

the power of human connections

# sparks

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a monthly newsletter from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric

January 2026

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## Capital Credit Refund

Please check this month's billing statement for your 2025 capital credit refund. If you have any questions regarding your refund, please call Customer Service Representative Hlou Yang at Steele-Waseca during regular business hours.

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## calendar of events

### January

- |    |                              |
|----|------------------------------|
| 1  | New Year's Day               |
|    | <b>SWCE office is closed</b> |
| 19 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day   |
| 24 | National Compliment Day      |

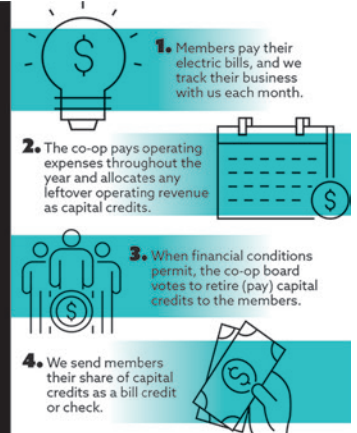
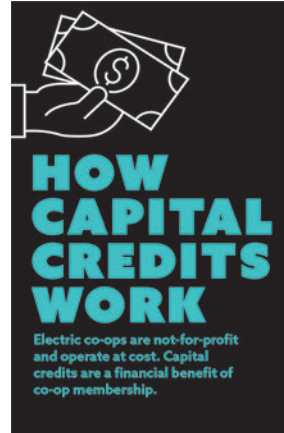
## Steele-Waseca board of directors approves record retirement of capital credit equity

The Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric board of directors during their Nov. 25 meeting approved the co-op's record retirement of \$2.326 million in capital credit equity allocated in 2003, 2004, 12.47% allocated in 2024, and estimated estate settlements for 2025. The previous record was \$2.303 million in 2024.

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 this month.

All former member-owners eligi-



ble 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. 1017125

Your equity is reserved for you, even if you move away from the area. That's

(Capital credit equity continued on Page 3)

## Steele-Waseca awarding \$1,000 scholarships to high school graduates in 2026

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is providing \$1,000 scholarships to qualified high school seniors graduating in 2026.


One scholarship will be presented to 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 ranging from a three-month post-secondary certificate program to a four-year college degree.

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 scholarship dollars from Steele-Waseca.

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

In 2025, Steele-Waseca awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 17 high school senior graduates. The co-op's scholarship program has awarded \$249,250 in scholarships since the program was established in 1954. A portion of the funds to support these scholarships come from unclaimed capital credit equity. 

 #swceLIFE+

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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: [info@swce.coop](mailto:info@swce.coop)



### Board of Directors

PJ Duchene . . . . . District 1  
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 Neil Schlaak . . . . . District 3  
 Dennis Ringhofer . . . . . District 4  
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*Assistant Secretary/Treasurer*

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### Division Managers

Steve Nordahl . . . . . *Member Services*  
 Jon Stelter . . . . . *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*

I hope you noticed on the front page of this month's *Sparks* newsletter the co-op's board of directors approved the retirement of \$2.326 million in capital credit equity. It included 100% of the equity allocated in 2003, 2004, 12.47% of the equity allocated in 2024, and estimated estate settlements for 2025.

Our average retirement, or refund, over the past five years has been \$1.911 million, which makes this year's refund \$415,000 more than the five-year average.

The seventh cooperative principle is Concern for Community. Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric carefully makes contributions each year to community organizations like United Way and food shelves, along with scholarships to a number of our graduating high school seniors. We have been diligent in maintaining a healthy equity ratio in recent years and were able to increase the refund for this year. We plan to maintain our great history of retiring equity in future years.

Every year Steele-Waseca receives questions from our member-owners regarding capital credit equity. For those who are new to a cooperative, or not familiar with how capital credit equity works, keep in mind that when you signed up to receive electric service from Steele-Waseca, you became a member of an electric co-op.

With investor-owned utilities returning a portion of any profits back to their shareholders, electric cooperatives operate on an at-cost basis. This means Steele-Waseca allocates 100% of its margins or profits (revenue less expenses) to its members who purchased electricity during the year, and retires or pays back those margins at a future date to those very members.

Instead of returning the margins to people or companies who had little or nothing to do with the generation of those profits, or who probably don't even live in the same region or state that you do, Steele-Waseca returns margins to those who actually purchase and use our product. Steele-Waseca allocates and retires capital credits based on how much electricity you purchased during a year. 1101419

**Where does the money come from?** Member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops set rates to generate funds to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve.

