

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* January 2024 NEWS

OCONTO ELECTRIC
OEE
COOPERATIVE



EXCITEMENT SOARS AT SNOWFLAKE SKI JUMP

HOODWINKED

HARDENING FOR CYBERSECURITY

HOT & SPICY RECIPES



- ✓ apply to college
- ✓ pick major
- ✓ find money for school

GET READY 2024 GRADUATES



Would you like to learn how to apply for a scholarship towards a post-secondary education? Oconto Electric Cooperative has two scholarship opportunities available. Scholarships are funded directly through the Federated Youth Foundation by unclaimed capital credits. A volunteer, member-appointed scholarship committee will review and select scholarship recipients.

#1: Youth Scholarship

Oconto Electric Cooperative is offering twelve, \$2,500 scholarships to graduating seniors who plan to continue their education beyond high school in an accredited college or technical school.

#2: Lineworker Scholarship

Oconto Electric Cooperative is also offering one \$2,500 scholarship to a graduating senior who is attending Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in the Electrical Power Distribution program.

Eligibility

Any graduating high school senior whose parent or guardian is a residential member of Oconto Electric Cooperative is eligible (residential is defined as having the primary residence within OEC's service territory). Scholarship awards will be paid out upon entry into the second full-time semester of post high school education.

Application

Scholarship applications are available from local high school guidance counselors or online at www.ocontoelectric.com.

Deadline

Completed scholarship applications should be at OEC's office no later than Monday, February 12, 2024.

Recipients will be asked to attend the cooperative's annual meeting on April 13, 2024, to receive recognition from the membership.

Questions?

Information can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com. If you have questions, you can also call OEC at 800-472-8410 or email bfripton@ocontoelectric.com.

Where Does Scholarship Money Come From?

At the end of each year, when the financial books are closed and OEC determines that year's profit margins, those margins are allocated back to the members in the form of capital credits. That money stays at the co-op and is used for approximately 20 years, at the end of which time it is retired back to the members.

As capital credits are retired, members who still purchase power from Oconto Electric after 20 years will

receive either a bill credit or refund check when a retirement is made. (115302) For anyone who no longer purchases power from OEC, the co-op will mail their checks to the last known address.

After a number of attempts to get the funds to the people it belongs to, any money that is not claimed goes into the scholarship fund.



Small Change that Changes Lives

Contributing to community causes

A local family loses their home in an early morning fire. A local Scout needs supplies to finish their Eagle Scout project. A young couple is trying to deal with the financial strain of their child's medical condition. A local food pantry needs help filling their shelves with food. You hear about these types of stories quite often. What do they all have in common? Thanks to Oconto Electric's Community Change program, the answer to this question is "help in time of need."

The mission. How can one person help make the community better? Members can sign up for the Community Change program. By voluntarily "rounding up" your electric bill and contributing a few cents every month, you can help support your community.

How it works. Members who participate in this program have their monthly bill rounded up to the nearest dollar and those few cents are deposited into the Community Change fund. The average donation per member, per year, is around \$6, with the most being \$11.88, and is tax deductible. Members are always welcome to make a one-time donation or donate a specific amount each month. For example you can choose to round up your electric bill and donate an additional \$2 each month.

Small change. Big difference. Contributions could be as little as a penny, but never more than 99 cents. Every penny that is donated will be pooled together to help local non-profit and charitable organizations within our communities. Collectively, we can make a difference.

Who decides on how the money is spent? The Community Change Board of Directors is comprised of seven Oconto Electric Cooperative members who meet quarterly to review applications. Grants are awarded based on how much money is available and whether or not the purpose of the request is consistent with Community Change guidelines. One hundred percent of donations made to Community Change are awarded as grants. Our 2024 Board of Directors are: Brian Rieth (president), Penny Hemle (vice president), Wayne Strei (secretary/treasurer), Virgie Damp, Dick Gilles, Mark Higgins, and Pam Langlay.

How do I sign up? You can call our office, return the completed form (below), or check the box on the back of your energy bill.



I wish to participate in the Community Change program using the following method:

- ☐ Nearest Dollar
- ☐ Nearest Whole Dollar Plus An Extra \$_____ each month
- ☐ One-Time Donation \$_____

Account #: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

Return to OEC, PO Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54139



How do I apply for a donation? For a grant application go to ocontoelectric.com/community-change/. Grants are reviewed in early March, June, September, and December.

Thank you for considering this worthy fund. It is another way that you, the members of OEC, are helping to spread the (115302) good as far as we can in our community.

A special thank you to all of our members who already round their bill up. By giving a few cents each month, OEC members are making a big impact. The Community Change board, the cooperative board, and the employees thank you for your participation.

thank
you!

NEED HELP PAYING YOUR UTILITY BILLS?

Oconto Electric Cooperative's Commitment to Community Program is designed to help households with their energy costs, including electric bills. For many Wisconsin households, energy costs place a severe and continuing stress on the family budget. To better serve our members, OEC is part of the Wisconsin Home Energy Plus (HE+) program.

This program is funded through public benefits and federal dollars to help eligible low-income households pay for home energy assistance and weatherization. Members may be eligible if they meet the HE+ program guidelines. Members should contact their local agency to determine eligibility.

County	Agency	Telephone Number
Marinette	Energy Services	715-666-4374
Oconto	Energy Services	920-516-7004 800-506-5596
Shawano	Dept. of Human Services	715-526-4740

community change

THIRD-QUARTER RECIPIENTS

- \$500 – House Fire.
- \$500 – House Fire.
- \$500 – Little Tigers 3K & Childcare to help purchase coat storage for new 3K area.
- \$750 – Oconto Falls Area Senior Center to help pay for new interior door and flag pole.
- \$500 – Kara Philhower to help with costs of Eagle Scout project, music wall at Oconto Area Non-Profit Child Care.
- \$750 – We Believe to be used to help families and elderly in the Gillett area at Christmas time.
- \$500 – House Fire
- \$500 – House Fire

FOURTH-QUARTER RECIPIENTS

- \$250 – Wannabees Quilters to purchase material for quilts that are distributed to children in need, fire victims, and so many more.
- \$250 – Morgan Badgers 4-H to purchase fleece material to make blankets and give to assisted living/nursing home residents.
- \$250 – Feed My Sheep Food Pantry to help purchase food.
- \$750 – Lena FFA to help with the cost of purchasing a hydroponic grow tower that will provide fresh produce for the school lunch room and local food pantry.
- \$500 – Leadership Oconto County to support their service project, buddy bench for a local school.



Congratulations, Kevin!

Congratulations to Kevin Thomson on his retirement from Oconto Electric Cooperative after 25 years of service. Kevin began his career as a general laborer on February 23, 1998. In 2007, he advanced to equipment operator, a position he held for 16 years.

"I've helped the linemen get power restored to our members during all our major storms. One thing I won't miss is getting a phone call in the middle of a cold winter's night to go out and help," said Thomson.

We wish him many years of good health and happiness throughout his retirement.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

During winter months, ensure your home is well sealed to reduce the need for excessive heating. Seal air leaks around your home and add insulation where needed to save up to 10% on annual energy bills.

Install weather stripping on exterior doors and apply caulk around windows. Check attic insulation levels and hire a qualified contractor if additional insulation is required.

Source : energystar.gov



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. The December account numbers belonged to Timmy Merkl, Combined Locks, and Ronald Jaeger, Gillett.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

