

youth tour connection

Steele-Waseca sponsoring 2 delegates for Youth Tour '17 to Washington, D.C.

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 2017 Youth Tour, June 10-15.

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). 28139
3. Return entries to: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, c/o Youth Tour

2017, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060. Entries must be received in Steele-Waseca's office on or before Friday, Feb. 17, 2017. The two Youth Tour recipients will be notified by Friday, March 17, 2017.

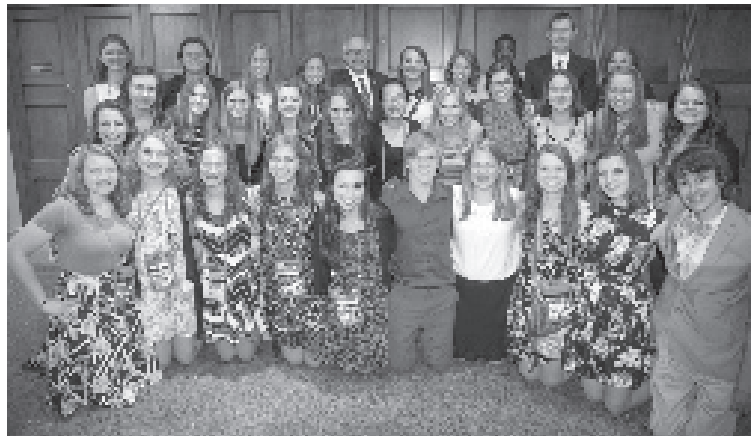
Each entry will be evaluated by a panel of judges for:

- 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 2017? 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



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's 2016 Youth Tour delegates, Karsten Singh of Northfield (front row, far right) and Abigail Hansen of Owatonna (middle row, second from left) were among the Minnesota delegation meeting with First District Congressman Tim Walz (back row, fifth from left) during last year's Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

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 10, at 9 a.m. An afternoon flight to Washington, D.C., will follow the orientation session.

Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2017 — June 10-15 — Theme for 2017: Commitment to Community

Name _____ M or F _____ Phone _____

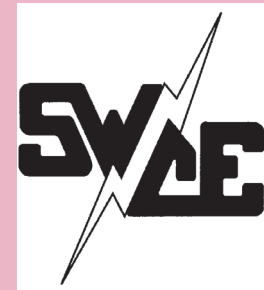
Address _____ street _____ city _____ state _____ zip _____ county _____

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 2017 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® Cooperative

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

February 2017

Coal Creek Tour update

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric has a limited number of openings available for the 2017 Coal Creek Tour, June 13-15. For more information, visit swce.coop (click on MENU, then OPPORTUNITIES) or contact Marketing Division Manager Doug Hughes by emailing, mktg@swce.coop, or calling 507-451-7340 or toll-free 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.)

inside connections

- 2 Manager Connection
- 3 Weatherization Assistance Pgm
- 4 Cookin' Connection
SWCE community solar update
Sparks in brief
Steele County Tip Line
- 5 Home Safety Calendar
Space heater & electric blanket safety
Steele County Clothesline event
- 6 Ad Connection
4-Seasons Vacations
- 7 Ad Connection
SWCE seeking assistance in locating former members
- 8 SWCE accepting applications for Washington, D.C. Youth Tour

calendar of events

February

- 1 National Freedom Day
- 2 Groundhog Day
- 5 Super Bowl LI
- 12 Abraham Lincoln's birthday
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 17 SWCE's application due date for 2017 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.
- 20 Presidents' Day
- 22 George Washington's birthday

Clothes dryers, Wi-Fi thermostats newest to residential rebates in 2017

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member-owners seeking ways to maximize their energy dollar may do so through rebates offered by the co-op in 2017.

New in 2017 are rebates for Energy Star® electric clothes dryers (\$75 rebate) and Wi-Fi smart thermostats (\$25 rebate).

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, click on "Residential Rebates," then "Qualified Installers List," listed under "Quick Links."

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



ENERGY STAR
Products with the Energy Star label have met federal specifications regarding energy efficiency.

