

## member connection


(Town hall meeting continued from Page 1)

Jeff/Judy Johnson of Kenyon.

Briggs demonstrated the convenience for members wishing to download the co-op's free app available through Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), for your smart mobile devices. Among the services available include viewing your current bill, making payments, and viewing your 24-month usage history.

Steele-Waseca Line Supervisor Dan Meier detailed the co-op's Geographic Information System technology that allows the co-op to have a quicker response to outages, determine overhead or underground services at a particular location, which is allowing for more efficiency for Operations and line technicians.

Briggs concluded with a presentation on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's International Program which is bringing power to parts of the world living without electricity. Steele-Waseca makes a yearly donation toward the program. 34299

Among questions asked by those in attendance included the production of solar panels during winter conditions, costs of overhead lines vs. underground service, and consideration of moving the day and time of the annual meeting. 

## Nondiscrimination Statement

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(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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



YOU'RE INVITED SWCE's  
Renewable Workshop

December 4th  
SWCE Board Room, Owatonna  
6:30 PM

Thinking about adding solar or wind to  
your home?

Come to our renewable workshop to learn:

- Details of solar systems with Jay Peterson, American Energy, LLC
- SWCE's POWRE rebate program
- Win a \$25 SWCE certificate

POWRE

- Seating limited to 20 members
- Enter SWCE through the front door at 6:30 PM

To sign up, contact Steve or Katie ([snordahl@swce.coop](mailto:snordahl@swce.coop) or [knelson@swce.coop](mailto:knelson@swce.coop)) at 507-451-7340

(Touchstone at 20 continued from Page 7)

Moore says has "more flexibility and agility to meet their needs."

"This is about more than keeping young people in their communities. It's the hope that they find it appealing enough to build their life there and having all the services of a modern city in rural America, where you feel safe raising your children," Moore says.

And the newbies?

"All the coolest places that people go on summer vacation are in co-op territories. There are national parks; they drive Route 66 through all the small towns. Why not link tourism with economic development? Why not pair those two in a way that people start to understand that you can live in those beautiful places, have that lifestyle, and even work remotely?" she says.

This isn't the mission of 80 years ago, but it's every bit as important. "It may not be electricity; it could be broadband or small business," Moore says. "Whatever it is co-ops can do to keep those communities thriving."

As Touchstone Energy heads into its third decade, Moore believes it's well-positioned to help its members move forward, even if it's into uncharted waters.

"The utility model is changing, which opens the door for new opportunities for the cooperative, for the community, and for their national brand."

(Courtesy: Michael W. Kahn, Rural Electric Magazine, a National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) publication)

Domaci Inc. presents

## Hometown Holidays

Celebrating European Traditions

Sunday, Dec. 2  
Park Ballroom  
300 Lexington Ave. S.  
New Prague, Minn.  
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Activities for the day include: crafters, Kids Corner, European style entertainment, food, demonstrations, and the 2019 Czech Heritage Jr. Royalty Coronation.



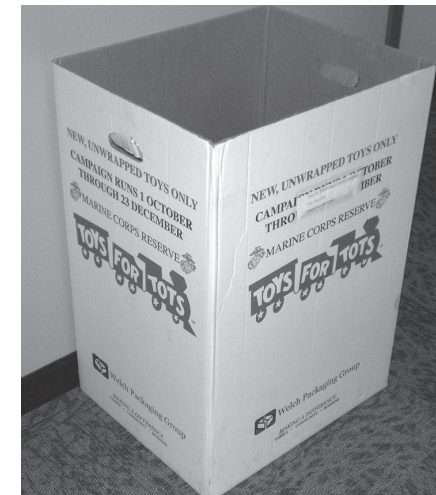
the power of human connections

# sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

December 2018



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is a local drop-off site for Toys for Tots in 2018. For those wishing to donate, please deliver your new, unwrapped toy(s) during regular office hours to the SWCE office by Wednesday, Dec. 12.

