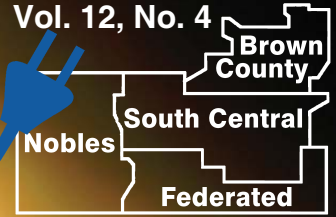


April 2008
Vol. 12, No. 4



Cooperative Alliance Partners *Connections*

Connecting our co-ops & members to a progressive future




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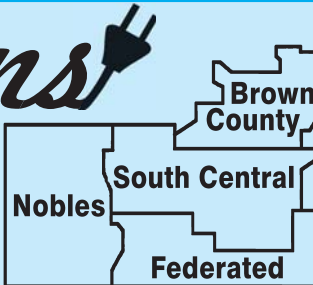
Manager's message
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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Cooperative Alliance Partners *Connections*

This publication focuses on CAP's members, programs and events. As this is the official member publication, member's story ideas, letters-to-the-editor and comments are welcomed.

Andrea Christoffer, CCC, Editor
Printed by the Livewire Printing Co., Jackson



Connections (USPS 010-456) is published monthly by Federated Rural Electric, 77100 US Hwy 71, Jackson, MN 56143. Subscriptions: Members \$5 a year. Nonmembers \$10 a year. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MN and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Connections*, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069.



Printed on recycled paper with soy ink.



"Owned by those it serves"

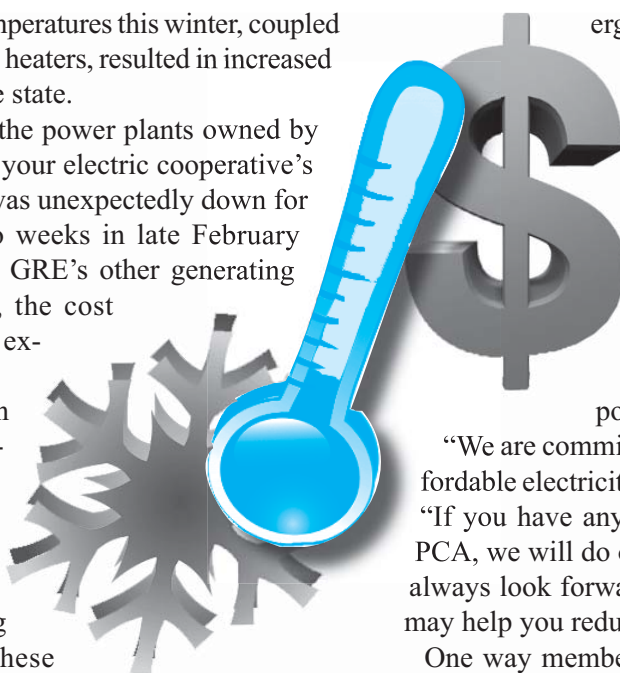
Dropping temps cause rising cost adder on your electric bills

Colder than anticipated temperatures this winter, coupled with increased use of electric heaters, resulted in increased energy usage throughout the state.

At the same time, one of the power plants owned by Great River Energy (GRE), your electric cooperative's wholesale power supplier, was unexpectedly down for maintenance for about two weeks in late February and early March. Although GRE's other generating units were operating well, the cost of replacement power was expensive.

As a result, a higher than normal power cost adjustment (PCA) was added to recent electric bills. The PCA is the rate adjustment on your electric bill that reflects the fluctuating wholesale power costs. These added wholesale purchases came from natural gas-fueled combined-cycled generators, which needed fuel during these times of record natural gas prices.

"Please be assured that we are proactively planning for your future energy needs," said Jon Brekke, GRE vice president for member services. "We work hard to anticipate any potential issues that could cause an escalation in en-



ergy costs. Whenever possible, we work to minimize the impact those issues could have on your electric bills. In addition, we do what is necessary to maintain and enhance the reliability of your service."

Looking ahead, the potential for additional power cost adjustments on your power bill this spring will depend largely on weather, energy usage and market costs of wholesale power.

"We are committed to providing you with reliable, affordable electricity," stated the co-op's general manager. "If you have any questions or concerns regarding the PCA, we will do our best to answer your questions. We always look forward to working with you on ways that may help you reduce your monthly bill."

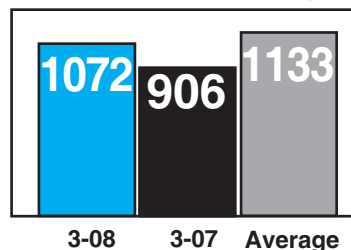
One way members can reduce their electric bill is by implementing energy-efficient improvements in your home or participating in your co-op's numerous energy-saving programs. The co-op can also calculate your energy use and budget it evenly over the year. Look for more ideas each month in *Connections* and on our website.

See the graph on Page 13, which shows a four-year average of the PCA adder. ➡

Cover Connections

The rising Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on recent electric bills was due to several factors. Cold temperatures caused increased power demands. Great River Energy's coal-fired Coal Creek Station then experienced a mechanical failure. More power then had to be produced by high-priced natural gas. ➡

Weather affects your electric bill



This chart compares the heating degree days for March '08, March '07 and the 63-year average for your monthly electric bill. ➡

Nobles Cooperative Electric member of the month

Electric cooperatives help bring light to Sudan people

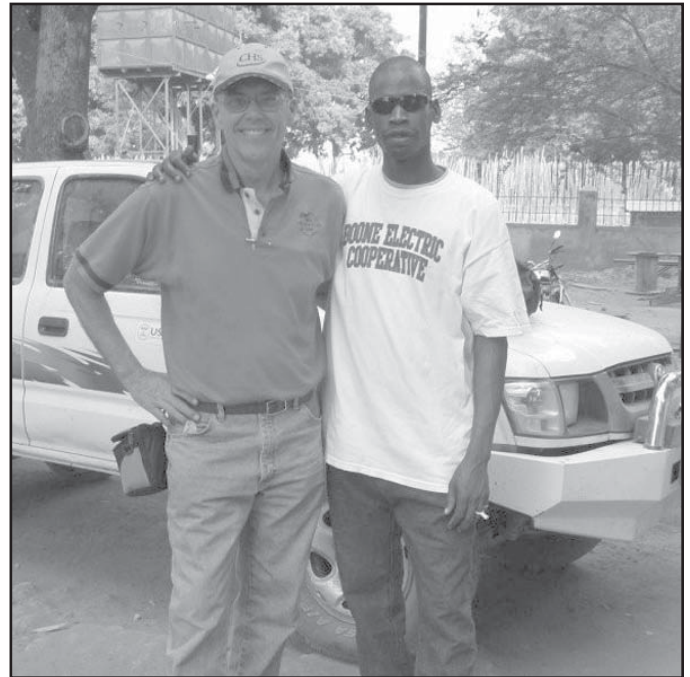
Cooperatives are all about helping one's neighbor, whether they are across the road, across the state, across the nation or even the world.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) International Program has provided people in developing countries with reliable and affordable electricity for 45 years. The results are increased productivity, millions of new jobs and higher incomes for rural communities in more than 40 countries. Through this program, Ron Schwartau, secretary/treasurer of the Nobles Cooperative Electric (NCE) Board of Directors, recently visited the African nation of Sudan.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. It is bordered by Egypt, the Red Sea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Libya. Its land mass consists of deserts, swamps, plains and even rain forests. It is divided into two regions: the north and the south. The north is predominately Muslim, while the majority of the south is Christian. Political unrest and tribal conflict often erupt within its borders. Even though Sudan is the third largest exporter of oil in the world, the wealth is not shared by the general population.

