

youth tour connection
Applications for Youth Tour '19 to Washington, D.C., due at Steele-Waseca by Feb. 22

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is accepting applications from eligible high school sophomores or juniors for an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., for the 2019 Youth Tour, June 15-20.

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

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

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

2019, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060. Entries must be received in Steele-Waseca's office on or before Friday, Feb. 22, 2019. The two Youth Tour recipients will be notified by Friday, March 22, 2019.

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

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

Essay Questions:

- 1. Why would you like to be Steele-Waseca's delegate to Youth Tour 2019? What do you hope to gain from the experience? Answer in 150 words or less.
- 2. Write a short essay on what commitment to community means to you. Include how you contribute to your



Steele-Waseca will be sponsoring two Youth Tour delegates in 2019. Last year, the co-op's delegates were Mallore McCarty of Minnesota Lake (front row, sixth from left) and Jessica Pieper of Owatonna (second row, fifth from right). 26684

community. Answer in 300 words or less.

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

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

MREA is requiring that each participating cooperative's delegate(s) report to the Crowne Plaza Airport located at 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington for an orientation session on Saturday, June 15, presently at 11 a.m. An afternoon flight to Washington, D.C., will follow the orientation session.

Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2019 — June 15-20

Name _____ M or F _____ Phone _____

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

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

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

Parent/Guardian consent: I/we hereby give my/our dependent high school son/daughter permission to enter the Rural Electric Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2019 Contest. I/we understand if he/she wins, I/we will be responsible for providing his/her own transportation to the Crowne Plaza Airport in Bloomington and from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Name(s) _____ SWCE account # _____

the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric February 2019

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calendar of events

- February
- 1 National Freedom Day
 - 2 Groundhog Day
 - 3 Super Bowl LIII
 - 12 Abraham Lincoln's birthday
 - 14 Valentine's Day
 - 18 Presidents' Day
 - 22 SWCE's deadline for 2019 Youth Tour applications
 - 22 George Washington's birthday



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric sells portion of service territory to Owatonna Public Utilities

Sale involves fewer than 100 meter locations

In early spring 2019, a few small portions of the service territory currently served by Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric will be transferred to Owatonna Public Utilities (OPU).

State statute 216B.44 allows a municipal utility to extend its corporate boundaries, and purchase territory formerly served by another utility. This is the case for portions of the city of Owatonna and six small pieces of territory served by Steele-Waseca. The territory involves fewer than 100 meter locations. The statute also provides that payment be made to the selling utility based on book value and revenue over a specific period.

According to Steele-Waseca General Manager Syd Briggs, OPU first approached the co-op regarding the territory in 2015. Selling utility property involves a lot of information gathering on equipment, substations, poles, meters, transformers, etc. Net book value is determined by original cost, depreciation, additions, and retirements over the years. Applicable revenue is then calculated for a period of 10 years. The process of negotiation and information gathering required just over three years.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric residential rebates announced for 2019

Rebates identical to those available in 2018

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member-owners seeking to add value to their energy dollar may utilize rebates offered by the co-op in 2019.

Rebates for central air conditioners and air source heat pumps (ASHPs) are listed below, and require a quality installation. To find a qualified installer, visit Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, click on "Residential Rebates," then "Qualified Installers List," listed under "Quick Links."

	A/C	ASHP
14.5-14.9 SEER	\$50	\$200
15.0-15.9 SEER	\$50	\$300
16.0+ SEER	\$50	\$400

Rebates for Energy Star® labeled ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are \$100 per ton in 2019.



ENERGY STAR

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

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

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2411 W Bridge Street, PO Box 485
Owatonna MN 55060-0485

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website: www.swce.coop
Email: swce@swce.coop
Fax: 507-446-4242



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Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

Operations Office Hours

8:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Monday–Friday

**For Customer Service, Billing
Questions and Power Outages
Phone:**

507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514

Before calling to report an outage

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

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

Phone 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514
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**

Many of you remember there are seven cooperative principles that have been established for all cooperatives (not just electric co-ops) since 1844. I have spoken about these principles during Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric town hall meetings, and we talk about them frequently at the headquarters in Owatonna.

One of the principles is, “Education, Training, and Information.” I learned early on there is an exchange of ideas that permeates the cooperative nation involving members, directors, and employees equally. Not only do I endeavor to pass on information about our cooperative to our members, and the general public, but I have gleaned information from everyone I talk to; everyone has experience or expertise that I benefit from. Today, I would like to address a topic that I occasionally hear from some of our members knowing it will be a benefit to everyone.

