

youth tour connection

Steele-Waseca sponsoring 2 delegates for Youth Tour '16

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is accepting applications from eligible high school sophomores or juniors for an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., for the 2016 Youth Tour, June 11-16.

The tour is coordinated through the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Participating cooperatives sponsor a member student(s) to travel to Washington, D.C., to learn about cooperatives and our government, tour historical sites, and have fun meeting new friends from Minnesota and other delegates from across the nation.

To be eligible, the entrant must meet the following requirements:

1. The entrant is currently a high school sophomore or junior, and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) are a Steele-Waseca member. Dependents of Steele-Waseca employees or directors are not eligible to participate.
2. All entries must include: a) the completed application form below; b) answers to both essay questions typed on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper; c) applicant's school and community information typed on a separate sheet of paper; and d) two letters of recommendation (one from an instructor, counselor or administrator, and the other from a church or community leader).
3. Return entries to: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, c/o Youth Tour

2016, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060. Entries must be received in Steele-Waseca's office on or before Friday, Feb. 19, 2016. The Youth Tour recipients will be notified by Friday, March 18, 2016. 17524

Each entry will be evaluated by a panel of judges for:

- completeness
- composition
- neatness
- ability to communicate
- school and community activities

Essay Questions:

1. Why would you like to be Steele-Waseca's delegate to Youth Tour 2016? What do you hope to gain from the experience? Answer in 150 words or less.

2. Write a short essay on what commitment to community means to you. Include how you contribute to your



community. Answer in 300 words or less.

School and Community Information (use a separate sheet of paper to list the following):

- All school activities – include letters and honors earned, positions held, etc.
- All community activities – include all church, community service and positions held.
- Work experience and any other information.

MREA is requiring that each participating cooperative's delegate(s) report to the Crowne Plaza Airport located at 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington for an orientation session on Saturday, June 11, at 9 a.m. An afternoon flight to Washington, D.C., will follow the orientation session. ^{5/16}

Steele-Waseca's 2015 Youth Tour Delegate Lucas Arndt of Owatonna (back row, fourth from left) was among 41 Minnesota delegates who traveled to Washington, D.C., for last year's Youth Tour. This group photo was taken in front of the White House. "I am very grateful that I was given this opportunity and I am thankful for all the people who helped make my experience as great as it was," wrote Lucas. "I am also thankful for all of the new friends that I met. Washington D.C. is a place that I will never forget." (Photo courtesy of Tami Zaun, Lake Country Power and 2015 MREA chaperone) ^{5/16}

Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2016 — June 11-16 — Theme for 2016: Commitment to Community

Name _____ M or F _____ Phone _____

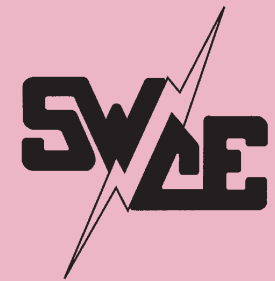
Address _____ street _____ city _____ state _____ zip _____ county _____

Email address _____ Parent(s) or Guardian(s) _____

I am currently a high school _____ sophomore _____ junior at _____

Parent/Guardian consent: I/we hereby give my/our dependent high school son/daughter permission to enter the Rural Electric Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2016 Contest. I/we understand if he/she wins, I/we will be responsible for providing his/her own transportation to the Crowne Plaza Airport in Bloomington and from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Name(s) _____ SWCE account # _____



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

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calendar of events

February

- 1 National Freedom Day
- 2 Groundhog Day
- 7 Super Bowl 50
- 12 Abraham Lincoln's birthday
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 15 Presidents' Day
Susan B. Anthony Day
- 19 SWCE's application due date for 2016 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.
- 22 George Washington's birthday

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric has a limited number of openings available for the 2016 Coal Creek Tour, June 14-16. For more information, contact Marketing Division Manager Doug Hughes by emailing, mktg@swce.coop, or calling 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514. Member parents and/or grandparents are reminded they may bring up to three students between the ages of 10 and 18 at NO CHARGE!