"Besides being involved with NCE, I serve on the NRECA Board of Directors and work with their International Program," Schwartau said. "They asked me to visit Sudan and evaluate the International Program in action. One can sit in a board room and see videos and read reports, but to physically go somewhere offers invaluable perspective. It helps to know exactly what we are asking our volunteers to do when we send them to places that don't offer modern comforts and may contain risks. If I, as a Director of the International Program, am sending volunteers there, I thought I should be willing to go myself.

These fact-finding trips help ensure that the International Program succeeds in its mission. "I've visited several developing countries," Schwartau said. "Rural people everywhere share the same interests — they want fair prices and the ability to provide for their families — and they always ask the same question: is it true that Americans have so much? For example, one third of the world's population only has electricity for part of the day and one-third has no access to power at all. When they learn we have it all day, every day, they envy us. That is what



Ron Schwartau (left), secretary/treasurer of the Nobles Cooperative Electric Board of Directors, stands with William James, a lineworker from Yei, Sudan. Schwartau spent three weeks in Sudan as part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's International Program, which helps bring electricity to developing countries.

the NRECA International Program does — it gives those people a chance to make their own progress so they don't have to envy others."

Schwartau and six volunteer linemen from across the country spent three weeks in the Sudan community of Yei. "Three years ago Yei had a population of 35,000 people," Schwartau stated. "It is now near 180,000. The reason for this growth is an influx of refugees. Yei has been peaceful for some time now so people are flocking to it."

A glimpse into the everyday life of Yei's citizens reveals that soccer is one of their main sources of recreation. Children make their own toys, which might be a paint roller on a stick, a plastic jug or a tin can with bottle cap tires and a string to pull it with. Many bars have TVs and Kung Fu movies are popular. On Sundays the roads are packed with people going to church. The roads are unpaved with washboards and potholes so large they can tip over trucks. Dur— *Continued on Page 14*

Don't just install a new cooling system; make sure it is installed correctly

Martin Van Buren said, "It is easier to do a job right than to explain why you didn't."

The same holds true for cooling systems. It is easier to install a cooling system right than it is to pay the costs of inefficiency. This is why your electric co-op's rebate program changed last year.

Quality Installation rebates range from \$180 to \$430 for central air conditioners and heat pumps with efficiency or SEER ratings of 14 or higher. The higher the SEER, the higher the rebate.

Cooling unit's efficiency rating	Rebate amount
14 SEER	\$180
15 SEER	\$280
16+ SEER	\$330

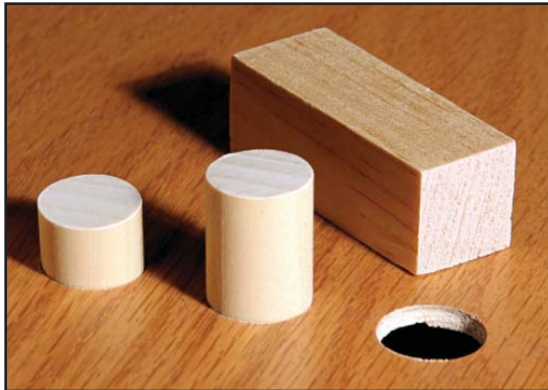
Ask about the co-op's additional incentives for heat pumps.

A Quality Installation is based on the contractor taking a test so they are knowledgeable on the units and their proper installation. Quality Installation guidelines are established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Quality Installation involves:

1. Proper sizing with a heat/loss calculation of the home that looks at the home's windows and insulation.
2. Refrigeration charge
3. Air flow
4. Duct sealing

An improperly installed or sized cooling system can be a big drain on your wallet. When an air conditioner is not sized or installed correctly, its performance can be reduced by as much as 35 percent. Today, 50 to 75 percent of all air conditioners in U.S. homes are believed to be adversely affected by size or installation is-



Don't put a square peg in a round hole when buying a new cooling unit. Guarantee yourself a perfect-fit cooling system by using a local Quality Installation contractor and save with the co-op's Quality Installation rebates.

sues. For example, oversized cooling equipment increases the on-off cycling of the equipment, resulting in poor dehumidification, increased costs and equipment wear and tear. In addition, air-conditioning systems and heat pumps suffering from improper refrigerant charge can cause problems that range from reduced operating efficiency to system freeze-up.

With a Quality Installation the contractor must test the unit, typically when temperatures are 65° or warmer. This will mean a second trip back to the house if your unit was

installed in the spring, winter or fall. However, you then know that the unit will work on the hot, sticky summer days. Due to this testing, the contractor fills out the Quality Installation rebate form for the customer and mails it to the cooperative. Then your electric cooperative will issue rebates on the cooling system to the customer.

With the Quality Installation program homeowners will know that their new central air conditioner or heat pump is as efficient as possible. Homeowners will

also enjoy more comfort from a system that properly dehumidifies the air during hot summer months and delivers the right amount of air flow in each room.

The more energy homeowners save on cooling costs with efficient systems, the more the cooperative benefits. It helps us keep electric rates stable and avoid buying pricey electricity on the open market during the hottest summer days. For more information call your electric co-op. For a list of local Quality Installation contractors go to Page 13. ➔

Monthly ENERGY[®] wise tip

What's your SEER & EER IQ? — Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) measures the efficiency of a central air conditioner's operation over an entire season. Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) measures how efficiently a cooling system operates at 95°F. The higher the SEER and EER, the more efficient the unit. Both are included in the ENERGY STAR specifications because each rating indicates the energy efficiency of the product under different operating modes. Both ratings are important when choosing a new cooling unit with 14 as the Energy Star minimum. ➔ — Courtesy www.energystar.gov

Watts new

Tune in to savings with a tune-up rebate for your central air conditioner or heat pump

Your electric cooperative helps you dial into savings with its cooling tune up program.

The Central Air Conditioner and Heat Pump Tune-Up Program provides a \$25 rebate for members who hire a licensed service technician to perform a tune-up on an existing central air conditioner or heat pump. A properly tuned air conditioner or heat pump will be a more efficient unit and saves you money on your cooling bills.

