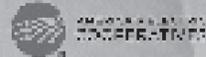


member connection



Cooking Efficiency Tip

Every time you open the oven door to check on a dish, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, increasing cooking time - and energy use! Try using the oven light instead.



7th Annual European Christmas Event and much more....

A free funfilled day for the family!

Sunday Dec. 4th ~11-4:00pm
Park Ballroom ~ 300 Lexington Ave S. New Prague

Free Admission ~ Please bring a non-perishable food item



Artisans and Crafters

Free Demonstrations:

Beaded ornaments, wood scrolling & rug making
Featured visitor: Daniela Mahoney:
Cultural Educator, born in Czech Republic
Josef Lada Exhibit

Free Live Entertainment:

Jr. Royalty Coronation
New Prague Czech Singers
Vidáki Hungarian Dancers
Lipa Slovak Folk Dancers
Domáci Czech Folk Dancers

Kids Corner:

Special Appearance by Elsa and Anna from Frozen!
Story telling, singing and more

Ethnic Lunch served all day includes:
pork and dumplings, cabbage rolls
hot dogs w/ chips, kolacky & pie

Event Sponsors:



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric December 2016

Happy Holidays

Wishing you and your loved ones peace, health, happiness, and prosperity in the coming New Year!

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Holiday lighting promotion

calendar of events

- December**
- 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
 - 21 First day of winter
 - 25 Christmas Day
 - 26 Christmas holiday 26177
SWCE office is closed

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
2301 Lincoln Avenue, Clouston

COOKIE WALK

Saturday, December 10, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Hundreds of Cookies & Christmas Goodies

Steele-Waseca board of directors approve retirement of \$1 million in capital credit equity

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors during their regular October meeting approved the retirement of \$1 million in capital credit equity allocated during 1988, 1989 and 2015, along with the estate settlements in 2016.

All current and former member-owners who received electric service from Steele-Waseca during those years listed above are eligible for the refund.

For convenience and to save on check processing and mailing costs, current member-owners eligible for this year's refund will have the amount of their equity applied as a credit on their Steele-Waseca bill received next month (December 2016).

All former member-owners eligible for a refund will have their equity mailed to them by check.

Capital credit equity comes from the cooperative's margins or profits. The co-op's margin each year is determined by subtracting operating expenses from the total amount of money collected during the year.

Your equity is reserved for you, even if you move away from the area. That's why it is important for you to make sure Steele-Waseca always has your current address and phone number.

Until it's refunded to members, the equity is used to finance new con-

Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$13.8 billion to members since 1988 — \$1 billion in 2015 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.



struction and system improvements. Using members' equity helps Steele-Waseca provide electric service at a lower cost than if all construction funds were borrowed from other resources.

This year, switch your old incandescent holiday bulbs to LEDs and show your holiday spirit in a whole new, energy-wise light. You're saving money. And you're being smarter with the power that makes your very merry display possible. Shine on.

Visit EnergyWiseMN.com to enter for your chance to win a \$500 energy credit through Dec. 24, 2016.

\$2 OFF

INSTANTLY on all ENERGY STAR® qualified Philips LED holiday string sets at participating Target® stores. Discount taken at register. Visit EnergyWiseMN.com for store locations. Offer valid Dec. 4-17, 2016.

Make The SWITCH

Published monthly by
 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

Board of Directors

PJ Duchene District 1
 Geraldine Lienke District 2
Secretary/Treasurer
 Duane Edwardson, *Chaplain* . District 3
 Dennis Ringhofer District 4
 Rodney Krell District 5
 Gary Wilson, *President*,
GRE Director District 6
 John Beal, *Vice President* District 7
 Ronald Sommers District 8
 Renee Malecha District 9
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Management

Syd Briggs *General Manager*

Division Managers

Darla DeVries *Office*
 Douglas Hughes *Marketing*
 David Lundberg *Finance*
 Kim Huxford *Operations*

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

As reported on the front page of this month's Sparks newsletter, the board of directors approved the retirement of \$1 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1988, 1989, 2015, and the estate settlements in 2016.

I am pleased to report this increase is over \$230,000 more than the amount refunded in 2015. Our average retirement, or refund, over the past 10 years has been \$629,090 which makes this year's refund \$370,910 more than the average, and the largest retirement in Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's 80-year history.

One of our cooperative principles is the value of financial participation. It is great to be part of a cooperative that is able to return a significant portion of that participation each year.

