over 770 MiEnergy members have distributed generation systems. In recent months, more new applications are requiring a supplemental engineering review which costs the member \$3,000 to determine if a member-owned solar system can be interconnected to MiEnergy's electric distribution system without overloading or back feeding into the substation and onto transmission lines. The result of the supplemental engineering review can lead to requiring the member to downsize the solar system or requiring them to pay for the distribution upgrades for the project.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss options MiEnergy could take to fairly allow any member the opportunity to install a solar system. The discussion proposed moving to a sized to electric load application for all new systems. This is the current practice in our Iowa territory where there is no net metering law. In Minnesota, the net metering law allows applicants to size a system greater than their typical energy use. In some cases, members sell significantly more back to the co-op than what they use, which limits capacity for other members in the future.

A benefit of transitioning to a sized to load practice is it would reduce the number of members who would need to pay for a \$3,000 supplemental engineering review. The system's size would be based on the member's electric load

which would eliminate overgeneration, circuit overloading and back feeding to the substation. A sized to load practice would also allow more members to install a solar generation system.

It is important to note that any existing member-owned solar or wind generation systems would be grandfathered. The new practice would not be implemented until early 2023 to provide advance notice to members and solar contractors considering solar generation applications.

Overall, the contractors' feedback was promising. They provided recommendations such as having a little allowance for a member's electric use growth, allowing for carryover of kilowatt-hour credits and encouraged allowing the transfer of electric services with oversized net metering systems to new owners of the property.

MiEnergy supports renewable energy. Actions that demonstrate support include:

- No grid access fee for members installing solar, even though Minnesota allows it.
- Net metering in our Iowa service territory, even though Iowa does not require it.
- Being one of the first electric cooperatives in the nation to install co-op-owned community solar in 2014.
- Entering an agreement to purchase 9 MW of locally generated solar power from Fillinona Solar.

Fillinona Solar will save the cooperative \$3 million on wholesale power costs over the first 10 years, which benefits all members of our electric cooperative.

While MiEnergy supports an individual member's decision to install solar, we recognize that not all members have this desire or the means to afford it. Every member of our cooperative has different social values, tax benefits and personal interests in evaluating their personal expenditure for a solar generation system. MiEnergy's rate structure allows the cooperative to recover the cost of the delivery of electric service to members' homes, farms or businesses, regardless if they have a solar generation system or not. It costs the co-op the same to provide service to a location whether the member uses 1,500 kWh or zero.

Transitioning to a sized to load application would continue to allow our membership to pursue member-owned distribution generation systems without unfavorably impacting other members financially through rate design or power quality concerns.

As always, I welcome calls, emails or personal visits.

## Scharmer makes history as Dairyland's board chair

Jennifer Scharmer, MiEnergy board member, was recently elected as the Dairyland Power Cooperative board chair. Dairyland Power Cooperative is MiEnergy's wholesale power supplier located in LaCrosse, Wisc.



Scharmer has served as a board member for MiEnergy for the past 16 years (previously Tri-County Electric Cooperative), serving as both vice chair (2008-2009) and chair (2010-2016). Scharmer is Dairyland's first female board chair in cooperative history. Since 2014, she has represented MiEnergy on the board of Dairyland Power and has previously served as board secretary and chair of the Governance Committee. Scharmer has also obtained the NRECA Gold Board Leadership status. Jenny, and her husband Tim, own and operate a small business and family farm in rural Winona, Minn.



## Fiber construction begins in rural areas

Excitement has been building for employees and future subscribers of MiBroadband and Harmony Telephone Company, as contractors begin digging in the fiber network for residents of rural Preston, Minn., and rural Howard and Chickasaw counties in Iowa.

In 2021, MiBroadband announced it was the recipient of a \$1.1 million grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Border-to-Border Grant. The grant program is a partnership between the State of Minnesota, City of Preston and Fillmore County. MiBroadband is using the grant and a \$2.1 million local match to serve 257 locations in the rural areas of southern Fillmore County.

Harmony Telephone was awarded a federal USDA ReConnect Program grant-loan totaling \$9.7 million in the fall of 2020. The company will use the grant-loan combination to connect 538 locations with high-speed broadband internet in Howard and Chickasaw counties in Iowa.