Rebates for Energy Star labeled ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are \$400 per ton in 2017. 19105

(SWCE residential rebates continued on Page 3)

Windbreak management and renovation

Courtesy: Adam Arndt, Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Windbreaks are an integral part of many rural homesteads and provide critical protection for farmsteads, livestock, crops, and wildlife.

Windbreak trees are planted close together to provide a wind barrier as quickly as possible. However, as the trees and shrubs mature, they begin to crowd one another.

This crowding must be relieved to maintain vigor and sufficient foliage to form an effective wind barrier. Unfortunately, many windbreaks planted 30-40 years ago are losing their effectiveness



due to age, poor health, or neglect.


In some cases, the windbreak no longer has the necessary density to provide winter protection. In other cases, overcrowding may have reduced the health and vigor of the windbreak, or the windbreak may have been invaded by aggressive sod forming grasses such as smooth brome, reducing tree growth. Whatever the reason, many older windbreaks need renovation.

Windbreak renovation is basically a drastic form of maintenance. Pruning, thinning and release, weed control, as well as replacement are all forms of maintenance that could be included in a renovation plan.

With careful planning and follow through, renovation of your windbreak should lead to the development of a healthy and functional windbreak. If possible, renovation should start early

(Windbreak management continued on Page 5)

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 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 exercises diligence 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.

I believe 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 2017, 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 for selecting their eligible recipient.

Steele-Waseca has awarded \$150,750 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! Leadership Conference in Eau Claire, Wis.

Steele-Waseca featured the Co-ops Yes! conference in the December 2016 Sparks newsletter with details on how sophomores, juniors and seniors may participate.



For the Washington, D.C. 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. 28869



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

In 2016, 40 delegates from Minnesota participated in the Youth Tour. They joined over 1,600 students from across the country who participated in their state's Youth Tour program.

While in Washington, 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.

The Youth Tour has grown into an invaluable program that gives young people 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, they approved sending two delegates in 2016 to represent Steele-Waseca on the Youth Tour. Their commitment continues as two delegates will represent the co-op again in 2017.

The co-op in recent years has made last year's Youth Tour delegate a part of the 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 6, Karsten Singh of Northfield and Abigail Hansen of Owatonna (Steele-Waseca's 2016 delegates) are scheduled to highlight their Washington, D.C. Youth Tour experiences. They 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.

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

REDLINE 1.1 BMX, boy's, 20x175, \$100; **NISHIKI MEN'S MTB**, 21-sp., easy-fire shift, \$100. 330-3178.

KUERIG COFFEE MAKER w/K-Cup & storage tray, exc. cond., \$40. 451-6485.

CLARINET; SINGLE FRENCH HORN. 340-0506.

STRAW & CANARY GRASS. 744-2871.

ROUEN DRAKES; MUSCOVY DUCKS. 390-0206.

GRASS HAY; STRAW, round bales; **ALF. & GRASS HAY**, no rain, sm. sq. bales, stored in Millersburg area. 451-7489 or 414-2245/cell.

USED AUTO PARTS, ENGINES, TRANS., car & truck parts, 30-day warranty, best prices. 332-2300.

DURANGO COWBOY BOOTS, blk, size 10.5, email: bloodgas5@yahoo.com for pictures, \$50. 390-1137.

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

STRIKEMASTER ICE AUGER, 8", 2 hp, like new, runs great, \$175/obo. 210-7919.

KATAHDIN HAIR SHEEP, reserve your Feb.-born ewe lambs now for spring delivery (they go fast), great for beginners, hobby farms & organic, never need shearing. 451-2722.

HEAVY DUTY TRAILER, tie down all (4) corners. 334-7656.

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

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.

(Space heater safety continued from Page 5)

space heaters. Space heaters should be kept at least three feet from blankets, clothing, paper, and other flammables.

- Place space heaters out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface—NOT on carpets, furniture, or countertops.

- Pets should never be allowed to sleep on top of electric blankets.

- Electric blanket wires should never be bent or tucked under a mattress.