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric details residential rebates available in 2016

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members seeking ways to maximize their energy dollar may do so through rebates offered by the co-op in 2016.

The rebates for central air conditioners and air source heat pumps (ASHPs) are listed below and require a quality installation. To find a qualified installer, visit Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, move your cursor over "FIELD SERVICES," click on "Save Money & Energy," then click on "Qualified Installers List," in the "Quick Links" box.

	A/C	ASHP
14.5-14.9 SEER	\$50	\$480
15.0-15.9 SEER	\$50	\$580
16.0+ SEER	\$50	\$630

Rebates for Energy Star® labeled ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are \$400 per ton in 2016.

For members looking into electric thermal storage (ETS) heat, Steele-Waseca is offering a \$50 per kW (kilowatt) rebate up to 100 kW.

Steele-Waseca continues to offer a \$100 rebate for residential HVAC electronically commutated motors (ECMs), which offer a higher efficiency rating than typical electric blowers or condenser fan motors.

Ductless ASHPs with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$300 rebate.

Energy Star labeled refrigerators and freezers are eligible for a \$75 rebate only if you recycle the old unit.

Dehumidifiers with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$25 rebate.

Steele-Waseca members purchasing any Energy Star labeled appliances during the year are encouraged to call Cindy Aamot at Steele-Waseca weekdays to report their purchase. Energy Star purchases help Steele-Waseca reach their Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) goal mandated in Minnesota's 2007 Next Generation Conservation Act. The statute sets an energy conservation goal for every gas and electric utility in the state equivalent to 1.5 percent of their annual retail energy sales.

Residential lighting rebates in 2016 in-

clude the following:

- Energy Star light emitting diode (LED) lights have a \$3 per bulb rebate or up to half the cost of a multi-pack (whichever is less). LED holiday light strings have a \$2 rebate or half the package cost (whichever is less).
- Energy Star compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) have a \$1 per bulb rebate or up to half the cost of a multi-pack (whichever is less). Make sure to submit all of the numbers around the product's UPC code.

Appliance and lighting rebates may not be combined with special promotional offers through Steele-Waseca and/or its wholesale energy provider, Great River Energy.

Steele-Waseca members who install a member-owned LED security light are eligible to receive a \$30 rebate (members on the Steele-Waseca security light program are not eligible to receive a rebate); air conditioning tune-ups conducted in 2016 are eligible for a \$25 rebate; swimming pool ASHPs are eligible for a \$400 rebate; and an Energy Star variable speed pool pump is eligible for a \$200 rebate.

If you have a rebate question or wish to request a rebate form, please call Cindy Aamot at Steele-Waseca weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rebate forms are available at Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, under "FIELD SERVICES," then click on "Save Money & Energy."

Completed rebate forms must be accompanied with a copy of the receipt and submitted within 90 days of purchase. Please allow six to eight weeks for processing. The rebate will appear as a credit on your monthly Steele-Waseca bill. ^{5/16}



ENERGY STAR

Products with the Energy Star label have met federal government specifications regarding energy efficiency. 17363

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 Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric
 2411 W Bridge Street, PO Box 485
 Owatonna MN 55060-0485

Website: www.swce.coop Find us on Facebook
 Email: swce@swce.coop
 Fax: 507-446-4242

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Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

Operations Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

For Customer Service, Billing Questions and Power Outages Phone:

507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514

Before calling to report an outage

1. Check fuses and circuit breakers in your home and on meter pole.
2. Check with your neighbors to see if they have power.
3. Look for possible causes such as a tree branch on wires, a broken pole, twisted wires, etc.

To leave a non-emergency message whenever SWCE's Office is closed:

Phone 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514
 Press "2" and leave message including name, account #, and phone # you can be reached at the following business day.

