

Reliable power brought to you by mapping technology

If the power has ever gone out, you probably wondered why.

The most likely culprits are the weather, accidents where someone/something hit a power pole, or squirrels (or other curious, pesky animals). But the cause isn't nearly as pressing as how long it will take to bring the power back.

Making sure safe, reliable electricity continues to flow to your homes, farms, and businesses is Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's top priority. One of the ways electricity is kept reliable and resilient is through technological improvements made over the years.

Steele-Waseca and Great River Energy (GRE), the co-op's wholesale power provider, use the latest in geographic information systems (GIS) to get a bird's eye view of our system. This mapping technology allows us to see where outages occur and assess potential issues on our systems. The information is used to make decisions that will reduce the number of times your power goes out.

GIS also allows us to use large amounts of data to predict where there might be areas of improvement on our grids.

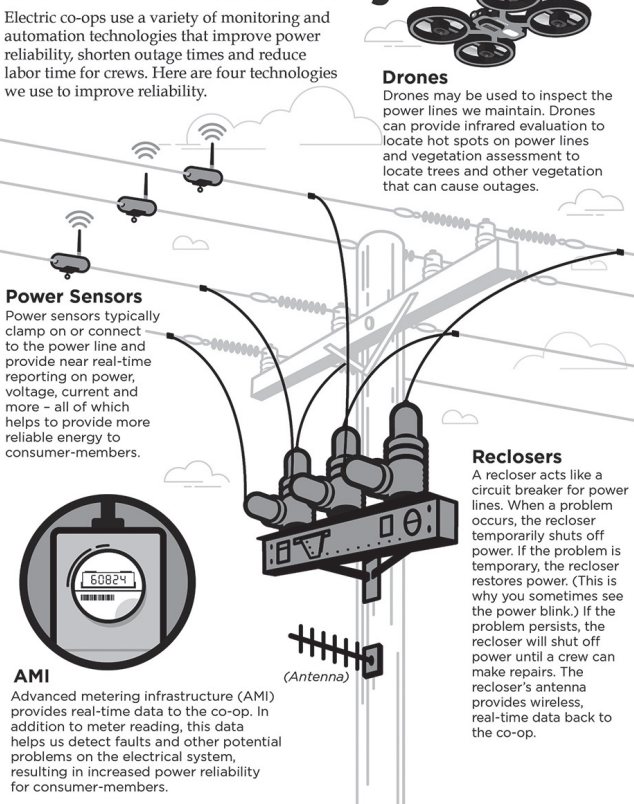
"We use GIS from transmission planning all the way to operations and maintenance," said Jeff Grussing,

GRE's leader of GIS development. "From planning a power line to dispatching crews for maintenance, GIS is a valuable resource that helps ensure a reliable, resilient grid. Everyone in Great River Energy's transmission division uses GIS, which allows us to visualize the data so we can use locational intelligence to make decisions about where to make improvements or where we might see concerns."

When the power does go out, GIS allows operators to see the fleet of vehicles in the area, making for a faster recovery time, and allocating location-appropriate resources. This means pinpointing exact locations of fleet materials to allow for safe, fast, and cost-effective power restoration.

The use of GIS is just one way Steele-Waseca and GRE work together to keep reliable electricity flowing to your home.

Monitoring the Line for Reliability



a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric January 2021

Capital Credit Refund

Please check this month's billing statement for your 2020 capital credit refund. If you have any questions regarding your refund, please call Hlou Yang at Steele-Waseca during regular business hours.



Wholesale rates to decline slightly in 2021

Great River Energy's average wholesale electric rate projected to decrease 0.2 percent

Strategic decisions to position its power supply portfolio and control costs have Great River Energy (GRE) poised to begin 2021 in a strong financial position while reducing rates to member-owners.

Great River Energy's average 2021 wholesale rate is projected to decrease 0.2 percent from the budgeted rate for 2020. The cooperative's 2021 revenue requirement is budgeted to be \$943.1 million, down more than \$32.2 million from the 2020 budget.

"Great River Energy employees have found creative ways to reduce expenses and stabilize wholesale rates while keeping electric service safe and reliable," said GRE Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Michelle Strobel.



GRE's 2021 budget includes approximately \$95 million of spending for new capital projects. Great River Energy budgeted for a margin of \$23 million in 2021, and expects to return more than \$20 million to member-owners through patronage capital retirements.

