

Connections

June 2023

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 27, Issue 6

Shine on! *Connections* earns gold in national Spotlight on Excellence awards competition

Connections hit the mother lode and brings home gold... again!

Federated Rural Electric, Jackson; and Brown County Rural Electrical Association, Sleepy Eye; recently received recognition in the 2023 "Spotlight on Excellence" national awards program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators (CREC) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Federated and BCREA received a Gold Award in the Best External News Publication category for the *Connections* newsletter for electric cooperatives under 20,000 members. Andrea Christoffer, Federated's marketing & communications manager; Steve Ruthenbeck, Federated's communications specialist; and Marcia Solie, BCREA's member services manager; create the award-winning newsletter. *Connections* is a shared monthly newsletter for the two cooperatives. This is the 18th time that a Federated member-owner newsletter has won a Spotlight national award. Gold awards were awarded to those entries scoring 90 points or more, while Silver winners scored 80 points or more in the finite scoring system.

"The Spotlight on Excellence awards have been recognizing outstanding co-op communicators and their work for more than 35 years — that work is all the more



The spotlight shines on *Connections* for its gold award in the Spotlight of Excellence Awards competition. Pictured are Steve Ruthenbeck and Andrea Christoffer displaying the award and the three issues submitted in the contest.

critical in today's evolving energy industry," said CREC President Scott Gates, senior editor with North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives. "These national awards are highly competitive; we congratulate those who earned the distinction this year."

"The *Connections* newsletter is our way of informing our members on everything from rate issues, the latest broadband news to seasonal topics, such as legislative and construction notices, which is beneficial to all," stated Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "It contains the important information you need, as member-owners, to keep your cooperative relevant, as well as encouraging you to communicate to us

your questions, comments and concerns. Congratulations Andrea, Steve and Marcia! Keep up the great work!"

"Our members let us know they are reading the newsletter and appreciate the information shared in it, which is the reason we provide it each month," said BCREA CEO Mike Heidemann. "We're proud of the *Connections* communication team and that their work was recognized on a national level."

A special reception honored the award recipients during the CONNECT '23 Conference held in Jacksonville, Florida, May 2-4. Winning entries were displayed during the event.

The annual Spotlight on Excellence awards competition — Continued on Page 7

At A Glance



We add the hot water to scrub-a-dub-dub in the tub!

Federated's water heater helps make clean up easier, whether it's muddy kiddos, dirty dishes or filthy farm clothes. Call Federated for your next one at 847-3520 or 800-321-3520. The price is \$589, plus tax, with free installation. Enjoy a lifetime-warranty against leaks for the original owner.

Tackle these three weekend-warrior projects to score energy savings in your home and yard

Score some weekend warrior points in your household! These home improvement upgrades save energy and money. Complete each one in a day or less!

Be wise with smart home cooling & heating thermostat

Cooling and heating your home typically account for a large portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats help keep your cooling and heating costs in check. Energy Star-certified models save about 8 percent on annual energy costs.

Now that smart thermostats are more affordable, as little as \$70, this simple upgrade makes for a fun, efficient weekend project. Be sure to save even more with your cooperative's \$25 smart thermostat rebate; find the rebate form on the co-op's website or call the office to request one.

Smart thermostats offer a variety of bells and whistles. The average model allows you to set custom temperature schedules; enjoy adjusting the settings from anywhere from your phone. Over time, it learns your cooling and heating preferences. Snowbirds can check on their Minnesota home's temperature by looking at the smart phone app.

Your new smart thermostat comes with step-by-step instructions; this project typically involves shutting off your heating/cooling equipment at the breaker panel, disconnecting/removing the old thermostat, installing the new smart thermostat and connecting it to your home Wi-Fi. Play it safe. Remember to read the installation instructions before you get started.



Kaaching! The energy savings can add up with a smart thermostat. The average model will allow you to set custom temperature schedules and change your home's temp using your smart phone.

