



FOR SREC, IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY

By Steve Lucas, CEO

For me, the start of a new year is a time for reflection. It's a time to look back on all we've done over the past 12 months as we prepare for the year ahead. As I look back, I find myself feeling deep gratitude for our wonderful community. I know I speak for all Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative (SREC) employees when I say that we are thankful to be in such an incredible place. We are fortunate to live in the same area where we work, which makes our ties to this community that much stronger.

Those community ties are a big part of who we are. Like all cooperatives all over the world, SREC abides by a set of seven core principles. The seventh of these principles, Concern for Community, is essential to our very identity as a co-op. We serve our community not only by providing an essential service, but also by supporting organizations and activities that make our community a better place to live.

One way we do this is by organizing and administering our Operation RoundUp program, through which members volunteer to round their energy bills up to the next dollar, with the difference placed in a fund that is distributed among worthy nonprofit organizations and causes in our community. The average individual donation to Operation RoundUp is only \$6 a year, which may not sound like much, but when pooled with a \$6 average donation from thousands of other members, that modest amount grows quickly.

Once again, we were able to make a big impact with our Operation RoundUp funds in 2023. We distributed the funds to a variety of local organizations including Wisconsin Badger Camp, Crawford Opportunity Center, Southwest Opportunity Center, Hodan Center, American Cancer Society Relay for Life – Lafayette County, InHealth Community Wellness Clinic, Family Promise, Sleep In Heavenly Peace, food pantries throughout our service territory, and fire and emergency services in all three counties we serve.

Another way we exemplify the seventh cooperative principle is by awarding scholarships to member students to help them with the costs of higher education. In 2023, we gave \$1,000 scholarships to 52 deserving high school seniors within our service territory. These funds come from unclaimed capital credits, which, if not used for charitable purposes like scholarships, would have to be returned to the state treasury. We make sure we keep those funds in the community and help as many local students as we can.

We also donate our time to activities that promote community safety. For many years now, our lineworkers have volunteered their time to perform an electric safety demonstration for youth at the annual Rural Safety Day Camp held in all three counties of our service territory.

We also help our neighbors in need. Just a few weeks ago our staff finished gathering up a pile of presents for a family we adopted through the Grant County Family Holiday Project. The mission of this project is to gather clothing, food, and gifts for families—especially those with young children or senior citizens—who might not otherwise receive any presents at Christmas.

In addition to all that we do for the community collectively, our employees give individually. I am very proud of all the ways SREC employees contributed to

their communities over the past year. They taught Sunday School, coached kids in a number of sports, and served as firefighters and emergency responders, among many other activities.

I think I can safely say that once again, SREC did what cooperatives do: bring good people together to make good things happen in the community. We're all set to do this again in 2024.

Everyone at SREC wishes a Happy New Year to our own, wonderful community.



Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative employees put the seventh cooperative principle—Concern for Community—in action last month when they collectively adopted a family through the Grant County Family Holiday Project.

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR HEATING COSTS?

**WHEAP provides assistance
to qualifying households**

If you find yourself in need of assistance in paying your winter heating and utility bills, you may find help through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP), which is funded by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Public Benefits (PB) program. WHEAP provides assistance for heating costs, electric costs, and energy crisis situations to qualifying households.

Your household may be eligible based on a number of factors, including the household's size, income, and energy costs. In most cases the energy assistance benefit is paid directly to the household energy supplier.

What types of energy bills are eligible?

Homes heated with wood, propane, natural gas, electricity, or fuel oil can receive energy assistance. Your household may also be eligible to receive a payment for your non-heating electric costs through funding provided by Wisconsin's Public Benefits Program.

If you currently do not have heat or may be disconnected...

Crisis assistance may be available if you have no heat, have received a disconnect notice, or are nearly out of fuel and are unable to purchase more. WHEAP agencies provide a 24-hour crisis phone number to help with emergencies after business hours.

Furnace/boiler repair and replacement

The HE+ Program Services can assist eligible homeowners and some renters whose furnace or boiler stops operating. Call your local WHEAP agency or the statewide Customer Care Center (1-800-506-5596) immediately if you are experiencing a no-heat situation.

Does your household qualify?

If the gross income for your household is less than the amount shown on the chart at right, you might be eligible to receive assistance. Households must complete a Home Energy Plus application through their local WHEAP agency (in the SREC

area's case, county social services or human services offices—phone numbers are listed below), or apply online at <https://energybenefit.wi.gov/>.