MiEnergy Cooperative is an owner of Harmony Telephone Company and MiBroadband. Anyone living in or near the areas that are part of these projects can call 800-886-6422 for more information and details on a timeline for service availability.



**Do The SUMMER SHIFT**

**YOU'RE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER**

When each member works to conserve electricity, we all win. Turn off unnecessary lights. Hang laundry to air dry. Raise the thermostat a few degrees. Reducing electric use from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on summer weekdays helps keep rates affordable.

Learn more about how the Summer Shift helps keep electric rates affordable at [www.MiEnergy.coop/Summer-Shift](http://www.MiEnergy.coop/Summer-Shift)

**mienergy**  
COOPERATIVE  
Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative  
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## Board room highlights | July 28, 2022

- Received a favorable financial report from CFO Shelly Hove.
- Reviewed and approved funding for two economic development loans.
- Management provided updates on the recent storm damage, solar contractor meeting and member information meeting.
- CEO Krambeer provided an update on subsidiary businesses.
- Directors reported on recent meetings attended.
- CEO Krambeer was thanked for serving on a panel for the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Forum.

The next board meeting will be held at the Cresco office on August 30 at 9 a.m.

**Real People**

**Real Local**

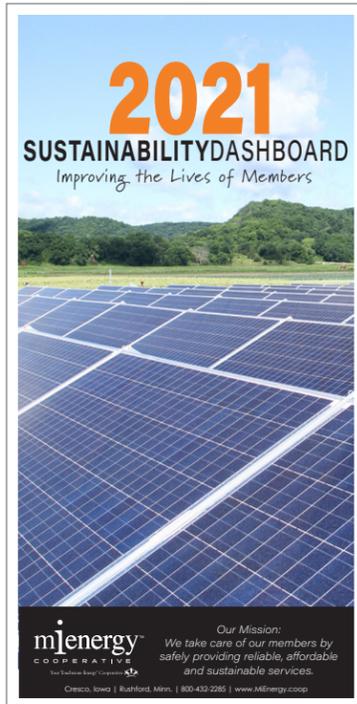
**TOM**  
Regional Account Manager

**Heartland Security**

SECURITY AUTOMATION VIDEO MEDICAL ALERTS

**888-264-6380 heartlandss.com**

# Co-op discusses sustainability with members



MiEnergy Cooperative held an information meeting at its Rushford office on July 21 to release its 2021 Sustainability Dashboard. Approximately 20 people were in attendance. MiEnergy's President/CEO Brian Krambeer presented on the cooperative business model, the co-op's commitment to community, energy management, partnerships, electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Highlights from the meeting include:

- Eleven locally elected board directors create policies, including rate-making policies, which benefit all members, not just a handful of investors outside the service area.
- Since merging in 2017, \$12.5 million has been given back to members in the form of capital credits or special refunds.
- The cooperative is committed to the communities it serves having \$3.8 million in active economic development loans.
- Energy management programs allow the co-op to reduce electric load by approximately 12 MW when energy

demand is high, which helps keep rates stable and enhances reliability.

- Eight cities are installing public electric vehicle chargers to form a local charging network.
- At the end of 2021, MiEnergy's generation resources capacity tallied 39% from renewable energy resources.
- The co-op had 730-plus member-owned distributed generation systems interconnected at year-end 2021. They have the capacity to generate 13 megawatts of electricity, which is mostly from solar.

Krambeer also led a discussion on its current policy for members seeking privately-owned generation systems called distributed generation (DG). The co-op is seeing challenges with saturation of DG solar on its system. Krambeer proposed an option the co-op is reviewing as a potential update to its current DG policy. More details about this can be found in the CEO column on page 2 of this newsletter. Members can download a copy of the 2021 Sustainability Dashboard at [www.mienergy.coop/sustainability-dashboard](http://www.mienergy.coop/sustainability-dashboard).

