

Connections

August 2024

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 28, Issue 8

Wonderful Washington, D.C. wows local students on 2024 Youth Tour

So what did you do this summer? Two students, sponsored by their local electric cooperative, highlight their Washington, D.C. adventure won by participating in the Youth Tour Contest.

Brown County REA sponsored Cindy Jensen, Comfrey. She is the daughter of David and Kelli. Meanwhile, Federated Rural Electric sponsored Elsa Thompson, Elmore. She is the daughter of Malorie and Todd.

Cindy Jensen's trip highlights

"My favorite memorial was the Lincoln Memorial," Jensen stated. "I liked that it had all of the 50 state's names on the outside. I also liked the architecture; It was just beautiful.

"I also really liked the Washington Monument because I've always wanted to see it in person. It stuck out to me during our night tour; it looked really pretty all lit up and with the sunset."

Museums were also fascinating. "I really enjoyed all the Smithsonian's sculptures, including bones, replicas and outdoor sculptures," Jensen said.

"We visited the Holocaust Museum and the FDR Roosevelt Memorial/museum. I learned that he was paralyzed at the end of his presidency. I thought Mount Vernon was really cool too. I learned a lot about George Washington."

Jensen liked other sites as well. "I really enjoyed the tour of the second



From small towns to D.C. bound...these two Youth Tour delegates enjoyed their trip June 18-23: Cindy Jensen, Comfrey; and Elsa Thompson, Elmore.

largest Cathedral in the U.S. — the National Cathedral. We explored Old Town Alexandria on the last day so it gave us time to relax and make some memorable moments. I also enjoyed the boat ride back to the hotel."

A D.C. trip requires a visit to the Capitol. "I really enjoyed the Capitol," she added. "I thought it was really cool to see inside and go into the House of Representatives. I liked looking at all the art and statues. Lots of history exists in the building and I was just

soaking it up. Plus, we talked with our legislators and discussed some new bills that passed."

Besides lots of walking, each delegate used a Segway for sightseeing. "I think the best part of the trip was Segwaying around D.C. or the Youth Night with other states' delegates. I met so many new people at Youth Night."

For many the Youth Tour is their first major travel experience without parents. "I grew a lot as a person," — Continued on Page 6

At A Glance



Water heater was flooded in June? Watch for issues

Did the June flooding cause your water heater's lower element to be covered in water? It may work for a short time. We have replaced many that were completely submerged. If only the lower element was covered, it may need just a new thermostat now or in the future. Call us with questions. ☎️



Ask questions before buying a solar system

Free energy from the sun and lower electric bills... How do I sign up?

The benefits of installing solar panels may seem like a no-brainer, but the reality is, not every site (and owner's situation) is always right for solar. Consider several factors before buying a solar system, like determining if your home/site will receive enough sun to achieve your goals, finding the right contractor, negotiating contracts and other details. Keep in mind that during a power outage, your solar system will not supply you power unless you also buy battery storage. Plus, you will still have a monthly service charge from the electric co-op to cover the poles, meter, substation, etc... when solar is not generating.

Investing in solar is a major decision. If you're considering solar, your electric cooperative can help.

Consider these questions before installing solar

1. What are my goals? If your primary goal is to save money on electric bills, you may achieve this through energy-efficiency action. Does your home have sufficient insulation and efficient windows? Do you have an old heating/cooling system that needs upgrading first? Is it time to upgrade to energy-efficient appliances too? Visit the co-op's website for heat pump and appliance rebate details.

2. Is my roof or site suitable for solar? If your roof is old and in poor shape, it may need to be replaced before panels can be mounted. Additionally, your roof or site should receive a lot of sun. Consider how much sun (and shade) the site receives and if any trees will need to be removed. Solar panels perform best when facing south; keep this in mind as you think about where the panels will be installed.

3. How long will I own the home? If you're considering rooftop solar, you're likely planning to stay in the home for several years. But if you plan to sell the home at some point down the road, consider that not all potential buyers will want to maintain a solar system. If you enter a contract to lease the system, carefully review the terms and what those mean if you sell the property.

