

October 2024 Vol. 8 Issue 10
A monthly publication for members of
MiEnergy Cooperative.

MiNews

It's National Co-op Month

Co-ops power communities with purpose

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Dairyland Power Cooperative awarded \$579 million for clean energy transition

Last month, Dairyland Power Cooperative, our member-owned wholesale power provider, made national news by being awarded \$579 million at an event held in Westby, Wis., and announced by President Joe Biden.

MiEnergy Director and Dairyland Board Chair Jenny Scharmer was in attendance and spoke with President Biden before the ceremony. The award resulted from an application by Dairyland to the New Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program, which was part of the Administration's Inflation Reduction Act. New ERA is a \$9.7 billion program available only to rural electric cooperatives, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and deploying new clean energy and storage resources.

Dairyland will use the funds to develop projects totaling 1,020 megawatts (MW) of power purchase agreements for solar and wind energy installations currently planned in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Projects include 593 MW of wind, 427 MW of solar and 60 MW of energy storage.

Congratulations to Dairyland President and CEO Brent Ridge and his team on the award, which will be a tremendous opportunity for Dairyland to accelerate its carbon reduction goals. This will result in a reduction of 3.3 million metric tons of carbon, decreasing carbon emissions by over 70%. Dairyland has already retired 579 MW of coal generation since 2014 and has reduced its coal generation investment by 60% since 1999.

This major award will allow Dairyland to advance its clean energy transition plans more quickly and affordably, providing



The Dairyland Power Cooperative Board of Directors met President Joe Biden at the announcement of Dairyland's New ERA award. Jenny Scharmer, MiEnergy board director and Dairyland board chair, is pictured to the right of President Biden.

an incredible opportunity to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy investments, facilitate economic growth and job creation, and promote environmental stewardship and justice – all while lowering energy costs for rural communities.

It is particularly important to note that Dairyland has continued its focus on safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. The New ERA grant not only allows for adding more renewable energy but also allows the opportunity to refinance existing generation resources and establish new purchase power contracts that will enhance system reliability.

You may be asking what this means to MiEnergy. This means Dairyland will provide much more renewable energy as part of its generation portfolio and will have a greater ability to maintain affordable wholesale power costs for MiEnergy. The grant will provide a buy-down on the cost of new renewable energy for Dairyland, ultimately benefiting MiEnergy members.

To ensure a safe and reliable power supply every hour of the day, Dairyland will balance its generation portfolio with renewables and “always available” generation from natural gas resources. Natural gas is critical for reliability and supports intermittent energy resources like solar and wind by ramping up quickly to fill in the gaps when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

Dairyland Power Cooperative, like MiEnergy Cooperative, is a non-partisan organization that works with both political groups to benefit all their electric cooperative members. Nearly 70% of MiEnergy's total operating expenses are wholesale power costs, making Dairyland's success a tremendous benefit to MiEnergy Cooperative.

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

Board room highlights | Sept. 26, 2024

- The year-to-date financial report is ahead of budget.
- Approved a revolving loan application for Featherstone Farms, LLC.
- Reviewed scenarios for the capital credit allocations. Approved Resolution 24-11 retiring approximately \$2,000,442.86 in capital credits.
- Management provided updates on operations and subsidiaries.
- Reviewed the results for the CEO evaluation and the yearly board assessment.

The next board meeting will be held at the Cresco office on October 31 at 9 a.m.



Pictured above is the MiBroadband Board of Directors following a groundbreaking ceremony for four projects in Fillmore County.

Construction begins on fiber projects for rural areas of Fountain and Preston

MiBroadband announced the start of construction on four rural fiber projects in Fillmore County at a groundbreaking ceremony August 27 at its Preston office.

In 2022 and 2023, MiBroadband was the recipient of \$5.15 million in grants from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Border-to-Border Program. These grants are now helping build out fiber service to areas north of Fountain and Preston and pockets of two rural areas in southern rural Preston.

MiBroadband is also breaking ground on a self-funded \$1.5 million project to bring fiber to the city of Fountain.

