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# CEO MESSAGE

FROM MICHAEL J. HENKE, PRESIDENT & CEO

mhenke@peoplesenergy.coop

Every other year we work with National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Market Research to conduct a survey of residential members that measures overall member satisfaction based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index. The survey also provides information about member perceptions of service quality, the key drivers of member satisfaction, member preferences, and helps shed light on who our members are. This year we also asked members to rate us on how well they believe we are living up to our mission and vision.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction that represents the U.S. economy. Organizations of all types from a wide range of industries use the ACSI methodology to obtain science-based insights across the complete arc of the customer experience. The ACSI benchmark for energy utilities in 2024 is 75. Electric cooperatives averaged 77 and I'm happy to report that PEC scored an 80. While we didn't achieve our self-imposed goal of 84 or higher (which we scored in 2018 and 2020), 80 is still a good score. It tells me that most members surveyed are satisfied with the Cooperative, we're meeting their expectations, and if they had the choice, they would still choose PEC as their electricity provider.

The performance attributes that members scored us highest on are friendly, courteous employees, minimizing longer outages, restoring power after an outage, and having highly trained and knowledgeable employees. While I know our employees are some of the best in the industry and our reliability has been good, it's reassuring to know that our members agree and are experiencing it. As a matter of fact, as I evaluated the performance attributes through the lens of our mission of providing reliable electricity and superior customer service at fair and reasonable prices we scored well on reliable electricity and superior customer service-related attributes. Our

lowest scores related to reasonable prices. This is consistent with other utilities and not a surprise since we had to raise rates this year. I never expect a member to like their rates, but I do appreciate it when they make the effort to understand them.

Another new question we asked had members rank how they prioritize reliability, affordability, and sustainability. Reliability led the rankings at 37 percent, in second place was affordability at 20 percent, and then sustainability at five percent. Four percent were unsure or didn't have a preference and 34 percent didn't respond to the question, which is unfortunate. This helps us better understand what our members value most about their electricity.

There was an interesting shift in how members prefer to receive information about the Cooperative. In the past, members stated they preferred it through the newsletter. This year e-mail and texting scored higher than the newsletter. While nearly 90% said they read the newsletter at least occasionally, it was a significant shift in preference which we will examine further.

I know surveys take time to complete and greatly appreciate that members took the time to complete ours. It is a valuable tool that we use to help us make decisions about how to best serve all members. A special thank you to the members who completed the survey!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Michael J. Henke". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael J. Henke  
President & CEO  
(800) 214-2694

# MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

highline

Vol. 88 • Issue 7

PEC's Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on June 27. During the meeting, the following items were discussed: a safety spotlight on outdoor recreation safety; results from the 2024 member satisfaction survey; McKenna O'Neill's experience on the 2024 NRECA Youth Tour; next steps in finalizing the 2025-2027 strategic plan; board self-assessment instructions; review of the May 21 storm event; review of the construction budget and outlook for the rest of the year, and the NRECA video titled Building a Relationship between the Board and the CEO was viewed.

**A quorum of directors was present, and the following actions were taken:**

- ▶ *Approved the 10-year financial forecast.*
- ▶ *Approved revising the 2025 PEC Annual Meeting date to March 27, 2025.*
- ▶ *Approved an update to the Residential and Electric Vehicle Time-of-Use rates.*

## MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Henke,  
*President/CEO*

Michelle Olson,  
*Director of  
Member Services*

Gwen Stevens,  
*Director of Cooperative  
Relations*

Dody Wubker, *CFO*

Nicholas Woetzel,  
*Director of Operations*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### DISTRICT 1:

Jon Kroening, *Secretary*

### DISTRICT 2:

Jodie Tvedt, *Vice Chair*

### DISTRICT 3:

John Winter

### DISTRICT 4:

Tracy Lauritzen, *Treasurer*

### DISTRICT 5:

Jerry Wooner, *Board Chair*

### DISTRICT 6:

Art Friedrich,  
*Dairyland Director*

### DISTRICT 7:

Jeff Orth

Visit [peoplesenergy.coop](http://peoplesenergy.coop)  
for a listing of the areas  
covered by each district.

Business Hours:  
7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Supporting our communities is in our DNA.**

As a member-owned cooperative, everything we do is focused on serving you and investing in the communities you live in.

Now that summer is here, many of our local communities are busy hosting a variety of festivals and events. People's Energy Cooperative is proud to support as many of them as we can. We enjoy celebrating with you!

