

April 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 4  
A monthly publication for members of  
MiEnergy Cooperative.

# MiNews



## Call 811 before digging

Know when you may need to hire a locator

**OPERATION  
ROUND UP  
GRANTS  
ANNOUNCED**

*Two local students  
win trip to D.C.*





## Tariffs, load growth and data centers

Every month, I end my column with “I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.” Last month, I received a record number of calls and emails related to the Canadian tariffs and the impact on our cost of electricity imported from Canada. Thankfully, the Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO), which operates like the air traffic controller for the electric industry in the Midwest, issued a statement that less than 1% of the electricity used in Minnesota comes from Canada and that the tariffs were not an issue. Thanks to all the members who reached out when they had a question impacting their electric cooperative. I was told that I was able to clarify several coffee shop discussions on the issue. A new topic of conversation to consider is our load growth and data centers.

MiEnergy Cooperative provides electric energy service to 23,500 individual accounts owned by 19,300 members. Our membership is very diverse with energy sales and rate classifications. Residential accounts makes up 36% of energy sales, small commercial attributes 24%, large power attributes 25% and our wholesale cites make up the remaining 15%.

Over the last five years, MiEnergy has seen less than a half-percent growth in energy sales. This trend is seen across many electric cooperatives in Minnesota, Iowa and the United States. For this reason, the board of directors made it a strategic initiative to pursue load growth.

Growth allows our electric cooperative to spread our fixed costs across more members, reducing individual costs. This is why your electric cooperative actively supports economic development through our revolving loan program. We assist our cities to help them grow their communities. We are also aggressively building out broadband across our service territory to enhance our future electric utility operations and to improve the quality of life for our members through broadband service. It makes our service territory more attractive for new residents and businesses that demand broadband.

An additional opportunity for growth is attracting companies

that use a lot of energy to our service territory. Our two ethanol plants and natural gas pumping station use a significant amount of electricity. While our margin on these members is minimal, it moves the needle for positive operating revenue because of their energy use. Our two ethanol plants also provide tremendous economic value to the local economy.

To increase our operating revenue for the benefit of all members and to strengthen our communities with additional tax revenue and job creation, MiEnergy is actively investigating opportunities to locate a data center within our service territory. Data centers are large energy users that can incorporate renewable energy, natural ground source liquid cooling or water-free cooling, and other energy efficient technologies that minimize environmental impacts.

You’ve likely heard about the boom of data centers and artificial intelligence, and the implications to electric energy demands. Fortunately, our wholesale power provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, is uniquely positioned to assist MiEnergy in our quest to grow our revenue opportunities and maintain their mission of sustainable, affordable and reliable wholesale power, which mirrors MiEnergy’s core values. The right data center in the right location could benefit all members.

As always, I welcome your calls, emails and personal visits.

## ANNUAL MEETING 2025

### VIRTUAL MEETING OPTION

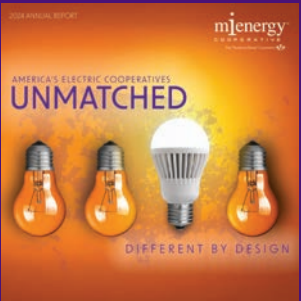
The annual meeting will be livestreamed via YouTube. A link and additional information about the annual meeting can be found by visiting:

[www.MiEnergy.coop/annual-meeting](http://www.MiEnergy.coop/annual-meeting)

Members online can submit questions during the meeting by emailing [AnnualMeeting@MiEnergy.coop](mailto:AnnualMeeting@MiEnergy.coop)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23 at 7 P.M.

Co-op leaders will discuss the financial health of the cooperative, along with priorities and challenges at the annual meeting. As a member of the cooperative, you are invited to attend the one-hour business meeting beginning at 7 p.m. at the Mabel Community Center in Mabel, Minn. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.



## Board room highlights | March 27, 2025

- CFO Shelly Hove presented the financial report which is tracking to budget.
- Management provided updates on operations and subsidiaries.
- Compliance and Training Coordinator Brad Pecinovsky provided a quarterly safety update.
- Approved awarding an underground contract bid to Chippewa Valley Connected.
- Director of Member Services Audra Skalet presented the annual distributed generation report filing.
- Approved the 2024 capital credit allocation presented by CFO Hove.
- Reviewed the list of 80 scholarships winners for \$1,000 each.
- Reviewed director applications for the open director district 1 position and selected candidates to interview.

