

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative*

June 2025 NEWS



## RURAL POLICY FOR WISCONSIN'S FUTURE

**PREVENTING WILDFIRES**

**EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR NEW HOMES**

**JUNE DAIRY RECIPES**



## EMPLOYEES SET TO SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGH VARIOUS CHARITABLE INITIATIVES

Oconto Electric Cooperative is committed to the communities we serve. We support local schools, community organizations and agencies through donations and programs that OEC offers. Many OEC employees are active with local groups and organizations, which enrich the cooperative's relationship with the people and communities we serve.

Our employees are dedicated to co-op principle number seven: commitment to community. Our employees have distributed \$206,500 to local charities and organizations since 2004. Employees organize several fundraising efforts throughout the year with funds being awarded in late fall.

Funds raised in 2025 will be shared between four charities this year.

### Lena Volunteer Fire Department

Monies raised this year will be used for the purchase of rescue struts. The purpose of the equipment is to help stabilize a vehicle so fire personnel can work safely to assist or remove the trapped victim from the wreck. This new equipment will save time, manpower, and make it safer not only for the fire personnel but also the victims of the accident.

### Oconto Area Humane Society

The Oconto Area Humane Society (OAHS) is a non-profit open-admission shelter dedicated to providing protection, care and shelter for abandoned and homeless companion animals. The principal area of service is Oconto County. In 2024, 503 animals were adopted out and 42 lost animals were reunited with their owners.

Over the past year, OAHS has been working with a low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter provider in Madison, the Wisconsin Community Veterinary Center (WCVC). The shelter approached this provider with the goal of altering both shelter animals and recently adopted pets more quickly and at a lower cost. Pet owners in Oconto County often face wait times to even see a vet, which can be problematic to families.

Funds received by OAHS will be used to expand their partnership with WCVC, the ultimate goal is to offer a low-cost spay/neuter option to low-income Oconto County residents. This would reduce feral animal populations and shelter expenses, keep pets with their families (by reducing surrenders

of animals that aren't fixed and exhibiting unwanted behaviors or pregnancies), and ensure better health outcomes for these animals.

### Oconto County School Supply Drive, Inc.

The Oconto County School Drive was started in January of 2020 by Brittney Dequaine and Amy Huggett. The non-profit organization serves students and families that need financial assistance in purchasing school supplies. Students must be enrolled in an Oconto County school to qualify.

Once the family registers, students will receive a backpack filled with the school supplies they need for a successful school year. During the distribution event children are provided a fun experience by getting to choose their own backpack and fill them with supplies. Students also receive a personalized water bottle and local hair stylists offer free haircuts.

In 2024 the drive provided 473 backpacks plus supplies. On average the cost of each backpack full of supplies is \$35 per student.

### Shawano Menominee Resiliency Coalition

The Shawano Menominee Resiliency Coalition (SMRC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families impacted by addiction and recovery. Their mission is to build a sustainable and comprehensive recovery support system that reduces stigma and fosters a safe, healthy community. (876200) Through partnerships with Shawano County, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe, SMRC provides peer support, prevention and intervention resources.

To further these efforts, SMRC established Rise Wellness, a recovery center located in Shawano. Rise Wellness offers recovery meetings, educational workshops, and a safe, drug-and alcohol-free space for individuals and families. The support from the OEC Employee Charity will directly contribute to building a robust recovery resource center that transforms lives affected by addiction. Together, we can create a healthier, more resilient community.



**HELP SUPPORT OUR 2025 EMPLOYEE CHARITIES**

**Basket Raffle: June 16-27 in the OEC Lobby**

# JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH

## *Enjoy a farm country breakfast*



June Dairy Month is about showing people how hard farmers work and how rewarding that hard work is. Attending a local breakfast on the farm is a tradition for thousands of people. This year attendees will have the chance to tour Hodkiewicz Harvesting & Trucking in Oconto County or Zeitler Enterprises in Marinette County, which are both members of OEC.

Hodkiewicz Harvesting & Trucking is run by Mitch Hodkiewicz. Mitch's farming career began in 1993, dairy farming with his great uncle, Ervin Rosera. In 1998, they chose to sell the cows but continue cash cropping. It was at this time when Mitch purchased his first tract of land, Great Uncle Ervin's farm.

Since that purchase, the farm continues to grow and diversify. The Hodkiewicz's now crop 4,300 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat. They also offer various custom field operations throughout the community as well as trucking services.

The first grain bin was put up in 1999, many additions have been made to the grain facilities since then including building additional bins, adding a drive-over unloading pit, installing wet and dry legs and a grain drying tower system, adding a grain dryer which was recently converted from LP to natural gas, and upgrading from single-phase to three-phase electricity.

Land stewardship is a priority of the farm which is demonstrated through implementation of a nutrient management plan, utilizing variable rate seed and fertilizer application, planting cover crops, and other conservation practices.

The farm consists of 5 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees who help during the especially busy seasons



of planting and harvesting.

Mitch and his wife Brooke live on the farm with their 4 children, and Mitch has enjoyed raising all 9 of his kids on the farm – Jason (daughter Briella), Justin, Kaitlyn (husband Jacob and baby girl coming soon), Kyle, Tyler, Macie, Hallie, Weldon, and Natalie. (165301) The family is so excited to have the opportunity to host Oconto County's 2025 Breakfast on the Farm.

