

Pilot project tests “smart” Wi-Fi water heater load control device

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric among co-ops participating in project

Great River Energy (GRE) and four member-owner cooperatives began a three-year pilot project in December 2020 to test a new “smart” Wi-Fi- or cellular-based water heater load control device that promises benefits to the cooperatives, member-owners, and GRE.

The device is manufactured by Aquanta. It offers cooperatives a high-tech, low-cost technology for water heater load control programs, which allow cooperatives to turn off power to member-consumers’ water heaters and reduce energy use in peak times.

Steele-Waseca’s Steve Nordahl said the co-op purchased 100 devices in December and have a number installed.

“This technology is much more cost-effective than other load control devices. There are savings on both installation costs and annual operating fees,” Nordahl said. “Our members also benefit. They can control the water heater themselves from an app on their smartphones and it will alert them if there is a leak.”

One purpose of the pilot is to prove that load control devices connected via the internet are just as reliably connected as devices connected through the utilities’ radio frequency network, which is the system that connects the cooperatives’ advanced metering infrastructure.

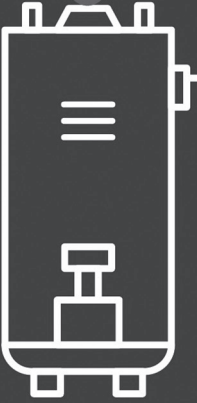
“There is some hesitance about Wi-Fi devices, but they are well documented to have high connectivity,” Nordahl said. 115750

“Members will have insight into the temperature of the water inside the water heater so we can see how ‘charged’ they are, like a battery. This helps us better balance our fleet of water heaters,” said John Reinhart, GRE’s demand response & technologies lead.

Member cooperatives need to have their own load control devices when GRE retires its old Yukon load management system in 2026.

“This fits with the vision we had when we selected our demand response management system, which offers tremendous flexibility,” Reinhart said. “We knew our load control assets could take on many forms based on what members

AQUANTA LOAD CONTROL DEVICES



Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative **100**
Runestone Electric Association **105**
Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric **100**
Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative **100**

want.”

Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative, Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative, and Runestone Electric Association are also participating in the project.

ENERGY WISE MN



OPEN THE TAP TO SAVINGS
Water-saving products are 50% off, now through April 28, 2021

Water-saving products, such as showerheads and faucet aerators, are engineered to lower water use without affecting your water stream or pressure. Installed in your home, they'll help you not only use less water every day, but also less energy to heat your water. It's a true win-win you'll notice in your utility bills. **And now for a limited time, you can get water-saving products at 50% off!**

Visit energywisemnstore.com

If you wish to reduce clutter and add convenience, you may elect to receive an email that your bill is available to view online. Log in to your online account at www.swce.coop, click on the “Alerts” tab, and check “Bill Notification,” and “Electronic Only.” Enter your email address and click “Update” to receive your bill notification by email instead of in the mail.

Northfield Area Home and Garden show
Lifestyle • Health • Leisure

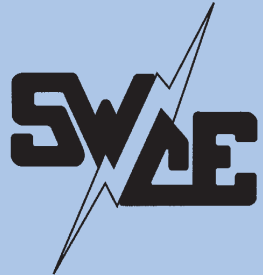
Saturday, May 15, 2021 | 9:00 – 3:00
The Dundas Dome

Main Event Sponsor: 



Only use light bulbs that meet (or are below) the maximum wattage listed on the lamp or fixture. Exceeding the maximum wattage can cause overheating and potential fire hazards.

Safety starts with you.
MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric May 2021

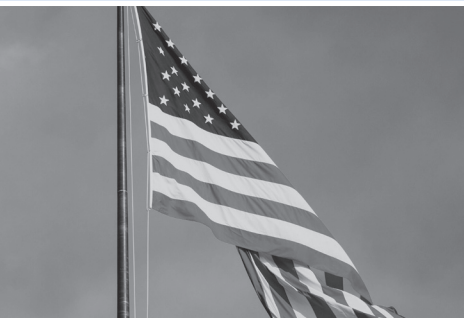
inside connections

- 2** Manager Connection
- 3** 2021 SWCE board of director nominees; SWCE receives USDA loan
- 4** Cookin’ Connection; SWCE community solar update; Steele County Tip Line
- 5** Practice safety with DIY projects; National Electrical Safety Month
- 6** Ad Connection; 4-Seasons Vacations
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- 8** SWCE participating in pilot project for load control device; Water-saving product promotion; Nfld Home & Garden Show

calendar of events

May

- 1** Law Day; Loyalty Day
- 4** National Teacher Day
- 6** National Day of Prayer
- 6-12** National Nurses Week
- 9** Mother’s Day
- 15** Peace Officers Memorial Day; Armed Forces Day; Minnesota fishing opener
- 17** Income tax filing deadline
- 22-28** National Safe Boating Wk
- 31** Memorial Day 31938
SWCE office closed