- Do not attempt to warm your entire home using space heaters. Space heaters are useful in small areas, such as a study or living room. However, if you need to keep large areas warm, your home heating system will do the job more efficiently.

To learn more on how to avoid electrical hazards, visit SafeElectricity.org.



LARGE ROUND CORNSTALK BALES, 6'x5', net wrapped; **SUZUKI 500 QUAD RUNNER**, 4-wheel drive, exc. cond. 475-1392.

WHEEL HORSE 418A GARDEN TRACTOR, 18-hp Kohler eng., incl. 42" mower deck, 48" landscaping blade, hyd. equip. lift, \$1600. 952-836-6782/Bill.

CROP PROTECTION PRODUCTS AVAILABLE, in packaged or bulk containers, cash, John Deere or Rabo financing accepted, rebates & private financing offers avail. 676-7767.

SPRING WEDDING DRESS, woman's size 6, sleeveless, 3' train/bustle, beaded waist, A-line, vry clean, \$250. 475-4289.

TROY-BILT STORM 2840, purchased in Fall 2011, used (3) times, exc. cond., always stored inside w/ gas drained, 277cc, 28" 2-stage elec. start gas snow-blower, \$700. 330-6076.

1-ACRE WOODED LOTS w/lakeshore on Beaver Lk. Gravel cul-de-sac, southern exposure, utilities & common well to lots incl. Ready to build your dream home! www.beaverikestates.com. 438-9503.

16" ROPING SADDLE; (3) GOAT KIDS, 3-mths-old (2-females/1-male), Boer cross, \$2.50/#. 456-6828.

FORD VERSATILE 946, 325 hp, 4300 hrs, power-shift, 20.8x42 tires at 50%, \$40,000. 461-2681.

(4) TRUCK TIRES, 11.00x20, 90% trd, \$150/all; **40' JD SPIKE TOOTH HARROW DRAG**, \$600; **MEL-ROE MULTIWEEDR**, \$600. 330-3945.

RED ELM FIREWOOD. 334-5090.

ENGINE HOIST, vry large, comes apart for storage, \$50. 952-652-2933.

VACATION IN WARM CANCUN, MEX., Omni, private owner, (2) units: (1) sleeps (4)/\$799, the other sleeps (6)/\$1299, avail. thru March 30th. 213-8823.

2009 CHEVROLET SILVERADO 2500HD, 4x4, ext. cab, 6.6 Duramax, Allison trans., backup cam., new tires, 160,xxx mi., gooseneck hitch, \$21,000/obo. 210-5596.

(4) HOLSTEIN STEER CALVES, 300-350 lbs, \$425/each. 363-1701.

HVY DUTY TRAILER, 8'x16', (2) 7500-lb. axles, new tires, \$1700; **1992 F-250**, 7.3 diesel, Super Cab, new tires, gd shape, 176,000 mi., \$1800. 456-9145.

PINE FIREWOOD, cut to about 2' lengths, approx. 2.5 pickup loads, you haul, \$150. 527-2560.

HOUSE CLEANING SERVICES: dust, vacuum, laundry, etc. 461-9422.

PUREBRED GERMAN SHEP. PUPS, blk & tan & white, 1st shots & wormer, great pets, \$350/cash. 319-3924.

KEROSENE PORTABLE HEATER, 9300 Btu, gd for outbuildings, great shape, \$20. 451-3401.

POLARIS SNOWMOBILE SOFT BLK LEATHER COAT/XL & pants/XL, exc. cond., \$250; **CASTLE X RACE WEAR**, coat/XL, bibs/XL, blk & gray, exc. cond., \$125. 491-4565.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric seeking assistance in locating 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 Teresa Hertle at the Steele-Waseca office during regular business hours. 20645