## THE PATH TO CREATING A LOCAL CHARGING NETWORK



### PREPARATION FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- ★ **2018** Launched electric vehicle charging rate.
- ★ **2019** Purchased two Chevy Bolts for pool vehicles. Added charging stations at Cresco and Rushford offices.
- ★ **2020** Partnered with regional electric cooperatives to launch CHARGE EV LLC, to create a regional charging network.
- ★ **2022** Eight local cities receive charging stations from the cooperative to launch a local charging network.

## Energy Management Programs

**11,150 RECEIVERS**

- AIR CONDITIONERS
- COMMERCIAL GENERATORS
- GRAIN DRYERS
- HEATING SYSTEMS
- IRRIGATION SYSTEMS
- WATER HEATERS

WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS HIGH MIENERGY CAN REDUCE DEMAND BY APPROXIMATELY

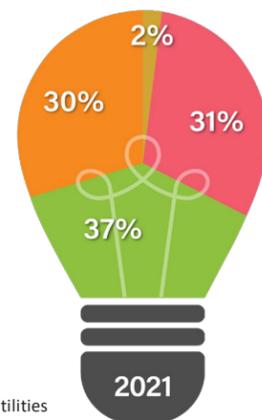
**12 MW**

IN 2021, MEMBER REBATES FOR PURCHASING ENERGY EFFICIENT PRODUCTS THROUGH THE CO-OP'S REBATE PROGRAM TOTALED

**\$396,650**

ENERGY EFFICIENCY SAVES MEMBERS MONEY

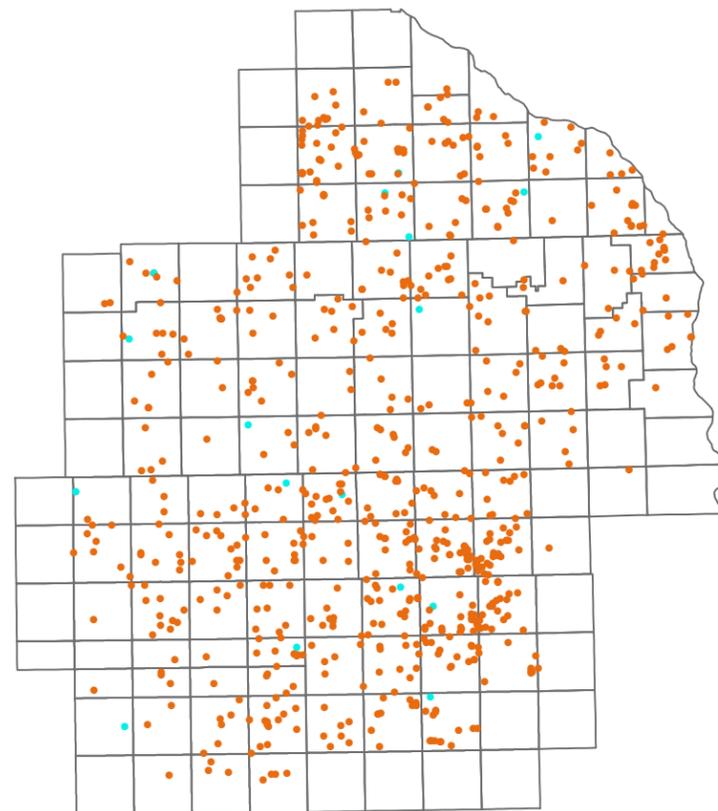
**39%**  
of energy is renewable  
NAMEPLATE CAPACITY



- Coal
- Natural Gas
- Wind & Solar
- Hydro & Biomass



**730-PLUS**  
member-owned renewable energy generation systems provide  
**13 MW** of electricity at year-end 2021



Partnerships allow MiEnergy to add **RENEWABLE ENERGY**, pilot residential **BATTERIES** and buildout a regional electric vehicle **CHARGING NETWORK** and more!

- NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION
- IOWA ASSOCIATION OF ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
- MINNESOTA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION
- TOUCHSTONE ENERGY COOPERATIVES
- DAIRYLAND POWER COOPERATIVE
- NATIONAL INFORMATION SOLUTIONS COOPERATIVE
- COOPERATIVE FINANCE CORPORATION
- FEDERATED RURAL ELECTRIC INSURANCE EXCHANGE
- COOPERATIVE RESPONSE CENTER
- CHARGE EV LLC
- HEARTLAND SECURITY
- HTC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
- MIBROADBAND
- MINNESOTA THREE LLC
- MINNOWA ALLIANCE LLC
- RENEWABLE RAYS
- SOUTHERN MINNESOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE
- STAR ENERGY SERVICES

## MIENERGY COOPERATIVE COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITIES IN 2021

**\$11,776**  
OPERATION ROUND UP  
Granting money to local, worthy causes.

**\$40,000**  
COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHOLARSHIPS  
80 scholarships to high school students.

**\$12,158**  
RECARE PROGRAM  
Helping members pay electric bills.

**\$17,297**  
DONATIONS/SPONSORSHIPS  
Supporting local communities and causes.

**\$38 MILLION**  
ACTIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOANS  
Supporting business development in rural communities.

# Ready, set, (your) thermostat!

Learning how to operate your thermostat to use less energy and still be comfortable is important. Heating and cooling account for about half the energy used in a typical home, so it's a great place to use less energy. When used wisely, your thermostat can help reduce wasted energy.

Here's some information on thermostat types, common operational misconceptions and best practices you can start today.

## TYPES OF THERMOSTATS

Mechanical thermostats are easy to control by adjusting a dial or sliding a switch. The downfall is you must make temperature adjustments manually, which is easy to forget. They are inefficient because they typically heat or cool the home beyond the set point.

If your cooling is set to 72 degrees, a mechanical thermostat may actually cool your home to 70 degrees before it turns off, wasting energy. Then it might not come on again until the home reaches 74 degrees. That four-degree temperature change is noticeable and can lead people to adjust the thermostat setting down even more, which wastes more energy.

Digital thermostats are more accurate, efficient and some are programmable, which is a great option for people who don't have internet or don't want their thermostat data tracked.

Smart thermostats—which require an internet connection—are Wi-Fi-enabled and can be controlled using a smartphone app. Programming is easier, and you can track and manage use and temperature data. However, that data is shared with the manufacturer.

Smart thermostats can learn your preferences and set a schedule that automatically adjusts the temperature. Some have geofencing, which adjusts the temperature based on the distance your smartphone is from home.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THERMOSTATS

A common misconception is the higher you turn your thermostat up or down, the faster your home's temperature will change. Turning your thermostat down to 55 degrees to cool your home faster is like repeatedly pushing the elevator button and expecting it to come faster.

It's likely you will forget you adjusted it and waste energy by over heating or cooling the home. Set your desired temperature for heating and cooling or program your thermostat so you don't make extreme adjustments.

Many people believe it takes more energy to heat or cool a house instead of leaving it the same temperature. The larger the temperature variance between inside and outside, the more energy your system uses. Setting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day can save up to 10% a year on your energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

## BEST PRACTICES

Use these heating and cooling tips from the DOE to add efficiency and savings to your home:

- Set it to 78 degrees in the summer when you are home and awake, and warmer at night or when away. Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter when you are home and awake, and cooler at night or when you are away.



- Upgrade to a programmable or smart thermostat that automatically adjusts the temperature throughout the day and when you leave the house.
- When on vacation, set your thermostat to 85 degrees in the summer and 55 degrees in the winter.
- In the summer, fans allow you to set your thermostat about 4 degrees warmer without feeling it. Remember, fans cool people not rooms, so turn them off when you leave a room.

Use your thermostat to optimize energy efficiency and find a balance between comfort and affordability.

Miranda Boutelle is the vice president 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.

## Local teen attends national tour program

Elaina Rosonke of New Hampton recently participated in the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour of Washington, D.C., sponsored by MiEnergy. She spent June 19-24 in Washington, D.C., with 33 other student leaders from Iowa.

Each year in June, this weeklong leadership development program provides high school students opportunities to learn firsthand about government, the electric cooperative business model and today's pressing issues in the energy industry. Students met their elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate, toured historic sites and ran their very own Snack Cooperative.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has been a joint effort of locally owned electric cooperatives, such as MiEnergy, their statewide trade associations, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) for nearly 60 years.