NEVER FORGET
MEMORIAL DAY 2021
WE HONOR ALL THE SACRIFICES MADE BY OUR HEROES

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric prepares for drive-thru annual meeting

Due to the current state of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric will be conducting their 85th annual meeting as a drive-thru event at their headquarters in Owatonna.

The co-op’s drive-thru annual meeting will be Tuesday, June 8, from 4 to 6 p.m., at 2411 West Bridge Street, Owatonna. The meeting is open to Steele-Waseca member-owners, and their guests.

For those members wishing to nominate a write-in board director candidate, they are asked to arrive at 3:30 p.m., June 8. Director candidate profiles are featured on Page 3 in this edition of *Sparks*.

Registration cards for the annual meeting will be mailed to members during the last week of May. **Please bring the registration card with you if you are planning to attend the drive-thru**

annual meeting. This year there won’t be any preregistration requirements.

For your safety, please stay in your vehicle and roll down your window at the meeting. Steele-Waseca employees and board directors will wear masks and gloves while helping you. Please follow the vehicle in front of you once you arrive. The drive-thru lanes are being increased to five for this year’s meeting.

Steele-Waseca members attending the drive-thru annual meeting on June



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is inviting their member-owners to the co-op’s annual meeting Tuesday, June 8, starting at 4 p.m., at its headquarters in Owatonna. The photo above is from last year’s drive-thru annual meeting conducted Sept. 21, 2020. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this year’s annual meeting will be a drive-thru event, and will feature five lanes for members instead of four used last year.

8 will be given a ballot to cast their vote in their vehicle, and receive co-op promotional products and certificates. Election results will be announced in the July 2021 *Sparks* newsletter, and in area media news releases.

In lieu of food shelf collections, Steele-Waseca will make a financial contribution to area food shelves on the member’s behalf. **Please do not bring a food shelf item to the annual meeting this year.** ~~SWCE~~

Please inform Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric if you have changed your phone number. There are times your co-op needs to reach you, whether it is to inform you about a planned outage, to learn if your power has been restored following a storm, or if it’s regarding your account. You may update your account by phone 507-451-7340 or toll-free 800-526-3514, or by email at swce@swce.coop.

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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



Board of Directors

PJ Duchene District 1
Geraldine Lienke District 2
Duane Edwardson, *Chaplain* . District 3
Dennis Ringhofer District 4
Rodney Krell District 5

Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Gary Wilson District 6
President, GRE Director

John Beal, *Vice President* . . . District 7
Ronald Sommers District 8

Renee Malecha District 9
Secretary/Treasurer

Management

Syd Briggs *General Manager*

Division Managers

Darla DeVries *Office*
David Lundberg *Finance*

Dan Meier *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

We all want the best for the people in our lives—our family, friends, community and others.

That includes you, our member-owners at Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric.

It's why we make safety a top priority at Steele-Waseca, and devote time and energy to make everyone aware of how to stay safe around electricity.

Our line crew was called out toward the end of March for a reported vehicle collision with a Steele-Waseca power pole. The situation could have turned out deadly had the motorist attempted to leave their vehicle and touched energized lines or equipment. The adjacent graphic serves as a reminder if you ever get into a similar situation. 1016384

As the weather gets more pleasant, more outdoor projects will become a priority. If you're working with tall ladders, cleaning gutters, or undertaking other projects outside, be mindful to look up and safely stay away from overhead power lines, especially those connected to your home.

If a project involves digging, be sure to call 811 a few working days in advance to get underground utilities marked.

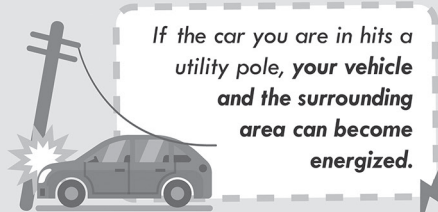
Help children understand the importance of staying away from electric utility equipment, to never climb trees near power lines, and to fly kites in wide open spaces, safely away from power lines.