The next board meeting will be held at the Cresco office on April 24 at 9 a.m.

## Members give \$7,000 in local donations



MiEnergy Cooperative’s Operation Round Up Trust Board met recently and elected to donate \$7,000 to the following local organizations:

- **\$500, American Legion Post 467, Spillville, Iowa**, to replace steps at the Veterans Memorial Bandstand.
- **\$500, Bundles of Love, Chatfield, Minn.**, to provide newborn essentials for new families in need.
- **\$500, City of Whalan, Whalan, Minn.**, to rebuild the city park and ball field.
- **\$500, Laura Ingalls Wilder Park & Museum, Burr Oak, Iowa**, to restore and upgrade the Burr Oak Mercantile.
- **\$500, Nodine Fire and Rescue, Dakota, Minn.**, to purchase rechargeable LED scene lighting.
- **\$500, Pickwick Fire and Rescue, Inc., Winona, Minn.**, to replace and upgrade fire station lighting.
- **\$500, Ridgeway Rural Fire Department, Ridgeway, Iowa**, to purchase firefighter turn out gear.
- **\$500, St. Lucas Firefighters Association, Inc., St. Lucas, Iowa**, to purchase a new pumper truck.
- **\$500, VFW Post 4561 & Auxiliary 4561, Cresco, Iowa**, to repair and replace the VFW hall roof.
- **\$500, Wilson Township Volunteer Fire Department, Winona, Minn.**, to purchase a ladder for hanging hoses.
- **\$400, South Bear School, Decorah, Iowa**, to purchase a portable toilet.
- **\$400, Street Scapes, Caledonia, Minn.**, to add a military rock in the community to honor veterans.
- **\$300, Scouts SA Troop 49, Lanesboro, Minn.**, to purchase new camp cooking equipment.
- **\$250, Big Canoe Lutheran Church – Hands of Hope, Decorah, Iowa**, to purchase batting for quilts.

- **\$250, Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Charles, Minn.**, to purchase batting and fabric for quilts.
- **\$200, Porter House Museum, Decorah, Iowa**, to replace the boiler system.
- **\$200, Spring Grove Syttende Mai, Spring Grove, Minn.**, to purchase a Square Reader and iPad.

Operation Round Up is funded by donations made by members of MiEnergy Cooperative who voluntarily have their electric bill rounded up to the next dollar. The average donation is \$6 per year, 2,400 MiEnergy members participate and 100% of the funds generated are granted to local organizations.

The program is based on the idea that small change adds up. Currently, the program gives approximately \$16,000 each year to local organizations.

The Operation Round Up Trust Board, made up of MiEnergy members, chooses where the funds get donated, and the amount of the donation based on an application process. The trust board members include Neil Broadwater, of Winona; Dan Dietzenbach, of Fort Atkinson; Beth George, of Houston; Sandy Gronwoldt, of Riceville; Roy Kryzer, of Lewiston; Dennis Ostwinkle, of Decorah; Teresa Ross, of Hokah; Tom Tibor, of Minnesota City; and Jay Wheelock, of Fountain.

Donations to Operation Round Up are tax deductible. Organizations receive grants through an application process. The next application deadline is August 15. To learn more about Operation Round Up or to round up your electric bill, visit [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop) or call 1-800-432-2285.

## Contractors working

Spring is the onset of MiEnergy’s construction and contractor season. Cooperative crews handle the day-to-day operations, but on an annual basis, MiEnergy hires contractors to assist with projects that make sure our electric system is safe and reliable for our members. Through the cooperative’s bidding process, the following contractors have been awarded bids for 2025:

- **Vegetation management:** 4-Control Inc, Asplundh, Clear Line LLC, Crank’s Tree Service, New Age Tree Service and Zielie’s Tree Service.
- **Underground:** Chippewa Valley Connected (CVC)
- **Pole testing:** Mi-Tech
- **Underground inspections:** STAR Energy Services
- **Staking:** STAR Energy Services
- **Fiber Staking:** Finley Engineering
- **Meter changeouts:** Chapman Metering

Please be aware that you may see these companies working throughout our service territory in Minnesota and Iowa. If you have questions about whether a contractor is working on our behalf, you can call 800-432-2285 at any time, including after normal business hours.







