

MiNews

March 2023 Vol. 7 Issue 3
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Swapping hotsticks for bows & arrows

Employees on target and going
the distance for community

Looking for ways to save energy?
There's an app for that!

10
**PORTABLE
GENERATOR
DO'S &
DON'TS**

MiEnergy's Josh Mitchell participates in the annual REC Archery Shoot, an event organized by co-op employees to benefit the local community.



It's annual meeting time

MiEnergy Cooperative's Annual Meeting will be held on April 12 at the Mabel Community Center. The theme for this year is "Beyond the Wires" and will highlight the co-op's diligence to members and communities beyond reliable electric service.

The annual report will be mailed to members March 28. It includes the 2022 financials, report from the board chair and management, the meeting notice, director election biographies and bylaw revisions being proposed by the board of directors.

Director District 1 is up for election this year. We actively seek director applications each year in November and December. When the deadline arrived in January the only applications received were from incumbent directors Dennis Ptacek and Jeffrey Redalen.

The board selected a policy committee of three directors who reviewed our policies and bylaws with our attorney Denny Puckett. The recommendation from the committee was to present the timely changes in the bylaws to the membership for approval.

It's hard to believe that MiEnergy was created over six years ago. The plan of merger document approved by the membership vote included original bylaws crafted for the newly formed MiEnergy Cooperative. A lot has happened in the last six years, including a world

pandemic. The bylaw recommendations reflect updated processes and procedures.

The first two proposed changes allow us to accept electronic membership applications and to host virtual annual meetings. It doesn't mean paper applications or in-person annual meetings are going away. These are additions that make it easier for members to do business with us and to actively participate in the annual meeting.

The third recommended change addresses member privacy. In the past, director candidates could ask for a membership list of all cooperative members in their district. Director candidates could then communicate with the district members as part of their election campaign. This is an outdated practice as there is a risk of the list being used for other purposes. MiEnergy's board approved a procedure allowing director candidates to provide the communication material (for example a postcard or letter) to the cooperative. The cooperative will affix the one-time mailing labels and take responsibility for mailing at the requesting director candidate's expense. It ensures the security of member information.

The remaining two changes simply remove outdated merger information on establishing the size of the board and beginning of director elections for the new organization formed on January 1, 2017. All five director districts have held director elections, and the changes simply cleanup the initial election timetable. The bylaw language establishing the size of the board with the merger remains the same.

Our election and balloting process is conducted by an independent third party, Survey & Ballot Systems. Members can vote online, by mail or in-person at the annual meeting. Ballot packages will be mailed in bright yellow envelopes on March 10 from Eden Prairie. It will include everything you need to vote. Members who have a valid email address connected to their service will also receive an email from noreply@directvote.com on or around March 10.

We hope to see you for the annual meeting on April 12. If you can't make it, the annual report will include details on how to view it virtually.

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

Board room highlights | Feb. 28, 2023

- CFO Shelly Hove presented a favorable financial report.
- Eide Bailly Auditor Nick Crank presented a favorable audit report.
- Approved the three-year audit proposal for 2023-2025 from Eide Bailly.
- Received the cost-of-service study results. A 5% increase in revenue will be implemented.
- Approved a revolving loan fund for Decorah Jobs in the amount of \$200,000 to be used for improvements in the Decorah Business Park.
- Hove presented the uncollectible accounts for 2022 in the amount of \$15,052.17. The uncollectible dollar amount is .02% of the annual revenue.
- Approved the annual meeting agenda.
- Approved the annual Inspection & Reliability Report filing with the Iowa Utilities Board.
- Appointed five additional members to serve on the advisory committee.

The next board meeting will be held at the Rushford office on March 27 at 9 a.m.

Spring is a great time to think about summer

Start researching options today for replacing your home's cooling system

The experts at MiEnergy have some tips to help you prepare your home to handle the heat. When it comes to heating and cooling system replacement, the time to prepare is before extreme weather seasons arrive.

