

member connection

Efficient holiday gift giving

Each holiday season, Americans throw away 25 percent more trash than any other time during the year.

This amounts to approximately 1 million extra tons of garbage per week. Just the 2.65 billion holiday cards sold each year in the U.S. could fill a football field 10 stories high. If we each sent one less card, we'd save 50,000 cubic yards of paper.

When browsing for presents, look for a gift that will save you energy, as well as help the environment.

Buy products from companies that support the environment. Look for gifts that are made of natural components, such as grown cotton or hemp, especially for items such as clothing, bedding, and towels. In addition, look for products that are recyclable or have been made with recycled content. Purchase products that have the Energy Star® label on them to ensure they are energy efficient.

When it comes to gift wrapping, make sure to be environmentally conscious as well. By wrapping just three gifts with re-used materials, enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields is saved. Use wrapping paper made from recycled paper. Be creative and use old poster, newspaper, or fabric.

If you're trying to find a gift for that Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member that seemingly has everything, consider purchasing an energy gift certificate at Steele-Waseca's office in Owatonna. The gift certificate can be used by the recipient to pay toward their electric bill from the co-op. Gift certificates may be purchased at the front counter during regular business hours.

(Source: North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association)



WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME & ENERGY EFFICIENCY STORE

Save.EnergyWiseMNSTore.com



SHOP TODAY

Steele-Waseca is dedicated to providing you with new ways to control your energy use.

That's why we're excited to tell you about **EnergyWise MN Store**, where you can learn about and purchase products that can help you save energy and money.

Visit us online at:
Save.EnergyWiseMNSTore.com
today and see which products are best for your home.

- INSTANT REBATES
- TOP BRANDS
- LASTING SAVINGS



Sunday Dec 3, 2017
11-4:00 pm

New Prague Park Ballroom
300 Lexington Ave South
New Prague, MN

Crafters - Demonstrations
Kids Corner
Czech Heritage Jr Royalty Coronation
Entertainment:

- featuring:
- Domáci Czech Folk Dancers
 - Lipa Slovak Folk Dancers
 - New Prague Czech Singers
 - Rince Nua Irish Dancers
 - Vidéki Hungarian Dancers

Ethnic lunch available for purchase. Please join us to be entertained while shopping from local crafters, or just sit and stay awhile!

Admission is free. Accepting non-perishable items for a local Area Food Shelf.

www.domaci-inc.org
Domaci Inc.
(Domáci Czech Folk Dancers & Czech Heritage Jr Royalty)
event fka European Christmas Event

(GRE 2018 budget continued from Page 1)

ects rates to increase approximately 1.5 percent annually over the next 10 years. Rate increase projections are slower than the pace of inflation despite upward rate pressure caused by reduced energy sales forecasts.

Changes to Great River Energy's generation portfolio, such as exiting the Genoa 3 contract and retiring Stanton Station, have improved the cooperative's position in today's energy market.

"We are now buying more energy from the market at a time when it is advantageous to do so," added Schmid.

GRE's 2018 budget includes \$92 million of spending for new capital projects—a record low for the cooperative. Total 2018 capital spending is budgeted at \$215 million.

Great River Energy budgeted for a margin of \$23 million in 2018, which will keep GRE on schedule to meet its goal of 20 percent equity by 2020.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric December 2017



Wishing you a safe & happy holiday season!

inside connections

- 2 Manager Connection
- 3 SWCE town hall meetings
Statement of Nondiscrimination
- 4 Cookin' Connection
SWCE community solar update
Sparks in brief
Steele County Tip Line
- 5 Holiday lighting safety
Be on the lookout for scams
- 6 Ad Connection
4-Seasons Vacations
- 7 Ad Connection
Holiday light recycling bins at SWCE
2018 calendars available
- 8 Efficient holiday gift giving
EnergyWise MN Store details
Hometown Holidays celebration in New Prague
St. John Luth. Ch. Cookie Walk

calendar of events

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

2018 Coal Creek Tour

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) has openings available for the 2018 Coal Creek Tour to Underwood, North Dakota, June 12-14. For more information, visit swce.coop (move your cursor over OPPORTUNITIES, and click on "Coal Creek Tour"), or call SWCE at 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.