Spring is in the air, and before you know it, summer will be here. There are many ways to get a jump-start on preventing summertime high bills and energy waste.

**ADD EQUIPMENT TO SPRING CLEANING**

An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charge, airflow adjustment and condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system’s efficiency and the lifespan of your equipment, reducing wasted energy and costs.

Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter can waste energy by causing your system to work harder. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk.

Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit, or head, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, be sure to turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

**KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR THERMOSTAT & FAN SETTINGS**

The Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees when

you are home and higher when you are away. You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the room you’re in during the day or when you’re sleeping. Using a fan

can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, make sure you flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter, and you can maximize the comfort benefit of a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

**CONSIDER COOKING OUTDOORS**

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling. Get the grill cleaned now so that you are ready to enjoy outdoor cooking.

Incorporate these tips into your summer prep to save energy and lower your bills.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

**Winners chosen for trip to D.C.**

Emma Godman, a junior at Crestwood High School, and Quinn Potter, a junior at Rushford-Peterson High School, won an educational-filled week of adventure in Washington D.C. as MiEnergy Cooperative’s Youth Tour Contest winners. Emma and Quinn will be among a group of 1,900 students sponsored by electric cooperatives from across the country to take part in the Rural Electric Youth Tour in June.



Emma Godman



Quinn Potter

The Youth Tour was inspired in 1957 by Lyndon Johnson, then a U.S. senator from Texas, when he called on electric cooperatives to send young people to Washington, “to see what the flag stands for and represents.”

The students will meet with state and federal legislators to get an up-close look at how our government works, along with experiencing the monuments, museums and history of our nation’s capital.

To qualify for MiEnergy’s contest, students must complete an online exam. Those who score 90% or greater become finalists. All finalists are interviewed to determine a winner and an alternate.

**Iowa contestants**

MiEnergy’s Iowa Youth Tour winner, Emma Godman, is the daughter of David and Krista Godman, of Cresco. Ella Knutson, of New Hampton, was selected as an alternate. Charlie Kriener and Brenna Thronson, both of New Hampton were also finalists.

**Minnesota contestants**

MiEnergy’s Minnesota Youth Tour winner, Quinn Potter, is the daughter of Brian and Erin Potter, of Winona. Gage Pronschinske, of Rollingstone, was selected as an alternate. Other finalists included Kate Baumann, of Houston.



It’s called a controlled burn for a reason. If you don’t plan your controlled burn in advance and keep it under check, it can quickly spread too far and wide.

If you are considering implementing a controlled burn (also known as a prescribed fire) to address vegetation or weed management, follow several precautions to stay safe:

- 1. Don’t start one without advance planning.
- 2. Certain groups should be notified: check with your town or village office; notify your local fire department; let your neighbors know your plans.
- 3. Obtain all necessary permits.
- 4. Check the forecast for weather conditions, such as wind direction and speed, as well as humidity (as a general rule, relative humidity should be 40 percent or higher).
- 5. If there are power poles in the planned burning area, clear all vegetation and weeds at least four feet around the base of the pole.
- 6. Wet the base of the pole with water before beginning your burn.

Even with the best laid plans, a utility pole could catch on fire during a burn; however, planning in advance can decrease the chances. Fire damage to a power pole is usually evident by blackening and scorch marks, but even slight discoloration can cause serious problems. Sometimes the poles burn from the inside out, and the damage is not immediately apparent.

Take the time to plan ahead, or your controlled burn could get expensive. The person who causes damage to a utility pole is responsible for the fees associated with replacing it. There are many other safety considerations; check with local authorities and fully research all aspects of a controlled burn before implementing one.

For more information about electrical safety, go to [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org).

**Plant the RIGHT TREE in the RIGHT PLACE**

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from a power line. Avoid planting beneath power lines, near poles or close to electrical equipment.

Remember, know what's below by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org)



**Call 811 before you dig**

Digging without locating underground utilities could leave neighborhoods in the dark, cause thousands of dollars in damages, and/or cause severe electrical shock. This is true regardless of how much area your project will cover or whether you consider the job to be large or small. To help stay safe, make use of the national underground utility locating service for free by calling 8-1-1.

