

Connections

December 2023

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 27, Issue 12

High school students: See D.C. for free! Enter Youth Tour Contest immediately

Local high school students: win a free summer trip to Washington, D.C.

It's as easy as one, two, three — lasting memories and friendships there will be!

1. Find the application on the co-op's website (www.federatedrea.coop) or talk to the school counselor, who is a delight.

2. Complete the application and write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic of your choice; for example, write on electric vehicles, solar, wind, coal and more...it's your written voice.

3. Students with the top five scores will come through the co-op's front door March 12 for a short interview; they'll answer our questions...just a few!

The highest score earns the cooperative's free trip to Washington, D.C. June 18-23, 2024. Youth Tour winner, see what sites we have in store:

- Memorials for Lincoln, Washington, Martin Luther King, and Jefferson will not bore.
- War memorials too (Vietnam, Korean, Pentagon 9/11 and World War II), yep you visit all four!
- Museums (Smithsonian, Holocaust, Marine Corps) provide so much to explore.
- Visit the Capitol, National Archives, Library of Congress and Supreme Court so your feet could get sore!
- Just for fun one night see the Washington Nationals baseball game and roar in delight as they score, then enjoy live theater another night...be ready for the encore!
- Track around Mount Vernon to learn more about the George Washington historical lore.
- At Arlington Cemetery visit the scores who defended our country's freedoms from shore to shore.
- Chat with other students from many states, plus see Minnesota representatives and senators face-to-face.



This could be you in 2024! Win Federated's Youth Tour Contest; go on the free trip to Washington, D.C. Katie Hartke, Sherburn, won the trip last year. Just fill out the short application and write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic. The top five are called back for short interviews.

Experience a trip of a lifetime to our nation's capitol, make new friends and memories galore! Apply for the 2024 Youth Tour by February 2, we implore. 📧

At A Glance



Happy Holidays!
Federated office
closed for holidays

Federated will be closed for the holidays on December 25 and January 1. Crews will be on call in case of outages. We thank you for your patronage in 2023! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you, our cooperative's member-owners. Have a safe and bright holiday season! 📧

This publication focuses on cooperative savings, 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
"Owned by those it serves"

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Energy Wise

Ho, Ho, Ho! Holiday lighting for best of show and energy efficiency in tow

No need to be a Grinch! Holiday light can be a cinch! Run down to your local hardware store and explore how easy it is to show your holiday spirit.

Red, white and green bulbs

LED bulbs just became fashionable. Buy one bulb that can rotate between three holiday colors — red, white and green. Feit offers a two-watt LED bulb and a five-watt reflector (floodlight) bulb. You can select one color by flipping a switch on the back of the bulb. Otherwise, pick the six second auto rotate feature that moves between red, white and green. The reflector bulb costs \$14.99, while the two-watt bulb costs \$5.99.

Changing out a light bulb for the holidays adds festive decor without the hassle of hanging different holiday strings of lights. Switch it to green for March and St. Patrick's Day! Then just switch it back to white for the rest of the year.

Feit also offers a red, white and blue LED bulb so you're ready for Independence Day, Memorial Day and Veteran's Day! If you want more color options, upgrade to the Feit Smart WiFi bulb. The Energy Star bulb (three-pack) costs about \$35, but connects via the mobile app or voice command with Google, Siri or Alexa. Turn it on/off, adjust color and brightness.

Color-changing LED light strip

Yes, lighting comes in shapes other than light bulbs. Feit offers an LED color changing plug-in LED Smart Wi-Fi Strip Lights. Peel and stick the lighting strip on a clean surface, for example, under your kitchen cabinets for more



Rudolph the red nose reindeer would like these LED light bulbs for the holidays. Not only do they glow red, but green and white too for a bright Christmas holiday delight. Otherwise, the LED bulbs and strip lights (pictured on the left and right) can be changed to any colors to match your holiday mood year-round. Remember, LEDs use up to 90 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last 25 times longer.

lighting on the countertops or in the foot kick area for ambience. Choose from white lighting or many colors, along with adjusting the brightness. Turn the lights on with a remote control, the cell phone app or by voice with Google or Alexa.