That \$25 rebate offsets part of the cost of an air conditioner or heat pump tune-up (limit one tune-up rebate per member; the program ends when funds are exhausted).

To receive the rebate the member must complete a short application form, attach the tune-up checklist completed by the licensed service technician and provide a copy of the technician's tune-up bill.

The technician must complete the following items and sign the co-op's rebate form.

- Clean condenser coil
- Check coolant level
- Check coolant pressure
- Check indoor filter
- Check belt and lube motor, if needed
- Test all controls
- Blow out all drain lines
- Perform a visual inspection of the entire cooling system
- Educate the member on proper system operation
- List air conditioner or heat pump's brand, model and serial number
- List the approximate age of unit
- List EER rating and BTU rating

Note: this program is only for air-source heat pumps or central air systems — not room air conditioners. It



Is your cooling unit operating efficiently? Consider scheduling a heat pump or central air tune-up to ensure you save the most on your electric bills. Your electric cooperative will reward you with even more savings — a \$25 tune up rebate! The reward is well deserved. Efficient heating and cooling systems help keep everyone's rates stable and your energy bills lower.

is for units over three years of age and have not been tuned up in the last two years. The program does not cover the cost of any necessary repairs that the tune-up may discover.

To ensure an efficient cooling system www.energystar.gov explains the reasons behind the tune-up checks:

- Clean evaporator and condenser air conditioning coils. Dirty coils reduce the system's ability to cool your home and cause the system to run

longer, increasing energy costs and reducing the life of the equipment.

- Check your unit's refrigerant level. Too much or too little refrigerant will make your system less efficient increasing energy costs and reducing the life of the equipment.

- Clean and adjust blower components to provide proper system airflow for greater comfort levels. Airflow problems can reduce your system's efficiency by up to 15 percent. ↙

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ENERGY-EFFICIENT KIND



Buying a new refrigerator, clothes washer, freezer or dehumidifier? Buy an Energy Star model to save with our Energy Star rebate.



**Brown County
Rural Electrical
Association**
507-794-3331



**Nobles Cooperative
Electric**
507-372-7331 or 836-6107



Rural Electric
507-847-3520 or 728-8366



**South Central Electric
Association**
507-375-3164 or 628-5571

Safety sense

Mercury and battery recycling = safety



A number of common consumer products contain mercury, a toxic substance that can be harmful to human health and the environment. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) encourages users of mercury-containing products to follow requirements of local recycling laws.

Thermostats

Many existing wall thermostats contain mercury switches that provide efficient temperature control. The switches are securely housed and the likelihood of consumer exposure to mercury is extremely low. When taken out of service, mercury thermostats should be properly recycled.

The Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC), a not-for-profit organization, facilitates the collection of all brands of used wall-mounted mercury-switch thermostats by heating, cooling and air conditioning (HVAC) wholesalers. Check with your local contractor for recycling.

Rechargeable batteries

Rechargeable batteries are found in cordless power tools,

cellular/cordless phones, laptop computers, camcorders, digital cameras and remote-controlled toys. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) provides a recycling service for your used portable, rechargeable batteries and old cell phones. The RBRC recycles the following battery chemistries: nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd), nickel-metal hydride (Ni-MH), lithium-ion (Li-ion) and small sealed lead (Pb). Visit www.RBRC.org to find local participating retailers for recycling.

Ordinary household batteries

Common household batteries (AAA, AA, C and D) do not contain hazardous materials. It is permissible in all states, except California, to dispose of them in household trash. ESFI suggests that you contact your local waste disposal official with any questions.

Mercury-containing lamps/bulbs

Compact fluorescents and high-intensity discharge lamps contain mercury. See Pages 10-11 on recycling. ➔

Don't dig up trouble! Contact GSOC first this spring!



1-800-252-1166
www.gopherstateonecall.org

Contact Gopher State One Call (GSOC) before doing any digging more than 12-inches deep. Make this call 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees, tiling and more. You can also register on the website at www.gopherstateonecall.org. This gives utilities time to mark their underground lines up to your meter so you are safe! Then contact a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. ➔

Federated focus:

Congrats Home Show winners!



Thanks for stopping by our booth at the Fairmont and Jackson Home Shows last month. Congratulations go to our winners of the \$50 worth of compact fluorescent bulbs: Duane Rieland, Fairmont; and Robert Drahot, Jackson. Stop by Federated's office to buy your CFLs!

Annual bills mailed April 30

About 268 Federated members with seasonal accounts will receive their annual electric bills April 30. Payment is due by May 12. It includes a meter reading by Federated to calculate the kilowatt-hour use for the past year.

Besides the energy use, the bill includes an advance payment (based on one year of minimum charges) for the coming year. If a security light exists onsite, it includes advance payment for that also (about \$66). If the previous year's total bill exceeds \$160, the excess is divided by two and added to the advance payment. If an annual bill is greater than \$500 or became a permanent home, it's transferred to monthly billing. If this was a cabin and became a year-round residence, contact the co-op to establish monthly billing.

Student summer job position

Office job for high school or college student working toward a business or accounting degree. Must be detail oriented and self-motivated. Prefer familiarity with PCs and Office 2000 programs. Must have driver's license and transportation. The wage is based upon experience. Request the job description from swanson@federatedrea.coop or call 847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520; ask for Sherry Swanson. Apply by May 1. 🖐

High school graduating senior?

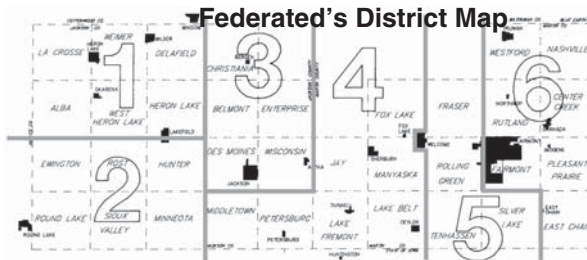


Apply for 1 of 6 \$600 Federated

Operation Round Up Scholarships

Federated's Operation Round Up dollars will go to local scholars!

Federated's Operation Round Up Trust Board will accept applications from the sons and daughters of Federated Rural Electric members. A \$600 scholarship will be awarded for each of Federated's six districts for a total of \$3,600. (See the map below.) The scholarship check will be jointly issued to the student and college after successfully completing one semester or quarter of higher education with at least a 2.0 grade point average.