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## calendar of events

### December

- |    |                                       |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 7  | National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day |
| 21 | First day of winter                   |
| 25 | Christmas Day                         |
|    | <b>SWCE office is closed</b>          |

Wishing you a safe & happy holiday season!

## Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board directors approve \$1.1 million capital credit equity retirement

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 1990 and 2017, along with estate settlements in 2018.

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

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 2018).

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

## Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric conducts town hall meeting in Owatonna

Sixty-six members, spouses, family and/or friends were in attendance for the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric town hall meeting, Oct. 23, at Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites in Owatonna.

The meeting invited members from Cannon City, Wheeling, Richland, Walcott, and Morristown townships in Rice County; Clinton Falls and Medford townships in Steele County; and Kenyon Township in Goodhue County, representing portions of Districts 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8.

Moderating the meeting was General Manager Syd Briggs. He presented information on cooperatives' seven principles, Steele-Waseca's operating margins, and the co-op's practice of retiring capital credits, and returning that equity


## Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$15 billion to members since 1988 – Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues (called margins) are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation

operating revenue 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. 29865

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. 

to current members and past members having service through Steele-Waseca during those years being retired.

Briggs highlighted the co-op's newest renewable energy program, POWRE (Power Optimized With Renewable Energy; pronounced power), and the workshop being held Tuesday, Dec. 4, in Steele-Waseca's board room at 6:30 p.m. (details featured on Page 8).

Attendees were presented information regarding ACRE (Action Committee for Rural Electrification), and how participation provides support to elected officials who support legislation keeping electricity reliable and affordable for rural electric cooperatives. As a result, the latest to join ACRE was

(Town hall meeting continued on Page 8)



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### Board of Directors

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*Secretary/Treasurer*

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Syd Briggs ..... *General Manager*

### Division Managers

Darla DeVries ..... *Office*  
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  
and listen to the prompts. Please have  
your account number, phone number, and  
name on the account available.

**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**

If you have attended a Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric town hall meeting in 2018, you may recall my information shared regarding capital credit equity.

As you 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 1990, 2017, and estate settlements in 2018.

Our average retirement, or refund, over the past 10 years has been \$760,362 which makes this year's refund \$339,638 more than the average.

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 member-owners 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 46 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. 74900

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 over \$16.1 million in capital credits to its members since 1966.

**I did not get electric service from Steele-Waseca during 1990 or 2017. Will I get any retirement?** No. This year capital credit retirements are only being made to members who purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca in 1990 and 2017.

**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 2018.

**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.

*Syd*

## ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

**(2) SUITCASE-STYLE PORT. FISH HOUSES**, like new cond., (1) 4x8, (1) 5.5x7.5', \$200/each/firm. 465-9918/New Rich./< 8 p.m.

**PEARL GUINEAS**, this year's hatch, \$9/large, \$7/medium size. 332-7524/Nathan/leave message.

**NORDIC TRACK WALKFIT**, gives distance, time, & calories, \$125/obo. 528-2763.

**ON-SITE GRAIN BIN AERATION DYNAMIC FAN BALANCING & VIBRATION TROUBLESHOOTING**, [www.cmttechnicalservices.com](http://www.cmttechnicalservices.com). 634-3409/Chuck.

**AC WD TRACTOR** w/Paulson trip bucket & tire chains, \$2000/obo. 456-4254.

**AQUARIUM**, 42-gal., bowfront, filter, heater, hood, gravel & accessories, exc. cond., \$175. 456-2340.

**LAND**, 40-acres, NW Shieldsville, 13.5 tillable, 10 pasture, mostly wooded, buildable site, great hunter's paradise. 744-2866.

**1-MAN ICE FISHING HOUSE**, canvas pop-up, gd cond., \$25. 451-5208/Owat.

**'84 FORD CARGO VAN**, insulated, gd rubber, 6-cyl., 4-spd, starts great, (1) owner, great hauler of whatever, licensed, pwr steering, best offer. 213-8823.

