

(Member focused continued from Page 1)

Steele-Waseca is still delivering electricity to our member-owners and want to show, through our service and programs, how we keep you, the member, in focus. 1001045

Rooted in strategic direction from the co-op's board of directors, seven cooperative value areas have been identified that keep our member-owners in focus. These value areas identify the "why" or purpose of our work. The seven value areas include: Quality Service, Cooperation and Collaboration, Life+, Growth, Appreciation, Trust and Innovation. In addition to identifying these value areas of the co-op, we've added an image, a visual icon that represents the value area. The adage is true: a picture is worth a thousand words, and we believe by assigning an icon to each of the seven areas, we'll be better able to show Steele-Waseca work, like programs, rates, projects, and benefits of cooperative membership, in value-form.

While we hope you agree we have a long-standing history of providing great communication on cooperative updates and information, the desire of this enhanced value-communication approach will create awareness, and provide additional education for our membership. Over the next three years, Steele-Waseca plans to highlight two to three values per year. While all efforts at the co-op are multi-valued, we feel that by demonstrating projects and happenings through value icons, their purpose will be clearer to our member-owners.

A few changes you'll notice will be use of the value-area icons in our *Sparks* articles, as well as our website and social media posts. Steele-Waseca plans to bring this visual showing of value to our events, like town hall meetings, as well as our printed messages like news releases and co-op letterhead.

Identifying cooperative value will show there is much more to Steele-Waseca than delivering electricity. We also deliver on membership value because we keep our members in focus—even if it's over lunch break while eating a hamburger. *SWCE*

7 cooperative value areas that keep Steele-Waseca member-owners in focus



Quality Service



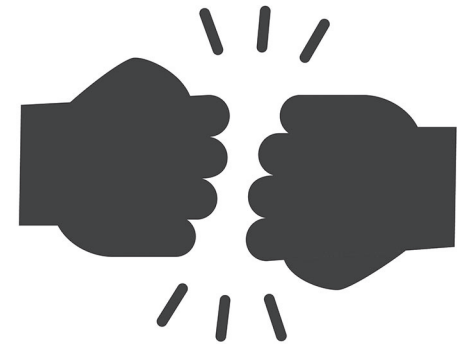
Trust



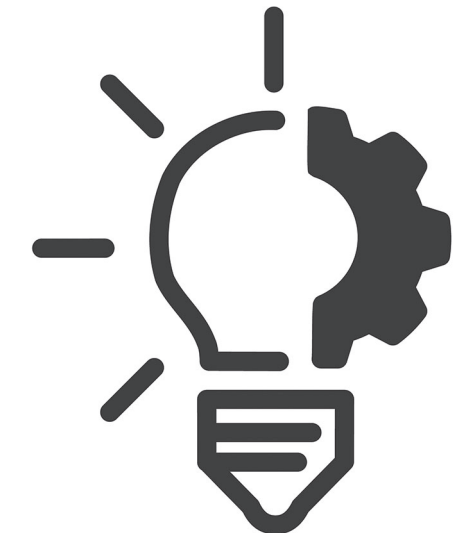
Cooperation and Collaboration



Life+



Appreciation



Innovation



Growth



the power of human connections

sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

December 2021

inside connections

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calendar of events

December

- 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 21 First day of winter
- 24 Christmas Eve 32932
- SWCE office is closed**
- 25 Christmas Day



FOR SALE:

1936 Ford Pickup, replica of Steele-Waseca's "first" service truck.

\$10,000 minimum bid.

All sealed bids are due at Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric by 3 p.m., Friday, Dec. 3.

For more information, please call Matt Rohman at 507-451-7340.

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board approves new record retirement of capital credit equity

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors, during their Oct. 27 meeting, approved the co-op's record-breaking retirement of \$1.694 million in capital credit equity allocated in 1994, 1995, 2020, and estate settlements in 2021. The previous record was \$1.615 million retired in 2020.

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

For convenience and to save on check processing and mailing costs, current member-owners eligible for this year's refund will have the amount of their equity applied as a credit on their Steele-Waseca bill received next month (December 2021).

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

Capital credit equity comes from the cooperative's margins or profits. The co-op's margin each year is determined by subtracting operating expenses from operating revenue collected during the year.

