

MiN News

April 2024 Vol. 8 Issue 4
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

Shaping our future with innovation

Cooperatives continue to explore
technology to meet member needs

Members give
\$7,000 to
local causes

What do lineworkers do?

Catch our fast facts on this career



Spring is here in full force

While it seems there is always something being planned, studied, or implemented at MiEnergy, spring is also a very busy time of the year for your electric cooperative. The annual meeting is an important member event to report on the activities of our member-owned electric cooperative and conduct our director elections. I want to thank the members who attended the meeting in person and those that joined the on-line broadcast of the meeting. I also want to thank the members who voted by mail or online in their director district election.

Our cooperative calendars are full of virtual meetings which allow us to attend many events that we would not have time to squeeze in. However, I do have greater appreciation for face-to-face meetings since the pandemic. I enjoy visiting with our membership at events and always leave knowing there is more that MiEnergy can do to support its members.

This time of the year always marks the first biannual meeting of the Operation Round Up Trust Board. I want to thank the trust board members who serve on this important committee that supports our local organizations from fire departments to school kids to everything in-between. Special thanks to the thousands of MiEnergy members who voluntarily agree to round up their electric bill each month to make this program possible. The maximum annual contribution is \$11.88, and the minimum is 12 cents. The average contribution is \$6. Our members' participation is what makes this program a great success. Thank you!

Spring is also the time for recognizing our high school scholarship program and our national Youth Tour. MiEnergy uses unclaimed capital credits to fund our local scholarship program. This year we are awarding 70 \$1,000 scholarships to

high school graduates of MiEnergy members planning to continue their education. This is a \$70,000 investment in our future leaders, workforce and families in southeastern Minnesota and northeastern Iowa.

The Youth Tour is an outstanding program organized through our national association. MiEnergy selects two participants (one from Iowa and one from Minnesota) who join other cooperative youth from states across the country for a learning and leadership experience in our nation's capital.

March is the month of statewide association legislative forums. REC Day at the Hill in Des Moines was held on March 12, and the Minnesota Rural Electric Association held their statewide legislative forum on March 19. Meeting with our local elected officials at our state capitals to provide our input on industry-related topics has never been more important. I also had the opportunity to testify on behalf of Minnesota's electric cooperatives in the Minnesota Senate Energy Committee chaired by Senator Frenz. I will sleep better at night when both state legislatures finish their work, and the season comes to a close.

Spring is also the time of year when materials arrive for our busy summer construction season. Contractor bids have been awarded, and MiEnergy's line staking and design technicians are busy determining routes and staking the contractor projects. This is the season when activity picks up for new electric services, revamps and/or new home/building projects.

We also know that Mother Nature's critters become more active in spring. Last month, lineworkers Darrin Peterson and Jamie Breeser responded to a 6:30 a.m. outage on a tap line north of Spring Valley along County Highway 1. They found the culprit was a busy beaver that took down an aspen tree that fell on the overhead line, which is pictured above.

Have a great spring and as always, I welcome any calls, emails or personal visits.



Board room highlights | March 28, 2024

- Reviewed the financial report for February. Sales remain under budget.
- Received updates from Safety and Compliance Coordinator Brad Pecinovsky and System Forester Josh Mitchell.
- Approved Resolution 24-02 Thanks and Appreciation for retiring director Dennis Young.
- Reviewed and approved the member allocations for 2023.
- Approved and awarded the underground construction contract to A1 Excavating, LLC.
- Approved the credential and election committee appointments.
- Received a year in review recap from STAR Energy Services CEO Lois Croonquist.

The next board meeting will be held at the Cresco office on April 30 at 9 a.m.

CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG

Digging without locating underground utilities could leave neighborhoods in the dark, cause thousands of dollars in damages, or cause severe electrical shock. To help stay safe, use the national underground utility locating service for free by calling 8-1-1.