Small preparations around the house can add up to big energy savings. Now is a great time to start thinking about and planning for a new HVAC (heating, ventilating and air conditioning) unit for your home, farm or business, before an equipment failure occurs. You can gain peace of mind knowing that you've done your research to purchase an energy efficient unit that will help save money on your energy bills and not be left making a hasty decision because you suddenly need a new unit.

If you're in the market for central air or a new room unit, consider a heat pump. A greener heating option, heat pumps transfer heat from one place to another. Air-source heat pumps move heat between the air inside a home and the air outside a home, while ground-source heat pumps (also known as geothermal heat pumps) transfer heat between the air inside a home and the ground outside a home.

Heat pumps can be used for both heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. At a maximum, ground-source heat pumps can be 300 percent efficient and at a minimum, all heat pumps are 100 percent efficient. Newer air-source heat pumps now offer legitimate heating in cold regions with new technological advancements with cold climate air-source heat pumps.

Ductless units are great for older homes that don't already have ductwork installed or for new additions. Be sure to check the efficiency rating, or seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER). The higher the SEER number, the more efficient the system. Consider buying an Energy Star approved unit, which uses around 14 percent less energy than traditional air conditioning units. Appliances with an Energy Star rating often exceed energy efficiency standards and can end up saving you money over the lifetime of the appliance.

Visit www.EnergyStar.gov for more information and check out the 2023 rebates for MiEnergy members at www.MiEnergy.coop.

It's a program to give help or get help

RECare is about members helping members

Whether you want to help members with their electric bill, or if you need help with paying your electric bill, RECare is a local program created to help members in paying utility bills.

Members who donate to the program have 100% of their contribution go to help pay electric bills of co-op members. Whether it is \$1, \$5, or \$10 a month or a single contribution of an amount of your choice, when combined with those of other generous members, your assistance can go a long way in helping others.

If you are a member in need of help paying your bill, Minnesota members can contact MiEnergy at 800-432-2285, and Iowa members can apply for funds through local Northeast Iowa Community Action offices. Local families received an average amount of \$143 last year.

Consumer Authorization Form

☒ **YES! I would like to contribute to RECare.**

Monthly Pledge:
☐ \$1 ☐ \$2 ☐ \$5 ☐ Other _____

I understand the amount above will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

One-time Contribution: \$ _____

Make check out to RECare c/o MiEnergy Cooperative.

Name: _____

Address: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Account Number: _____

Date: _____

Hitting more than just the bullseye

Tenth annual fundraising event by employees reaches co-op members

BEYOND THE WIRES

Checking off two of the seven cooperative principles hits home with our first article in the 'Beyond the Wires' series: cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community. What started 10 years ago as just a fun gathering for employees and connecting with others in the industry, has turned into quite the popular place to be in February for those aiming with accuracy to help others.

Fundraising amounts at the REC Archery Shoot have totaled over \$38,800 since they started donating proceeds from the event in 2018. Each year, the organizers choose a family in need who are members of either MiEnergy Cooperative or Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative.

The event started in 2013 at the Fayette County Fairgrounds in West Union and has been a staple co-op family experience ever since. The Echo Valley Archers set up the facility every winter to accommodate avid archers from around the area.

As for the co-op lineworkers taking over the shooting facility for one day, volunteer coordinator Dave Wilkes from MiEnergy explains, "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."

Proceeds raised annually through raffle prize ticket sales are given away, benefitting co-op members. Many industry related and local businesses, donate items or sponsor the event and raffle drawings each year.



Josh Abbott, from ACEC, and Dave Wilkes, from MiEnergy, coordinate the annual archery event.



Over the years, the REC Archery Shoot has raised over \$38,800.

