



IN THIS ISSUE:

CEO Message

2015 Member Appreciation

Coop News

AMI Update

Holiday Safety & Efficiency



MANAGEMENT STAFF

Elaine J. Garry,
President/CEO

Gary Fitterer,
Director of Engineering

Mike Henke,
Chief Financial Officer

Michelle Olson,
Director of
Member Services

Gwen Stevens,
Director of Member &
Community Relations

Troy Swancutt,
Director of Operations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Office Hours:

7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

Telephone: 507-367-7000

Toll-Free: 800-214-2694

Web Address:

www.peoplesenergy.coop

Gopher State One Call:
1-800-252-1166

(for digging & line location)

GET READY TO *HARNESS THE POWER* OF **COMMUNITY SOLAR**



Following months of research, planning, and anticipation, the People's Community Solar project is underway! Site preparations are being made and construction is set to begin yet this year in the Elgin Business Park.

The best news of all... People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) members can now purchase a subscription to harness the power of solar energy! It doesn't matter where you live, as long as you are an active member of PEC you can participate.

Subscriptions are limited and being sold on a first-come, first-served basis for \$750 for the output of one 305-watt panel. The price includes the cost to design and build the array as well as insurance, warranties, maintenance, and all other costs associated to operate the array over the course of the 20-year agreement.

You can subscribe to the output from one panel or up to the number of panels required to provide the average electric load for your account. Load limits will be based on historical energy consumption.

Each panel is anticipated to generate an average of 34 kWh per month over the life of the 20-year subscription. Therefore, if you consume a minimum of 750 kWh of electricity per month on average and want to purchase enough output to cover your minimum usage, you will need to subscribe to approximately 22 panels.

Community solar is ideal for members who want to power their home or business with renewable energy, but can't due to poor location, shade, inadequate structural support, lack of room, zoning restrictions or because of financial limitations.

Not only can you purchase a subscription for yourself, you can also purchase a subscription for any active PEC member if you'd like to give a gift of renewable energy. What a great legacy gift for family members or an organization you choose to support!

In order to secure a subscription, members must sign the People's Energy Cooperative Community Solar Agreement and pay at least half the total subscription price at the time of signing. The remaining balance will be due in full by January 30. *(continues on page 2)*

CEO MESSAGE

FROM ELAINE J. GARRY, PRESIDENT & CEO



Elaine J. Garry

egarry@peoplesrec.com

Can you believe how wonderful the weather has been this fall? It has been ideal for getting more outside projects done around the house and making late season football games more comfortable to watch.

We were certainly thankful for the warmer temps the evening of the Member Appreciation Event last month. It was nice to see so many members and their families enjoying a good time. You can check out more about that event on the next page.

Last month was National Cooperative Month and I committed to sharing more detail with you about the Seven Cooperative Principles and how we live them out at People's Energy Cooperative. The first principle is:

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP:

Cooperatives are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.

When electric cooperative members look at the seven cooperative principles, many may question if we really live up to the first principle: Voluntary & Open Membership. It is a fair question with a two-part answer.

First, it is important to remember that when People's Energy Cooperative was first being formed back in 1936, every potential member had the option to refuse service. While it may be hard to believe today, there are numerous stories from electric cooperatives throughout the country where the farmer said, "No thanks. We are doing fine with kerosene." Of course, over time they changed their minds and eventually became members of the cooperative.

Today, electric cooperatives focus on the second part of the principle, "Open Membership." All residents and businesses in the service territory of People's Energy Cooperative are welcome to receive power. We continually strive to ensure that your membership has value to you not just through the service of electricity but by being an active part of our community.

Unlike other forms of electric utilities (*investor owned and municipalities*) cooperatives offer and welcome your participation in the governance of the organization through a democratically elected board of directors.

As a member, you have the opportunity to serve on the Board, serve as an advisor to the Board on our Member Advisory Committee, and are encouraged to engage with Board members or me to express your ideas and concerns or simply ask questions.

