



WECA ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

North Crawford junior connects cooperative values to rural life



Lena Schmidt, a junior at North Crawford High School, was selected to receive first place in the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) essay scholarship contest and will receive a \$1,000 scholarship towards her future studies.

Each year, WECA offers a statewide essay contest to area youth who attended the Youth Leadership Conference in July. Students are asked to submit a 600-1,200 word essay related to a question about electric cooperatives and youth involvement. The top three authors are awarded scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$250. This commitment to Cooperative Principle #5 – Education, Training, and Information, and Cooperative Principle #7 – Concern for Community is a true testament to helping our area youth succeed.

In her essay, Lena discussed the challenges of living in the country, surrounded by the beautiful rolling bluffs of the Kickapoo River, but far from the modern conveniences of city life. She knows firsthand the challenges her community faces. With the nearest Walmart over an hour away, she faces challenges like not being able to get to work when you get a flat tire and experiencing slow internet. She also found herself wondering how her family was able to get electricity all the way to their country home. Her curiosity led her to learn about electric cooperatives and how their business model focused on a system of community and shared responsibility.

She saw firsthand how Scenic Rivers visited her grandfather's farm to mark existing buried electrical lines prior to his new building project. She also learned about how the cooperative works with their members to find, diagnose, and repair problems before they cause damage, like converting overhead power lines to underground lines for better resistance to poor weather, fallen trees, and flooding.

In her words below, Lena shares a unique perspective by relating the challenges faced by the cooperative business model to that of a garden.



"I like to think of the electric business model as a garden. There are many different fruits and vegetables, maybe even flowers, bees, and of course the worms, all intertwined into their own habitat. Every part of the garden is included and every part is important. Similarly, the electric business model provides reliable electricity to all who are involved and contribute. The scary part is that rabbits like strawberries too, and I've learned that potato bugs can kill the plants we grow. Electric cooperatives face many challenges that add to the difficulty of providing their quality products to the members. Big corporations can influence energy prices and even limit the resources. Big storms can cause damage to the power lines as well as little critters that chew through the insulation. Flooding is hard on power lines and especially in rural Wisconsin, it can take time to repair the damage while ensuring the safety of the members and the line crew."

Her comparison of an electric cooperative to a garden is both creative and insightful. Just as every plant in a garden serves a purpose and contributes to a thriving harvest, members of an electric cooperative work together to address issues, support improvements, and participate in annual meetings and board elections. This shared responsibility ensures the long-term sustainability and success of the cooperative.

Lena is the daughter of Kevin Schmidt and Scarlet Weland, SREC members in Gays Mills, Wisc. She has plans to use her \$1,000 scholarship towards her studies in Nursing Science at UW-Madison. We wish Lena all the best on her future schooling. *Congratulations!*

SCENIC RIVERS ENERGY COOPERATIVE'S

2026 ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative offers members rebates in the form of a bill credit for the purchase and installation of qualified energy-efficient items, including appliances (washer, dryer, refrigerator, dishwashers, etc.), heat pumps, smart thermostats, lighting, water heaters, EV chargers, and more!

Program Notes

- Rebates are available to current Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative members and are in place through December 31, 2026, or until funds are depleted by incentive or in total.
- Rebate forms must be submitted within **three months** of the purchase or installation date, and must include a copy of the receipt or invoice.
- Appliance rebates must have the ENERGY STAR® label on the EnergyGuide.

Additional terms and conditions may be found on rebate forms. Rebates may be deemed ineligible if missing information or if all criteria is not met. Forms are available online at www.sre.coop or at our Lancaster and Darlington offices. For more information, call us at 800-236-2141.

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Scan QR code or visit website at sre.coop/energy-rebates to view complete listing of 2026 rebates and application forms.

LIGHTING	
LED Exit Sign <i>50% of cost cap</i>	\$5/sign
LED Fixture <i>50% of cost cap</i>	\$0.50 per 800 lumens
LED Bulb <i>5 bulb minimum, 50% of cost cap</i>	\$0.50/bulb
Occupancy / Motion Sensor <i>Doesn't include motion detector bulbs or fixtures</i>	\$5/ea.

WATER HEATING

* Must be "controlled" as defined by cooperative

Commercial Water Heater 75-99 gallons	\$500/ea.
Commercial Water Heater 100+ gallons	\$800/ea.
Residential Water Heater 75-99 gallons <i>Uniform Energy Factor 0.88+</i>	\$500/ea.
Residential Water Heater 100+ gallons <i>Uniform Energy Factor 0.88+</i>	\$800/ea.
Heat Pump Water Heater <i>Integrated (all-in-one) units, Uniform Energy Factor 2.20+</i>	\$500/ea.

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC WATER HEATERS FOR SALE

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative sells 50 gallon, 85 gallon, and 105 gallon Marathon electric water heaters to our current members for their residential needs. These water heaters are one of the longest lasting and most energy-efficient water heaters on the market. Plus, when purchased through SREC, the rebate listed above is automatically applied to the purchase price when a qualifying load management device is set up!