Installation can be done yourself. Tools needed include a scissors, tape measure and screw driver. Each strip is 16-feet, but can be expanded to 32 feet. While it can be used indoors or outdoors, it is not waterproof. Enhance the mood lighting in your man cave, rec room, a book case, a

bedroom, stairways, covered patio area and more.

LED lighting is energy-efficient and long lasting making it a fun home upgrade stocking stuffer or holiday gift. Find these through your local Ace Hardware, Amazon and Walmart for around \$40.

Delight in these bright-lighting options for the holidays or year-round. LED bulbs offer users the ability to light their surroundings according to the time of the year or even their mood. Not only that, but LED bulbs are extremely energy-efficient! 

LED lights go up once and change colors for year-round holiday dazzling light display

Let your holiday spirit shine year-round! Bedazzle with LED color-changing fairy lights for indoor or outdoor use.

Dazzle Bright holiday lights come with 200 LEDs (66-foot long) or 400 LEDs. Choose from 17 colors and eight lighting modes. Use the remote control to change from auto, fade, jump, asynchronous fade, asynchronous jump, in waves, strobe and twinkle. Select from three timer modes (on four hours, on six hours or on eight hours). While the lights are rain proof, keep the power adapter away from the water.

Put the light string up once and use the remote to change your color selection year-round. Light up for Christmas (red and green), Thanksgiving (orange), Halloween (orange and purple), Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day (green), Easter, Fourth of July (red, white and blue), birthdays, graduation party and weddings.

Find Dazzle Bright on Amazon.com or Walmart.com for about \$30 for the 200-light string. 

Magical! One Dazzle Bright light string can turn different colors for each holiday season using the remote!



Safety

'Tis the season for holiday lighting cords; be safe!

Light up the holiday season! Yet, keep electrical safety in mind for you and your beloved pet. Keep Fido and Fluffy safe with a few bright electrical safety tips.

- Is this your new pet's first holiday season? Keep your pet safe by making sure no lighting or extension cords become a dangling "chew-toy" sensation. Chewing on a cord could cause injury or death for a small pet.

- Purchase pet bitter spray. Spray it onto cords or around the tree to deter your pet from chewing on these safety hazards.

- Invest in a plastic cord protector sleeve that slides over the electrical cord for \$10-\$20 from a pet store or website. That's the best present you can give each other — safety!

- Tuck dangling cords behind furniture and away from the curious pets' mouths.

- Outlet covers work great to protect little kids and roving pets too.



- Does the night light near the floor look like a toy to your pet? Remove it if it's not critical.

- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). A GFCI quickly shuts off power when electrical current to ground occurs. Plugging the holiday light strings into a GFCI outlet (outside), or GFCI power strip or outlet inside, enhances safety for your four-legged friend.

- Unplug lighting cords and other electrical devices when not in use.

- Supervise your pet after putting up the holiday tree or lighting display. If Fido won't leave it alone, keep him in a different, but safe room when you are away. This way you avoid Clark Griswold's "cat"-astrophe from chewing on a tree's lighting cords. 

Enjoy a picture perfect holiday with your pets by keeping electrical safety in mind for your four-legged friends too.

Federated Focus

Co-op gifts: Energy Star smart thermostat rebate \$25



Star of wonder, star of night, Energy Star shines with efficiency so bright! Boost your

home's energy efficiency with a Smart Thermostat this holiday season. You'll love the cell phone access to turn the heat up or down as you travel. Plus, monitor your home's temperature when you go south as a snowbird. Federated offers a \$25 Energy Star Smart Thermostat rebate. Find the form on our website. Submit the form and copy of the receipt. The \$25 will be applied to your electric bill.

Federated gift certificate is



the perfect gift!

Some people are just hard to shop for! They have all they need or maybe are a bit finicky. Go with a gift certificate from Federated. Call or stop by the office and have a credit applied to their electric or broadband bill.

2024 construction plans?



Planning on building a new house, bins, hog barns or heated shop? Schedule your

project with Federated's Operations Department to make sure we have the materials on hand for your job in 2024. Call the office and speak to George in Operations or e-mail info@federatedrea.coop. Add our Broadband service too.