At the end of each year, the co-op subtracts operating expenses from operating revenue collected during the year. The balance is called an operating "margin."

**Can we get our retirement of capital credits sooner?** The board of directors has the responsibility of balancing the amount of equity with the cost of debt, and therefore, the amount of capital credit retirements each year. The higher the equity we maintain, the lower the debt, and the less we have retired in capital credits. However, the cost of our debt is one of the major components in our rates. Most co-ops attempt to maintain an equity-to-asset ratio between 30% and 50%. Steele-Waseca is at 45.9%. Our overall objective is to reward both past and current ratepayers with a balanced approach of retiring past and current capital credits each year, and maintaining the most manageable level of debt possible.

At Steele-Waseca, the board of directors make a decision in the fall of each year to retire capital credits. The co-op has retired over \$28 million in capital credits to its members since 1966.

**I did not have electric service from Steele-Waseca during 2003, 2004, or 2024. Will I get any retirement?** No. This year capital credit retirements are only being made to members who purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca in 2003, 2004, and/or 2024.

**How will the retirement of capital credit equity work?** Inactive or former members, who no longer purchase electricity from Steele-Waseca (but purchased electricity during the years being retired) will receive a check. Due to the expense involved with processing and mailing printed checks, current members eligible to receive capital credit equity will have that amount credited to their Steele-Waseca account displayed on your bill received this month.

**What if I moved?** If you move or no longer have electric service with Steele-Waseca, it is important you inform the cooperative of your current address, so future retirements may be properly mailed to you. If you purchased electricity from Steele-Waseca during the years being retired, then you are entitled to a capital credit retirement, even if you move out of Steele-Waseca's service area. If Steele-Waseca has your current address, then the co-op will send your retirement check by mail.

If you have additional questions regarding your equity, please contact Steele-Waseca during regular business hours.

#swceTRUST



# Great River Energy board approves 2026 budget and rates

GRE's wholesale electric rate to increase 2.9% in new year

The Great River Energy (GRE) board of directors approved the cooperative's 2026 budget and rates Thursday, Nov. 6, setting the stage for a 2.9% average wholesale rate increase next year.

The generation and transmission cooperative is budgeting revenue and expenses of approximately \$1.1 billion in 2026. As a not-for-profit cooperative, Great River Energy collects only enough revenue to cover its costs as well as a margin to operate the business.

GRE operates, maintains and plans

power supply and transmission facilities to ensure a reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible supply of wholesale electricity to its 26 member-owner cooperatives (including Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric) located throughout Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin.

At the same time, the cooperative makes investments in the best interests of its member-owners over the long term. The co-op is in the early stages of significant regional transmission in-

vestments to ensure reliable electric service.

“The strategic decisions we have made in recent years have resulted in improved service to our membership and stable wholesale electric rates,” said Great River Energy Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Michelle Strobel.

 #swceCOOPERATION

## MISO says power grid ready for winter, but stresses risks remain

The regional grid operator recently held its annual Winter Readiness Workshop, which featured transmission and generation outlooks as well as weather forecasts for the upcoming season.

The assessment shows adequate resources are available for winter but highlights the potential risks and challenges associated with cold and extreme weather operations.

“Having a clear picture of the risks is key to staying ahead of extreme weather,” said Jason Howard, director of

operations risk management at MISO (Midcontinent Independent System Operator). “We work closely with our members to ensure we’re prepared—not just for what we expect, but also for the unexpected.”

The winter forecast indicates near-to slightly-below-normal temperatures across MISO’s north and central regions—which include Minnesota and the Dakotas—while the south region is expected to experience above-normal temperatures.

An active storm pattern is anticipat-

(Capital credit equity continued from Page 1)