Great River Energy projects wholesale electric rates to decline significantly over the next 20 years, driven primarily by strategic decisions to improve the economic efficiency of its power supply portfolio. 24395

GRE plans to shut down the 1,151-megawatt Coal Creek Station power plant in the second half of 2022. Coal Creek Station has been a critical part of Great River Energy's power supply portfolio for decades, but it has lost value compared to other alternatives in recent years.

RESOLVE TO SAVE ENERGY

Make a home energy resolution and reap the benefits all year long!

Three easy ways to save energy:

1 Install a programmable thermostat.  
You could save an estimated \$180 annually!

2 Ditch incandescents.  
Did you know incandescent bulbs release 90% of their energy as heat? Use LEDs instead.

3 Reduce energy used for water heating.  
Lower your water heater's temp and consider installing low-flow showerheads.

Source: energy.gov

inside connections

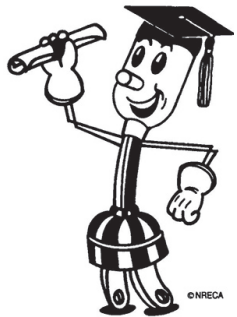
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Stray voltage questions  
Sparks in brief
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Preparing a winter driving survival kit  
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4-Seasons Vacations
- 7 Ad Connection  
2021 SWCE calendars
- 8 Monitoring line reliability  
Energy-saving ideas

calendar of events

- January
- 1 New Year's Day  
SWCE office is closed
  - 17 Benjamin Franklin's b-day
  - 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric awarding scholarships to qualified high school graduates in 2021

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is providing \$500 scholarships to qualified high school seniors graduating in 2021.



One scholarship will be presented at each participating school. Scholarship eligibility required by Steele-Waseca includes:

1. Applicants must currently be high school seniors, who will be continuing their education on a full-time basis at a two- or four-year technical school or college.

2. Applicants must be dependents

of a Steele-Waseca member.

Each participating school is responsible for administering any other eligibility requirements, the selection of their school's Steele-Waseca scholarship recipient, and the disbursement of the scholarship dollars from Steele-Waseca.

All eligible high school seniors should contact their guidance counselor or scholarship committee for more information.

In 2020, Steele-Waseca awarded \$500 scholarships to 15 high school senior graduates. The co-ops scholarship program has awarded \$181,750 in scholarships since the program was established in 1954. A portion of the funds to support these scholarships come from unclaimed capital credit equity.





the power of human connections

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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](http://www.swce.coop)  
Email: [swce@swce.coop](mailto:swce@swce.coop)  
Fax: 507-446-4242

 Find us on Facebook

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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*

Even though I work at an electric cooperative, like most people, I don’t think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and to enjoy other modern conveniences that electricity allows. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the last several months, we have been likely using more energy around the home. And yet, we still expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we really think about electricity is when the power goes out, or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our modern lifestyle every day, it’s a great value, especially when compared to other common services and expenses. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat, unlike most other consumer goods.

Like many of you, I have a smartphone to stay connected, subscribe for access to watch my favorite programs and movies on television. Many of us consider these necessities for modern day life. We can see what we’re getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services.

In contrast, when we use electricity, we don’t necessarily “see” all that we’re getting for our money. But considering what electricity does for us, it’s a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets.

For comparison, consider the average rent increase was nearly 4% (from 2014-19) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of medical care was increased 3% during this time, and education was not far behind at 2.6%. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4%.

The bottom line: electricity brings everyday value. In fact, the average Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric member during 2019 (as 2020 has yet to be completed as of this column) had power for 8,751.42 hours out of a possible 8,760 hours. That’s a reliability rate of 99.9%. Considering electricity is something we all use around the clock, I’m proud of our track record. At the same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions, and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid.

Steele-Waseca provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. And as your trusted energy advisor, we want to help you save energy and money. 32816

We recognize the last several months have been challenging for many of our members, and we’re here to help. If you have questions about your account, or are looking for ways to save energy at home, please give us a call during regular business hours, or visit our website at [swce.coop](http://swce.coop).