Rosonke said she had the experience of a lifetime. "Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity in our nation's capital. I met many new friends and my favorite parts were the Korean War Memorial and Mount Vernon. Thank you MiEnergy Cooperative!"

Rosonke presented highlights from her sponsored trip to MiEnergy board members on June 30.

In addition to taking in the sights of the nation's capital, all the state groups convened for the Rural Electric Youth Day, sponsored by NRECA, to learn from public figures and other inspirational speakers. This year's Youth Day agenda included Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic Medalist and two-time world Wheelchair Basketball champion. Schlappi shares his inspiring message for every American, young or old: "Just because you can't stand up, doesn't mean you can't stand out."



## WINNESHIEK COUNTY FAIR — DECORAH



MiEnergy was proud to sponsor the apple pie and chocolate chip cookie contests at the Winneshiek County Fair.

From the apple pie contest pictured from L-R front row: Elaine Knutson, first place winner; Sue Blom, second place winner; Katrina Hageman, the 2022 fair princess contestant holding the third place winning pie from Full Circle Services; and Johanna Stayskal, MiEnergy contest judge. L-R back row: Contest judges Morgan Fechner, Decorah Bank & Trust;

Lashelle Evans, Viking State Bank & Trust; and fair princess contestants Kalissa Schmelzer and Savannah Solheim.

From the chocolate chip cookie contest pictured from L-R front row: Elaine Knutson, first place winner; Gracelyn Torgerson, second place winner; Jordan Sims, third place winner; and fair princess contestants Katrina Hageman, Karissa Schmelzer and Savannah Solheim. Back row: Judges Marc Mikkelson, MiEnergy; Linnea Rahlf, Decorah Bank & Trust; and Clarence Winkler, Nutrien.



## Personnel changes at the co-op

### CHANGE RETIREMENT

Gordy Johnson retired from the cooperative on July 22. Gordy began his employment with Tri-County Electric Cooperative on July 23, 1979, in Rushford when he was hired to work as a meter and load management technician and finished his 43 year career with MiEnergy Cooperative as the metering and load management foreman. We wish Gordy the very best in his retirement.



Gordy Johnson

### PROMOTIONS

Cole Kingsley has accepted the journeyman technician position in Rushford. Cole has been with the cooperative for six years and started his new position on June 6. Kraig Johnson has accepted the line technician position in Cresco. Kraig has been with the cooperative for 15 years and started his new position on June 20.



Cole Kingsley



Kraig Johnson



Lucas Gravos

### NEW EMPLOYEE

Shawn Omar has accepted the position of journeyman lineworker and started his new position on July 1. Shawn brings with him his experience and his familiarity with the MiEnergy territory since he is originally from the Cresco area. We welcome Shawn to MiEnergy Cooperative.



Shawn Omar



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**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**  
SEP 5 Labor Day  
SEP 20 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)



MiEnergy has a variety of rebates available to members when they purchase energy efficient products and appliances that meet or exceed specific criteria. Those rebates are only available until funds are depleted, or December 31, whichever comes first.

Appliances | Audits | Lighting  
New construction | Water heaters  
Electric vehicle chargers  
Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning Systems

Rebate forms are available online at [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop) or by calling 1-800-432-2285. View details of the rebate before making purchases to ensure your items qualify.

# Come see us at the Iowa State Fair!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the 4-H Exhibits Building at the 2022 Iowa State Fair. MiEnergy is proud to be a Touchstone Energy member, which means we're part of a nationwide network of locally owned co-ops that provides resources and leverages partnerships to help member-consumers use energy wisely.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair from August 11-21, make sure to stop by and see us in the air conditioned 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats and suckers for the kids while supplies last. Kids can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station!

We look forward to connecting with our co-op members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!

**mienergy**<sup>™</sup>  
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

IOWA PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

MINNESOTA PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage

**PAID**  
DPC



## Summer Storm

Saturday, July 23 crews began getting called out around 3:30 p.m. as a line of storms rolled through. Over 5,300 members were affected. Houston County reported a tornado and other areas saw significant damage from straight-line winds. Over a dozen poles were broken or damaged.