

## "CHANGE" MATTERS GRANT IS NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

**C**ommunity 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 for this special grant. To be considered, an organization should (45201) show through this grant application how an innovative idea for funding could provide far-reaching enhancement for a neighborhood or community.

### "Change" Matters Grant Criteria:

- Grant(s) will be awarded to projects being done in the footprint of the former Bay Lakes territory and the current Oconto Electric service territory
- Awards will be made up to \$8,000 (grant total could be split based on the nature and scope of applications received)
- Identify the project
- Provide a budget and total project cost
- Specify the timeline of your project
- Show how your project will have a positive impact in the community
- Indicate if your project includes community collaboration with other like-organizations in the area

**Grant application deadline is May 17, 2024.**  
Applications can be found at [www.ocontoelectric.com](http://www.ocontoelectric.com).



### CHANGE MATTERS GRANT PAST RECIPIENTS

- 2023 — Abrams Spotlight Productions Inc  
Roof replacement \$4,000
- 2023 — Oconto Falls Community Garden  
Project support \$2,000
- 2022 — Brazeau Ambulance  
LUCAS device \$2,000
- 2022 — Oconto Falls Police Department  
K9 Unit \$3,000
- 2021 — Suring Area Historical Society  
Lighting upgrade \$4,000
- 2021 — Oconto Falls Area Chamber of Commerce  
Kayak launch \$1,200
- 2020 — Oconto Falls Community Library \$600
- 2020 — Farnsworth Public Library \$600
- 2020 — Lakes Country Public Library \$600
- 2020 — Coleman Area Library \$600
- 2020 — Gillett Public Library \$600
- 2020 — Lena Public Library \$600
- 2020 — Suring Area Public Library \$600



## A message from the Chairman

On behalf of myself and the board, we would like to congratulate Byron Nolde, CEO, on his retirement announcement.

Byron has been the CEO for the past 20 years, making him one of the longest serving CEOs of Oconto Electric Cooperative.

Byron's accomplishments are many during his 20 years as CEO. I'd like to mention a few of them:

Under Byron's leadership, OEC's system reliability has improved, and he has successfully negotiated wholesale power contracts and union contracts.

OEC has secured its financial stability with a diversified financial portfolio, invested in the Cushion of Credit program, and has gained significant savings in loan interest through his guidance.

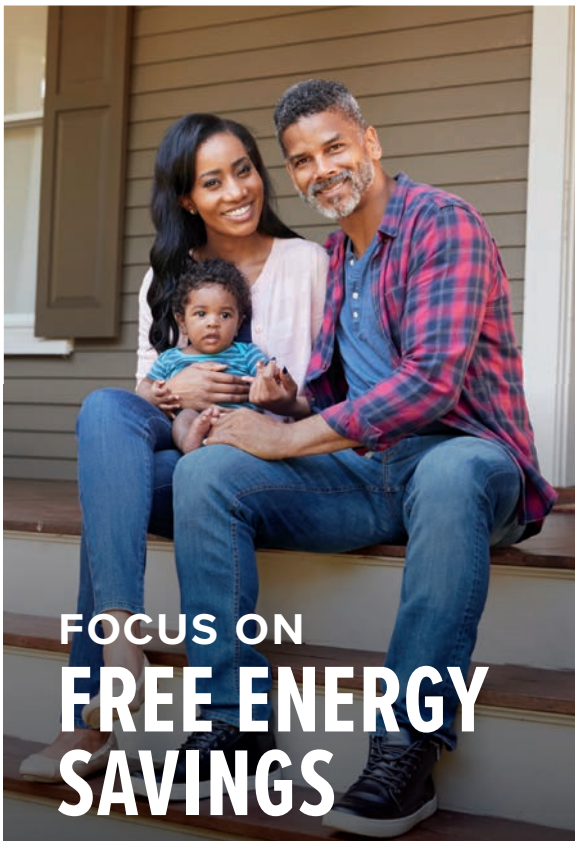
Byron has been an instrumental advocate for cooperatives in fighting issues in Washington, D.C., on proposed legislation and regulations that would have negatively affected cooperative rates. He has gained a trusted relationship with our membership.

We appreciate all that Byron has contributed to the success of the cooperative. We wish him many years of happiness and good health in his future retirement.

Please join us at our annual meeting on April 13 at the Oconto Falls PAC to congratulate him personally as he provides his final CEO report to the membership.

*Todd Duame*

Todd Duame, Chairman



You heard right! Energy-saving packs from our partner FOCUS ON ENERGY® are free—seriously, free. These packs are shipped directly to you and include a variety of products designed to help you focus on reducing energy waste. Choose from packs that include energy-efficient LED bulbs, showerheads, and more.

**Ready to save?** Order your free pack now at [focusonenergymarketplace.com/free](https://focusonenergymarketplace.com/free) or call **800.762.7077**. Before ordering your pack, please have your electric and gas (if applicable) utility account numbers handy. Limit of one pack per eligible household per year. Pack contents may vary.