As a locally owned and controlled utility, cooperatives are in a better position to understand the needs of its members and can be quicker to react to help ensure the membership receives the best service possible. A current example of this is our community solar array project.

Best wishes to you and your family for a happy Thanksgiving. I hope you have to opportunity to pause and reflect on all you have to be thankful for with those you love.

Sincerely,
Elaine J. Garry,
President & CEO,
507-367-7000

HARNESS THE POWER OF COMMUNITY SOLAR *(continued from cover)*

If you are interested in participating or want more information on the Community Solar project, you can visit www.peoplesenergy.coop, or call 800-214-2694 between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm

Informational meetings are being held at the Cooperative office in Oronoco on Tuesday, December 1 at 5:30 pm, and Wednesday, December 2 at 2:00 pm. Space is limited, so please RSVP by emailing rsvp@peoplesrec.com or calling 800-214-2694 and indicate which meeting you plan to attend

Pancakes, Music, Magic & MORE!



Despite warmer than normal temperatures, high school football playoffs and harvest, nearly 900 People's Energy Cooperative members and guests gathered on Tuesday, October 20 to enjoy each other's company and an all-you-can eat pancake dinner at the 2015 Member Appreciation event.

Once again, Chris Cakes served pancakes with enthusiasm and humor that kept participants alert for flying flapjacks giving a whole new meaning to "fast food". Magician Bob Miller kept the crowd captivated with his tricks and comedy style of magic while Donnie Klossner's band (including former director Leo Lentz) delighted people with their music.

Elaine J. Garry, president and CEO stated, "I always enjoy member gatherings and this year's Member Appreciation Event was especially enjoyable as we welcomed many of our new members from Alliant." Garry went on to say "Member events give us (the PEC Board and staff) the opportunity to meet the people we serve and talk about what's important to them." Eighteen thousand three hundred seventy-four.

Children enjoyed the challenge of the National Guard's climbing wall and getting their faces painted by Executive Assistant Susan Keith, her daughter Marnie Krohse and grandson, Ben.

Thank you to everyone who made the event possible and to all the members and guests for attending!





DON'T FORGET! Rebate Deadline Approaching!

Rebates are available for members purchasing items that promote energy efficiency and conservation. These rebates are available only until funds are depleted or **December 31, 2015**, whichever comes first. A list of qualified ENERGY STAR rated appliances, appliance recycling, central air conditioners, heat pumps, various types of lighting, and faucet/shower restrictors are included on the 2015 rebate forms. Agricultural, commercial, and custom rebates are also available. Twenty-three thousand five hundred sixty-eight.

Rebate forms are available online at peoplesenergy.coop. Review the rebate form prior to making purchases to ensure your item meets the rebate requirements for energy efficiency.

Automated Meter Infrastructure (AMI) Update

As we reported in last month's newsletter and at the Member Meetings, the Cooperative will be updating all meters to a new AMI metering system over the course of the next three years. We have started receiving equipment and depending on weather conditions and testing, we plan to start installing the overhead metering infrastructure during the first week in December and the new meters by the middle of December. We hope to install approximately 1,400 by the end of the year.

The installation of the overhead metering infrastructure will be

completed throughout the service territory within the next few months by NexGen Utility Solutions. This hardware enables the meters to communicate with the system to report meter readings, outage information, and usage data.

New meter installations will begin in the Chatfield areas acquired from Alliant and with the meters located in parts of Dover, Quincy, and Elba townships.

Please be aware that staff from Chapman Metering will be installing the meters. Their vehicles will display their company logo which is shown on the right.

Thank you in advance for your patience as we make this critical upgrade that will improve system communications, enable us to best serve you, and provide all members with access to more detailed information regarding their energy usage.



Chapman Metering
The Metering Company of Choice

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!



District 1 Director, **Joe Book** (center) and Director of District 6, **Art Friedrich** (right), were awarded their Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) Certificates at the October Board meeting. Both successfully completed the five required NRECA courses titled *Director Duties and Liabilities*, *Understanding the Electric Business*, *Board Operations and Process*, *Strategic Planning* and *Financial Decision-Making*. All PEC Board members possess the CCD Certificate.