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Louis J. Ackman | Faribault | Joan H. Lucas | Webster |
| James K./Pamela A. Black | Northfield | Mark J/Marilyn Lysford | Claremont |
| Belva M. Brown | Faribault | Robert H./Naomi F. Moon | Zumbrota |
| Merrill D./Berniece Bunn | Ellendale | Phillip M./Kay E. Muchow | Faribault |
| William D. Cummings | Faribault | Mary C. Neymeyer | Faribault |
| Mr/Mrs Andrew C. Garner | Ft Myers, FL | Jeff S. Nill | Medford |
| Walter B. Hill | Faribault | Bill R. Ostrom | Rochester |
| Michael Lewis | Claremont | Stanley D. Poole | Ellendale |
| | | Patsy A. Reese | Ellendale |
| | | Dwight W. Shroyer | Kenyon |
| | | Jane E. Stepanek | Owatonna |
| | | Michael Tingelhoff | Faribault |
| | | Harry J. Tuma | Lonsdale |
| | | Mark/Marlys Tuttle | Waseca |
| | | Warren A. Wayne | Ellendale |
| | | Angela M. Welch | Northfield |
| | | Elizabeth J. Wilson | Ellendale |
| | | David C./Kathryn Winters | Owatonna |
| | | Beverly Young | Morristown |

Is my off peak/dual fuel being controlled today?
 Visit Great River Energy's website at www.greatriverenergy.com and click on "Load Management"
Need a history of controls?
 Click on "History" on the "Load Management" page

ad connection

give away

27" SYLVANIA TV. 456-8637.

PALOMINO GELDING, 8-yr-old, beautiful, needs someone who can wrk w/him more than I can. 279-0106.

FREE ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS, you place & remove your own ad on SWCE's website, www.swce.coop, these are separate from Sparks & will not appear in Sparks unless emailed to sparks@swce.coop.

PIANO, 1/4 sawn oak w/bench. 952-652-2933.

wanted

LOOKING FOR FARMLAND TO RENT in the Owat. area. 213-6979.

UNWANTED BIKES & LAWN MOWERS, \$ paid on delivered. 330-3178.

LOOKING TO RENT FARMLAND for 2017 & beyond. 456-6521.

SPIGOTS for tapping maple trees. 332-8936.

JUNK & UNWANTED APPLIANCES, no TVs, computers &/or plastic dishwashers, free drop off. 210-6728/Dan.

DEAD/LIVE GARDEN TRACTORS, will pay \$; **GARDEN TRACTOR LOADER**, attachments, weights & misc. 256-7299, eves/451-0546.

JUNKERS & REPAIRABLES: cars, trucks, most farm & constr. equip., top \$ pd for junkrs. 332-2300.

SMALL GRAVITY FLOW BOX/WAGON in vry gd shape, must be smaller than 180 bushel. 451-9614.

SNOWMOBILERS to join Steele County Sno Blazers Club, send name & address to: SCTA, PO Box 146, Hope, MN 56046 for membership form. 446-0587.

WINDMILL TOWER, does not need to be working. 461-2681.

HAND-SCREW PARKING JACK from a NH 77 hay baler. 330-3945.

MESSAGE TABLE in gd/exc. cond. 213-0059.

for sale

OLD NAVY HUSKY BOYS JEANS, size 10, new; **NIKE WIND PANTS**, boys, size M, new. 213-7097.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **February 6** to ensure being printed in the March Sparks. Please print neatly or type your ad of **20 words or less** on this form. We reserve the right to edit ad copy to allow space for more ads. Ads received after the 6th will be printed in the April issue.

For Sale Wanted Give Away

Phone # _____ Account # _____

Name _____

Clip and mail to: SWCE, PO Box 485, Owatonna MN 55060-0485, or fax to: (507) 446-4242 or email your ad to: sparks@swce.coop.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

LARGE PET PORTER, composite w/metal door, \$35; **ELEC. HD MEAT GRINDER**, new, \$60; **FLARE BOX**, exc. cond., \$600. 455-3881.

1998 SYLVAN SPORT TROLLER, nice boat, livewell, depth finder, front mount trolling motor, nice 25 hp Yamaha 4-stroke. 213-6979.

BEACHFRONT VACATION CONDOS FOR RENT in Fort Myers Beach, South Padre Island & Mexico, visit www.sandysbeachfrontcondo.com for details & photos. 612-865-9604/Sandy.

RED WING WORK BOOTS, only used 2-months of wrk, size 13, steel toe, uninsulated, still in gd cond., \$65/obo. 744-2266.