So far this year, we've participated in Stewartville's Transportation Fair, Dover's Third of July celebration, and Eyota's Family Fun Night. PEC has also provided financial support for Elgin's Cheese Days, Viola's Gopher Count, Dover's Third of July, Stewartville's Summer Fest, and Byron's Good Neighbor Days.

As summer rolls on, we'll also be supporting Oronoco Gold Rush Days, Plainview's Corn on the Cob Days and Chatfield's Western Days. We hope to see you there!

**\$30 SPOT YOUR NUMBER**

Each month, we hide four account numbers (without the last two digits) within the text of the newsletter. If you find your number, contact the Cooperative by the 15th of the next month at **(800) 214-2694** or [memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop](mailto:memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop) to receive a \$30 credit on your bill.

**Good luck in finding your account number!**

# Life-Sustaining Medical Equipment



Do you need oxygen or other life-sustaining medical equipment requiring electricity at home? When life-sustaining equipment is present in a home, it's important that you notify us by completing the Medical Alert Priority form, so we can note this on your account. This does not guarantee you will always have electricity or that it will be turned on faster in the event of a power outage, however we take this information into account when servicing your account and working through the outage restoral process. Twenty-three thousand eight hundred thirty-nine.

## PLEASE NOTE:

- The Medical Alert Priority Form must be signed by your doctor and indicate the reasons you want to have a medical alert designation.
- The form is only good for one year and needs to be re-submitted annually if needed.
- If your medical condition requires that you be on the medical priority list, we strongly encourage you to have a backup plan for other living arrangements or backup power for your medical equipment.
- It is important that you make sure we have your updated contact information in the event we need to contact you regarding your electric service.

To access this form, visit [www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop) and click on the 'Account Forms' button. If you have any questions, call (800) 214-2694 or email [memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop](mailto:memberservices@peoplesenergy.coop).

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT 2024

During the month of August, Carr's Tree Service and New Age Tree Service will continue to work with us to execute our vegetation management plan.

Carr's Tree Service will be spraying in Whitewater, Plainview, Elgin, Viola, Farmington, Elmira, Orion, Pleasant Grove, Sumner, and Jordan townships. They will also be doing tree work in Highland, Watopa, and Glasgow townships.

New Age Tree Service will be spraying in High Forest, Pleasant Valley, Racine, Pleasant Grove, Eyota, and Marion townships. They will also be doing tree work in Minneiska, Mount Vernon, Watopa, and Whitewater townships.



# CONGRATULATIONS

Thank you both for your years of service to our members.



**Nick Woetzel**  
Director of Operations  
5 years



**Michelle Olson**  
Director of Member Services  
15 years

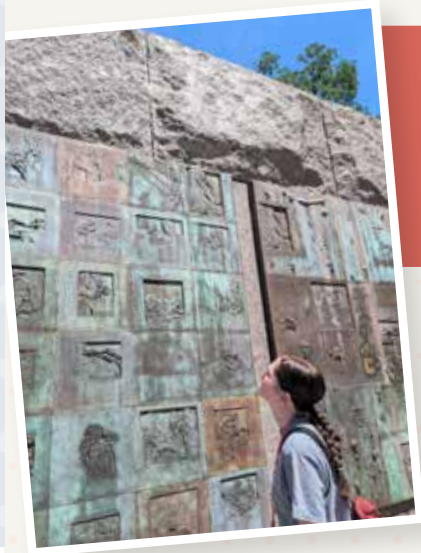
# 2024 NRECA Youth Tour

Last month, McKenna O'Neill from Stewartville traveled to Washington, D.C. with 33 other students from across Minnesota for the 2024 NRECA Youth Tour. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience including trips to dozens of monuments and museums, along with opportunities to network with hundreds of students from around the country.

Below, McKenna shares some of the highlights from her trip:

## Day 2:

This morning, we learned about rural electric cooperatives and youth advocacy. We also took a two-hour walking tour of the Potomac Park monuments. I found where the Franklin D. Roosevelt monument recognizes early lineworkers and learned so much about his impact on rural America.



## Day 3:

Today, we toured the Capitol and Library of Congress. We also had the honor to speak with Senator Amy Klobuchar. She shared a lot of information on topics I am passionate about. As a soon-to-be voting adult, it was great to hear everything she is working on. I was also very impressed that she took time out of her busy schedule to visit with us!