4. Lease or purchase? Purchasing a rooftop solar system outright is expensive, which is why many homeowners opt to lease their solar panels. However, federal tax credits can help cover some of the costs for a new system, up to 30 percent. Regardless of how you finance the solar system, secure a few quotes from qualified contractors. Your electric co-op can recommend area contractors that



co-op members have used and trusted.

Discussion items before signing with solar contract

1. Can the contractor provide up-to-date documentation? It may seem obvious, but request proof and documentation of the contractor's licensing, permitting and other credentials; ask for local referrals. Comb through company reviews, check the contractor's status with the Better Business Bureau. Do your homework on the front end before signing a contract. Go with a local vendor and electrician familiar with local, county and Minnesota ordinances and requirements.

2. Does the contract seem reasonable and fair? If you decide to hire a contractor to install solar, carefully read the fine print of the contract. Do the system performance calculations seem realistic? Does the project timeframe sound reasonable? Negotiate the contract terms to fit your goals and needs.

3. Who maintains the solar panels? Determining who is responsible for maintaining the solar panels depends on who owns the system. If you lease the system from a solar installer, it may be their responsibility. Periodically, solar panels need to be cleaned as dirt, debris and snow impact panel productivity. Parts may also need to be replaced, so it's important to know who will take on these responsibilities.

4. How will I work with the electric co-op? Look at your electric co-op's website first before buying. The system must be connected to the electric grid, so you need to sign an interconnection agreement. We can walk you through the steps, including how our solar rates and fees work. Do not let the solar contractor start work until the co-op application is approved and co-op contract is signed.

Solar panels may help the environment and save on electric bills — just consider the many factors before diving in and installing a system. Do plenty of research upfront, and contact the co-op if you have questions or decide to move forward with an installation.


Mini-fridges goes anywhere & offers three ways to chill

Take your travels to new convenience levels with a portable mini-fridge that acts more like a cooler.

Mellif mini-fridge can be powered by plugging it into a normal outlet, plugging it into a vehicle with DC charger cord or use a 20-volt DeWalt Max Battery. You can use the smart phone app to monitor the temperature and change the settings from -4 degrees Fahrenheit to 68 degrees. Use it as a mini freezer or fridge with the portability of a 25-quart-sized cooler. Thick insulation makes it energy efficient.

Imagine the ways you could use it from camping, picnics, fishing trips, road trips, work sites and kids' sporting events. It holds 44 cans of pop or 22 bottles of water. Pack the night before and plug into the outlet at home. Then plug it in while you drive using the DC charger; use the DeWalt Max lithium battery when you get there and plug it back in on the way home.

Fun features include beverage holders and the USB port to recharge your cell phone. The 11-inch handle and wheels make it easy to pull to your final destination.

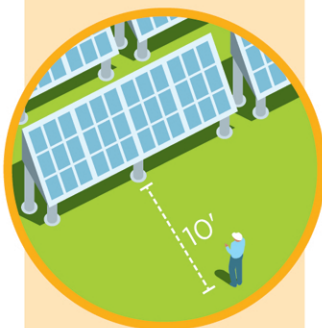
Find it on Amazon for about \$270 (battery not included); it features a five-year warranty. It is nearly 22 inches wide, 13 inches deep and almost 17 inches tall. When cleaning, make sure it is unplugged for safety. 



Safety

Safety near solar

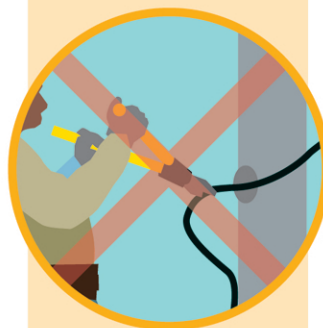
Like any other source of electricity, solar panels can pose potential hazards. Keep these safety tips in mind.



Stay at least 10 feet away from the installation.



Never walk on solar panels.



Never cut any wiring to the solar panels.



Never touch broken or damaged solar panels.

Federated Focus

Annual Meeting results...

Since this *Connections'* deadline was before the Annual Meeting August 1, look for the Annual Meeting election results in the September issue. The prize winners will also be posted in that edition.

Fall Round Up deadline nears



The next Operation Round Up deadline is September

27. Find the application at www.federatedrea.coop; otherwise, call the office to have it e-mailed or mailed to you. Encourage your fire department, ambulance squad, schools or local nonprofit groups to apply for funding. Eligibility is explained on the website or application letter.