We are all concerned about climate change, and your cooperative is always working to balance the desire of lowering our carbon footprint with continuing to provide reliable and consistent power. As cooperatives, Steele-Waseca and Great River Energy (GRE) make decisions on generation resources and other issues in collaboration with our members.

We are investing in clean energy opportunities available today that will lower emissions while protecting electricity reliability and member rates. We also anticipate future technology advancements will provide new ways to generate carbon-free electricity.

Terms you are probably hearing frequently are “carbon free,” and “renewables;” incidentally, they are not always synonymous. Both terms are beneficial to reducing climate change; however, many utilities consider “nuclear generation” as “carbon free.” At Steele-Waseca, we believe we should take reliability and the long-term effect of all resources into account, in order to make the most responsible approach to meeting the needs of our members and the environment, as we continue to evaluate our plans and evolve our portfolio.

Great River Energy, Steele-Waseca’s wholesale power provider, already has a number of carbon-free generation sources that are also renewable, including wind, hydro, and solar power. Last year, GRE supplied members like Steele-Waseca with 35 percent carbon-free power including 25 percent wind and solar, and 10 percent hydro power. In addition, Great River Energy recently announced a goal of having 50 percent of its energy come from renewable resources, primarily wind, by the year 2030.

On a smaller scale, but extremely important when listening to and involving our membership, we also launched our new POWRE (Power Optimized With Renewable Energy; pronounced power) rebate program providing additional rebates and incentives to size renewables to load. We have had great responses to the new program and are pleased with the continued interest of our membership.

Another piece of information to be aware of is the article on the front page of this issue of *Sparks* about the service territory transfer to Owatonna Public Utilities that should occur this spring.

It involves six small pieces of territory where OPU has extended their corporate boundaries. There are fewer than 100 meter locations in the service territory.

State statute allows a municipal to acquire territory after negotiating a fair book value and payments on revenue for an extended period of time. 81115

Steele-Waseca took time and effort to ensure the sale did not adversely affect the remaining membership. It required over three years arriving at a conclusion that was agreeable between OPU and Steele-Waseca. Any member affected by the sale will receive a written notice from Steele-Waseca before the changeover, followed by a welcome letter from OPU.

It is always a pleasure serving all our members; we will miss those that are leaving, and I am sure they will be in good hands with OPU. Steele-Waseca will maintain past balances with capital credits, and will retire (pay) the approved amounts of equity to those members.

Change can be a wonderful thing in our lives, and I encourage each of you to follow Steele-Waseca on Facebook, our website, in *Sparks*, and by attending any of our meetings across the service territory in order to be aware of information that affects and involves the cooperative nation.

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

2000 POLARIS 500 XC SNOWMOBILE, high performance twin, 2130 mi., like new cond., \$1500. 451-8744.

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

POWER CORD for HP Model 2000-2C20NR, \$10. 838-8565.

TOBOGGAN, extra long, wood, exc. cond., 92”Lx15 3/4”, \$150. 213-8823.

PORTABLE STORAGE, 40’ & 20’ shipping containers, store your stuff on your property, rodent- & moisture-proof. 612-418-4375.

COUNTRY HOUSE FOR RENT, 2-story, older farm house 2.5-mi. SE of Owat. along Hwy 218, 4-bdms, large yd w/storage shed, \$750/mth. 456-8786.

2-BDRM APT FOR RENT in Ellendale, spacious, ground level, all appliances incl. washer/dryer, no pets, no smoking, \$600/mth. 456-8931.

1938 FORD PICKUP, custom restored, ready for your choice of color interior & exterior. 327-3626.

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.

(Territory sale to OPU continued from Page 1)

questions. Any Steele-Waseca members with deposits on their accounts will re-

ITALIAN OR CARNIOLAN HONEYBEE PACKAGES, 2- or 3-lb., call for prices, April delivery, will deliver in Owat. 456-0753.

CIRCLE LK LOT, 0.7-acres; (3) **DOWNHILL ROSSIGNOL SKIS**; 48” **ELEC. BASEBOARD HEATER**, 220V (all very well priced to sell). 470-262-7696.

1981 ARCTIC CAT JAG 4000 & 2-PLACE TRAILER, tilt, swivel, & lifetime license, gd cond. 334-3668.

RENN 8’ SNOWBLOWER, double auger, hydraulic spout, 540 PTO, \$950/obo. 390-5222/Owat.

