

Connections

September 2022

For the member-owners of Federated Rural Electric



Volume 26, Issue 9

EV Ride & Drive Event amazes visitors on quiet ride & pricing



Electric cooperative members explored the features of six electric vehicles August 10.

What did you think of driving an electric vehicle?

"I was amazed by the ride and they are more affordable than I thought, with a number of models under \$35,000."


That was the comment from one co-op member who did a test drive August 10 in Windom. Your electric cooperative partnered with three neighboring cooperatives, Great River Energy and the American Lung Association to sponsor the event. Six vehicles were on display, including:

- 2021 & 2022 Tesla S
- 2022 Chevy Bolt
- 2022 Rivian R1T
- 2020 Hyundai Kona
- 2018 Chrysler Pacifica

In addition, about 100 people signed a waiver and completed a survey to test drive/ride in three electric vehicles:

- F-150 Lightning
- Chevy Bolt
- Kia Niro PHEV

Slayton Tesla owner, Travis Pierson, was one of the panelists and brought his red Tesla S for display. "My wife drives our Tesla from Slayton to Marshall for work every day. We charge it at home at night, just like your phone. If we are going to the Cities, we charge it for five minutes at St. Peter to get to the Twin Cities. We have very little range anxiety after owning it for a year. The beauty of it is a 'full tank' every morning after charging."

Your electric cooperative wants to be your energy information resource and this was one way of increasing awareness and education on electric vehicles. Visit your cooperative's website for information ranging on EV charger rebates, link to a listing of electric vehicles' pricing and range, plus special rates for time-of-use charging. 




Federated members Ray and Deb Salzwedel, Windom, test drove the Ford F-150 Lightning pickup from the Sleepy Eye Ford dealership.

At A Glance



Water heater 'falling' behind? Schedule your install today!

Before the holidays arrive and snow falls, upgrade your 25-year old water heater to a new, efficient unit with a life-time warranty against leaks for the original owner. Call Federated to schedule your install now. The water heater costs \$629.49 (includes tax and installation). 

Tune up your furnace for maximum efficiency this coming heating season

In the average household about \$1,000 a year is spent on heating. It pays to keep your furnace working as efficiently as possible.

Dirt and neglect are the top causes of furnace inefficiency. Maintaining your furnace will keep your system operating at peak performance and prevent future problems and unwanted costs.

Here are some steps you can take to keep your furnace operating smoothly.

Hire a professional contractor to perform routine maintenance of your equipment. Contractors get busy once winter comes, so it's best to schedule a furnace checkup in the fall.

A typical check-up includes:

Check thermostat settings to ensure the furnace keeps you comfortable when you are home and saves energy while you are away.

Tighten electrical connections and measure voltage and current on motors. Faulty electrical connections can cause unsafe operation of your furnace and reduce its life.

Lubricate moving parts. Parts that lack lubrication create friction in motors and cause inefficiency.

Inspect the condensate drain in your furnace. A plugged drain can cause water damage in the house and affect indoor humidity levels.

Check the starting cycle of the equipment to assure the furnace starts, operates and shuts off properly.

Inspect filters. A dirty air filter causes your furnace to work harder to distribute air throughout your home. This increases energy costs and damages your equipment, leading to



early failure. Therefore, it's important to check your air filter once a month. If it's dirty, take action!

How to change your furnace filter:

1. Locate the current filter. It will be easily accessible and generally on the side or bottom of your unit, possibly behind a door or in a bracket.

2. Turn off your furnace and fan using your thermostat, your circuit breaker panel or switch.

3. Open the access cover or grill (if you have one) and pull out the old filter. Before you pull it all the way out, look for the arrow on the side, indicating which way to put the new filter in. Look for the arrow on the edge of the new filter. The arrows should point toward the furnace or blower unit.

4. Insert the new filter carefully. It should be a tight fit, so wiggle it a bit.

5. Close the access cover. If you don't have a cover and can see the edge of the filter, it's a good idea to grab some duct tape or a magnetic cover to seal that space.