Continuity of electric service

Federated will endeavor to provide continuous service, but does not guarantee an uninterrupted or undisturbed supply of electric service. The Cooperative will not be responsible for any loss or damage resulting from the interruption or disturbance of service for any cause other than gross negligence of the Cooperative. The Cooperative reserves the right without previously notifying the member to temporarily interrupt service for construction, inspection, repairs, emergency operations, shortages in power supply, safety and state or national emergencies. The Cooperative will not be liable in any event for any loss of profits or other consequential damages resulting from the use of service or any interruption or disturbance of service. (C)



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

After June flooding resides, summer construction starts

Summer construction for both electric and broadband is now in full swing. Our contractors, as well as our crews, were delayed significantly with the rain and flooding; however, most of the routes we needed are cleared up. That moisture was prime time for mosquitos and biting gnats, which never makes working outdoors pleasant. Kudos to those who endured it.

Broadband is working in Jackson County south of Interstate 90 in Phase One of the Border-to-Border round nine grant project. So far, we are at about 350 signups out of a possible 500 so we are grateful for the support our members are showing. We have been informed that TD&I (our contractor) will be mobilizing service drop crews so some of you will be seeing that part of the project starting. The electronics buildings will be set in August and after a period of time for installing that, services will be activated. This is a two-year project so we need to keep with it to meet our project completion deadline of December 31, 2026.

We did have a rash of lightning in June and part of July, which wreaked havoc on both the electric system and the fixed wireless system. Fiber was virtually unaffected though, which is why we are taking on this cooperative effort. It's ironic that nearly 90 years ago, people were sitting around a table talking about installing electric service to much the same area. History has a way of repeating itself.

Fair season is underway! Visit Broadband booth at Martin County Fair

We are in fair season with Jackson County Fair just wrapping up. We now focus on the Martin County Fair. We'll have a booth in a building by the main gate to meet with members about anything really, but especially our broadband and electric service. Stop in if you're at the fair and talk with employees and directors that might be staffing the booth. Our directors will once again be handing out T-shirts to the 4-H participants and participate at the 4-H auction.

Summer electrical grid power sources rely on fossil fuels

The transmission system, as well as generation assets, remain a top priority for grid operators. With baseload generation (coal) being on the chopping block, something has to be available for grid resiliency when wind and or solar isn't available. Battery storage is still in its infancy. Dispatchable resources, like natural gas, is the go-to source right now. The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) real time displays show natural gas and coal leading the way in keeping on the lights. Every other resource is barely in the double-digit range. As I write this, our real time display is at 133,902 megawatts being consumed by the Midwest and that has to be delivered by mostly coal and natural gas. Nuclear is at 10 percent, but has the potential to be a much larger contributor for decades to come, however; there is a reluctance to bring it back by most. Legislators in Minnesota understand the importance and need to embrace it and change the state law banning new nuclear power.

President Biden signed a bipartisan bill recently aimed at bolstering the nation's nuclear power in what supporters describe as a historic win for the sector. The nuclear package should speed up the timeline for licensing new nuclear reactors and cut fees that companies pay. It also requires the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to put together a report that considers ways to simplify and shorten the environmental review process for reactors. Supporters say the legislation is a big deal for the nuclear power and will help bring more of the climate-friendly, albeit controversial, power source online. Nuclear isn't new; the U.S. Navy used nuclear marine propulsion in the 1940s. As of July 2023, the U.S. Navy operates 99 nuclear reactors and 79 nuclear-powered warships, including aircraft carriers and submarines. Nuclear has a place in our electric generation fleet and we should encourage the adoption of policy to move it forward. (C)

Board authorizes \$1.2 million in capital credits; find credits on electric bills received in August

Cash back is coming your way! Federated members will see capital credits refunds on the August 5 electric bills.

This year the Board of Directors is retiring and returning nearly \$1.2 million in capital credits from three different sources:

1. Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative (wholesale power supplier capital credits) returned \$66,608 from 2021 patronage.

2. Great River Energy returned \$193,580 in capital credits to Federated for 1995 and 2013-2014 patronage; this also represents wholesale power supplier capital credits.