Your equity is reserved for you, even if you move away from the area. That's why it is important for you to make sure

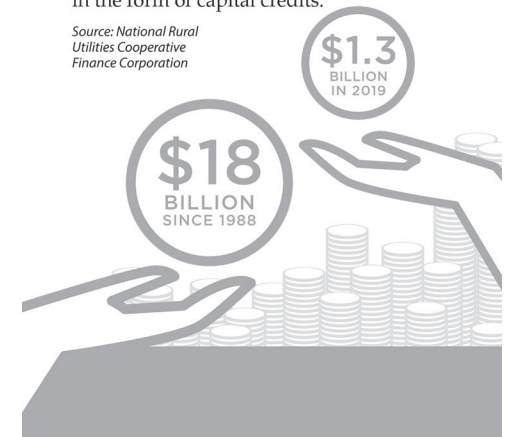
Steele-Waseca always has your current address and phone number.

Until it's refunded to members, the equity is used to finance new construction and system improvements. Using members' equity helps Steele-Waseca provide electric service at a lower cost than if all construction funds were borrowed from other resources. *SWCE*

Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$18 billion to members since 1988 – \$1.3 billion in 2019 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues (called margins) are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation



Our focus is you—the member

Here's a fun question: how do you show value?

One could do this by telling about price in comparable products. One could tell about value through accessibility or timeliness of a product. We could tell you about the value of eating a hamburger—it's reasonably priced, there is easy access to it from a drive-thru and it was at just the right time for lunch break. All these items are true, but do they show the value of the hamburger?

What if the true value of the hamburger was in its nourishment to the body?

What if the value of the hamburger was also in the beef producer that raised it? What if the value was in the restaurant owner that sold it to support their family? How do we show value rather than tell about it?

How do we show cooperative value to member-owners?

As you well know, our cooperative was started to form member-ownership in our service area for delivering electricity to member homes, farms and businesses. Eighty-five years later,

(Member focused continued on Page 8)

ad connection

give away

MAPLE LOGS FOR FIREWOOD, can load. 465-8566.

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.

FIREWOOD, (3) dead ash trees, you cut—you can have, 1/2 mi. east of Owat. 451-3370.

LA-Z-BOY SOFA & LOVE SEAT, reclining, hunter green leather, you load & haul. 451-7057.

(2) COMMERCIAL UPHOLSTERY MACHINES, supplies included, you pick up. Email: jkelling57@icloud.com.

wanted

USED OIL, 200-gal. minimum. 420-7429.

RECIPES for the *Sparks*, only from members who have not submitted a recipe in 2021; please use a 3x5 card; the member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

GUNS; AMMO; JD MOWERS; TACKLE; ESTATES. 279-0431/Mark.

TO EXCHANGE 1000-PC. PUZZLES FOR OTHER 1000-PC. PUZZLES. 461-3324.

WOODEN LATHE SNOW FENCE, any length. 330-0729.

FORD DIESEL SKID STEER. 330-1849.

1968-72 FORD PICKUP TRUCK, reasonable price. 456-1070.

HAY/TILLABLE LAND TO RENT: Richland, Walcott, Wheeling, Cannon City Twsp in Rice Co. 330-5253.

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

AG RELATED ITEMS FOR EDUCATIONAL DISPLAYS at family-owned business east of Nfld incl. hand tools, livestock related item & machinery. 581-9248.

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

3-4 BRED HEREFORD COWS. 213-8670.

All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

ALL TYPES OF MILITARY VEHICLES, running or not; **SMALLER BOAT** for yard ornament, preferably alum., doesn't need to float, holes are OK, does not need motor. 612-910-0041.

for sale

LARGE OBLONG MARIGOLD CARNIVAL GLASS FRUIT BOWL, 4', rare & beaut., \$20; **6-PLATE SET**, yellow depress. glass, \$40. 461-3324.

CAT SKID LOADERS: 2017 226D & 2016 242D, both fully loaded, tires gd/exc. on both, \$29,900/each. 685-4405.

HINIKER STALK CHOPPER, new knives; **CASE IH 7500 6-BTM PLOW**; **1976 INT. LOADSTAR 1600**, 16' steel box. 491-1781.

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

(4) COOPER AT-3 TIRES, 245x70R16, about 1/2 tread, vry gd casings, \$20/each; **(3) GUNS**: Win. 25, Win. 61, Rem. 514. 451-7755.

CAST IRON BATHTUB, you pick up, \$200/obo. 521-2040.

9T GRAIN BIN w/elec. auger, best offer; **STORAGE FOR RENT**: boats, trailers. 475-2322.

ALFALFA/GRASS MIX, full size sm. sq. hay bales, great quality, no rain. 451-2978.

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

MINI STORAGE UNITS, Ellendale. 456-1460.

OAK FIREWOOD, you haul, \$100 per truckload. 210-0316.