Smart thermostats

A smart thermostat automati-

cally adjusts heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. These devices offer the ability to monitor and adjust your home's temperature even when you are away. This allows you to set up schedules for the most efficient heating possible.

Seal your ducts

In houses with forced-air heating systems air is distributed through the house's ducts. In a typical house about 20-30 percent of the air that moves through the duct system is lost due to leaks, holes and poorly connected ducts. The result is higher utility bills and difficulty keeping the house comfortable, no matter where the thermostat's temperature is set.

If you seal your own ducts, start by sealing air leaks using mastic sealant or metal tape and insulating all the ducts that you can access (such as those in attics, crawlspaces, unfinished basements and garages). Never use duct tape, as it is not long-lasting. Make sure that the connections at vents and registers are well-sealed where they meet the floors, walls and ceiling.

Other considerations

If your furnace is more than 10 years old and you are noticing telltale signs of system failure, now may be the time to consider a replacement. Depending on where you live, replacing your old heating system with one that's earned the Energy Star logo can save you nearly \$140 annually. Talk to the co-op about installing a heat pump and our rebates to lower heating costs too.

— Courtesy of energystar.gov

Make scanning documents a snap!

If you have folders bursting in your file cabinet, packets of receipts filling your desk drawers and photos spilling out of albums, you can digitize those documents quickly and easily with the Fujitsu ScanSnap iX600.

The ScanSnap offers Wi-Fi compatibility to allow you to directly connect to smart devices or cloud services without a PC. This enables you to send the scanned documents to a variety of digital places for storage.

The ScanSnap is also great for businesses. One scanner will support up to four user licenses. The scanner also provides up to 30 customizable




The Fujitsu ScanSnap makes quick work of digitizing documents.

profiles, which gives business owners different scanning options.

The ScanSnap features a 4.3-inch touchscreen for easy use that allows you to set up preferences.

Scanning two-sided documents is no problem with the ScanSnap. It has duplex capability. It also has speed. Up to 40 pages can be scanned per minute. The ScanSnap can scan photos in under a second with intelligent features, such as auto facial orientation and red-eye reduction.

The ScanSnap iX600 costs approximately \$450 and is available at a variety of retailers and online. 

Safety

Be safe around electricity at harvest

Before we know it, harvest arrives. Every year your electric co-op sees power line poles hit by farm equipment. Making contact with an overhead or underground power line is serious and potentially deadly. Follow these tips to avoid becoming "that guy."

- Power lines can sag. Just because your equipment cleared it last year, it might not this year. Make sure to always keep 10-foot distance from any overhead power line. How can you tell? Use a spotter to watch the equipment being moved.

- Make it a habit to look around before beginning the day and notice where the power lines are located. Look for underground cabinets. Point out these items to other farm workers.

- Be extra cautious when moving equipment in windy conditions. It is always better to lower equipment before moving it. For example, always lower a grain auger when moving it from bin to bin.

- Build grain bins away from power lines to reduce the risk of grain



Watch out for electric poles when working the ground. They are no match for today's powerful farm machinery.

augers coming into contact with the lines. This action also eliminates the chance of a storm blowing a power line onto a metal building, which then becomes electrified.

- If you plan to move a building or bring a new one onto your site, call the

co-op to make sure the power lines can be safely moved and cleared.


- Report any lines that appear low or sagging.

- Always call 811 before doing any digging.

- Never assume a line or underground cabinet is safe to touch. You cannot tell if it is energized simply by looking at it.

- If your equipment gets in a power line, do not leave the equipment. Remain in the cab, as long as it is not on fire and call the co-op right away. If you must leave, know how to leave the cab safely.

- Don't let anyone approach the cab of any equipment that has come in contact with a power line. Keep them a safe distance away, which is usually at least 30 feet.

