

Connections

Vol. 13, No. 1



Switch over to the new *Connections!*

Energy efficiency isn't the only thing improving at your electric cooperative. As compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs replace incandescent bulbs with longer life and energy savings, so *Connections* is out with the old and in with the new!

"Your electric cooperative's newsletter underwent an energy-efficiency upgrade," stated Andrea Christoffer, editor. "We're saving money by providing less pages, but we're also providing more focused information and full-color throughout. This format will make the newsletter a quick, easy read for you, our member-owners. Stay informed without wasting valuable time. Plus, fewer pages means less of an impact on the environment!"

This improved version of *Connections* will be read by members of Brown County Rural Electric Association, Sleepy Eye; Federated Rural Electric, Jackson; and South Central Electric, St. James.

"The new design hopes to continue the old *Connections'* award-winning tradition," Christoffer continued. "Pass along feedback on the new format so we continue to meet the needs of you, our member-owners. E-mail info@federatedrea.coop or send a note with your electric bill." 📧



How would you like to see the Iwo Jima Memorial first hand and other famous monuments? Would you also like to tour the nation's Capitol, climb the Washington Monument and make new friends from around the country? You can do all of these things in the 2009 Youth Tour!

Thanks to your electric cooperative, teens have a chance to win a free trip to Washington, D.C. this summer. Just enter the Youth Tour contest. Co-ops from each state send teens to Washington, D.C. for Youth Tour. The first year of the coordinated tour included approximately 400 young people from 12 states. Word of mouth spread and today over 1,500 young people and their chaperones participate in Youth Tour each year. If you are a high school student, you may be eligible for the Youth Tour tradition by winning the all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C. June 13-18.

See Page 4 for details. 📧



Connecting our co-ops & members to a progressive future



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Electric blankets got it covered when it comes to energy savings

Members can get wrapped up in saving on their heating bill. Space heaters are often a solution. What about electric blankets? They're even more efficient. See the table on the right.

Different types of electric blankets are available to help you save energy and money. Grab an electric blanket to cover up while you watch TV or sleep. An electric mattress pad for your bed is another option. The choice you make depends if you want warmth to come from above or below. An electric mattress pad means you need fewer heavy blankets covering you.

The best, but more expensive electric blankets or mattress pads, use digital ambient temperature controls. They sense the air temperature and automatically adjust heat output. They also have a preheat setting and provide nearly silent operation. Cheaper controls make a click when the internal thermostat switches it on and off. This can wake light sleepers.

Select a blanket or mattress pad with positive thermal coefficient (PTC) heating wire. Its resistance changes as the temperature changes. When the blanket or pad is resting tightly over or under your body and therefore warmer, its heating output decreases to maintain a steady temperature.

That's a wrap — electric blankets cover the spread on energy savings! — *Information courtesy of Questline and JimDulley.com*

Heater type	Watts	Cost Per Night*	Cost Per Month*
Space Heater	750-1,500 Watts	49¢ - 96¢	\$14 - \$29
Electric Blanket	60-100 Watts	4¢ - 8¢	\$1.20 - \$1.80

*Assumes eight hours of operation per day at \$.08 per kilowatt-hour. Actual figures may vary depending on size of room, number of windows, amount of insulation, etc.



If an electric device consumes 1,000 watts for one hour, it consumes one kilowatt-hour (kWh). If an electric device consumes 100 watts for 10 hours, it consumes one kWh. The number of watts an electrical device uses times the number of hours it is on reveals the number of watt hours consumed. Divide that by 1,000 to get kWh. Multiply kWh by 8¢ (your electric cooperative's electric rate) to get the cost of electricity the device uses. Space heaters range in wattage from 750-1,500 watts. For an eight-hour night this would amount to 6-12 kWh. The typical wattage for an electric blanket is 60-watts (single) and 100-watts (double). For an eight-hour night this would be .48 - .8 kWh, making electric blankets are more economical.



