

# BENCO Electric Cooperative Link

SEPTEMBER 2023

## WELLSPRING: YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT WIND AND SOLAR POWER

Renewable energy is already used to power homes and businesses across southern Minnesota, but there are opportunities to do more. Explore additional opportunities below to increase your impact. BENCO's Wellspring Renewable Energy program is a voluntary program.

### WELLSPRING PROGRAM

**Wind Program:** The Wellspring renewable wind energy program is a voluntary program that offers wind-generated electricity to cooperative members. Electricity provided by wind generation is a coordinated effort between Great River Energy and its 28 distribution cooperatives located throughout the state of Minnesota.

Members participating in the wind program are purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs). For every 1,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean, renewable electricity generation, a REC is created.

Renewable energy is purchased in 100 (kWh) blocks.

For each 100 (kWh) block purchased, there is an additional charge of \$0.30 on your electric bill.

**Solar Program:** Like the wind program, the Wellspring renewable solar energy program is a voluntary program offering solar-generated electricity to cooperative members. Like the wind program, electricity provided by solar generation is a coordinated effort between Great River Energy and its 28 distribution cooperative located throughout the state of Minnesota.

Members participating in the solar program are purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs). For every 1,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean, renewable electricity generation, a REC is created.

Renewable energy is purchased in 100 (kWh) blocks.

For each 100 (kWh) block purchased, there is an additional charge of \$2.00 on your electric bill.

Visit [BENCO.org/renewable-energy](https://www.benco.org/renewable-energy) to learn more about estimating potential paybacks, find answers to frequently asked questions and to apply for the Wellspring program.

# CEO CORNER

Last month BENCO broke ground to begin construction of a new Rush River substation. Our Rush River substation serves approximately 815 members and is located in Prairie Lake township. The substation is south of Nicollet County Road 8.



*Existing substation dating back to the 1960s.*

This substation dates back to the early 1960s. A new substation for the area will add necessary capacity, reliability, sustainability and new technologies. This will help better serve the northern most part of



*Broken ground and construction of new substation.*

our service territory. Construction should be completed around the end of October with cutover happening shortly after. This project has a budget of \$1 million.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Cooperatively  
yours,



# FROM THE BOARD

July 27, 2023

Brad Leiding Presided

The board reviewed and approved the minutes of the June 29, 2023 board meeting.

Abby reviewed the MN Department of Revenue Valuation Notice and Certification of Apportionment for 2023.

Tim reported on breaking ground of the Rush River substation this month.

Attending directors reported on the CoBank Energy Directors Conference, the MREA District 6 Meeting and the AgriGrowth meeting.

The board passed the resolution to approve the extension of the Power Purchase Contract to 2055.

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## PCA UPDATE

ACTUAL PCA FOR AUGUST

\$0.0385

ESTIMATED PCA FOR SEPTEMBER

\$0.0352

ESTIMATED PCA FOR OCTOBER

\$0.0278

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is due to changes in the monthly wholesale rate from our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE).

# COLD WEATHER RULE AND ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE



In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1, 2023 and April 30, 2024 if electricity is the primary heat source and all of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by BENCO Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from BENCO.

*Please note Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.*  
Before disconnecting electric

service to residential members between October 1 and April 30, BENCO must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities
- A list of local energy assistance providers
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$67,764 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2024.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access

the application portal.

- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.

If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact BENCO at 507-387-7963 to set up a payment arrangement.

Please note this is an assistance program. Members will need to plan to make payments once assistance payments are complete.

## **Energy Assistance Providers Serving BENCO Members:**

### **BROWN COUNTY FAMILY SERVICES**

PO BOX 788, New Ulm, MN 56073  
507-354-8246

### **MINNESOTA VALLEY ACTION COUNCIL**

PO BOX 3327, Mankato, MN 56002

*Blue Earth County - 507-345-2433*

*Faribault County - 507-526-5291*

*LeSueur County - 507-357-4246*

*Martin County - 507-238-1663*

*Nicollet County - 507-934-5224*

*Sibley County - 507-237-2981*

*Waseca County - 507-835-8240*

*Watsonwan County - 507-375-5748*

### **SEMCAC OF FREEBORN COUNTY**

PO BOX 549, Rushford, MN 55971  
800-944-3281

# TWO ADDED TO BENCO LINE CREWS



*Tyler Moorman*

Tyler Moorman and Ben Ahlschlager joined the Engineering and Operations department at BENCO in July as linemen.