The 8-1-1 “Call Before You Dig” number will route you to your local utility locating service. It takes a few business days for a professional to come mark your public utilities with flags or spray paint.

There are different colors of paint and flags that mark the underground utilities, and each color is universal to what utility is buried.

Even if you previously had utilities located, it is best to call before every digging project. Underground utilities can shift.

**It is important to understand that 8-1-1 locators do not locate privately installed facilities. If you have any private utilities, you will need to hire a private utility locator. Some examples of private utilities include: underground sprinkler system, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems or gas piping to a garage.**

For more information about 8-1-1 and digging safety, visit [Call811.com](https://Call811.com).

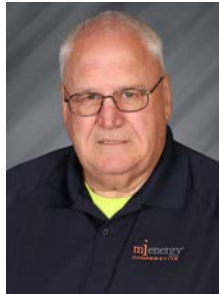




# Personnel changes at the co-op

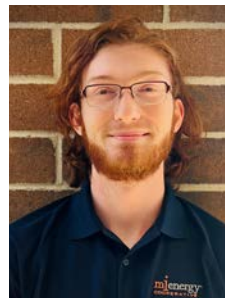
## EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

Kevin Reicks retired from the cooperative on March 6. He began his employment with Hawkeye REC on February 16, 2000, as a member service technician and retired as an operator/technician. Thanks Kevin for your 25 years of dedication and service to MiEnergy.



## NEW EMPLOYEE

We are pleased to announce that Jack Martinka has accepted the IT Systems Analyst position. Jack currently resides in Chatfield and will be based out of the Rushford office. He started on March 24. Welcome Jack to MiEnergy Cooperative.



## ALTERNATE ENERGY PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT NOTICE

### MINNESOTA MEMBERS

In compliance with Minnesota state laws, MiEnergy Cooperative adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production. MiEnergy is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. MiEnergy is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by MiEnergy. Interested members should contact Kent Whitcomb at MiEnergy Cooperative, P.O. Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971 or call 800-432-2285.

### IOWA MEMBERS

Owners of alternative energy production equipment, no matter how small, even solar-powered heat pumps, are required to provide written notification to their utility of the intent to construct or install such facilities/equipment at least 30 days prior to construction. Alternate energy production facilities are defined as solar, wind turbine, waste management, resource recovery, refuse-derived fuel, agricultural crops or residues, or wood burning facilities used to generate electricity. This Iowa State Law went into effect on January 1, 2013.

### ALL MEMBERS

MiEnergy has a form to complete as well as other information regarding interconnection that can be found on our website at [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop). Interested members should contact Kent Whitcomb at MiEnergy Cooperative, P.O. Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971, [kwhitcomb@MiEnergy.coop](mailto:kwhitcomb@MiEnergy.coop) or call 800-432-2285.

# LOOK OUT FOR POWER SOURCES



Do not get within 10 feet (in any direction) of a power line.

Be aware of power lines when working on the roof.

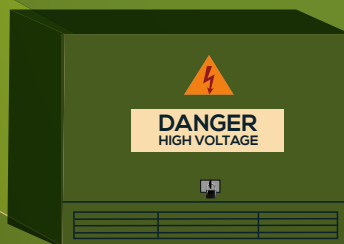


Do not trim branches or limbs near power lines.

Be careful when carrying long or tall objects such as ladders or poles.



Before you dig, call 811 to have underground utilities marked.



Do not dig near padmount transformers or other utility equipment.



## 12TH ANNUAL REC ARCHERY SHOOT – WEST UNION

Proceeds of over \$11,000 from this year's 12th Annual REC Archery Shoot went to Jeremiah Nelson and family of Cresco. He worked for Acculine, one of MiEnergy's contractors. Jeremiah was diagnosed with light chain multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that affects the plasma cells and is undergoing treatments for the non-curable cancer as they work for a deep remission. The annual event raises money for a family in need who have a connection with or are members of MiEnergy or Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative (ACEC). "We are just a group of people who work in the utility industry that get together once a year to shoot, relax and raise some money for local families in need," explains co-op coordinator Dave Wilkes from MiEnergy. Pictured L-R: Josh Abbott, ACEC, Jeremiah Nelson and Dave Wilkes, MiEnergy.