In total, the areas will cover 781 locations and provide internet speeds of 1 Gbps download and 1 Gbps upload on a fiber network, which is the fastest and most reliable service available.

The ceremony marked a significant milestone in MiBroadband's ongoing commitment to bring high-speed internet access to underserved rural communities.

Funding from the Border-to-Border Program is crucial in enabling MiBroadband to extend its fiber-optic network into rural areas, ensuring that residents and businesses have access to the fast, reliable internet they need to thrive, and opening doors to new opportunities in education, healthcare and economic development.

With the support of local partners and stakeholders, the fiber installations are expected to be completed in 2025.

"We're excited to kick off these projects and bring the benefits of modern connectivity to North Preston, rural Preston and North Fountain," said Jill Huffman,

MiBroadband CEO. "Thanks to the support from the Border-to-Border Broadband Program, we're able to bridge the digital divide in these areas and ensure no one is left behind in the digital age."

The projects are part of MiBroadband's initiative to expand fiber networks across rural regions of Southeast Minnesota and Northeast Iowa.

MiBroadband is owned by MiEnergy Cooperative, Mabel Cooperative Telephone Company and Spring Grove Communications. Information about MiBroadband's rural fiber projects and future plans can be found online at www.mibroadband.com/internet/ or by calling 507-886-6422.

Interruptible heat test 7 a.m. on Nov. 20

If you participate in MiEnergy's interruptible heating (also known as dual fuel or energy management), your system will be tested on Wednesday, November 20 beginning at 7 a.m.

At that time, the electricity powering your electric heating system will be interrupted and cause your backup heating system to operate. All power will be restored by 12 p.m.

This annual test is conducted to ensure that your backup heating system starts automatically and adequately keeps your home at a comfortable temperature during control periods this winter. The test also ensures the control equipment is functioning properly.

Shine the light on local volunteers – finalists announced

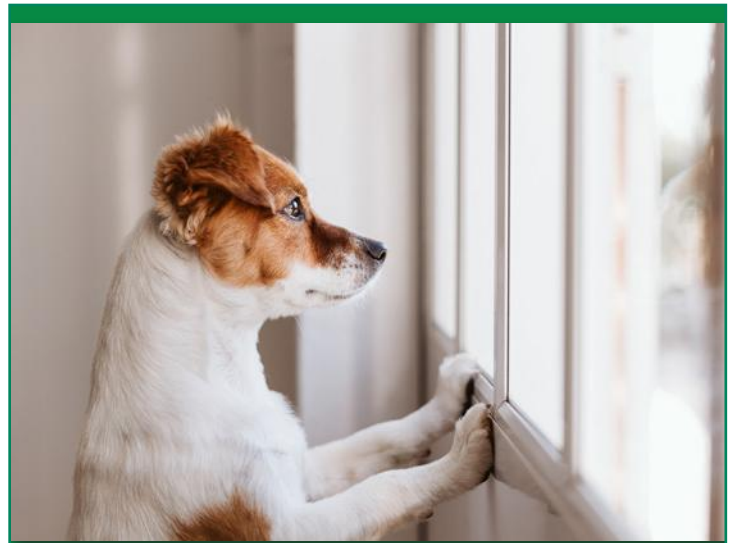
Earlier this summer, the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa sponsored their fourth annual Shine the Light contest to highlight our cooperative commitment to community. During the month of June, member-consumers and employees of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate volunteers in their communities who are working to improve quality of life.



Seventy-five nominations were submitted from across the state, highlighting the work of many incredible Iowans. Three winners were selected and received \$3,000 for their volunteer organization.

- Judy Hess of Fonda was nominated by Kerry Noethe, who is a member-consumer of Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association. Judy was selected as a 2024 Shine the Light winner for her work with MAGS 4 Fonda, which is a group of mothers and grandmothers who work to improve the parks and pool in the small northwestern Iowa community of Fonda.
- Doug Pralle of Hampton was nominated by Madison Alert, who is an employee of Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative. Doug was selected as a 2024 Shine the Light winner for his work with Compassion Flights, which arranges free air transportation for medical treatment. Doug is a pilot and founded the nonprofit in 2017.
- Beth Thole of Sibley was nominated by Gary and Karen Trei, who are member-consumers of Osceola Electric Cooperative. Beth was named as a 2024 Shine the Light contest winner for her work with Osceola County Ag Pavilion.