Steele-Waseca board of directors approve retirement of \$1.1 million in capital credit equity

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors during their regular October meeting approved the retirement of \$1.1 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1989, 1990, and 2016, along with estate settlements in 2017.

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 2017).

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

Capital credit equity comes from 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

Great River Energy 2018 budget: Stable rates, flat sales

Strategic decisions to position its generation portfolio and other cost-saving measures have left Great River Energy (GRE) entering 2018 with stable wholesale electricity rates and a strong financial position.

GRE's revenue requirement for next year is budgeted at \$969.2 million, down more than \$20 million from the 2017 budget. That means lower power costs for GRE's member cooperatives (Great River Energy is the wholesale energy provider for Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's legacy members).

How Do Capital Credits Work?

Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are returned to members in the form of capital credits.

1. Your co-op tracks how much electricity you buy and how much money you pay for it throughout the year.
2. At the end of the year, your co-op completes financial matters and determines whether there are excess revenues, called margins.
3. Your co-op allocates the margins to members as capital credits based upon their use of electricity during the year.
4. When the co-op's financial condition permits, your board of directors decides to retire, or pay, the capital credits.
5. Your co-op notifies you of how and when you'll receive your capital credit retirements.

the year. 21388

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 construction 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.

Cost savings in operations, maintenance, and fuel contributed significantly to the budget reductions. Keeping costs competitive was especially critical as GRE continues to experience stagnant energy sales.

"Employees found creative ways to work efficiently and reduce spending, so our rates are actually lower than earlier projections," said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Larry Schmid.

GRE's average 2018 wholesale rate is projected to increase 0.75 percent over the budgeted rate for 2017. GRE proj-

(GRE 2018 budget continued on Page 8)

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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

Board of Directors

- PJ Duchene District 1
- Geraldine Lienke District 2
- Duane Edvardson, *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
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
- Renee Malecha District 9
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

You may have noticed on the front page of this month's Sparks newsletter, the board of directors approved the retirement of \$1.1 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1989, 1990, 2016, and estate settlements in 2017.

I am pleased to report this increase is \$100,000 more than the amount refunded in 2016. Our average retirement, or refund, over the past 10 years has been \$698,920 which makes this year's refund \$401,080 more than the average, and the largest retirement in Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's 81-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 with 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 or profits (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 margins to people or companies who had little or nothing to do with the generation of those profits, or who probably don't even live in the same region or state that you do, Steele-Waseca returns margins to those who actually purchase 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 nearly 47 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 within that level. Our overall objective is to reward both past and current ratepayers with a balanced approach of 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 nearly \$15.1 million in capital credits to its members since 1966.

I did not get electric service from Steele-Waseca during 1989, 1990 or 2016. Will I get any retirement? No. This year capital credit retirements are only being made to members who purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca in 1989, 1990 and/or 2016.

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 with 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 2017. 26095

What if I have moved? If you move or no longer have electric service with Steele-Waseca, it is important you inform the cooperative of your current address, so 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)

DIAMOND-D GOOSENECK HORSE TRLR, 7'x18', 5' sleeping area, tack area under manger, stove, furnace, & cupboards in sleeping area. 327-9965.

FISH HOUSE, custom built, hydraulic, 16'x8', foam insulation throughout, tongue & groove cedar, cabinets, counters, radio, lightd holes, \$7800. 330-1154.

TV CONVERTER BOX, new in box, \$20. 334-7177.

INT 1086, 3800 hrs, always stored inside. 456-1597.

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

ANGUS BEEF, on-farm processing, 90% grass fed. 456-8356.

'98 JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE, 190,000 mi., \$2500. 339-4972.

WALKFIT PLATINUM ORTHOTICS, male set/sz 8-8.5, female set/sz 9-9.5 (nevr worn), \$38. 451-8888.

MAHOGANY GUN CASE, (7) rack, bottom draw, gd cond., glass doors, \$110/obo. 210-2074.

HAMILTON BEACH FOOD PROCESSOR, (14) cup, like new, \$30; **GEORGE FOREMAN XL GRILL** w/ temperature control, new, \$30/cash. 334-3804.

RESERVE YOUR KATAHDIN EWE & RAM LAMBS for spring delivry, nvr sheer sheep again. 451-2722.