**SHORESTATION BOAT LIFT**, 3600#, 108" wide, has wheel kit, no canopy. 634-7629 or 951-2568.

**MR. & MRS. SANTA CLAUS**, each 2' tall w/light candles & moving arms, \$10/each. 451-1946.

**NIGERIAN DWARF GOATS**, bucks & wethers. 334-8607.

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

**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.**

(Touchstone at 20 continued from Page 5)

portfolio of programs, branded resources, and tools for our cooperatives," she says.

That's an ongoing mission, but Moore notes that Touchstone Energy cooperatives have scored higher than other utility groups on the national American Customer Satisfaction Index survey for the last five of the 14 years surveyed.

"Electric co-ops are the gold standard—best in class. And as we've evolved, we've worked to provide tools so that they can maintain that standard or grow in that arena."

Those tools include the National Survey on the Cooperative Difference research and programs like Service Excellence and the Road to Member Engagement. There's also [Lynda.com](http://Lynda.com), the online education service covering thousands of topics. It's free for employees of Touchstone Energy member co-ops.

But Touchstone Energy's leaders and members continue to look ahead, and they see more than just electricity.

Career opportunities give people who

**PORTALIFT BOAT LIFT**, 1600#, no canopy, best offer; **FARMALL 560**, diesel, needs work, best offer; **2012 LOWE FM175** w/115-hp Mercury, \$16,500. 456-8639.

**TREK 720 MEN'S HYBRID**, 700x35c, 21-spd, \$100; **TREK MT 220**, boy's, 24x175, 21-spd, \$100. 330-3178.

**FISH HOUSE**, 4x8, \$100; **LP TANKS; SUNFLOWER HEATERS; FISHING EQUIPMENT; 2-WHEEL TRAILERS**. 664-9426.

**2012 TOYOTA PRIUS**, charcoal gray ext., gray & blk int., 47-mpg, clean car, clean title, vry reliable, 76,000 mi., \$9895. 491-4565.

**6-PANEL BIFOLD DOOR**, solid oak, 30x80, stained honey oak, & all hardware, \$60/obo. 838-8689.

**CHIEF GRAIN BIN**, 4000-bu., unloading auger & fan, ladders inside & out, buyer takes down & move. 451-7528.

**HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS**, seasons 1-5, new, sealed/never opened DVDs, \$100. 451-0653.

**OAK DOUBLE TRESTLE DINING TABLE**, 42x60 w/(2) self-storing extra boards, & (6) chairs, \$400. 684-2221.

**2016 FORD FOCUS**, 17,000 actual mi., loaded incl. backup camera, \$9000. 330-3945.

**ESTEBAN AUTHENTIC LIMITED EDITION CLASSICAL GUITAR PACKAGE**: amp, cable, strap, stand, case, instructional DVDs, chord chart, extras, all included, \$200. 369-8519.

**SNOWBLOWERS; SMALL CAMPER**, can be used for hunting shack; **WILL REPAIR SNOWBLOWERS & SMALL ENGINES**. 213-7978 or 475-1311.

(5) **HOLSTEIN STEERS**. 451-3678.

**POLYPAY RAM**, 2-yrs-old, excellent temperament. 213-1466.

**GRADER BLADE**, 3-pt, \$225; **DORM FRIG.**, \$60; **6-GAL. PAINT POT**, \$200; **GOLF CLUBS**, \$40. 339-0763.

**ROUND BALE CARRIER**, 3-pt, \$100. 390-4076.

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

**TRUCK BOX LINER** for GM S-10 pickup; **BIRCH INTERIOR DOORS; ARMSTRONG ALTERNA RESERVE LAMINATE VINYL FLOORING**. 451-8494.

**REGISTERED POLLED HEREFORD COWS, BRED HEIFERS, & SHOW HEIFER CALVES**. 951-9582.

**GIBLALTAR IV WOOD-BURNING STOVE**, 18" w/32" length, \$165; **METALBESTOS CHIMNEY PIPE**, Model SSII, 15' of 10" diameter, interlocking, \$125. 210-5353.

**2002 FORD F-450**, 7.3L, diesel, auto, 14' flatbed & liftgate, \$6500/obo; **HOMEMADE CAR TRAILER**, tandem axle, \$1000/obo. 456-8521.