For more information, please call **1-866-HEATWIS (432-8947)** or visit **www.homeenergyplus.wi.gov**.

homeenergy+

Income Guidelines for the 2023–2024 Home Energy Plus Program Year

(10/01/2023 through 9/30/2024)

60 percent of state median income guidelines

Household Size	One Month Income	Annual Income
1	\$ 2,820.67	\$33,848
2	\$ 3,688.58	\$44,263
3	\$ 4,556.50	\$54,678
4	\$ 5,424.50	\$65,094
5	\$ 6,292.42	\$75,509
6	\$ 7,160.33	\$85,924
7	\$ 7,323.00	\$87,876
8	\$ 7,485.75	\$89,829

ENERGY ASSISTANCE OPTIONS FOR SREC MEMBERS

Salvation Army 1-800-264-6412
Catholic Charities 608-782-0710
Southwest CAP 608-375-5903
Crawford County Human Services 608-326-0248

Grant County Social Services 608-723-2136
Green County Social Services 608-328-9393
Lafayette County Human Services 608-776-4800
Vernon County Human Services 608-637-5210



WINTER STORMS:

Extreme winter weather can lead to closed roads and power outages.

Are you prepared?



Extrême winter weather can immobilize an entire region. Even areas that normally experience mild winters can suddenly be hit with heavy snowfall or intense cold. Winter storms can result in closed streets and highways, power outages, and flooding. Take action now to ensure the safety and comfort of your family in the event of extreme winter weather.

Before a Storm

- Have snow removal equipment on hand, as well as rock salt to melt ice and sand to improve traction.
- Regular fuel sources may be cut off during a storm, so make sure an alternative source is available to heat your home. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone knows how to use them. Fires pose an additional risk when alternate heating sources are in use.
- Locate your main water supply and valves; make sure you know how to shut them off in case a pipe bursts.
- Repair roof leaks and keep gutters clear. Trim any tree branches that could fall during a storm.
- Winterize your home by caulking and weatherstripping doors and windows, sealing the attic area, and installing storm windows. This will help to keep your family safe and comfortable during a storm.

During a Storm

- Listen to your radio, television, or NOAA Weather Radio for weather reports and emergency information.
- Eat regularly and drink ample fluids, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- To conserve fuel, keep your home cooler than normal. Temporarily close off heat to some rooms.
- Stay dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent the loss of body heat.
- Watch for signs of frostbite; these include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers and toes. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- Drive only when necessary. If you must drive, travel on main roads during daylight hours. Keep others informed of your whereabouts.

After a Storm

- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack, a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
- Help neighbors who may require special assistance including infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation and open all faucets; pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold. Do not try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame.
- Follow forecasts and be prepared when venturing outside. Major winter storms are often followed by extremely cold conditions.

A little forethought and attention to detail will help to ensure that you and your family stay warm, dry, and safe this winter, no matter what the weather is outside.—Source: Touchstone Energy



Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative was recognized recently for achieving recertification in the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program. This voluntary program includes on-site evaluations of safety and compliance criteria and successful implementation of a Safety Improvement Plan. CEO Steve Lucas (center) was presented with the certificate by Elizabeth Ressie (left), Dairyland Power Cooperative's director of safety & human resources, and Mike Ruff (right), director of operations at Clark Electric Co-op.

REMEMBER THESE DATES



Petition Forms Due

Members living in Districts 3, 4, and 8 who are interested in running for the board of directors must turn in their petition forms to SREC by January 14.



Candidate Biographies Due

Candidates for director must turn in biographies to be included in the annual report to SREC by February 5.



SREC Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars for SREC's annual meeting Saturday, April 13, at the Youth & Ag Building in Lancaster. More details coming soon.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



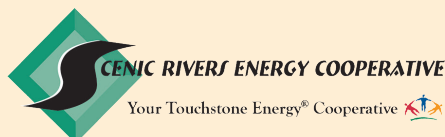
This photo was taken at the 1971 Grant Electric Cooperative annual meeting. There just has to be a story here! If you can share any other details about this picture, please call SREC at 800-236-2141.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

During winter months, ensure your home is well sealed to reduce the need for excessive heating. Seal air leaks around your home and add insulation where needed to save up to 10% on annual energy bills.

Install weather stripping on exterior doors and apply caulk around windows. Check attic insulation levels and hire a qualified contractor if additional insulation is required.

Source: energystar.gov



Steve Lucas, CEO

206 County Road K
Lancaster, WI 53813
lancaster@srec.net

300 Barth Drive
P.O. Box 127
Darlington, WI 53530
darlington@srec.net

15985 St. Hwy. 131
Gays Mills, WI 54631
gaysmills@srec.net

608-723-2121 • 800-236-2141 • www.sre.coop
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