Are you a Federated Rural Electric member? Have a graduating high school senior? Have your son/daughter apply for a \$600 scholarship. One will be awarded for each Federated district. The city of Welcome falls in District 5.

website (www.federatedrea.coop). Click on Operation Round Up and scroll down. Recipients will be announced in the June *Connections* newsletter. 🖐

Graduating high school seniors must apply by April 21. Use the application included with the April 1st electric bills. Application forms were mailed to local school counselors. The application is also available by calling Federated, e-mailing (info@federatedrea.coop) or on Federated's

Sherburn student wins \$1,000 scholarship



Jenna Gaalswyk

Jenna Gaalswyk, Sherburn, dips into the "basin" of scholarship funds by winning the first \$1,000 Federated Rural Electric/Basin scholarship.

"This scholarship comes from Basin Electric Power Cooperative based in Bismarck, North Dakota, which becomes a wholesale power supplier for Federated in 2008," stated Richard Burud, Federated's general manager. "Basin awards 120 of these scholarships to local electric cooperatives.

Federated is excited to award this first \$1,000 scholarship to Jenna."

The scholarship was available to high school seniors and college students who will be enrolled full-time in an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school working on an undergraduate or master's degree. Federated received 24 applications. Each applicant completed a two-page application and wrote a 400-word essay on how local cooperatives serve rural areas and how they are different from other local businesses.

"When I learned I was chosen as the recipient of this scholarship, I was truly honored," Gaalswyk said. "Federated has a long history of excellence. I am proud to be a part of that tradition. Thanks Federated for providing me with this opportunity. I plan to attend Bethel University, St. Paul, for a degree in biology/pre-med and eventually return to practice obstetrics/gynecology in the area."

Federated thanks the scholarship judges for their time: retired high school teacher, Helen Murphy, Sherburn; and retired high school counselor, Barney Olson, Jackson. 🖐

Members fund \$13,704 via Operation Round Up

Organization	Amount	Purpose
Dunnell Book Room	\$100	To update book, tape, CD and DVD collection
Sanford Hospice, Windom, Jackson & Worthington	\$195	Toward a portable suction machine to maintain patient's airway
JCC Early Childhood Special Ed. Program	\$200	To replace and expand classroom toy selection
Martin Co. Farm & Home Safety Committee	\$200	For farm and home safety information for K-5 students
Martin Co. Mentoring Network, Fairmont	\$212	Toward purchase of resource books for mentor training
Western Community Action, Jackson	\$250	To purchase three tables for community events
Jackson County DAC, Lakefield	\$250	Buy a dehumidifier to benefit disabled people with allergies working with fabrics
Fort Belmont, Jackson	\$250	Toward cost of nine boom boxes
Gingerbread Nursery, Jackson	\$250	Toward purchase of children's preschool farm toys
Martin County West Community Education	\$312	Hire Prairie Ecology Bus for preschool - 2nd grade summer programs
Lakefield Ambulance Service	\$435	Toward purchase of an immobilization mattress
Ceylon EMS	\$455	Toward purchase of a new ambulance cot
Granada First Responders	\$495	Buy a first responder's radio for a new member
Jackson County Mutual Aid Association	\$500	Toward Okabena & Jackson communications towers' repeaters
Adaptive Physical Education of JCC	\$500	Toward therapeutic horseback riding for disabled students
Minnesota West Foundation, Jackson	\$600	Scholarship for Jackson or Martin County student in powerline program
Jackson County Library	\$900	Hiring "Zooman" for summer-reading program
Jackson County Dept. of Human Services	\$1,000	Assist REA members with emergency-energy assistance
Friendship Ventures, Annandale	\$1,000	Toward camp scholarships for local disabled students
Fox Lake Sports Commission, Welcome	\$1,000	Toward construction costs of two dugout roofs
Northrop Fire Department	\$1,000	Toward purchase of pumper truck
Six Federated scholarships	\$3,600	One \$600 scholarship/district for high school seniors of Federated members
Total	\$13,704	

The Federated Rural Electric Trust, Jackson, awarded \$13,704 to local organizations through Operation Round Up March 26. Operation Round Up donations occur due to monthly contributions from Federated members. Through this charitable giving program 21 organizations received money in this 27th round of funding. Interested organizations may go to Federated's website: www.federatedrea.coop to complete the application or e-mail (info@federatedrea.coop) for an application. Otherwise, call Federated at 847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520; ask for Sherry or Andrea to request an application. 📌

From Dunnell to D.C. thanks to Youth Tour Contest

Blake Potthoff, Dunnell, won Federated's free trip to Washington, D.C. June 14-19 in Federated's Youth Tour Contest. Second and third place awards of \$150 and \$100 were awarded to Alexandra Cross, Brewster; and Kristi Schulz, Winnebago. 29 students entered the contest.

Potthoff, is the son of Neal and Dawn. He is a sophomore at Martin County West High School. He will be among 1,000 teenagers from across the country participating touring the D.C. sites, visiting with legislators and learning about cooperatives.

- Cross, daughter of Richard and Laurie, is a sophomore attending Round Lake-Brewster High School.

- Schulz, daughter of Kevin and Carol, is a sophomore attending Maple River High School in Mapleton.

The other two Youth Tour finalists were:

- Erika Post, Brewster, daughter of Troy and Gwen. She is a sophomore at Southwest Star Concept.

- Roshay Reimers, Lakefield, daughter of Richard and Ranae. She is a Round Lake-Brewster sophomore.

Applicants completed an application and an essay on an energy-related topic with five finalists interviewed. 📌



Congratulations to the finalists in Federated's Youth Tour Contest! Blake Potthoff won Federated's trip June 14-19 to Washington, D.C. Seated: Blake Potthoff and Alexandra Cross. Standing: Kristi Schulz and Erika Post. Not pictured: Roshay Reimers.

Details listed about fluorescent light bulb recycling in your area

Recycle fluorescent bulbs to keep our planet mercury-free.

Brown County

The date is set for May 22. Cost ranges from 40 cents and up, depending on the kind and size of bulbs. PCB and non-PCB ballasts and batteries will also be taken. Watch for the May and October recycling dates. Questions? Call the Brown County Courthouse. Talk to Desiree Hohenstein at 507-233-6641.

Cottonwood County

Bring fluorescent bulbs year round to the Cottonwood County Landfill located on County Road 22 five miles northwest of Windom. It is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the first and third Saturdays of the month from 8 a.m. to noon.

In addition, bring in fluorescent bulbs for recycling during the Household Hazardous Waste Exchanges in June and July. Watch the newspapers for details or call 507-831-2441.

