

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

November 2024



A YARN ABOUT SIEVERS
RENOWNED FIBER ARTS SCHOOL
KNITS PEOPLE TOGETHER

UNIMAGINABLE

SMART HOME TECH
ON A BUDGET

KIDS AND CRITTERS



VETERANS WAITED TO HEAR TWO SIMPLE WORDS WELCOME HOME

Old Glory Honor Flight (OGHF) is an organization based out of Appleton that is dedicated to transporting our local WWII, Korean, and Vietnam War veterans to Washington, D.C., to see the memorials built in their honor. It is a one-day trip and completely free of charge to the veteran.

The mission of OGHF would not be successful without the help of their guardians. Each veteran is accompanied by a guardian, usually a family member. If a veteran doesn't have anyone to accompany them, OGHF will provide one. Their role is to ensure that every veteran has a safe and memorable experience.

Amy Winkler, an employee of Oconto Electric Cooperative, went on her first OGHF as a guardian in 2014. On October 23, Winkler will have gone on her ninth mission as a guardian.

What made you sign up to be a guardian?

I wanted to give back to our veterans. They gave so much for our freedom and this was a good way to show them how much I appreciated what they did and to say "Thank you." Being an OGHF guardian is one of the best things that I have ever done! I talked about it so much and spoke so highly of it then, that now my husband goes on the missions also.

Is there a cost to be a guardian?

Yes, I pay \$500 for every mission that I have the honor of going on.

What does a guardian do?

We are expected to be there for our vets and let them know how much they are appreciated. We need to contact the vet ahead of the mission to introduce ourselves. If the vet has someone on "The Wall" they would like to make an etching of, you would look that up ahead of time to know where to look. We let them know facts about the memorials that we visit or monuments that we may drive by (tour guide). We may need to push them in wheelchairs as it is a lot of walking. I take a lot of pictures of them throughout the day so I can create a book for them to remember the day and share their experience with family and friends. This day is all about them and you need to smile and make them feel like a "king/queen for the day." I have created a lot of friendships by doing this and discovered a lot of things that the history books do not tell you.



Amy Winkler walks with veteran Dick on Honor Flight 62.

Welcome home

Once we land back in Appleton we exit the plane and wait behind a black curtain until the very last veteran gets off the plane. Cheers of "welcome home" rang out from the airport terminal. The curtains were pulled back and as far as the eye could see were people holding signs and clapping to welcome the veterans home.

Thank you

Every veteran deserves this chance to go and experience this amazing mission that is meant to say "Thank you!"

Winkler finally convinced her uncle Burt Dunst, who served in the Army during the Vietnam War, to sign up for the flight. Dunst was a part of Mission 70 that went on September 11, 2024.

"Thank you Amy so much for being at the airport last night to welcome me back. If it weren't for you, I might have missed one of the most amazing days of my life. The letter you guys sent was just the frosting on the cake. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

God Bless You for going on so many of these flights that bring joy and closure to so many of us. I waited over 50 years to hear those 2 simple words 'Welcome Home.' Last night I could hear them loud and clear."

OGHF is always looking for more veterans and guardians to go on flights. You can learn more information on their website, www.oldgloryhonorflight.org. —Katie Jagiello



MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

A beautiful crisp autumn morning welcomed people to the Oconto Electric Cooperative Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, October 5, held at OEC.

The event is an opportunity for members to learn more about their co-op. This included our energy services area that had our Chevrolet Bolt electric car, a display on considering solar

energy, and materials on energy-saving tips. Member Services showed members how to use SmartHub to view their usage and how to pay their bill online. Community Change had a board member available to answer questions, and we had hotline demonstrations.

There was plenty to keep the kids busy, including a bounce house, face painting, balloon artist, and the light bike.

We would like to express our gratitude for the continued support and trust of our valued members. If you attended the event we hope you had a nice time.

Prize winners included: Nancy Schuster, David and Bonnie Wegner, Karen Kispert, Brigett Manecke, Joe Borowitz, Allan Blazek, Zach Allen, Sharon Schwartz, Don Lisowe, and Michael Kuczynski.





THANKFUL TO OUR MEMBERS FOR 25 YEARS OF CHARITABLE GIVING

OEC 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 we serve.

Since 1999 Oconto Electric members have had the opportunity to participate in a wonderful program called Community Change. Members can sign up to have their electric bills rounded up to the next whole dollar, with the extra money going into the Community Change fund.

Community Change has a board of directors (a group of seven volunteers who are co-op members not employed by OEC) that meets quarterly in March, June, September, and December to review applications for Community Change funds. 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. The Community Change board has awarded over \$40,000 to house fire victims and over \$200,000 in donations since 2000.

In 2024 grants were awarded to:

- 3 House Fire Victims
- Pine Needle Quilters
- Lena American Legion Post 342 - Wheelchair Ramp
- 2 Medical Assistance
- Kingdom Come Food Pantry
- Holy Trinity Parish/St. Vincent De Paul, Oconto
- We Believe - Helping Families at Christmas

How to apply

If you know of a charitable or service organization, civic group, or individual with unusual financial needs, you can encourage them to apply for a Community Change grant. Applications can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com or in the OEC lobby. Applications for the December board meeting must be submitted by November 20.

The Community Change board would like to extend their sincere appreciation to all the OEC members who contribute.

Dear Community Change,

There are no words to express how grateful I am for your kindness. Losing our home and our dog has been incredibly hard. Starting over, trying to make sure my boys have everything they need and trying to figure out how I was going to make that happen has been my biggest fear. Your very generous donation has gone a long way in easing that fear.

Thank you so very much — Dawn Miller & Family



"Bag Lunch To Go"

Tuesday, November 5

From 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. (or until we run out) pick up your brown bag lunch at OEC headquarters!

Pulled Pork Sandwich, BBQ Sauce, Chips, Homemade Cookie, Beverage. Cost is \$10 for the meal or \$5 per sandwich.



Employee Charity
Oconto Electric Cooperative

Proceeds go to:
Victory Olympics
The Nurses Nook
Oconto Falls Legion



**We're Grateful
for Your
Membership.**

Our offices will be closed
**Thursday, November 28,
and Friday, November 29,**
in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.
We are incredibly grateful for your
membership as our team spends this
special time with loved ones.

From our co-op family to yours,
we hope you have a wonderful
Thanksgiving!

**OCONTO ELECTRIC
OEC
COOPERATIVE**



Ground broke for new substation

September 9, OEC broke ground for a new substation/transmission switch yard. This substation will replace an existing substation that is adjacent to the new one in Oconto Falls. The current substation is nearing the end of its lifecycle. The concrete foundation is deteriorating and we continue to replace failing parts.

The new substation will improve reliability for members. Additionally, the facility size was increased to allow for any future expansion such as battery storage, or solar when that technology becomes more cost effective. (1183500)

Electrical substations are a critical piece of our infrastructure, serving to increase or decrease the voltage of power as it moves through the grid.

The new substation is expected to be completed in May of 2025.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

If you're heading out of town during the holiday season, remember to set your home to vacation mode. You can save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help you save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually.

Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, toothbrush chargers, TVs, and gaming consoles.

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 October account numbers belonged to Scott Kissinger, Krakow, and Christopher and Kari Olson, Suring.



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