The winners are also featured in the September issue of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and on the contest website at www.IowaShineTheLight.com; all of the 75 nominators and nominees were listed in the August issue of the magazine.



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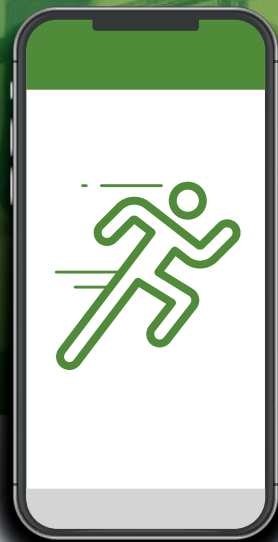
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OCTOBER IS NATIONAL

CO-OP MONTH

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, community-led utilities. Because we are a co-op, we can adapt to our local members' needs, providing the programs and services you care about most. That's the power of co-op membership.

Co-ops power communities with purpose

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

MiEnergy is deeply committed to our members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

This month, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For MiEnergy, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including MiEnergy, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people--the local communities we're proud to serve.

7 Cooperative Principles



Open and Voluntary Membership: Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.



Democratic Member Control: Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.



Members' Economic Participation: Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At MiEnergy, this happens through paying your energy bills.



Autonomy and Independence: Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.



Education, Training and Information: Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.



Cooperation Among Cooperatives: Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.



Concern for Community: All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.



Watch our Facebook page throughout October for a chance to win a prize as part of our Co-op Month celebration

Members only
**FALL
EVENT**

**OCTOBER 18
1 P.M. - 6 P.M.**



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Pumpkin bowling
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**RSVP online at www.MiEnergy.coop or
call 800-432-2285 by 4 p.m. Oct. 17!**

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Gift baskets

I ♥ MiCo-op gift basket drawing

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Highland Homestead of MN
Winona, MN



The Green Button
Cresco, IA



Freedom by Design
Peterson, MN



Blepta Studios
Calmar, IA



Serio Farms
Preston, MN

To show our appreciation for our members, MiEnergy is pleased to announce a gift basket drawing contest in honor of National Cooperative Month in October. MiEnergy will draw names to give away 50 gift baskets filled with local items to members who enter the contest. The basket includes goat milk lotion, dry soup mix, a shelf-stable snack box, freeze-dried saltwater taffy, a microwavable soup bowl warmer, a refrigerator magnet, a ceramic coaster and smoked tomato sauce. And better yet, the co-op will come to you! A representative from MiEnergy will deliver the baskets to each winning residence within its service territory.

HOW TO ENTER:

Visit www.MiEnergy.coop/co-op-basket-giveaway to complete the form or call 800-432-2285. Members must provide their name, phone number, account number and service address to enter.

The contest closes on **October 23, 2024**. Winning members will be notified by phone on October 24. Baskets will be delivered Oct. 28-Nov. 1.

CONTEST RULES:

One entry per membership. Employees and directors are not eligible to enter the contest.

FIND THE FORM
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Capital Credit Refunds Have Arrived!