Go green to boost your greenery with a rain barrel

If you possess a green thumb, you know that rainwater is the best water for your plants. Rainwater is free of minerals, salts and treatment chemicals found in tap water or groundwater. It also contains helpful macronutrients to foster healthy plant growth.

Installing a rain barrel is an easy way to harvest large amounts of rainwater and reduce home water use; it's a win-win situation. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one rain barrel can save a homeowner 1,300 gallons of water annually.

Most residential rain barrels range in size from 50 to 90 gallons; the size you purchase depends on your watering needs. Buy one at a chain store or google it to make your own using a garbage can.

The simplest way to install a rain barrel is positioning a plastic or

wooden barrel directly under your gutter downspout. Basic piping or eave spouts may be required, but this is an easy way to harvest rainwater; the barrel won't take up much space. Consider a cover for the top of your rain barrel to keep insects and small debris out of your harvested water.

Enjoy the fresh savings with a simple clothesline

If you have enough outdoor space available, installing a clothesline is a great way to save energy. Save on dryer costs in the spring, summer and fall; plus, save on summer cooling costs since unwanted heat from the clothes dryer won't be added to your home, making your air conditioner work harder. Air drying is much gentler on fabrics and keeps your clothes and linens looking fresh longer.

You can create your own clothesline with two T-posts, wire and hook-and-eye turnbuckles. Depending on your soil, you may need a small amount of Quikrete to set the posts. Another option is installing the line between two trees. A typical load of laundry requires about 35 feet of line, so keep this in mind as you're determining the best location.

If an outdoor clothesline isn't an option, no sweat! You can easily create an indoor drying rack that folds to save space. Home improvement websites like thespruce.com and hgtv.com offer step-by-step tutorials for a variety of indoor clothes racks.

These simple ideas help you save energy and money. So roll up those sleeves and tackle a few projects.

Do the math! 3-in-1 tool adds convenience

One tool completes three tasks so that adds up to efficiency!

An ideal option for maintaining smaller lawns the Black and Decker's 3-in-1 mower, trimmer and edger features a compact design without sacrificing power or performance. Detach the string trimmer/edger from the mower using a built-in foot pedal — that's fast and easy!


- The compact push mower features a 12-inch removable deck. The cutting height ranges from 1.6 inches to 2.4 inches. A 6.5-amp motor and gear drive transmission powers it all. Plus, it's lightweight and adjustable, weighing only about 10 pounds.

- The string trimmer takes on the toughest grass, weeds and overgrowth. The 12-inch cutting swath provides precise cuts for great-looking results. The automatic feed spool eliminates

stopping and starting constantly to bump it so more line comes out.

- The wheeled edger easily maintains clean, crisp flowerbed, driveway and walkway borders in edge trimmer mode. Simply rotate to convert from a trimmer to an edger.

Plug this yard tool into a 110-outlet. It will charge to full power in four hours. It provides 15-30 minutes of mowing, depending on how thick the grass is. For this reason coverage area varies.

The cordless model costs approximately \$130. The corded model costs around \$100. 



The Black and Decker 3-in-1 is a mower, trimmer and edger all in one. Great for small lawns, the 3-1 yard tool also comes in a corded and more compact version. Just detach the trimmer/edger from the base unit to trim (left) and use as an edger (as shown above).



Safety

Generator ready for the summer storms?

Portable or permanently installed standby generators come in handy during long-term power outages. However, if you do not know how to use them properly, they can be dangerous. Contact a qualified vendor or electrician to determine which generator is best suited to your needs. Before using, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

If installing a permanent generator, it must have a transfer switch. The transfer switch prevents energy from leaving your generator and going back onto the utility electrical equipment, when it could be dangerous to a lineman or others near downed power lines, a process known as "back feed." A qualified electrician should install your generator and transfer switch.

Operate it outdoors with good ventilation. Never run a generator



Tune-up time! Make sure your home or farm standby generator's oil, filter and fuel are ready if a big storm rolls through.

in a home or garage. Generators give off deadly carbon monoxide.


To avoid back feed do not plug a generator into a wall outlet. Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator's outlets.

