

# Connections

June 2024



For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric

Volume 28, Issue 6

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



**District 1:**  
**Aaden Nauman**  
Windom  
son of Jennifer



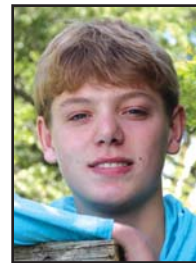
**District 2:**  
**Devin Untiedt**  
Lakefield, son of  
Shane Untiedt &  
Amy Watje



**District 3:**  
**Nolan Ambrose**  
Jackson  
son of Jeremy &  
Kassie



**District 4:**  
**Brynn Gustafson**  
Fairmont  
daughter of Kyle &  
Patricia



**District 5:**  
**Cameron Schmitdke**  
Fairmont  
son of Ryan  
& Kristin



**District 6:**  
**Olivia Mattson**  
Granada  
daughter of  
Bradley & Jackie



**At-Large District:**  
**Sarah Matasovsky**  
Fairmont  
daughter of Steve  
& Brenda



**At-Large District:**  
**Jaydan Moses**  
Armstrong  
daughter  
of Deborah Tietje



**At-Large District:**  
**Nolan Madsen**  
Okabena  
son of Gary &  
Jody

Nine high school seniors received a \$700 Federated Operation Round Up Scholarship. 38 students completed the Federated scholarship application.

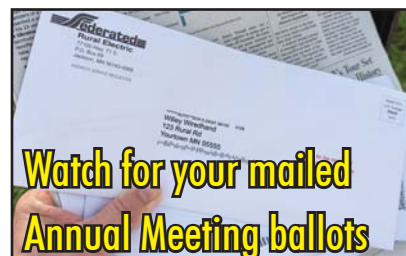
This is the 22<sup>nd</sup> year students applied for it. A scholarship was awarded to each co-op district, plus three more where remaining applicants had a second chance of winning. These are the same districts used for director elections.

This is the 34<sup>th</sup> consecutive year Federated dedicated funds to high school scholarships and the 29<sup>th</sup> year that the scholarships are from Operation Round Up. This totals \$154,900 in Federated scholarships.

Congratulations to these and all high school graduates! 🎓



**Federated**  
**will be closed**  
**July 4<sup>th</sup>**  
*Crews are on call in case of outages*



**Watch for your mailed Annual Meeting ballots**

**Your Annual Meeting ballots and Annual Report will arrive around July 1. Vote to be entered for drawing — \$1,000 worth of electric bill credits!**

### At A Glance



*Sign up for outage text notifications and stay informed*

Whether you are at work or play, know if you have an electrical outage. Sign up for our FREE outage text notifications. Go to [www.federatedrea.coop](http://www.federatedrea.coop) and click on the text notification button. Otherwise, call us during business hours or e-mail [billing@federatedrea.coop](mailto:billing@federatedrea.coop). 📞



## Keep your cool this summer by ensuring your cooling unit is ready for the heat & humidity

It's the hottest day of summer and you are already dripping sweat. You turn your central air on and nothing happens! Prevent the panic when it comes to summer cooling with these ultra "cool" troubleshooting tips!

Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is one of the most important and expensive systems in your home. Detecting issues early helps you plan for repairs or equipment replacement.

Equipment issues can affect your electricity use, which may result in higher energy bills. The age of your equipment can be a major factor in function. The lifespan of a heating and cooling system ranges from 15 to 20 years.

Proper maintenance and lower use increases the life of the equipment. To find out the age of your system, look for the manufactured date printed on the unit's nameplate. If you can't find it, search online using the model number or call the manufacturer.

If you live by the mantra, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," you could be left sweating this summer. If your system is approaching or past the 20-year mark, start saving for a new system and request replacement estimates. Watch out for these warning signs, indicating your heating and cooling system needs repairs or replacement.

### **Air conditioning is not as cool as usual**

If the air from your air conditioner is warm or not as cool as it usually feels, the equipment has an issue. It could be a problem with the compressor or a refrigerant leak. Contact a professional to get the issue checked, as special certifications are required for handling refrigerants. Many refrigerants, especially ones used in older systems,



**Be cool as a cucumber with a new cold climate heat pump, which is up to 300 percent efficient for lower monthly operating costs for cooling and heating.**

are harmful to the environment. Fix leaks before adding more refrigerant.

### **Low airflow from vents**

If you aren't getting good airflow, it could be an easy fix, such as filter replacement or opening closed dampers. If you've made these fixes and airflow is not at normal levels, contact a professional. A bigger problem may exist with a motor, fan or something else.