Turn it down to turn up savings

The Department of Energy states that for an eight-hour setback period you can save approximately one percent on heating costs for each degree that the thermostat is set back. At the current average residential price for propane of \$2.40 per gallon, an LP furnace will cost about \$10 per night to operate. This is based on the following assumptions: a typical home uses an 80,000 Btu furnace; a gallon of propane is equivalent to 92,000 Btus; in a typical eight-hour period a furnace will run 60 percent of the time for 4.8 hours (80,000 x 4.8/92,000 x 2.40 = \$10) If you set back the temperature by five degrees, you will save five percent on heating costs or 50 cents per night (\$15 per month). These numbers will vary with the size of the furnace and outdoor temperature. — *Information courtesy of Questline*





Keep the Boogeyman away with story-telling, lighted blankets

Don't just tell your child a lullabye. Tuck them into a Lulla Bed.

Lulla Beds offer a unique vision of the time-honored tradition of reading a story before bed (and playing with a flashlight under the covers) by adding a dynamic, unexpected element.

Each Lulla Bed blanket tells a story and provides a light show for children. Four different blankets are available: Space, Kitty, Heroes and Princess.

Pressing a start button on the blankets activates a two-minute tale and glowing LED lights. The blankets require three D-cell batteries. The battery compartment is located at the foot of the bed, underneath the comforter.

Care is simple. Untie the straps in all corners to remove the cover from the LED comforter. This outer cover can be machine-washed cold and tumbled dry on low setting. Gently spot clean the LED comforter by hand and air dry. Do not submerge the comforter.

The blankets cost approximately \$150. For more information visit www.lullabeds.com.



Lulla Beds come in four different styles to stimulate imagination and distract children from their fear of the dark. Make story time more exciting at bedtime with a Lulla Bed Story Blanket.



Create a safe space for space heaters



As outdoor temperatures fall, rising heating costs have many looking at space heaters to lower heating bills. Safe Electricity offers the following safety tips:

- Purchase only space heaters that were safety tested and UL approved. Make sure the unit is equipped with an emergency tip-over, shut-off feature and heating element guards.
- Before using a space heater, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working.
- Space heaters have one purpose

— to provide supplemental heating. Never use them to thaw pipes, cook food or dry clothing and towels.

- Place the heater on a level, non-flammable floor surface, not on carpets, furniture or countertops.
- Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from all combustible liquids like fuel, spray cans and paint, as well as flammable items such as draperies, blankets and sofas.
- Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Contact could result in serious shock or burns.
- Do not overload circuits. Never use extension cords or multiple plugs

with a space heater; make sure the unit is not plugged into the same circuit as other electric appliances.

- If your space heater is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) and the GFCI trips, don't assume something is wrong with the GFCI. Stop using the heater until it can be checked by a professional.

• Never leave space heaters unattended. Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or going to bed.

— Information courtesy of safeelectricity.org

Federated Focus

4-H Electricity Awards go to...

At the fall county 4-H recognition banquet Federated again sponsored the \$50 incentive award. The winners were: Charles Steuer, Blue Earth; and Izaak Lucht, Jackson.

Vandalism causes Ceylon outage

Shots were fired at the Ceylon substation December 9 causing an outage. Crews found that someone shot at the transformer and other equipment. Replacing the transformer alone costs \$200,000, plus the labor to clean up the transformer oil that leaked out. Please report to the Martin County Sheriff any unusual activity that was seen on that night or any tips regarding this crime at 507-238-4481.

Call 24/7 with meter readings!

Call in meter readings any time of the day or night! Call 1-866-797-7218. For first time account setup you will need your member number and meter number from your bill. This is the first phase of the new bill payment and meter reading program. This new system is fast, easy and these readings are downloaded into billing. Call 1-800-321-3520 for other billing issues or help with the new system.

\$1,000 scholarship deadline...

Encourage your high school senior or college student to apply for the \$1,000 Federated/Basin scholarship. The deadline is February 5. Download the application from Federated's website, call Federated or visit your school counselor for it.

Operation Round Up deadline...

Local organizations can apply for Round Up funds by February 20. Go to our website for the application.

Enter Youth Tour contest for a chance to win a free trip to D.C.



You could see the Spirit of St. Louis and other famous historical artifacts at the Smithsonian Museums if you win the 2009 Youth Tour Contest. Enter today before the February 27 deadline "flies" by!