Every year Steele-Waseca receives questions from our members regarding capital credit equity. For those who are new to a cooperative or not familiar on how capital credit equity works, keep in mind that when you signed up to receive electric service from Steele-Waseca, you became a member of an electric co-op.

With investor-owned utilities returning a portion of any profits back to their shareholders, electric co-ops operate on an at-cost basis. This means Steele-Waseca allocates 100 percent of its margins (revenue less expenses) to its members who purchased electricity during the year, and retires (or pays back) those margins at a future date to those very members.

Instead of returning the profits, known as margins, to people or companies who had little or nothing to do with the generation of those margins, or who probably don't even live in the same region or state that you do, Steele-Waseca returns margins to those who actually buy and use our product. Steele-Waseca allocates and retires capital credits based on how much electricity you purchased during a year.

Where does the money come from? Member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops set rates to generate enough funds to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve. At the end of each year, the co-op subtracts operating expenses from operating revenue collected during the year. The balance is called an operating "margin."

Can we get our retirement of capital credits sooner? Steele-Waseca currently has an equity-to-assets ratio of 45 percent. The board of directors has the responsibility of balancing the amount of equity with the cost of debt, and therefore, the amount of capital credit retirements each year. The higher the equity we maintain, the lower the debt, and the less we have retired in capital credits. However, the cost of our debt is one of the major components in our rates. Most co-ops attempt to maintain an equity ratio between 30 and 50 percent, and Steele-Waseca is well within that level. Our overall objective is to reward both past and current ratepayers with a balanced approach by retiring past and current capital credits each year, and maintaining the most manageable level of debt possible.

At Steele-Waseca, the board of directors make a decision in the fall of each year to retire capital credits. The co-op has retired \$14.9 million in capital credits to its members since 1966.

I did not get electric service from Steele-Waseca during 1988, 1989 or 2015. Will I get any retirement? No. This year capital credit retirements are only being made to members who purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca in 1988, 1989 and/or 2015.

How will the retirement of capital credit equity work? Inactive or former members who no longer purchase electricity from Steele-Waseca (but who purchased electricity during the years being retired) will receive a check. Due to the expense involved in processing printed checks, current members eligible to receive capital credit equity will have that amount credited to their Steele-Waseca account on their bill coming in December 2016. 22723

What if I have moved? If you move or no longer have electric service with Steele-Waseca, it is important that you inform the cooperative of your current address so that future retirements may be properly mailed to you. If you purchased electricity during the years being retired, then you are entitled to a capital credit retirement, even if you move out of Steele-Waseca's service area. If Steele-Waseca has your current address, then the co-op will send your retirement check by mail.

If you have additional questions regarding your equity, please feel free to contact Steele-Waseca during regular business hours.

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

AALADIN HOT WATER PRESSURE WASHER, used, 4 gpm @ 3000 psi, 230V, single phase, LP, \$2450; **VAL 6 KBE5L RADIANT HEATER**, \$2395. 583-2703.

OAK HEADBOARD, queen size w/mirror, (2) storage compartments, overhead light for reading & hardware, gd shape, \$95. 412-1246/Terry.

JD TRS21 SNOW THROWER, recoil starter, 1-stage, adjustable chute, \$225. 649-0475.

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

ROOFING & SIDING: homes, barns & outbuildings. 848-1477.

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

COMPOUND BOW, 50 lb. Pinnacle w/mechanical release, arrows & case, \$100. 363-1274.

10 X 20 COLD STORAGE in Morrilstown, \$99/mo.; **6 X 8 COLD STORAGE** in Fbo, \$49/mo. 332-4638.

2012 HEARTLAND SUNDANCE 5TH WHEEL CAMPER, 33' long, outside kitchen, (2) slide outs, sleeps (4), vry gd cond., \$23,500/obo. 330-0284.

EZ-DUMPER TRAILER, 5x8, 6000-lb. axle weight, wrks perfectly, \$2000. 651-357-8191.

WOODEN ROLLS OF SNOW FENCE, \$15-\$20/each. 451-5172.

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

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.beaverlkstates.com. 438-9503.

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

2002 BUICK PARK AVE.; **1985 BUICK RIVIERA**, gd cond. 838-5267.

SHIPPING CONTAINERS, 20' & 40', moisture & rodent proof, store your stuff on your property. 612-418-4375.

USED AUTO PARTS, ENGINES, TRANS., CAR & TRUCK PARTS, 30-day warr., bst prices. 332-2300.