It pays to be a member—board approves refund of \$2 million

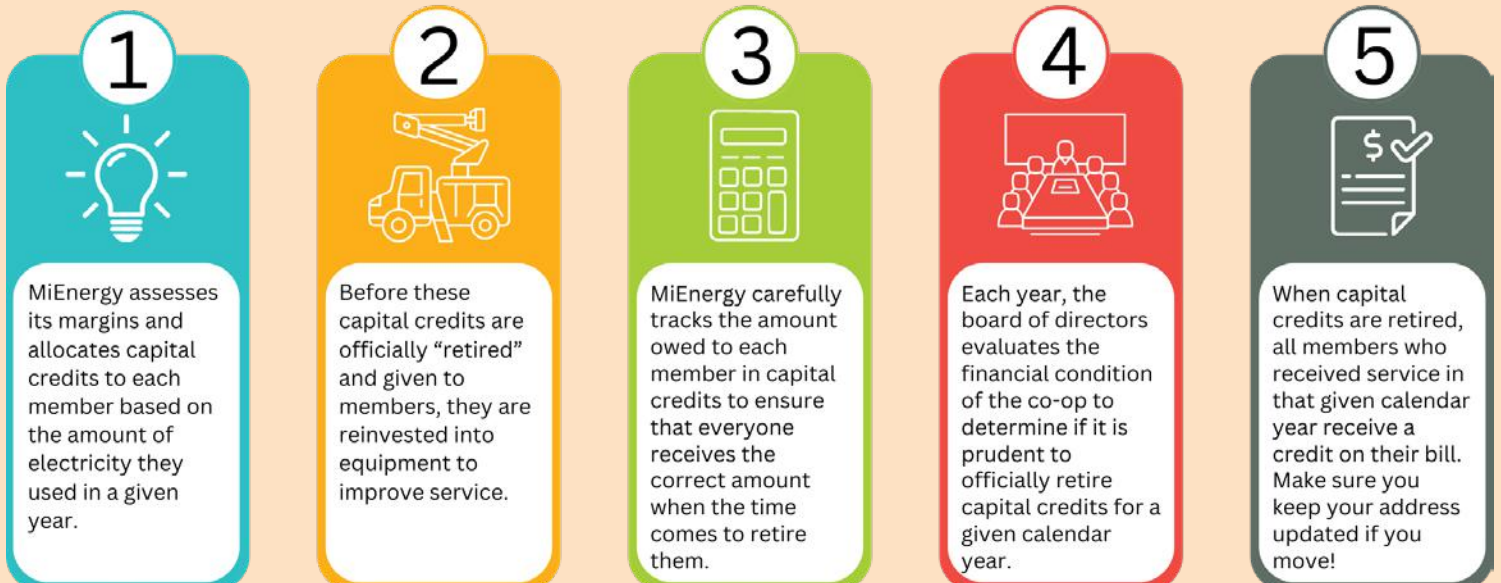
Capital credits are your share of the cooperative’s “profits.” Per MiEnergy’s bylaws, the board of directors determines the amount of retirement each year based on the financial condition of the cooperative.

Capital credits at not-for-profit companies are similar to dividends paid by for-profit companies. The difference is the cooperative’s “shareholders” are the people it serves and the dividends (capital credits) are paid only to those members.

Of the 800+ electric cooperatives across the nation, MiEnergy ranks in the top 10% in the amount of capital credits it pays back to members. The board recently approved retiring over \$2 million in capital credits. If you purchased electricity from the co-op during 2002–2023, your credit is listed as a “Capital Credit Refund” on your statement. The 1998–2000 credits are a retirement from Dairyland Power Cooperative that we are passing on to members.

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK

Unlike investor-owned utilities, MiEnergy Cooperative is a not-for-profit organization that returns its profits, or “margins,” back to its members. As a member, you are a part-owner of the co-op and entitled to receive money back through capital credit retirements. **Here is how they work:**



Transformer upgrade in Winneshiek County

MiEnergy crews recently upgraded a current transformer and equipment for a member in Winneshiek County. 1. Travis Cummings (l) and Caleb Steiner (r) set up the new transformer connections. 2. Ryan Dahl (l) communicates to ensure safe and effective power transfer. 3. Travis Cummings in the bucket is transferring power with hotstick. 4. Caleb Steiner by the electric pole with an extendo stick finalizing the project upgrade.



Local business adds solar

It took a joint effort by four parties, but now a local business is meeting its energy needs with renewable energy. MiEnergy recently commissioned a 162-kW solar array at Four Daughters Vineyard & Winery, a co-op member located near Spring Valley, Minn. The system is affixed to the roof of their cidery building for making Loon Juice hard cider. Since the system exceeds 40 kW, all excess energy generated will be purchased by MiEnergy's wholesale energy provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative. This project involving Four Daughters Vineyard & Winery, MiEnergy Cooperative, Solar Connections and Dairyland Power Cooperative highlights the importance of collaboration in meeting the needs of members.