Turn the generator on before plugging appliances into it. Once the generator

is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit. Remember, generators are for temporary usage; prioritize your needs.

Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary if the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Always ensure your hands are dry before touching the generator.

Be sure the generator is turned off and cool before fueling it.

Keep the children and pets away from any portable generators. Many generator components are hot enough to burn you during operation. 

Federated Focus

June capital credits allocation




By paying your electric bill to Federated, you are more than a customer, you are a member-owner and share in the profits or margins.

At year-end Federated subtracts its operating expenses from the operating revenue to determine the co-op's operating margins. These margins are then allocated or assigned to members' capital credits accounts, based on the amount of energy purchased. This is also known as patronage. Think of your capital credits account as a savings account. The account is the accumulation of margins, which were allocated to you each year based on your patronage.

Notice on your June electric bill statement that you have additional wholesale power supplier credits from our three providers: Great River Energy (GRE), L&O Power Cooperative (L&O) and Southern Minnesota Electric Cooperative (SMEC). When Federated's Board of Directors approved the rate consolidation of Federated's legacy and former Alliant electric rates in 2021, these capital credits are now combined and allocated among all electric members. Previously, only legacy members received GRE and L&O, while former Alliant members received SMEC credits.

This decision to retire or pay capital credits is based on the cooperative's financial stability and is typically done in July.

Capital credits are just one of the many differences that set cooperatives apart from other utility business models. 



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

Grads: choose an electric cooperative career path

Welcome to summer everyone! Family vacations can begin. Graduations also occur this time of year. College graduates can venture out to be a contributing member of society. The opportunities seem endless. I hope you embrace each and every one that comes your way. For the graduating high school seniors it's decision time. So many career choices exist! Decide

what is your destiny and go! Federated, along with co-ops of all shapes and sizes (whether its an electric, ag or broadband), count on you to take us into the next decades and can be a great career choice. If I were you, knowing what I do now, pay attention to the cooperative business model to see if it's a fit. It's about as grassroots and wholesome as you can get; it's never boring. At Federated we have several disciplines from line workers to accountants, to internet installation technicians, customer service reps and fiber splicers to mention some. This is a shameless plug, but if any of this interests you, check it out.

NERC outlines power reliability for the summer


As we move into summer, we must be aware of electric loads and how it affects the grid. From a national perspective two-thirds of the U.S. could face energy shortfalls during periods of extreme heat this summer. The North American Reliability Council (NERC) warned of it in its 2023 Summer Reliability Assessment released in May. The National Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NRECA) CEO Jim Matheson says the report is "an especially dire warning that America's ability to keep the lights on has been jeopardized."

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) shares local outlook

- Demand forecasts and preliminary resource data indicate that MISO is at risk of operating reserve shortfalls during periods of high demand or low resource output. MISO's resources are projected to be lower than summer 2022, while net internal demand also decreased. Firm transmission imports for this summer have significantly increased; this has resulted in a higher Anticipated Reserve Margin (ARM) of 23 percent on an installed capacity basis versus 21 percent last summer. MISO's capacity auction has not concluded at the time of this assessment, which may cause change to MISO's firm resources for the summer.

- MISO conducted its annual Loss of Load Expectation (LOLE) analysis and determined a 2023 Reference Margin Level (RML) of 15.9 percent results in an LOLE of one day in 10 years. MISO's RML declined from 17.9 percent in 2022 to 15.9 percent in 2023, based on the newly implemented seasonal capacity and associated modeling improvements that include seasonal outage rates and other enhancements. Comparing the increased ARM to the lower RML indicates improved reliability from the LOLE base case at one day in 10 years.

- Performance of wind generators during periods of high electricity demand is a key factor in determining whether system operators need to employ operating mitigations, such as maximum-generation declarations and energy emergencies. MISO has over 30,300 megawatts (MW) of installed wind capacity; however, the historically-based on-peak capacity contribution is 5,488 MW.