STEALTH 4 INFRARED QUARTZ HEATER, digital thermostat w/adjustable temperature, energy efficient w/remote. 744-2886.

DINING ROOM TABLE, solid wood, & (4) chairs, vry nice. 339-5102.

FARMALL 806 TRACTOR, 8156 hrs, serial #21839, \$5500. 383-3447.

BARITONE HORN; FLUTE, new. 340-0506.

POWDERIDGE PATH 30 SNOWSHOE, new; **(21) BUNDLES OF CERTAINTED LANDMARK 25 ARCHITECT. SHINGLES-DRIFTWOOD**. 676-1141.

1999 HEAT & GLO® FIREPLACE, LP, fan, log set, vent & cap, oak surround & mantel, exc. cond., Model 6000XLT, \$495. 456-2060.

REAR CYL. WGH, 14" tall x 11.5" dia., chains & bracket for snowblower or blade for riding lawn mower, nvr used, \$30; **OMNI-TECH COLUMBIA WINTER COAT**, blk, women's, size XL, new, \$50. 684-3913.

WINTER/SUMMER STORAGE; OAK FIREWOOD, \$175/cord (you haul); **LP FIREPLACE**. 451-8740.

STRAW & CANARY GRASS. 744-2871.

KATAHDIN HAIR SHEEP, never shear sheep again, great disposition, outstanding mothers, great for hobby farms, organic & beginners. 451-2722.

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

ENGINE HOIST, 3-ton, disassembles, vry gd, \$60; **VICTORIAN PARLOR TABLE**, spoon carving, gd cond., \$95. 952-652-2933.

1992 FORD F-250, 175,000 mi., 7.3 Diesel, crew cab, \$1800; **HVY DUTY (TWIN 7000-LB. AXLES)**, 6x14, \$1500. 456-9145.

HOUSE FOR RENT, (4) bdrm, 6 mi. out of Owat. 451-3678.

NORWEGIAN FJORD GELDING, 7-y-o, registered, broke to ride & drive single & double. 456-8329.

BULL CALF, 6-mths-old; **(2) BEEF COWS** exposed to bull. 952-652-2678.

TORN DOWN BARN: old barn wood, wooden shingles, batten wood & old roof tin. 465-8086.

ANTIQUE VANITY, \$75. 583-6679.

BLDG FOR RENT, 3700 sq. ft, 2-large overhead doors, secure, unheated storage, city elec., close to city limits in twsp., \$495/mth. 213-8823.

(2) SNOWMOBILES: '08 Ski-Doo GSX & GSX Ltd incl. Triton encl. trlr, exc. cond., \$10k takes all; **SKI-DOO & POLARIS CLOTHING & MODULAR HEAT SHIELD HELMETS**, m-sz XL, w-sz L. 334-6334.

WOODSTOVE, white porcelain parlor type, top load, ash drawer on bottom, A-1-A Mascot stove, \$150. 369-8519.

1918 WINCHESTER 12-GA., antique, Model #1897, wrks great, orig. case, was my grandfather's, \$750/cash. 456-3905.

FIREWOOD, mostly oak, split & dry, you load & haul, \$125/pickup load. 684-9418.

WASHR/DRYR PAIR, \$250 for bth/obo; **FRIG.**, \$375/obo; **STOVE**, blk, glass top, \$375/obo. 451-8979.

EGGS, brown & white, cage free, \$1.50/doz. (can deliver to Owa.); **LAYING HENS/PULLETS**. 451-9535.

1952 IH-M, wide front, loader, gd tires, 12V alt. 612-600-4621.

1982 S-10 PICKUP, 118k mi., topper, 5-spd, \$900. 330-5670.

LOADER TRAILER, nice. 334-7656.

(4) TRUCK TIRES, 11.00x20, 90% tread, \$150 for all; **PHASE CONVERTER**, 20 hp, makes single phase into 3-phase, \$200; **UPRIGHT AIR COMPRESSOR**, 50-gal. tank, Baldor motor, "C" air brand. 330-3945.

2002 CHEVY 1500, 4WD w/204,000 mi., \$2600. 456-3136.

2008 PRIUS, silver color, gray interior, 117,000 mi., backup camera, new tires, 45 mpg, nice car, \$7000. 491-4565.

ALF. GRASS HAY, 3rd cutting, small sq., no rain. 645-8755.

LIBERTY LINK SOYBEANS, 1.2RM-2.3RM products for SE MN, 140k bags or 40-unit boxes, seed treatment avail., 8% savings till Dec. 10, cash or JD Financing. 676-7767.