Know how to prepare for and stay safe after storms that could leave behind hidden electrical hazards, such as downed power lines, and submerged electrical devices.

We don't want anyone to take a chance that could end in tragedy, and to help, Steele-Waseca continues their participation in the Safe Electricity program. We encourage you to visit SafeElectricity.org, or utilize the link on the co-op's website at swce.coop. The site provides life-saving information presented in videos, interactive games for children, online teacher resources, and more.

We have the safest, most reliable electric system of any country in the world, but we aren't content to rest on those laurels. We value the safety and well-being of our member-owners and Steele-Waseca employees, and we'll continue working to educate everyone on important safety

KNOW WHAT TO DO if in an Auto Accident with Power Lines



Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.



1. Do NOT leave the car,
and warn others to stay away.

2. Call 911 to have
the utility notified.



3. Wait until a utility professional
has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason
to exit the vehicle is
if it's on fire.

If the car is on fire, jump clear
of the vehicle: with feet together,
and without touching the car and
the ground at the same time.



Continue to **hop away**
with your **feet together**
as far as you can.



Learn more at
SafeElectricity.org

considerations.

After all, every great day starts with safety.

Syd

ad connection

(For Sale ads continued from Page 6)

NORINCO PARATROOPER SKS, 16.5", 7.62x39 w/ box, plus scope, 30/clip, over 1000 rounds, pkg deal, \$1500. 369-8519.

(3) **HAND-CRANK OIL BARREL PUMPS**, \$15/each; **MERCURY VAPOR LIGHT**, \$20; (2) **BOAT SEATS** w/pedestals, \$20/each. 465-8566.

JD 14T BALER, \$450. 334-6334.

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

200-BU. GRAVITY WAGON w/running gear, \$395/cash; **18' GLENCOE FIELD CULTIVATOR**, 3-point, \$295. 465-8483.

TORO WHEEL HORSE 522XI TRACTOR, 48" & 60" deck, rear vac bagger, 44" 2-stage snowblower, weights & chains, \$3000. 330-5413.

TORO PULL-BEH. LAWN RAKE, \$150. 384-7005.

STORAGE BLDG, 11x14 on skids; **PUSH LAWN MOWER**; **ELEC. FENCER**, new/nvr used; **TRACTOR-STYLE LAWN SPRINKLER**; **8X16 HAY RACK & RUNNING GEAR**. 456-0259.

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

BLK & DECKER CORDLESS ELEC. LAWN MOWER w/bagger, mulching blades, \$75; **ELKHART ALTO SAXOPHONE**, plays well. 340-0506.

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.

Annual Cogeneration Notification to Membership

In compliance with Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's (SWCE's) adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, SWCE is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers, whom satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. SWCE is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the SWCE Board. Interested members should contact SWCE, 2411 W. Bridge St., PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060-0485, or call 507-451-7340 or toll-free 800-526-3514.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below.

Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

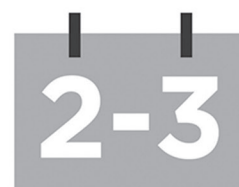
1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start.



2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project.



ad connection

give away

FIELD ROCK. 334-7756.

BABY TREND JOGGING STROLLER. 383-5309.

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

2-ROW CORN PLANTER; SMALL 3-PT DISC. 334-0188.

EXTERIOR PAINTING JOBS: outbuildings, barns, houses, etc. 308-8556.

GUNS; AMMO; METAL SIGNS; TACKLE; ES-TATES. 279-0431/Mark.

TO LEASE SOME LAND FOR PHEASANT HUNTING, DEER HUNTING, OR BOTH, I live in Steele County, so looking at Steele or surrounding counties in the area. 213-0610/Curt.

WILL DO TILLING, PLOWING, BLADE & BUCKET WORK w/compact tractor. 451-6046.

1988-1994 TOYOTA TACOMA 22R, 5-spd, runs or parts. 456-7907.

PASTURE TO RENT for cattle, no pasture is too small. 456-0315.

DRIVERS w/Class A CDL & tanker, must take drug & alcohol test. 456-1181.