3. Finally, Federated is returning capital credits from 2003-2004 and 2023.

- 39 percent (the balance) from 2003: \$158,894
- Nearly 92 percent from 2004: \$620,460
- 44 percent of 2023 patronage: \$137,541
- Total \$916,895

Federated returns a portion of last year's electric margins so newer cooperative members see the benefits of capital credits. When Federated's Board of Directors approved the rate consolidation of Federated's legacy and former Alliant electric rates in 2021, the wholesale power supplier capital credits are now allocated among all electric members. In the last decade Federated has returned over \$8.3 million to its member-owners.

The Broadband division generated margins of \$89,203 in 2023, which was allocated as capital credits to electric members who also receive Broadband's services. Since Broadband is capital intensive and in the early stages of bringing fiber to the homes, the Board of Directors decided that no retirement of Broadband margins would occur at this time.

Current members will receive a bill credit on their August bills listed as "Capital Credits Retired." Checks will be mailed in late July if the amount was more than \$500. Checks will also be mailed to former members if the amount is larger than \$20. Capital credits are returned as a bill credit, which saves labor, postage and printing costs for the membership.

"During these inflationary times, capital credits being returned to you, our member-owners, helps out a lot," stated Scott Reimer, Federated's general manager. "This is the cooperative difference of local ownership!"

Unlike many corporations, Federated is a not-for-profit organization. We reinvest our profits back into the coopera-



Federated directors celebrate the cooperative difference by returning \$1.2 million to Federated members as capital credits; look for your credits on the August 5 electric bill. Directors from left to right: Jon Saxen, Glenn Dicks, David Meschke, Bruce Brockmann, Darwin Voss, Scott Thiesse and David A. Hansen.

tive. Plus, we allocate the value of those profits (based on electricity purchased during the year) to a capital credits account maintained for each member. Federated holds these margins over time to finance part of line construction and maintenance. Using our margins this way means Federated does not have to borrow as much money, saving members interest charges that would otherwise be reflected in higher electric rates. ^(c)

Fairgrounds awash in blue 4-H T-shirts, courtesy of the co-op



Federated distributed more than 600 T-shirts to Jackson and Martin County 4-H members and screened adult leaders during the county fairs. Brinley and Kylin Bass model their shirts at the Jackson County Fair. ^(c)

Teens explored D.C. monuments, memorials & museums, plus made new Minnesota friends

— Continued from Page 1

thanks to the Youth Tour. I became more mature and can talk to new people more easily. This experience makes me see the world differently and I just feel more knowledgeable. Seeing where everything is being run also gave me a point of view that I have never seen — big things are going on outside my little town; if I work hard, I could be part of it.

“I’ve met friends for life,” she said. “I was so nervous that I wasn’t going to make any friends and now I’m walking away with many. On the last day it all hit us hard that it was the last day of doing activities together. We ended up planning a reunion at Valley Fair next year. I’ve kept in contact with all of my new friends too.”

Jensen encourages other high school students to apply for the co-op’s Youth Tour Contest in December. “I would 100 percent recommend Youth Tour to everyone. I had so much fun seeing D.C. and all of the memorials. You also get to meet some great people and make friends for life. Thank you Brown County REA for this opportunity. I also appreciate all of the chaperones. They made all the activities fun and they made this experience one that I will never forget!”

Elsa Thompson’s trip highlights

“My favorite memorial was the WWII Memorial with the cool water features,” Thompson said. “I also liked this memorial because it had a pillar for each of the 50 states, so it was cool to see Minnesota. My favorite monument was the Washington Monument. This was my favorite because of how cool and lit up it was at night. We went on a Segway tour and saw the monument at night. A funny story that happened was when we had the Segway tour. I almost got lost at the National Mall because I went the wrong way on the Segway and didn’t notice everyone else going the opposite way.”

Thompson appreciated the Smithsonian Museums too. “I really enjoyed



Meet the 2024 Minnesota Youth Tour delegation! These 34 students were sponsored by their rural electric cooperative to learn more about their nation’s history, capital and electric cooperatives. The group paused for a photo at the Capitol.

the Natural History Museum with all of the exhibits. I learned a lot about our planet and the animals that inhabit it.”