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~~

 #swceTRUST

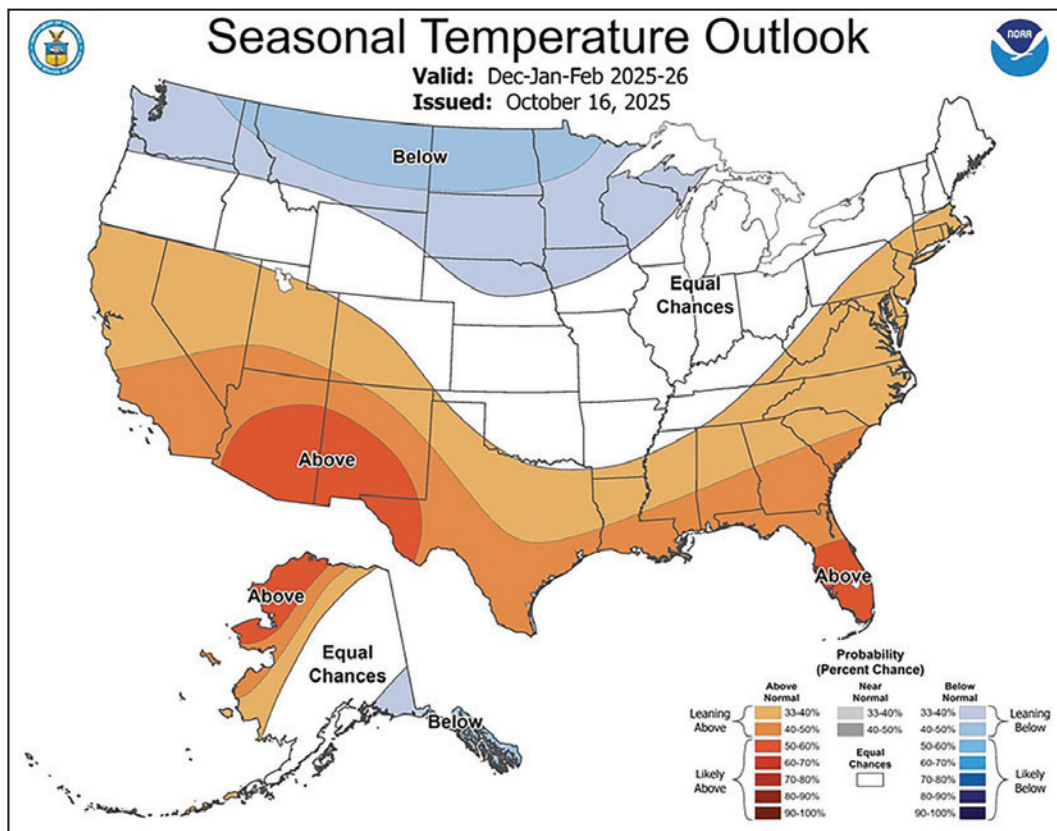
ed in the central region pushing north, likely creating above-normal precipitation across the Great Lakes while much of the south region is expected to remain dry.

MISO expects peak winter demand to be around 103 gigawatts (GW), but it could reach as high as 109 GW. Last winter, MISO reached a peak demand of 108 GW on Jan. 21, 2025, during Winter Storm Enzo.

MISO is emphasizing the importance of adapting to a changing energy landscape, especially as the generation fleet changes, demand increases and extreme weather events become more common.

(Courtesy: Great River Energy)

 #swceSERVICE



## cookin' connection

### Kids Play Dough

Sandi Jones

Faribault

2.5 c. flour  
1/2 c. salt  
1 Tbsp. alum (spice)

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil  
Kool-Aid pkg., any color & flavor  
1.75 c. boiling water

Mix flour and salt in a bowl. Mix water, alum, oil, and Kool-Aid in a separate bowl, then add to flour and salt mixture. Knead well (Add extra flour if sticky). No refrigeration needed. Keep in air-tight container.

Please use a 3 x 5 card when submitting your recipe. The member whose recipe is published will receive a \$7 energy credit. 30208



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 2025. Learn more about community solar and The Sunna Project by visiting Steele-Waseca's website, [swce.coop](http://swce.coop). #swceINNOVATION

## Was your account number in Sparks?

Each month five account numbers are printed in *Sparks* and a minimum bill credit of \$15 is awarded among however many of those members find their account number. For example, if all numbers are found, a credit of \$15 will be applied to the members' following month's electric bills; or, if only one number is found, that member receives a \$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 3rd of the month following receipt of the *Sparks*, or the amount will be forfeited.

## December issue of Sparks



**Numbers found:**  
Brian/Dawn Cherwinka  
**Numbers not found:**  
Norman/Judy Liffengren  
Mr. & Mrs. James Gramse  
Brandy/Josh Rife  
Brandon/Nicole Wroge



## 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), or register your account with SmartHub. For instructions to use SmartHub, visit [swce.coop/smarthub](http://swce.coop/smarthub).

• **If you have changed or added phone numbers**, please contact SWCE to update your information or change it through your SWCE SmartHub account.

• **Need a new water heater?** For information about our Westinghouse Electric Water Heater Program, phone the SWCE office weekdays between 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., or email [rebates@swce.coop](mailto:rebates@swce.coop).

