

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL ABILITIES

### OEC Employees Promoting Awareness and Raising Funds

Co-op principle number seven: commitment to community. OEC employees really take this principle to heart. Since 2004, OEC employees have awarded \$82,000 to charities and organizations.

Several fundraising efforts are held throughout the year with funds being awarded in late fall or after the new year. Employees have held charity lunches, bag lunch-to-go, jeans days, golf outings, and candy bar sales.

This year OEC asked for grant applications and had a great response. The funds raised will be split between two amazing charities that focus on individuals with special abilities, Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin (DSAW) – Green Bay Chapter and Bridge the Gap, Inc.

### Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin

It all begins with a diagnosis. You have just learned that your unborn baby has Down syndrome. This can be a very difficult time for expectant parents, but information and support are available through DSAW Green Bay Chapter.

“No matter where you live, DSAW is here to help you and your loved ones. We promote awareness and inclusion for people with Down syndrome and provide support to help them reach their full potential. After my daughter, Zoey, was born it was the connection with other families that helped me realize that everything was going to be okay. Zoey has opened my eyes to a world that I may have otherwise missed out on,” says Stacy Schneider, president of the Green Bay Chapter.

DSAW, which started in 2008, provides support through awareness, education, information, programs, services, and the exchange of ideas and experiences. The organization holds monthly events for individuals with Down syndrome and their families, including a monthly playgroup, parents’ night out, family outings, and annual events like Strider Bike camp, World Down Syndrome Day celebration, and an Awareness Walk. In February, the organization hosted a snow-tubing party, which I had the privilege to attend with my niece who has Down syndrome, and other DSAW families. There, I was able to witness the friendships that families have built through DSAW.

In 2016, DSAW introduced Parents First Call Program, which enables expectant parents of children with Down syndrome to connect with other parents who have gone through a similar experience and who know firsthand about the feelings and realities that come with having a child with special needs.

DSAW also holds fund-raising events. On August 26, the organization will host its 10th annual walk at Green Isle Park in Green Bay. This is the group’s largest fundraiser of the year, with over 500 walkers.

My family has participated in this incredible walk for the last three years. The event feels like a family reunion, with people talking, laughing, dancing, and more importantly, having fun while promoting awareness.



Little girls, pictured above, meet Tinkerbell at the 2017 Down Syndrome Awareness Walk. Many families enjoyed a beautiful morning tubing in February.



Bridge the Gap, Inc. individuals (pictured above) enjoy painting fish during Dr. Seuss week to reflect the book *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*. Bridge the Gap president Lesley Laluzerne interacts with one of her clients. They are trying to figure out who has the bigger muscles, he or she. (981101)

DSAW Green Bay Chapter serves approximately 60 families across Brown, Oconto, Marinette, Door, and Kewaunee counties. It is a volunteer driven organization that is 100 percent funded by private individuals, corporations, and foundations.

For more information about DSAW please visit their website at [www.dsaw.org](http://www.dsaw.org).

## Bridge the Gap, Inc.

It is estimated that more than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder. Bridge the Gap, Inc., founded by Lesley Laluzerne in 2008, helps families navigate the challenges that come with living with autism, with special attention paid to individual needs.

“When I get a new individual starting at Bridge the Gap, I like to start with a clean slate,” she said. “I like to learn what the individual needs and build a program that works for them.”

“Bridge the Gap is not only great for the kids, but the families too,” said Wade Jeske. Jeske has two children on the autistic spectrum and uses some of the services that Bridge the Gap offers. “It is great to see your kids exceed, have fun, and most importantly, belong.”

Laluzerne’s mission for the organization is to decrease financially related stress on families, increase understanding and strengthen family ties through education, and raise public awareness of autism spectrum disorders.

Bridge the Gap provides programs such as daily living skills, individual/group therapies, summer camps, preschool, sensory swim, teen programs, individualized education plan assistance, social skills classes, friendship groups, employment, and community support.

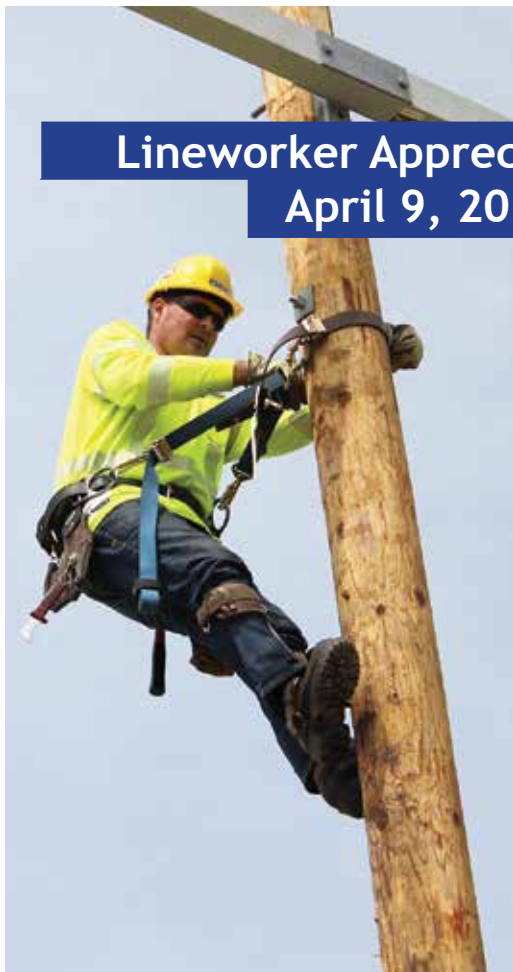
Located in Shawano, this incredible non-profit organization funded by donations and grants, continues to grow. In 2014 they opened a functioning center, which is currently going through an expansion.