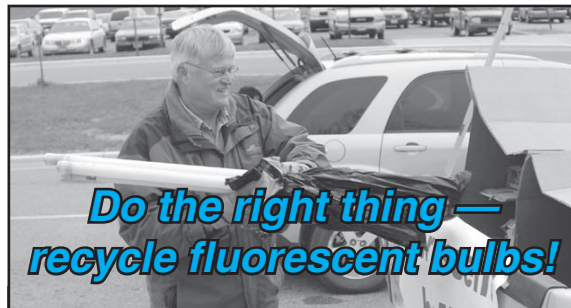
Jackson County

Mark May 2 and an October date as the times for businesses to recycle fluorescent lights and computer monitors. Depending upon the type of fluorescent bulb, it costs 25 cents to \$2.75 for recycling. Recycling computers, monitors, televisions and VCR/DVD players will be free to residents. Business prices are \$5 for computers, \$7.50 for monitors and printers, \$15 for TVs and \$5 for VCRs/DVDs and stereos. All other electronics will be collected for roughly 15 cents a pound. Handling fees may apply. Call Jackson County's Environmental Office to register and for details: 507-847-2240.

Residents can bring their bulbs in from June through October on the first Monday and the third Saturday of the month to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility (at the County Highway Department on County Road 34).

Martin County

Recycle fluorescent bulbs May 8 at the northeast corner of K-Mart parking lot in Fairmont from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bulbs are accepted from the homes and businesses in the



Bulb recycling tips

- Keep lamps dry. Store them where they will not get broken. Do not tape together.
- Count long lamps and package tightly in boxes (ideally in original manufacturer's box) without separators. Label the box with the quantity. Do NOT package different lengths in one box or send partly filled boxes.
- If necessary, use newspapers to help cushion bulbs during transport to the recycling center. If lamps are broken, place them in a box. Wrap and tie them with a plastic bag. 🖱️

County. It costs 59 cents to \$5 a bulb, depending on the type of bulb. Call the Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce at 507-235-5547 or Billee Rabbe at 507-238-3115.

Welcome Hardware, 109 Dugan North, also accepts fluorescent bulbs for recycling during business hours. Costs range from 65 cents to \$5. If you have questions, call 507-728-8330. Please ask for Doug or Sharon.

Murray County

Recycle fluorescent bulbs year-round at the Murray County Demo Landfill located on County Road 29, south of Hadley. It is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to noon, plus the first and third Saturdays of the month from 8:30 a.m. to noon. A recycling fee applies.

Plus, watch the newspapers for details on the fluorescent bulb recycling program as part of the Hazardous Waste Collection. Questions? Call the Courthouse and ask for John Bloemendal at 507-836-6148.

Otherwise, recycle fluorescents year-round at Slayton Recycling Center, 1820 Erlandson Avenue, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Nobles County

Schaap Sanitation Recycling Center, south on Highway 60, Worthington (507-376-3298). The Recycling Center is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The fee ranges from 60 cents to \$5, depending upon the type of bulb. A \$2.50 fee applies for broken bulbs.

Watonwan County

Coast to Coast, 423 First Avenue South, St. James. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, Thursday night until 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone: 507-375-4151. The fee charged for recycling and shipping depends on the bulb.

The county Environmental Services Department's Hazardous Waste Days are the last Wednesday of May and the last Wednesday of September. You can also recycle fluorescent bulbs on those days. Call 507-375-3393. 🖱️

Steps on cleaning up broken fluorescent and high-intensity discharge lamps

Using fluorescent and high-intensity discharge (HID) lamps instead of incandescent light bulbs saves you money on electric bills and helps the environment.

However, mercury is used in fluorescent lights of all types, as well as in HID lamps. Visible light is produced when the mercury in these lights is energized electrically. Because they contain mercury, fluorescent and HID lamps must be handled and properly recycled to avoid polluting the environment and posing a health threat. Be careful when handling and transporting fluorescent and HID lights; do not drop or handle them roughly. If they are broken or crushed, the mercury in them will be released.

Store fluorescent and HID lamps in their original package somewhere inaccessible to children. The original packaging protects used lamps during storage and transportation for recycling. When transporting fluorescent and HID lamps, carry them in the trunk, if possible. Make sure no heavy items exist in the trunk that can roll around and break or crush the lamps. As an added precaution, place the used lamps in heavy-duty plastic bags that can be sealed.

Cleaning up a broken fluorescent lamp

If you break a fluorescent light, keep people and pets out of the room. Open windows and outside doors to vent mercury vapor. About 20 percent of the mercury in the bulb vaporizes immediately. Mercury vapor from the bulb is the greatest health concern. Let the mercury vapor vent outside for about 15 minutes before you clean up the broken bulbs.

If more than two fluorescent lights or another mercury-containing device is broken or if you are unsure what to do, call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 1-800-422-0798 for 24-hour assistance. The Duty Officer will put you in touch with someone who can advise you on cleanup. Otherwise, follow these steps to clean up a broken fluorescent light after you ventilated the room:

1. Wearing disposable rubber or plastic gloves (if available), carefully scoop up the glass shards and any powder with one or two pieces of stiff paper or cardboard. Do not use your hands; the shards are sharp and the powder contains a very small amount of mercury.



How much mercury exists in a CFL? It averages 5 milligrams or roughly equivalent to the tip of a ball point pen.

2. Wipe the area with a damp paper towel or a disposable wet wipe to pick up any very small glass shards and the powder residue. A sticky tape, such as duct tape, can also pick up small shards and powder, particularly on carpet. Do not use a vacuum until you have cleaned up all the visible powder and shards.

3. Place all the glass shards, powder and materials you used in the cleanup (gloves, papertowel, wet wipe or tape) in a plastic bag that can be sealed. Then place this sealed bag inside another bag and seal it. Keep this in a safe outdoor storage location until you can take it to your local household hazardous waste facility.

4. Wash your hands.

5. Now you can vacuum. Ventilate the room during and after you vacuum. When you are done, put the vacuum bag or the contents of the canister in a double-sealed plastic bag. Place this bag in the trash outdoors until normal disposal.

If a fluorescent light breaks on a carpeted surface, follow the cleanup procedure above; use gloved hands and tape to pick up all glass shards and powder before you vacuum.

Cleaning up a broken HID lamp

High-intensity discharge lamps are often used outdoors to provide security lighting. For example, HID lamps are used along streets and alleys, in parking lots, in backyards and on farms.

HID lamps contain more mercury than fluorescents — from 20 to 100 mg. The mercury is sealed in a glass or quartz capsule that has wire leads. If this capsule is intact, the damaged light should be double sealed in plastic bags and taken to a household hazardous waste facility.

However, if the inner capsule has been broken and the mercury ends up on the ground, it will be impossible to recover the mercury. In this case, just pick up the pieces of the lamp and put them in the trash outdoors.