• **November temps** – The average high temperature for November was 45° F, while the average low was 27° F. This resulted in 867 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, which resulted in 841.5 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. For a complete list of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural rebates, and their respective rebate form, visit [swce.coop/rebates/](http://swce.coop/rebates/). For more information or to receive a rebate request form, email [rebates@swce.coop](mailto:rebates@swce.coop), or call 507-451-7340 or 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).





# HEATING SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER

## Simple precautions can help you avoid **fire hazards** and **electrical dangers**

There is nothing like curling up by the fire on a cold winter day. But heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths. With a few simple steps, you can prevent most heating fires from happening.



### STAY COZY AND SAFE THIS WINTER:

- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from heating equipment like furnaces, radiators, fireplaces, electric or wood stoves and space heaters.
- Maintain a 3-foot kid- and pet-free zone around heating equipment.
- Plug heaters and electric fireplaces directly into wall outlets. Never use extension cords or power strips.
- Plug only one heat-producing appliance into an electrical outlet at a time.
- Turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Unplug heaters when not in use.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Test smoke alarms every month.
- Hire a qualified professional to install or service stationary heating equipment and water heaters according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Have your heating system, vents and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.



### SMART TIPS:

- Install and test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to alert you before it's too late.
- Have a home fire escape plan and practice it with your family.

 **Safe  
Electricity.org®**

## TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Look out for the “energy-saving device” scam. Whether sold on social media platforms or through random emails, consumers have fallen victim to scams where these products claim to reduce or even eliminate energy bills. These products are advertised as devices that will “balance” or “clean” the power in your home, thus saving you money. There is no such device that can simply be plugged in to lower energy use.



# PAPERLESS BILLING



The eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.

 **Steele-Waseca  
Cooperative Electric**

Visit [swce.coop/smarthub](https://swce.coop/smarthub) for more information



# ad connection

## give away

**FIREWOOD** is cut up, you pick up. 317-4335.

**HP #61 BLK & COLOR INK CARTRIDGES**, 1 each. 634-7988/leave message.

**MALE CAT**, vry friendly, indoor cat & also loves to be outside, recent vet check (vry healthy), gray tiger color. 612-910-0041.

**(2) OLDER UPRIGHT FREEZERS**. 213-0443.

**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, or emailed to SWCE.

## wanted

**LOOKING FOR CARPENTERS & REMODELERS!** Flexible hrs, full- or part-time work, no experience needed, must have a valid driver's license, \$18-25 an hour. Set up an interview w/Eric. 676-4886.

**TDR TRANSFER DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS IN ERIN & FOREST TOWNSHIPS**, CPI vs CER calculation got you losing them? Sell & transfer off before deadline. 612-756-0271/Dan.

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

**ISO TRANSFERABLE BUILDING RIGHT IN WALCOTT TOWNSHIP**. 651-260-9225.

**FORD SKID STEER**, diesel. 330-1849.

**RECIPES** for the **Sparks** from members who did not have a recipe published in 2025. Please use a 3x5 card. The member who has their recipe published earns a \$7 energy credit on their SWCE statement.

## for sale

**GRASS HAY**, sm. sq., 1st & 2nd cut, no rain, east of Fbo & Mdtd. 210-1158.

**2016 CHEV. EQUINOX LTZ**, AWD, 125,000 mi., silver, lt gray interior, great cond., like new interior, new tires, \$4895. 330-2041.

**55-GAL. PLASTIC & STEEL BARRELS** w/covers, \$5-\$15; **220-GAL. POLY TANK** w/valve in forklift frame, \$75. 421-2521.

**RED BEDROOM SET**, incl. matt. & box spring; **ROCKING HORSE**. 451-5456 after 5 p.m.

## All area codes are 507 unless otherwise noted

**2015 SALEM ICE CABIN HYBRID ADDITION**, has a shower & toilet, 8'x21', \$15,000. 508-0474/Jer.

**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.

**GRASS HAY BALES**, full size, sm. sq. 451-2978.

**CASIO KEYBOARD**, CT-636 Tone Bank, exc. cond., \$50. 684-2144.

**JD A ROLL-O-MATIC TRACTOR**, \$700/obo; **CLIPPER FANNING MILL #7**, best offer; **PINCOR GENERATOR**, sm., 1000 PTO, 50 kW, 3 ph., \$3500/obo; **WHITE TIN**, 3'-22', \$.30/each/obo. 381-9849.