**REGISTERED AUSTRALIAN SHEP. PUPS**, blk-tri, red Merle's, blue Merle's, exc. family, obedience, & working dogs, 1st shots & dewes removd. 475-2509.

**CIRCLE LK LOT**, 0.7 acres; (3) **DOWNHILL ROSSIGNOL SKIS**; (2) **ELEC. BASEBOARD HEATERS**, 220V. 470-262-7696.

**STRAW**, small square bales. 744-2871.

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

**HVY DUTY TRAILER**, 8'x16', (2) 7500-lb. axles, new tires, \$1700. 456-9145.

(Touchstone at 20 continued on Page 8)



**FREE 2019 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

KITTENS. 451-3820.

**FREE ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS**, you place & remove your own ad on SWCE's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop), these are separate from **Sparks** & will not appear in **Sparks** unless mailed, delivered, faxd or emailed to SWCE.

**WOOD** for burning, (3) trees on ground, (3) trees standing. 390-5270.

wanted

**JUNKERS & REPAIRABLES**, we take cars, trucks, most farm & constr. equip., top \$ paid. 332-2300.

**USED/WASTE OIL**, 200-gal. minimum. 420-7429.

**REM. 870**, 12-ga. slug barrel w/cantilever scope mount. 465-9918 before 8 p.m.

**BARN OR OUTBUILDINGS**, I remove to re-purpose the lumber; **OLD TIN & SIGNS**. 330-0258/Tim.

**JUNK & UNWANTED APPLIANCES**, no TVs or computers, **FREE** drop-off. 210-6728/Dan/lv. msg.

**FENTON GLASS**, many colors & shapes, paying top \$; **RED WING POTTERY**. 213-7120.

**CROPLAND RENTER**, Lonsdale area, 66.9 acres for 2019. 744-2512.

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

**5 X 8 STEEL UTILITY TRAILER** or 4x8 trailer. 869-3191.

**RECIPES** for the **Sparks**, only from members who have not submitted a recipe in 2018, please use a 3x5 card, the member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

**SNAPPER RIDER LAWN MOWER** w/rear engine. 451-8734.

**HANDICAPPED 4-WHEEL SCOOTER CHAIR**, adult size, gd cond. 465-3786.

**NH HAYLINER 273 BALER**, sm. bales, serial #122175; **HOUSE FOR RENT** in country. 451-3678.

**CEMENT FEED BUNKS**. 390-4076.

for sale

**SOREL CARIBOU WOMEN'S WINTER BOOTS**, size 9, never worn, still in box, \$60. 456-6917.

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](mailto:sparks@swce.coop).

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

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

**WHEEL HORSE 418A GARDEN TRACTOR**, 18-hp Kohler engine, incl. 42" mower deck, hydraulic equip. lift, \$900. 952-836-6782/Bill.

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

**VARIETY OF MEN'S & WOMEN'S OLD WEST/FRONTIER CLOTHING** incl. hats, skirts, vests, frocks, shirts, trousers & accessories. 952-451-4821.

**HOCKEY GEAR**: skates, size 4 & 7, \$15-\$30; helmets, size sm. & med., new in box, \$10-\$30; breezers, size junior XS & XL, \$10-\$25; shin guards, size 11", \$5. 455-3881.

**FARM KING SNOWBLOWER**, 80", 2-stage, single auger, 3-point hitch, hydraulic spout turn, gd shape, \$1000. 451-1505.

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

**MIT PRESSURE WASHER**, gas powered, 2400 psi, \$75. 612-221-1408.

**LADIES SAS LEATHER TIE SHOES**, made in USA, new cond. 451-7626.

**MOHAIR (ANGORA GOAT) WOOL & ALPACA FIBER; YARNS, ROVING, BATS, WASHED FIBER & RAW FLEECES**. 832-392-1587/cell.

**1990 FORD RANGER**, basic w/no extras, bed liner, newer engine, 4-cyl., runs exc., \$900; **20-GAL. WATER HEATER**, 110V, \$25. 334-9700.