**Call Before You Dig
 Gopher State One Call
 811 or 800-252-1166**

48-hour notice required for ALL underground cable locations

manager connection



By Syd Briggs,
 General Manager

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric strives to be diligent in keeping you, our member-owners, informed on safety, energy efficiency options, and events like our town hall and annual meetings. We also support programs intended for our young people living within our service area.

It's important we support our youth, not only to enrich their lives, but also instill the value of cooperative membership. After all, it's our youth who will one day become community and co-op leaders.

For high school seniors graduating in 2016, Steele-Waseca offers \$500 scholarships to those planning to continue their education on a full-time basis at a two- or four-year technical school or college.

One scholarship is awarded at each participating school. Scholarship applicants must be a dependent of a Steele-Waseca member. All eligible high school seniors should contact their guidance counselor or scholarship administrator for more information. Each participating school is responsible for administering any other eligibility requirements, and the school selects their eligible recipient.

Steele-Waseca has awarded \$141,750 since the program was established in 1954. Today, a portion of the funds to support these scholarships comes from unclaimed capital credit equity.

Two other programs sponsored by Steele-Waseca is the annual Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., and the Co-ops Yes! Youth Leadership Conference in Eau Claire, Wis.

Steele-Waseca featured the Co-ops Yes! conference in the December 2015 Sparks newsletter with details on the opportunity for sophomores, juniors, and seniors to participate.

As for the Youth Tour, eligible sophomores and juniors may send their application (details are on Page 8 of this



month's Sparks newsletter) directly to Steele-Waseca.

The tour is coordinated through the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

In 2015, 41 delegates from Minnesota participated in the Youth Tour. They joined over 1,500 students from across the country who participated in their state's Youth Tour program.

While in D.C., delegates have a chance to meet with their elected officials and discuss issues that are important back home. They'll have an opportunity to learn about the cooperative business model and enjoy sightseeing in the nation's capital. 61535

The Youth Tour has grown into an invaluable program that gives young Americans an experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Steele-Waseca's board of directors have been so impressed with the young men and women who have represented the co-op on the Youth Tour, that they have approved the sponsorship of two delegates starting this year to represent Steele-Waseca on the Youth Tour.

The co-op in recent years has made last year's Youth Tour delegate a part of our annual meeting. Many of you have commented on how much you enjoy hearing from our youth and the appreciation they have of their Youth Tour experience. At this year's annual meeting on Tuesday, June 7, Lucas Arndt of Owatonna (Steele-Waseca's 2015 delegate) is scheduled to highlight his Washington, D.C. Youth Tour experience. He will also introduce this year's yet-to-be-determined delegates.

Outreach with youth in the communities we serve is just one more way Steele-Waseca seeks to provide and enhance the quality of life in rural Minnesota.

Syd

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

GRASS HAY BALES, small square. 612-756-1131.

DELAVAL CREAM SEPARATOR, hand crank or elec. motor, no motor, gd shape, \$95. 390-4274.

PRIEFERT HORSE STALL FRONT; PICNIC TABLE, hunter green, foldable; **MIXED FIREWOOD; APPLE TREE FIREWOOD; STORAGE** for fish houses. 676-1141.

PORTABLE STORAGE CONTAINERS, 20' & 40', store your stuff on your property. 612-418-4375.

FIREWOOD, mixed hardwoods, 1/4 cord/\$65, 1/2 cord/\$120, full cord/\$220 (you pick up). 645-4158.

CABIN ON FRENCH LK, (2) bdrm w/(2) sheds on leased land, incl. new dock. 481-4348.

PASTURE FOR RENT, fenced, rural Dundas. 952-270-5562.

GRASS HAY, sm. sq., hvy bales, no rain. 334-6377.

TABLE W/2-CHAIRS, drawer in front can also be used as a desk, solid wood, grt shp, \$75. 583-6679.

(2) **13.6 X 28 FIRESTONE TIRES** on AC WD rims, \$550; (2) **14.9 X 28 TIRES** on AC rims, \$800 (tires are 95% thread). 330-3945.