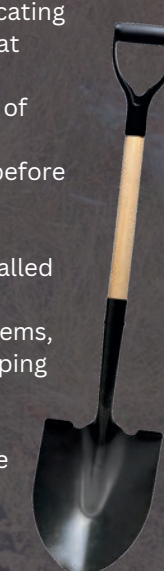
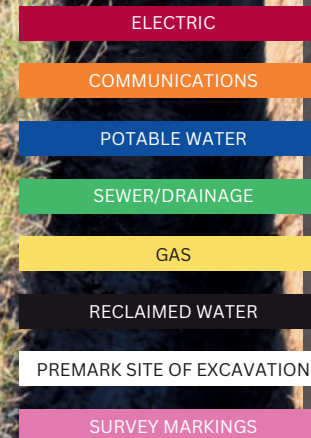
The 8-1-1 "Call Before You Dig" number will route you to your local utility locating service. Make sure to tell the operator where and when you plan to dig and what type of work you will be doing. From there, it takes a few business days for a professional to mark your public utilities with flags or spray paint. Color codes of underground markings are shown at left.

Even if you previously had utilities located by calling 8-1-1, it is best to call before every digging project. Underground utilities can shift, and it is important to be certain of where they are before ever putting a shovel in the ground.

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 systems, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems or gas piping to a garage.

Once all of your underground utilities have been located, it is time to start digging, but be sure to wear all of the proper protective gear before putting the shovel into the earth.

For more information about 8-1-1 and digging safety, visit Call811.com and SafeElectricity.org.



EARTH DAY APRIL 22

Conservation versus energy efficiency

Electricity is essential to our daily lives. It gives us opportunities to learn, keeps us safe and comfortable and provides entertainment. The downside is that every source of energy generation has consequences. Fossil fuels emit carbon. Hydropower dams limit the passage of migrating fish. Even solar panels can't be made without mining minerals. Using less electricity is a way to mitigate the impact of producing the electricity that powers our lives.

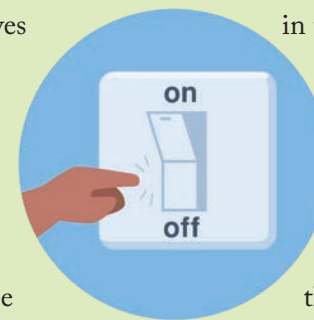
Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency.

Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerators keep your food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you leave the room conserves energy.

Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot—depending on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Let's start with what's typically the biggest energy user



in the average household: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Save energy while you sleep by programming your thermostat to be a few degrees closer to the outside temperature at night. In colder climates, add an extra blanket or comforter to your bed to keep you warm.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/hybrid water heater

is a great example of an energy efficient project. Adjusting the temperature setting to the recommended 120 degrees and using less hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit our screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities with your family or community. Unplug and get outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

Any small changes we can make to benefit the planet can add up if we all pitch in.

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month

Fast facts about electrical lineworkers

You probably don't think about them until your power goes out, but electric lineworkers protect our homes and communities 24 hours a day. Like other first responders who keep us safe, lineworkers endure all kinds of weather and challenging conditions.

In April, we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day to

honor the men and women who power life. Here are some quick facts about lineworkers and the work they do.

LINWORKER HISTORY

Lineworkers first appeared during the 1840s rush to spread telegraph service across the U.S., stringing wires between trees and other natural objects. It didn't take long for everyone to realize tall poles were safer and more practical.

WHAT ELECTRIC LINWORKERS DO

Restoring electricity after a power outage is just one of the many duties of lineworkers, who also:

- Install and connect new power lines to homes and businesses
- Maintain and perform upgrades to improve our electric grid
- Diagnose and pinpoint power delivery issues
- Plan and manage large-scale projects
- Ensure safe work practices in often challenging conditions

Lineworkers are responsible for maintaining and upgrading the nation's electric grid that connects more than 7,300 power plants to 145 million consumers through 60,000 miles of high-voltage lines, millions of miles of distribution lines and more than 50 million transformers.

