Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

# Connections

January 2011

Vol. 15, No. 1

Win a free trip to D.C.!

## Attention: high school students!

Visit the Washington, D.C. memorials and other famous monuments. Tour the nation's Capitol. Visit with Minnesota legislators about the nation's issues and make new friends from around the country. You can do all of these things in the 2011 Youth Tour!

Thanks to your electric cooperative, teens may win a free trip to Washington, D.C. this summer. Just enter our Youth Tour Contest. Co-ops from each state send teens to Washington, D.C. for Youth Tour. The first year of the tour involved approximately 400 young people from 12 states. Word-of-mouth spread and today more than 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 11-16.

See Page 4 for details on how to enter the contest.

Federated Rural Electric

*Connecting our co-ops & members to a progressive future*

Brown County
South Central
Federated

## Inside this issue:

Learn more about newest co-op director...Pages 4
Winter line patrol is underway...Page 6

Cooperative Alliance Partners
**Connections**

This publication focuses on CAP's members, programs and events. As this is the official member publication, member's story ideas, letters-to-the-editor and comments are welcomed.
Andrea Christoffer, CCC, Editor
*"Owned by those it serves"*

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# The Energy-Efficient Chef: cooking up energy savings in the kitchen

Energy Wise

Put on your energy savings apron when you cook a meal. Besides deciding what to cook, consider which appliance to use to save energy — the microwave, countertop appliance, oven or crockpot.

Large quantities of food are usually most efficiently cooked on the range or in the oven. Most newer self-cleaning ovens have heavy wall insulation so they bake and roast fairly efficiently. A good rule of thumb is to use the smallest cooking appliance possible for the amount of food. If you're just cooking servings for two, a countertop oven is ideal. If you plan on preparing multiple servings, choose the large range oven.

Another consideration when selecting your cooking appliance is how many consecutive items you have to cook. If you are going to bake a cake, roast some meat and then bake some potatoes, using the large range oven is best. The mass of the oven will hold heat from cooking one food item to the next. This eliminates the preheat cycle and provides more even cooking. Using a high-quality, well-insulated slow cooker can also be an energy saver. For fast cooking a pressure cooker dramatically reduces cooking time.

Small countertop convection ovens are efficient. Convection ovens have a small fan to circulate the heated air around food to cook it faster. Reducing cooking time reduces the total kilowatt-hours consumed and the heat generated in your kitchen. Some foods cook better without the convection air, but they will take longer. Of course, using a microwave oven saves electricity because the cooking times for small quantities are very short.

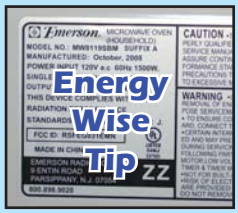
**Which handle should you grab when cooking your next meal? Microwave or oven? Depends on the food and how many people you're serving.**

Using smaller countertop kitchen appliances can often result in less electricity use overall, but not always. Many factors, including the time of the year and your HVAC (heating, ventilation, air-conditioning) system determine this overall electricity use.

For example, if you air condition your house and use the kitchen range during the summer, the heat from cooking makes the air conditioner run longer — the costs of cooking increase.

***— Continued on Page 7***

## Simple math; calculate appliance operating costs




The nameplate on each appliance lists the wattage or amperage it consumes. If wattage is listed, multiply that number by the amount of time the appliance is used (in hours per use, per week, or per month), and then divide this by 1,000. This gives you the kilowatt hours used. Multiply this number by the electric rate listed on your bill (in dollars per kilowatt-hour) and you'll see how much the appliance costs to operate. If the nameplate lists amperage, multiply it by 120 to get watts and start your calculations. Keep in mind that this calculation is an estimate, because many cooking appliances are thermostatically controlled — meaning on low setting, the heating elements are off most of the time. On high they may be on *all* the time. Use your best judgment to estimate how long they are on for personal cooking settings.

# Mini-pies are a great snack for a case of the monster munchies

Watt's New

Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie is a pretty big pie. How about 24 mini-pies instead? The mini-pie maker from Williams Sonoma makes it easy.