CASE 1818 SKID LOADER, 20-hp Onan engine, only 36” wide, 830 actual hrs, \$6000; **2018 FORD FOCUS**, 17K mi., \$9000/obo. 384-7553.

14’ ALUMACRAFT DP BOAT, TRLR, DPTH FINDR; **WIN. 25**, 12-ga.; **REM. 722 REM. MAG.**; **.410 SXS**; (4) **TIRES**, 225x70R15, gd casings, little tread, \$5/ea.; **CLASSIC CAR**, runs gd, rust free. 451-0996.

MUSTANG 940 SKID LOADER, app. 40-hp, Yanmar diesel, gd winter starter, new tires w/dirt & pallet forks, \$7500. 330-3945.

1999 ARCTIC CAT JAG, 440cc, exc. cond., elec. start, \$1000. 952-652-2473.

ceive full credit on their final bill.

Any capital credit balance will be maintained by Steele-Waseca un-

2002 DODGE DURANGO, 4x4, blk, 3rd row seats, cassette/CD/radio, 4.7L, V8, clean title, \$2700/obo. 835-2814/Kevin/leave message.

HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS, seasons 1-5, DVDs, new w/seal, \$75. 451-0653.

FIREWOOD, 5- to 10-yrs-old, trailer load/\$50/obo. 451-5887.

TREK 720 MULTITRACK, 700x35c, men’s, \$100; **SCHWINN SIERRA**, 21-sp, 26x175, \$100. 330-3178.

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

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

(2) **TRAILERS**, 4x8 & 6x13; **LP TANKS**; **HEATERS**, elec. & LP. 664-9426.

WHEEL HOUSE FISH HOUSE, 6x10, heater, \$1100. 612-221-1408.

(Tree care continued from Page 5)

inches away from the trunk. If you notice brown foliage this spring, wait until late spring before pruning it out. Even though the foliage may be dead, there may be buds that are still alive to fill in the brown spots.

For more advice on selecting proper trees, sites, and care, contact the Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District at 507-451-6730 (ext. 3). You can also find them at www.steeleswcd.org, or on Facebook@SteeleCountySWCD. There you will find their 2019 tree order form (orders encouraged to be submitted by the end of February) loaded with hardy northern stock that is well adapted to our growing season, as well as other services they offer, including windbreak planning.

Correction

In the January 2019 *Sparks* newsletter, the map entitled, “Average Prices for Residential Electricity,” listed the U.S. average as 13.5 cents per kWh (kilowatt hour). The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association issued a correction that the figure should have been 12.9 cents per kWh.



Why is my bill higher in the winter?

In our region, November through March is typically when members use the most electricity due to cold weather. Here are other factors that cause energy use to increase:

- ❖ Shorter days and longer nights mean more time indoors. That typically means more lights, TVs, appliances and video games in use.
- ❖ Heating systems run more. Even if you have a propane furnace, your electric use increases because electricity powers the blower motor in the furnace.
- ❖ Holidays mean more guests, more hot showers, more cooking – all using electricity.
- ❖ Block heaters use between 500 to 1,500 watts depending on the vehicle. So a car using a 500-watt heater would use 150 kWh a month plugged in at 10 hours a day.
- ❖ Portable plug-in space heaters can dramatically increase your monthly bill as well. A 1,500-watt space heater used for 10 hours a day will use 450 kWh a month or \$54.45.

ad connection

give away

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

wanted

FARM DOG/PUPPY. 421-8735.

BUMPER-STYLE LIVESTOCK TRAILR. 330-3856.

PAINTING JOBS: indoors, outdoors, outbuilding, barn, garage, etc. 320-8225.

3-POINT DISC, 5' or 6'. 664-3843.

USED/WASTE OIL, 200-gal. min. 420-7429.

SEASONAL DRIVERS w/CDL, Hazmat, Tanker, clean driving record w/pre-employment drug test, flexible hrs, gd pay. 774-9730.

1- OR 2-BTM PLOW in working cond. 456-8520.

SEEKING OWAT. AREA TRUCK DRIVER JOB, I have a Class A license. 455-0900.

BIG BLOCK 391 CI V8 FORD ENGINE for a F-600 truck; CHEVY 350 for truck. 676-0969.

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

HYDRAULIC POST POUNDER; HAY for horses. 651-260-9225.