## Day 4:

Today, we toured the Holocaust Museum. It was an incredibly powerful experience. I was so shocked by the calculated rise to power by Hitler. I was also humbled and saddened by the inhumane acts that were committed. Seeing the videos and pictures of the prisoners brought me to tears.



## Day 5:

For our final day in D.C., we got to tour the Smithsonian Institute museums. At the National Museum of African American History and Culture, I found the suit worn by Chadwick Boseman in Black Panther! Did you know that suit was completely made by a 3-D printer?



# Powering a Brighter Future: Guatemala 2024

If you would have asked Lead Area Lineworker Eric Dessner last May why he was traveling to Guatemala to help electrify a remote village in the mountains, he would have responded with, "It's just the right thing to do." And he's right. With decades of history and experience, rural electric cooperatives have been doing 'the right thing' for residents in rural America since their inception. NRECA International provided a way for People's Energy Cooperative to collaborate with other cooperatives in Minnesota and Iowa to empower a small community in rural Guatemala with access to electricity.

Prior to leaving on the trip, Eric and Mike Berkenpas from Northwest REC in Iowa (the two project leaders) were informed that the site they had scouted out in February would no longer be available due to logistical issues. They were given the choice – stay at this location and reschedule the trip or stay with the trip dates and help finish a project on the other side of the country. Ultimately, they, along with the rest of the group, chose to work on the unfinished project because they knew either way they would be able to impact those who are underserved.

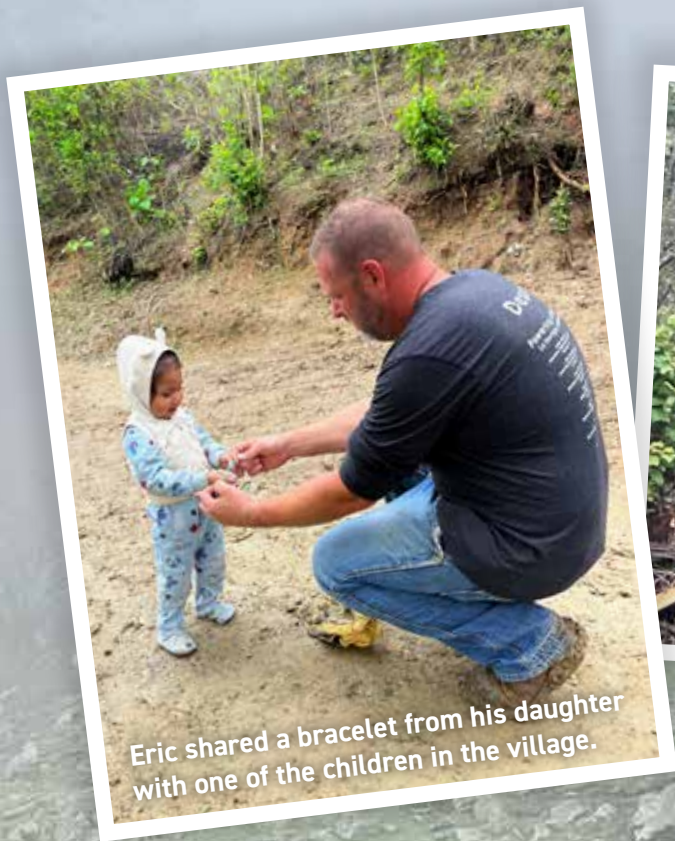
In early June, Eric left with 13 other cooperative lineworkers for the remote village of Las Penas, Guatemala, which is 6,000 feet above the ocean. They worked 10 straight days – leaving early in the morning to allow time for travel and returning to their hotel in the late afternoon. There were no real roads in the area; a large dirt path had been established only days before their arrival to allow them to travel in pickups most of the way there. With the area full of clay and mud, travel was extremely difficult. They often had to hike the last few miles to the work site. In fact, the rain that came around 3 p.m. every day would often cut their workday short.



The lineworkers and local residents celebrate the completion of the project.



Rain created treacherous driving conditions on the mountainside.



Eric shared a bracelet from his daughter with one of the children in the village.



Spans of over 750 feet were not uncommon in the mountainous terrain.