If the capsule containing the mercury has broken above or on a hard surface, wear gloves to pick up the glass shards and wipe the mercury up with a damp cloth or tape. Place the materials in a plastic bag that can be sealed and then seal inside another bag; take them to your local household hazardous waste facility. 🖱️

— Courtesy www.pca.state.mn.us

Our energy future — small talk now can prevent big bills later

Invoking the successful public-private partnerships of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the legacy of the “New Deal,” Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, called on government to work with consumers to achieve national climate change goals. “In the 1930s, when Roosevelt initiated the ‘New Deal’ the President didn’t say: You people go out and provide electric power all across the country while the rest of us sit on the fence and determine what penalties will be assigned if you don’t meet these goals. No, President Roosevelt said we need a partnership between government and the people.”

Before an audience of nearly 9,000 electric cooperative leaders assembled in California for the Association’s 66th Annual Meeting, English observed that whoever is elected president this fall will face a tremendous challenge. Crafting and enacting policies to meet our nation’s climate challenge will consume many of the new president’s first 100 days. Like Roosevelt whose “New Deal” morphed from ill-defined campaign rhetoric into a coherent set of policy initiatives — not over night, but over a decade — the new president will have time to implement the new plan. “The components of that plan however, will not be fully in evidence until well after he or she takes office,” English said.

English encouraged co-op leaders to energize their local members, to empower co-op consumers and begin a dialogue between elected officials and electricity consumers. “The cooperative principles require that we educate and inform the membership,” said English. “We have a responsibility also to provide elected officials the information they need to make good

1

Experts say that our nation’s growing electricity needs will soon go well beyond what renewables, conservation and efficiency can provide. What are elected officials going to do to make sure we have the electricity we’ll need in the future?

2

What are elected officials doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions-free electric power plants an affordable reality?

3

Balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is all this going to increase my electric bill and what will elected officials do to make it affordable?

Electric co-op members can be proactive in keeping their rates affordable by letting their elected officials know about their concerns. A website at www.ourenergy.coop is available to help get the ball rolling. Visitors to the site can click on “Contact Elected Officials” and the system will direct e-mails and letters concerning the above questions to the appropriate officeholders.

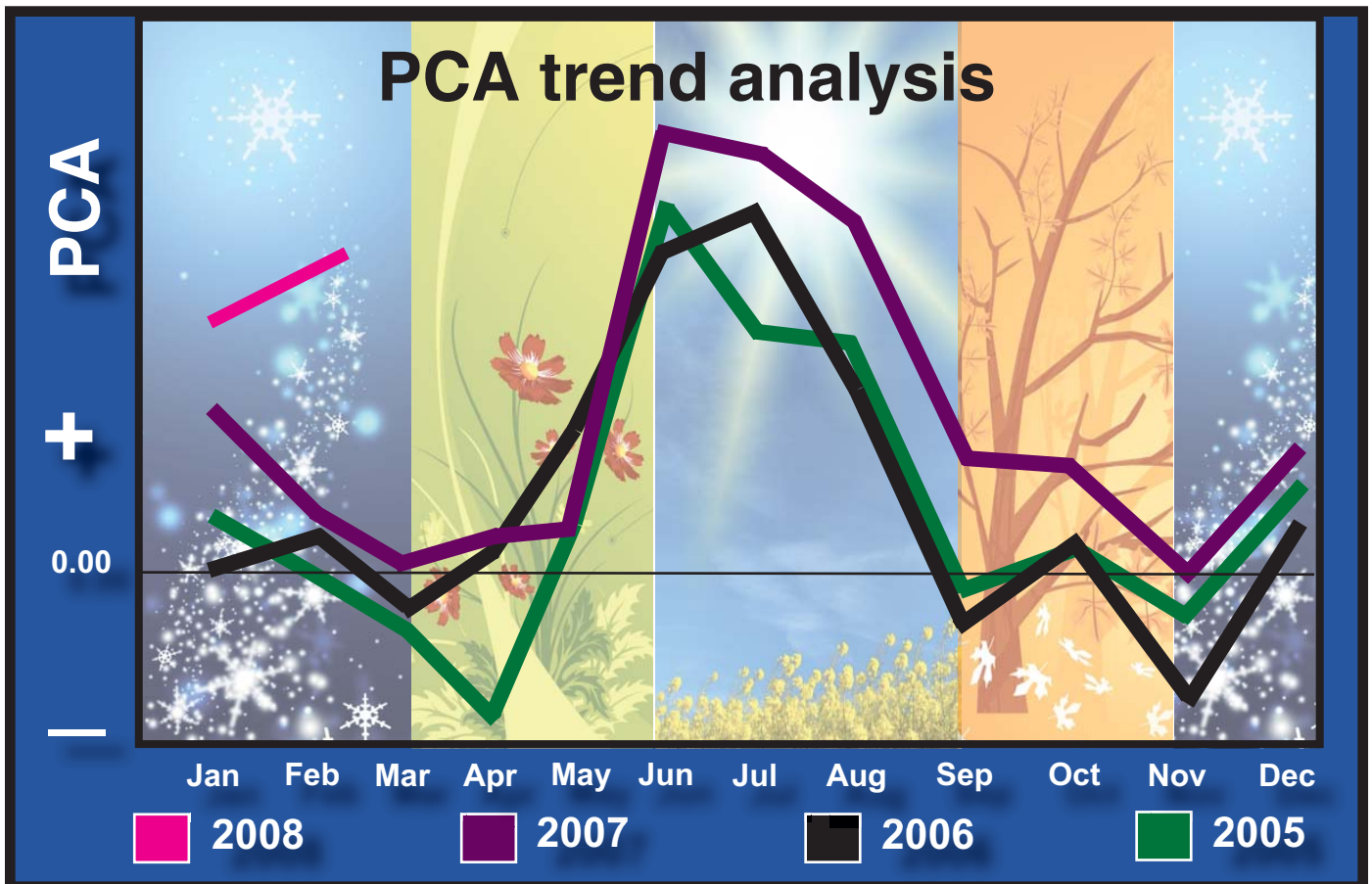
decisions and effective policy.”

“Policy makers must be called upon to answer the tough questions,” English said. “Consumers need straight answers about the current state of technology, capacity and cost. Co-op consumers recognize that balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. They want to know how much this is going to increase their electric bills and what elected officials will do to make it affordable.”

The co-op chief warned that America risks returning to a time when electric service was a privilege enjoyed only by the wealthy. “That would be wrong,” English said. “Creation of a consumer class for which electric power is an unaffordable luxury should not be a legacy of climate change policy.” He held co-op consumers out as a bulwark against such an outcome and challenged co-op leaders in attendance to engage

their member-owners. “I’m talking about engaging 40 million people in 47 states. You,” he said of the crowd, “are the key to awakening this sleeping giant. You are the key to making certain that consumers truly understand the implications and the threat to their future if our elected officials don’t get the right answers and don’t have a plan.”