If you are a freshman, sophomore or junior attending a high school in Federated Rural Electric's service territory, you are eligible to enter the Youth Tour contest for a chance to win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Here's how to enter. Write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic and mail it to your electric co-op. All entries must be received by February 27. Your electric co-op will select five essay finalists for a March 24 interview and then award the trip to the winner. Second place earns \$150 and serves as first alternate. Third place receives \$100. The winner flies from the Minneapolis International Airport June 13 with the Minnesota delegation and returns to Minneapolis June 18. Call or e-mail Federated Rural Electric (847-3520, 728-8366, 1-800-321-3520 or info@federatedrea.coop) or talk to your school counselor for the application. Check out the national Youth Tour website at www.youth-tour.coop for photos and videos. Plus, visit www.mrea.org for Minnesota's Youth Tour highlights.

Member wins \$100 of groceries



Congratulations Jamie Cranton, Lakefield! Jamie entered Great River Energy's "Fill the Fridge" contest on the website www.mnbrighterideas.com where she took a short quiz on Energy Star appliances. She won a \$100 gift certificate to be used for groceries at her local grocery store. You too can save money by taking advantage of Federated's Energy Star appliance rebates for refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers and dehumidifiers with rebates ranging from \$25 to \$75. Call Federated or visit www.federatedrea.coop for the form.



Joan Hargan puts the seal on her career at Federated Rural Electric

Roughly 3,000 envelopes a month... 12 months a year... 41 years...

That means Joan Hargan has opened nearly 1.5 million envelopes in her career at Federated as a billing clerk/customer service representative.

Appropriately enough, Joan's Federated career came out of an envelope. "One of my friends working at Federated became pregnant," she remembers. "Back then women quit their jobs when they were expecting. My husband, Dave, told me I should write Bob Johnson about the opening, thinking he was Federated's manager. It turns out Marv Johnson was the manager and Bob was his son. The letter sat on Marv's buffet for three weeks because it was addressed to Bob, who was away at college. When Bob returned home, Marv told him he had a letter from his girlfriend. Bob said he didn't have a girlfriend. After the letter was opened, Marv called me to schedule an interview, when he hired me on the spot."

Today, Joan is often the first billing employee members talk to when they call Federated and the first smile they see when they enter the office. Her duties include maintaining billing information and records, calculating reports for each department, answering questions and more.

Before starting at Federated, Joan graduated from Jackson High School in 1964. She attended Worthington Junior College and worked at Northwestern National Life, Minneapolis, for two years. "I came home when it became clear Dave and I were going to be married," Joan said. "I knew he was the one for me from the first time I saw him in the eighth grade."

Once again, envelopes played an important part in Joan's life. "Short-



Joan Hargan has greeted Federated members for 41 years, a career worth writing home about. She will retire January 30. Stop by to wish her well!

ly after our wedding, Dave was drafted and served in Vietnam from 1967-1968," she said. "Waiting for him to come home was a sad and scary time. To keep in touch, we mailed audio tapes (Dave's often had gunshots in the background). I went home every noon hour to check my mailbox. Whenever a new tape came, our mailman waved the envelope in the air as soon as he saw me."

After Dave returned home, the couple had one child, Ryan, in 1973. Throughout it all, Joan worked at Federated and witnessed many changes. "The main difference between then and now is we did everything, like filling out bill statements and record books, by hand — no computers," she said. "Eventually, we started using a Bouroughs machine. Each member had a magnetic stripe that recorded basic information about their account. We had to retrieve each stripe, put it with their bill, run the two through the machine, put the stripe back and file the ledger sheet. It was a very time-consuming process. At the end of the month we added over 4,000 ledger sheets by hand, which was a horrendous task. I spent a lot of late nights at

Federated when it came to that part of the job. After the Bouroughs machine came a punch-card system and then computers, which I greatly prefer."

Moving into Federated's new office also stands out in Joan's memory. "We built the new office in 1971," she said. "I remember going to the construction site and walking gravel hallways through the brick skeleton of the building. Moving day was a big deal. We did it all ourselves, loading everything on the line trucks."

Federated has grown a lot since Joan began her employment. "Many new companies came online, like the ethanol plants, plus crop-drying systems continued to get bigger," she said. "The size of our electrical load increased dramatically as a result. Working with the members who make up our system has been one of the pleasures of the job. I've known some really special customers. One couple in particular really made an impression on me. They brought a gift to my home every Christmas Eve. The people I worked with have also been wonderful. You couldn't find a nicer group of people to spend more than half a lifetime with."

Throughout her time at Federated, Joan has no regrets. "Things worked out even during the challenging times," she said. "I've come this far with many friends, health and a great guy. I look forward to the future."