LAYING HENS: silkie, bantam chickens. 456-6989.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any item posted. The party posting any advertisement assumes complete liability for the content of, and all replies to, any advertisement and for any claims against SWCE as a result thereof, and agrees to indemnify and hold SWCE harmless from all costs, expenses, liabilities and damages resulting from, or caused by, any advertisement or reply thereto.

Steele-Waseca seeking assistance to find former members

Capital credit checks for the following former Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members have been returned to the co-op because their mailing addresses are no longer accurate.

If you know any of the following former members and can provide information about them, please call Kathy Friedrichs at the Steele-Waseca office during regular business hours.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Debra J. Anderson | Northfield |
| Mr./Mrs. Douglas P. Baer | Pemberton |
| Gladys R. Bedney | Owatonna |

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| David A./Deborah K. Beland | Owat. |
| C. Eric/Billie J. Bergh | Northfield |
| Dorothy Collins | Winnebago |
| Bridget T. Daly | Faribault |
| Catherine Dusbabek | Faribault |
| Robert B. Englund | Faribault |
| Craig D. Evans | West Concord |
| Darlene Filan | Kilkenny |
| Deborah Hendrickson | Owatonna |
| Walter D. Jackel | Owatonna |
| Mr./Mrs. Curtis C. Jacobsen | Owat. |
| Mr./Mrs. Donald J. Johnson | Waseca |
| Kelly/Art Johnson | Blooming Prairie |
| Jeanette K. Jones | Waterville |

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Harlan K. Juvland | Minneapolis |
| Michael L. Kaiser | Waseca |
| Vernon F. Koch | North Oaks |
| Jeffrey T. Knickerbocker | Faribault |
| Martina Kramer | Kenyon |
| Vince A. Krohn | Faribault |
| Cheryl S. Lemke | Faribault |
| Mr./Mrs. James R. Marshall | LeCenter |
| Emil F. Pisch | Waldorf |
| John P. Quaintance | Owatonna |
| LaDonna D. Raimann | Mapleton |
| Barry R./Barbara J. Smith | Rochester |
| Jon O. Younger | Faribault |

(Scammers continued from Page 5)

ing OK. [sic]"

Morley knows of two victimized Midwest Energy business members. One lost about \$1,500; the other about \$400.

"The unfortunate thing is for each one that we know of, it's quite likely there are many others that we don't," Morley said.

Meanwhile in Colorado, Durango-based La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) is warning members about another scam in which businesses are told to pay \$500 to a "meter man" who will be there within the hour.

"Every time we turn around, there's a new twist," said Steve Gregg, LPEA chief operating officer. He said victims

are told the person is coming to install a new "GPS meter"—something that doesn't exist.

"This current scammer is claiming that they will be on-site at the location to pick up funds," said Gregg. "We definitely want to caution our members about confronting this person, or persons on your own, as you don't know who you're dealing with."

(Editor's note: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric was informed Dec. 21 by East Central Energy in Braham, Minn., that one of their business account members received a call and a text message from a person who claimed to represent "ECE Company." The caller threatened to shut off the electricity unless the

business made an immediate payment on their account. The business member was instructed to go to another local business, fill out an application, and then call back for further instruction. The member called the phone number that was instructed to call back, it was answered "ECE Company."

If someone calls you demanding an immediate payment or asking for banking information, immediately hang up the phone and call your local law enforcement authorities. In addition, please contact Steele-Waseca so the co-op is aware of the situation.

If you have any questions regarding the status of your account, please call Steele-Waseca at 507-451-7340 or toll-free at 800-526-3514.) 28667

cookin' connection

Tuna Hotdish

Luanne Louks

Claremont

- 1 can tuna
- 1 1/2 c. celery, sauteed in 2 tbsp. margarine about 15 minutes
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can chicken gumbo soup
- 1 c. milk

Mix ingredients, then alternate layers of chow mein noodles and the tuna mixture. Bake one hour in moderate oven (350° F).