The villagers of Las Penas eagerly showed up to help electrify their community. They helped pull line up and down mountainsides from pole to pole before our lineworkers strung it up on the top of the poles. These spans measured 750 - 1,000 feet! Since they couldn't always rely on vehicles, villagers would also load up their horses with equipment and supplies to traverse the mountainous terrain. In fact, one day, everyone involved helped carry a 419 lb. transformer up the side of a hill and then worked together to pull the transformer up the pole with ropes.

The work Eric and the group accomplished was nothing short of amazing. Without access to much of the equipment they would normally use, the group was able to finish setting several poles and stringing 3.5 miles of power lines, along with outfitting 32 homes with four lightbulbs and two wall sockets. This impacted the lives of over 150 residents.

Up until May, the villagers of Las Penas, Guatemala had never experienced life with electricity. Many of them had to travel hours just to charge their cell phones. Today, thanks to the work of Eric and the rest of the lineworkers, they can turn the lights on, shining the way to a bright future. We are incredibly proud of Eric and everything he accomplished in Guatemala. We are also very grateful to Border States, one of our key partners, for covering the cost of Eric's trip.



At the end of a long day, the group starts their hike back to the vehicles.



## Tree Planting Initiative

**Over the next several years, a variety of native trees and shrubs will be planted along the Great River Ridge Trail between Elgin and Plainview. The trees will provide shade and serve as a living snow fence along the path.**

In support of the project, People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up program approved a \$1,124.16 grant to EcoFest Foundation, Inc. On May 15, the group started by planting nine shade trees and four shrubs just north of Elgin where Highway 42 and County Road 25 intersect.

"We wanted to start with a small amount of trees and shrubs for troubleshooting any issues with planting, maintenance, etc.," comments EcoFest Foundation President Logan Kolb. "We plan to use the remainder of the grant money to plant additional trees on September 28 with help from community volunteers. After planting is complete, BlackTop Grill in Elgin will be hosting an EcoFest fundraiser, including live music, to help raise funds for planting more trees and shrubs in 2025 and beyond."

Prior to planting any trees, Kolb notes how the DNR was consulted and recommended specific native tree species for the project. Grant funds were then used to purchase approved tree species (e.g. bur oak, white oak, shagbark hickory, dogwood, serviceberry) and necessary supplies for planting and maintenance such as fencing, stakes, and watering bags.

Increasing the shade/canopy, along with improving aesthetics and privacy while on the trail, should lead to more community members using the Great River Ridge Trail. The trees will also provide environmental benefits (air quality, pollinator/wildlife habitat, etc.) and help reduce drifting snow in winter. Twenty-one thousand nine hundred forty-eight

"EcoFest Foundation, Inc. and the community of Plainview-Elgin-Millville would like to express our sincerest gratitude to People's Energy Cooperative members for the grant money to help improve the Great River Ridge Trail between Plainview and Elgin with as many trees and shrubs as we can get into the ground!" says Kolb.





# ELECTRIFY ROCHESTER EXPO 2024

As your rural electric cooperative, we also want to be your trusted energy resource. On July 6, we participated in the Electrify Rochester Expo to help members understand their options when it comes to electrification and sustainability projects. As a presenting sponsor, we had information on our rebates, energy management programs, and incentive rates. There were also a variety of vendors and volunteers ready to talk about their areas of expertise.

The weather was beautiful and we enjoyed connecting with our members. Thank you to Rochester Electric Vehicles for the opportunity to partner with you on this great event!



## Worried about your bill getting paid on time?

Sometimes, life gets in the way and your bill doesn't arrive on time in the mail. Please know that you can receive and review your bill electronically the same day the bills are processed. You also have multiple options when it comes to paying your bill.

- Online Payment through SmartHub
- Secure Pay-by-Phone System - (855) 730-8709
- Automatic Payment Plan
- Your Bank's Bill Payment System
- MyChoice PrePay Program
- Paying in Person at our Headquarters in Oronoco

For more detailed information about these options, visit [www.peoplesenergy.coop/payment-options](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop/payment-options).

## Before you upgrade or install, CHECK OUT OUR REBATES!

If you're planning on purchasing a new appliance, smart thermostat, water heater, LED lighting, or a heating or cooling system for your home, make sure you check out the many rebates available to you as a People's Energy Cooperative member. Two thousand three hundred ninety-nine.

Before making your purchase, visit the rebates page on our website or call Member Services at (800) 214-2694 to check if the product you're interested in qualifies for a rebate. In addition to rebates available for residential and business accounts, we also offer rebates for commercial/industrial/agriculture accounts.