More than 9,000 representatives from cooperative electric utilities across the nation attended the NRECA Annual Meeting and Expo, February 22-27, at the Anaheim Convention Center. During this meeting, they set NRECA’s legislative and organizational agenda for 2008. NRECA is the national service organization that represents the nation’s more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide electric service to more than 40 million people in 47 states. 🖱



The PCA is typically higher during the summer months when hot weather causes air conditioners to run. The PCA was higher this winter due to the cold weather and an equipment breakdown at Coal Creek Station.

Listing of area's Quality Installation contractors

Ahrens Heating, New Ulm: 354-217
Al's Plumbing & Heating, Wilmont: 926-5901
A-OK Service, Fairmont: 238-2468
Boeckman Plumbing & Heating, Elmore: 943-3749
B&R Plumbing & Heating, Winthrop: 647-5362
Bruce's Plumbing & Heating, St. James: 375-4520
BTU, Inc., Worthington: 376-6966
C&S Heating & Air Conditioning, Hanska: 794-4328
Cress Refrigeration, Fairmont: 236-2284
Countryside Plumbing & Heating, Jackson: 847-4288
Comfort Heating & Air Conditioning, New Ulm: 354-2165
Day Plumbing, Heating & Cooling, Fairmont: 235-9009
Electric Service Company, Blue Earth: 526-2255
Feder Mechanical, Madelia: 642-3522

Fischer Heating & Sheet Metal, Sleepy Eye: 794-7625
Fodness Heating & Cooling, New Ulm: 354-3947
Gag Sheet Metal Inc., New Ulm: 354-3813
Isakson Plumbing & Heating, Gibbon: 834-6413
Jennings Plumbing & Heating, Redwood Falls: 637-5483
Kaduce Plumbing & Heating, Winnebago: 893-4456
Kerkoff Plumbing & Heating, Morgan: 249-3138
Lakeside Plumbing & Heating, Gibbon: 834-6206
Mike's Plumbing & Heating, Slayton: 836-6158
Mosley Inc., Lakefield: 662-6227
Nilson Heating & A/C, New Ulm: 354-5500
Royer's Inc., Winnebago: 893-4612
Schwalbach's Plumbing & Heating, at Ace Hardware stores in Jackson, Windom & Worthington: 372-2792
St. James Heating & Air, St. James: 375-8700
Total Comfort, Fairmont: 235-5278
Vee Plumbing and Heating, Madelia: 642-8700

Sudan volunteers find trip to be an illuminating experience

— *Continued from Page 3*

ing one rainy spell, 350 vehicles were stuck on a road. It took three weeks to clear it because no tow trucks exist. Since the area endured a 20-year civil war, most of the infrastructure is destroyed. People have no plumbing. Instead, everyone has jerry cans and go to rivers, ponds or scattered hand-pumped wells to collect water.

“The NRECA site has a well due to cholera outbreaks, which happen two or three times a year,” Schwartau said. “Disease is a big problem — malaria, yellow fever, polio, TB, meningitis, leprosy, typhoid, parasites and AIDs.

“Currently, Yei had 140 streetlights and electric power for 13 hours a day,” Schwartau said. “It has the most streetlights and the most reliable power supply of any city in the country. Even the capitol of Southern Sudan has only two streetlights. Yei is also in the initial stages of setting up an electric cooperative. Power for 350 customers is provided by a single diesel generator, but two more were delivered on our final day. Electricity in Yei costs about 48 cents per kilowatt-hour. People who typically make \$1 to \$2 a day often end up with a \$14 monthly electric bill.”

It’s no wonder that modern equipment for the Yei electric cooperative is nonexistent. “All pole holes are dug by hand,” Schwartau said. “The workers don’t use handles on their shovels because there is no room for them at the bottom of the hole. The poles are raised by hand. The wire is transported and raised by hand. Pulling up a three-fourths of a mile stretch of three-phase wire manually is no easy task, but the Sudanese linemen are hard workers and dedicated to their jobs. What electricity means to Yei is



All line work in Sudan is done by hand — even digging pole holes.

economic improvement, safety, better health and educational opportunities. Businesses can better serve customers and people can walk the streets at night with thefts and assaults being less of a threat.”

Working under these conditions takes getting used to for U.S. linemen. “I think some of the volunteers were a bit discouraged after the first week,” Schwartau said. “One reason was the food. We had to bring our own things to eat and everyone quickly tired of dehydrated rations. On the plus side, language wasn’t a problem. English is Sudan’s official business language since it was originally a British colony.”

As time passed, the linemen positively adjusted when they saw the difference they made. “It was no longer us and them,” Schwartau said. “We felt like a single co-op. Plus, the experience gave the U.S. linemen a lot of perspective and made them appreciate how much we have in this country. They even earned some bragging rights out of the deal. One

linemen said he would never have to listen to members of the older generation tell him how hard line work was without bucket trucks. Now he can tell those people he has built lines from the ground up by hand.

“On our last day we flew out on an 18-passenger plane,” Schwartau said. “Between us, the other passengers and the luggage we were overweight. As a result, the pilot refused to load any more luggage or take off. A local woman walked up to him and said we were ‘NRECA.’ He then started stacking the extra luggage down the center aisle of the plane and away we went down the runway.”

That final experience helps illustrate what the NRECA International Program hopes to accomplish. Many people in poorer countries are weighted down with a lack of opportunities. By bringing them electricity, the NRECA International Foundation’s donations and its volunteers hope to help their progress take flight. ✎

— Visit www.nrecainternational.org to learn more.

Readers' recipes

Asparagus aspirations?

Aspire to add asparagus to your next spring meal! 🐸

Sow your wild oatmeal recipes!



Make a tasty meal with oatmeal! Share with us your recipes using oatmeal

whether it's for cookies, cakes, bars, breakfast dishes or yogurt toppings!

Mail these oatmeal recipes by May 24 to: Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop. Otherwise, drop it off at your local electric co-op. Add your name and phone number. 🐸

Baked Shrimp & Asparagus by Joan Windschitl, Comfrey

- 12 oz. cut asparagus
- 1 lb. med. shrimp, peeled/deveined
- 1 T. butter, melted
- 10¾ oz. can cream of shrimp soup
- ½ tsp. soy sauce

Combine ingredients and spoon into a greased 8"-square baking pan. Bake uncovered 425° for 20 minutes. Serve over hot rice. 🐸

Cel's Asparagus-Egg Casserole by Glendoris Urban, Truman

- 2 cans asparagus, drained (or fresh)
- 4 hard boiled eggs, sliced
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ c. milk
- 1 c. grated cheddar cheese
- 1 c. buttered bread crumbs

Layer asparagus and eggs in greased casserole. Combine soup, milk and cheese; pour on top. Top with bread crumbs. Bake at 375° for 25 minutes. 🐸

Asparagus Cheese Casserole by Rosalie Bulfer, Fairmont

- 4 T.+1 tsp. unsalted butter
- 3 T. flour (or cornstarch)
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper
- ¼ tsp. mace, ground
- 1 c. milk
- ½ c. heavy cream
- 3 10 oz. bags asparagus, cooked & drained
- 2 large hard boiled eggs
- ¾ c. coarsely chopped sharp cheddar
- ½ c. minced almonds (blanched or slivered)
- ½ c. bread crumbs
- 1/8 c. Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350°.