TRANSFERRABLE BLDG RIGHTS for Walcott Twsp in Rice Co. 390-4762.

DRIVERS w/Class A license, CDL, & tanker endorsement, must pass drug & alcohol testing, clean driving record. 456-1181.

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

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

for sale

CASE IH 2020 BEAN HEAD PARTS: (25) sickle sections w/bolts, (3) guards, (2) auger fingers (all new), \$90. 612-290-2835.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

HVY DUTY FLOOR JACK; 3/8" & 3/4" AIR IMPACT WRENCH; METRIC WRENCH SET, large size; BENCH VISE; MANY ITEMS (retired from farming). 456-0259.

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

(4) HEREFORD HEIFER CALVES, top quality, \$7000/firm. 451-2722.

1984 FORD F-150, 4x4, new clutch, 142K mi., gd tires, runs gd, \$900. 330-5670.

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

ON-SITE GRAIN BIN AERATION DYNAMIC FAN BALANCING & VIBRATION TROUBLESHOOTING, www.cmttechnicalservices.com. 634-3409/Chuck.

SKID STEER BUCKETS, \$800; 2013 CHEVY CRUZE, 86,000 mi., \$9400; BOBCAT S330, 1610 hrs, \$26,800. 402-7679.

FISH HOUSE, drop-down wheelhouse, 7.5'x18' & a 3' V-nose, heater used (3) seasons, has stove & (2) bunks, sleeps (3), \$2400. 838-8958.

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

1979 CHEVY PICKUP 4X4 FOR PARTS, \$300; 1985 CHEVY, 4x4 w/Western snowplow. 456-5466.

HOLIDAY VILLAGE, many different styles (no Dept 56), \$3 for houses/businesses, \$1/each for people, & many other pieces. 334-5961/Joanne.

PRONTO M51 4-WHEEL SCOOTER w/SureStep, \$500. 744-5353.

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

LOFTNESS 1082H SNOWBLOWER, 3-pt, 9', 1000-RPM PTO shaft, \$5000. 383-1378.

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

FUTON, extra thick mattress - green, vry gd cond., \$50; '04 PALM BEACH PONTOON, 20'. 210-1826.

JIFFY ICE AUGER, gas, 8", \$150. 451-7837.

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

'02 FORD F-450, 7.3, auto, 14' flatbed w/liftgate, \$6500; '94 SUBURBAN, 140,000 mi., \$2500; HOME-MADE TANDEM CAR TRLR, \$1000. 456-8521.

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

NH FP230 CHOPPR w/heads, crop processr & Met-alert III, hydr. swing tongue & wagon unhook, tandm axle, exc. con. w/824 2-row corn head & 27P 7' hay pkup, incl. new set of knives & cutter bar. 456-2628.

40-ACRES IN RICE COUNTY, Beacon Parcel #05.25.3.75.001, great hunting & buildable site, \$225,000. 744-2866.

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

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

MINI STORAGE UNITS FOR RENT in Ellendale. 456-1460.

1993 FORD F-250, 4x4, diesel, 140,000 mi., gd engine, body not so gd, \$2000. 456-9325.

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

2005 CHEROKEE 28' TRAVEL TRAILER, exc. cond., \$10,000. 451-8722.

1986 FORD BRONCO w/8' poly snowplow blade, 3-spring trip. 676-0969.

(5) HEREFORD STEERS, 400-lb. 444-9347.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

MN TWINS SPRING TRAINING IN FLORIDA, March 7-17. By motor coach, 10-nights hotel, 16 meals, 3 Twins training tickets, Nashville highlights tour & Grand Ole Opry. \$1,999 pp, 2 per room.

SAVANNAH—SOUTHERN CHARM AT ITS BEST, March 29-April 6. By motor coach, 7-nights hotel, 11 meals, St. Louis Arch, Gospel Dinner Cruise, tour of Savannah. \$1,599 per person, 2 per room.

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, & more. Starts at \$1,649 pp, 2 per rm.

NEW YORK YOUR WAY, June 25-29. Includes airfare, Millennium Hotel in Times Square, YOU pick the activities you want to see in New York City. \$1,699 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!

4 Seasons Vacations, Inc.
TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.

member connection

Great River Energy on track for 50 percent renewables by 2030

Great River Energy's (GRE's) portfolio of generation resources has evolved over time, reflecting changes in the markets as well as GRE and its member-owner cooperatives' continued push to provide reliable, affordable and environmentally-friendly power.

