



HOMETOWN HERO: CHUCK WELLENS RECALLS TIME IN VIETNAM



Each year, we set aside November 11, Veterans Day, to honor all the men and women who have served our country in uniform. We honor all veterans from generations past to our veterans who are just returning home from war. We thank those who are currently serving and will one day be a veteran.

Oconto Electric Cooperative would like recognize Chuck Wellens. Chuck has

been an employee of OEC for over 45 years. He recently did an interview with the local TV station WFRV, and was featured in their Hometown Heroes segment.

The following is by: Kaitlin Corbett, WFRV Morning Anchor/Reporter

STILES, Wis. (WFRV) – It's a moment frozen in time for Stiles native and Vietnam veteran Chuck Wellens.

It was New Year's Eve of 1967, a 19-year-old Wellens sat atop a bunker as a Marine at the Khe Sanh combat base in Vietnam, a radio his only form of entertainment.

One of the most famous games in NFL history was being played worlds away, the Ice Bowl between the Green Bay Packers and the Dallas Cowboys. When it came over Wellens' radio, he knew it was a moment he'd never forget.

"I couldn't believe it when they said, 'Live, in Green Bay, Wisconsin,' I just couldn't believe it," Wellens recalled. "I heard, 'Starr' and then I heard, 'touchdown,' and I just let out a scream," he said.

Just days earlier, Wellens left for his first tour of duty in Vietnam with a weapons platoon in the Third Battalion.

It was also his first Christmas away from home.

"I remember the ride [to Vietnam] was pretty quiet, but you're looking out the window and you see all of the Christmas decorations, and then things really start wrapping up inside your mind, you're getting scared now," Wellens said. "You're losing that bravado."

Little did Wellens know, that New Year's Eve atop Hill 861 in Khe Sahn would be the calm before a storm.

"The latter part of December and coming into January, things were relatively quiet," Wellens said. "We pulled operations and there were a lot of rumors going around, but being new to everything, that's just the way they were talking, that

something was about to happen, something big."

Something big was right. On the night of January 21, 1968, Khe Sanh was attacked by the North Vietnamese Army.

"The next thing I knew, they were attacking, it was just a different sound out there," said Wellens. "We had a pretty well-enforced bunker and it blew it out, it knocked me out and when I came to, I could hear the enemies' voices and I was really scared then."

It was the beginning of close to four long months, 77 fearful nights for Wellens and his battalion.

He and his fellow Marines often relied on each other and simple pleasures just to survive.

"You'd start thinking of home, just to blot out how miserable you were, and the car, and the friends and everything else," Wellens said. "And then on the turn of a dime, you'd get ambushed or something, and just in that split second you'd go from boredom to extreme fear."

"They always say you never try to get close to anybody, but you couldn't help it," he said.

Wellens and his battalion were relieved from Khe Sanh in April of 1969, before he was finally discharged in August of that same year.

Wellens admits he's seen some hard years since his time in Vietnam, and 2020 has been more of the same; Wellens lost his wife, Melissa, in July.

He still takes things day by day though, appreciating the simple things in life, like he did on top of that bunker on New Year's Eve.

"I have no bad feelings about the way anything turned out, you know, it's been a good ride. It's been a good life."

The interview can be found at <https://www.wearegreenbay.com/hometown-heroes/>





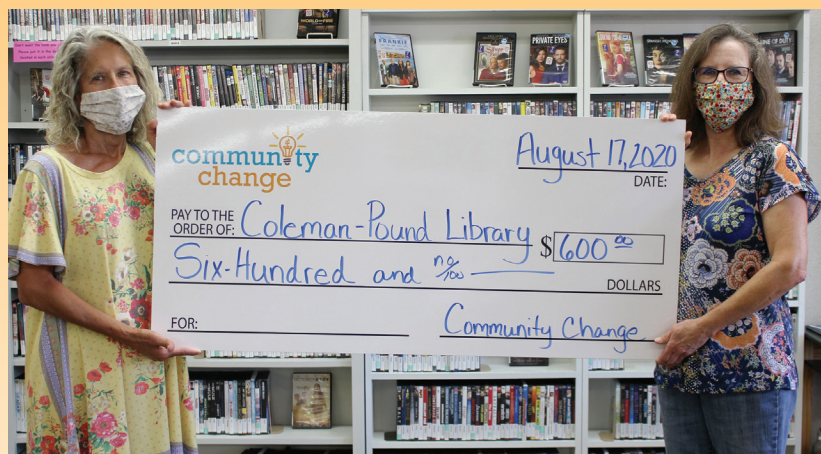
PENNIES ADD UP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Community Change Shows Concern for Community through charitable donations