Tax exempt electric heat

Have a new electric heating system? Apply for the Minnesota heating exemption. Call billing to request the form. ☎



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

Battery storage pairs with renewables for reliability

I had a call from a member regarding batteries for bulk energy storage. This technology is changing rapidly with two main batteries: lithium and iron air. A battery storage system can be charged by multiple sources; however, the preferred method would be from renewable energy, like wind and solar. Occasionally, they will be charged at night directly from the transmission grid. Energy storage is the linchpin of the clean-energy transition. The more renewable energy on the grid, the better, but these resources only produce power when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing. Energy storage can "firm up" renewable resources, maximizing their value to the grid. In addition, it's claimed that energy storage can reduce the cost of electricity (storing energy when it is cheapest, dispatching it when most expensive), and increase the reliability of our aging electric grid, strained by a growing economy. It's a big topic and this is just a snippet on the subject. We will continue to inform members on topics of interest; however, we are in an energy transition since Minnesota elected to go 100 percent carbon free for electric generation by 2040.

Construction season winds down, as ground freezes

As we move into early winter, our construction season is really on borrowed time. Now that we are into the holiday seasons, very little will be done. For all purposes our contractors are done for the year. Our crews will continue right up until the bitter end to accomplish all that they can.

Broadband updates on fiber installs at Northrop & Jackson County plans

We completed most of the work in Northrop for the fiber build out and contractors are finishing up installing services and installing NIDS. Our crews will start with the fiber splicing on drops and things will be lit up operational. I am holding out hope that all can be done by early December, but weather is always a factor.

The Border-to-Border project in Jackson County is entering its final phase of design; we will be going out for materials and contracted labor bids in December. Our plans are for construction to begin as early in the spring of 2024 as possible. We contracted with BLINK26 Marketing to get the word out to the 480 members in the grant area. So far you should have received a postcard with more to come. We have also done some radio ads for December. Keep watch and please contact us if you get a postcard. This is an opportunity of a lifetime to get a fiber connection to your home or business that will provide you with gig-speed internet. The demand for bandwidth is not decreasing.

We continue to evaluate other areas for fiber builds; however, it takes time. We offer a very good fixed-wireless product until we get there with fiber. I know you have choices, but your co-op has your best interests in mind. We are local and answer our phones. Our margins are local to keep our systems operating. Call Chelsy in our office and ask about getting a Federated connection.

What MISO and NERC expect for this winter and reliability

Forecasters predict above normal temperatures across the North and Central regions. No matter the forecast, Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) prepares for all conditions. When it comes to winter-grid planning, they pay close attention to the weather, available resources, fuel supplies and lessons learned from past storms. For this winter MISO forecasts having enough electricity to meet expected consumer demand under typical conditions. Of course, the potential always exists for high-risk, low-probability weather events impacting MISO. These events often require operators to implement emergency procedures for power to keep flowing. Preparing for each winter season is something MISO takes seriously. They review emergency grid procedures and practice implementing those procedures with operators. We are all hopeful that early predictions will ring true and an uneventful winter will ensue. ☎

2 Basin/Federated \$1,000 scholarships help reach the graduation finish line; apply today

The thrill of the grad cap toss is even more precious when backed by scholarships to make it affordable.

Federated will award two \$1,000 Basin/L&O scholarships to two local Federated members' sons or daughters.

"This scholarship comes from Basin Electric Power Cooperative based in Bismarck, North Dakota, which became a wholesale power supplier for Federated in 2008 and L&O Power Cooperative in Rock Rapids, Iowa," stated Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager.

The scholarships are 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 degree.



Previous Federated-Basin scholarship winners are not eligible to apply again. Applicants must be 25 and under and a U.S. citizen.

Complete a two-page application, including a grades' transcript, ACT/SAT scores, write an essay and have an outside appraisal (reference checklist). The one-page essay should address: *What challenges face rural electric cooperatives in the coming years and how do you think challenges should be addressed?*

Apply by January 26, 2024. Applications are available from www.federatedrea.coop, call the office, e-mail info@federatedrea.coop or from local high school counselors.