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

TREE TRIMMING, REMOVAL, & STUMP GRIND., pro climber & aerial lift to U of M guidelines; **2007 FRONT CHROME BUMPER** for an F-650, like new. 456-1609.

ALLIS 185D TRACTOR/CAB, about 4400 hrs; **INDUSTRIAL FOLDABLE LADDERS**, \$50/each. 528-2252.

1995 POLARIS 440 SKS, liquid cooled, ready for winter. 838-8870.

(2) TRAILER TIRES ON RIMS, ST175/80R13, 5-bolt rim, both for \$75. 491-4565.

QUEEN-SIZE 3" BED MATTRESS, vry gd cond., hardly used, \$20/obo. 363-6503.

(2) MANKATO TENT & AWNING SUITCASE STYLE CANVAS FISH HOUSES, stored in heated garage, very good condition. 602-0470.

BUILDABLE RIGHTS in Webster Twsp in Rice County. 612-919-4130.

OLIVER TRACTORS: 1650, 88, 77, 70; **1983 MON ARK BOAT**, 17.5', Evinrude 115. 455-2599.

18"X 24' STEEL CULVERT w/apron, \$75. 465-8566.

TIRES ON RIMS, G78R15, \$20/pair. 334-9583.

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

CANON MX340 PRINTER, copy/fax/scan, comes w/(4) blk PG-210XL cartridges, & CL-211 color cartridge, \$250. 334-3804.

BOSS PWR-V DXT, 9'2" w/wings, \$6800. 334-7177.

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

8' PICKUP CAMPER, gas & elec. frig., gas furnace & stove, \$350. 319-0307.

PING-PONG TBL, v-gd con., \$60; **ROLLTOP DESK**, 54"w, 33"dp, 50.5"h, circa 1930s, \$100; **SCHOOL DESK CHAIR**, needs refinishing, \$15; **SCHWAN'S ICE CREAM TINS**, lot of 10 for \$20. 332-3014.

MIXED GRASS HAY BALES, sm. sq., no rain, hvy bales. 210-1158.

MAYTAG ATLANTIS ELEC. CLOTHES DRYER, hvy duty, oversize capacity, 4-prong plug, \$50; **175' OF 1.25" SUMP PUMP HOSE**, 9 pcs in various lengths, \$5. 456-0210 or 456-0202.

GRASS HAY, BANKING & BEDDING HAY, sm. sq. 334-6377.

EdenPURE GEN 3 PORTABLE HEATER, Model 1000, exc. cond., \$250/obo; **OAK BUFFET** w/glass doors. 684-2144.

2-PERSON MILLENNIUM TREE STAND, 12' tall w/ shooting bar, like new w/all straps & full arrest cables, \$200/obo. 323-4362.

FIREWOOD, \$75/qtr cord, \$280/full cord; **ONIONS, POTATOES, & BUTTERNUT SQUASH**, \$1/pound. 651-357-5092/Paul/Nfld area.

(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.



member connection

USDA funding available to help low-income individuals and families buy or repair homes

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development has funding available for very low- and low-income individuals and families seeking to purchase or repair a home in a rural area.

The Direct Home Loan program offers financing to qualified very-low and low-income applicants that are unable to qualify for traditional financing. No down payment is required, and the interest rate could be as low as 1% with a subsidy. Applicants must meet income and credit guidelines and demonstrate repayment ability. The program is available in rural communities of generally 35,000 people or less. 1056024

The maximum loan amount is \$20,000 at a 1% interest rate, repayable for a 20-year term and can be used to improve or modernize homes and do essential repairs. Grants of up to \$7,500 are available to homeowners 62 and older and must be used to remove health or safety hazards, such as fixing a leaking roof, installing indoor plumbing, or replacing a furnace.

Time is limited to receive funds for the current fiscal year. Contact a USDA Rural Development Housing Specialist in your area to learn if you qualify.

USDA Rural Development loans and grants provide assistance that supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; com-

munity services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/mn.

(USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.)

Steele-Waseca's EnergyPay Plus Automatic Payment Plan

Steele-Waseca's **EnergyPay Plus** plan automatically pays your bill by electronic transfer of funds from your checking or savings account through any participating financial institution.

- safe
- dependable
- easy to use
- hassle-free
- save time and postage

With **EnergyPay Plus** you'll never forget to pay your electric bill or have to worry about it getting lost in the mail! Just complete the authorization form and return it to Steele-Waseca.

Sign up today for easy energy bill payments!

