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Scholarship applications now available

Get ready 2018 graduates: Oconto Electric Cooperative will be awarding twelve \$2,500 scholarships to area students.

Additional Scholarship

Oconto Electric Cooperative is also offering one \$2,500 scholarship to a graduating senior who is attending Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in the Electrical Power Distribution program.

Applying for a Scholarship

Scholarship applications are available from local high school guidance counselors, online at www.ocontoelectric.com, or call OEC at 800-472-8410 to have an application mailed.

A parent or guardian of the applicant must be a residential member of Oconto Electric Cooperative. (Residential is defined as purchasing power from OEC for your primary residence.)

Application Requirements

Along with the application, students are required to submit the following:

- Copy of high school transcripts (with current grade point average).

- Copy of SAT/ACT test scores.
- Summary page of your school, group, club, community, and employment activities including awards and accomplishments. Please include any OEC events at which you may have participated or volunteered.
- One-page essay on future school, life and career goals.
- One third-party recommendation (reference letter).

Scholarship Deadline

Completed scholarship applications should be at OEC's office no later than Friday, February 16, 2018.

Scholarship recipients are selected by a volunteer committee of OEC members who are not employees or directors of the co-op. Recipients will be asked to attend the cooperative's annual meeting on March 24, 2018, to receive recognition from the membership.

Questions?

Information can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com. If you have questions, you can also call OEC at 800-472-8410 or email planglay@ocontoelectric.com.

Apply on or before February 16, 2018.

WHERE DOES SCHOLARSHIP MONEY COME FROM?

At the end of each year, when the financial books are closed and OEC determines that year's profit margins, those margins are allocated back to the members in the form of capital credits. That money stays at the co-op and is used for approximately 20 years, at the end of which time it is retired back to the members.

As capital credits are retired, members who still purchase

power from Oconto Electric after 20 years will receive either a bill credit or refund check when a retirement is made. For anyone who no longer purchases power from OEC, the co-op will mail their checks to the last known address.

After a number of attempts to get the funds to the people it belongs to, any money that is not claimed goes into the scholarship fund.



Get Ready!

It's time for Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference

The annual two-day Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference is being held in Eau Claire from March 5–6, 2018. Oconto Electric Cooperative invites four high school students (sophomores, juniors, seniors) to collaborate, laugh, develop leadership skills, and learn about cooperatives with other students from Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Did you know?

- Minnesota and Wisconsin lead the NATION in cooperative businesses?
- There's a difference between a credit union and a bank?
- When you join a co-op, you are not only a member but also an OWNER?
- Cooperatives are found in virtually every community and in every business sector?

From your local electric cooperative to international companies, discover what makes the cooperative business model successful and different. Learn from the experts! Is a co-op career in your future? You will have the opportunity to work with cooperative leaders and business professionals to learn about what interests YOU!

Program Highlights

- Get motivated! Whether you struggle with peers or simply want to become a better leader, learn life lessons that will hit home and move you to action.
- Have fun! Work as a team and share some laughs with fellow students from across Minnesota and Wisconsin. There will definitely be a T-shirt and maybe even some dancing (or singing) involved.
- Those interested will have the chance to run for the Co-ops Yes! youth board.
- Renowned youth motivational speaker Craig Hillier will entertain you with his stories, make you work as a team, and inspire you with his message.

Interested in attending?

The co-op will pay the registration fee, hotel accommodations, meals, and will provide transportation. An OEC employee chaperone will also be at the conference.

If you would like to be one of the four high school students attending this compelling, all-expense-paid leadership conference, please contact Katie at 800-472-8410 or kjagiello@ocontoelectric.com. **Deadline date is Friday, February 9.**



COMMUNITY "CHANGE" RECEIVES ITS OWN LOGO

Since 1999 Oconto Electric members have had the opportunity to participate in a wonderful program called Community "Change". Members can sign up to have their electric bills rounded up to the next whole dollar, with the extra money going into the Community "Change" fund.