2-WHEEL TRAILERS, (3) different sizes; **PLASTIC PALLETS; PLASTIC BARRELS; PORTABLE FISH HOUSE**, 4x6. 664-9426.

CABIN on French Lake, family owned 60 yrs, leased land, 80' shoreline, \$99,500. 334-6362.

NH 513 MANURE SPRDR, exc. shape. 254-8251.

(4) CHAIRS & KITCHEN TABLE, wood, \$50; **LARGE 2-DRAWER DESK**, blond, \$50. 213-9109.

1975 OLIVER 1800 w/cab, gas, would sell attached 3-way hyd. loader, 95% tread on tires. 402-3913.

WHIRLPOOL GAS STOVE/RANGE, exc. cond., white, manual incl., text for pictures. 213-0059.

HANDYMAN SERVICES AVAIL., exc. references, reliable. 380-1609/Chad.

FEB. 2016 APHA BAY GELDING sired by APHA World Champion "By Appointment Only," Pleasure deluxe!, \$2000. 456-6828.

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.

(Smart meter myths continued from Page 5)

are an unlikely and unprofitable target for hackers.

Finally, there are the myths surrounding smart meters and ill effects on health. These concerns state that having the radio-based smart meter is the equivalent to having a cell tower attached to the side of your home. Again, this is unfounded. Let's look at why. Number one is that they communicate intermittently

for as few as five minutes a day. These devices are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and their output is well below the levels this Federal agency sets. As one doctor observed, the radio waves emitted are more like those of a cordless phone or wireless router. Radio waves emitted by smart meters are much weaker and less frequent than other sources we use on a

daily basis.

We will all benefit from the continued development of America's smart grid and can rest easy with the knowledge that the rumors surrounding radio-based smart meters don't hold water.

ad connection

give away

(4) CONTINENTAL TIRES, P265-70R17, usable or spares. 527-2307.

KITTENS, 7- & 3-wks-old, calico/white, orange, blk to gd homes, also gd mousers. 835-1635.

FREE 2017 CALENDARS are available at Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, 2411 W. Bridge St., Owat., during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

(2) CHILD BOOSTER CAR SEATS; KODAK PRINTER; 17" COMP. MONITOR, fit scr. 451-8979.

wanted

1- OR 2-BDRM FOR RENT, share house, Fbo area. 298-7525.

TIRES for a Suzuki Grand Vitara, 225- or 235-60R16, at least half tread or more. 456-7757.

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

CHILDREN'S SNOW SLED. 451-2537.

ESTATES, COLLECTIONS, FISHING OR HUNTING EQUIP., willing to purchase your collection/estate or setup an online auction. 279-0431/Mark.

JANITORIAL WORKERS, PT, day/evening needed in local area, \$10/hr. 412-1248/Laura.

RIM for 13.6-38 Farmall M, drop center 11" wide Mo-line rim, name brand maker. 663-1275.

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

TO PLAY BACKGROUND MUSIC ON HARP for your Christmas party. 210-4944.

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

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

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

FARMLAND TO RENT in the Owa. area. 213-6979.

TRACTOR TIRE CHAINS for JD 4020, tire size 18-4-34 & JD 3020, tire size 15-5-38. 451-6507.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

SMALLER WORKING MANURE SPREADER; RAIL for overhead machine shed; JUNK OR PARTED NH 268 BALELINER BALER. 213-1466.

RUPP SNOWMOBILES, PARTS OR MEMORABILIA, I collect anything Rupp. 612-695-4229/Clint.

(10) FRESH DRESSED DUCKS. 612-328-1634.

PICKUP BOX TRAILR for wood hauling. 649-7216.

for sale

GIANT RINCON MTB, mens, 26x175, 21-spd, \$100; TREK 950 MTB, men's, 21-spd, 26x175, \$100. 330-3178.

OLD FASHIONED WRINGER WASHER, still wrks & (2) WASHTUBS on stand. 589-9259.

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

JD 71 CORN SHELLER & DRAGLINE (always shedded). 744-5277.

FIREWOOD, all sizes, Walcott Twsp area, best offer. 332-7739.

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

(5) COOPER LIFELINER GLS TIRES, gd tread w/ rims, \$125/obo. 663-1275.