### **Bad odors?**

Heating and cooling systems sometimes smell when you first start them up for the season. Those smells should be minor and dissipate quickly. Any serious smells, such as burning metal, melting plastic or noxious odors, are a sign that your system is in trouble. If you smell those odors, turn your system off immediately and contact a professional.

### **Strange noises?**

Noise is associated with the fans and motors in heating and cooling systems. Take note of any excessive or new noises. If your system is making any clunking, clanging or whistling noises, turn it off and check the filter. If that doesn't solve it, call a pro.

### **Running frequently?**

Your system needs to run more to keep up on extreme weather days, but watch if it runs too often. Short cycling is when a system cycles on and off before completing the heating or cooling process. Contact a professional.

Several factors come into play when deciding to fix existing equipment or invest in new equipment. Consider the severity of the issue, repair costs, the likelihood of additional repairs, equipment lifespan and your budget.

The efficiency of your existing system is also a consider—

— *Continued on Page 6*

## Upgrade light switch to make cell phone a remote control

See the light! Enjoy easier access with your light switch at home. Make your light switch dimmable and also use it as remote control light switch by using your Smart phone.

Imagine dimming the lights in the living room without getting up from your recliner by using your cell phone. Better yet, shut off the bedroom lights from your bed using the cell phone app. The Feit Wi-Fi dimmer switch makes it all possible. The switch costs about \$23 from your local Ace Hardware Store or Menards. Otherwise, order similar switches from Amazon.

Instructions are provided on how to change it out with a few tools or hire an electrician. Always shut off the breaker first. Unhook the wires to the old switch and rehook up to the new switch. Then you download the app for your cell phone and grant it access to your home's modem and Wi-Fi. It is compatible with Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant for voice commands as well. Up to 20 of these switches can be grouped together on the app.

This requires using dimmable bulbs and requires a neutral wire. Ⓢ



Dim your LED Lights with this dimmable switch from Feit or use the Smart phone app.  
— Feit photo

## Safety

# Make big splash with summer safety tips

As summer arrives, people embrace outdoor activities, home improvement projects and increased use of electrical devices to keep cool. Staying safe around electricity is crucial to prevent hazards such as shocks, fires and other injuries. Follow these tips:

- Inspect extension cords before use. Check for any damage to cords, such as fraying or exposed wires. Ensure the extension cord is rated for outdoor use and can handle the power requirements of the devices you're connecting.

- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets are essential for outdoor areas.

They automatically shut off the electrical circuit when they detect a ground fault, reducing the risk of shocks.

- Maintain a safe distance between electrical devices and water. Never use electrical appliances near a pool



or hot tub. Ensure that pool and hot tub electrical systems are on dedicated circuits with GFCI protection to prevent accidental electrocution.

- Schedule regular maintenance for air conditioning units to ensure they are functioning safely and efficiently.

Keep the area around your air conditioner free from debris to prevent overheating and potential fires.

- Do not plug too many high-wattage devices into a single outlet or power strip. This can overload the circuit and cause a fire. Protect sensitive electronics from power surges by using surge protectors, especially during summer storms.

- During a power outage, unplug electronic devices to prevent damage from power surges when electricity is restored. Consider installing a generator to provide power during outages, but ensure it is used safely with the manufacturer's instructions plus a transfer switch to protect line crews.

These simple actions enable you to stay protected around electricity during your summer activities. Enjoy the fun and the sun — safely! Ⓢ

# Federated Focus

## Attend Twins Play Ball Clinics



Take your kids or grandkids to the Twins Play Ball clinics in our area this summer. Choose from four different sessions:

- Saturday, June 22, 3-5 p.m. at Welcome's Fox Lake Area Sports Complex.
- Saturday, July 27, 9-11 a.m. at the Heron Lake Laker Field.
- Saturday, July 27, 3-5 p.m. at the Jackson County Central High School baseball field.
- Sunday, July 28, 10-noon at Fairmont's Winnebago Avenue Sports Complex.

The sessions are free, but you need to advance register the student (ages six to 12 — boys and girls are welcome). They will learn about hitting, fielding, throwing and having good attitudes too from the Twins Play Ball staff. Register at: <https://www.mlb.com/twins/play-ball/programs/youth-clinics>

Each child should bring his/her ballglove, sunscreen and water bottle. These events are sponsored by Great River Energy and your local electric cooperative.