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

**2003 CHEVY 2500HD EXT. CAB**, 4x4, Vortec 8100 engine, 240,xxx mi., service box; **SKID STEER BUCKETS**. 402-7679.

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

**LIGHTED BEER SIGNS; RECORD ALBUMS; OLD TRUNKS; WILDLIFE PRINTS; CHAIRS**, many kinds; **WOODEN WAGON WHEEL HUBS**. 612-827-6575.

**MF 2705 TRACTOR; PRONTO PWR WHEEL-CHAIR**, exc. cond., best offer. 475-2322.

**MINI STORAGE UNITS**, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

**USED ENGINES, TRANSMISSIONS, AUTO & TRUCK PARTS**, 30-day warranty on eng. & trans. 332-2300.

**MINI STORAGE AVAIL. IN FBO**: 6'x8', \$49/mth; 10'x24', \$125/mth; **MINI STORAGE AVAIL. IN MORRISTWN**: 10'x20', \$99/mth. 333-0319.

**(2) PEERLESS NAT. GAS GARAGE HEATERS**, 120,000- & 100,000-Btu respectively, \$200/each. 456-8689.

**FARMALL M TRACTOR**, incl. front-end loader, runs gd, stored in pole shed. 456-3675.

**SONY HT-CT780 TV SOUNDBAR** w/wireless sub-woofer, \$175. 456-2060.

**DEMCO CAR TOW DOLLY** w/auto steer cornering, hydraulic surge brake system w/tilt bed frame, ideal for RV owners. 456-1133.

**CONTRACTOR'S TOPPER FOR TRUCK**, fits 6.5' bed, red, vry nice cond., \$300. 456-8556.

**DENIM DAYS COLLECTION**, (18) sets, some Hostess gifts incl., \$10/set. 330-3886.

**(3) RESTORED JD TRACTORS**: 1941 Unstyled "G," \$7500; 1959 530, \$6500/negotiable; 620 wide front, \$4300. 330-3315.

**1983 CHEV. 454**, 1-ton, 4WD, Dana 60 front end w/plow, runs & drives, rusty. 455-1628.

**FUTURA HOT WATER PRESSURE WASHER**, used, 3.5 gpm @ 3000 psi, WS101 pump, 230V, single phase, \$2995; **VAL 6 DAYSTAR RADIANT HEATER**, new, \$1195. 583-2703.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

**SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK**, Feb. 11-18, 2019. By motor coach, 7 nights hotel, 13 meals, Dallas, LBJ Ranch, San Antonio city tour, Oklahoma Memorial & more! Starting at \$1,399 pp, 2 per room.

**PANAMA CANAL**, Feb. 28-March 17, 17 nights, Coral Princess (all meals, entertainmt & gratuities O/B), stops in Columbia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, & Mexico. Starts at \$4,899 pp, 2/room.

**MONUMENTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**, May 17-21. Includes airfare, 4 nights, meals incl. Guided tours of D.C., Arlington, Mt Vernon, WWII, Korean, Vietnam & Lincoln Memorials, Smithsonian & more! Starts at \$1,649 per person, 2 per room.

Coming soon: **MINNESOTA TWINS TRAINING CAMP TO FLORIDA**, March 7-17.

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



coal creek tour connection

Steele-Waseca accepting reservations for 2019 Coal Creek Tour

If you're seeking ideas for a three-day getaway, reservations are being accepted for Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's annual Coal Creek Station Tour to Underwood, North Dakota.

This mini-vacation lets you get away and leaves the planning to us. Mom and/or Dad, or Grandma and/or Grandpa, have you ever thought it would be fun to take the kids or grandkids on an outing where everything is planned out, meals included, have fun, learn, and be worry free?

The tour includes the Coal Creek Station and Falkirk Mine, with a side tour of the Garrison Dam.