Create up to four individual-sized pies full of your favorite fillings with this simple-to-operate pie maker. Whether its savory meat pies, vegetable pies, quiches, fruit pies or tarts, most pies take just eight minutes to cook.

Features include:

• Locking latch and crimper seal ensures pie edges are completely sealed.

• Included pastry cutter ensures perfectly round pie bases and tops.

• Ready light indicates when the unit has reached optimal temperature and is ready to use.

• Cool-touch handles stays cool throughout the cooking process.

• Nonstick cooking plates can be easily wiped clean.

• Non-skid, non-marking feet on the base provide a stable platform.

**Make a pile of pies with the Williams Sonoma Mini-Pie Maker. The device makes pies in eight minutes. Not only do you get a tasty treat, you may save electricity because you don't have to heat up your full-sized oven.**

The mini-pie maker costs approximately $80 and is available through www.williams-sonoma.com.

# Home safety checklist for older adults

Safety

Last year, more than 1 million people 65 years and older were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with accidents at home.

Since most of these episodes resulted from a lack of maintenance, walk through your home and use the following checklist to spot possible safety hazards. If you notice a potential problem, arrange for it to be fixed immediately to prevent accident or injury.

**Look for the UL label — tested for safety.**

• Kitchen: Make sure all of your appliances carry an Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) seal, which means the item was tested and found safe to use. Check electrical cords for fraying or cracking; inspect step stools for splitting or cracking, plus throw rugs for tripping hazards like bumps and turned-up corners.

• Living room: Check rugs and runners, electrical cords, lamps and other lighting. Inspect the fireplace and chimney for fire hazards. Make sure all passageways are clear.

• Bathroom: Are small appliances marked with a UL seal? Check the bathtub, shower, rugs and mats for slipping hazards and inspect cabinets for safe storage of medications.

• Bedrooms: Examine rugs, runners, electrical and telephone cords; make sure the area around the bed is clear of items that could cause you to trip.

• Basement/garage/workshop: Make sure all power tools bear the UL mark. Check fuse and breaker boxes for possible malfunction and shock/fire hazards. Inspect extension cords and cords on tools and lawn and garden supplies. Check for proper ventilation and make sure flammable liquids are stored properly.

• Stairs: Make sure proper lighting exists on and around stairways. Examine handrails and steps for possible defects or weaknesses. Test stair coverings for tripping hazards.

— *Courtesy of Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.*



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# Federated Focus

**Youth Tour Contest from Page 1**

Encourage a local high school freshman, sophomore or junior to apply by February 25. Applications for the free trip to Washington, D.C. are available from local school counselors, www.federatedrea.coop or call/e-mail Federated. Fill out the application and write a 300-word essay on an energy-related topic. Five finalists will be interviewed March 30. First 15 applicants also receive a $20 Amazon.com gift card.

**Basin scholarship applications**

Remind your high school senior or college student with a year remaining to apply for the two $1,000 Federated scholarships by February 1. Applications are available from school counselors, www.federatedrea.coop or call/e-mail Federated. The student completes the application, writes an essay on local cooperatives, submits a transcript, ACT scores and a reference fills out a checklist. The parents must be Federated members.

**Iowa members' complaints**

If you have a concern or complaint regarding Federated Rural Electric, it should be addressed to: Richard Burud, manager, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or call 507-847-3520.

If Federated does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from: Utilities Board, Department of Commerce, 350 Maple St., Des Moines IA 50319-0069 or call 515-281-5979.

If your complaint is related to service, rather than rates, and Federated does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Utilities Division too.

# New director discovers what's behind paying the cooperative electric bill

**It's not a sign of the times when regular citizens step into leadership roles at your electric co-op. This has always been the cooperative way. Darvin Voss is Federated's newest director.**

Darvin Voss remembers gaining a new appreciation for Federated after serving four years on the nominating committee. He's now entering another era of learning as Federated's newest director elected at the November Annual Meeting.

"I remember attending the first nominating committee meeting in 2001," Voss explained. "I found it very interesting and highly recommend serving on the nominating committee (seeks candidates to run for director and nominating committee). The co-op attorney and general manager Richard Burud gave a summary about Federated. I remember thinking, 'wow, there's a lot more going on here than paying the light bill.'"