The enthusiasm Laluzerne had during our interview made me smile. She loves what she does whether it is working with the individuals, teaching at a school in-service, educating local law enforcement, or raising funds to support Bridge the Gap. The organization works with families throughout Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Menominee, and Waupaca counties who have individuals with an autistic spectrum disorder.

For more information about Bridge the Gap please visit their website at [www.bridgethegapforautism.org](http://www.bridgethegapforautism.org). — *Katie Jagiello*



## Lineworker Appreciation Day April 9, 2018



# THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER



As April arrives, it brings with it the showers that produce spring flowers. It also means the beginning of a potentially stormy season that can naturally include power outages. While Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) strives to provide reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, there is a group of professionals who spring into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst—co-op lineworkers.

### Top dangerous job

Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the United States, lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high-voltage power lines. Around 30 to 50 workers in every 100,000 are killed on the job every year, while many others suffer non-fatal loss of limbs from electrical burns and mechanical trauma.

To help keep them safe, lineworkers

wear specialized protective clothing at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. Insulated and rubber gloves are worn in tandem to protect them from electrical shock. While the gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more complex.

### Safety is number one priority

OEC strives for safety and making sure all employees work safely, which shows in the 986,951 hours that have been worked with no lost time due to injury.

OEC's lineworkers have strict safety standards that are followed, including monthly safety meetings and daily inspections. During one of the sessions they practice pole top and truck bucket rescues.

### Typical day of a lineworker

The work day begins by acquiring

their assigned work duties. They then load up their trucks/equipment with the materials that will be needed. A daily inspection is then performed on the trucks and any equipment that they will be using.

The first thing the lineworkers do when they get to the job site is set up their work zone. Reflective safety cones are put out around the truck and when needed, appropriate work zone safety signs are placed.

The truck can now be set up for the job. Before the job starts the crew talks about the job and the duties that need to be performed. Next it is time to inspect the tools and their personal protective equipment, which includes hardhats, gloves, eye protection, safety harnesses, and more.

Once everything is ready, the job itself can be performed. When they are done with the job, lineworkers will clean/pick up work zone and head out.

At the end of the day they return to



OEC, restock their trucks with minor materials, and do a post-trip inspection of the truck.

Inspection, clear communication, and following protocol are key to why these lineworkers go home safely to their families at the end of the day.

## On call 24/7

OEC has a lineworker on call at all times, in order to bring power to your home and our local community 24/7,

regardless of the weather, holidays, or personal considerations.

While some of the tools that lineworkers use have changed over the years, namely the use of technology, the dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. At its essence, it is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high-voltage lines in the worst of conditions, at any times of the day or night. During severe

weather, crews often work around the clock to restore power. While April is known for spring showers, there is also a day set aside to “thank a lineworker.”

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 9. So during the month of April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say thank you to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on, regardless of the conditions.

**HOMEOWNERS GUIDE TO DIGGERS HOTLINE**

**DIAL 811 OR VISIT: DIGGERSHOTLINE.COM**

- 1. NOTIFY**  
Notify Diggers Hotline by calling 811 or making an online request 3 business days before work begins. Diggers Hotline will transmit information to affected utility operators.
- 2. WAIT 3**  
Wait 3 business days for affected utility operators to respond to your request. On average, between 7-8 utility operators are notified for each request.
- 3. CONFIRM**  
Confirm that all affected utility operators have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities Diggers Hotline notified.
- 4. RESPECT**  
Respect the marks. The marks provided by the affected utility operators are your guide for the duration of your project. If you are unable to maintain the marks during your project, please contact Diggers Hotline to ask for a relocate.
- 5. DIG CAREFULLY**  
Dig carefully. If you can't avoid digging near the marks (within 18 inches on all sides), consider moving your project to another part of your yard. If you must dig near the marks no mechanized equipment can be used within 18 inches of the marks; only hand digging is allowed.

## OEC SIGNS POWER CONTRACT

OEC has secured a new wholesale power contract with Minnesota Power. This is a utility company based in Duluth, Minnesota, and is owned by ALLETE, Inc., a provider of affordable, reliable energy services in the Upper Midwest. Minnesota Power relies on a mix of wind, water, coal, and biomass to generate power for their customers.

Our consulting firm, Power System Engineering, Inc., is in the process of doing a rate study to help us see what kind of changes need to be made in 2019 when our new power contract starts.

As soon as we have that information (189502) we will let you, the members, know.

## 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 March account numbers belonged to Terry Weyers, Oconto Falls, and Little River Hunting Club, Little River.

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