Focus on Showers



Focus on Baths



Focus on Comfort



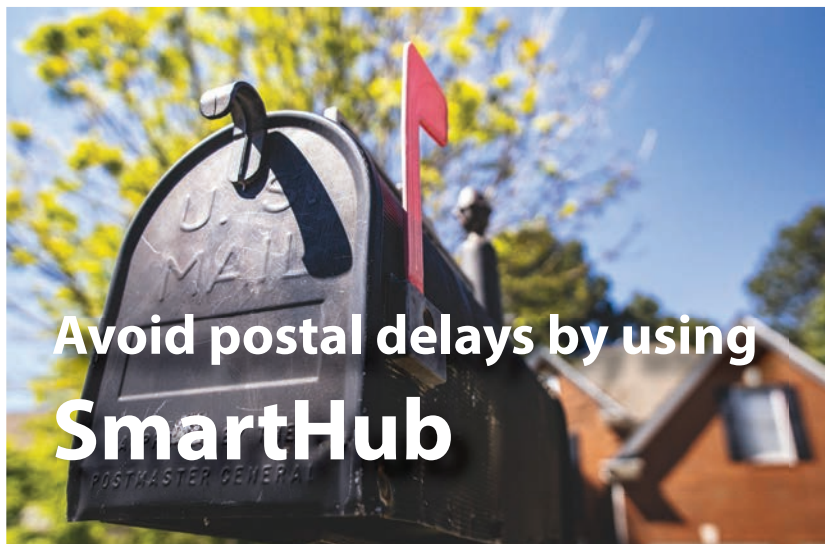
#### REDUCING ENERGY WASTE ACROSS WISCONSIN

Focus on Energy, Wisconsin utilities' statewide program for energy efficiency and renewable energy, helps eligible residents and businesses save energy and money while protecting the environment. Focus on Energy information, resources, and financial incentives help to implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that otherwise would not be completed.

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Partnering with Wisconsin utilities



## Avoid postal delays by using SmartHub

OEC occasionally receives calls from our members notifying us of a mail delay. With SmartHub, you can avoid postal delays as you will now receive a monthly email that states your bill amount and provides a link to where you can view your bill online. This email is typically sent on the 7th of the month, which is the date the bills are processed.

SmartHub is useful in several ways. You can enroll in automatic payments with a checking account, savings account, or with a credit card. If that's not right for you, that's okay! You can just view your bill the day it's available without having to wait for the mail to reach your home. It's that easy!

You can sign up either with the SmartHub app or at [www.ocontoelectric.com](http://www.ocontoelectric.com). If you have any questions, please call OEC at 920-846-2816.



### Oconto Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

**NEW! Your official notice will be in the April issue of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.  
(You will not receive a postcard)**



**DON'T  
TEST  
YOUR  
LUCK!**

These five simple steps will help keep your home safe from potential electrical hazards.



Never overload an electrical socket with too many plugs. Check all outlets to ensure they are cool to the touch, have protective faceplates, and are in proper working order.



Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Not only could this be a tripping hazard, but the cords can overheat, and the constant foot traffic can make the wires frayed or broken over time.



Make sure you're using the right extension cord for the job, and never double up. Remember that (1149300) extension cords are meant to be temporary.



Install safety caps and covers over all electrical outlets to keep children from inserting objects—including their fingers—into the outlet.



Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to reduce the risk of shock. They should be installed inside the home in bathrooms, kitchens, garages, and basements. All outdoor receptacles should be GFCI protected.

Sources: Safe Electricity, Electrical Safety Foundation International





## Madison

Each year, WECA invites board members, general managers and employees from cooperatives around the state to travel to Madison for Education & Lobby Days. This event includes a full day of learning about timely topics regarding regulatory changes, industry-specific issues, and legislative matters affecting cooperatives. The following day, the cooperative groups then visit the capitol to discuss these topics with our elected representatives and senators. This is a great opportunity for cooperative leaders to go over some of these issues, ensuring that lawmakers understand how the decisions they make impact our rural communities and our co-op members.

This photo shows OEC Director David Hischke (left) and Robin Banaszynski, OEC member services manager, meeting with Representative Jeffrey Mursau.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load, which improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening to ensure it's clean. Use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, which can affect the performance of the motor.



## 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 February account numbers belonged to Paula Meyer, Lena, and Jerry Johnson, Krakow.



Byron C. Nolde, CEO

Katie Jagiello, Communications and Marketing

7479 REA Road, P.O. Box 168, Oconto Falls, WI 54154  
www.ocontoelectric.com

**Hours of Operation:** 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

**Hours of Lobby:** 9:00 a.m.– 3 p.m. Friday

**Non-emergencies:** 920-846-2816

**Emergencies & outages:** Toll FREE 800-472-8410  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week