- On-Peak Reserve Margin Risk Scenario Summary: Expected resources meet operating reserve requirements under normal peak-demand scenarios. Above-normal summer peak load and outage conditions could result in the need to employ load-modifying resources and energy transfers from neighboring systems and Energy Emergency Alerts. Emergency declarations that can only be called upon when available generation is at maximum capability are necessary to access load modifying resources (demand response) when operating reserve shortfalls are projected. What we see for our area is positive and less dire than the rest of the country. Our load management and generator control programs are effective tools to help mitigate the issues, as they arise. 

Congrats grads! Nine students awarded \$700 Operation Round Up scholarships



District 1:
Carter Johnson
Lakefield
son of Jason & Angela



District 2:
Kelsey Soleta
Lakefield
daughter of Mark & Stacie



District 3:
Noah Orlikowski
Alpha
son of Harry & Kelly Soucek



District 4:
Kaylyn Domek
Estherville
daughter of Martin & Rebecca



District 5:
Katelynn Sommer
Fairmont
daughter of Justin & Mary



District 6:
Brock Lutterman
Fairmont
son of Chad & Chrissy



At-Large District:
Lincoln Becker
Fairmont
son of Lynn & Julie



At-Large District:
Rachel Tusa
Alpha
daughter of Steve & Jenny



At-Large District:
Sutton Bohlson
Northrop
son of James & Tara

Nine high school seniors received a \$700 Federated Operation Round Up Scholarship. 36 students completed the Federated scholarship application.

This is the 21st year students applied for it. A scholarship was awarded to each co-op district, plus three more where remaining applicants had a second chance of winning. These are the same districts used for director elections.

This is the 33rd consecutive year Federated dedicated funds to high school scholarships and the 28th year that the scholarships are from Operation Round Up. This totals \$147,900 in Federated scholarships.

Congratulations to these and all high school graduates! 🎉



88th Annual Meeting Thursday, August 3



The pork chop supper returns! Enjoy a bag of chips, cookie and bottle of water too!

Vote to enter—\$1,000 worth of bill credits

- Your mailed ballots arrive around July 1 and must be received back in Federated's office by August 2 at 4:30 p.m. OR
- Members may vote in person August 3 from 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Play Bingo for prizes from 5:30-6:15 p.m. Annual Meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

Held at the Martin County West High School, Sherburn, MN



Play Bingo from 5:30-6:15 p.m. Win prizes ranging from bill credits, logo items and more!

2023 Minnesota legislative session impacts everyone who uses electricity

The 2023 legislative session, which concluded May 22, was one of the most consequential in history for Minnesota's 1.7 million cooperative members. Record investments, key policy changes and a landmark 100 percent carbon-free by 2040 mandate all made this legislative session one with big long-term impacts on everyone using electricity in the state.

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) represents Minnesota's 44 distribution cooperatives and six generation and transmission cooperatives who collectively serve over 1.7 million Minnesotans. They are the voice for non-profit electric cooperative member-owners at the Capitol and have been deeply engaged with lawmakers, so Minnesota cooperative-member owners have their voices heard. MREA worked tirelessly to shape the session's outcomes. This overview highlights a few items affecting electric cooperative members.

100 percent carbon-free by 2040

The first and most impactful bill for electric cooperatives and their member-owners was the historic 100 percent carbon-free by 2040 bill, which was signed into law in early February. The legislation, passed in record time, is widely regarded as the most significant energy policy ever passed in Minnesota and mandates all electricity sold in the state come from carbon-free sources by the year 2040. The law will increase the challenge of keeping the electric grid reliable under all conditions; significant advancements in technology will be needed to achieve the mandate.

Minnesota's electric cooperatives are leaders in navigating the clean-energy transition, while keeping electricity reliable and affordable. However, this new law does present significant challenges. As a result, MREA worked with lawmakers to add some common-sense amendments to



Is an electric vehicle on your horizon? The state of Minnesota added rebates for electric vehicles under this year's legislation: \$2,500 for a new vehicle under \$55,000 or \$600 rebate for a used electric vehicle under \$25,000.

help protect affordability and reliability. Nonetheless, a lot of investment, innovation and ingenuity will be necessary to avoid cost increases and potential service disruptions, while meeting the mandate.

