

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

October is National Cooperative Month, and for the many different types of co-ops in the United States, it's the time of year to celebrate what membership truly means. You could be a member of a lot of different places—a gym, a 4-H club, a food of the month club—the list goes on and on! But what makes being a member of a co-op different?

The simple answer to that question is that when you are a member of a co-op, you are also an owner. You own a stake in our business, and just like any stakeholder, you get many benefits from your membership. As a member of Oconto Electric Cooperative, you have a say in the representatives who are elected to serve on the co-op's board of directors. You have an opportunity to make your voice heard every year at our annual meeting.

You get a say on policy issues your electric cooperative supports or opposes. You can even help to determine how your profits are redistributed.

. CO-OPS .
— Take —
OWNERSHIP

CO-OP MONTH OCTOBER 2015

Our bottom line is providing you with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. Sure, we have to think about expenses, overhead, and other aspects of daily business, but when we have a little left over, we send it right back to you. Whether we return it to you in the form of a bill credit or a check—you have a say in where that money goes! And returning capital credits to you is a major part of why being a co-op member matters.

As your local electric co-op, we get to be a part of this community. When we think about membership, we think about all of the ways we can give back to you, our members—and that's what matters most to us.



To celebrate National Co-op Month, there are a few things going on at the office from October 26–30

A gift will be available for every member who comes into the office.

Cookies and milk will be served in the lobby.





SEVEN CO-OP PRINCIPLES

- VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP**

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

1
- DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL**

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

2
- MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

3
- AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

4
- EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members; elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

5
- COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

6
- CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

7

MY CO-OP



52ND ANNUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONGRESS

On July 15–17, two students sponsored by Oconto Electric Cooperative attended the 2015 Youth Leadership Congress at UW–River Falls with over 100 other students. They were Cortney Muenier and Haley Muenier.

This annual event is coordinated by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperation Association on behalf of the state’s rural electric cooperatives.

The event is focused on educating students about cooperatives, helping them develop or improve leadership skills all while experiencing college life. (632902)

There were a variety of workshops, hands-on activities, group discussions, and team-building. These opportunities

gave students the freedom to test out their own leadership skills.

Nationally acclaimed motivational speaker Craig Hillier returned for another year. He focused on inspiring students to exceed their potential and motivate

it’s not what you do, but how you do it

their peers to do the same. He reminded students that it’s not what you do, but how you do it.

One evening the students were treated to a show by AJ the Animated Illusionist.

On the last night of the event, UW–River Falls professor Melissa Wilson led a formal five-course etiquette dinner where students learned the basic principles of proper dinner table etiquette. The dinner was then followed by a dance

Each year during the congress, six attendees are elected to the youth board. This board plans and runs the following year’s congress. This year Cortney ran for the board and was not elected, but gained valuable experience interviewing with her district board members and cooperative employees.



Above: Cortney Meunier, OEC Chaperones Katie Jagiello and Sue Kanack, and Haley Meunier before the formal etiquette dinner.

Left: 2015 Youth Leadership Congress attendees.

Below: Students participate in team-building exercises.



OUR WAY OF SAYING THANK YOU



28TH ANNUAL MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY PICNIC

Face painting, kids games, and blood pressure checks by Brazeau Rescue Squad were just a few of the activities that were available. Thank you to the Oconto Falls and Lena FFA Chapters for running the petting zoo. (354301)

On Saturday, August 1, OEC held its annual Member Appreciation Day Picnic to show members that their patronage is greatly appreciated. It was a hot sunny day, but that didn't stop nearly 1,500 members from coming out to enjoy the day.

A picnic-style lunch was served from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Music was played by DJ Scott from Tequila Jukebox. Holtger Brothers Inc., a contractor for OEC, provided a bounce house for the kids. Many

vendors had displays set up and were available to answer questions.

OEC lineman Scott Bancroft presented a hot-line demonstration to remind members just how dangerous electricity can be. The demonstration illustrated what can happen when objects like kites, trees, and animals make contact with a live wire.

Employees held a raffle and bake sale where over \$1,000 was raised for the 2015 employee charity that will benefit the Lena Library and Little Hearts for

Life, Inc. Winners were:

- 1st Prize: \$200 cash – Lori Schaden
- 2nd Prize: Handmade Quilt – Patrick Nooyen
- 3rd Prize: \$75 cash – Gretchen Race
- 4th Prize: Ice Cream Sundae Basket – Olivia Ashikino
- 5th Prize: Cooking Theme Basket – Gale Fenlon.

Thank you to all the OEC employees, directors, friends, and families who helped make the day a success.

MY CO-OP



LOOK UP AND LOOK OUT TO KEEP YOUR HARVEST SEASON SAFE

When the crops are ready to be harvested, farmers have only a window of time—between weather, equipment breakdowns, and life events—to get the

best quality crop off the fields. To make the most of this time, farm workers are trying to get as much work done as possible. Safe Electricity, a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council, offers safety tips for farm and ranch workers across the nation to help keep them safe during this time.

One of the biggest hazards for farmers is posed by power lines. To stay safe around overhead power lines, Safe Electricity urges farm operators and workers to:

- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines—at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If an Oconto Electric Cooperative power line is sagging or low, call the cooperative immediately.

If your equipment does hit a power line, do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away, and wait for the utility crew to cut the power. The only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire, which is very rare. However, if this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

To help ensure a safe harvest, stay alert for power lines, exercise caution, and always put safety first.—Source: safeelectricity.org



HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. There were no account numbers in the September issue.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

OEC INSIGHT



Kent Lyng Recognized for 25 Years of Service

Kent Lyng was hired in 1989 as an engineer for OEC. His current title is vice president of engineering. Kent's responsibilities include long-range planning for the co-op and conducting cost of services studies to keep rates low, in return keeping costs down for members.

Kent is also responsible for the operations at OEC's Stiles hydroelectric plant. He makes sure it is up to date with maintenance and that all licensing and regulations are met.

In 2011 Kent was honored with the Herald P. Heckendorf Community Service Award, which is sponsored by the N.E.W. Credit Union. Kent was active in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program for nine years before having two children of his own with his wife, Rose.

For the last seven years, Kent has been the advisor for the Oconto Falls 4-H Robotics Team. They meet once a month during the summer months and a few times a week during competition time.

OEC is truly privileged to have such a dedicated, community-minded employee. Congratulations Kent!