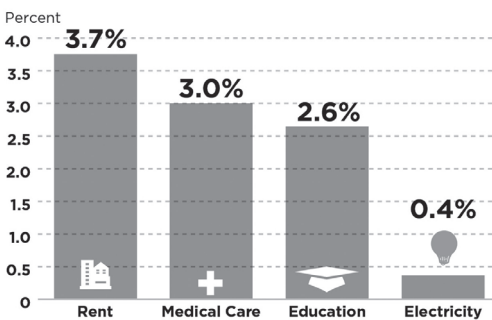
Steele-Waseca is *your* electric co-op and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of the communities within our service area. That’s everyday value.

*Syd*

## ELECTRICITY REMAINS A GOOD VALUE

The cost of powering your home rises slowly when compared to other common expenses. Looking at price increases over the last five years, it’s easy to see electricity remains a good value!

Average Annual Price Increase 2014-2019



## ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)  
**MIXED GRASS HAY**, no rain, sm. sq. 210-1158.

**WOOD-BURNING STOVE**, enameled cast iron, 29" high x 25" width, \$500. 334-9823.

**TIKKA 3 243 WIN. BLUED SENTH**, new in bx, \$625; **12-GA. REM. 870 LAM**, \$400; **32-RDS 444 MARVIN**, \$45; **42-RDS 300 WEATHERBY MAG**, \$70; **43-RDS OF 25 AUTO**, \$15. 461-1191.

**MOLDBOARD** for a Case IH plow, \$175/obo; **4X5 ROUND GRASS HAY BALES & CORNSTALK BALES**. 451-5131.

**BAND SAW** w/legs; **PENDLETON WOOL SHIRTS**, size 2X; **OLD BX SPRING** w/coils, full sz & a twin sz; **MEN’S T-SHIRTS**, sz 2X, some plain, some w/ pockets, some w/buttons, many nvr worn. 437-1061.

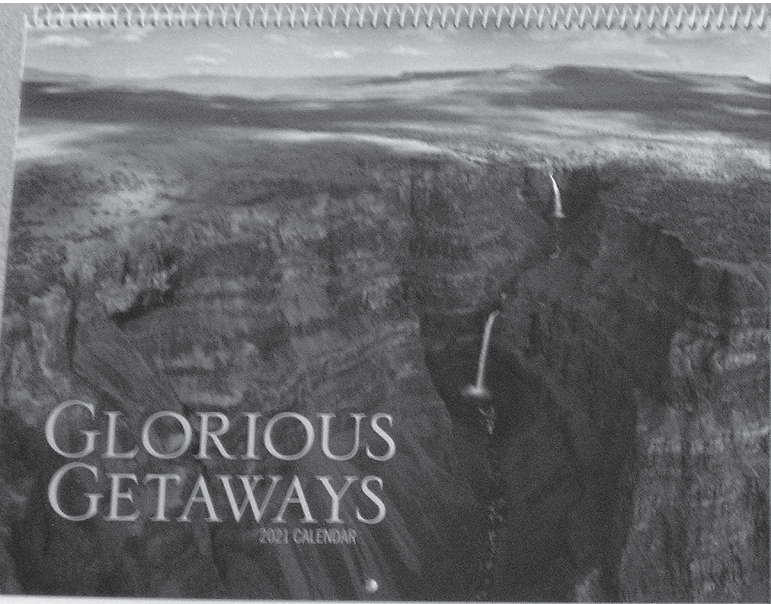
**3-6’ ALUM. RAMPS**, \$40; **4-BIKE CARRIER**, 2" rec., \$150; **BENCH GRINDR**, \$20; **PORT. AIR COMPRESSR**, vint., \$40; **BUCKET HTR**, \$20; **HORSE TRLR WATER TANK**, corner style, \$40. 456-8893.

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.

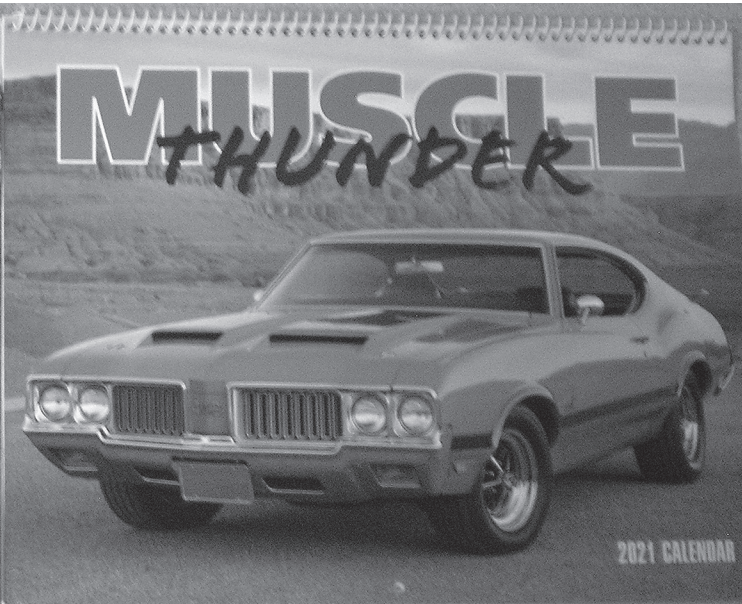
(ACRE contributions continued from Page 3)