- Always have an emergency plan in place and teach all family members what to do. Don't touch or move anyone who is in contact with electricity. You could be shocked. When calling 911 or your local emergency number, report an electric-contact accident. 

Federated Focus

Apply for Operation Round Up



The next Operation Round Up deadline is September 23.

Find the application at www.federatedrea.coop; otherwise, call or e-mail our office to request it. Encourage local groups to apply for funding for community service projects, community leadership programs, education/youth projects, emergency-energy assistance and disaster relief. Recipients are announced in November.

Brandon Clarke promoted



Effective August 22, Brandon Clarke was promoted to Line Foreman for the Martin County crews. Clarke started

at Federated July 2, 2007, as an apprentice lineman and was promoted to journeyman in 2010.

As the Martin County Foreman, Clarke works with the operations manager, along with the rest of the operations team, on directing the Martin County line crews' work, completes paperwork, ensures safety and interacts with co-op member-owners on project needs. He will also help with training, monitor hazards, be knowledgeable on construction specs, codes and policies.

"Brandon's experience and skill set make him a good fit for this position," said George Madden, operations manager. "I am confident he will excel at his new role and continues to provide outstanding service to the Federated membership." ☺



Scott Reimer

Manager's Message

More load control days occur due to market pricing

As summer progresses, we are noticing more and more load control days, which are not necessarily on the sustained heat days like usual. Now they reduce the need for market purchases by Great River Energy. Low wind and higher natural gas prices are cited as the culprits. Most power suppliers these days have a diverse and hedged portfolio of generation needs; however, with the loss of so much baseload it is forcing more and more market purchases to occur. The trend in the industry is to move to more renewables, such as wind and solar, which puts us in situations like this. The alternative to load control would simply be higher prices. We all want to avoid that so Federated will participate in these measures for the good of all. Rolling blackouts were the main topic earlier in the year; however, none have occurred.

Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) power supply update

Having enough generation resources available within the MISO footprint is the key here. MISO is keeping close watch on availability. While we are short 1-2 percent, they feel we will make it through the year without that level of control. They have now indicated future years will yield more chances of reserve shortages, unless replacement generation is built. Natural gas is the likely resource as it's a dispatchable generation and can come online quickly. Wind and solar will continue to be built, but these resources are non-dispatchable, which means unless the wind is blowing or solar is producing, we can't count on them.

Rate study is underway

The rates outlook for our members is good. Yet, for us to keep up with our cost of business with power supply being 85 cents of each dollar, we are looking at an adjustment for 2023. We don't know what that is just yet until we refresh our model with new inputs. As soon as we have that identified, we will present it to the Board of Directors for review and inform the membership. Realistically, we could be looking at a 3-4 percent increase, but we will firm that up soon.

Updates on fiber broadband grants for both counties

The broadband effort continues for both Jackson and Martin Counties as we seek grants for both. We are awaiting word from our ReConnect 3 application, which if received, will be used to serve areas without access to 100/20 in Martin County. On the heels of the ReConnect 3 grant is ReConnect 4. Our intentions would be to apply to serve Jackson County here. The Border-to-Border grant for Heron Lake and Dunnell area wasn't viable so we are rolling these areas into the Reconnect 4 application to make a larger project taking advantage of economies of scale.

City of Ceylon fiber project we hope starts work yet this fall

The City of Ceylon fiber project is nearly ready to begin. The city applied for this grant and Federated was selected to install/operate it under a request for proposals earlier this year. We are awaiting clearance from the environmental review. As soon as that is completed and ample notice is posted, we can begin. Mid to late September is likely. We held two community events where Ceylon residents could talk with Federated broadband staff and sign up for the service that best meets their needs.

Federated Broadband had a booth at the Martin County Fair

Broadband had a booth this year at the Martin County fair, which was a success. We met with current and prospective subscribers and answered any questions. This resulted in several new sign ups. See the prize winners listed on Page 8.