# ENERGY EFFICIENCY: The Power of Smart Home Technologies

Smart home technologies are transforming how we live, making our homes more comfortable, convenient, and energy efficient than ever before. These devices communicate with each other to automate everyday tasks and functions around the home. In addition to convenience, smart technologies enable consumers to manage and monitor their energy consumption through device scheduling and control.



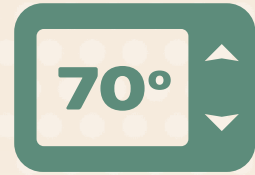
## SMART PLUGS OR BULBS

With a smart plug or bulb, you can set schedules to automatically turn lights and devices off or on, which can help you save energy and boost home security.



## SMART HUBS

Voice assistants like Amazon Echo or Apple HomePod allow family members to interact with the various devices through voice control rather than individual apps.



## SMART THERMOSTAT

While traditional programmable thermostats can be set to your schedule and preferences, a smart thermostat takes this one step further by learning and adjusting to your routine and building a schedule around it.

Whether you're looking to automate every aspect of your home or simply want to try a device or two, smart technologies have the power to transform your living space into a home where comfort and convenience reign supreme.



## TIPS FOR INTEGRATING SMART HOME TECH

If you're new to smart home technologies, keep the following tips in mind as you explore home automation options.

- 1. Define goals.** Determine the areas in your home you want to make smart, like lighting, security and entertainment systems.
- 2. Choose compatible devices.** A smart hub can make integration easier with a central device to control multiple smart technologies.
- 3. Check Wi-Fi strength.** Smart home technologies require a stable internet connection to function properly, so consider factors like router placement and signal strength.
- 4. Prioritize security.** Set strong, unique passwords for your Wi-Fi network, set devices to update automatically and limit personal data collection.

# Behind the Scenes of Power Restoration

When the power goes out, our crews get right to work to fix the outage safely and quickly. People's Energy Cooperative has a process in place to ensure power gets restored as efficiently as possible whatever the cause of the outage. Twenty-nine thousand three hundred twenty-eight.

First, our lineworkers must locate and assess the damage. Safety is always our top priority, which means crews begin by clearing lines or equipment that could pose a safety hazard to the public.

Restoring power to critical facilities like hospitals, fire stations, and other essential services is the next priority. As crews begin making repairs, they will first focus on repairing transmission lines. These lines carry high voltages of electricity to substations that step-down the voltage levels and distribute it for safe use in homes and businesses.

After transmission lines are repaired, substations and transformers are examined to make sure everything is working as it should. Then lineworkers get to work on distribution lines. It is important to remember that our crews are out working on problems that need to be fixed, even if you don't see anyone working in your neighborhood.

Once these repairs are made, lineworkers begin the work of restoring power to individual homes and businesses. The time it takes to restore your power depends on many factors, including the size of the outage, the level of damage sustained, and the working conditions lineworkers face when restoring power in damaged areas.

Whether the outage is long or short, it pays to know what to do when the power goes out so you can keep your family safe. Safe Electricity suggests you:

- Call your electric utility immediately to report the outage.
- Use safe alternative food preparations. A barbecue grill is an excellent way to prepare food. Always grill outside.
- Check on friends and relatives—especially children, seniors, and those with medical conditions or disabilities.
- Have a storm kit (with items like flashlights, a battery-operated radio, batteries, and first-aid supplies) prepared for use during power outages.
- Turn off electrical appliances and unplug major electronics, including computers and televisions. Power sometimes comes back in surges, which can damage electronics.





**People's Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

**highline**

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Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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# Legislative Energy Forums

## Mark your calendars and join us!

Now, more than ever, it's important to engage with those who represent you at the local, state, and federal government. The electric industry is rapidly changing and it's important that government representatives hear from those they serve. We encourage you to take an active role in this year's election by joining us at one of our two legislative forums. Hear how candidates for state house seats view issues important to the electric industry.

### Stewartville

**Thursday, September 19**

Riverview Greens Golf Course

5:30 p.m. – Dinner

6:00 p.m. – Forum

### Elgin

**Tuesday, September 24**

The BlackTop Bar and Grill

5:30 p.m. – Dinner

6:00 p.m. – Forum



# 24-HOUR OUTAGE NUMBER

## WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, SO DO WE

Call even if you think your neighbors have reported the outage. Leave one light on so you know when power has been restored. Have an emergency kit prepared.

# (800) 214-2694