GEARED FOR SAFETY

Lineworkers climb with up to 40 pounds of safety gear and tools. That's like carrying a 5-gallon water jug! Here's what they typically wear to stay safe while working:

- Hard hats
- Safety glasses
- Flame-resistant clothing
- Arc flash protective clothes
- Rubber gloves & sleeves
- Climbing belts
- Fall-protection harnesses

ONE HOT STICK

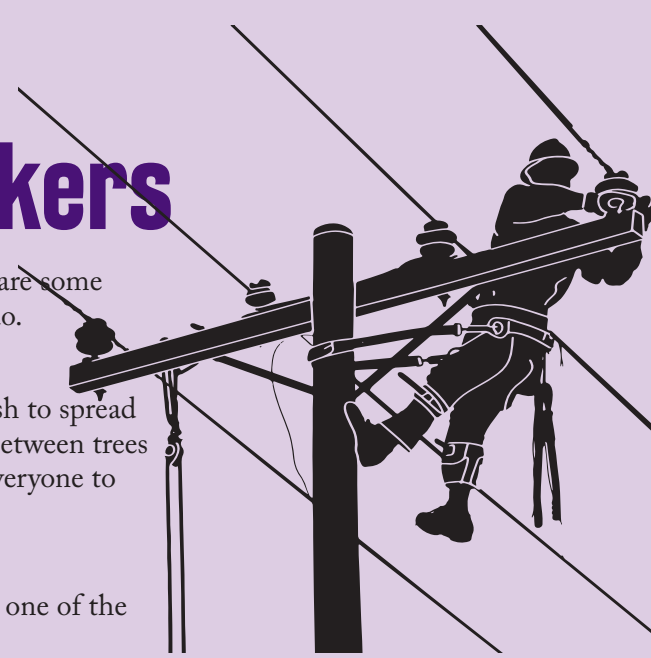
One essential tool for lineworkers is the hot stick, an insulated fiberglass pole used to safely move energized wires and other equipment. Hot sticks vary in size depending on the job.

WILD SIDE OF WORK

Wild animals cause a significant number of power outages every year, and lineworkers encounter plenty while working. When your office is the great outdoors, these encounters are part of the job.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

The U.S. Department of Energy describes journeyman lineworkers as one of the nation's highest-paid professions that doesn't demand four years of postsecondary education.



Becoming a journeyman lineworker normally requires a high school diploma or equivalent, completion of a recognized accredited lineworkers' school and a paid apprenticeship, which typically spans four years. Apprentice lineworkers receive hands-on training and experience in the field before advancing to journeyman status. Lineworker salaries range from \$40,000 to \$144,000, depending on location, skillset and experience.

INSPIRING SAFETY

Roughly 60,000 lineworkers hit the road annually to respond to devastating storms and the damage they leave behind. In addition to extreme weather exposure, lineworkers face a variety of dangers, including electric shock, falls from elevated work locations and roadside traffic accidents. High injury rates among early lineworkers led to the creation of apprenticeship programs and organized labor throughout the industry.

Safety is always the number one priority, which is why lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures.

Lineworkers power our lives. The next time you see one, remember to thank them for the essential work they do.



Aleah Eichenberger, a junior at New Hampton High School and William Carlson, a junior at Houston High School both won an educational-filled week of adventure in Washington D.C. as MiEnergy Cooperative's Youth Tour Contest winners. Aleah and William 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.

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.

Aleah is the daughter of Jeremy and Heather Eichenberger of New Hampton. William is the son of Bob and Mimi Carlson of Houston.

Safety In Work Zones MOVE OVER AND SLOW DOWN



Cars or trucks that speed through a work zone endanger workers on the ground. Driving too fast or not moving over can also put an elevated lineworker in danger by causing the bucket to move or sway.

Orange cones, flashing lights, and warning signs all indicate a work zone on the road ahead.

"Keeping a safe distance between your car and the lineworkers and their equipment, driving the posted work zone speed limit, and using your four-way flashers when stopping or traveling slowly can help reduce accidents in work zones," says Wayne Hageman, MiEnergy's Iowa Director of Operations.

There can be hefty fines or even jail time for violating traffic laws in work zones.

"Power poles and electrical equipment line our streets and highways, and narrow roadways often require crews to place their equipment in traffic lanes," Hageman says. "Their work activities are often taken for granted but benefit us all, and like everyone, they deserve a safe workplace. Be alert to utility crews and other work zone workers for their safety as well as yours."

Don't make the jobs of road workers, electric utility lineworkers, and tree trimmers more dangerous. Drive safely. For more safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

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 Cooperative 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 Cooperative. 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. Interested members should contact Kent Whitcomb at MiEnergy Cooperative, P.O. Box 626, Rushford, MN 55971, kwhitcomb@MiEnergy.coop or call 800-432-2285.