## CRESTWOOD FFA SPONSOR – CRESCO

MiEnergy sponsored an award at the Crestwood FFA Chapter banquet. MiEnergy employee Meagan Moellers (right) presents an Agricultural Proficiency Award to Kelsey Adams (left) for rabbit production.



## Carefree renewable energy possibilities

### An easy way to support renewable energy

Would you like to support renewable energy? Thanks to Evergreen, it only takes \$1 per month to contribute. Evergreen is a green power program available to all co-op members that supports electric generation by wind, solar, landfill gas-to-energy and animal waste-to-energy. Members can purchase 100 kilowatt-hour blocks at \$1 per month, which is added to your monthly MiEnergy statement.

Renewable energy makes up 25 percent of Dairyland Power Cooperative's generation portfolio and the number continues to grow with member support of Evergreen. This is in addition to your energy rate.

For more information or to sign up for this green power program, call the co-op at 800-432-2285 or visit [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop) > Programs and Products > Evergreen.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**OFFICE INFORMATION**  
Open Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday by appointment.  
**IOWA** 24049 Highway 9, PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136  
**MINNESOTA** 31110 Cooperative Way, PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971  
\*\*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.\*\*

**PHONE NUMBERS**  
**LOCAL** 563-547-3801 (Cresco); 507-864-7783 (Rushford)  
**TOLL-FREE & 24/7 OUTAGE REPORTING** 800-432-2285  
**PAYMENT LINE 24/7** 855-941-3631  
**UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING** 811

**ONLINE**  
**WEBSITE** [www.MiEnergy.coop](http://www.MiEnergy.coop)  
**SOCIAL MEDIA** Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**DISTRICT 1** Dennis Ptacek, secretary and vacant seat  
**DISTRICT 2** Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair  
**DISTRICT 3** Don Petersen, treasurer and Skip Wieser  
**DISTRICT 4** Kyle Holthaus and Carl Reicks  
**DISTRICT 5** Beth Olson and Jenny Scharmer

**MANAGEMENT STAFF**  
**BRIAN KRAMBEER** president/chief executive officer  
**SHELLY HOVE** chief financial officer  
**JILL HUFFMAN** broadband chief operating officer  
**STEVE OIAN** vice president of electric operations  
**VASSIL VUTOV** vice president of information technology  
**MIKE WALTON** vice president of engineering and planning  
**KENT WHITCOMB** vice president of member services

**MINEWS STAFF**  
**MEAGAN MOELLERS** communications specialist, editor  
**ANNIE HOILAND** communications specialist  
**BRENDA TESCH** marketing and communications manager

**2025 OFFICES CLOSED**  
**APRIL 18** Good Friday  
**MAY 26** Memorial Day  
**JUNE 24** Employee Development Day  
**JULY 4** Independence Day  
**SEPT 1** Labor Day  
**SEPT 9** Employee Development Day  
**NOV 27-28** Thanksgiving Holiday  
**DEC 16** Employee Development Day  
**DEC 24-25** Christmas Eve and Christmas Day  
**DEC 31** New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.

## COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVES

MiEnergy's Rushford and Cresco offices will be hosting American Red Cross community blood drives. These blood drives are open to the general public. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter MiEnergy to schedule an appointment.

**Tuesday, April 15 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.**  
**Rushford Office**

**Thursday, May 8 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.**  
**Cresco Office**



**SURVEY**

**mienergy**<sup>™</sup>  
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 

IOWA PO Box 90, Cresco, IA 52136

MINNESOTA PO Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971

PRSR STD  
U.S. Postage

**PAID**  
DPC

MiEnergy is conducting an energy use survey to help us and our wholesale power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative, plan for the future needs of members and to fulfill a Rural Utilities Service requirement. The survey will be mailed to a random sample of 400 of our residential members in late April. We encourage members to complete the survey. The survey information will include a letter detailing who to contact if you have questions when completing it.

# WIRED FOR SERVICE.

We thank electrical lineworkers for their commitment to powering our local communities.

**mienergy**<sup>™</sup>  
COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative 



**LINEWORKER  
APPRECIATION DAY**

**APRIL 14, 2025**