Over the years, Great River Energy has evolved its portfolio by reducing its energy supply from fossil fuels and increasing its push into energy-efficiency and renewables.

"Today we see significant opportunities in renewable energy that will enable us to grow our business in a cost-effective way," said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Power Supply Officer Jon Brekke. "Our member cooperatives increasingly want more renewable energy in their supply and we aim to provide that."

Great River Energy has exited contracts to receive power from two coal-based power plants and has retired Stanton Station, a coal power plant that served the cooperative's membership for 50 years. For the first time in the organization's history, there is more

generating capacity from natural gas than coal.

GRE met the requirements of Minnesota's renewable energy standard eight years early by achieving 25 percent renewables for all-requirements member systems in 2018. The cooperative has now set an ambitious new goal of 50 percent renewables by 2030. The cooperative's next big renewable energy undertaking will be the Emmons-Logan wind farm, which will bring 300 megawatts of wind to southern North Dakota by 2020.

"This push to greater renewables helps us stay relevant and competitive in the energy markets of the future," Brekke said.

Electric cooperatives serve primarily suburban and rural areas—places with room to grow. Because of these changes, Minnesota's cooperatives and economic development partners can tout a growing renewable portfolio to attract businesses that value clean energy or have their own environmental goals.

"At the end of the day, we remain focused on our mission to provide our

members affordable, reliable energy in harmony with a sustainable environment," Brekke said.

As an upper Midwest utility, Great River Energy is situated near some of the world's premier wind resources. By siting wind farms in areas with prolific generating potential, the cooperative receives some of the most favorable prices for renewable energy in the country.

GRE's proximity to Canada presents opportunities to receive hydropower in a unique and mutually beneficial arrangement.

Great River Energy sees its highest energy demand in the summer while Manitoba Hydro's system peaks in the winter. Through a "diversity exchange," both utilities are able to get a boost from the other when they need it most. This agreement has been in place since 1995 and has expanded in recent years.

To align its renewable energy supplies with Minnesota's renewable energy statutes, Great River Energy only counts hydropower from small facilities in its voluntary renewable energy goals.

eligible for a \$25 rebate; members purchasing an electric clothes dryer with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$25 rebate; variable speed pool pumps with the Energy Star label are eligible for a \$100 rebate; and pool ASHPs are eligible for a \$200 rebate.

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

Member-owners who complete home energy savings measures are eligible for \$0.05 per kWh (kilowatt hour) savings. Submit the "Residential HOME ENERGY SAVINGS Rebate Request" form found at swce.coop, along with the requested documentation. The maximum rebate is \$100 for 2,000+ kWh.

Steele-Waseca is offering up to \$500 for members participating in the Charge-

Wise program. This is a voluntary program offered by participating electric cooperatives for qualified members who own a plug-in (PEV) or plug-in hybrid (PHEV) electric vehicle.

The program allows members to charge their PEV/PHEV in their garage or carport using electricity from a specially installed 20-amp ChargeWise outlet. This ChargeWise outlet only provides energy during the off-peak hours of 11 p.m.-7 a.m. Members simply plug in the PEV in the evening and their vehicle is charged during those overnight hours at a reduced rate. They wake up to a fully-charged electric vehicle.

If you have a question or wish to request a rebate form, please call Cindy Butterfield at Steele-Waseca weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rebate forms are available at Steele-Waseca's website, swce.coop, by clicking on "Residential Rebates." Please visit energystar.gov to check the model number of qualifying products. 1013332

Completed rebate forms must be accompanied with a copy of the receipt and submitted within 90 days of purchase. Please allow 6-8 weeks for processing. The rebate will appear as a credit on your Steele-Waseca bill. **5/16**

cookin' connection

Stuffed Shells

Shirley Giles

Faribault

12 oz. pkg jumbo shells
32 oz. jar spaghetti sauce
2 eggs (slightly beaten)
2 pkgs. chopped frozen spinach (thawed)
1 tsp. onion salt
1 lb. ricotta cheese

1 lb. Italian sausage
1/8 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 lb. shredded mozzarella cheese
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
2 T. parmesan cheese

Cook shells. Drain and set aside. Brown sausage, drain and add spaghetti sauce. Beat eggs, add spinach, cheese, onion salt, garlic powder and nutmeg to eggs. Pour part of spaghetti sauce mixture on bottom of baking dish. Stuff shells with cheese mixture and place on spaghetti sauce. Top with the rest of the spaghetti sauce. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Shirley wrote, "Serves about 6 people."