7" STRIKEMASTER LAZER MAG™ ICE AUGER, \$150. 789-5992.

ALF./GRASS MIX HAY, full size, sm. sq. bales, grt quality, no rain. 451-2978.

2001 DODGE CARAVAN, fair cond., runs gd, hi hwy miles, sell as is, \$500/obo. 272-1977.

VIKING SEWING/EMBROIDERY MACHINE, try before you buy, all computer chips, manuals & access, like new, rural Owat., \$695. 451-8979 or email: mari_emails@yahoo.com.

ALLIS WD, newer rubber, weights, chains, heat houser & loader; **MM 10' TANDEM DISC**. 451-1359.

MUSCOVY DUCKS, ready for fall butchering, 2017 hatch; **GEESE**, 2017 hatch, ready for fall butchering, also have some already butchered. 446-0090.

HESTON PT10 HAYBINE for parts. 210-2048.

8' SNOWPLOW, complete w/lights & controls. 332-7972.

KENMORE HUMIDIFIER, Model 758.144171, bottle dispenser type w/(2) boxes of filters & bottles of treatment, \$100. 330-2945.

ALF./GRASS & MIXED GRASS HAY, sm. sq., no rain, hvy bales. 334-6377.

STEINBAUER PWR MODULE, under 2-yrs-old, can be used on Steiger STX 375 or NH 375, 25% pwr & torque boost, saves on fuel, installation possible, \$1250. 213-0254.

INT 504 TRACTOR, runs gd, steering needs help; **1997 CHEVY TAHOE**, runs gd, some rust, high mileage; **(200) HACIENDA ADOBE BRICKS**. 451-1505.

GIANT CYPRESS MEN'S HYBRID, 700x35, 21-spd, F.S. Fork, \$200; **TREK 220 BOY'S MTB**, 24x175, 21-spd, F.S. Fork, \$100. 330-3178.

SNOWBLOWER, new, fits 21-hp Husqvarna lawn tractor, 42" wide, all fittings, \$1600/new/make reas. offer. 491-6658.

FLEETWOOD 5TH WHEEL RV, 21.5', great cond., sleeps (5), appliances & supplies, ready to go, truck bed & powerpack attachments, \$2900. 332-7294.

FULL-SIZE BED, BOOKSHELF & FOOT BOARD, real wood, metal sides, gd shape, other things, \$100. 583-6679.

FIREWOOD, mixed hardwoods, split & dried, by the pick-up loads, \$75. 645-4028.

GERMAN SHEP. PUPS, born Sept. 27, 1st shots, \$300. 461-7289.

METAL-FRAME BUNK BED, blk, twin on top, full on btm, incl. both matt., exc. cond., vry sturdy, delivery & setup avail., \$150. 649-7216.

PARKER 300-BU. GRAVITY BOX on JD wagon, \$1200; **1996 IH DIESEL FARM TRUCK** w/16' box, \$10,000; **JD 5520 TRACTOR**, 4WD w/loader, \$29,000. 330-3945.

MASSAGE CHAIR, dark brown, like new, 2-yrs-old, used approx. (4) times, has heat, massage, vibrate w/power everything, \$1000/obo. 413-2887 or email johnngkilness@gmail.com.

MASCOT STOVE, A-1-A, white porcelain wood-type stove, top load, ash drawer on bottom, \$150. 369-8519.

TRACTOR TIRE CHAINS for 14.9" x 28" tires. 456-3545.

1989 CHRYSLER TC BY MASERATI, red LeBaron body, hard & soft top convertible, made in Italy, 2.2 Turbo, needs work, \$2000. 952-652-2933.

1983 FORD (460) PICKUP w/plow, plow works, pick-up needs fuel pump, has rust. 528-2443.

MUSCOVY DUCKS, ready for fall butchering; **DINING ROOM TABLE & (4) CHAIRS**. 390-0206.

USED ENGINES, TRANSMISSIONS, & AUTO PARTS, 30-day warranty, best prices. 332-2300.

BLK LEATHER SOFA, newer w/Chaise lounge on (1) side, non-smokers. 330-0876.

MUSTANG 310 SKID LOADER, manure forks & bucket, newr Kohler 18-hp engine, \$2500.461-1758.

