



Steve Lucas, CEO

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: Energize your summer by attending the annual Youth Leadership Congress

We've got a great opportunity for high school students whose parents or grandparents are members of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative—the Youth Leadership Congress held at UW-River Falls July 24–26. Sponsored by Wisconsin's electric cooperatives, this program is developed for teens, by teens. It's packed with interactive, hands-on activities that keep students on their feet, as well as thought-provoking presentations by nationally acclaimed speakers that keep students on their toes.

Youth Leadership Congress brings together teens from all across the state, who invariably leave the three-day event with 100-plus new best friends. If they choose, they leave with other rich opportunities as well. Every year the students attending Youth Leadership Congress elect six peers to the state Youth Board. These students are responsible for planning the next year's program, and they also have an opportunity to join teens from throughout the nation in Washington, D.C., for the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in June.

We make it very easy for students to attend this worthwhile event: All costs for participating in Youth Leadership Congress are covered by the state's electric cooperatives through the Federated Youth Foundation. SREC even provides transportation to and from River Falls.

Why do we go to all this effort? First, it's simply part of what co-ops do—education and training is one of the seven guiding principles that all co-ops abide by.

More importantly, investing in youth always pays off. For

more than 50 years, the Youth Leadership Congress has been helping to develop our next generation of leaders. The students who attend bring their newly honed leadership skills and deeper understanding of the cooperative way back to their schools and communities. Many past attendees have gone on to serve their co-ops and communities in volunteer leadership positions. Others go on to establish rewarding careers in co-ops, something they learn about at Youth Leadership Congress.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

For an example of just how rewarding a co-op career can be, consider the recent experiences of four of our linemen. The April snowstorm that was a major inconvenience for us was devastating for a fellow co-op in Minnesota. Freeborn-Mower Energy Cooperative Services, headquartered in Albert Lea, Minnesota, suffered severe damage in the storm, with about half of its distribution system out of power.



Broken poles snapped off at the bottom were a common site in Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services' system after a mid-April snowstorm. SREC crews were among those that helped rebuild.
(Photo courtesy of Freeborn Mower Cooperative Services)

In such situations, the sixth co-op principle—Cooperation Among Cooperatives—kicks in. Scenic Rivers was one of 15 Wisconsin electric co-ops that answered Freeborn-Mower's call for help in rebuilding its system. Robert Tank from the Gays Mills office, Matt Rasmussen and Travis Klein from Lancaster, and Lucas Ritchie from Darlington left for Freeborn-Mower on April 11 and returned on the 17th. While there, they worked in high winds reframing all the new poles that were to be set—quite a task as the linemen said about 700 poles had broken in the storm. In fact, they said so many trucks hauling new poles were going in and out of Freeborn-Mower's pole yard and parking area that the blacktop was ruined.

Motel space for assisting crews was hard to find because so many rooms were filled with people from the area who were out of power.

Despite the challenges and inconveniences, however, it's always rewarding to be part of the cooperative spirit that prevails in these situations. When you work for a co-op, you have an opportunity to make a big difference in a lot of people's lives.

And for students, it can all start at the Youth Leadership Congress. Applications can be found on our website, www.sre.coop. Deadline for applying is Monday, June 14.



MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Jemma Holden of Lancaster's picture of a vigilant calf standing guard over the herd was the featured photo for June in SREC's 2018 Member Photo Contest. The 2019 Member Photo Contest is underway; please turn to page 18 to learn more.



DAIRY GOOD

SREC members host June dairy breakfasts

These are lean times for some in the dairy industry. So, showing support by consuming more dairy products and attending dairy breakfasts might be more important than ever. Here are details about the Crawford, Lafayette, and Grant County events.

Crawford County

The last time Kaitlyn Riley appears as Alice in Dairyland will be when her family farm near Gays Mills hosts the Crawford County Dairy Breakfast.

“My dad will probably deny it, but he thought it would be a special sendoff if our family hosted,” Riley said. “As of now, that will be my final event as Alice.”

It will be a sweet moment, on the farm where as a little girl she started by getting fresh water for calves every day and grew to help manage the registered Jersey herd of 65 milk cows.



Kaitlyn Riley’s last official duty as Alice in Dairyland will be at her home farm near Gays Mills when it hosts the Crawford County Dairy Breakfast June 1.



Kaitlyn, Jody, Paulette, and Justin Riley will host the Crawford County Dairy Breakfast June 1.

Her parents, Jody and Paulette Riley, both grew up on dairy farms. Her brother, Justin Riley, works for Foremost Farms in Richland Center.

Low prices and overproduction are pushing out small family farms like his, Jody Riley said. “We made a living. I know the next generation couldn’t milk 60 cows and get by” in the future, he said.

With a stall barn, pipeline, and 200 acres to grow feed for the cattle, it was the right size farm for them, he said. “There wasn’t a better place to grow up, and you couldn’t find better friends than those kids they met in the show ring.”

He hopes people realize the challenges dairy farmers face. “Drink more milk. Eat more cheese,” he said when asked what consumers can do.

Just imagine if fast food restaurants had milk as an option as a fountain drink, Jody Riley said.

“We are seeing some difficult times. Everyone knows that,” Kaitlyn Riley said, at least partly due to weather and prices. “But what is so important is that agriculture will continue to persevere and do it well.”