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric also has an auto payment option using your Visa, Mastercard, or Discover debit or credit card. Call Steele-Waseca during regular business hours or visit swce.coop for more information on auto pay options.



Make your holiday merry and bright.

LED holiday lighting is 50% off!

The holiday season is one of the most energy-intensive times of the year, but that doesn't mean you should keep your twinkling, strobing and glittering decorations packed away. Instead, use up to 90% less electricity by switching from incandescent to durable, longer-lasting LED holiday lighting. And now, we're making it easy to make the switch with a 50% discount. Offer ends Tuesday, December 28, 2021.

Give yourself the gift of energy savings at energywisemnstore.com/holidaylights.

Take advantage of this 50% discount while you can!

ENERGY WISE  MN

Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **December 6** to ensure being printed in the January *Sparks*. **Please print neatly or type** your ad of **20 words or less** on this form. We reserve the right to edit ad copy to allow space for more ads. Ads received after the 6th will be printed in the February issue.

☐ For Sale ☐ Wanted ☐ Give Away

Phone # _____ Account # _____

Name _____

Clip and mail to: SWCE, PO Box 485, Owatonna MN 55060-0485, or fax to: (507) 446-4242 or email your ad to: sparks@swce.coop.

cookin' connection

Orange Cream Cake

LaVerne Duban

Lonsdale

1 pkg. lemon cake mix
1 env. orange Kool-Aid
3 eggs
1 c. water
1/3 c. vegetable oil
2 pkgs. orange JELL-O

1 c. cold water
1 c. cold milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1 pkg. instant vanilla pudding
8 oz. carton whipped topping
1 c. boiling water

In mixing bowl combine cake mix and Kool-Aid mix, eggs, water, and oil. Beat on medium 2 minutes. Pour into 9x13 ungreased pan. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes until toothpick comes out clean. Using a meat fork, poke holes in cake. Cool for 30 minutes. In a bowl dissolve 1 pkg. JELL-O into boiling water, stir in cold water. Pour over the cake. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours. In mixing bowl, combine milk, vanilla pudding mix, and 1 pkg. JELL-O. Beat on low 2 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes. Fold in whipped topping. Frost cake. Refrigerate.

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



Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric's solar subscribers will see a 31 kWh credit per panel on this month's statement for energy generated during October 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.

November issue of Sparks



Numbers found:

No members found their number

Numbers not found:

Diane Opland
Adrian/Dorothy Kilian
Jeanne Fleek
David/Dana Blackstock
Nicholas Voegelé



Sparks in brief . . .

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

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

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

• **October temps** – The average high temperature for October was 63° F, while the average low was 44° F. This resulted in 370.5 Heating Degree Days (HDDs), and 20 Cooling Degree Days (CDDs). They compare to last year's average high of 51° F and average low of 33° F. This resulted in 728 HDDs and 0.5 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

BE SAFE DURING THE HO-HO-HOLIDAYS 10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY JOLLY



Before you plan out your new holiday lighting scheme or repeat last year's festive design, keep these 10 safety tips in mind when decorating outdoors:

- 1 Do not toss light strands up into the air. They could get too close to or come into contact with a power line.
- 2 Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.
- 3 Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.
- 4 Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.
- 5 Do not use staples or nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.
- 6 String together no more than the number of strands recommended by the manufacturer.
- 7 Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.
- 8 Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.
- 9 Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.
- 10 Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.

Safe Electricity.org®

Extension cord safety

Courtesy: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Using extension cords properly is critical to your safety.

With continuous use over time, an extension cord can rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. Stay safe from electric shock and electrical fires with the following tips:

• Do not overload extension cords or allow them to run through water or snow on the ground.

• Heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where you need them. 1094920

• Make sure the extension or power strip is rated for the products you're using and is marked for either indoor or outdoor use.

• The appliance or tool that you are using the cord with will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord, and do not use a cord that has a lower rating.



CIRCUIT BREAKERS

All newer homes are protected by circuit breakers. Unlike a fuse that must be replaced when it blows, a circuit breaker that has "tripped" can be mechanically reset to resume operations once the problem has been resolved. Each circuit breaker contains a permanent metal strip that heats up and bends when electricity moves through it. If a circuit shorts out or becomes overloaded, the metal strip bends enough to "trip," flipping a switch that immediately shuts off power to the circuit. Circuit breakers also protect branch circuits, which can be sized for 120-volts or 240-volts.



The 120-volt circuits use one phase of the electrical service to power standard home appliances.



The 240-volt circuits use both phases of the service to power larger appliances such as a clothes dryer.

Electrical arcing causes more than 30,000 fires a year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.