PRONTO PWR WHEELCHAIR. 475-2322.

2018 DATES AVAIL. FOR WEDDINGS & EVENTS. 327-7047.

(3) DOWNHILL ROSSIGNOL SKIS; (2) ELEC. BASEBOARD HEATERS, 220V. 470-262-7696.

33315

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.

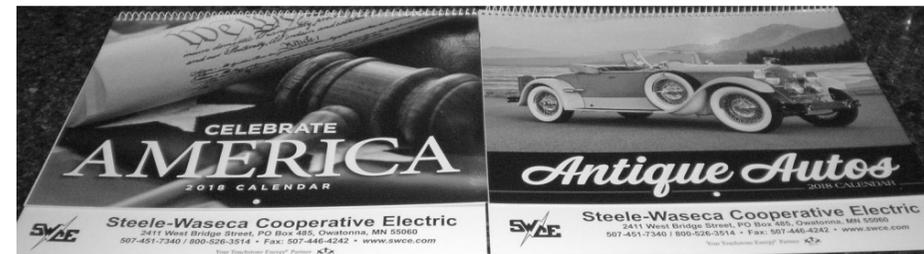
(Scam alert continued from Page 5)

• If someone calls your home claiming to have discovered a virus on your computer, hang up. This caller's intent is to access personal information you may be keeping on your computer.

Steele-Waseca wants to make sure you avoid any and all types of scams that could put you or your financial information in jeopardy. If you would like more information about how you can protect yourself from scammers, visit the Minnesota Attorney General's website, www.ag.state.mn.us, or call 651-296-3353 or toll-free 800-657-3787.



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members wishing to dispose of their unwanted/unusable holiday lights, may drop them in the bins inside the main entrance of the co-op at 2411 W. Bridge St., Owatonna, during regular business hours. The bins will be available through mid-January 2018.



FREE 2018 Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric calendars are available at the co-op's office, 2411 W. Bridge St., Owatonna, while supplies last. You may pick them up at the front desk during regular business hours:)

ad connection

give away

(2) **TRACTOR TIRES**, large, great for sandbox. 456-3675.

FARM CATS, variety of colors incl. calico. 456-9409.

FARM CATS, many colors. 213-1466.

KITTENS, spring & fall farm or indoor kittens avail., vry friendly, litter-bx trained & gd mousers. 451-9455.

FIREWOOD, cut your own & help clean up branches, need wooded area cleaned out. 838-6920.

wanted

STAMPS, old licking kind only, no self-adhesive, but can already be on an envelope or paper, \$ paid on listed value. 676-0970.

RECIPES for the *Sparks*, only from members who have not submitted a recipe in 2017, please use a 3x5 card, the member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

JUNK & UNWANTED APPLIANCES, no TVs &/or computers, free drop off (Fbo). 210-6728/Dan.

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

BUSTED CONCRETE, CEMENT BLOCKS, SILO STAVES, FIELD STONE suitable for riprap, will haul or you may dump free, Fbo area. 828-3377.

TURKEY COOKER, especially bottom grill torch. 213-1466.

WILL DO SM. ENGINE REPAIR ON: snowblowers, log splitters & ice augers; **TO BUY JUNK CARS.** 213-7978 or 455-1183.

SALON CHAIR; LARGE MIRROR. 461-1865.

PERSON WHO ENJOYS WRKING W/SENIORS, prefer. w/nursing-related bckgrd, to asst elderly male at his home 2-3 hrs daily, 5-6 days/wk in the Morris-town/Fbo area, wages commens. w/exp. 521-1209.

(1) **TRANSFERABLE BLDG RIGHT** in Rice Co., Forest Twsp. 319-8911.

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

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

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

for sale

WHEEL HORSE 418A GARDEN TRACTOR, 18 hp Kohler engine, incl. 42" mower deck, hydraulic equip. lift, \$1100. 952-836-6782/Bill.

1500-GAL. POLY WATER TANK, \$300; **STAINLESS STEEL MANURE AUGER** w/5-hp motor, \$1000. 456-6715.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

CORN/PELLET-BURNING FURNACE, variable 80,000-165,000 Btu, incl. 14-bu. hopper, chimney draft controller & draft meter, \$900. 475-1983.