*NRECA Action Committee for Rural Electrification®*, or *ACRE*, are not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. Contributions to *ACRE* are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. You have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Federal law prohibits contributions from foreign nationals who lack permanent resident status. Any contribution guidelines presented are merely suggestions. You are free to contribute more or less than the suggested amounts, or not at all. Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric has 371 employees, directors, and members participating in *ACRE*. 88366


- ☐ REGULAR MEMBER: \$2.08 PER MONTH (\$25 PER YEAR)
- ☐ CENTURY CLUB MEMBER: \$8.33 PER MONTH (\$100 PER YEAR)
- ☐ PRESIDENT’S CLUB MEMBER: \$41.66 PER MONTH (\$500 PER YEAR)\*
- ☐ OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_




**GLORIOUS GETAWAYS**  
2021 CALENDAR



**MUSCLE THUNDER**  
2021 CALENDAR



**Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric**  
2411 West Bridge Street, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060  
507-451-7340 / 800-526-3514 • Fax: 507-446-4242 • [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop)  
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



**Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric**  
2411 West Bridge Street, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060  
507-451-7340 / 800-526-3514 • Fax: 507-446-4242 • [www.swce.coop](http://www.swce.coop)  
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

### 2021 calendars available

FREE 2021 Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric (SWCE) calendars are available at the co-op’s office, 2411 W. Bridge St., Owatonna, while supplies last. With the office being closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, members wishing to obtain a calendar or calendars will need to call the SWCE office at 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514 once they’re in the main entrance parking lot, and meet office personnel at the door to obtain their calendar(s) during regular business hours.



ad connection

give away

MAPLE & WILLOW, cut up, you haul. 527-2307.

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.

wanted

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

JOBS for construction, yard wrk & others. 213-4060.

2-WHEEL CAR DOLLY w/ramps & straps in any shape. 301-5221.

SAVANNA GOATS. 451-3678.

ESTATES; VINTAGE VEHICLES; VINTAGE ADVERTISING, paying cash for each. 456-0628.

OLD STAMPS for my collection, new or used, will pay fair price for them, can meet in a safe place. 676-0825.

7' WOODS ROTARY-CUTTER or other makes. 456-7614.

PICKUP, 4x4, 1/2 ton, 10-yr-old +/- w/low miles. 451-2722.

(3) BANTAM CHICKENS: (2) hens, (1) rooster; 14' ALUM. BOAT & TRAILER. 663-1275.

USEABLE REAR TRACTOR TIRES, 11.2x36 or 12.4x36. 651-271-9077.

JUNKERS OR REPAIRABLES, top \$ pd for cars & trucks. 332-2300.

SET OF 18.4-38 JD TIRES & RIMS; 1970s JD SNOWMOBILE HELMET. 581-0470.

WILL ASSIST PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES w/personal cares, exercise programs, meal prep, house-keeping, errands, 40+ yrs experience. 456-0076.

FORD SKID STEER, diesel. 330-1849.

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

BARN, GRAINERY &/OR OUTBUILDINGS, I remove to repurpose the lumber; OLD TIN; BARN SIDING; LUMBER. 330-0258/Tim.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

for sale

BLK ANGUS STEERS, BULL, HEIFER. 451-3678.

1997 BLAZER, 4x4; 1997 BUICK LESABRE; 2000 PONTIAC BONNEVILLE. 317-2824.

BRIGGS & STRATTON LAWN MOWER MOTOR, 17.5 gross hp, runs gd, \$175. 583-6679.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

TOMMY LIFT, gd cond., \$300; CARTOP CARRIER, \$35; PET KENNEL, large, \$30; 4.5" GRINDER, new, \$10. 455-3881.

