Co-op’s role in economic development
Local $9.9 million impact

Discover the benefits of electric water heaters

USDA’s ReConnect program delivers $5.4 million for rural broadband
Co-op partnership receives broadband grant/loan for $5.4 million

In March 2018, Congress provided $600 million to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to expand broadband infrastructure and services in rural America. On Dec. 13, 2018, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the rules of the program, called ReConnect, including how the loans and grants would be awarded. USDA received 146 applications between May 31, 2019 and July 12, 2019, requesting $1.4 billion in funding across all three ReConnect Program categories: 100 percent loan, 100 percent grant and loan-grant combinations.

Harmony Telephone Company, which is owned by MiEnergy Cooperative and two telephone cooperatives, Spring Grove Communications and Mabel Cooperative Telephone, was one of those 146 applicants. On Jan. 17, USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky announced Harmony Telephone Company as a recipient of a ReConnect Program award totaling $5.4 million. Harmony Telephone Company will use the $2.7 million loan and a $2.7 million grant to construct a fiber-to-the-premises network to connect 577 households, a health care center and a critical community facility spread over 143 square miles in several counties bordering southern Minnesota and northern Iowa.

This award is critical to help build out fiber infrastructure to rural areas in our electric cooperative service territory. I firmly believe that access to broadband creates life-changing opportunities for rural residents just as electricity did in the 1930s. A recent email from a MiEnergy member who became a MiBroadband subscriber affirmed my belief. Her children are now able to keep up with homework and she became a MiBroadband subscriber affirmed my belief. Her

MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Last December, we were presented the results of our 2019 membership satisfaction survey and I could not have been more pleased with the results.

Overall satisfaction with MiEnergy Cooperative was very good, with a mean rating of 8.74 on a ten-point scale. Our American Customer Satisfaction Index was 83 out of 100, which is a two-point increase since our last survey in 2017. By comparison, Xcel Energy’s rating was 74. The rating most important to me related to our employees, and it was the highest rating of the entire survey: friendly, courteous and highly trained/professional employees. Having convenient payment options, being easy to reach, supporting local communities, keeping outages to a minimum, restoring power quickly after an outage, keeping bills to a minimum and resolving issues and problems all received scores above 4.5 on a 5-point rating, which is considered excellent.

Members rated us 4.34 in having our members’ best interest at heart in addressing rates, communications and costs. Our lowest rating was 3.9 for charging reasonable rates. This rating is the same as all other electric cooperatives across the country.

Overall, the results were very promising and rewarding, yet they also identified areas for improvement. Maintaining costs for service, providing retail electric rate options, adopting programs for smart thermostats, renewable energy, battery storage, electric vehicle charging and broadband are all initiatives to address in 2020 and moving forward.

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

The purpose of load management

Load management programs, also known as load control, help balance supply and demand. It consists of interrupting electric service to water heaters, heating systems, air conditioners, irrigation pumps, grain drying systems and whole farm operations during critical times. It reduces the total demand during peak use hours and in turn helps keep electric rates affordable. Typically, highest demand coincides with extreme weather events, but also impacted by the regional energy market.

ECONOMIC DISPATCH CONTROL VS STORAGE CONTROL

Economic dispatch and storage/off-peak are part of the co-op’s load management program, also known as load control.

Economic dispatch control is when water heaters are interrupted at any time with the maximum time not to exceed six hours during any 10-hour period.

Storage/off-peak control is when water heaters water heaters are controlled Monday through Friday (typically no weekends or holidays) for 8.5 hours per day in the summer (11:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.) and 14 hours per day in the winter (5:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.).

Why choose an electric water heater?

Your co-op has been selling efficient, safe and clean electric water heaters for decades.

Most people don’t think much about water heaters. They take for granted hot showers, clean dishes and freshly laundered linens. The lonely water heater, tucked away in the basement or a utility closet, is out of sight and out of mind.

The co-op has been selling efficient, electric water heaters for decades. Compared to even the most modern gas water heaters, new electric models are safer, cleaner and more convenient. Electric water heaters don’t need additional venting since there is no flame and no fumes. Best of all, the energy professionals at MiEnergy offer some great incentives to buy one. MiEnergy provides free service, parts and maintenance during normal business hours. A service charge applies if after regular business hours. Whether you are in need of a water heater for new construction or to replace an existing electric or gas model, call the energy experts at MiEnergy today or visit our website at www.MiEnergy.coop.

Green electricity for everyone

Evergreen is designed to fit YOUR lifestyle and budget. Everyone can support renewable energy. Contact Janelle at MiEnergy today!
$500 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS
{with strong community service involvement}

As a cooperative, MiEnergy has a strong commitment to youth and community. The scholarship program recognizes high school seniors who demonstrate cooperative spirit through service to others.

APPLICATION DEADLINE
The application is posted on the cooperative’s website www.MiEnergy.coop. Submit your application, cover letter and transcripts by Monday, March 2, 2020. Sixty $500 scholarships will be awarded this year. If you have questions regarding the scholarship program please contact Annie Holland at ahoiland@MiEnergy.coop or call 800-432-2285.

SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY
• The student must be a high school senior, graduating in 2020.
• The student must continue their education after high school at an accredited technical school, college or university.
• The student must be the son, daughter or legal dependent of a MiEnergy member with an active electric account. (Children of MiEnergy Cooperative employees and directors are not eligible).
• The student must demonstrate community service, according to scholarship instructions.
• The student must have at least a “B” grade point average.

Two area high school students will be selected by MiEnergy to represent the cooperative as delegates on the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour. They will join hundreds of other students from across the country as they travel to President’s Day weekend and interview by a panel of judges on the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour website at www.youthtour.coop.

MINNESOTA MEMBERS:
Tour dates are June 20-25, 2020.
Students with the top five scores will be interviewed by a panel of judges on March 25, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Cresco office. It is mandatory that the student attend this event and parents/guardians are encouraged to attend as well.

IOWA MEMBERS:
Tour dates are June 18-25, 2020.
Students with the top five scores will be interviewed by a panel of judges on March 25, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Cresco office. It is mandatory that the student attend this event and parents/guardians are encouraged to attend as well.

“Making a Big Difference
Love of community is at heart of electric cooperative

To move forward, you have to give back.”
This quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond and obligation that ties MiEnergy to the communities we serve.

We know when we helped to bring electricity to rural Minnesota and Iowa many years ago, the quality of life improved for all. Through the years, other projects and matters needed to be tackled, and we have been at the forefront of helping to address some of those issues. We want to help meet the long-term needs and sustainability of our communities to ensure they continue to thrive – because just like you, we live here too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the consumer-members (that’s you!) we serve. This focus to benefit the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. MiEnergy knows that electricity is a critical need for modern-day life, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community.

Over time, our co-op has evolved to meet the changing needs of our communities, thereby improving the quality of life for everyone. And that can mean many different things. It can mean programs for MiEnergy’s youth, such as educational scholarships or the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take our community’s brightest young people to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action. It means organizing food drives, forming Operation Round Up that gives back to community organizations and our RECare program that helps local families in need pay their utility bills. It means being a top catalyst in rural economic development efforts for our rural communities by offering loans and grants to improve the quality of life for members and the communities we serve, helping the economic and social well-being of the region and working to attract new businesses as well as business retention and expansion and job creation.

We all benefit from these programs because of you and your neighbors. You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs. As a local cooperative, we are proud to power your life and bring good things to our community. While the larger environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same. By working together, we are certain that we can continue to do good things for our rural communities throughout our service territory.

Operation Round Up and RECare granted $14,930 in 2019 to local causes and members.

To maintain the future of our communities by retaining our youth and retirees in our region by creating jobs, health care services, continuing education and recreational opportunities for them. Turn to pages 6-8 to learn how MiEnergy has made an economic impact on our rural communities.
Co-op has funded $9.9 million in local loan program

MiEnergy supports economic development efforts of area communities by awarding loans through three programs: Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Programs (REDLG), Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and Policy 80 loans. These programs improve the quality of life for members and the communities the co-op serves, along with the economic and social well-being of the region. It also helps attract new businesses and allows for business retention, expansion and job creation in rural communities. The loans made available through these programs come in part from grants awarded to MiEnergy by several different sources including the USDA Rural Development.

Over the past two decades MiEnergy, and its predecessors Hawkeye REC and Tri-County Electric Cooperative, has aggressively played a key role in several important development projects and has funded over $9.9 million in local projects through the revolving loans and grants. Many of the projects have enhanced our local communities and provided local jobs, helping to stabilize local economic growth. MiEnergy works with community leaders to expand economic development to create an environment where people want to work and live. The cooperative has invested financial commitments, energy assistance, economic development incentive rates, energy efficiency incentives along with other resources to improve the economy, health, safety and quality of life in communities through many different projects. The co-op’s commitment is strong to our rural economy making Northeast Iowa and Southeast Minnesota a place to prosper, grow and raise a family.

MiEnergy’s service area encompasses a sizable network of organizations to help businesses get off to a successful start. It can help put business owners in touch with the right people; those who are prepared to provide the specific kind of help required. MiEnergy also works to network business owners with existing owners to compliment organizations or supply necessary resources. Together, we can experience growth and stabilization in our local, rural areas.

We are more than just your electricity provider; we are a partner in rural economic development for our local communities.

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE #7
Concern for Community

For more information, please contact:

Pat Boyle, Marketing and Member Services Representative

Ted Kjos, Vice President of Marketing & External Relations

IOWA
MINNESOTA
MiEnergy is committed to working with community leaders to expand economic development and create an environment attractive for employment opportunities and favorable living conditions. New business development, business retention and expansion, increased tax base, job creation and a healthy work environment improves the quality of life for our communities.

We continually seek out worthy projects to solidify our commitment and foster our relationships between our cooperative, our members and the communities we serve.