Voss brings board experience to Federated having served on the St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rost Township, on the finance board and as a trustee. He also served as a 4-H adult leader helping with livestock when his three children (Emily, Ashley and Dustin) showed hogs.

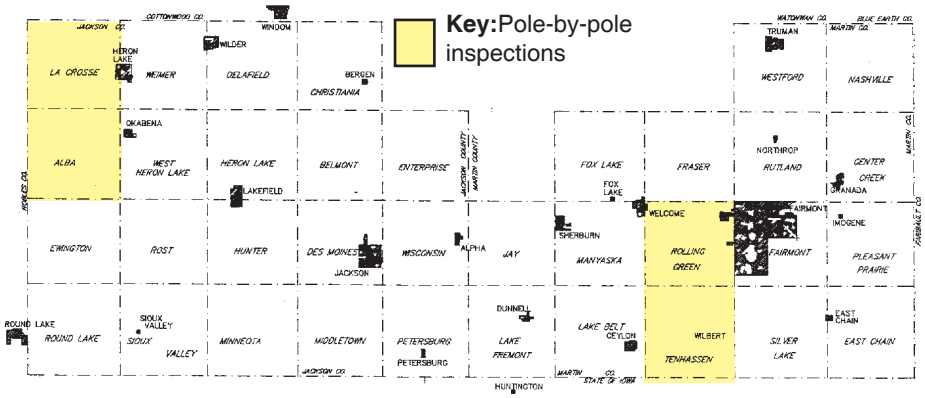
Voss raises corn, soybeans and custom finishes hogs in the Sioux Valley area with Cheryl, his wife. "After going to vocational school for auto mechanics, I worked at the Lakefield Implement Company, did carpentry and even sold

*— Continued on Page 5*

# New substation added to FREA

**Federated and Great River Energy linemen tested the transformer at the new Wisconsin substation December 21. The substation was previously owned by the City of Jackson and will help Federated serve members in Jackson's Industrial Park.**

# Line crews hit the road for line patrol




Why is that Federated truck driving so slow?

Federated's line crews are doing the annual line patrol this winter on all of its power lines. They visually inspect all power lines looking for minor problems before they become big problems and cause an outage. At the same time they are verifying the readings on all meters so you may see a Federated truck drive up to the meter and then leave.

In addition, some meters will be changed out as part of the co-op's conversion to automated meter reading. The first meters changed out this winter involve meters presently read by Federated's meter reader.

**Pole-by-pole inspections**

Other townships undergo pole-by-pole inspections where poles are struck with a hammer to test if it's sound or rotten. Inspections are planned in these townships: LaCrosse, Alba, Rolling Green and Tenhassen.

# Federated posts its annual notice for nondiscrimination

Federated is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410. Otherwise, call toll free 1-866-632-9992 (voice) or 1-800-877-8339 (TDD) or 1-866-377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Fill-the-Fridge winner earns $100 gift card

**Congratulations Marge Thiesse, Ceylon. She entered Great River Energy's website contest called "Fill-the-Fridge" last fall. Her name was drawn as the local winner of a $100 grocery gift card. Go to www.mnbrighterideas.com to learn how to save energy like Marge.**

# Introducing new Federated Director Darvin Voss

*— Continued from Page 4*

Asgrow seed for 15 years," Voss stated. "I enjoy the rural lifestyle as it's the best place to raise a family. We are a fourth-generation farm family so it was natural to get into farming when the opportunity arose."

Voss enjoys deer and pheasant hunting, along with ice fishing, in his free time.

"As a director, we review the co-op's income and expenses," Voss stated. "We monitor the power supply issues and how it affects Federated. This co-op runs like a well-oiled machine with good management and employees. I'm looking forward to serving the co-op members."

# Dip into the well of green power with Wellspring Wind Energy

Is your support of green energy "welling up" in you?

Sign up for Wellspring renewable wind energy program; it is a voluntary program offering wind-generated electricity to co-op members. Electricity provided by wind generation is a coordinated effort between Great River Energy (GRE) and its 28 distribution cooperatives.