Scholarships apply to Fall 2024 tuition and are paid in August. 📧

Let it snow! Ceylon member wins the EGO snowblower

Federated thanks the 744 Federated members who updated their contact information for entry in a prize drawing. Members received a green bill insert with the electric bills and it was also promoted in the *Connections* newsletter.

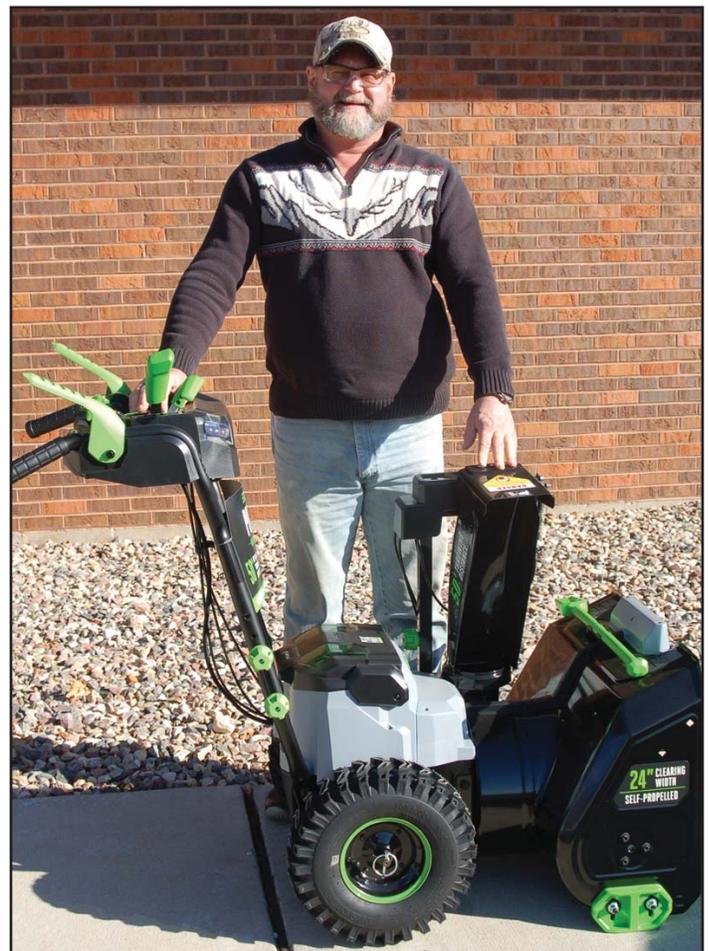
The grand prize winner was Tod Tessum, Ceylon. "I never win anything," he stated. "I'm now ready for the first snow."

Federated also congratulates three Federated members winning \$50 bill credits:

- Greg Thiesse, Fairmont
- Jeff A. Bass, Okabena
- Donna Hecht, Sherburn.

In addition, many signed up for the outage text notifications, as the co-op needs your cell phone number to do those updates. If you would like to sign up for outage text notices, call the office during business hours (847-3520 or 800-321-3520; press option 5 for billing). Otherwise, e-mail billing@federatedrea.coop. Your account may have up to three cell phone numbers listed, along with an e-mail address. Let us know too if your land line has been dropped. Thanks for making it easier for the cooperative to communicate with you, our member-owners. 📧

Let it snow; let it snow; let it snow! Todd Tessum, Ceylon, is ready to tackle winter snow with his new EGO electric snowblower that he won from the co-op's fall contest.



Ready for 2023 taxes?

Check on federal energy-efficiency tax credits



Did you make energy-efficiency upgrades to your home this year? Remember to claim the tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, offers federal income tax credits for energy-efficiency improvements made through 2032.

- Did you replace your exterior door or windows? Receive a tax credit of 30 percent paid by the homeowner, up to \$500 per year (up to \$250/door). Windows earn up to \$600/year.
- Installed an air source or ground source heat pump? Receive a tax credit up to 30 percent of the cost

paid by the owner (up to \$2,000). The same amount applies for a biomass stove/boiler.