Thank you to our co-op employees who work daily to keep the lights on for our members but also work diligently out of the kindness of their hearts to go above and beyond (the wires) to bring joy to local families dealing with difficult life circumstances. We appreciate you, and we thank you for always striving to reach the bullseye while also serving our community. After all, that's the co-op way of doing things.

Funds raised this year were given to the Luke Hackman family of rural Decorah. Luke was an employee at ACEC and a member of MiEnergy who passed away from an automobile accident in December leaving behind his wife and two children.



APPS TO HELP YOU SAVE ENERGY

There are a number of reasons why people are interested in cutting back on energy consumption. You may be motivated to save on your energy bills or driven to reduce your personal carbon footprint. Regardless of why you're interested in using less energy, here are a few apps that can help you achieve meaningful energy savings:

SMART THERMOSTAT APPS. Yes, to use a smart thermostat app, you must purchase a smart thermostat. But heating and cooling make up a large portion of the average home's energy consumption (and cost), so saving on heating and cooling can make a big impact on bills. Smart thermostats and their accompanying apps are handy and promote energy efficient behavior—and these devices have become much more affordable over the years. You can purchase an ENERGY STAR®-certified smart thermostat for as low as \$100, which can save you 8% on annual heating and cooling costs, about \$50 per year. The device will quickly pay for itself, and you'll gain insight into better ways to heat and cool your home. Plus, the ability to control the thermostat from anywhere can equate to real savings. Trusted brands and devices include Google's Nest Learning Thermostat and Ecobee's Smart Thermostat.

ENERGY COST CALCULATORS. If you're wanting to reduce energy use at home, it's important to know where your consumption is going. Energy cost

calculators can help pinpoint your energy use with a few simple steps and identify areas to save. The concept is pretty simple; just plug in the wattage of your various appliances and how often you use them to see which are using the most energy. Most energy cost calculator apps are free and can be downloaded to any Apple or Android device. If you browse the app store, you'll find multiple energy cost calculator apps, but most are similar in functionality. Be sure to read the app's reviews and download the one that best aligns with your energy efficiency goals.

JOULEBUG APP. If you're competitive and enjoy gamifying—well, everything—the JouleBug app is right up your alley. JouleBug makes energy conservation simple and fun through personal tasks

and badges earned within the app, group challenges you can tackle with friends, and communities you can join to learn about local sustainability efforts. The JouleBug app is free and can be downloaded to Apple or Android devices, and it's an easy tool to make saving energy fun.

These are just a few apps that can help you find new ways to save energy. Smart light bulbs are typically paired with apps for convenient control of home lighting; smart plugs also come with apps to help you control how you power everyday devices and electronics.

Whether you use an app or not, saving energy is always a smart idea that can help you save money on your monthly bills and reduce your carbon footprint.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

PLAY IT SAFE!

10 DO'S & DON'TS

WHEN USING PORTABLE GENERATORS

If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, MiEnergy reminds you to play it safe. With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators. Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

- 1 DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
- 2 DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
- 3 DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
- 4 DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
- 5 DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
- 6 DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
- 7 DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
- 8 DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
- 9 DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
- 10 DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

Photo credit: Honda

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous—even deadly—if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips. If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, give us a call at 800-432-2285.



COMMUNITY BLOOD DONATIONS



MiEnergy's Rushford office will be hosting an American Red Cross Blood Drive on April 18 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

MiEnergy's Cresco office will be hosting an American Red Cross Blood Drive on May 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The blood drives are open to the public. It is encouraged to secure

an appointment time. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter MiEnergy to schedule an appointment. Power Red appointments are available.

Above, MiEnergy's Audra Skalet donates at the February 14 drive in Rushford.

MiEnergy reps advocating in St. Paul

Representatives from MiEnergy's board and staff attended the annual meeting of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association in February. Electric cooperatives from across the state were in St. Paul learning, listening and advocating for sustainable, reliable and affordable electricity. Pictured at right from top to bottom: MiEnergy's group is shown with Representative Gene Pelowski, Senator Jeremy Miller and Representative Greg Davids.