State Competitiveness Fund

Investments in Minnesota's electric grid are more crucial than ever; historic funding from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) necessitates Minnesota think big to attract federal dollars. As a result, lawmakers put \$190 million into a newly created State Competitiveness Fund, which attracts hundreds of millions of dollars for investments in Minnesota's energy infrastructure. Co-ops across the state will be using these funds, including an additional \$5.3 million specifically for consumer-owned utilities, for projects to improve affordability and reliability and aid in the energy transition.


Electrification rebates & grants

The State of Minnesota wants to help you buy an electric vehicle. This includes a rebate up to \$2,500 for a new electric vehicle with a sale price below \$55,000 or up to \$600 for a used vehicle under \$25,000. The rebate is open to individuals, businesses, nonprofits and governments; those who have already received an EV rebate or tax credit from Minnesota are not eligible. Find a listing of different

electric vehicles, along with their mileage range and purchase price, at www.shift2electric.com/evinfolist.

Those who would like to purchase a highly efficient heat pump to heat and cool their home could receive rebates of up to \$4,000. The legislature also made grant money available for solar on schools, electric bikes, electric school buses, pre-weatherization work and more. Stay tuned to the *Connections* newsletter, as the state works out the details on these rebates and new programs.

"For those of us who work with MREA on a regular basis, we see the effort that goes into protecting us from bad legislation — successfully," said Scott Reimer, Federated Rural Electric's general manager. "This year was an exceptional session and exceptional work was done by all MREA staff. Jenny Glumack, MREA government affairs director, literally spent most days at the Capital, advocating on our behalf; she did it with grace and persistence. She is our shining star for this legislative session."

"Brown County REA thanks Great River Energy and MREA for their work in this unprecedented legislative session with the amount of bills passed," said Mike Heidemann, Brown County REA general manager. "They worked consistently for the interests of co-op members to keep rates affordable." 

Summer screams for ice cream; share your dreamy, creamy recipes

How do you like your dreamy, creamy ice cream? Do you have a supreme home-made ice cream recipe? Maybe you make ice cream pies, cupcakes, treats or sandwiches. Share your ice cream recipes with us. Mail your favorite recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by June 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧



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War Cake (no eggs)

by Beverly Berg, New Ulm

Place in a heavy-bottom sauce pan and bring to a boil the following ingredients. Cook over low heat for five minutes. Then remove from heat and cool.

- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. water
- 1 c. raisins (or less)
- 2 T. vegetable oil or 2 T. margarine

While the above mixture is cooling, heat the oven to 350°. Grease and flour an 8x4" pan. Then add the flour and other ingredients listed below to the cooled mixture.

- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. cloves
- 1½ c. flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ c. walnuts, chopped, optional

Bake until toothpick in the center comes out clean — about 45-50 minutes. 📧

Connections shines in golden spotlight

— Continued from Page 1

recognizes the top-rated communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related organizations. Entrants competed with electric cooperatives of similar size in 18 categories. Electric cooperative communicators and marketing professionals submitted more than 650 entries in the Spotlight on Excellence program. Faculty members from the University of Missouri Columbia, as well as noted professionals in the fields of marketing, newspapers and digital communications judged the event. 📧



Just make the call before digging:

1-800-252-1166



Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees and tiling.

Register at www.gopherstate-onecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧

Happy 4th of July!
The cooperative will be closed July 4
Crews will be on call in case of outages

Local, fast internet!

I'm a Federated Broadband customer & Federated director



"I switched to Federated Broadband this year," said Dave Meschke, Welcome. "I noticed the faster speed right away. The picture was clearer and faster with TV streaming. I use the internet for farming, crop insurance work and electric cooperative online meetings." Make the switch for local, fast internet by calling Federated Broadband today!

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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.

We're LOCAL just like you!



Our team of Internet employees are based here in southern Minnesota. We believe that customer service takes on a whole new meaning when you live and work with the people you serve! You do have options for Internet! Make it local with Federated Broadband!