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 13 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during December 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.

January issue of Sparks



Numbers found:

Sharon L. LaPlount

Numbers not found:

Richard G./Cathy Cap
Benjamin/Dorothy Garrison
Lee D. Ramsey
Gary/Jamie Walburn



Sparks in brief . . .

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

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

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

• **December temps** – The average high temperature for December was 30°F, while the average low was 19°F. This resulted in 1,257 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 25°F and average low of 10°F. This resulted in 1,470 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

• **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2019, 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

Keep safety in mind when using portable electric heaters

Electric space heaters can help warm a room quickly. However, they can be as dangerous as convenient if used improperly.

Safe Electricity® urges everyone in the home to understand the importance of using space heaters safely:



Photo courtesy of Safe Electricity.

• Purchase only space heaters that have been safety tested and UL approved. Make sure the unit has an emergency tip-over shut-off feature and heating element guards. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care.

• Before using a space heater, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working condition.

• Make sure the heater is clean and in good condition.

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

• Space heaters have one purpose—to provide supplemental heating. Never use them to thaw pipes, cook food, or

dry clothing or towels.

• Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from combustible liquids, like fuel, spray cans, and paint, and flammable items such as draperies, blankets, and sofas.

• Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Accidental contact could cause serious shock or burns.

• Do not overload circuits. Never use extension cords or multiple plugs with a space heater and make sure not to plug the unit into the same circuit as other electric appliances. 32414

• If your space heater is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) and it trips, don't assume there is something wrong with the GFCI. Immediately stop using the heater until a professional can check it—if not, a serious shock could occur.

• Never leave space heaters unattended. Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or going to bed.

• Replace older space heaters with newer, safer models.

Many people also use electric blankets to keep warm during cold winter nights. Before plugging in electric blankets, check for any damage and inspect cord for frays, cracks, or cuts. Do not tuck electric blankets under the mattress and place nothing on top of the blanket while it's in use, including comforters and bedspreads. Don't allow pets to sleep on the electric blanket.



BEDS FOR KIDS

CABIN FEVER ESCAPE

2019 FUNDRAISER

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 23RD
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Steele County History Center
1700 Austin Road - Owatonna

Tickets: \$30 per person
Purchase at Edward Jones - Matthew Stanislav, The Hat Chic, or by calling Beds For Kids at 507-213-6312

Tasting Stations, by Chef Tim Cockram & Chef Mark Beland

Cash Bar, Silent Auction, Wine Wall Raffle

Doors open at 6 p.m.

Improv Comedy Show by Spontaneous Productions—Performance begins at 8 p.m.

Winter injury affecting conifer trees

by District Technician Adam Arndt, Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District

In the late spring and into the summer of 2018, the Soil and Water office received several phone calls about conifer or evergreen trees that had turned partially or completely brown, and appeared to be dead.

Minnesota's harsh climate can cause occasional severe damage to many trees and shrubs that are normally considered hardy in our region if conditions are right. Winter sun, wind and cold temperatures, snow and ice, salt used for deicing streets, and food shortages for wildlife can all severely injure or destroy trees and shrubs.

On April 13, 2018, the Steele County area received six inches of snow and rain, and again on April 18, another six inches of snow followed by a high-pressure system, clear skies, and a lot of sunshine. As the snow receded, residents started to notice entire trees that turned brown or had brown needles above the previous snow line.

This browning effect seen in the spring is typically the result of foliage desiccation caused by the sun and wind during our winter and early spring months. Water lost through evapotranspiration during this time is not readily replaced by the plant because the roots are in frozen soil. The common name for this damage is winter burn or winter drying.

Winter burn can also occur when needles are damaged after rapid temperature changes, particularly on the south side of trees. Rapid temperature drops can occur at sunset and sunrise, or when sunlight is suddenly blocked by other trees, hills, or buildings.

Prevention of winter burn begins with selecting trees that are hardy to your area. The next step is selecting the proper planting site. Avoid planting trees or shrubs next to buildings that can act as a reflective surface. The last step is making sure evergreens are sufficiently watered prior to the soil freeze up.

To help retain soil moisture and reduce root competition from grass, add a 3- to 4-inch thick layer of wood mulch around your evergreens. Be sure the mulch ring is slightly beyond the drip line of the tree, and keep mulch a few

(Tree care continued on Page 7)