(9) BIG CHUNKS OF OAK, 18" across, 24" long, best offer. 451-5456 after 5 p.m.

2014 BUICK LACROSSE, mint cond., 19,500 mi. 583-2462.

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

HAYFIELD WINDOWS, purchased in 2015-16, like new, (3) crank out w/screens/24"x72", (1) 43"x31" (fixed), (5) 24"x31.25" (fixed), \$850 for all or selling separately. 630-661-6005.

MINI STORAGE UNITS FOR RENT. 456-1460.

'08 POLARIS SPORTSMAN 800 4-WHEELER; '90 POLARIS INDY SNOWMOBILE; '95 POLARIS XLT SNOWMOBILE (all in vry gd cond.) 391-5848.

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

TV ANTENNA w/UHF-VHF, \$60; CEDAR MAILBOX POST, new, \$15. 334-3804.

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

5TH WHEEL HITCH, plate style, clean, not rusty, \$250. 491-4565.

RENTAL, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$125. 451-7946.

(34) FEEDER STEERS, all natural Blk Angus, Baldys, Hereford, top blood lines, \$1.50. 838-7721.

GRASS HAY BALES, sm. sq. 334-6377.

DRIVE TOILET SEAT RISER w/removable arms, new (never used), for elongated toilet, \$5. 451-1713.

FIREWOOD: \$75/qtr cord, \$140/half cord, \$260/full cord, Nfld area. 651-357-5092/Paul.

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.

(2) LEVEL LAKEFRONT CABINS, Lk Mazaska, not leased land, \$189,900 & \$224,900 respectively; 74 SHARED ACRES. 763-218-2948/txt questions.

LADIES SAS LEATHER TIE SHOES, like new, made in USA, great for walking. 451-7626.

FUEL TANKS, new, 550-gal./\$1250, 1000-gal./\$1550, pumps avail. at extra charge, delivery avail. 383-1215.

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

IH 1420 COMBINE & CORN HEAD, narrow 4-row, \$4500/firm; FORD ROLL OFF, 1-ton, \$3500/firm; (75) BALES, sm. sq. grass, \$3.25/bale. 456-1181.

COUNTRY HOME FOR RENT, (4) bdrm, 7 mi. east & north of Mdfd, no pets, no smoking, exc. cond., double garage, avail. 12/1/20. 456-3016.

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

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

1989 FORD TRUCK, 4WD lock hubs, Hi Lo manual trans., chains, topper. 663-1132.

(2) QUARTZ HEAT LAMPS, 30" w/stands & spare bulb; GRAM SCALE w/weights. 413-3135.

(40) 5X6 ROUND BALES & CROP GRASS HAY, \$55/each; (15) FEEDER PIGS, \$1 per lb. 451-3456.

THOMAS KINKADE PERPETUAL CALENDAR, (12) plates & tiles. 384-3406.

(66) GRASS HAY BALES, sm. sq., no rain; (2) SCHWINN STINGRAY ORANGE COUNTY CHOPPER BIKES. 456-3084.

CROSLEY WASHER & DRYER; FRIGIDAIRE REFRIG. & STOVE; TABLE & CHAIRS. 213-0443.

EDISON PHONOGRAPH; RECORD CABINET PLAYER; RECORDS W/CABINET; SINGER SEWING MACHINE; TABLE & CHAIRS (all vintage). 451-0653.

(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel

Call 4-Seasons at 800-328-4298 to learn more about their tour information.

4 Seasons Vacations, Inc.

TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.

ACRE connection

NRECA'S PAC raises record amount for House, Senate candidates

by Erin Kelly, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) staff writer

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's political action committee (PAC) overwhelmingly supported winners of the 2020 congressional elections, with 96% of House candidates and 86% of Senate candidates backed by the PAC emerging victorious so far.

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification, better known as ACRE®, also set a new fundraising record in the 2020 election cycle despite the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation of in-person events. With two months of ACRE receipts remaining to report, the committee has raised \$4,240,385 to date in 2019-20, said ACRE Director Gabe Snow. That compares with \$4,120,929 in the 2015-16 cycle and \$4,043,784 in 2017-18.

"It's nice to be able to report that, cycle-over-cycle, we continue to grow as we continue to see enthusiasm among the eligible membership to participate in the program," Snow said.

Despite ACRE's record-setting success this cycle, the amount of contributions slowed in 2020 compared to last year because of the pandemic.