Please use a 3 x 5 card when submitting your recipe. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$7 energy credit.



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's solar subscribers will see a 35 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during December 2015. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop. The latest subscriber is Charles Sonnek of Waldorf.

Was your account number in Sparks?

Each month five account numbers are printed in *Sparks* and a total of \$35 in energy credits is divided among however many of those numbers are found. For example, if all numbers are found, a credit of \$7 will be applied to the members' following month's electric bills; or, if only one number is found, that member receives the full \$35 credit. Members finding their numbers who have a load management receiver on their dual fuel, electric water heater, air conditioner, or genset will receive an additional \$7 credit. When you find your number, phone our office no later than the 5th of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

January issue of Sparks



Numbers found:

Allen R./Samantha J. Yule
Dale W. Sandborg

Numbers not found:

John A./Patricia L. D'Amato
Larry D. Howell
Thomas Machacek



Sparks in brief . . .

• **Want easy energy payments?** Sign up for **EnergyPay Plus**, our automatic payment plan, or **Energy Prepay**, our discounted advance payment plan. Contact our office for details. You may also pay your bill online at www.swce.coop. By entering your Steele-Waseca username and password you can also view a 13-month history of your account.

• **If you have changed or added phone numbers, please contact SWCE to update your contact information.**

• **Need a new water heater?** For information about our Marathon Electric Water Heater Program, phone Cindy Aamot at our office between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., 446-4204 / 800-526-3514.

• **December temps** – The average high temperature for December was 34° F, while the average low was 24° F. They compare to last year's average high of 29° F and average low of 18° F.

• **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2016, all ENERGY STAR refrigerators/freezers (with recycling), dehumidifiers, central air conditioners, air and ground source heat pumps, compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs), light emitting diode (LED) holiday lights and bulbs purchased are eligible to receive rebates (may not be combined with special promotions). Rebate request forms must be submitted within 90 days of purchase. Rebate forms are available at www.swce.coop. For more information or to receive a rebate request form, phone Cindy Aamot between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at 446-4204 or 800-526-3514.

• **Steele-Waseca's tree service contractor** – Carr's Tree Service, Inc., is contracted to do SWCE's tree trimming. To report a tree concern, phone:

507-451-7340 / 800-526-3514

STEELE COUNTY TIP LINE
866-878-7964
 TO BE USED TO REPORT ANY CRIME OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ANONYMOUSLY
 COVERS ALL OF STEELE COUNTY INCLUDING THE CITIES OF:
 OWATONNA ELLENDALE
 BLOOMING PRAIRIE MEDFORD

health & safety connection

One phone number, multiple scams

by Michael W. Kahn, *Electric Co-op Today*

The bad guys are becoming ever more flexible and creative in the ways they scam electric cooperative members.

"You never know who they're going to be in a given day," said Mike Morley, corporate communications manager at Midwest Energy in Hays, Kan. "They've adapted their tactics to where the same group will impersonate a number of utilities."

Morley, who first spoke to ECT.coop about scams in March 2013, said it used to be victims threatened with disconnection were told by scammers to buy a prepaid card and that they'd be called back in a couple of hours.

"Now they call and say, 'This is Midwest Energy. Your account is past due and we need you to call us back,'" Morley said, adding that spoofing software fools the caller ID into displaying "Midwest Energy."

"When they call back they get a voice menu that sounds exactly like ours. And it's not just us—other utilities in Kansas have reported this."

A Midwest Energy staffer called the toll-free number posing as a member using a phony name and account number, and was told they owed \$780. The staffer was even instructed to go to a specific nearby store to buy a ReloadIt prepaid card.

When an ECT.coop reporter dialed the same number another day, the recording claimed it was Eversource, a New England investor-owned utility. Upon reaching a live person, the reporter gave a phony location in Eversource's Springfield, Mass., territory. After tapping on a keyboard, the man on the phone told the reporter there was a \$997.78 delinquent balance and to go to a supermarket two miles away to buy ReloadIt cards and call back with the numbers.