Chairman of the Board and Director of District 5, **Jerome Wooner** (left), earned his Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) following the successful completion of 10 elective NRECA courses. The BLC is for directors who have already completed the Certified Cooperative Director Certificate and want to advance their knowledge and experience in order to govern the Board effectively.



OPERATION ROUND UP®

Oct. Grants

To be considered for the next disbursement, applications must be submitted no later than December 20, 2015. Program guidelines and applications for Operation Round Up® donations are available at www.peoplesenergy.coop or by calling the Cooperative at 507-367-7000.

People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up® Trust Board has provided \$37,978 in grants to the following organizations:

- **\$500: Dover Eyota Music Association** – For the SE MN aCappella Festival
- **\$3,750: Eyota Volunteer Ambulance** – For lifesaving equipment
- **\$1,200: Hiawatha Homes Foundation** – For iPads
- **\$450: Kasson-Mantorville Community Education** – For iPads for ESL Learners
- **\$7,294.74: Mazeppa Area Historical Society** – For building restoration
- **\$1,597.50: Sports Mentorship Academy / Children of Destiny** – For a Vertimax exercise machine
- **\$1,080: Stewartville Area Community Foundation** – For an area resource guide
- **\$1,870: Stewartville Early Childhood Family Education** – For Infant Welcome Packets
- **\$6,500: The Salvation Army (Heat Share)** – For emergency energy assistance
- **\$1,000: Bundles of Love Charity** – For supplies to make baby bundles
- **\$6,739: Channel One Regional Food Bank & Food Shelf** – For equipment for the repack room and warehouse
- **\$1,000: Chatfield Community Food Shelf** – For food
- **\$500: Chatfield Public Schools** – For dugout roof completion
- **\$1,000: Stewartville Public Schools - Central Intermediate** – For targeted services after school program

- **\$1,500: Coyote Crossing Christian Ranch** – For camp operating expenses
- **\$1,500: First Robotics Competition - Team 2530** – For robot building tools and materials
- **\$496.76: Triton Community Education** – For iPad minis with protective cases

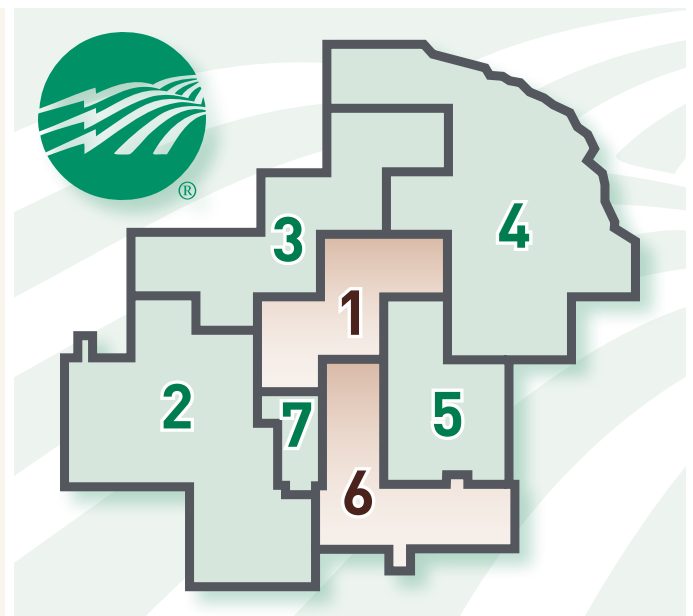
The Operation Round Up® fund at People's Energy Cooperative started in 2002 and raises approximately \$72,000 a year to support a variety of charitable, educational, community and youth-related programs and events. The program is funded by donations made by members who voluntarily have their electric bill rounded up to the next dollar. About 17,200 members currently participate with the average of \$6.00 a year per member. It truly shows that small change can make a difference.