SAMSUNG ER-290 ELEC. CASH REGISTER w/operator's & programming manual, \$50. 456-0356.

PET PORTER, large, composite w/metal door, \$35; **ELEC. HD MEAT GRINDER**, new, \$55; **FLARE BOX**, exc. cond., \$600. 455-3881.

FARM-DUTY BALDOR MOTOR, single phase, 1.5 hp, 1725 RPM, like new. 334-9333.

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

FIREWOOD; DIRT & SNOW BUCKETS; PALLET FORKS; 2500HD SERVICE TRUCK; JD 5020; 2015 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE, \$4800. 402-7679.

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

CONTRACT FOR DEED, seasoned 10+ yrs, property in Plymouth, MN, lake, worth double balance of C/D, 6.5% interest guaranteed, \$140,000. 334-6829.

TREE TRIMMING, REMOVE & STUMP GRINDING, pro climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; **FRONT CHROME BUMPER** for an F-650, new. 456-1609.

HALLMARK ORNAMENTS COLLECTION, going back to 1973; **HALLMARK COOKIE CUTTERS COLLECTION** (reasonably priced). 583-7105.

8' FLUORESCENT LIGHT, \$10; **ELEC. FIRE-PLACE**, \$20; **SWIVEL CHAIR**, tan, \$10; **CEMENT CUT-OFF SAW**, diamond blade, \$100. 390-0013.

FORTUNE CREEK TRL LOTS, covenant allows for a pole shed, starting at \$75,000. 838-5033/John.

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

ETHAN ALLEN 2-PC. BUFFET HUTCH w/glass doors, fruitwood stain; (2) **WOODEN CHAIRS; CHINA DISHES**, 12-pc. setting. 451-1946.

MINI STORAGE: 6'x8'/Fbo/\$49/mth, 10'x24'/Fbo/\$125/mth, 10'x10'/Morristwn/\$69/mth, 10'x20'/Morristwn/\$99/mth. 333-0319.

BOOKCASE, solid wood, 4'x32", (5) shelves, \$40; **TV STAND**, swivel, (2) built-in speakers, glass front, 18" tall, oak, \$75. 213-8823.

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

REZTOR RA140 WASTE OIL HEATR, \$3000; **VAL 6 KBE5L RADIANT HTR**, diesel fired, 115V, 2-stg, 118K Btu, \$2395; **ALKOTA 2142 H-WTR PR. WSHR**, 2 gpm@1400 psi, 115V, 1-ph., \$1600. 583-2703.

PLAS. BARRELS, \$3/each; **ELEC. HEATERS**, small, \$10; **LP TANKS**, 20- & 40-lb.; **18' FORESTER CAMPER**, best offer. 664-9426.

LUND ROLL UP COVER for Ranger ext. cab pickup, \$100/obo. 210-0220.

ELECTRONIC BATTLESHIP GAME, like new, \$20. 581-3270.

'96 JBL 24' TRAILER, (2) axle, 7500 lbs., (3) ramps, \$1000/obo. 332-6925.

16" TRIPLE-C SADDLE, hand made in the USA, grt shape, Owat., \$675/cash only. 456-3905.

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

HARMAN CORN OR PELLET STOVE, 50,000 Btu, auto or manual operation, elec. ignition, exc. cond., \$900. 391-2485.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

CHRISTMAS IN CHICAGO, Dec. 3-5. Deluxe motor coach, Goodman Theatre's, "A Christmas Carol," Christmas around the World tree display, trolley Christmas lights tour & more! \$599 pp dbl occ.

SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK, Feb. 4-11, '18. Deluxe motor coach, 7 nights, 15 meals, Riverwalk boat tour, San Antonio history tour, LBJ Ranch, tour of The Alamo & more! \$1,299 pp double occ.

MN TWINS SPRING TRAINING IN FLORIDA, March 15-25, '18. Deluxe motor coach, 10 nights, 18 meals, incl. Best of Nashville guided tour, Coca Cola factory in Atlanta, Ga. \$1,799 pp dbl occ.

PANAMA CANAL CRUISE, March 23-April 9, 2018. Round trip Delta flights from Minneapolis, 15-day cruise on the Island Princess, visit 6 ports of call. \$4,679 per person double occupancy.