The percentage of ACRE-backed candidates who won this year's races could change slightly as results continue to be tabulated. There are still three House candidates supported by ACRE whose contests have not been called. Two Senate races in Georgia will be decided by special runoff elections in January. So far, however, the percentage of ACRE-backed candidates who won is higher than it was in 2018—94% of House candidates and 81% of Senate candidates.

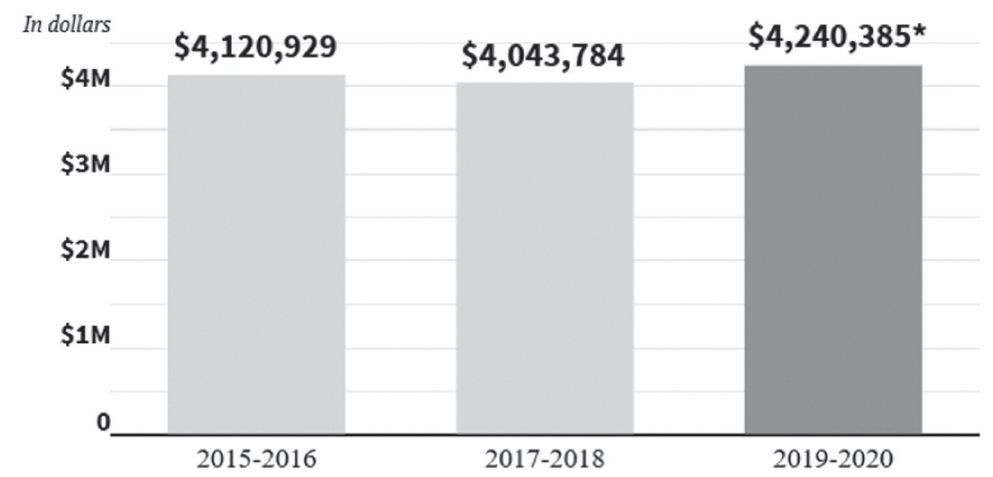
ACRE supported 329 House candidates: 165 Republicans and 164 Democrats. Of those, 319 have won so far and seven have lost. 1021765

In the Senate, 25 of the 29 candidates supported by ACRE have won their races so far, and two have lost. ACRE supported 22 Republican Senate candidates and seven Democrats. Republicans had nearly twice as many senators up for re-election this year as Democrats.

ACRE supports candidates who support issues important to electric cooperatives, which tends to result in ACRE largely supporting incumbents. The PAC does not donate to presidential

ACRE RAISES RECORD AMOUNT FOR CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification, known as ACRE®, set a new fundraising record in the 2019-2020 congressional election cycle despite obstacles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



\*Total for the current cycle is through October 2020. Additional donations are expected through the end of the year.

Source: ACRE

candidates.

NRECA CEO Jim Matheson said NRECA and its members will continue to work in a bipartisan way with the new Congress, which takes office in January. He pointed out that co-ops have been successful even in a divided government. NRECA and its members won passage last year of two major priorities—the RURAL Act and the SECURE Act—with support from a Democratic-led House and a Republican-led Senate.

"We have been able to overcome divided government with our bipartisan approach, and we need to keep that up going forward," Matheson said.

Because of the pandemic, Snow and ACRE Deputy Director Amy Lewis had to cancel about two dozen trips they would normally have taken this year to help co-ops and statewide associations with fundraising and grassroots efforts. While in-person events remain essential to ACRE's future efforts, Snow and Lewis said they believe virtual candidate forums are here to stay.

"Our ability to engage with candidates running for Congress really saw

a shift as they got more comfortable doing virtual events," Snow said. "We were able to include folks back in the congressional districts, including our co-op members, eligible employees or board members, without having to fly them to D.C., or having someone from NRECA travel to the district. If we can continue to provide those opportunities in a post-pandemic environment, I think that would be beneficial. It doesn't replace the in-person events, but it will augment them."

ACRE receives voluntary grassroots contributions—which average about \$65 a year—from more than 35,000 eligible co-op employees, directors, and consumer-members in 47 states, Snow said. In general, hourly employees are not eligible to contribute because of federal laws designed to prevent workers from feeling coerced by their bosses to give. However, those employees are allowed to contribute if they are co-op consumer members, Snow said.