You will need to fill out the IRS form 5695 for any of these items listed above. Visit with your tax preparer.

The government also approved rebates for different energy-efficiency improvements that are based on 150 percent of an area's median income level. Details are not yet out on these programs.

Keep these tax incentives in mind when planning for your home's energy-efficiency improvements in 2024 too. Check out www.energy.gov/save for more detailed information on all of the federal tax credits and incentives. 

Know the cost behind running a space heater



Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home?

If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the Minnesota average electricity rate of 13.5 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$12 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$73 a month.

If you use space heaters, operate them safely. Keep them three feet away from anything flammable; do not leave them unattended. Plus, plug the space heater directly into the outlet — not an extension cord or power strip. 



'Twas the night
before Christmas

Elves used the hot water to clean.
Dirty dishes were now shiny and bright.
The laundry was washed and dried.
The little ones were spotless and tucked into bed.

**Thanks to the electric co-op's water heater.
Make your holidays clean, shiny and bright!**

Call your local co-op
for your next water heater



FOREVER / USA

It's time for a few new stew recipes to do on a frigid winter night

Tis the season for stew! Try a few new recipes of stew with your family crew. Send your favorite stew recipes, whether for stove top, oven, crock pot or instant pot, to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by December 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 

Caramel Pecan Pie by Lori Burdick, Heron Lake

9" unbaked pie crust	3 eggs
26 individually wrapped caramels, unwrapped	½ tsp. vanilla extract
¼ c. butter	¼ tsp. salt
¼ c. milk	1 c. pecan halves
¾ c. white sugar	

Preheat oven to 350°. In a saucepan over low heat combine the caramels, butter and milk. Cook, stirring frequently, until smooth. Remove from heat and set aside. In a large bowl combine the sugar, eggs, vanilla and salt. Gradually mix into the melted caramel mixture. Stir in pecans. Pour filling into unbaked pie crust.

Bake in a preheated oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until pastry is gold brown. Allow to cool until the filling is firm. 

White House Pecan Pie by Frances Harms, Brewster

½ c. butter, room temp	1½ tsp. vanilla
1 c. white sugar	3 large eggs
1 c. dark corn syrup	2 c. pecans, coarsely chopped
½ tsp. salt	9" unbaked pie shell with fluted edge

Combine butter, corn syrup, salt and vanilla. Beat mixture until thoroughly blended. Add eggs; beat until just blended. Fold pecans into this mixture. Pour into pie shell.

Bake in 375° oven on the rack directly below the center rack until the top is toasted brown and the filling is set in the center when the pie is gently shaken (about 40 to 50 minutes). If using a glass pie plate, the crust should be brown, while the bottom of the pastry is pale gold. Cool on a wire rack. Serve with unsweetened whipped cream (optional). 

Oysters McGee

by Duane Rost, Jackson

Order fresh oysters from www.islandcreekoysters.com in Massachusetts.

Scrub and brush oysters to clean and enhance the display of the character of the shell. Set the grill to maximum heat for 10 minutes. Place the oysters on a screen on the grill. Close the lid for two minutes. Open the lid. Continue until they are "warm" and open slightly.

Carefully lift off the grill immediately, keeping each oyster belly down and horizontal. "Release" with an oyster knife entering either through the hinge or the outer edge. Holding the oyster level, cut the adductor muscles. Put into individual small bowls to serve each with its own nectar. This experience yields a warm, succulent, fresh presentation. 

**Just make the call
before digging:
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Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for

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local electric co-op





Whether you want to watch your favorite holiday movies, video chat with your loved ones or shop online for gifts, Federated Broadband has you covered with speeds up to 40 MB! Plus, enjoy friendly and professional customer service from a local team that cares about your satisfaction. This December Federated Broadband offers a special deal for new customers. Sign up in December and receive a FREE install (\$150 value)! Don't miss this opportunity to save money and enjoy the best internet service in rural areas. Call us today so your holidays are memorable!



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

507-847-1001 or 1-833-847-8001 

Businesses: ask about our larger data plans



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The Board of Directors generally meets the last business day of the month at 8 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.

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