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 meetings in Owatonna and Lonsdale

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric town hall meetings conducted in Owatonna and Lonsdale attracted 247 members, spouses, and guests to learn the latest on the co-op and ask questions of the lead presenter, General Manager Syd Briggs.

The town hall meeting, Oct. 30, at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites in Owatonna, was for members in Kenyon, Cannon City, Wheeling, Richland, Walcott, Morristown, Clinton Falls, and Medford townships. It covered portions of Districts 1, 6, 7, and 8. The meeting was attended by 79 members, spouses, and guests.

The town hall meeting, Nov. 2, at the Lonsdale American Legion, was for members in Wheatland, Webster, Upper Bridgewater, Northfield, Bridgewater, Forest, Erin, Kilkenny, Shieldsville, and Wells townships. It covered portions of Districts 1, 7, and 8, and all of District 9. The meeting was attended by 168 members, spouses, and guests.

With National Co-op Month recognized in October, Briggs detailed how co-ops operate, and highlighted their principles and history.

Briggs presented information on

Steele-Waseca regarding the number of meters in their service territory, kilowatt-hour (kWh) sales, and the strong financial condition the co-op is in.

Attendees learned about ACRE (Action Committee for Rural Electrification), and how participation supports elected officials, who approve legislation keeping electricity reliable and affordable for rural electric cooperatives.

Briggs highlighted information regarding the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Rural Development program, which has allowed Steele-Waseca to gain access to funds for economic development projects within the co-op's service territory.

Attendees learned how the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has committed to bringing electricity to countries previously without access to electricity, thus improving the quality of life and stimulate economic development in those countries.

Briggs also highlighted ways for members to conserve. It ranges from low cost, no cost ways to save energy to investments made by members for renewable energy systems. There continues to be interest shown by members

wishing to be part of Steele-Waseca's community solar program through The Sunna Project. It allows members to subscribe for a solar panel for \$170 when they participate in the co-op's 16-hour water heater control program. The member earns an energy credit based on the amount of power produced by the panel. Members may also subscribe at a higher panel price without participating in The Sunna Project.

Each of the town hall meetings ended with questions from those in attendance. They included those regarding renewables and a desire for the co-op to develop a solar rebate program. There were questions regarding Gopher State One Call and the responsibility of homeowners to hire and pay for locators to find utilities considered on the member's side of the service. 1018991

The next town hall meetings will be scheduled in early Spring 2018. 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. *SW*

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is the recipient of Rural Development funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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, audiotope, 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

Cream Puffs in a Pan

Tammy Larson

Blooming Prairie

1 c. water
1/2 c. margarine
1 c. flour
6 eggs

Mix water and margarine, and bring to a boil. Add flour, all at once, remove from heat and stir rapidly until the mixture leaves the sides of the pan and forms a ball. Let cool a bit, then beat eggs in mixture, one at a time, beating well. Spread on an ungreased 11x15 inch jelly roll pan. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes. It will form many mounds while baking. Let cool.

Filling:
2 small boxes of instant French vanilla pudding
4 c. milk
12 oz. whipped topping
chopped nuts (optional)
8 oz. cream cheese
Hershey's chocolate sauce

Mix pudding with milk. Beat in softened cream cheese, blend well, and spread on crust, filling holes. Top with whipped topping. Drizzle Hershey's chocolate sauce over all, and sprinkle with nuts. Refrigerate.

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 26 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during October 2017. The latest to subscribe are Allan Latourelle of Mapleton, and Randy/Sherry Schott of Ellendale. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop.

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:

No members found their number

Numbers not found:

Paul Frydenlund
William Kirkpatrick
David/Sylvia Prieskorn
William/Nancy Babcock
Jeremiah/Tasha Vail



sparks • december 2017

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.

• **October temps** – The average high temperature for October was 59° F, while the average low was 41° F. They compare to last year's average high of 62° F and average low of 42° 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

Holiday lighting tips begin with safety first

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

This year is rapidly drawing to a close and that means the holiday lighting season is back.

If your home space is in need of a decorative refresh, here are some tips to take your artistic stylings to the next level. There are two areas to cover, so let's get started.