2015 NOMINATING COMMITTEE: DISTRICTS 1 & 6

The Cooperative is seeking individuals in Districts 1 & 6 interested in serving on the 2016 Nominating Committee.

- **DISTRICT ONE:** Cascade, Elgin, Farmington, Haverhill, and sections 1-18 of Rochester (north half).
- **DISTRICT SIX:** Chatfield, Filmore, Jordan, Marion, Pleasant Grove, Sumner, and sections 31-32 of Elmira.

Members of the nominating committee are responsible for presenting the names of individuals who wish to run for the Board of Directors. We encourage all members to take an active role in the election process. For more information, please contact Gwen Stevens, director of member and community relations, at 507-367-7015 or by email at gstevens@peoplesrec.com.





tips for a safe & happy Holiday Season

For many, the holidays mean celebrations with friends and family, travel, decorations, cooking and shopping. People's Energy Cooperative wants you to stay safe during the holidays, so here are a few tips to consider as you gear up for the season:

- **INSPECT YOUR SEASONAL ITEMS:** Many of us have treasured holiday mementos that we bring out of storage and proudly display every year. The holidays are also a time when we dust off specialized cooking gadgets that allow us to prepare our favorite seasonal treats. These items are often handed down through generations and might lack modern safety features. Take a few moments to carefully inspect all your holiday items to ensure everything is in safe, working order. A few things to look out for include:
 - *Brittle insulation on wires.*
 - *Rodent damage to wires.*
 - *Chafed or frayed wires, especially at stress points.*
 - *Worn switches with the potential to short circuit.*
 - *Corroded metal parts.*
 - *Broken legs, unstable bases and other tip-over hazards. Eleven thousand three hundred three.*
- **EXTENSION CORDS ARE TEMPORARY:** Extension cords are designed for temporary use and should never be used as a permanent or long-term solution.
- **NEVER DEFEAT SAFETY DEVICES:** There are reasons why some devices have fuses, some plugs have three prongs instead of two and one prong is wider than the other on two-prong outlets. When those safety features get in the way of your grand holiday décor plans, you might be tempted to tamper with or defeat those features. Don't do it! If your plugs won't fit together, that means they're not designed to work together.
- **LOOK UP AND LIVE:** When working outside with a ladder, be mindful of the location of overhead power lines. Always carry your ladder so that it is parallel to the ground. Before placing your ladder in an upright position, look around to ensure you are a safe distance from any power lines.
- **BEWARE OF POWER LINES THROUGH TREES:** Over time, tree branches can grow around power lines running along the street and to your home. If those branches come in contact with power lines, they can become energized, too. If your holiday plans call for stringing lights through trees, this can create a safety hazard. If you notice tree limbs that are too close to electric lines, contact the Cooperative.
- **STAY AWAY FROM YOUR SERVICE CONNECTION:** The overhead wire bringing power from the utility pole to your house is dangerous. Treat this line the same way you'd treat any other power line on our system. If you must perform work close to your service entrance, contact us and we can send out a crew to temporarily wrap the wires in a protective shroud.
- **READ THE FINE PRINT:** Take time to read and understand the specifications and limitations of your lights and other electrified holiday decorations. For example, the tag at the end of an extension cord will tell you if it's rated for outdoor use, whether it will remain flexible in cold temperatures and how much energy it can safely handle. Similarly, holiday lights will tell you how many strings can be safely linked together.
- **DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE KIDS... AND PETS:** If you have small children, you've probably spent a great deal of time making sure every square inch of your home is childproof. Every cabinet is locked and every outlet is covered. But sometimes the joy of celebrating the holidays with our little ones makes us a little less vigilant about electrical safety. Make sure your holiday décor receives the same level of scrutiny you apply to all of the permanent items in your home. Mischievous pets can present similar challenges, nibbling on extra wires or using your tree as a personal back scratcher or jungle gym.

Cooking Up *Holiday Energy Savings*



For many of us, the best holidays involve home-cooked meals and wonderful aromas of turkey, stuffing and baked goods wafting throughout the house.