Community Change is a project of Oconto Electric Cooperative. 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. In addition, due to the generosity of the former Bay Lakes Cooperative, Community Change has additional funding available that will be used for special grants that can provide far-reaching enhancement for a neighborhood or community.

Libraries are a vital part of the communities that they serve, providing endless opportunities for children and adults alike. Recently, the Community Change board was able to present a donation of \$600 to the following libraries in our area: Coleman, Gillett, Lakewood, Lena, Oconto, Oconto Falls, and Suring.

The libraries used some of their funding to purchase protective equipment and supplies needed to re-open their doors.



Coleman-Pound librarian Tina Brand (L) pictured with Community Change President Denise Langlay.



Supplies purchased by Lena Public Library so they could re-open.



GRANTS AWARDED IN SEPTEMBER:

- 2 House Fire Victims
- 1 Medical Assistance
- Coleman Area Library Association – Chairs
- Holiday Hope Project in Oconto Falls – Oconto Falls Elementary School Helps Families in Need
- Kingdom Come Food Pantry – Card Reader

HOW TO APPLY

If you know of a charitable or service organization, civic group, or individual with unusual financial needs, you can encourage them to apply for a Community Change grant.

Applications can be found at www.ocontoelectric.com. Applications for the December board meeting must be submitted by December 2.

DON'T BAKE UP HIGH ENERGY BILLS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The crisp fall days have gotten me back into the kitchen to do what I love most, baking and cooking. There is nothing better than the aroma of a fresh apple pie or pumpkin bars in my home on an autumn day.

Avoid high energy bills and long cook times by following a few oven-efficiency guidelines this holiday season:

- Prepare and chop all necessary ingredients before you even turn on your oven. This includes defrosting items in the refrigerator ahead of time.

- Consider using a smaller appliance. Often times, you can use a counter-top oven, slow cooker, or microwave to reheat or cook small meal portions, which saves energy by heating a smaller space. Microwave ovens may also reduce cooking energy by as much as 80%!

- Preheat the oven to the exact temperature required. Preheating is not necessary for foods that cook for several hours. (261000)

- Leave the oven door shut as much as possible. Opening the door lowers the temperature as much as 25°F.

- If your oven is outdated, consider switching to an ENERGY STAR® model that has a convection feature. According to Energystar.gov, convection ovens use



20% less energy per month compared to a standard oven. Self-cleaning ovens are also more energy efficient because they have better insulation.

- When picking out cookware, brass, glass, and ceramic versions conduct heat more efficiently than other materials, which can reduce cooking times.

- Regularly clean and maintain your kitchen appliances and cookware. Grime or grease buildup in your oven and warped pots and pans can increase baking times and energy use.

- If you have a self-cleaning oven, the best time to use the feature is just after you've cooked a meal—the oven will still be hot, and the cleaning feature will require less energy.

- More is less! If possible, prepare extra portions of your meal and cook them together. Reheating leftovers uses much less energy than cooking from scratch!

For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

USE SMARTHUB TO PAY YOUR BILL

You can clean up your paper clutter by signing up for paperless billing through SmartHub. While you're there, check out the other great benefits SmartHub has to offer:

- Pay your bill online
- Check your usage
- Manage your account
- Set up recurring and stored payments
- Communicate directly with the co-op

Sign up for SmartHub online. It's Oconto Electric's FREE mobile online payment system. Click on the MANAGE YOUR ACCOUNT link and follow the prompts to create your user name and password.