To the Top!

Training Stages for Electric Lineworkers

Known for their strength and agility, lineworkers are dedicated to ensuring our communities have reliable power. Safety is always top priority on the job, which is why lineworkers spend thousands of hours training as they advance their skills.

Here's a look at the career progression of a lineworker.

Crew Leader

A crew leader is an advanced position that requires supervising lineworkers on job sites, coordinating with contractors and directing daily activities for crews.

Journeyman Lineworker

Post-apprenticeship and with roughly 7,000+ hours of training under the belt, journeyman lineworkers are fully trained in their field. They repair, update and install overhead and underground power lines, as well as other electrical equipment.

Apprentice Lineworker

Before reaching lineworker status, they are required to work as an apprentice. Apprentice lineworkers earn competitive wages while receiving hands-on training and experience in the field. They typically spend four years in their apprenticeship.

Groundperson/Linehelper

Many lineworkers begin their career as a groundperson, or linehelper. They assist line crews with tools, keeping job sites safe and operating smaller equipment.

Regardless of stage, all lineworkers continue education and training throughout their career. Training and testing requirements vary from utility to utility.



Shaping our energy future through innovation

The energy industry is undergoing significant change driven by technology and the transition to more sustainable forms of energy. Innovation is essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring a continuous, reliable and affordable power supply.

Electric co-ops are no strangers to adapting to the needs of the local communities we serve. MiEnergy has always leaned into change as we explore new ways to meet members' energy needs.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

By using advanced equipment like drones that inspect our local grid, sensors that provide real-time data on the condition of power lines and satellite imagery used to monitor vegetation growth, we can pinpoint potential problems before they even occur and ultimately improve service for all.

Investing in smarter technologies also can enhance the monitoring and control of electricity flow so we can respond swiftly to changing needs. Even before adverse weather is here, advanced analytics from our systems, combined with data on weather patterns and other information, allows us to be proactive in taking preventative measures to shore up our system.

PREPARING FOR INCREASED ENERGY USE

Today, we depend on electricity more than ever before. From vehicles to farming equipment to home heating options, we depend on more products and appliances that run on electricity.

Interest in electric vehicles (EVs) is growing. MiEnergy is available to help members make informed decisions about EVs regarding electric charging options and capacity requirements for the home.

Automakers are transitioning many or all new vehicles to electric-

only models in the next 10 years. MiEnergy, like all electric providers, must plan now to have the necessary infrastructure in place to meet future EV charging needs—without jeopardizing the ability to provide reliable power.

Additionally, we are exploring innovative technologies to help address the increasing demand for electricity.

INNOVATIVE EFFICIENCY SOLUTIONS

MiEnergy is driven by a commitment to community and member satisfaction. As consumers become more proactive in managing their energy use, we are providing new ways to help our members lower their use and save money.

Submitting rebates, analyzing meter data by signing up for Smart Hub, reading energy savings guides and

completing DIY online energy audits are just a few examples of how you, with the help of MiEnergy, can help you take control of your energy use.


COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

You may not realize it, but MiEnergy is part of a larger network of 900 electric co-ops nationwide. While we are locally-owned by you, the members of the co-op, we also have the advantage of working with co-ops across the country to share ideas and leverage the innovations our colleagues might have tried out first. As cooperatives, we're collaborators instead of competitors—it's a unique aspect of our business model, and we're stronger because of it.

Our energy future will look different than it has in the past, and MiEnergy is prepared to adapt for the members we serve. Our mission and commitment to you remain steady—to provide reliable power at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

The energy industry is changing, but electric co-ops are known for adapting to their local members' needs. As we plan for changes and challenges ahead, innovative solutions are essential. Here are a few ways we're innovating for the future.



- **Use of Advanced Technologies**
 Drones aid in power line inspection and maintenance. Smart meters provide real-time data and help.
- **Preparing for Increased Energy Use**
 The demand for electricity is increasing as more technologies are electrified. Co-ops are exploring innovative solutions like battery storage to meet demands.
- **Energy Solutions for Members**
 Co-ops provide innovative efficiency services like appliance rebates and flexible billing options to help members manage their energy use.
- **Strength in Numbers**
 By working with and learning from other co-ops, we are uniquely positioned to improve service to our local communities.