AALADIN HOT WATER PRESS. WASHER, used, 4 gpm @ 2300 psi, 230V, single phase, \$2495; **VAL 6 KBESL RADIANT HEATER**, \$2395. 583-2703.

RENTAL, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$100. 451-7946.

2007 JD GATOR, gd cond., \$3960. 381-1160.

JD 7200, MaxEmerge 2, vacuum corn planter, (12) row, 30", liquid fert., flex frame, 250 monitor, \$15,900. 334-6092.

CLIMATE CONTROLLED UNITS FOR RENT, 11'x9' to 16'x10'. 332-4623.

2015 EASY CLIMBER STAIR LIFT, covers 13 steps, wrks great, has (2) remotes & a fold-up chair, come view it/test it out; **OLD BARN WINDOWS** for crafting or anything, \$5/each. 213-6832.

2002 CHEVY Z71 PICKUP, incl. topper; **TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL & STUMP GRINDING**, pro climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines. 456-1609.

CERTAINTED LANDMARK 25 DRIFTWOOD SHINGLES, 21-bundles; **DOG KNL**, 48"x32"x35"; **CHAISE LOUNGE CHAIR**, white. 676-1141.

BLK ANGUS BEEF: qtrs, halves or whole avail, semi-organically & locally raised. 330-2452/Matt.

1995 FORD F-150, 4WD, fiberglass topper, chrome rims, ext. cab; **1989 YAMAHA MOTO 4 ATV**, 200cc. 456-0296.

HOME REPAIRS: plumbing, decks (repair or replacement), window & door installation, drywall (repair or installation) & more, quality wrk, exc. references, affordable prices. 581-6562/John.

COLD STORAGE in Fbo, 6x8, \$49/mth. 332-4638.

FORTUNE CRK TRL LOTS, the covenant allows for a pole shed, starting at \$75,000; **7.6 ACRES ON GONVICK AVE.**, \$79,900. 838-5033/John.

CABIN at 17436 Gary Trl #24, French Lk, fully furnished, new roof, dock, (2) storage sheds, leased land, \$74,900. 789-5395.

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

ROOF SHINGLING for home &/or farm, licensed & insured, trusted since 2000. 271-9129.

8" CEMENT BLOCKS, approx. 125, unbroken, \$0.50/each. 528-2256.

1996 NORTHWOOD PONTOON w/trailer, 30 hp Merc., \$7495; **1993 18' PROWLER CAMPER**, \$3200; **HUMIDIFIER**, \$75; **VENTED LP FISH HOUSE STOVE**, \$125. 383-3871.

ENTERTAINMENT CENTER, solid oak, 6'x6'8"x20" deep, fits 32" TV, \$250/obo. 789-6596.

CLAM 5600 FISH HOUSE, 3-4 person, gd cond., \$200; **NU-WAY LP GAS VENTED FISH HOUSE HEATER**, \$75. 208-8304.

PAIR OF FEATHER PILLOWS, professionally dry cleaned, \$25. 451-7626.

SHIPPING CONTAINERS, store your stuff on your property, 20' & 40', moisture & rodent proof, free delivery within 50 miles of Owat. 612-418-4375.

OSTER COUNTERTOP MICROWAVE, used (1) yr, like new, blk, 1100W, capacity 1.1 cu. ft., size 12x22x17, \$65. 456-2060.

'96 19' CRESTLINR w/115 hp Johnson mtr, (2) troll. motors & Shorelandr trlr, \$9000; **'97 17' BAYLINR 1750 CAPRI** w/Merc. 130 hp I/B mtr (nds wrk) & Escorts trlr, \$1800; **'00 UTIL. TRLR**, \$400. 213-0225.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

MN TWINS SPRING TRAINING IN FLORIDA BY MOTOR COACH, March 2-12; 11 days, 19 meals, 2 Twins games, Nashville tour, Coca-Cola tour & more. \$1,699 per person based on 2 per room.

MONUMENTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C. (AIR INCLUDED), March 31-April 4. Five days, 8 meals incl., D.C. tour, Memorials, Mount Vernon, Arlington. \$1,399 per person based on 2 per room.

SAVANNAH & CHARLESTON, March 31-April 9. Ten days, 20 meals, city tours of both, Dolphin Discovery, Gospel Dinner Cruise, Biltmore Estate & more. \$1,950 per person based on 2 per room.

HEART OF ALASKA (AIR INCLUDED), July 14-21. Eight days, 12 meals included, Anchorage, Denali Park, Fairbanks, Valdez, 1-day Glacier cruise & more. \$3,299 per person based on 2 per room.

Call 4-Seasons at 800-328-4298 and reserve space today! Be sure to tell us you are Steele-Waseca members!



member connection

Income-eligible members encouraged to utilize federal Weatherization Assistance Program

Weatherization Assistance is a nationwide, federally funded program of the U.S. Department of Energy. Each state administers its weatherization program to meet the unique needs of its low-income residents.

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides free home energy upgrades to income-eligible homeowners and renters to help save energy and make sure your home is a healthy and safe place to live.

Weatherization works closely with its companion, the Energy Assistance Program, to help permanently reduce the energy bills for low-income Minnesotans.

If your household qualifies, a local

(SWCE residential rebates continued from Page 1)

For members interested in electric thermal storage (ETS) heat, Steele-Waseca offers a \$50 per kW (kilowatt) rebate up to 100 kW.

Steele-Waseca will again 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 your 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 Butterfield 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 2017 include 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

Weatherization service provider may conduct a free home energy assessment to determine if cost-effective energy efficiency improvements can be completed in your home. Weatherization services could help decrease your annual energy costs by up to 30 percent.

Potential energy upgrades include:

- Exterior wall and attic insulation
- Air leakage reduction
- Furnace, boiler, and water heater repair or replacement
- Ideas to help you reduce your home's energy use, such as using a programmable thermostat.

Minnesota residents can also obtain

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 fixture 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 2017 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 question or wish to request a rebate form, please call Cindy Butterfield at Steele-Waseca weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rebate forms are available at Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, by clicking on "Residential Rebates." 127480

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. ^{SWCE}

an application or receive assistance with finding your local service provider (for Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members, it will either be Minnesota Valley Action Council, Three Rivers Community Action or SEMCAC) by contacting the Commerce Energy Information line toll-free at 1-800-657-3710 or email: energy.info@state.mn.us.

Income eligible residents need to complete a joint Energy Assistance/Weatherization Assistance application and mail it to your local Energy Assistance Program service provider. After your eligibility has been determined, wait time for assistance varies between local service providers.

(Courtesy: Minn. Department of Commerce)

Invest in Efficiency

The benefits of some home efficiency investments aren't seen as quickly as others.

Set Water Heater to 120°
No Cost; Save \$73/yr

Open Window Blinds in Winter; Close in Summer
No Cost; Save \$35/yr

Adjust Thermostat 1° Down in Winter, 1° Up in Summer
No Cost; Save \$82/yr

Instant Benefit

Find more ways to save at TogetherWeSave.com.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy Home Energy Saver, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. Based on national average savings; actual savings will vary by climate.

cookin' connection

Puppy Chow

Christy Strobel

Kilkenny

- 1 c. chocolate chips
- 1 c. peanut butter
- 1 stick butter or margarine
- 1 box Chex™ cereal
- 2 1/2 c. powdered sugar

Melt together chocolate chips, peanut butter and butter or margarine. Pour over one box of Chex cereal and mix. Put it in a big Ziploc® bag and add powdered sugar. Close bag and shake. If not enough powdered sugar, then add more.

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 12 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during December 2016. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop). The latest subscriber is the Izaak Walton League's Owatonna chapter, who now has a total of three subscribed panels.

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 7th of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

January issue of Sparks



Numbers found:
Donald W. Daniels Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. James W. Stursa

Numbers not found:
Timothy M. Hoschette
Terry/Pamela Mackenthun
Mr. & Mrs. Edward J. Skala



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 Westinghouse Electric Water Heater Program, phone Cindy Butterfield at our office between 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., 446-4204 / 800-526-3514.