To celebrate retiring, Joan and Dave plan to travel to San Diego and visit family and friends. They will return to Jackson in the spring to work on their house and stay active doing volunteer work. As for moving on from Federated, "I'm leaving my counter in capable hands," Joan said. 🍷

Governor Pawlenty announces Stay Warm Campaign to help families this winter

Governor Tim Pawlenty announced the Stay Warm Minnesota campaign that features a new website for information and resources to help Minnesota families get through another cold winter. The website www.staywarm.mn.gov is a collaborative effort between state government agencies, the state's major utilities, and several nonprofit organizations in the energy and social service fields.

"Minnesotans can take steps now to ensure a safe and comfortable winter," Governor Pawlenty said. "The Stay Warm partners have resources to help Minnesota families in these tough economic times and this new website provides a connection to those resources."

The Stay Warm website includes information on energy efficiency and conservation, heating assistance programs, winter safety tips and links to



Financially-challenged families can keep warm this winter thanks to a new Minnesota heating-assistance program.

local, state and national energy websites. The collection of energy tips on a variety of topics is designed for homeowners and renters to help use energy wisely and efficiently. For families who meet certain income re-

quirements, the website is a one stop shop for energy assistance programs from many different government and non-government sources.

For those without Internet call 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782. ❄️

Snowmobilers: Beware of rights-of-way hazards

Stay alert when snowmobiling!

Your electric cooperative has poles, guy wires, cabinets, padmount transformers and pedestals installed on hundreds of miles of rights-of-way in our service area.

Guy wires need special attention as they can be on several sides of a pole and can be difficult to see. Remember, the cooperative is granted easements only to build and maintain lines in these areas. The property does not belong to the electric cooperative. Be sure to check with the property owner before snowmobiling on their property. ❄️



Your meter 'snow' where to be found?

Where or where did your meter go... buried under piles or drifts of snow?

"We encourage our members to look out for their electric meter, especially after the heavy December snowfalls," stated the co-op's line superintendent. "Meters on the green padmount transformer boxes could be buried under a drift. Plus, be sure to not bury it under a snow pile when moving snow to prevent an outage. Linemen need access to the meter on the transformer box if an outage occurs."

In addition, it's impossible to read a meter covered by snow. Carefully, dig out the meter by hand with a shovel, if possible. Otherwise, the co-op may have to estimate the electric bill. ❄️



'Soup'er supper! Send us your favorite soup or stew recipes

Mail your soup recipes by January 26 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. 📧



Root Beer Angel Cake

by Bev Hines, Bingham Lake

White angel food cake mix

Root beer pop

Prepare the cake mix as directed, except substitute root beer flavored pop for the water. Bake and cool as directed. Remove from the pan.

Glaze:

½ c. butter, melted

2 c. powdered sugar

¼ c. finely crushed root beer hard candy

2 to 4 T. root beer pop

Prepare the glaze by heating the butter in a saucepan until melted. Blend in the powdered sugar. Stir in the soda pop 1 T. at a time. Spread the top of the cake with the root beer glaze, allowing some to drizzle down the side. Sprinkle the top with about 2 T. of crushed root beer flavored hard candy. 📧



Apple Dumplings by Kathy Luther, Lewisville

2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled and cored

2 10-oz. cans (8 rolls/can) of refrigerated crescent rolls

½ c. butter

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

¾ c. white sugar

½ can of Mountain Dew, a 12 oz. can

Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease a 9x13" baking pan. Cut each apple into 8 wedges. Separate the crescent roll dough into triangles. Roll each apple wedge in a crescent roll triangle starting at the smallest end. Pinch to seal and place in the baking pan. Melt the butter and stir in the sugar and cinnamon. Pour over the apple dumplings. Pour Mountain Dew over the dumplings. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until golden brown. 📧



Pulled Pork Sandwiches by Mary Kay Truesdell, Sherburn

3 lb. pork roast

1 T. oil

2 T. minced garlic

½ tsp. salt

2 med. onions, cut into thin wedges

½ tsp. pepper

1 c. root beer

Sprinkle the roast with salt and pepper. Brown on all sides in 1 T. oil. Place roast in a crock pot. Add onions, 1 c. root beer and minced garlic. Cover and cook on low for 10 hours or on high for 4 to 5 hours. Shred for sandwiches. Serve with the following sauce.