Oconto County is home to 762 farms—97% of which are family farms and may include multiple family members. 33% of Oconto County farmers are females and 67% are males. Beginning farmers account for 26% of all producers and 30% of farmers are 65 or older. Over \$220,802,000 worth of agricultural products are sold in Oconto County annually. \$141.9 million of that is milk sales—18th in the state. 152,567 of the 638,720 acres of land in Oconto County are utilized as cropland or pastureland.

### **Oconto County Breakfast on the Farm**

**June 8, 2025 • 7 A.M. – Noon**

#### **Hodkiewicz Harvesting & Trucking**

5634 McCarthy Road, Lena, WI 54139

**(Traffic enter McCarthy Rd from NB on ramp off 22 to Hwy 141 right lane)**

Cost: \$10/day of event, \$9/advance

#### **MENU**

Scrambled Eggs with Cheese & Ham, Pancakes, Sausage, Yogurt, Cheese, Ice Cream, Milk, Coffee, Water

**Wagon Tour of Norsk Farms/Olson Family Farm**







**Z**eitler Enterprises is a 4th-generation dairy farm established in 1918. It is currently operated by Jerry and Tricia Zeitler, along with their three children, Renee Seefeldt, Zach Zeitler and Michaela Zeitler.

The Zeitler family has made numerous improvements to the farm over the last 100+ years starting with Jerry's grandparents, Arthur and Esther Zeitler, and parents, Dan and Marge Zeitler. Jerry and Tricia purchased the farm in 2014. In May of 2023, the family added four Lely A5 Robotic milkers in a new 175' x 265' freestall barn that also houses the dry cows and close up springing heifers. In addition to the 260 cows milked in the new barn, Zeitlers also milk 70 cows in their existing stanchion barn. Their milk is shipped to BelGioioso Cheese to make authentic Italian Artisan Cheeses such as Parmesan and American Grana crafted in both Chase and Pulaski, Wisconsin.

Along with the dairy herd and young-stock, Zeitlers harvest 1,000 acres of crop land which includes corn for both silage and grain, alfalfa, soybeans and wheat. The Zeitlers are blessed to have summertime help, along with family and friends when needed.

Farming brings many challenges but Jerry and Tricia believe watching their 3 grandsons, Connor, Colton and Cullen exploring life on the farm makes it all worthwhile. They anxiously await Baby Seefeldt #4 which is due in September. The new barn is designed for expansion as a 5th generation grows into the family business.



Tricia Zeitler and grandson Cullen enjoy a moment with a calf. "I have been on the Marinette County Breakfast on the Farm committee for 15 years. Our family loves going to the event. When the committee couldn't find another farm to host, we decided that this was finally going to be the year that we host the event. I want people to come to our farm so we can educate them on agriculture, dairy farming and the new technologies that are out there," said Tricia.



## **Marinette County Breakfast on the Farm** **June 22, 2025 • 7:30 A.M. – Noon (Rain or Shine)**

### **Zeitler Enterprises**

W8368 E 16th Road, Coleman, WI 54112

Adults-\$10. Children 6-10: \$5. Children 5 years & under: free.

No advanced ticket sales.

### **MENU**

Pancakes, Eggs, Sausages, Ham, Cheese Curds, Maple Syrup,  
Applesauce, Milk, Juice, Coffee and Ice Cream



Petting zoo with baby animals, Moo-Mania comedy show, face painting, balloons, kids bouncy play area, viewing of barns & cattle, and music—co-sponsor Dairy Farmers of WI.



## Annual Meeting

**O**n a beautiful sunny morning with strong signs that Spring has finally shown its face, Oconto Electric Cooperative held its 88th Annual Meeting on April 12 at the Oconto Falls High School Performing Arts Center in front of 158 registered cooperative members.

CEO, Ryan Miller (photo above) took to the podium to discuss three priorities. He played a very informative video showcasing the history of the electric cooperative movement in the country and why it was so critically important in rural communities to help them thrive. He then explained that right-of-way clearing remains a very critical role for the cooperative to maintain safe lines for lineworkers and cooperative members.

Cooperative Attorney James Timm was called up to report on the election of directors. With Dave Hischke running unopposed in District 2 and Ronnie Kruse running unopposed in District 5, it only left one seat open for a race. With the retirement of long-time board member Tony Wagner, that race was determined earlier at the local District 3 meeting. Carl Tennie, of Gillett, ran unopposed and secured the seat for a three-year term.

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

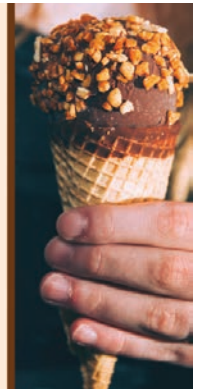
Some scammers will pose as utility workers or contractors affiliated with your electric utility by knocking on your door and claiming to be employed or hired by the utility company. They may claim they were hired to reset, repair, replace or inspect your electric meter or other utility-related device. If a utility employee or authorized contractor needs access to your home, we will schedule an appointment in advance, and proper identification will be provided for your review.

*Source: Utilities United Against Scams*

## June is National Dairy Month!

*Thank you  
dairy farmers.*

Stop in at OEC's office  
June 16-20 for an  
ice cream treat!



## 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 May account numbers belonged to Charles and Carol Jannsen, Oconto and Shane and Molly Dillon, Abrams.



Ryan Miller, CEO

Katie Jagiello, Communications and Marketing

7479 REA Road, P.O. Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54154  
www.ocontoelectric.com

**Hours of Operation:** 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

**Hours of Lobby:** 9:00 a.m.– 3 p.m. Friday

**Non-emergencies:** 920-846-2816

**Emergencies & outages:** Toll FREE 800-472-8410  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week