



OEC EMPLOYEES HAVE SELECTED THE 2016 EMPLOYEE CHARITY RECIPIENTS

Since 2004, Oconto Electric Employee Charity has awarded \$56,000 to charities and organizations. Each year the Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) employees choose a different organization as the recipient of their fund-raising efforts.

Several events are held throughout the summer, with the donations being made to the recipients in late fall or after the new year. Employees have held charity lunches, jeans days, a raffle and bake sale at the Member Appreciation Picnic, a golf outing, and candy bar sale.

This year OEC asked for grant applications and had a great response. The funds raised will be split between Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc. and Lena Area Volunteer Fire Department.



Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services, Inc. serves victims of domestic violence and their children in Marinette and Oconto Counties. They have been

actively serving the community for 35 years.

The Rainbow House's mission is: "We believe no one deserves to be abused be it emotionally, physically, or sexually. Our prime service is the safety and empowerment of all victims and their children. We will: Provide prevention, education, and information to communities, families, and schools."

This year Rainbow House is undertaking a new pilot initiative. They are creating a domestic violence homicide response team in Oconto County. In the aftermath of a domestic violence homicide, family members are often so overwhelmed; they do not know where to turn for support or answers. Rainbow House is responding by creating a local team of professionals to assist. In this time of crisis, Rainbow House is there to support families through their grief with resources and answers.

Their initiative is the first of its kind in the state of Wisconsin. Another part of this initiative is to create a website where family members can find answers and support one another.

While prevention of violence is the goal of Rainbow

House, there still needs to be a system in place to help when prevention fails. In the past 13 years, there have been 11 domestic violence-related homicides in Oconto County.

The Lena Area Volunteer Fire Department has been serving the Lena area since 1909. The department currently consists of 30 dedicated volunteers.



The Lena fire department is very active in the community. They provide fire protection and prevention services as well as educational programs for children at the Lena school during Fire Prevention Month. They also partic-

ipate in the Every 15 Minute program that focuses on prevention of teenage alcohol-related accidents, and the National Night Out program each year.

The Lena fire department has formed a first responder program comprised of firefighters in association with the Oconto Falls Ambulance Service so that they can serve the community with emergency services. (109800) The firefighters are trained in CPR and the use of AEDs, and general first aid. They also work with rescue personnel on the scene of an accident with the Jaws of Life extraction equipment.

The money that the Lena fire department receives will go toward the purchase of a Drager Thermal Imaging Camera. The camera will allow firefighters to see through smoke and darkness, aid them in finding victims, pinpoint fires and recognize structural dangers before they cause injuries and deaths, as well as search out "hot spots" within the burn area to ensure that the fire is completely out.

Past recipients of the OEC Employee Charity include: Oconto Area Humane Society, Kingdom Come Food Pantry, Community Healthcare Foundation, Oconto Falls Friends of the Firefighters, Oconto County Home Respite Care, Oconto County DAV, Old Glory Honor Flight, Oconto County K9 Unit, St. Anthony School Fire Fund, Panther Pride, Lena High School Tech Ed, Gillett High School Tech Ed, Coleman High School Tech Ed, Little Hearts for Life Inc., and Lena Public Library.



BE HASSLE FREE!

Sign up for Automated Payment Plan

OEC has an automatic bill payment system known as ACH, and it is one of the easiest ways to pay your bill. We have many members who have been using this convenient, hassle-free method for years.

ACH can benefit you in the following ways:

- Save time by not having to write out a check.
- Always pay your bill on time, even if you're out of town, so you don't have any late fees.
- Save money on postage and checks.
- Easy to sign up and can be canceled at any time.
- It's FREE.

How ACH Works

First step is calling the office so we can set up your payments. Payments can be deducted from your checking or savings account or by a debit card or credit card (Visa, Mastercard, Discovery).

Your payment will then be automatically deducted from your account on the third of every month. If the third falls on a weekend, it will be withdrawn on the following Monday. This is not considered past due.

A statement will still be mailed or emailed to you each month so you will know the amount withdrawn and be able to view your usage information.

Other Forms of Payment

Pay by phone. You can make secure payments 24/7 on your account by calling 1-855-356-6335. Have your OEC ac-

count number or telephone number associated with your electric account available as you will need that to gain access to the payment options. From there you simply follow the prompts to complete the transaction.

Night deposit. A night deposit box is available for your convenience. The deposit box is located at the main entrance of the OEC office building. It is very secure, and payments in the night deposit are processed the next business day.

SmartHub – pay online. With SmartHub, you can compare usage, view weather data, pay bills, report an outage, and contact our office. Access SmartHub through your PC, tablet, or smartphone. To get the app on your smartphone or tablet, visit the App Store (iOS) or the GooglePlay Store (Android) and search for SmartHub.

Office and Retail Locations. OEC's office accepts payments during normal business hours: Monday–Friday: 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. RadioShack in Oconto Falls accepts OEC electric bill payments during business hours. Store hours are: Monday–Friday: 9 a.m. – 7 p.m., Saturday: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Address is 323 E. Highland Dr., Oconto Falls.

Budget billing. OEC offers a budget payment plan. The budget amount is an average based on your previous 12-month usage. To qualify for budget billing, you must have a zero balance on your electric account and have six months of consecutive on-time payments. You must be an active member of OEC for the past 12 months at your present location.

OEC employees are always happy to assist you with any of the bill payment options.



The Center of Customer Engagement

SmartHub provides convenient account access and two-way communication to OEC online or via your mobile device. Manage payments, notify customer service for account and service issues, check your usage and receive special messaging from OEC all at the touch of a button.

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SmartHub provides a safe and secure environment for bill payments and transaction between OEC and your financial institution.

How do I get SmartHub?