### Annual Meeting changes format

Due to declining attendance and increasing costs, Federated's 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will be a remote format August 1 (call to listen or attend by Zoom). The quorum comes from members voting via mail. Watch your mail box around July 1 for the annual meeting ballots and the annual report summarizing the financials, candidates and Bylaws/Articles of Incorporation amendments. Return your ballot by July 31 to be eligible for the drawing worth \$1,000 in bill credits. (b)



Scott Reimer

## Manager's Message

### Groundbreaking starts fiber project in Jackson County

We celebrated with the groundbreaking for the Jackson County Border-to-Border Round 8 Low Density Grant project BCPF-23-0002-FY23 for fiber-to-the-premises May 29. This Jackson County Fiber Project will serve 480 households, businesses and farms in Jackson County. In a funding partnership with Jackson County and the State of Minnesota Federated will improve unserved levels to 1 gigabyte per second (Gbps) download and 1 Gbps upload on their fiber network, exceeding the 2026 state goal. Building a fiber-to-the-premises network improves access to education and health care. It will also increase employment, as businesses leverage this new network and telecommuting opportunities arise. This project was formally kicked off with representatives from the state of Minnesota, state and federal legislators, as well as the involved contractors and engineers. (See Page 8 photo.) It was a great event. We look forward to getting this project started around June 1. The southern part of the project from Interstate 90 south will be the 2024 goal and then move to the north of I-90 segments in 2025 with completion by December 31, 2025.

### More employees mean more office space needed; architect hired

As Federated grows, so does the need for space to accommodate growth. The headquarters building in Jackson is structurally fine; however, we believe that we can make better use of the space we have and accomplish what we need. The firm of Olson & Hobbie Architects were hired to do an evaluation of the space. We engaged employees for their input and gathered information on what their space requirements are now and in the future. Now the architects will be compiling it for a recommendation. Likely, we will look at the entire footprint as a clean pallet and create a work flow that best reflects Federated today with the electric and broadband operations as fully supported. The plan, once vetted, will go to the Board of Directors for further discussion; hopefully, we can set a course for the project in 2025. This will look more like a complete remodel with all of the utilities such as water, sewer, electric and communications updated versus a new facility, as the bones of the structure, we believe are in good condition.

### Minnesota legislative session ends with 'chaos fireworks'

The legislative session came to an end filled with fireworks. The DFL and the GOP faced off with spirited debate and did not agree to much. The property tax clarification bill (SF 1242/HF 1171), which cooperatives were monitoring, did not pass, as no tax bill was reported out of committee prior to the closing moments when a monster omnibus bill was pieced together. The Minnesota Energy Infrastructure Permitting Act (SF 4784/HF 4700) incorporates a subset of the ideas that had widespread support from energy stakeholders; it will make electric sector permitting faster and more cost effective so in essence the grid resiliency that has been talked about will be somewhat easier to do. The Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) updates made some strides. The provisions streamline the ECO administrative burden and allows incentives for fuel switching programs. The bill allows cooperatives to achieve a higher percentage of their total conservation requirement through efficient fuel switching, as opposed to traditional conservation; plus, it removes the sunset provision that allows co-ops to exclude electric vehicle load from their total load, when calculating the conservation reduction needed to meet ECO goals — ultimately reducing the total amount of electricity reduction required to meet the goals. One of the cooperatives' top priorities was ensuring no mandates were passed. Several bills, including HF 5097 (the distributed generation interconnection bill) and HF 3895 (the cooperative governance bill), as well as other mandates, such as net metering and mandating distributed generation, were introduced or carried over from last year. However, none of these bills moved forward or passed. (b)

# Federated coordinates double-matching funds totaling \$30,000 to assist four local fire departments

Federated recently presented a combined donation of \$7,500 to four local fire departments: Alpha, Ceylon, Lakefield and Northrop.

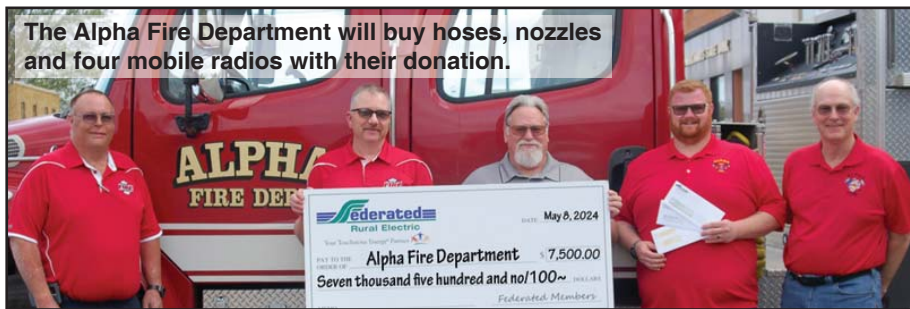
Federated took advantage of matching funds from two organizations to triple the impact. “Federated donated \$2,500, then secured matching funds from CoBank’s Sharing Success Program and Basin Electric Cooperative,” stated Federated’s General Manager Scott Reimer. “Cooperatives are concerned about their local communities; we saw this as a way to help each fire department with costly equipment needs. This is the third year of helping our local fire departments; we will rotate this donation each year until we’ve helped all the fire departments in our service area.”