The three-day tour is scheduled Tuesday, June 11, through Thursday, June 13, 2019. Travel in the comfort of a motor coach from Steele-Waseca to Bismarck, North Dakota, then stay at the Country Inn & Suites, which also has a water park for the kids. Each morning the hotel provides a full buffet breakfast.

The tour on Wednesday, June 12, will include the Coal Creek Station to learn about the process of utilizing coal to generate electricity. Next is to observe the HVDC (High Voltage Direct Current) Terminal. It's here participants will see the equipment where 22,000 volts of alternating current (AC) from the generators is converted to 400,000 volts of direct current (DC).

From the 21st floor of Coal Creek Station, you will be able to view the Blue Flint Ethanol Plant. It generates over 65-million gallons of ethanol per year by using steam from the Coal Creek power plant, rather than utilizing additional boilers and burning natural gas,

Bringing today's technology to a unique system that serves you

Courtesy: Great River Energy (GRE)

One of the most unique elements of the electric system that brings electricity to you will be upgraded this spring with today's technology.

This 436-mile high voltage, direct-current (HVDC) power line system is owned and operated by Great River Energy (GRE), wholesale power supplier to Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's legacy members.

GRE's HVDC system—one of few of its kind in the world—delivers electricity from the cooperative's largest power plant in Underwood, North Dakota, to Minnesota. Think of it as a 436-mile



Coal Creek Tour participants in 2018 had the opportunity to get an up-close look at one of the trucks utilized at Falkirk Mine.

making Blue Flint one of the most efficient ethanol plants.

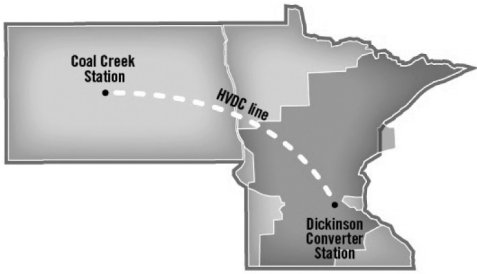
Participants will also visit the Falkirk Mine to observe the open-pit mining process for lignite coal, and the huge drag lines that uncover the coal. You'll learn how the land is restored to its original landscape, and farmland crop production levels after the coal is mined. If weather permits, tour participants will be able to walk in the coal field and pick their own coal. 1020508

The tour price per Steele-Waseca member and their guest is \$310 per adult. One of the cooperative's goals for STUDENTS is to offer an educational opportunity about the electrical industry to our membership's young people. This is a great way for parents and/or grandparents to bring up to three students between the ages of 10 and 18 on this tour at NO CHARGE! Additional

students may attend for a minimal additional charge of \$150 per student. Students must be accompanied by an adult.

For non-member adults, who are not guests of a Steele-Waseca member traveling on the tour, the cost is \$620 per adult. For members wishing to travel for a second or additional time, the cost is \$620. However, if you bring a guest who is a Steele-Waseca member, who has not previously been on the tour, the price will remain at \$310 per adult to encourage promotion of the tour.

This tour has a history of filling up fast. To preregister, contact Jack Schwab by calling 507-451-7340 or toll-free 800-526-3514. You may also reach Jack by emailing, [jschwab@swce.coop](mailto:jschwab@swce.coop). There are only a limited number of seats available, so sign up now. <sup>5/18</sup>



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's wholesale energy provider, Great River Energy, is upgrading their high-voltage, direct-current system during Spring 2019, as they replace all of the major components in their "converter stations" at either end of the 436-mile power line represented above.

homes, farms, and businesses. Those converter stations are where all (HVDC upgrade continued on Page 5)



cookin' connection
Baked Cheese Balls

Christy Strobel

Kilkenny

String cheese (mozzarella)
Skim milk
Italian bread crumbs

Cut up string cheese into bite size pieces. Dip them in skim milk. Then cover with Italian bread crumbs. Freeze for 24 hours. Then bake at 425° for 7 to 10 minutes. Dip in marinara sauce.

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 31 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during October 2018. 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:
Dale Baker
Numbers not found:
James A. Valek
Sharon Kalis
Caleb Faulhaber
Lester/Betty Oeltjenbruns



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 53° F, while the average low was 35° F. This resulted in 638.5 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 59° F and average low of 41° F. This resulted in 472 HDDs and 0.5 CDDs.