In a medium pan melt the butter; spoon 4 T. of melted butter into bowl and set aside. Blend in the flour, salt, pepper and mace into the rest of the butter. Cook over low heat for 1-2 minutes. Add the milk and cream; cook the sauce while stirring constantly for two minutes until thick.

In the two-quart casserole alternate the layers of asparagus, eggs, cheese and almonds. Pour the sauce on top. Combine the reserved butter, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese and sprinkle on top. Bake 30 minutes until bubbling and brown. (I use fresh asparagus, instead of frozen asparagus; cook until still crispy because it tenderizes the dish. Can use fresh green beans as a substitute.) 🐸

Asparagus Treat by Judy Wee, Balaton

- 1 box Triscuits, crushed
- 2 cans asparagus, drained (may use fresh)
- 3 small cans tuna
- 3/4 c. salad dressing
- 1 can sliced water chestnuts
- 2 cans cream of celery soup

Grease 9x13" pan. Line with half the Triscuits. Put asparagus, tuna and chestnuts in layers. Combine the soup and salad dressing; pour over the layers. Add the remaining half of Triscuits. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes. 🐸

Asparagus Roll Ups by Patricia Warnemunde, St. James

- 2 c. milk
- 4 T. flour
- 4 T. butter
- ½ tsp. salt
- pepper
- ½ c. grated cheese
- 6 slices ham
- 1 bunch asparagus (18-20 stalks)
- ½ c. bread crumbs

Make cheese sauce with milk, flour, butter, salt, pepper and cheese. Lay three to four pieces of asparagus on each ham slice. Roll up and fasten with a toothpick. Put in a 9x13" baking dish. Cover with the cheese sauce. Sprinkle the bread crumbs on top. Bake 25 minutes at 375°. 🐸

Hot Asparagus Pasta Salad by Robin Cehl, Dundee

- 8 oz. corkscrew pasta, cooked
- garlic clove, crushed
- ¼" sliced fresh gingerroot, minced
- 1 T. cooking oil
- 1 lb. fresh asparagus, cut 1½" pieces
- 2 T. water
- ¼ lb. cooked ham, cubed
- 1/3 c. sliced ripe olives
- 8 oz. can sliced water chestnuts, drained, or 1 c. sliced celery

Dressing: 6 T. vegetable oil
2 T. white wine vinegar
1 T. soy sauce
¼ tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper
1/8 tsp. dry mustard

Cook the pasta according to package's directions. Meanwhile, in a large skillet saute the garlic and gingerroot in oil over medium-high heat for 1-2 minutes. Add asparagus and water; cook until it is crisp-tender or about 8 minutes. Stir in the ham, water chestnuts/celery and olives. Remove from the heat. Drain pasta and place in a large salad bowl. Add asparagus mixture. Cover with foil. Combine dressing ingredients; pour over the salad. Toss and serve immediately. 🐸



Richard 'Rick' Burud

Manager's message

PCA passes increased costs on to you

Increased "wholesale costs" show up in your power cost adjustment (PCA) on your recent billing.

We're being asked, why is my bill greater than last year? The answer is twofold.

1. Check your usage — due to the cold weather and increased use of electric space heating, your usage may have increased. If you use more, the bill will go up.

2. The PCA — our wholesale suppliers (Great River Energy and WAPA) increased their rates January 1. In addition, Great River Energy had to purchase additional power (due to an outage at Coal Creek and the increased usage); this electricity was generated from natural gas at record


gas prices. These costs go directly on your electric bill.

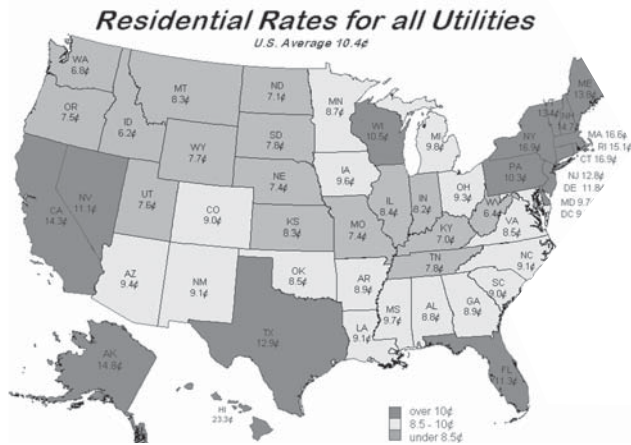
Do we see relief? In the short run we'll see monthly fluctuations up and down (see graph on Page 13), but in the long run it will get worse. Why, you may ask? No baseload generation is being built in the area so we are planning on wind and natural gas as our solutions and both are increasing in price. Sorry, but we believe in telling it like it is. As you know, we're still a bargain if you compare us to the alternate fuels of LP and oil. Our rates are still below the state and national average electric rates (See the map below).

Wind turbine is erected

Both wind turbines at Welcome (Federated's) and Brewster (Nobles Cooperative Electric's) are up. Welcome was wired and is ready to be commissioned with Brewster about a week behind. So, I expect that in April they'll both be producing. They each cost about \$3.4 million so the sooner they generate the better we'll be. Watch for our turbine's dedication ceremony.

Let us help you save money

Stop in our office and purchase your compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) to reduce your electricity consumption. With these you'll reduce your lighting consumption by two-thirds. Let's all do our part and join in this great conservation program. 



Official monthly newsletter published by
Federated Rural Electric
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Jackson, MN 56143-0069
E-mail: info@federatedrea.coop
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David Meschke — 238-1122
Jon Saxen — 764-3771

The Board of Directors meets the last business day of the month at 9 a.m. at the Jackson office. Regular board meetings are open to the membership. Members interested in discussing business items should contact the general manager or president three days before the meeting.

Add your GreenTouch to Kilen Woods State Park



Help us make a difference at our local state park May 3! All ages welcomed!

Lend a helping hand to spruce up Kilen Woods State Park (north of Lakefield) May 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Rake campsites, scrape picnic tables, scoop out fire pits, pick up litter, clean the facilities, clear the oak savanna and more! Federated provides a free hot dog lunch. Receive a free trinket, while enjoying the fresh air and making a difference!

RSVP by April 30 if you can help so Federated has an accurate food count. Call Federated at 847-3520, 728-8366 or 1-800-321-3520 or e-mail info@federatedrea.coop. 