Added value to the communities we serve

MiEnergy’s community investment projects that have been awarded over the past 20 years total over $9.9 million. These projects have brought our community amenities full circle, from toddler to senior citizen, by providing daycare, higher education for adolescents and specialized medical care for our seniors. This encourages residents to use our local resources instead of traveling outside of our communities.

The cooperative has worked and partnered with many organizations; city and county agencies, community and non-profit organizations, area development and chamber groups, USDA and Dairyland Power Cooperative. MiEnergy is looked upon highly by its members and community leaders within the area for its dedication and devotion to community activities and projects.

Iowa’s electric cooperatives discuss important issues with legislators

Nearly 200 directors, managers and employees from Iowa’s electric cooperatives discussed priorities with more than 80 state legislators on January 14 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception in downtown Des Moines. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance and FUEL Iowa, hosted the annual reception.

The event provided an opportunity to meet with legislators at the beginning of the state legislative session to discuss issues regarding the commitment to electric reliability, community and safety shared by Iowa’s electric cooperatives.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including energy-related items central to Iowa’s rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, electric co-op directors, managers and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues.
It’s no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,000 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and $1.14 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1 DON’T OVERLOAD OUTLETS.
Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you’re relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

2 NEVER LEAVE SPACE HEATERS UNATTENDED.
If you’re using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you’re using them from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

3 INSPECT HEATING PADS AND ELECTRIC BLANKETS.
These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads—look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

4 USE PORTABLE GENERATORS SAFELY.
Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home’s electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from windows and doors.

COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE—RUSHFORD
MiEnergy’s Rushford office will be hosting an American Red Cross Blood Drive on February 18, 2020 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. The blood drive is open to the public. It is encouraged to secure an appointment time, however walk-ins are also welcome. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter collection code 022. At left, MiEnergy’s Kent Whitcomb gives a double red donation at the Dec. 18 drive in Rushford. At right, MiEnergy’s Roger Carman shows off his free t-shirt for donating blood at the Jan. 2 drive in Cresco.

Personnel Changes around the co-op

Retirements
Troy Schultz retired from the cooperative on January 24. He began his employment on August 8, 1988 and finishes his career with MiEnergy Cooperative as the Distribution Technical Trainer for the Minneapolis office. Congratulations Troy and thank you for your years with the cooperative. We wish him the very best in retirement.

Al Ziebell retired from MiEnergy on January 31 as building and grounds maintenance worker at the Minneapolis office. He began his employment on January 23, 1995. Thanks to Al for his years of service and dedication. We wish him the very best in retirement.

New Employees
Peter Scherbring accepted the position of network/systems engineer. He started on January 20 at the Minneapolis office. Peter is originally from Rollingstone and currently resides in Lewiston. We welcome Peter to the cooperative.

Jordan Williams was offered and has accepted the position of Facility/groundkeeper/warehouse assistant at MiEnergy’s Minneapolis office and started on January 27. Jordan is originally from the Mabel area and is currently living near Chaska. We welcome Jordan to MiEnergy Cooperative.

Online Resources from Your Local Electric Cooperative

Visit the MiEnergy website at www.mienergy.coop to view member forms, program details and services, power outage information, rates and much more. If you have any questions or need to make changes to your account, please contact your local electric cooperative.

Website
THE COOPERATIVE

Visit the MiEnergy website at www.mienergy.coop to access member forms, program details and services, power outage information, rates and much more.

Forms
The cooperative offers a wide variety of PDF forms for members to make it easy to sign up for service programs and for services including rebate forms.

Outage Map
View real-time power outages on your smart phone or tablet. It is available on the MiEnergy website. Only members may access outage or service outages.

Social Media
Keep up-to-date with news and information regarding your local electric cooperative. Visit mienergycoop.org for updates on co-op events and affairs, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Tip of the Month
Are you using your fireplace efficiently? Remember to turn down the damper when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

Source: energy.gov
Get involved at your co-op Advisory Committee members needed

Looking for a way to learn more about MiEnergy and the electric co-op industry? Be a part of the Advisory Committee. This group meets three to four times a year. Meetings are at 7 p.m. and are 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Committee members receive a $50 per diem and mileage for attending meetings and serve a three-year term.

No background in the industry is required, just a willingness to learn and provide feedback on topics presented.

The committee is appointed by the board of directors in April and is limited to five members per district. Members interested in serving or learning more about the committee can contact Heather Larson at 800-432-2285 or hlarson@MiEnergy.coop.

VEHICLES FOR SALE BY SEALED BID

MiEnergy has three used vehicles available for purchase. These vehicles will be sold “as is” by sealed bid. The vehicles can be viewed at the Cresco office starting March 2, 2020 by appointment by calling 1-800-432-2285. To obtain a bid form, stop by or call the Cresco office. Deadline to submit a bid is 4 p.m. on March 9, 2020.

- 2007, Chevy Extended Cab 2500, 4x4, 95,180 miles.
- 2008, Chevy Extended Cab with utility box, 126,540 miles.
- 2009, Chevy Extended Cab 250 HD, 4x4, 155,938 miles.