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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 24/7 877-853-6517

UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING 811

ONLINE

WEBSITE www.MiEnergy.coop

SOCIAL MEDIA Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1 Dennis Ptacek, secretary and Jeff Redalen

DISTRICT 2 Dean Nierling, chair and Ron Stevens, vice chair

DISTRICT 3 Don Petersen, treasurer, Skip Wieser and Dennis Young

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

STEVE OIAN vice president of operations - Minnesota

VASSIL VUTOV vice president of information technology

MIKE WALTON vice president of operations - Iowa

KENT WHITCOMB vice president of member services

MINEWS STAFF

MEAGAN MOELLERS communications specialist, editor

ANNIE HOILAND communications specialist

BRENDA TESCH marketing and communications manager

2023 OFFICES CLOSED

MAR 23 Employee Development Day

APR 7 Good Friday

MAY 29 Memorial Day

JUN 8 Employee Development Day

JUL 4 Independence Day

SEP 4 Labor Day

SEP 20 Employee Development Day

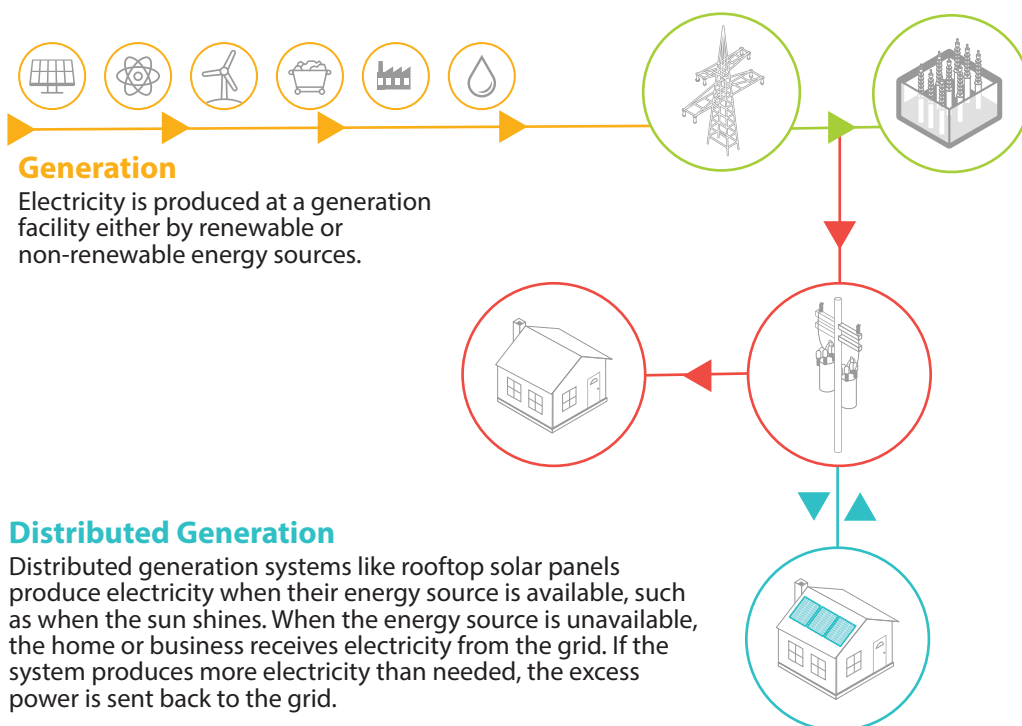
NOV 23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday

DEC 6 Employee Development Day

DEC 22, 25 Christmas Holiday

DEC 29 Close at 11:30 a.m. (New Year's Eve Observance)

HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**DON'T FORGET TO
SPRING FORWARD**