People will always need food and fiber that farmers produce, and agricultural communities are pulling together, she said.

There is a supportive group in Crawford County that puts on the breakfast, Jody Riley said. “Our farm is just the

place to have it,” he said.

Kaitlyn Riley is not sure what she wants to do when her reign as Alice in Dairyland ends, but she wants to be closer to her family’s farm in southwestern Wisconsin.

The Riley farm is at 44477 County W, Gays Mills.

The Crawford County Dairy Promoters put on the breakfast from 6 to 10 a.m. June 1. Pancakes, sausage, applesauce, cheese, pudding, cottage cheese, ice cream, milk, and coffee are on the menu.

Cost is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 6 to 12, and free for children 5 and under.

Lafayette County

When there was a possibility that the Lafayette County Dairy Breakfast would be held off of a farm, Cottonwood Dairy owners volunteered to host.

“I think it’s important for people to see where their food comes from,” said Jim Winn, one of the owners of Cottonwood Dairy. “So many people are so far removed from agriculture, it’s very important to get people out to the farm. They can walk through our barns and see how well our cows are taken care of, the comfort they have, food and water at their disposal, their freedom to wander around.”

The owners know their operation is different from the dairy farms people grew up on a couple generations ago,



Cottonwood Dairy owners Randy Larson, Brian Larson, and Jim Winn and their families and employees will welcome people to their farm near Wiota for the Lafayette County Dairy Breakfast June 8.

because they grew up on those farms, too.

But when those farms' barns were tired and in need of updating, the three decided to pool their resources and become partners in one operation in 1998. It grew from 600 cows, and then by increments of 300 to the current 1,800. There are 32 employees who milk and tend to the herd.

Owner Randy Larson hopes people find a "sense of community, just get together," and enjoy themselves at the breakfast, sponsored by the Lafayette County Dairy Promotion Committee.

To support dairy farmers, people can use more dairy products—not just milk, but cheese, butter, and yogurt, he said. And there are options for milk with less sugar and for those who are lactose intolerant.

"Every year, there's more and more people more generations removed from what farming is all about," said owner Brian Larson. "I hope they pick up that we're producing a wholesome, nutritious product and that they have faith in our product."

The breakfast is June 8, 6:30 to 10:30 a.m., at Cottonwood Dairy, 9600 County D, South Wayne. The farm, which hosted the dairy breakfast in 2000, is just outside of Wiota.

The menu includes scrambled eggs with ham and cheese, sausage links, doughnuts, cheese, pudding, milk, juice, coffee, and ice cream. Cost is \$5 for

adults, \$3 for children 10 and under, and free for preschoolers. Activities include live music, pedal pulls, petting zoos, door prizes, and a children's corner.

Grant County

Kieler Farms near Platteville is a multi-generational family farm.

"There are nine family members that are owners," said Renee Clark, who with her husband, Matt, are two. Her parents, Louis and Ann Kieler; brother Eric and his wife, Leah; aunt and uncle, Jackie and George Kieler; and their son, Daniel, all work together.

"Because of the size that we are, our farms are spread out. Our houses are all farm houses on farms two to three miles apart. We're not on top of each other. We all have our own areas to focus on. Because we're family, we know the dependability and loyalty of each other. We trust each other. We're best friends. It's pretty cool," Clark said.

In addition to family members, 25 people work at the farm, from part-time

to full-time. There are three milkings a day, with 1,800 cows.

After college, Clark left the farm to explore other paths, but felt drawn back. She had wanted to host the dairy breakfast "since I was a kid. This year, we have a new barn with nice viewing areas for people to come and watch milking in the upstairs and/or downstairs observation areas," she said.

The new barn is a 50-stall rotary parlor with a cross-ventilated freestall barn.

"I think it's really important for people to come to the farm because so many people are now generations removed the farm," Clark said. "It's an opportunity to see where their food comes from and the role technology plays on a modern dairy farm."

The best ways that people can help farmers are "to be supportive of farm neighbors and to buy more dairy products. There are so many farmers that are doing so many great, positive things environmentally and cow-comfort wise," said Clark, who is president of Grant County Dairy Promoters.

The breakfast, hosted by the Lancaster FFA Alumni, is 7 to 11:30 a.m. June 9 at Kieler Farms, 5404 Stanton Road, Platteville. The menu includes pancakes, eggs, sausage links, cheese, applesauce, honey, yogurt, coffee, and milk. Cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for kids.—*Mary Glindinning*



Kieler Farms, a multi-generational family farm near Platteville, will host the Grant County Dairy Breakfast June 9.



MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

Your photo could be featured in our
2020 Member Calendar!

Submit your favorite high-resolution photos capturing rural life in SREC's service territory to jmartin@srec.net by August 23.

For a complete list of rules and criteria as well as downloadable forms, visit our website, www.sre.coop.



BEST WISHES TO ALL
AREA GRADUATES FROM
SCENIC RIVERS ENERGY
COOPERATIVE

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

Seek shelter indoors or in a hard-topped vehicle. If you can't get to shelter:

- avoid open fields and hilltops.
- stay away from tall, isolated trees and objects.
- spread out (if you're in a group).



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