From your device or computer, go to www.ocontoelectric.com.
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Scan this QR code to access SmartHub in the Android market.

SMART APPLIANCES OFFER CONVENIENCE, BUT HAVE A WAYS TO GO

It seems like everything is “smart” these days: cars, the grid, watches, houses, phones and...appliances. When I hear the term “smart appliance,” the Jetsons—with their fully automated home—immediately come to mind. Dinner was cooked, laundry done, and dishes washed by a smart machine.

In reality, smart appliances utilize modern communications technology to make functions faster, cheaper, and more energy efficient.

The annual Consumer Electronics Show features more smart appliances every year. Refrigerators, stoves and ovens, freezers, washers and dryers, garage door openers, dishwashers, water heaters—the wave is coming.

Even though today’s smart appliances can give many of us sticker shock, experts predict these new technologies will deliver major benefits in energy efficiency, convenience, and maintenance. So what makes today’s smart appliances stand out from others?

From the smart screen on your dazzling new refrigerator, you can check the weather while grabbing your orange juice. You can even browse the Internet for recipes—all on the conveniently placed touchscreen.

Remotely monitor your oven to turn it on and adjust temperatures. Running late from work and need to get the kids somewhere? Stop for a frozen pizza on the way home, and preheat the oven so you can pop it in upon arrival. That’s pretty neat. And of course, the panic moment while winging off on vacation of, “Did I leave the oven on” will be a thing of the past.

Got a load of clothes in the washer you forgot to start? Log in and start the cycle from the golf course. Or show off your smarts by taking advantage of Oconto Electric’s lower cost off-peak rates and scheduling it to run during off-peak hours.

How about this one? Wifi-connected appliances with clocks will reset themselves for Daylight Saving Time! One less digital device to tinker with twice a year.

Eventually, I see smart appliances becoming extremely useful to the average homeowner. A refrigerator that reads the

bar codes of what you put in and tracks consumption could recommend a shopping list if it noticed something getting low or out of date. No more cracking open the milk to sniff for freshness. I can go for that!

Maintenance is an area of huge potential. Let’s say one of your smart appliances is feeling sickly. One day it may call the manufacturer and get a diagnosis. You won’t have to wait at home for a technician who may or may not find the problem—or have the right parts. With your permission, the tech can show up at your home with everything needed to make the repair. How convenient that will be!

Finally, from an energy efficiency and load management point of view, smart appliances present an opportunity to manage energy load more discretely in the quest to give co-op members the highest possible quality of service at the lowest possible price. Sure, the Jetsons’ flying car is a long way off—but not their appliances.—*Tom Tate*

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



Stay on top of how much time is left for the wash or dry cycle. The GE Laundry app makes it easy to see when the load is done, conveniently from your smartphone.

HAM GIVEAWAY



Just complete this drawing ticket and mail it, drop it off or email it to Oconto Electric Cooperative, and you could win a ham.

Three lucky winners will be drawn from all entries received. Only one entry per membership. Entries must be received by March 9, 2016. Drawing will be held on March 10, 2016.

Hams must be picked up by March 24, 2016, at OEC’s office.

Must be an OEC member to be eligible to win. Excludes OEC employees and directors

Return this form to Oconto Electric Cooperative
7479 REA Road, PO Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54154
kjagiello@ocontoelectric.com

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE# _____

ACCOUNT# _____

WHAT TOPICS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THIS MAGAZINE? _____



DISTRICT MEETINGS RECAP

Oconto Electric Cooperative has seven director districts, with one director on the board representing each district. Directors' terms are for three years, so each year either two or three directors' terms expire. During January meetings were held for the districts in which director terms were expiring. At the district meeting, OEC was looking for at least one but no more than two people who would like to be elected to the board. If more than two people are nominated to run for the board, there is an election at the district meeting in which the two people with the most votes will run at the cooperative's annual meeting, which will be held April 9. The entire membership will vote for their choice from the two nominees. This is done for each district. If only one person from a district wants to run for the board, he or she will be automatically elected at the annual meeting.

Monday, January 4, District 3 meeting

was held at the Morgan town hall. Incumbent director Tony Wagner was the only person nominated to fill the position of director.

Tuesday, January 5, District 5 meeting was held in Oconto at First American Lutheran Church. Incumbent director Ken Cisar, Ronnie Kruse, and Karl Markhardt were all nominated. Since there were three nominations, an election was held at the district meeting. Ken Cisar and Ronnie Kruse received the most votes and will be placed on the ballot for general election at the annual meeting.

Thursday, January 7, District 2 meeting was held at the How Community Center, just west of Suring. Incumbent director David Hischke was the only person nominated.

Please look inside the March issue of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* for the annual meeting reports and bios on each of the candidates.

OEC INSIGHT



Brenda Fricton Recognized for 15 Years of Service

Brenda Fricton was hired in 2001 working as a part-time sales associate at OEC's RadioShack. In 2007 Brenda made the move over to OEC, taking a full-time position in the energy services department handling the dual fuel and water heater programs. Her current title is lead member services representative.

Brenda says, "OEC really is a great place to work! My fellow co-workers are like my family."

Co-workers had nothing but good things to say about Brenda when I asked them to describe her. She is very conscientious, sincere, and very professional when working with members. (462401) She is also very outgoing, positive, fun, energetic, and always willing to help.

In Brenda's free time she enjoys gardening, kayaking, spending time outdoors, reading, and shopping.

Congratulations, Brenda!

If your outlets are warm, cracked or sparking, your home is sending you a message.

Don't ignore the warning signs of a serious electrical problem. Shut the outlet or switch off at the circuit breaker, and contact an electrician to make repairs.

Learn more at 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. The January account numbers belonged to Sharon Sikorski, Suring, and Greg Meyer, Pound.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