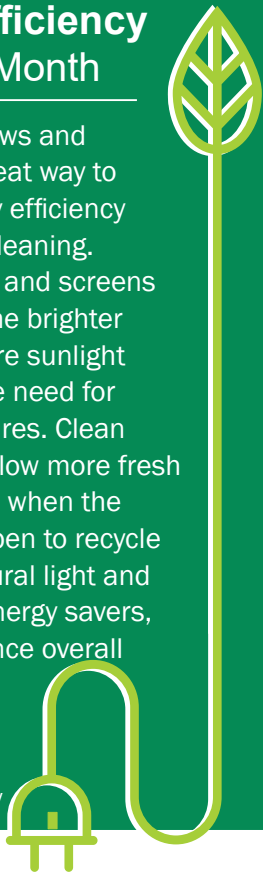


MARCH 12

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Washing windows and screens is a great way to practice energy efficiency during spring cleaning. Clean windows and screens make your home brighter by allowing more sunlight in, reducing the need for lamps and fixtures. Clean screens also allow more fresh air in the home when the windows are open to recycle indoor air. Natural light and clean air are energy savers, and they enhance overall health and productivity.

Source: energy.gov



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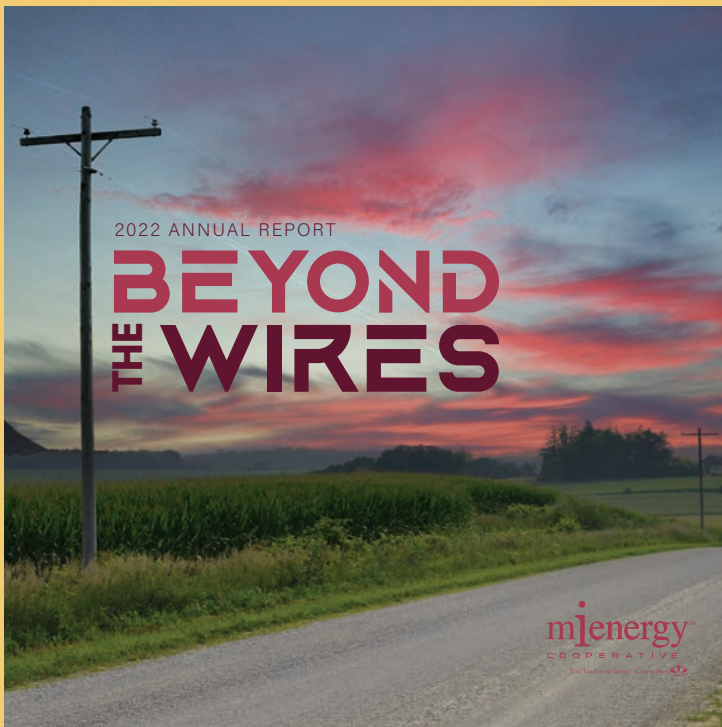
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Annual Meeting April 12, 2023



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 begins at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12, at the Mabel Community Center, 201 South Main Street, Mabel, Minn. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m.

BALLOTS AND VOTING

All members will vote on the recommended updates to the cooperative's bylaws. Members in District 1 will also vote for directors. Voting can be done by mail, online or in-person.

A ballot, voting instructions and supporting materials will be mailed March 10 from Survey and Ballot Systems, of Eden Prairie, Minn. in yellow envelopes. Members who have an email address on file with the cooperative will receive information electronically, in addition to it coming by mail.

Survey and Ballot collects and tabulates ballots. Security measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of your vote and to prevent duplicate voting.

The voting results will be announced at the annual meeting. Members can vote in-person at the annual meeting starting at 6:30 p.m. and until the ballot box closes at the start of the annual meeting at 7 p.m.

DISTRICT 1 ELECTIONS

District 1 candidates are incumbents Dennis Ptacek (Seat #1) and Jeffrey Redalen (Seat #2). No other director applications were received.

For members unable to attend in person, the annual meeting will be livestreamed.
Watch for details in the annual report to be mailed to all members March 28.