FILLMORE COUNTY AGRICULTURE SUMMIT—LANESBORO

MiEnergy's Kent Whitcomb was invited to present at the Fillmore County Agriculture Summit on March 14 at Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center. The event was geared for all agricultural families, businesses and entrepreneurs. Whitcomb highlighted energy rebates, energy audits, Rural Energy for America grants, water heaters and member-owned solar.

U.S. Rep. Hinson

State Rep. Davids

State Sen. Miller

State Rep. Pelowski

State Rep. Bergan

During the month of March, employees and directors met with several elected officials in Iowa and Minnesota. Directors Beth Olson, Don Petersen, Jenny Scharmer, Ron Stevens and employees Brian Krambeer and Heather Larson met with state representatives Greg Davids and Gene Pelowski, and state Senator Jeremy Miller as part of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's Legislative Day. Employees Shelly Hove and Mike Walton met with state Representative Michael Bergan as part of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' REC Day on the Hill. Employees Shelly Hove and Brian Krambeer met in Cresco with U.S. Representative Ashley Hinson.



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
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 This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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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 KRAMBEEER 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

2024 OFFICES CLOSED
MAY 27 Memorial Day
JUNE 4 Employee Development Day
JULY 4 Independence Day
SEPTEMBER 2 Labor Day
SEPTEMBER 24 Employee Development Day
NOVEMBER 28-29 Thanksgiving Holiday
DECEMBER 17 Employee Development Day
DECEMBER 24-25 Christmas Holiday
DECEMBER 31 New Year's Eve, close at 11 a.m.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

A well-designed landscape can add beauty to your home and reduce home heating and cooling costs. Plant deciduous trees with high, spreading crowns to the south of your home to block sunlight in the summer and reduce the need for air conditioning. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, allowing sunlight to warm your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs with low crowns to block winter winds. Dense evergreen trees and shrubs planted to the north and northwest are the most common type of windbreak and can help lower energy used for home heating.

Source: energystar.gov

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 other projects to 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 2024:

Vegetation management: 4-Control, Asplundh, Clear Line, Davey Resource Group, New Age Tree Service and Zielie's Tree Service; **Overhead:** Tjader and Highstrom; **Underground:** A-1 Power; **Pole Testing:** Mi-Tech; **Staking and Underground Inspections:** STAR Energy; **Staking:** Acculine; **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.

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Members donate \$7,000



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

- **\$1,300, Mabel Ambulance Service, Mabel, Minn.**, to update equipment for hands-free communication.
- **\$1,200, St. Charles United Methodist Church, St. Charles, Minn.**, to purchase a commercial freezer to assist with food storage for area food shelves.
- **\$1,000, Houston Public Library, Houston, Minn.**, to replace outdated computers.
- **\$800, Rushford-Peterson Schools, Rushford, Minn.**, to provide unstructured social engagement and hands-on learning opportunities for middle school students.
- **\$500, Helping Hands Backpack Giveaway, Caledonia, Minn.**, to purchase school supplies for students in need in Houston County.
- **\$500, Hometown Resource Center, St. Charles, Minn.**, to purchase a new air conditioner for the food shelf.
- **\$500, Houston Area Museum, Houston, Minn.**, to purchase archival supplies.
- **\$500, Riceville Ambulance Service, Riceville, Iowa**, to purchase ice and water rescue equipment.
- **\$500, Spring Grove Friends of the Library, Spring Grove, Minn.**, to assist in developing an outdoor room.
- **\$200, Project Get Outdoors, Wabasha, Minn.**, to support the Healing Forest, which will train individuals as therapy guides for nature-based therapeutic experiences for Southeastern Minnesota youth and young adults experiencing trauma.

Operation Round Up is funded by donations made by members of MiEnergy who voluntarily have their electric bill round up to the next dollar. The average donation is \$6 per year, 2,200 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 away approximately \$14,000 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; Roy Kryzer, of Lewiston; Dennis Ostwinkle, of Decorah; Teresa Ross, of Hokah; Pery-O Sliwa of Decorah; Tom Tibor, of Minnesota City; and Mike Tuohy, of Chatfield.

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 or call 800-432-2285.