When the reporter told the man that the address was actually in the middle of a river, the man responded, "I'm playing around with you." When asked why on another day the same number was Midwest Energy, the reply was, "Because I can do what the hell I want." Asked about how much they were making scamming people, the reporter was told, "All you need to know that we do-

(Scammers continued on Page 7)

DANGER!
Outlet Overload

Every year, U.S. fire departments respond to an estimated **25,900 home electrical fires**. These fires cause an estimated **280 deaths, 1,125 injuries** and **\$1.1 billion in property loss**.

Thirty-nine percent of home electrical fires involve outlets and receptacles, and other electrical wiring.

To ensure safety, you should only use about 80 percent of the available current for each electrical outlet in your home.

Are you overloading outlets?
 Use this formula to find out:

WATTAGE/VOLTS=AMPS

Example:
 Let's say you are using 2,000 watts of power (for one outlet). Divide the watts by the volts in your home (typically 120), and you come up with 16.6 amps of current being used. With a 20 amp electrical outlet, you are using about 80 percent of the available current.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration, Home & Garden

Use electric power safely

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric wants you to safely power your appliances and devices by not overloading outlets. Just count how many things at your residence need power. To help ensure the safety of your home and family, make sure you don't plug more than one major appliance into an outlet at a time. If an outlet isn't working, have a qualified electrician check it out, have them install more outlets on the proper circuits where needed, and replace missing or broken wall plates so wiring and components are not exposed.

(Town hall meeting continued from Page 3)

der the conditions of the acquisition that closed on July 31, rates will not change for three years, any rate changes in years four and five are limited to no more than 5 percent, and SMEC is contracted to purchase power from Alliant Energy for 10 years.

Among the programs and promotions highlighted by Briggs were the Revolt electric vehicle recharging program, community solar and The Sunna Project, along with rebates available through Steele-Waseca.

District 7 Director John Beal presented information regarding ACRE (Action Committee for Rural Electrification), and how participation provides support to elected officials who favor legislation that keeps electricity reliable and affordable.

The latest to join ACRE as a result of the town hall meetings conducted by Steele-Waseca this past October and November include the following: Donald Antl, Owatonna; Steven Bloom, Owatonna; Arlan Brase, Owatonna; Bea Concannon, Owatonna; Ivan Cowell, Medford; Jerry/Dar Czarnowski, Owatonna; James David, Ellendale; George Dettmann, Ellendale; Bob El-

lis, Northfield; Gary Fischer, Waseca; Luke Havumaki, Faribault; Phil/Gail Heim, Medford; Martin J. Jensen, Medford; Steven Jensen, Hope; Jeff Johnson, Kenyon; Jerry Katzung, Owatonna; Duane/Debbie Klecker, Owatonna; Donald Kramer, Owatonna; John Kriesel, Owatonna; Loyal Merritt, Medford; Gaylord Moeckly, Medford; Jo Moore, Ellendale; Virgil/Janet Neumann, Owatonna; Linda Noble, Faribault; Doug Pirkl, Owatonna; Robert/Carol Prokopec, Blooming Prairie; Ken/Vesta Schiller, Hope; Eric/Nina Sellner, Owatonna; Harold Snyder, Owatonna; Vincent Steinbauer, Medford; Gary Wagenbach, Nerstrand; Kenneth/Jenell Warner, Owatonna; James Wencl, Owatonna; and Martin Zacharias, Owatonna.

The next round of town hall meetings is tentatively scheduled for late March or early April, but specific dates and locations have yet to be determined. Members are notified by a postcard mailed to their billing address, and a phone call through Steele-Waseca's automated phone messaging system to the number listed on the member's account. **SWCE**

Do you need a calendar for 2016? Steele-Waseca has a limited supply still available. Just stop by our office during regular business hours.