Safety is up first. If your lights are ground mounted or can be installed standing on the floor or ground, you can skip ahead. However, since most decorations involve some installation at height, you need to do the following:

1. Have a ground crew (one or two people) to steady your ladder and pass up the decorations...an invaluable part of safety and for keeping you supplied with untangled light strings, fasteners, and encouragement.
2. Remember to keep a safe distance from your overhead electric service (at least 10 feet).
3. Don't overreach. If you can't get to a point with your body completely centered between the sides of the ladder, get down and relocate it.
4. Don't overextend the ladder. If your ladder is too short, rent or borrow a longer one. A ladder extended beyond its working limits is dangerous as is standing on rungs too close to the top.
5. Do not overload circuits by stringing more light sets together than the manufacturer recommends. Check the packaging for details.
6. Check your wires for breaks and cracks in the insulation that can lead to shorts. Most of these tips apply equally to inside and outside decorating activi-

ties.

Light selection is next. If at all possible, invest in LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights this season. Unlike the first versions to hit the market that were characterized by rather harsh and unattractive colors, the newest generation's colors are reminiscent of the incandescent lights of yore.

Why go the LED route? Longevity and cost of operation are the two key reasons. Unlike incandescent lights, whether the large or mini bulb, LEDs will last for many years. LEDs have no filaments to burn out. Aside from physically destroying the bulb, the LED is amazingly robust. Given the modest number of hours of operation, you can expect LEDs to last seven or more years.

Then there is the cost of operation benefit from LEDs. These gems of technological advancement truly sip electricity. A reasonable estimate of power consumption is 7* watts per 100 lights. How does that compare to the old incandescent? Each of those bulbs use 12 watts, so a string of 100 devoured 1,200 watts.

Do you truly want to manage the cost of operating holiday lights? Invest in timers to turn the lights on and off automatically. Really into gadgets? Invest in a smart plug for your lights you can program and control from your smartphone.

(* - Source: <https://www.christmas-lightsetc.com/pages/how-many-watts-do-christmas-lights-use.htm>)

MERRY, BRIGHT AND EFFICIENT HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Decking the halls doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bill! Keep your holiday lighting merry, bright and energy efficient with LED light strands.

- Consider replacing older light strands with new ENERGY STAR LED® lights. LED strands are 70 percent more efficient and last 10 times longer than the age-old standard bulbs.
- You can get the look of cozy lighting with LEDs. Just look for "warm white" on the label.
- Unlike older light strands, LED lights give off virtually no heat, making them safer for kids and pets (and reindeer).
- Save energy by setting a timer for outdoor lighting and decorations. Program the timer so the lights turn on in the evening and turn off later at night when you typically go to sleep.

Source: Dept. of Energy

sparks • december 2017

Look out for scams

by Meghaan Evans, NRECA

Unfortunately, in today's world, scams are inevitable. Scammers can threaten you with everything from legal action involving the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to turning off power to your home.

Utility scams often involve an individual or group posing as an employee of your electric cooperative. The scammer may use threatening language in order to frighten you into offering your credit card or bank account information. Don't fall victim to these types of scams. Understand the threats posed and your best course of action:

- If someone calls your home or cell-phone demanding you pay your electric bill immediately, gather as much information as you can from that individual, hang up the phone, and contact the local authorities. Scammers often use threats and urgency to pressure you into giving them your bank account number or loading a prepaid credit or debit card (such as a Green Dot card). Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric will never ask you to offer up personal financial information over the phone. If you have any doubts about your utility bill, please contact Steele-Waseca over the phone at 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514, or stop in at our office located at 2411 W. Bridge St., in Owatonna. 1061065

- If someone comes to your home claiming to be an employee of Steele-Waseca that needs to collect money or inspect parts of your property beyond your meter location, please call our office to verify they are, in fact, an employee. If they are not, call local authorities for assistance and do not let the individual into your home.

There are other types of scams consumers should watch out for:

- Government agencies, like the IRS, will never call to inform you of unpaid taxes or other leans against you. You will always receive this type of information in the mail. If someone calls claiming to be the IRS, hang up immediately.

- If you receive an email from an unknown sender; an email riddled with spelling errors and typos; or an email threatening action unless a sum of money is paid, do not click any links provided within the email, and do not respond to the email. Simply delete the email, or send it to your spam folder.

(Scam alert continued on Page 7)

5