ENERGY STAR® Rebates - In 2018, all ENERGY STAR refrigerators/freezers (with recycling), electric clothes dryers, dehumidifiers, central air conditioners, air and ground source heat pumps, light emitting diode (LED) bulbs purchased (limit 5) 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

Electrical Safety Checklist

Nearly half of all home fires occur during winter months. Take a few minutes to identify and correct any potential electrical hazards to ensure the safety of your home.

SWITCHES AND OUTLETS

- Are any switches or outlets warm to the touch? YES NO
Warm switches or outlets indicate an unsafe wiring condition.
- Are any outlets or switches discolored? YES NO
Discoloration indicates dangerous heat buildup at these connections.
- Do plugs fit snugly into outlets? YES NO
Loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

CORDS

- Are any cords cracked, frayed or damaged? YES NO
Damaged cords can expose wires, causing shock or fire hazard.
- Are any cords pinched by furniture or windows, or attached to anything with staples or nails? YES NO
Pinching and/or stapling cords can damage the insulation, causing shock or fire hazard.
- Do you use extension cords on a permanent basis? YES NO
Extension cords should only be used temporarily.

ELECTRIC PANEL

- Do you have recurring tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses? YES NO
If yes, this could indicate you're exceeding a safe level of electrical current.
- Do you have arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs)? YES NO
AFCIs provide greater fire protection. Check your circuit breakers for the AFCI label.



Please note this is not a comprehensive safety checklist. Visit ESFI.org for more information. Source: ESFI



(HVDC upgrade continued from Page 3)

of the upgrades will take place. Nearly all of the equipment that is housed inside them will be removed and replaced with advanced technologies.

HVDC systems are unique in general because they deliver electricity in direct current rather than alternating current, which is the standard for most electric systems.

"There are only a few systems like these in the United States," said Greg Schutte, GRE's project manager. He said the main benefit of HVDC systems is the ability to deliver electricity more efficiently over long distances than alternating current systems.

"There is always some power lost in delivery when you transmit electricity over a power line," Schutte said. "But over long distances, those losses are significantly lower on direct current systems than alternating current systems."

Great River Energy has been preparing for this major upgrade since 2011. The upgrade will be completed this spring. You may learn more about the system at greatriverenergy.com.

Touchstone at 20

A nod to yesterday, a focus on tomorrow

There were no Nest thermostats in 1998. Nor Tesla Powerwalls or iPhones. And folks were just beginning to hear about Touchstone Energy® Co-operatives, formed in an era when the big-ticket issue was retail competition in the energy industry.

Issues come and go. Technologies come and go. But as long as Touchstone Energy remains flexible and adaptable, its experience over two decades shows it's here to stay.

Now with more than 730 member co-ops and commemorating its 20th anniversary this year, things look very different from that startup.

"If the brand were to remain what we were 20 years ago, we wouldn't be meeting the current members' needs," says Lynn Moore, Touchstone Energy executive director. 1057403

"The brand started as an awareness campaign," Moore says. "You're trying to get your name out there and get everybody to know who you are and what you stand for."

That initially meant running ads and showing up at events with members. Then came mascots, beginning with CFL Charlie and continuing today with LED Lucy, to help children understand about conserving energy. And there's years of research that Moore says is aimed at "knowing what our members at the end of the line need"—and helping co-ops accomplish that.

"We've evolved the 'Three Amigos'"—the three colorful figures featured in the logo—"and the brand of Touchstone Energy Cooperatives into a

(Touchstone at 20 continued on Page 7)

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
1301 Lincoln Avenue, Owatonna
COOKIE WALK
Saturday, December 15, 2018
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
All Delicious!! Incredible Variety
Most items \$4.00/dozen or \$2.00 per half dozen
Complimentary Coffee & Hot Cocoa
Cinnamon Rolls \$2.00 ea OR 6 for \$5.00