

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* February 2024 NEWS

OCONTO ELECTRIC  
**CEC**  
COOPERATIVE



## EAU CLAIRE TO HOST U.S. NATIONAL SNOWSHOE CHAMPIONSHIPS

TREADING WATER

EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR  
MANUFACTURED HOMES

KIDS AND CRITTERS



# OCONTO ELECTRIC EMPLOYEE CHARITY DONATES \$20,000 TO LOCAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Co-op principle number seven: Commitment to Community. Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) employees really take this principle to heart. Since 2004, OEC employees have awarded \$193,000 to charities and organizations.

The grants were made possible in part through fundraising and from CoBank, one of the co-op's lenders, who matched our \$10,000 as part of its Sharing Success Grant program.

## Oconto River Kids

Oconto River Kids began in 2012 with a landowner who envisioned a local volunteer group providing hunting and fishing opportunities for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. He contacted the local DNR conservation officer, who shared a passion for mentoring young hunters. That group of individuals dedicated themselves to the idea and moved forward to create a corporation called Oconto River Kids.

The group continues to grow, but maintains its simple grassroots approach to providing unique hunting and fishing experiences for its mission.

## Oconto County Youth Fair

The Oconto County Youth Fair Board is celebrating new lighting in their exhibition hall and all of the animal barns. Thanks to OEC's Employee Charity and Focus on Energy incentives, the lighting project was able to be completed at very little cost to the Fair.

## Oconto Falls Youth Baseball and Softball Club

For many years the City of Oconto Falls Parks and Recreation ran the youth baseball and softball program. After the 2022 season they announced they would no longer do so. In 2023 a group of local individuals created the Oconto Falls Youth Baseball and Softball Club. The club offers baseball/softball for kids between ages 5-14. The money donated will be used to replace outdated catching gear, which is essential to their safety.



Pictured is Lee Poutusa, a volunteer mentor for Oconto River Kids, with OEC employees. He's been working with the organization since 2014 when it officially became a nonprofit corporation.



Holding the check are Fair Board Directors Cliff Gerbers and Debbie Woods.

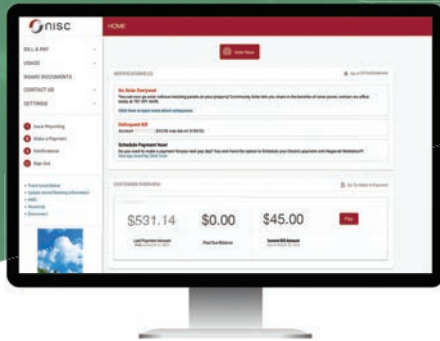


Oconto Falls Baseball players Gabe Holtger, Graham Hillberg and Club President Mike Hillberg accepted the club's money from OEC employees.



## NEWLY REDESIGNED SMARTHUB

Save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere.



SmartHub has a new look and feel, but still contains all the powerful features that allow you to take control of your account like never before! SmartHub lets you manage your Oconto Electric Cooperative account through the web or using your mobile device.

SmartHub allows you to:

- **Set up bill reminders**
- **View billing and payment history**
- **Track your energy usage**
- **Set up recurring payments**
- **Paperless billing**

If you haven't registered for SmartHub, do it today – it's simple! You'll just need a valid email address and your account number. (759400) Download the free SmartHub app for your smartphone or tablet or access it online by clicking the SmartHub icon on our website, [www.ocontoelectric.com](http://www.ocontoelectric.com), and start improving your energy usage today!



## DISTRICT MEETINGS CONDUCTED

Oconto Electric Cooperative has seven director districts, with one director on the board representing each district. Directors' terms are for three years, so each year either two or three directors' terms expire. At the district meetings, members were able to nominate candidates for election for the board terms that were expiring.

Wednesday, January 3, the District 1 meeting was held at the Elizabeth Washebek Memorial Building (Brazeau Ambulance Facility). Incumbent director Dennis Langenberg was the only person nominated to fill the position of director.

Thursday, January 4, the District 7 meeting was held at St. Anthony Catholic Church in Oconto Falls. Incumbent director Todd Duame was the only person nominated.

Langenberg and Duame's nomination will be approved at the April 13 annual meeting by a voice vote.

Please look inside the April issue of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* for the Annual Meeting reports.

## Safety for seniors at home



**MainStreet Messenger is an emergency response service that helps make independent living a reality while giving peace of mind to families whose loved ones prefer to stay in the comfortable surroundings of their own home.**

*Help is only moments away with push of a button*



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## HOW EXTREME WINTER WEATHER IMPACTS RELIABILITY

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. That's because we're doing more activities inside, and our heating systems are running longer and more often to counteract colder outdoor temperatures. Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times—in the morning and early evenings—and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

In winter months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow or ice storm or equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and OEC will inform you about the situation.

OEC and our wholesale power provider take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts, and disaster response planning, but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the heat on for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible. Your heating system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temp and the outdoor temp.
- Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens, and dryers. Start the dishwasher before you

go to bed and use smaller countertop appliances like slow cookers and air fryers to save energy.

- Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation. Make sure your furnace filter isn't clogged and dirty. Replace it as needed.
- When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.

As we face the challenges posed by winter weather, understanding its impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also each contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local community warm and connected.

### BEST BETS FOR

## Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

### UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE



Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.

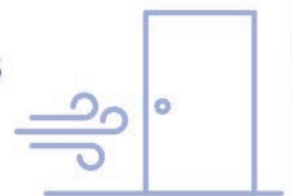


### MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.

### ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



### USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.



### LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).





## When minutes matter

Oconto Electric Cooperative has continuous training throughout the year to ensure our employees are prepared for an emergency that could occur on the job. Most recently our outside crews received their certification on the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), administration of first aid and CPR. Their certification is good for two years.

For the linemen of OEC, who often work in remote areas, medical help in case of an accident is often a long ways away. If a worker goes into cardiac arrest or comes into contact with a power line that is carrying several thousand volts of electricity, they may have only minutes to receive life-saving medical care.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.



## HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. *We accidentally placed the same account number twice in January.* The January account number belonged to James Goffard, Coleman.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