H.O. FLUOR. LIGHTS, \$15; ALM. SNOWMOBILE TRLR, \$450; 350 CHEV. ENG., \$200; 16 HP BRIGGS ENG., \$100; COMP. AIR DRYERS, \$150-\$300; LP TANKS, 30-, 100-, 420-lb. 271-6592.

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

SHINGLING & ROOF REPAIRS, licensed & insured, trusted since 2000. 271-9129.

2002 CHEVY Z71 PICKUP, incl. top; TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL & STUMP GRINDING, pro climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; TABLE HOCKEY GAME, 6'x3'x3'(high). 456-1609.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

'92 PLY. ACCLAIM, 4-door, white, new fuel filtr, \$600/obo; PKUP TOPPR w/side doors off a '98 Dodge Dakota, \$100; NI 326 CORN PICKR, \$550; ENCLSD 4 X 8' CALF/SHEEP TRLR, \$600. 835-7652.

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

(6) 15,000-BU. GRAIN BINS AVAILABLE TO RENT 3-mi. north of Blmg Prairie (just east of Hwy 218). 202-4089/Chuck.

FLARE BOX, 175-bu., hoist, \$675; SONY CAR STEREO w/speakers, AM/FM/CD/MP3, new, \$150; TV CONVERTER, new, \$50. 455-3881.

COMMERCIAL BLDG, Blmg Prairie, next to Casey's. 676-7491.

LADIES SAS LEATHER SHOES, new cond., made in USA, \$45/cash. 451-7626.

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

(2) OAK DISPLAY CABINETS, 89" wide, 73" tall, 18" deep, glass in doors & glass shelves. 239-2321.

HAY: 4'x6' large round grass, 4'x4' sm. round alf. & sm. sq. alf.; 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.

ANTIQ. COOKSTOVE, copper clad green & cream, exc. cond.; RUG-WEAVING LOOM. 583-2616.

USED CATTLE PANELING, var. sizes. 676-4966/Al.

2003 FORD ESCAPE XLS, dk blue, (1) owner, rust on fenders, great wrk car. 612-867-8876.

SOFA, 78x35x35, light wicker, (8) loose light green (sage) upholstered cushions, used vry little, \$150. 645-8323.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK, Feb. 19-26, 2017. Eight days, 15 meals, staying 2 nights on Riverwalk, Oklahoma City Memorial, LBJ Ranch & more. \$1,299 per person based on 2 per room.

MN TWINS SPRING TRAINING IN FLORIDA BY MOTOR COACH, March 2-12, '17; 11 days, 19 meals, 2 Twins games, Nashville tour, Coca-Cola tour & more. \$1,699 pp based on 2 per room.

SAVANNAH & CHARLESTON, March 31-April 9, '17; 10 days, 20 meals, city tours of both, Dolphin Discovery, Gospel Dinner Cruise, Biltmore Estate & more. \$1,950 per person based on 2 per room.

MONUMENTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C. (AIR INCL.), March 31-April 4, 2017. Five days, 8 meals incl., D.C. tour, Memorials, Mount Vernon, Arlington. \$1,399 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

Steele-Waseca conducts town hall meeting in Owatonna

Over 70 members and spouses were in attendance for a Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric town hall meeting, Oct. 25, at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites in Owatonna.

The members invited were from the southeastern part of District 1, northwest portions of Districts 4 and 6 and the southern half of Districts 7 and 8.

Steele-Waseca General Manager Syd Briggs was the lead presenter (see photo) and covered details regarding the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA's) vote.coop website designed to promote rural electric cooperative member participation on Election Day, and to learn more about the candidates and issues prior to voting.

Briggs explained how personal visits from co-op directors and management with state and federal legislators is important regarding issues impacting Steele-Waseca and its member-owners.

Board Director John Beal presented details regarding ACRE (Action Committee for Rural Electrification) and how participation supports elected officials

who approve legislation keeping electricity reliable and affordable for rural electric cooperatives.

The ACRE presentation prompted the following to join: Marsha Borwege, Medford; Ronelle Deschamp, Faribault; Tracy Herbst, Connie Kubista and Dave/Lois Nelson, all of Medford.

Briggs presented information regarding Steele-Waseca's commitment toward community involvement through the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour, the Co-ops Yes! leadership conference in Eau Claire, Wis., and the annual bus tour to Coal Creek Station in North Dakota. 21006

Town hall attendees were also informed on the co-op's security light program and how changes are coming to Steele-Waseca's website for a more user-friendly experience with mobile devices. Attendees questioned Briggs on the water heater program, The Sunna Project, community solar and what



percentage of Steele-Waseca's power comes from natural gas generation.