Product Features:

- Easy Installation and Service
- Non-Metallic Tank
- No Anode Rod
- Lifetime Tank Warranty*
- 6-year Parts Warranty*

* Must register product within 90 days of purchase.

For more information, visit sre.coop/water-heaters, or contact us at 1-800-236-2141 to discuss product features, current at-cost pricing, and how you can save even more when the qualifying load management device is set up.

SREC does not install water heaters. You are responsible for the disposal of your old water heater.



**HVAC*****Must provide AHRI Certified Reference Number**

Heat Pump - Air Source & Mini-Split	\$200/ton
Heat Pump - Commercial Air Source & PTHPs	\$200/ton
Heat Pump - Geothermal	\$400/ton
New Furnace with ECM Blower Motor <i>Variable speed motor (not multi-speed) OR Eae ≤ 670 kWh/year; member's primary heat source</i>	\$35/ea.
Smart Thermostat <i>Honeywell or Sensi brand thermostat Enrolled in Load Management program</i>	\$25/ea.

CONSERVATION

Electric Vehicle Charging Station <i>Must be "controlled" as defined by cooperative</i>	\$500/ea.
EV Charging Station - Installation Costs <i>For secondary "controlled" meter as required by cooperative</i>	\$200 cap
Electric Vehicle Smart Charger with integrated metering <i>Must be "controlled" as defined by cooperative</i>	\$1,000/ea.

AGRICULTURAL/COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

Circulation Fan <i>Fans < 36" must be ≥ 18 pounds force/kW Fans ≥ 36" must be ≥ 21 pounds force/kW</i>	\$1/inch
Exhaust Fan <i>Fans < 36" must be ≥ 18 cfm/watt @ 0.05" SP Fans ≥ 36" must be ≥ 21 cfm/watt @ 0.05" SP</i>	\$1/inch
Electric Forklift Battery Charger <i>Must be "controlled" as defined by cooperative</i>	\$200/ea.
Dairy Plate Cooler / Well Water Pre-Cooler	\$500/ea.
Dairy Refrigeration Heat Recovery with Electric Backup <i>Used with controlled electric water heater as defined by co-op</i>	\$300/ea.
Low / Zero Energy Livestock Waterer <i>≤ 500 watts, insulated tank</i>	\$50/ea.
Scroll Refrigerant Compressor <i>\$1,000 cap per compressor</i>	\$30/HP
Variable Frequency Drive (VFD) <i>\$1,000 cap per compressor</i>	\$30/HP

ENERGY STAR CERTIFIED

If you're planning to purchase updated appliances and electronics, look for the ENERGY STAR® label, which indicates higher energy efficiency performance. Electronics that receive the ENERGY STAR® rating are up to 25% more efficient than standard products.

The ENERGY STAR® label is typically located in the bottom right corner of the yellow EnergyGuide.

**APPLIANCES*****Must be Energy Star Certified**

All-in-One Washer/Dryer <i>Must use ventless heat pump drying</i>	\$50
Clothes Dryer (electric)	\$25
Clothes Washer	\$25
Dehumidifier	\$25
Dishwasher	\$25
Freezer (≥ 10 cubic ft.)	\$25
Inductive Range	\$25
Refrigerator (≥ 10 cubic ft.)	\$25
Recycling - Freezer <i>Must be working appliance</i>	\$25
Recycling - Refrigerator <i>Must be working appliance</i>	\$25
Recycling - Room Air Conditioner <i>Must be working appliance</i>	\$25

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Forty (40) scholarships, each worth \$1,000, will be awarded through random drawings at our 89th Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at the Grant County Youth and Ag Building in Lancaster, Wisc.

Scholarships are available to seniors in high school, seniors in a home-schooled program, and non-traditional students entering their freshman year in a post-secondary accredited program.

To be eligible, applicant's parent(s), legal guardian, or applicants themselves must have an active membership (primary residence) with SREC. The applicant must be present at the SREC Annual Meeting.

Learn more at sre.coop/scholarships or call 800-236-2141.

**Applications due
March 31, 2026**



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Mid-winter is a great time to ensure you're making the most of your home heating system. Replace or clean filters to keep your furnace or heat pump running efficiently. Listen for strange noises and check for uneven heating—these signs indicate that the system may need servicing. Ensure vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or rugs as proper airflow helps your system work less and saves energy. A little maintenance along the way can prevent costly repairs and keep your home cozy through winter.



Save the Date

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting

April 11, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.
Youth and Ag Building
Lancaster, WI

Note: Due to the bylaw requirements regarding notice of annual meeting, the March *WEC News Magazine* with the annual report will be mailed March 12, 2026.

MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH



"Baby Squirrels" is this month's featured photo from Deb Warren, a member in Ferryville, WI.



Steve Lucas, CEO

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