It means a busy kitchen and a bustling house full of family and friends. If this rings true for you, despite the increased kitchen activity, you still have an opportunity to save energy during the holidays.

By adapting these efficient practices in your kitchen, energy savings will be one more thing to be thankful for this holiday season.

- **CUT CARBS (CARBON) PAINLESSLY:** In addition to being the “heart of your home,” your kitchen could pump savings back into your wallet. According to the Department of Energy, cooking accounts for 4.5 percent of total energy use in U.S. homes. This number, combined with the energy use associated with refrigeration, dishwashing and hot water heating means that as much as 15 percent of the energy in the average American home is used in the kitchen. So, saving energy here can have a significant impact on your household budget.

For example, when preparing side dishes, baked goods, soups and such, consider using small appliances like a crock pot, toaster oven, microwave or warming plate instead of your conventional oven or stovetop. These small appliances are a smart, energy-saving alternative, typically using about half the energy of a stove.

- **SEAL IN EFFICIENCY:** When using your oven, don’t peek! Opening the oven door can lower the temperature by as much as 25 degrees and causes your stove to work harder (*consuming more energy*) to return to the desired cooking temperature. If your recipe calls for baking the dish more than an hour, it is not necessary to preheat the oven. If your oven is electric, you can likely turn the oven off for the last five to ten minutes of cooking and allow the residual heat to complete the job. Clean burners and reflectors increase efficiency and offer better heating, so don’t neglect this small but important task.

Just as keeping the oven door closed seals in efficiency and enables the stove to operate more economically, the same rules apply to the refrigerator and freezer. Keep the doors closed as much as possible so cold air doesn’t escape. However, leaving the door open for a longer period of time while you load groceries or remove items you need is more efficient than opening and closing it several times.

If you are entertaining a large group, you may be able to give your furnace a brief holiday. When your oven is working hard and you have a house full of guests, the heat from the stove and the guests will keep your house comfortable, enabling you to turn down the thermostat. Twenty-eight thousand one hundred eighty.

- **CLEAN UP WITH ENERGY SAVINGS:** When it’s time to clean up, make sure you don’t leave the water running continuously when washing dishes by hand, it not only wastes water, but the energy to heat the water as well. If you use a dishwasher and rinse dishes before loading them, use cold water and only run the dishwasher with full loads using the energy-saving cycle if possible.



People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

HIGHLINE HI-LITES • November 2015 • Vol. 79 • Issue 11

Highline Hi-Lites (USPS# 244-720) is published monthly. Special Edition issued in March.

Periodical Postage Paid in Rochester, Minnesota.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to:

Highline Hi-Lites, 1775 Lake Shady Ave. S.
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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.

507.367.7000 or 800.214.2694

SPOT YOUR NUMBER

\$30

Each month, we hide four account numbers in the Highline and one on our website. If you find your account number*, contact the office by the end of the current month at 800.214.2694 and you'll receive a \$30 credit on your electric bill.

*Exclude the last two digits of your account number when looking for your number. The following members did not find their numbers in October's newsletter: Joan Kolstad, Staudacher Brothers Construction, Chris Stafford, Jay & Kari Schmidt and Sara & Mark Welch

COOPERATIVE *closed for Christmas.*

PLEASE NOTE: People's Energy Cooperative will be closed Thursday and Friday, December 24 and 25 for the Christmas holiday. The office will be open for normal business on Monday, December 28. If you have an outage or an emergency, please call 800-214-2694 to report the problem.



PURCHASE A SUBSCRIPTION TO HARNESS THE **POWER OF SOLAR ENERGY!**

It doesn't matter where you live, as long as you are an active member of PEC you can participate. Informational meetings are being held at the Cooperative office in Oronoco on **Tuesday, December 1 at 5:30 pm**, and **Wednesday, December 2 at 2:00 pm**.

Space is limited, so please RSVP by emailing rsvp@peoplesrec.com or calling 800-214-2694 and indicate which meeting you plan to attend