Manyaska substation on pause until last equipment arrives

Finally, the Manyaska substation in Sherburn is now in the "waiting-on-equipment mode." As soon as components start arriving, contractors will mobilize on site and complete the project. We still anticipate completion this October. ☺

Members cast votes for Annual Meeting topping second highest election results

Federated members “delivered” a high-voting response thanks to the second year of mail-in ballots.

“We are pleased with the voting response for this Annual Meeting,” said Scott Reimer, Federated’s general manager. “Mailing ballots to all members gives each and every member the opportunity to democratically participate, which created the second largest voting response ever! We had 1,197 ballots cast by mail, while 32 ballots were cast at the drive-in Annual Meeting conducted at the Jackson County Fairgrounds. Last year’s total votes cast was 1,495.”

Ballots were counted August 3 after the Annual Meeting by the Nominating Committee and Attorney. Members voted on directors: Glenn Dicks, Lakefield, was running unopposed and was re-elected for District 1 with 1,158 votes cast. Meanwhile, Darvin Voss, Lakefield, ran unopposed and was re-elected for District 2, (1,161 votes). On the Nominating Committee Tyler Ayers, Alpha, was elected for District 3 over Kilen Warmka, Alpha (631 to 572). In the District 4 Nominating Committee Paul Nelson, Jackson, was elected against Curtis Ringgenberg, Jackson (661 to 543).

A brief business meeting was held at 6 p.m. August 3 to approve last year’s Annual Meeting minutes and the Nominating Committee report. Members honked to approve motions and listened to 105.7 FM in their cars or at home to the short business meeting.

Members who cast votes properly were entered into a drawing for \$1,000 of bill credits. The winners are:

- \$500 grand prize bill credit: Willis Hinkeldey, Windom;
- \$250 bill credit: Jeffrey Hotzler, Heron Lake;
- \$150 bill credit: Curtis Baumgard, Brewster; and
- \$50 bill credits: Renee Bordwell, Lakefield, and Wade Ysker, Bingham Lake. 🏆



A brief business meeting occurred at the Jackson County Fairgrounds August 3. Pictured: General Manager Scott Reimer, Board Secretary Darvin Voss, Attorney Brad Anderson and President David A. Hansen.



Former director Jim Oltman and his wife Karen, Granada, cast their vote in person at the drive-through Annual Meeting. Employee Brian Hansen registered them.



Members who voted were entered into a drawing for electric bill credits. Employee Jon Beckman receives a ballot from one of the 32 to vote at the drive-in portion, while 1,197 voted by mail. This was the second largest voting response.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not stop winter disconnects; know the process

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following apply:

1. Your household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by your electric cooperative or by the local energy-assistance provider.

2. You enter into and make reasonable timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

3. You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from your electric co-op.

Winter disconnects may occur

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30,

Your electric cooperative must provide:

1. A 30-day notice of disconnection;
2. A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy-assistance providers;

4. Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and

5. A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50 percent of the state median income to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2023.



Blue Earth County	507-345-6822
Des Moines Valley Human Services (Jackson & Cottonwood)	847-4000
Martin County Human Services	238-4757
MN Dept. of Energy Svcs. (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3805
Minnesota Valley Action Council	1-800-767-7139
Brown County	508-4041
Martin County	238-1663
Nicollet County	934-5224
Sibley County	237-2981
Watsonwan County	375-5748
Nobles County Family Services Agency	372-2157
Renville County	320-523-1842
Salvation Army's Heat Share (Jackson, Martin & Brown Co.)	1-800-842-7279
Sibley County Human Services	237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.)	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.)	376-4195
United Community Action Partnership (Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties)	1-800-658-2448

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website: <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/> for more details.
- Contact your county's energy assistance provider for additional information and assistance.