(Editor's Note: Contributions to the ACRE contributions continued on Page 7)



## cookin' connection

### Apple Cider Syrup

Shirley Giles Faribault

- |                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1/2 c. sugar                    | 1 T. lemon juice      |
| 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon        | 2 T. butter/margarine |
| 1 c. apple cider or apple juice | 4 tsp. cornstarch     |

In small saucepan stir together the sugar, cornstarch, and cinnamon. Then stir in cider and lemon juice. Cook and stir 2 minutes more. Remove from heat and stir in butter. Makes 1 1/2 cups. Enjoy with pancakes, French toast, etc.

Please use a 3 x 5 card when submitting your recipe. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$7 energy credit. 1077674



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's solar subscribers will see a 23 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during November 2020. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://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.

## December issue of Sparks



**Numbers found:**  
Saul/Sarah Lockerby  
Lisa Qualey  
Mark Wegner  
**Numbers not found:**  
Jason Glass  
Belinda Chapman



## 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](http://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.

- **November temps** – The average high temperature for November was 47° F, while the average low was 29° F. This resulted in 801.5 Heating Degree Days (HDDs) and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 35° F and average low of 23° F, which resulted in 1,078 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

- **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – 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 [swce.coop](http://swce.coop). For more information or to receive a rebate request form, phone Cindy Butterfield at 800-526-3514.

- **SWCE'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**

LIVESTOCK OWNERS

If you have questions or concerns regarding stray voltage in your livestock confinement building(s), or are planning an addition, or constructing a new one, call Steele-Waseca at 507-451-7340 or 800-526-3514. Steele-Waseca will work with you and your electrician to eliminate potential stray voltage problems. You may also visit: [www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com](http://www.minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com).

## health & safety connection



## Be safe

### Stay clear of downed power lines

NEVER TOUCH A DOWNED POWER LINE.

Always assume it is energized and call 911 immediately.

POWERFUL STORMS can damage power lines. If you see a downed power line:

- Stay at least 50 feet away from it and assume it is energized. The ground may also be energized making the entire area extremely dangerous.
- Never touch anything that is touching a downed power line. It is as dangerous as the line itself.
- If a power line falls on your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside your vehicle until help arrives.

### Purchasing counterfeit chargers have consequences

Whether you need a replacement or just want an extra phone charger, sometimes it's tempting to purchase an off-priced option rather than the expensive charger provided by the manufacturer. However, purchasing a bargain charger could have disastrous consequences, not just for your phone, but for your safety.

Check out Underwriters Laboratories (UL) library of resources to help identify and avoid dangerous counterfeit electrical products at [besafebuyreal.ul.org](http://besafebuyreal.ul.org).  
(Courtesy: ESFI)

## Making a Winter Driving Survival Kit

Use an empty three-pound coffee can or any similar container with a plastic cover to store the following items:

- Small candles and matches
- Small, sharp knife and plastic spoons
- Red bandanna or cloth
- Pencil and paper
- Large plastic garbage bag
- Safety pins
- Whistle
- Snacks
- Cell phone adapter to plug into lighter
- Plastic flashlight and spare batteries

Reverse batteries in the flashlight to avoid accidental switching and burnout. Warm batteries before using them. Store safety items in the passenger compartment when severe winter weather threatens in case the trunk is jammed or frozen shut. Choose small packages of food that you can eat hot or cold.

- Suggested food items:**
- Raisins in small packets
  - Semi-sweet chocolate in pieces for sharing
  - Miniature candy bars
  - Chewing gum
  - Wrapped hard candies
  - Food bars
  - Canned soup, meat and poultry

- Store bulky and heavy items in an accessible place:**
- 30-foot cord to use as homing line when you must exit the vehicle
  - Booster cables
  - Basic tools
  - Sand, cat litter or other grit in a plastic milk carton
  - Shovel
  - Tow cables or chain
  - Sleeping bag or blankets
  - Road flares and reflectors
  - Snowmobile suit and heavy boots

## Emergency Phone Calls

If you become stranded in any part of Minnesota, and you have a cell phone, call 911 to summon help. In other states, you may be able to dial 911 or 0 to reach an operator. When you talk with authorities:

- Provide information on your location, condition of all persons in the vehicle and the problem you are experiencing
- Follow instructions; you may be told to stay where you are and wait for rescuers
- Do not hang up until you know who you have spoken with and what will happen next
- If you must leave your vehicle, write down your name, address, phone number and destination. Place the piece of paper inside the front windshield for someone to see