Currently, wind energy for the Wellspring program comes from the Chandler Hills Wind Farm, the Trimont Area Wind Farm and the G. McNeilus Wind Farm. GRE continues to add new wind resources to the Wellspring program as interest in the renewable energy increases.

Interested co-op members are asked to make a minimum one-year commitment to buy electricity from the Wellspring renewable wind energy program for a slightly added cost — 40 cents/100 kilowatt-hour block. Sign up for one block, three or whatever you want.

Review the most commonly asked questions. Use the coupon below and return it with your electric bill or e-mail your cooperative the same information on the coupon.

**Is the wind power supplied directly to my home?**

No. The electricity generated by the wind turbines is fed into the state's electric system, called the grid. It is like pouring a pitcher of water into a pond. You can't get the water from the pitcher back out of the pond. The same holds true for recapturing wind-generated electricity from the grid. It is available to use, but cannot deliver the exact electron generated by the wind turbine. The wind power that you purchase will replace electricity that would have been generated by conventional fossil fuels.

**Do customers still receive traditional sources of power?**

Yes. Members are not able to distinguish whether the electrons flowing into their homes were generated by wind power or not. Participation in the Wellspring wind energy program increases the percentage of renewable energy supplied to cooperative members over and above the state mandated Renewable Energy Standard.

**Is the power in members' homes dependent upon the wind blowing?**

No. Members' power will continue as usual.

**Do members get all of their electrical energy from the Wellspring renewable wind energy program?**

Members can decide how much wind energy they want to buy (in 100 kilowatt hour blocks). Members can purchase an amount up to their normal monthly consumption. For example: if their normal usage is 800 kilowatt hours/month they can purchase up to eight blocks.

**Does wind power cost more?**

Yes. Although this project is the most cost-effective "Green Resource" option, it is still slightly more expensive. The extra cost of wind power will be passed directly through to the member. The typical household uses 800 kilowatt hours of energy per month.

**When will I be billed for the Wellspring blocks that I purchase?**

Wellspring members are billed monthly on their electric co-op bill.

**How does this project affect people who do not subscribe?**

This project has no impact on members who do not want to participate. Many customers may be satisfied knowing their power is produced by efficient conventional power plants. This project is for customers who want to use renewable energy resources and are willing to pay the extra costs associated with it.

**Why is this program offered?**

Cooperative members have indicated a preference for renewable energy options. Renewable energy is a product that customers want and we are in the business of providing what our members want.

Call your electric co-op with any questions.

**Sign me up for Wellspring wind energy**

Name on electric bill _____

Address _____

City/state/zip _____

Co-op location number _____

Co-op member number _____

Sign me up for:

_____100 kWhr blocks x 40 cents/block =

$_____ extra each month

Signature _____

***Return with electric bill or mail to co-op***

## Gush over mushrooms; rush mushroom recipes to us

Whether canned mushrooms, fresh or recipes using mushroom soup, share with us your favorite recipes containing mushrooms. Mail 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.

### **Ham & Wild Rice Hotdish** by Laura Greiner, Truman

1 c. wild rice
minced onion
¾ c. celery, chopped
1 c. ham, diced
2 slices bacon, diced
3 T. butter
salt & pepper to taste
1 can mushroom soup
½ c. milk
1 c. mushrooms, optional

Wash the rice and then cover well with hot water. Simmer for 30-45 minutes or until the rice is tender. Drain. Saute onion, celery, ham and bacon in butter. Add the salt, pepper and soup diluted with milk and mushrooms. Mix well with wild rice and place in buttered casserole. Bake at 350º for 35 to 40 minutes.

### **Casserole for Hungry Families** by Mary Ellen Stenzel, Heron Lake

Layer in 9x13" pan: 1½ lbs. browned ground beef; 1 can drained mushroom pieces; garlic and onion salt; 8 oz. mozzarella cheese; half of 32 oz. jar of spaghetti sauce; 1½ c. spaghetti or macaroni, cooked and drained; the other half of the spaghetti sauce and finally top with 8 oz. mozzarella cheese. Cover and bake one hour at 325º.