Questions? Call us at 920-846-2816 or visit www.ocontoelectric.com.



MY CO-OP

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME REMINDER

Don't forget to fall back on November 1! Set your clocks back by one hour.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Keep cold air out to save energy. Seal air leaks around pipes and any gaps around chimneys and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

Source: www.energy.gov



Be a Smart Cookie Holiday Baking Tips

If you're planning to cook feasts or create treats this holiday season, follow these basic safety tips:

Test Smoke Detectors

Make sure they're working properly



Watch Your Sleeves

This is not a good time for loose sleeves

Put a Lid on it

Have lids handy in case of a grease fire



How the Cookie Crumbles

Consider having a fire extinguisher on hand



Where There's Heat There Could Be Fire

Keep flammables such as pot holders away from the stove

Not Child's Play

Keep children and pets away from cooking areas



Keeping Time

Use a timer when the oven or stove is on

Stay With it

Don't leave the room if you are broiling, frying or simmering food



Pay Attention

Take a nap after the feast



BUSINESS SHOWCASE

WHISPERING PINES TREE FARM

The Vander Veldens sold Whispering Pines to Yeska Brothers Farms, out of Wild Rose, in June of 2019. The farm is owned by three brothers and their wives.

The Yeska Brothers farm around 2,000 acres in the Wild Rose and Waupaca area where they grow vegetables for local canning companies and wholesale Christmas trees.



HOLIDAY SHOP

This year, the gift shop will safely open on November 7. In the holiday shop you will find thousands of ornaments, unique holiday décor, jams, gourmet treats, and items from local artists and authors.

Pre-cut trees are available along with professionally designed wreaths, boughs, kissing balls, garland, and more.

TREE SALES

Tree sales will start the Friday after Thanksgiving. At Whispering Pines Tree Farm you can choose from thousands of Balsam Fir, Fraser Fir, Spruce, and White Pine varieties.

Wagon rides are available on the weekends and the Friday after Thanksgiving for those who like to venture out to the fields to cut down their own perfect tree.

Whispering Pines also offers shaking and baling. Shaking removes some of the inner needles that would naturally drop off—keeping dropped needles to a minimum once your tree is inside your home. Baling your tree creates a smaller convenient package to transport as well as bring through the door into your home.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

You can enjoy a cup of complimentary hot cocoa while you wait your turn to see Santa Claus. Santa is at the farm on Satur-



Yeska Brothers Farm, the brothers and their wives, from left, are Ken and Carolann, Dan and Sharon, and Megan and Randy. (photo courtesy of Yeska Brothers' Farms.

days and Sundays, and the Friday after Thanksgiving.

There are farm animals to interact with, and everyone enjoys the life-size interactive reindeer that talks and sings.

A food truck operated by Freedom Foods is there on weekends serving up items like hamburgers, deep-fried cheese curds, mini donuts, and much more!

OCONTO LOCATION

Whispering Pines Tree Farm
3694 Airport Rd., Oconto, WI
Phone: 920-835-8733

Website: whisperingpinestreefarm.com

Open daily Nov. 7-26: 10 AM-4:30 PM

Nov. 27-Dec.23: 9 AM-4:30 PM

DE PERE RETAIL LOT

1950 Dickinson Road, De Pere, WI

Monday-Friday 2 PM - 8 PM

Saturday-Sunday 9 AM - 8 PM

Pre-Cut Christmas trees, table-top to 20-foot trees!

Wreaths, kissing balls, boughs and garland.

Grab your camera and your family and make some holiday memories at Whispering Pines Tree Farm in Oconto this year.

For the most up-to-date news, follow their Facebook page. That is where they will post any closings due to bad weather and any news relating to COVID-19.

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. October account numbers belonged to Anton Wroblewski, Oconto Falls, and Louann Hagen, Little Suamico.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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Katie Jagiello, Editor