FERTILE CHICKEN EGGS for hatching, layer type. 334-6377.

FORD DIESEL SKID STEER. 330-1849.

LAWN SERVICE JOBS. 651-354-4405/Tim.

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

USED ROUND PEN FOR HORSES, & YEARLING-SIZED SHOW HALTER, FLY BOOTS, FLY MASK, etc. 210-7044.

JUNKERS & REPAIRABLES, cars or trucks, top \$ paid. 332-2300.

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

OLD TYPEWRITERS for repair purposes. 339-8577.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

for sale

16' CRESTLINER BASS BOAT w/60-hp Mercury motor, tilt & trailer, \$3000; ALUM. BOAT LIFT, for listed boat; JD 4020 FENDERS, \$400/pr; JD 4020 404 ENGINE & JD 466 ENG., \$750/each. 330-3945.

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

HUSQVARNA 450 RANCHER CHAIN SAW, 2-yrs-old, runs great, spare chains, sharpened, extra air filters, & spark plug, \$225. 414-403-3845.

SUEVIA CUP WATERERS; 5' SS TUBE FEEDERS; LIVESTOCK RACK, factory made; 8' ALUM. PICK-UP TOPPER (perfect set up for upcoming 4-H or other livestock projects). 380-2759/Waldorf.

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Blmg Prairie. 456-2957.

TOMMY LIFT, gd cond., \$300; PET KENNEL, large, \$30; 4.5" GRINDER, new in box. 455-3881.

YOUNG LAYING HENS. 612-703-1316.

BELT-MOUNTED POWERED AIR-PURIFYING WELDING HELMET; LIFESTYLE 300 EXERCISE MACHINE, total body workout, multifunction program. 363-6696.

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

1997 CHEVY S-10 PICKUP, \$2995. 363-2593.

PDG MOBILITY FUZE T50 PWR TILT WHLCHAIR, gel seat, knee supports, leg curtain, foot platform, extra batt., used 2 yrs, \$1200; INVACARE TRACER EX2 WHLCHAIR, 3-y-o, used 1 yr, \$150. 475-0840.

OLDER RIDING MOWER, good seat, tires, & belts, needs battery, \$10. 676-0970.

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

(4) GOODYEAR EAGLE ULTRA GRIP TIRES on GMC, 6-hole factory wheels w/lug nuts, 245/55R18, near new cond., \$400. 612-685-8666.

1987 JD 7720 TITAN II, 2-wheel drive, hydro trans., reverser, chopper, 2-spd cylinder, newer 24.5-32 tires, always shedded, 4100 hrs, gd cond. 444-9048.

1981 HONDA CB650, \$1300. 456-4807.

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

(3) USED 300-GAL. DIESEL BARRELS & STANDS, you haul away, \$50/each/obo. 380-5054.

(7) PELLA WINDOWS, dbl. pane, new, var. sizes. 210-3782.

16' LUND FISHING BOAT, 25-hp Johnson motor, Minn Kota trolling motor, depth finder, all new swivel seats, other extras. 451-9445.

DAVID BRADLEY HAY RAKE; SCRAP IRON. 317-2824.

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

2005 SUZUKI BOULEVARD C50, 5500 mi., \$2500. 455-0022.

GRASS HAY, sm. sq. bales by Waldorf. 327-3672.

(2) BEAUTY SHOP DRYER CHAIRS. 334-5680.

SHINGLING & LIGHT CONSTRUCTION, free estimates. 456-0296.

MINI HORSE PAINT MARE, \$200/obo; MINI HORSE PAINT STALLION, 3-yrs-old, \$300/obo; 14' SYLVAN FISHING BOAT, alum., 20-hp Mercury motor, \$2000/obo. 226-4514.

STRAIGHT GRASS BALES; MIXED ALF. & GRASS BALES, sm. sq., \$4 per bale. 612-756-1131.

TV ANTENNA, new w/UHF-VHF, ideal for house, cabin, fish house, \$50; CEDAR MAILBOX POST, new, \$10. 334-3804.

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

COMMERCIAL VENDING MACH., \$350. 334-7177.

KATAHDIN HAIR SHEEP EWE & RAM LAMBS, great for beginners, 4-H, & organic. 451-2722.

REESE 18K 5TH WHEEL CAMPER HITCH, \$900; STRIKEMASTR 7" AUGER, elec., \$200. 210-6084.