CoBank is one entity that provides Federated long-term financing for line construction projects, while Basin Electric is one of Federated’s wholesale power providers.

The Alpha Fire Department will buy hoses and nozzles with some of the donation. “We are also excited to buy four mobile radios for the following vehicles for better emergency response: our tanker, pumper, rescue and grass rig,” stated Curt Endreson, Alpha’s fire chief.

The Ceylon Fire Department has been raising funds for a few years for a torpedo nozzle system. “This nozzle has a spray of 20 feet in many angles,” stated Ellen Kling, Ceylon training officer. “It protects firefighters from running into an unsafe environment, as it knocks down the fire. Being a rural department, we don’t always have enough people to go in immediately.”

The Northrop Fire Department will buy two new air packs. Each one costs \$7,000. “Our air packs are over 15 years old,” said John Clymer, Northrops’s fire chief. “While we don’t use air packs often, they are critical at times for firefighting. This donation covers one and then the city and Fire Relief Associations funds will buy a second one. Both will be placed on June 2024 • Connections



our primary pumper so it would be the first ones used for firefighter safety.”

Finally, the Lakefield Fire Department recently purchased new self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). “This

new gear required that we upgrade/replace our existing compressor and fill equipment,” stated Cody Poelaert, fire department treasurer. “This donation helps offset this purchase.”

# Don't dig up trouble! Call Gopher State One Call first; watch for the colored flags & markings

No, the little flags are not lawn decorations, but safety notices.

Before doing underground digging more than 12 inches deep, call Gopher State One Call 48 business hours in advance (1-800-252-1166 or 811). You can also register your digging site online ([www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)).

You need to provide the address where you will be digging and what area is involved. Gopher State then notifies your electric cooperative, telephone companies, fiber, water, etc. These utilities have 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) to locate their underground utilities in the rights-of-way.

For example, with underground electric cable the co-op's contractor locates up to the meter. You will need to hire an electrician to locate the underground power lines on your side of the meter and property. Use white spray paint or flags to indicate the area that you need located before calling.

Contact Gopher State if you or your contractor will be digging more than 12 inches deep for:

- tree planting
- tiling
- new foundation, building or deck
- landscaping
- installing a fence or invisible pet fencing
- digging up a driveway, whether in the yard or ditch.

Once 48 hours passes, digging may proceed. Just hand dig in the areas within 24 inches of the flags. If no flags



**Know what's below. Call Gopher State One Call before you dig so underground locates, like this, can occur marking the underground electric cable, fiber, telephone, gas lines and more.**

or spray paint occurred, it means no underground utilities are in this area.

This is a critical safety step. Avoid electrocution and digging into underground electric lines. You don't want to be the one cutting underground power cable or fiber line and paying for those repair costs. Hitting a gas line is equally dangerous and expensive.

Safety first! Gopher State and your utilities thank you for your safety diligence.

The color of paint or flags identifies the type of underground facility	
WHITE	Area of Proposed Excavation
PINK	Temporary Survey Markings
RED	Electric
YELLOW	Gas, Oil, Steam, Propane
ORANGE	Communication, CATV, Fiber
BLUE	Water
PURPLE	Reclaimed Water, Irrigation
GREEN	Sewer

## Replace old central air with a heat pump to cut monthly costs

— Continued from Page 2

ation. Heating and cooling technology improvements have come a long way in the last 20 years. Lower operation costs offset the cost of a new system over time. Remember, the more expensive (and efficient) unit to buy often provides lower monthly costs and pays for itself.

Consider your options before you are in desperate need. Secure estimates from two contractors. Ask the contractor, "If this was your home, what type of system would you install and why?" The best solution for your home might be a different type of equipment, like a heat pump.