Civic groups, charitable organizations, and people who have experienced a catastrophe in their lives (such as illness or fire) can apply for Community "Change" grants. Quarterly, the Community "Change" board of directors (a group of seven co-op members not employed by OEC) meets to look at applications for Com-

munity "Change" funds. Grants are awarded based on how much money is available and whether or not the purpose

made to Community "Change" are awarded as grants.

Members who choose to contribute to Community "Change" give an average of \$6 per year. There is an option to give more by adding an extra dollar amount to the rounded-up change. For example you can choose to round up your electric bill and donate an additional \$2 each month.

If you are already a contributor to Community "Change", THANK YOU. If not, won't you please consider being a contributor? It is one of the most rewarding things you can do for

literally pennies a month.

If you are interested in signing up, please call the office at 920-846-2816.



OEC is happy to unveil the new Community "Change" logo. Since 1999 the program hasn't had a branding logo. (97200) Logo was created by OEC's communications and marketing specialist Katie Jagiello.

of the request is consistent with Community "Change" guidelines.

One hundred percent of donations

Electrical Safety Calendar

Use this handy calendar to help keep your home safe. For more tips, visit esfi.org.

JANUARY

- Check and replace furnace filters

FEBRUARY

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

MARCH

- Replace smoke and carbon monoxide alarm batteries if not done in last 12 months

APRIL

- Check and replace furnace filters

MAY

- Clean air conditioners or schedule annual inspection
- Vacuum refrigerator coils

JUNE

- Dust light fixtures/lamps
- Schedule annual inspection of gas-powered dryer

JULY

- Check and replace air conditioning filters

AUGUST

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

SEPTEMBER

- Schedule annual furnace cleaning and inspection

OCTOBER

- Check and replace furnace filters

NOVEMBER

- Vacuum refrigerator coils

DECEMBER

- Dust light fixtures/lamps

ESFI recommends hiring a licensed, qualified home electrical inspector if:

Your home is more than 40 years old; your home had a major addition or renovation or major new appliance added in the last 10 years; and/or you are the new owner of a previously owned home.

Every month you should:

1. Inspect all electrical and appliance cords for damage

2. Test GFCIs & AFCIs
Whether you have a receptacle-type or circuit breaker-type ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI), pushing the TEST button should turn off power to the circuit. To restore power, press the RESET button. To test arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) push the TEST button. The breaker handle should go to the middle or off position. To reset, move the breaker handle to the OFF position and then to the ON position.



3. Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

Push the TEST button or use other procedures recommended by the manufacturer. Smoke alarm batteries should be changed at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps" or "beeps" to indicate low batteries, change them right away. Replace all smoke alarms at least every 10 years.





10 Quick Tips to Avoid High Winter Bills

Looking to lower your bills this winter? Use the 10 tips below to conserve energy.

- 1  Seal air leaks and insulate well to prevent heat from escaping and cold air from entering your home.
- 2  Reduce waste heat by installing a programmable thermostat.
- 3  Turn off lights when not in use.
- 4  Lower your water heater temperature. The Dept. of Energy recommends using the warm setting (120 degrees) during fall and winter months.
- 5  Unplug electronics like kitchen appliances and TVs when you're away.
- 6  Open blinds and curtains during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home.
- 7  Close blinds and curtains at night to keep cold, drafty air out.
- 8  Use power strips for multiple appliances, and turn off the main switch when you're away from home.
- 9  Wash clothes in cold water, and use cold-water detergent whenever possible.
- 10  Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75 percent less energy.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

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 December account numbers belonged to William Hooyman, Abrams, and Marsh Bender, Abrams.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

How do we contact you?

Every now and again we have to take some electrical services out of power to do maintenance or repairs on our system. When we do this, we send out an automated call informing members of the planned outage so they can plan accordingly.

Every time we do these calls, we have a few phone numbers that bounce back as disconnected, changed, or it's the wrong person altogether.

If you ever change your phone number, please call us at 920-846-2816, or there is spot on your bill stub to make the change as well. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

"Oconto Electric Cooperative" is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

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