• **December temps** – The average high temperature for December was 26° F, while the average low was 13° F. They compare to last year's average high of 34° F and average low of 24° F.

• **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2017, all ENERGY STAR refrigerators/freezers (with recycling), electric clothes dryers, 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 Butterfield 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

Home Safety Calendar

Use this handy calendar to help keep your home safe all year long. Visit <http://virtualhome.esfi.org> to learn more about home electrical safety.

JANUARY <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace furnace filters	FEBRUARY <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum refrigerator coils	MARCH <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Replace smoke/CO alarm batteries if not done in the past 12 months
APRIL <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace furnace filters	MAY <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum refrigerator coils <input type="checkbox"/> Clean air conditioners or schedule annual inspection	JUNE <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Dust light fixtures and lamps <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule annual inspection of gas-powered dryer
JULY <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace air conditioning filters	AUGUST <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum refrigerator coils	SEPTEMBER <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule annual furnace cleaning and inspection
OCTOBER <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace furnace filters	NOVEMBER <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum refrigerator coils	DECEMBER <input type="checkbox"/> Test GFCIs & AFCIs <input type="checkbox"/> Test smoke & CO alarms <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect electrical/appliance cords for damage <input type="checkbox"/> Dust light fixtures and lamps

(Windbreak management continued from Page 1)

enough to allow any new planting to become effective before windbreak protection is completely lost from the existing trees.

All windbreaks, even well designed ones, need regular maintenance in order to maintain their overall structure and continue to function as effective wind barriers. Windbreak maintenance improves individual tree health and vigor, which means faster growth, longer life, and fewer pest and disease problems.

One overlooked maintenance factor is checking weed matting if used to establish new trees. Check to make sure the mats are not girdling the trees after about five years. If girdling appears inevitable, removal of the mats or cutting the mat next to the base of the tree is recommended. While maintenance should be done throughout the life of the windbreak, renovation is usually reserved for older or neglected windbreaks.

The SWCD offers site visits, advice, and plan creation for all types of windbreaks. They are taking orders now for their annual tree sale. You may visit their websites, steleswcd.org or wasecaswcd.org where you will find the 2017 tree order form, detailed tree descriptions, and pictures. You may also qualify for cost assistance to offset the establishment of the windbreak or living snowfence. Please contact Adam Arndt at the Steele County office by phone, 507-451-6730 Ext. 3, or email: adam.arndt@mn.nacdnet.net, or Tyler Polster at the Waseca office, 507-835-4800 Ext. 3, or tyler.polster@mn.nacdnet.net.

Don't risk safety for convenience of space heaters and electric blankets

Do not let your efforts to stay warm put your safety at risk this winter.

Space heaters and electric blankets can be efficient ways to stay warm, but they can also be dangerous. Safe Electricity® has tips to help your family keep safe:

- Read and follow all space heater and electric blanket instructions.
- Check space heaters and electric blankets before use. Cords should not be frayed, brittle, or cracked. The blanket should not have any charred or dark areas.
- Turn space heaters and electric blankets off when not in use.
- Choose a space heater with a safety certification. You should look for the UL, ETL, or CSA mark on space heaters and electric blankets. These verify that the product has been tested for safety.
- Look for a space heater that has guards from heating elements and automatically shuts off if it is tipped over.
- One of the biggest causes of fires is one of the most easily avoidable. Many fires start when flammable products are placed too close to heating devices, such as

(Space heater safety continued on Page 7)

Steele County Clothesline
invites you to

Join us as we sample food and beverages from four different regions of the county.

BOARDING PASS

Saturday, January 28, 2017

Boarding Time: 6:00 PM

Gate Assignment: Owatonna Country Club
1951 Leonard Rd. Owatonna, MN

Purchase your official Boarding Pass at <http://www.steelcountymn.gov> or call 507-451-6730 (Cost is \$50/person)

Bring a household item or a piece of clothing to get your Passport Stamp

Contact us 507-451-6730 with any questions!