D.C.’s architecture is also impressive to these rural teens. “The National Cathedral has great architecture! I also liked to see how it represented so many things, while also being a place of worship.”


“The Capitol was a really great experience and I learned a lot,” she added. “My favorite thing there was the rotunda with all of the spectacular art and how tall it was! Visiting our senators was very interesting and informative. We asked questions about topics that pertain to rural electric cooperatives and received some really great answers.”

The delegates traveled back in time with a stop at Mount Vernon. “I enjoyed touring George Washington’s house and seeing what life was like when our county was being born.”

Besides great sights, the people were even better, Thompson said. “I would say the best part of this trip was meeting so many people from so many

different places! I loved learning about how my life differed from a person based on where they lived in the United States. I made a lot of new friends from Minnesota while on the trip. My roommate was from Chanhassen and had two little brothers just like me! I will keep in contact with my roommate and all the other people I made friends with through social media. Youth Tour helped me become more social. I made a lot of new friends and connections from all over the country.”

Thompson encourages other area teens to apply for Federated’s Youth Tour Contest. “I 100 percent recommend Youth Tour to all! It is such a great experience and a great way to see our country’s capital. You meet so many people and make life-long connections and memories with others. Thank you Federated for sponsoring this life changing trip! I would also like to thank all of our chaperones on the trip for always being helpful.”

Watch for details on the 2025 Youth Tour Contest in the December *Connections* newsletter. 

Open wide! Time to slide in a slider! Share favorite slider recipes

How do you make slider sandwiches for a group? Share your favorite slider recipes with us; what bread, meats, sauces and cheese do you use? Send your favorite slider recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by August 26. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Your electric co-op is closed Labor Day, Monday, September 2



Crews are on call in case of outages

Have a safe holiday weekend!

Slow Cooker Root Beer BBQ Ribs by Jean Beckendorf,

Welcome

- 2 lb. pork ribs
- 1 c. root beer
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- salt & pepper

Season the ribs with the garlic and onion powder, along with salt and pepper. Place the seasoned ribs in a slow cooker.

In a bowl mix the root beer and BBQ sauce together; pour over the ribs. Cover and cook six to eight hours on low or three to four hours on high until fully cooked and tender. 📧

Rebates await!

Explore electric co-op's rebates on our website:

- Air source, ductless & ground source heat pumps.
- Energy Star refrigerators & freezers with proof of recycling the old unit.
- Energy Star dehumidifier and Smart Thermostats rebates too! 📧

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.gopherstateonecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧

Manage your home

Arm and disarm your system; automate your lights and thermostat — all from one app!



Subsidiary of your local electric co-op

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Cruise to the head of the class with faster internet!



a solid connection is. We work hard to provide it and be there to support our customers when they need it. We offer reliable, high-speed internet that's perfect for students of all ages. Get ready for a smooth A+ school year — sign up for Federated Broadband today!

Need a break from homework? Federated Broadband offers internet and streaming TV bundles starting at \$140 per month. Take a study break with your favorite show or cheer on your favorite college sports team with SW Stream. All you need is a Roku Ultra or Ultra LT.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates regarding our fiber optic line buildouts and when we may be coming to your area! 



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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.

Federated Broadband's Residential packages:

Fixed Wireless

- 6MB down/2MB up: \$50 per month
- 15MB down/3MB up: \$70 per month
- 25 MB down/3MB up: \$80 per month
- 40 MB down/5MB up: \$90 per month

Fiber


- 100MB symmetrical: \$70 per month
- 250 MB symmetrical: \$85 per month
- 1 GIG symmetrical: \$100 per month

Event Wi-Fi

Did you know Federated Broadband offers event Wi-Fi? Whether it is for seed-plot field days, wedding, family reunion or community event, let us help connect your event with our mobile Wi-Fi event trailer! We can get you connected anywhere we have a line-of-site to one of our towers.

Outage text notifications

Sign up for the Broadband text notices when there is a tower outage or to text us for technical support. Call us during business hours or e-mail us your cell phone number (info@federatedbroadband.coop)!

In addition, follow Federated Broadband on Facebook for updates and happenings. 



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