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

**2006 FORD F-150**, 4 door, 4WD, new tires/topper, 152,000 mi., \$4500. 456-0296.

**PORTABLE GENERATOR**, 4400 watt. 573-1210.

**BOAT/RV STORAGE FOR RENT; 1999 CRESTLINER**, 1-yr-old trailer, \$6900/obo; **SM. STRAW & HAY BALES**. 475-2322.

**SEASONED MIXED HARDWOOD FIREWOOD**, \$100/qtr cord, \$375/cord. 651-357-5092/Nfld area.

**1939 CHEVY PICKUP CAB ONLY**, front bumper, hood, front fenders, running boards, \$2500; **CHAINS FOR TRACTOR**, #2, 10'4" long, 28" wide, \$200. 491-4565.

**TREK 100 NAVIGATOR**, F.S. Fork, 26x175, sm. men's 21 spd, \$100; **TREK 7100**, 700x35c, 21 spd, F.S. Fork, men's, \$150. 330-3178.

**1994 IH STRAIGHT TRUCK** w/18' freezer box, \$4900. 334-7177.

**RENTAL**, Izaak Walton League Bldg., 4 mi. south of Owat., seats 100, full kitchen, grill, Wi-Fi, \$175. 451-7946.

**MINI STORAGE UNITS** in Morristown, any size. 330-4776.

**4-PLACE SNOWMOBILE TRAILER OR ATV HAULER**, tandem axle, Featherlite, new floor, tires, lights, bi-fold ramp back. 363-6601.

**4-UNIT PORTABLE GROOMING CAGES**, alum. grade, nice cond., could be used in boarding kennels or vets. 838-0477.

**IH #33 LOADER**, manual 78" bucket, fits on M or Super M, vry nice shape, \$700. 327-4493.

**2005 CHEV. C-30 DUALY TRUCK**, 188,993 mi. 327-9965.

**HUNTING BLINDS**, weather/rodent proof, insulated & much more. 330-2452.

**CAKE DECORATING ITEMS**. 380-6978.

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

**24" DUAL-STAGE SNOWBLOWER; SM. METAL DESK; DINING ROOM TABLE**. 213-0443.

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

**NET-WRAPPED MIXED GRASS HAY BALES**, 4x5, \$45-\$50; **55-GAL. BURN BARRELS**, \$10. 390-0458 or 676-6094.

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

**DANDY-LION YARD ROLLER WEED KILLER**, \$50; **HOMS 1000-GRAM SCALE**, \$100/obo; **HAY HOOK CHANDELIER**, \$500/obo. 440-8831.

**HOCKEY GEAR**: composite stick, new, \$35; roller bag, helmets, shin guards, sticks, tape, misc.; **MEAT GRINDER**, new, \$50; **METAL OFFICE DESK**, \$20. 455-3881.

**HOOD** for Dodge Pwr Wagon, \$50/obo. 330-5670.

**VINTAGE LAMPS, BOTTLES, CANS, & TOYS**. 491-2667.

**MARLIN MACH 2**, 17-cal. w/scope. 451-9445.

**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.**

## travel

**GUYS & DOLLS**, March 4, '26. Chanhassen Dinner Theatre production set in mythical NY City in a perfect balance of story, dance, & music. \$139 pp incl. transportation, performance, lunch, & dessert.

**HAWAIIAN ISLANDS**, March 17-29. Round trip non-stop Delta flights from Mpls to Honolulu, city tours, 8-day cruise aboard Pride of America incl. Maui, Hawaii, & Kauai. \$7,699 pp w/2 per room.

**Call 4-Seasons at 373-4705 or 373-2473, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, to learn more about their tour information.**



## Sparks Free Classified Ad Form for all SWCE Members

Ads need to be received in our office by **January 2** to ensure being printed in the February **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 2nd will be printed in the March issue.

☐ For Sale

☐ Wanted

☐ Give Away

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Account # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail to: SWCE, PO Box 485, Owatonna MN 55060-0485; deliver to SWCE, or email your ad to: [sparks@swce.coop](mailto:sparks@swce.coop).




## member connection

### Wilson retiring from Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, Nordahl promoted to member services manager

Jan. 8, 2026, will be the last day for Member Services Division Manager Kim Wilson as she retires after more than 27.5 years with the co-op.

She started with Steele-Waseca in the front office on June 8, 1998, and was promoted to her present position on May 14, 2022. 29808

Steele-Waseca wishes Kim a fulfilling retirement and thank her for years of dedicated service to the co-op and its members.