Sauce: 2 cans root beer 1 c. bottled chili sauce hot pepper sauce (optional)

Combine root beer and chili sauce. boil; reduce heat and boil gently uncovered for 30 minutes until the sauce is reduced to 2 c. Add hot pepper sauce, if desired. 📧



Coca-Cola Cake by Patricia Warnemunde, St. James

2 c. all-purpose flour

2 eggs

1 c. coca cola

2 c. sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

2 T. cocoa

1 tsp. baking soda

½ c. buttermilk

½ tsp. salt

1 c. butter

Mix the flour, sugar, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. In a separate bowl mix the eggs, vanilla and buttermilk. Add to the flour mixture. Bring to a boil the butter, cola and cocoa; add to the flour mixture. Mix well. Pour into a greased 9x13" pan. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes at 350°. Cool.

Frosting: ½ c. butter

dash of salt

4 c. powdered sugar

2 T. cocoa

¼ c. coca cola

1 tsp. vanilla

Cream the butter and cocoa together. Add the salt and powdered sugar. Add the cola and vanilla. Mix thoroughly. 📧



Cherry Cola Salad by Colleen Freking, Heron Lake

¾ c. water

20 oz. can crushed pineapple with juice

¾ c. sugar

1 T. lemon juice

1 can cherry pie filling

1 can cold cola or 7-Up

6 oz. box cherry jello

½ c. chopped nuts

Combine water and sugar; boil. Add cherry pie filling and return to boil. Pour this boiling mixture over jello and stir until it dissolves. Then add the pineapple with its juice, lemon juice, cola or 7-up, and nuts. Pour into a serving bowl or into a 9x13" cake pan if you would like to cut into squares to serve. Chill. If you prefer, you can substitute applesauce (1½ c.) for the pineapple. Serves 8-10. 📧

Don't dig up trouble! Contact GSOC before digging



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. 📧





Richard 'Rick' Burud

Manager's Message

Welcome to our new newsletter design

This month marks the birth of a new cooperative newsletter. Your cooperative is working to improve and minimize the cost of communication to you on a monthly basis. However, you have a responsibility as a cooperative member to tell us what you like and what we can do to improve the new format. We look forward to hearing from you.

My 2009 predictions...

Normally, I make a few predictions around the first of the year. Some are right, but most of 2008's predictions were wrong so don't go to the bank with these:

1. Vikings make it to the playoffs.
2. About 50 percent of our troops come home from Iraq and our deployment is significantly reduced.
3. The economy is in a recession for the first six months with some growth by next Thanksgiving.
4. Gasoline prices increase from current levels of \$1.60 per gallon to \$2.10 per gallon this summer.
5. Electricity will increase between 6-10 percent to our members in 2009.
6. Twins get into the playoffs with one new unnamed pitcher.
7. Timberwolves struggle and don't make the playoffs again (not too much of a prediction).
8. Corn prices level at \$2.50 per bushel as ethanol production drops due to lower usage of gasoline.
9. Land prices in the area drop due to the recession and low commodity prices.

10. The Minnesota Senator's position finally is settled with Coleman declared the winner.

11. With a new president the world tests our country with a new world crisis.

Hopefully your predictions are better than mine. I hope some don't come true. We'll have to wait and see how many are right in 2009!

KARE 11 works with Sioux Falls digital channel 11 starting January 15

For members living near the Jackson/Nobles County border hit the rescan button that evening. New equipment will allow you to get 11 from Sioux Falls and CTV's KARE 11. 📺

High-speed satellite Internet —always on, fast, local service

\$99

in January 2009

Package start at \$49.95/month. Call 1-800-321-3520.

Wildblue



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The Board of Directors generally 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.

Board meeting highlights

Federated Rural Electric's Board of Directors met December 29. They acted on these issues:

- Approved 2009 directors' committee and delegate assignments.
- Set February 27 as the date for the 2009 work plan/budget meeting.
- Approved membership renewal in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association for 2009.
- Congratulated the employees for achieving a 91 on the onsite safety observation and a 91 score on the application for the safety accreditation for a 93 overall score. This qualifies FREA for discounted insurance.
- Increased the meter testing deposit from \$15 to \$25. If a member requests a meter to be tested, \$25 must be paid in advance. If the meter is not within the 2 percent tolerance, the \$25 is refunded; if it is within the range, the co-op keeps the \$25. 📺