Steele-Waseca conducted a town hall meeting in Lonsdale on Nov. 10. Details will be presented in next month's *Sparks* newsletter. The next round of town hall meetings will then be conducted in early Spring 2017. Specific dates and locations have yet to be finalized. 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.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **December 5** to ensure being printed in the January *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 5th will be printed in the February 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.

cookin' connection

Crab Salad

Ruth Kruger

Hayfield

- 12 oz. frozen crabmeat
- 16 oz. shell macaroni
- 1 1/2 c. American cheese, diced
- 3 c. Miracle Whip dressing
- Optional: black olives, green peppers
- 1 c. chopped celery
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 1 c. Cool Whip whipped topping

Cut thawed crab into bite-size pieces. Mix Cool Whip and Miracle Whip. Combine all ingredients. Makes enough to fill 5-quart ice cream bucket.

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 36 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during October 2016. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop. The latest subscriber is the Izaak Walton League's Owatonna chapter. 105820

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.

November issue of Sparks



Numbers found:
(None)

Numbers not found:
Jeri L. Blazek
Mr./Mrs. Donald J. Fried
George P./Joanne Klug
Eldean L. Proehl
Ronald C./Sharon K. Velzke



sparks • december 2016

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 Butterfield at our office between 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., 446-4204 / 800-526-3514.

• **October temps** – The average high temperature for October was 62° F, while the average low was 42° F. They compare to last year's average high of 62° F and average low of 41° 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 Butterfield 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

Busting the myths about "smart meters"

by Tom Tate, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

By now, most Americans have likely heard of the "smart grid."

This phrase is being used to describe the computerization of America's electrical infrastructure. The purpose of this computerization is to improve the reliability, efficiency, resiliency and security of the electric grid.

A key component of the smart grid is an advanced metering infrastructure, also known as AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) in the utility world. AMI systems utilize digital meters as well as computer technology to measure electric use at homes and businesses more precisely than was possible with analog meters.

The digital meters communicate via radio or the existing power lines and have been loosely termed as "smart meters." AMI benefits electric co-op members with greater accuracy in billing, faster outage restoration, operational savings versus manual meter reading and detailed data that you and your co-op can use to manage electric use much more accurately.

Unfortunately, a number of myths have developed over the years concerning smart meters. These myths can be classified into three categories: privacy concerns, security and health effects. Let's take a look at each, starting with privacy.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric takes great pains to keep your information private—and that information includes the details of your electric use. The only people who see that data are co-op employees and you. Your co-op will not release this information to anyone else without your specific permission. The myths are that the data collected can tell when you are home or away and exactly what you are doing when you are there, and that this data is being given to the government. Naturally, the data will show when you are home because for most families, energy consumption is higher then. But having said that, the current smart meter cannot identify what activities are taking place down to the specific appliance in use. This myth is simply unfounded.

What about the myth that these meters actually make the electric grid less secure by providing an avenue for hackers to break into systems through the smart meter and wreak havoc? While

hackers continually attempt to break into electric systems, their focus is at higher levels in the operation. Hacking a meter is unlikely for a variety of reasons. Hackers like to work remotely via the internet, and smart meters don't offer that option. Radio-based smart meters require the hacker to be nearby to catch the weak communication signal, break the proprietary communication protocol and to be there for extended periods of time to collect the short burst of data sent. Therefore, smart meters

(Smart meter myths continued on Page 7)

MINNESOTA STRAY VOLTAGE GUIDE

A Guide Addressing Stray Voltage Concerns

In 2015, Minnesota developed a [Stray Voltage Guide](http://www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com) outlining the steps farmers, licensed electrical contractors, utilities and their advisors can take to discover and resolve stray voltage concerns on livestock farms. It is focused on dairy farms, but the processes and procedures are relevant to all types of livestock and livestock housing facilities. To download a copy, visit www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com. 21309

HOLIDAY LIGHTING SAFETY TIPS

- Consider purchasing LED holiday lights; they are cool to the touch and more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs.
- Test holiday lights by connecting each strand before hanging them.
- Make sure there are no broken bulbs or damaged or frayed cords. Discard any defective strands.
- Use holiday lights that include the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) label.
- Avoid resting bulbs on tree needles and branches. Try using a clip to keep the bulbs upright.
- Do not overload electrical outlets or extension cords.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor holiday lighting before leaving the house or going to bed.

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

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