Steve Nordahl was promoted, Nov. 16, to member services and business development department manager. He started with Steele-Waseca in May 2016 as a system technician. 

 #swceLIFE+



### New Year's Energy Savings Resolutions

#### Resolutions You Can Afford to Keep!

It costs nothing to...

- Set the water heater temperature to 120 degrees.
- Run only full loads in the washer or dishwasher.
- Turn off lights when you leave a room.
- Unplug electronics and chargers not in use.
- Adjust your thermostat when going to bed or leaving the home.

Spend a few dollars to save a lot more ...

- Get a water heater blanket.
- Use a programmable thermostat.
- Seal air leaks around windows, doors, plumbing, etc.
- Replace regular bulbs with CFL or LED light bulbs.
- Use a smart power strip for electronics.

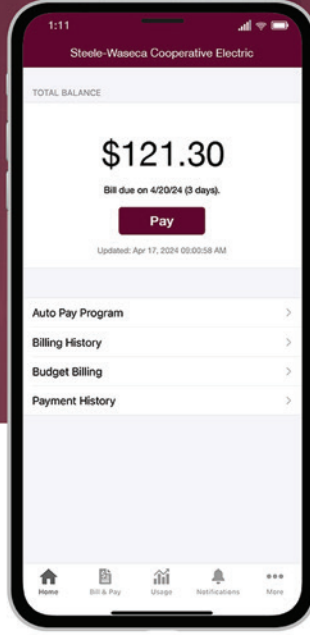
To generate more energy savings, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org)



## SIGN UP FOR AUTO PAY

Save time and money by automating your bill payments to avoid late fees.





Visit [swce.coop/smarthub](https://swce.coop/smarthub) for more information

NOTE: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric members who received a \$50 Energy Star® gift certificate for their attendance at the co-op's 2025 annual meeting, June 3, are reminded the certificates expire Dec. 31, 2025. Thank you for your cooperation:)



## 2026 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., scheduled June 15-20

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric seeking applicants; will sponsor two eligible students

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric is accepting applications from eligible high school sophomores or juniors for an all-expense paid trip, valued at approximately \$4,000, to Washington, D.C., for the 2026 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., learn about cooperatives and our government, tour historical sites, and have fun meeting new friends from Minnesota and other delegates from across the nation. 1064793

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

1. The entrant is currently a high school sophomore or junior, and their 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) selfie/video response to the 3 questions lasting at least 2 minutes in length total (not to exceed 3 minutes); c) two letters of recommendation (one from an instructor, counselor or administrator, and the other from a church or community leader).
3. Videos may be emailed to Member Services Supervisor Randy Sobrack

at [rsobrack@swce.coop](mailto:rsobrack@swce.coop). Applicants may either mail, email, or drop off the application form and letters of recommendation to: Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, c/o Youth Tour 2026, PO Box 485, Owatonna, MN 55060. Entries must be received in Steele-Waseca's office on or before Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2026. The two Youth Tour recipients will be notified by Wednesday, March 11, 2026. **All entrants completing the application requirements will be entered into a drawing for a \$250 gift card that will be announced at Steele-Waseca's annual meeting Tuesday, June 2, 2026.**

Each entry will be evaluated by a panel of judges for the personality and communication exhibited in the video response to the three listed questions within the time requirement, and to learn more about you from your letters of recommendation.

*Responses to the following questions:*

1. Why would you like to be Steele-Waseca's delegate for the 2026 Youth Tour? What do you hope to gain from the experience?
2. What activities do you enjoy most at school? Note letters and honors earned, positions held, etc.
3. How do you contribute to making your community a better place to live whether it's through your school, church, community service, or being employed?

MREA is requiring each participating cooperative's delegate(s) report to the Crowne Plaza Airport located at 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington for an orientation session Monday, June 15, presently at 9:30 a.m. An afternoon flight to Washington, D.C., will follow the session.

 #swceLIFE+



*Experience the trip of a lifetime with Youth Tour!*

- Explore Washington, D.C. through historic monuments, world-class museums, and visits with elected officials.
- Build leadership skills and discover how you can make your mark on the future.
- Connect with students from across the country and form friendships that last a lifetime, all sponsored by your local electric cooperative.

### Washington, D.C. Youth Tour 2026 — June 15-20

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ 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 student permission to enter the 2026 Rural Electric Washington, D.C. Youth Tour Contest. I/we understand if they're selected, I/we will be responsible for providing their transportation to the Crowne Plaza Airport in Bloomington and from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ SWCE account # \_\_\_\_\_