Personnel changes at the co-op

NEW EMPLOYEES



Malachi Bunke accepted the apprentice lineworker position with MiEnergy and started on September 9. Bunke completed his training at Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, Minn. in May of 2023 and had been working as an apprentice lineman at Rochester Public Utilities. Welcome Malachi!

Grady Hengel accepted the apprentice lineworker position. He was hired in May as a seasonal temporary lineworker, working the past three months with the line crew and has been gaining a great amount of knowledge of the MiEnergy system. Grady started his full-time position at MiEnergy on September 16. Welcome Grady!



Cassidy Zawislak accepted the billing representative/receptionist position. She was currently working for the Scandinavian Inn in Lanesboro.

Cassidy started at MiEnergy on September 17. Welcome Cassidy!

Hoiland earns communication credentials

MiEnergy's Annie Hoiland, communications specialist, recently earned the Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC) credential. The CCC program through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) provides co-op communicators with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively communicate and increase their visibility within the co-op and community. The CCC program is a cohort-based blended learning program (a mixture of 110 hours of online and in-person instruction). Annie has been an employee at MiEnergy for 16 years. Congratulations Annie!



MiEnergy reps take part in regional meeting



MiEnergy's staff and board directors recently attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA's) Region 5 & 6 Meeting in Minneapolis.

Pictured above MiEnergy's Board Director Jenny Scharmer (r) played a role in presiding over the NRECA resolution process.

At right, MiEnergy's President/CEO Brian Krambeer (l) and Board Chair Dean Nierling (r) participated in a panel discussion on the topic of cooperative mergers and board/CEO leadership





out & about in your COMMUNITY



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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

2024/2025 OFFICES CLOSED

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.
JANUARY 1 New Year's Day



FARM SAFETY DAY—CRESCO

MiEnergy's Shawn Omar (l) and Clint Lickteig (r) gave electric safety demonstrations to 120 fifth grade students from Howard-Winn, Notre Dame and Riceville schools. ISU Extension and Outreach Howard County hosted the event at the Howard County Fairgrounds as part of the annual Farm Safety Day. The students rotated through different farm safety educational stations throughout the day.

CAREER DAY—CALEDONIA

MiEnergy's Randall Ashbacher (l) and Chris Horn (r) participated in a career event organized by the Bluff Country Collaborative hosted by Caledonia Schools. Nearly 700 students in grades 9 through 12 attended from Caledonia, Houston, La Crescent-Hokah, Mabel-Canton, Rushford-Peterson and Spring Grove schools. It served as a great way to help educate students on what MiEnergy does and to highlight the career opportunities as a lineworker and other career options.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY—RUSHFORD

Employees recently walked the ditches of Highway 16 near the Rushford office to pick up litter as part of the Adopt-A-Highway program. Front row L to R: Brian Krambeer, Lori Clobes, Heather Larson, Audra Skalet and Wendy Jacobson. Back row: Charlie Mueller and Kent Whitcomb.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

If you recently made or plan to make energy efficiency improvements to your home, you may be eligible for federal tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 empowers homeowners to save money on energy efficiency improvements and upgrades. Homeowners can save up to \$3,000 annually to lower the cost of efficiency upgrades by up to 30%. A few upgrades covered through the IRA include new exterior doors, windows, insulation, heating/cooling equipment and other major appliances. If you completed an upgrade this year or you are considering one, visit www.energystar.gov/federal-tax-credits to learn if you qualify for a tax credit.

Source: energystar.gov

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- Before you begin a hunt, note the location of power lines and other electrical equipment. Dense trees can make them hard to see.
- Obey all signs that advise electrical hazards, especially when placing a tree stand.
- Never use power poles to support a tree stand.
- Never shoot at power lines or electrical equipment.
- When setting up and taking down the stand, make sure you don't make contact with any overhead electrical equipment.
- If you're using a portable generator on your trip, don't run it in a confined area.

For more information visit:

 Safe
Electricity.org