DUMP TRUCK SERVICES, 15.5-ton capacity for all your hauling needs: rock, gravel, dirt, etc. 456-7774.

TROY-BILT TRAILBLAZER, 27", 4-hp Briggs & Stratton engine. 363-1274.

80-GAL. ALUM. FUEL TANK, \$175/obo; 55-GAL. STEEL DRUMS, \$5/each. 380-4291.
(For Sale ads continued on Page 7)

travel


Call 4-Seasons at 373-4705 or 373-2473, from 9 a.m. to noon Mondays, to learn more about their tour information.



TRUST OUR EXPERIENCE. LOVE YOUR VACATION.


swce 2021 board of director nominees

June 8




The 2021 Nominating Committee has selected the following nominees for the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors. Committee members include: Frank/Joyce Ahlman, Faribault; Lester/Jane Kroeger, Waseca; Ryan/Jenny Angelow, Faribault; Doug/Cindy Finch, Owatonna; Keith/Carol Schrader, Nerstrand; Glenn/Linda Wiesjhan, Owatonna; Jane Middlestadt, Owatonna; Jim/Patricia Pagel, Faribault; and Joseph Haberman, Blooming Prairie. The election of directors will take place during Steele-Waseca's 85th annual meeting, presently scheduled Tuesday, June 8, from 4 to 6 p.m., at the co-op's headquarters located at 2411 West Bridge Street in Owatonna. 1022728

District 1




Patrick J. (PJ) Duchene, incumbent, resides and operates the family farm in Wells Township, west of Faribault, with his wife, Randi. The couple has a son, Patrick, and daughter, Sumer. PJ also works as the ship foreman with the Rice County Highway Department. As for why he wishes to represent District 1 on the Steele-Waseca board of directors, PJ responded, "I feel I can be a very good voice for the member-owners of the co-op. I also enjoy learning new things. The last three years have went by so fast." He is a Credentialed Cooperative Director and is presently working on board leadership training. As for the qualities he brings to the board, PJ stated, "I'm young and outgoing. I enjoy being involved in my community."

District 3




Sylvia J. Archer, resides in rural New Richland of Berlin Township. She has been a member of Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric since 1995. Since retiring from Jostens in 2017, Sylvia has worked part time at Cabela's, Whispering Oak, and on the 2020 Census. In 2018, she campaigned for Steele County District 1 Commissioner, and visited every farmstead twice and was pleased to see so many farmers using solar. Sylvia has been an active volunteer in the community including at the Steele County Detention Center. She has held numerous positions in an organization focused on recovery where she has mentored women. Sylvia is currently chairing a committee in the same organization to do outreach to professionals in southern Minnesota. When asked why she wishes to represent District 3 on the Steele-Waseca board of directors, Sylvia wrote, "I'm concerned about the impact of carbon emissions on our environment. I'm pleased to see SWCE taking a leadership role in converting to solar and I want to continue to help work toward transitioning to healthy & cost-effective renewable energy. I also believe in working with other cooperatives so we can learn from each other. I would also like to see more gender-equity on the Board." As for the qualities she could bring to the board, Sylvia responded, "I take my commitments very seriously. I strive to educate myself and do the best, most knowledgeable job no matter what I do. I'm also known to think outside the box and connect the dots for more creative solutions."

District 5



Duane R. Edwardson, incumbent and chaplain on the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors. He has been a director since being elected in 2003. Duane, and his wife, Mary, are semi-retired farmers residing in rural Ellendale of Lemond Township. They have two daughters, Sheryl and Karen; a son, Alan; and six grandchildren. Duane and Mary are members of LeSueur River Church in Waseca County. Duane has served on several committees in the Steele County area. When asked why he wishes to represent District 3 on the SWCE board of directors, Duane wrote, "There are always new challenges working with our rural, urban and industrial loads. Our goal is to maintain a strong co-op while keeping the rates as low as possible with reliable service." Adding the SWCE board continues to work hard for its members. As for the qualities he brings to the board, Duane responded, "I will be a good listener to our members needs. We will implement new technology for our members to help them in their businesses and to promote good country living."