### **Corned Beef Hot Dish** by Judy Anderson, St. James

2 c. cooked noodles or Creamettes
1 can cream of chicken soup
7 oz. can corned beef
1/3 c. onion, minced
1 c. milk
½ c. cheese, grated
salt & pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients and pour into 1½ quart greased casserole. Top with bread crumbs and melted butter. Bake at 350º for 45 minutes. Serves 4.

**Energy savings are no sweat with a Marathon water heater! Call your co-op today.**

## Heating system affects cooking efficiency

*— Continued from Page 2*

The moisture given off from cooking also increases the air-conditioning load. Whenever possible, use countertop cooking appliances outdoors or use a solar cooker for rice and steaming vegetables.

Things are reversed during the winter. All of the electricity used for cooking ends up heating your house and reducing the heating load on your heat pump or furnace. Cooking is basically similar to resistance heating, so you get one Btu of heat into your house for each Btu you pay for on your monthly utility bill.

If you have a standard electric furnace or baseboard heating, the heat from cooking costs the same, making the added heat a cost-effective advantage. If you use a heat pump for heating your house, you may be getting up to three Btus of heat for each one you buy. The heat you gain from cooking costs you more than your heat pump, so it is not as advantageous.

Efficient cooking means happy tummies and energy bills.

*— Courtesy of James Dulley*

## Call before you dig

**1-800-252-1166**

GOPHER STATE ONE CALL

**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.

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E-mail: info@federatedrea.coop
Website: http://www.federatedrea.coop

Office hours: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

Richard Burud, General Manager

David A. Hansen, President — 847-3530
David Meschke, Vice President — 238-1122
Jim Oltman, Secretary/Treasurer — 464-3479
Glenn Dicks — 662-5321
Lyle Fisher — 847-4757
Jon Saxen — 764-3771
Darvin Voss — 662-6679

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.

# Manager's Message

Richard 'Rick' Burud

**Cooperative receives two grants**

Federated Rural Electric has received two grants for 2011. One will help defray a portion of the energy audit costs for members who qualify as small businesses or agriculture producers who are considering making energy-efficiency improvements. The other will help fund water runoff containment from the co-op's Jackson buildings and parking lots so it doesn't enter the Des Moines River watershed. The first grant is from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the second is from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

**My 2011 predictions...**

As in the past years, I've made predictions for the upcoming year. Remember, these are predictions and the likelihood that they come to fruition are not always too good.

1. Corn prices will remain "very good" with China needing to buy.
2. The Vikings get a new coach, "Wade Phillips."
3. Vikings get a new stadium approved with a retractable roof.
4. Summer brings "extreme heat."
5. Twins don't make the World Series due to a lack of quality pitchers.
6. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to push "global warming" regulations, which end up in the Federal courts.
7. Santa Claus comes again in 2011.

**Need a service upgrade or new service for a new home, shop or upgrading grain drying?**

During this time of year, our cooperative orders most of our materials for the 2011 summer construction season. In order to meet your needs if you're planning to upgrade or add a new electric service, call our office and talk to Joe Marthaler (Jackson County) or Jerald Hagen (Martin County) at 1-800-321-3520. This will help us greatly in meeting your needs in 2011.

**Yes dear, I'm *CERTAIN* everything is fine at home.**

**Even when you're not there, protect your home against:**

- Vandals & burglars
- Smoke damage & fire
- Frozen pipes
- Flooded basement
- Sump pump failure
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Power failure
- And more...

**Purchase a new Heartland Security system by January 31, 2011 to receive three months of FREE monitoring. (Certain restrictions apply; cannot be combined with other offers.)**

# Board meeting highlights

Federated Rural Electric's Board of Directors met December 28. All directors were present. They acted on these board items.

- Set February 28 as the date for the 2011 Workplan & Budget meeting.
- Approved contributions to the employees voluntarily signing up for a Health Savings Account for 2011.
- Approved the cooperative's 2011 membership dues in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).
- Voting delegate certificates were received for the NRECA and National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative Annual Meetings.
- Listened to reports by department managers and on subsidiaries.
- Approved a resolution on the Lakefield Junction sale as a substitute resource from Great River Energy.

**Sign up for Auto Pay; ask for the brochure**

Save stamps & trips to mailbox