Factor in the savings available for

switching to a cold climate air source heat pump. The most efficient models qualify for 30 percent federal tax incentive up to \$2,000. Plus, check out the rebates available from your electric cooperative for air source, ductless and ground source heat pumps. See the co-op's website or call to visit with the co-op's energy expert.

## Rib-tickling, tasty time! Share your favorite rib recipes with us

Get out a bib for some tasty ribs! Share your favorite rib recipes with us, whether it's pork or beef, whether grilled, baked or your secret BBQ sauce. Send your favorite rib 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! 📧

### Potato Salad by Adelle Fischer, New Ulm

Boil 6 medium potatoes and peel; slice or cube potatoes.

Boil 4 eggs and slice or cube.

Mix dressing in a bowl:	1½ c. mayo	1 T. vinegar
1 T. mustard	1 tsp. salt	1/8 tsp. pepper
1/3 c. dill pickle juice	½ c. sugar	

Add the dressing to the potatoes and eggs. 📧

### Mock Western Dressing by Barb Sellner, Sleepy Eye

2/3 c. ketchup	¼ tsp. onion powder	1 T. honey
1/3 c. vegetable oil	½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce	¼ tsp. salt
1/3 c. sugar	¼ tsp. garlic powder	

Mix together and enjoy. 📧



Switch to a 'star' performing dehumidifier

Stop using your old energy-guzzling dehumidifier that causes high summer electric bills. Switch to an Energy Star dehumidifier. Enjoy a \$25 Energy Star rebate from your co-op. Find the rebate form on our website. 📧

## Efficient, electric water heating



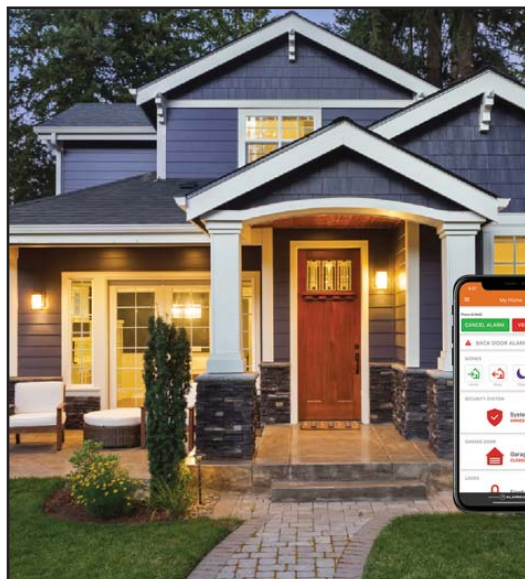
Call your local electric cooperative for your next water heater. It features a limited-lifetime warranty against leaks for the original owner.

## 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](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter. 📧



## Security systems made easy

A security system from Heartland Security is an affordable, reliable way to help keep your home and family safe.



888.264.6380 • [heartlandss.com](http://heartlandss.com)  
Subsidiary of your local electric co-op

# Border-to-Border fiber groundbreaking occurs for Jackson County



The Jackson County Border-to-Border fiber buildout project is underway! Federated celebrated the groundbreaking for this project May 29 with employees, contractors, and several local, state, and federal elected officials. It is not too late to get signed up for a fiber drop if you have a property within the grant area! This project will help bring Federated Broadband one step closer to being able to provide fiber internet to all of its customers. Contractors will begin work south of Interstate 90 in June with the project set for completion by the end of 2025.

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number CPFFN0179 awarded to the State of Minnesota by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Not in the fiber area at this time? Call our office to see what other service options you may have. Federated Broadband is here to serve you as your local hometown cooperative. We provide internet and streaming TV packages to serve your individual needs. ☎️



info@federatedbroadband.coop • www.federatedbroadband.coop

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



Official monthly newsletter published  
77100 US Hwy 71, PO Box 69  
Jackson, MN 56143-0069

E-mail: info@federatedrea.coop

Website: <http://www.federatedrea.coop>

Facebook.com/Federated

Phone: 507-847-3520 or 1-800-321-3520

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

Scott Reimer, General Manager

David A. Hansen, President — 507-841-1176

David Meschke, Vice President — 507-236-4896

Darvin Voss, Secretary/Treasurer — 507-370-3201

Bruce Brockmann — 507-399-3487

Glenn Dicks — 507-840-1075

Jon Saxen — 507-236-7027

Scott Thiesse — 507-399-6427

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

### Streaming TV

TV and internet packages start at \$140 per month. All you need is a Roku Ultra or Roku Ultra LT. Call the office, e-mail or see our website for details.

### 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 getting your event connected 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)! ☎️