District 5



Rodney D. Krell, incumbent, and his wife, Michelle, reside in Blooming Prairie Township. He is presently the assistant secretary/treasurer on the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors. Rodney is a fourth generation farmer to operate the Krell family farm. Their diversified crop farm raises corn, soybeans, sweet corn, and peas. The couple has two adult children: son, Justin; and daughter, Jenna. Rodney currently is a member of the Blooming Prairie school board, Blooming Prairie Education Foundation board, Blooming Prairie FFA Alumni Association, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, and Steele County Agricultural Society. Rodney serves as Eucharistic Minister at his church. Honors include the 1996 Steele County Soil and Water Conservation Farmers of the Year, and the 2012 Steele County Farm Family of the Year.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric among nine co-op projects getting a boost from USDA's electric loans

Courtesy: Victoria Rocha, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved \$598 million in loans for 11 projects, most of them at electric cooperatives, to improve and modernize rural electric infrastructure for delivery of affordable, reliable power to thousands of residential, commercial, and agricultural consumers.

Among the recipients is Steele-Waseca, which was awarded a loan for \$19,889,000. "This Rural Development investment will be used to connect 141 consumers, and build and improve 71 miles of line. This loan includes \$2,546,460 in smart grid technologies," according to the project description.

Several loans will help expand smart grid technologies, "a catalyst for broadband and other telecommunications services in unserved and underserved rural areas," the USDA said in its March 16 announcement.

“Now is the time for our nation to make significant investments in infrastructure—roads, bridges, broadband and energy—to improve quality of life and support good-paying jobs, transition to a clean energy economy, and keep the United States poised to lead the global economy,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

cookin' connection

Crumb-Top Potatoes

Joyce Cordes

Faribault

1/3 c. butter
3 or 4 large potatoes cut in thin slices
1 1/2 c. sharp shredded cheese
3/4 c. crushed cornflakes
1 or 2 tsp. salt
1 1/2 tsp. paprika (optional)

Melt the butter in a jelly-roll pan in a 375° oven. Add potatoes and turn once in butter. Mix remaining ingredients and sprinkle over top. Bake 30 minutes or until potatoes are soft... "Delicious."

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 45 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during March 2021. 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. 1064482

April issue of Sparks

Numbers found:

None found by those members

Numbers not found:

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Glende
Ryan/Lisa Clarey
Craig/Lisa Ryan
Kaylee Wyttenbach
Andrea Lyman

KEEP
LOOKING!



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.

• **March temps** – The average high temperature for March was 48° F, while the average low was 30° F. This resulted in 815 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 0 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 43° F and average low of 30° F. This resulted in 885 HDDs and 0 CDDs.

• **ENERGY STAR® Rebates** – In 2021, 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

Practice safety when DIY-ing

by Abby Berry, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

These days many of us are spending more time at home and finding new, creative ways to enhance our living space.

Tackling do-it-yourself (DIY) projects for the home can be fun and cost-effective, so why not roll up those sleeves and get started. Whether you're painting the front door with a fresh hue or finally upgrading those patio lights, successfully completing a DIY home project is incredibly satisfying. But many of these projects do not come without risks.

Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind as you get to work:

• **Start by selecting a designated work area.** The amount of space you'll need will depend on the size and scope of your project, but make sure you have adequate lighting and ventilation (if necessary). Required tools and equipment should be located in your workspace and organized for easy access.

• **Personal protective equipment (PPE) is your friend.** We know you're a pro, but investing a few bucks in PPE is essential for most home projects. Stock up on safety goggles, dust masks, ear plugs (or noise reduction ear protectors), gloves and any other kind of protection you'll need for your project. Remember to wear appropriate clothing and shoes. (Ditch the sandals for this!)

• Work slowly and clean as you go.

When you rush through a DIY project, you'll likely end up with less desirable results than you intended, or worse, you could make a costly or dangerous mistake. Take your time and remember that you are in control of the project. You should also clean as you go to ensure a safer workspace. Pick up any scrap materials, tools that aren't in use and any tripping hazards.

• **Be cautious with power tools.** Annually, 8% of electrocutions in the U.S., are attributed to improper use of power tools. The Electrical Safety Foundation International offers the following safety tips:

1) Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to protect against electrical shock.

2) Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.

3) Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.

4) If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.



5) Do not use power tools without the proper guards.

6) When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electrical shock.

Remember, you should only tackle DIY home projects within your skill and comfort level. For projects that require extensive electrical work, we strongly recommend you hire a licensed, qualified electrician for assistance.

To learn more about electrical safety, visit the Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric website at swce.coop.