Your electric cooperative exists because of you; we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either

of these programs, please contact the cooperative to set up a payment plan. ☎

2023 Minnesota Income Eligibility

Household size	Annual income limit
1 person	\$30,572
2 people	\$39,979
3 people	\$49,386
4 people	\$58,793

Have a ball for supper with new meatball recipes! Share yours now

On top of spaghetti? Is that how you serve your meatballs? Share with us your meatballs recipes, whether it's for spaghetti, appetizers, Swedish meatballs, sandwiches or something else. Mail your meatball recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Active military bill payment options exist



Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change.

Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 📧

Old Fashioned Cream of Tomato Soup by Laurie Sherman, Truman

Saute: 2 T. butter and 1 small onion, chopped.

Add: ¼ c. flour — cook and stir two minutes.

Add: 1 c. milk — whisk until thick.

Add: 1 quart peeled, chopped, fresh tomatoes — simmer 10 minutes.

Dump in blender and process until smooth

Return to pan and add: ½ tsp. thyme, basil, salt and pepper.

Add: ½ pint whipping cream and stir until warm.

Add: celery leaf if serving immediately. Reheats and freezes well. 📧

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

Blueberry Sheet Pancake by Carol Waibel, New Ulm

1 stick butter, divided

2 c. buttermilk

2 large eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

2 c. flour

¼ c. sugar

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. kosher salt

1½ c. chopped fruit, nuts or chips

Heat oven to 400°. Line a rimmed 13x18" pan with parchment paper. Melt butter; use 1 T. of the butter to coat the parchment paper and sides of the pan.

Mix the milk, eggs, vanilla and 4 T. butter. Whisk until combined. Add the flour, sugar, baking powder, soda and salt. Fold in 1½ c. blueberries or other fruit. Bake until lightly golden and springs back when touched (about 12-15 minutes). Heat broiler, brush pancake with remaining butter and broil two to four minutes. Serve with syrup or powdered sugar. 📧

Thanks for visiting co-ops' 2022 Farmfest booth



Drum roll...here's the winners for the battery-powered yard tools. 1. Snowblower: Kevin Root - Meeker Cooperative. 2. Leaf blower: Connie Mulder - Renville Sibley. 3. Electric mower: Pam Peterson - Meeker Cooperative. 4. String trimmer: Randy Huhnerkoch - Redwood Electric. 5. Chain saw: Arlyn Minkel - Renville Sibley 📧

Add Federated Broadband to your farming operation & reap fast, unlimited service

1. Uploading yield maps can be easy!

2. Acreage Wi-Fi can make great internet extend to your shop, hog barn or grain setup.

3. Fast internet allows video camera monitoring of livestock and outbuildings.

Residential packages

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 6MB down/2MB up | \$50/month |
| • Perfect speed for e-mails, surfing & Facebook | |
| 15MB down/2MB up | \$70/month |
| • Upgrade to streaming TV & drop satellite TV | |
| 25MB down/3MB up | \$80/month |
| • Works with larger households, downloads & gaming | |
| 40MB down/3MB up | \$90/month |
| • Gamers, work from home and all of the above! | |

Basic installation fee \$150

We offer business packages & streaming TV too!



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



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Glenn Dicks — 840-1075

Jon Saxen — 236-7027

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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.

Martin County Fair booth winners announced!

Thanks to the Federated Broadband customers, both existing and potential new subscribers, who stopped by our Martin County Fair Booth August 16-21.

Due to the recent expansion into Martin County, Broadband employees staffed a booth to demonstrate this new, reliable, unlimited and fast internet service that's tower-based. Five towers were added this summer to double the coverage area in Martin County.

A fair booth drawing was conducted. The three winners are:

1. Two months of free service was awarded to Jordan Johnson, Fairmont.
2. Free installation was awarded to Marlene Moeller, Welcome.
3. Free installation was awarded to Mark Shumski, Granada.

Put poor service internet behind you. Drop satellite TV service for our local streaming service. Sign up for Federated Broadband today, whether you live in Jackson County, Martin County or an adjacent area. Call and tell us your street address and with our online topographical maps we can determine which tower would service you. ☎