While Tyler is a new employee at BENCO, he is a familiar face at the co-op. Tyler is from the Kasson-Mantorville area and attended line school at Dakota County Technical College. He spent two years working for Rochester Public Utilities and then worked for BENCO for four years. After a brief move back to his hometown and working for People's Electric Cooperative in Oronoco, MN, Tyler is back as a lineman at BENCO. Tyler enjoys spending time with his family and playing with his daughter while not at work. Tyler also said he enjoys being at BENCO due to the family-like environment.



*Ben Ahlschlager*

Ben is originally from Worthington, MN. Following high school, he attended Mitchell Technical Institute and completed their power line program. Prior to joining BENCO, Ben was a lineman at Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative in Estherville, IA. In his free time, Ben enjoys spending time on area lakes, riding side-by-sides and being with family and friends. When asked what he likes most about BENCO he said, "I enjoy the people I work with each day and the friendly atmosphere at BENCO."

Thank you, Tyler and Ben, for your dedication to the members of BENCO Electric Cooperative!

## WHERE, OH WHERE?

The following is a list of former BENCO members who have unclaimed capital credit checks or credit balances on their inactive account. Please contact Angie at 387-7963 with any information on locating the former BENCO members.

### **M**

Jennifer M. Menne, Janesville  
Keith Menne, North Mankato  
Paul R. Menne, Mankato  
Hilda Mennenga, Lake Crystal  
Ron Menough, Maple Grove  
Mark J. Mensing, Blue Earth

Ryan K. Mensing, Blue Earth  
Glenn Menton, North Mankato  
Heidi Menzel, Burnsville  
James Meredith, Mankato  
Mia Merickel, Burnsville  
Giselle Merlo, Lake Lillian  
Shawn M. Merrill, North Mankato  
Brenda Merritt, Mapleton  
Grant Merseth, Brooklyn  
Ron Mertens, Easton  
Ronald Mertens, Wells  
Dan Mertesdorf, Nicollet  
Marcella Mertesdorf, Vernon Center  
Shannon N. Mertins, Eagle Lake  
Steve Mesia, Lafayette  
Metro Council Envir Serv, St. Paul

Duane Mettler, Madison Lake  
Duane L. Mettler, Madison Lake  
Julie Mettler, Mankato  
Kathy Mettler, Lake Charles, LA  
Larry Mettler, St. Peter, MN  
Timothy R. Mettler, Wells  
Metz Baking Co., St. Louis, MO  
Marie Metz, Winnebago  
Dominic Metzger, Winthrop  
Dominic V. Metzger, Mankato  
Franz Metzger, Mankato  
Darryl Metzler, Eagle Lake  
Dean R. Meurer, Mankato  
James A. Mews, Walker  
Albert Meyer, Gaylord  
Allen Meyer, St. Paul

# NOMINATION PROCESS FOR DIRECTORS BEGINS IN DISTRICTS 1, 4 AND 9

The BENCO Electric Cooperative Board of Directors consists of nine directors with one director representing each of BENCO's nine districts. Each Director is elected for a three year term and there is no term limit. The director rotation is as follows: Directors in districts 1, 4 and 9 are up for election in 2024; directors in districts 2, 6 and 8 are up for election in 2025; and directors in districts 3, 5 and 7 are up for election in 2026. A director can be elected by the board to serve as President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The following guidelines must apply if you are interested in running for a director position in 2024:

- You are a resident of and live in District 1, 4 or 9.
- You are receiving electric service from BENCO at

the above residence.

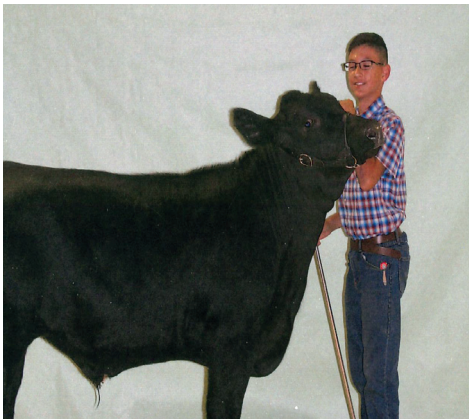
- Your account with BENCO is in good standing.

As a director you must:

- Be willing to attend regular and special board meetings.
- Be willing to abide by and uphold the Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws and policies of BENCO Electric Cooperative.

If you are interested in being nominated at your district meeting or you would like more information, please contact Kathy Gerber, Member Services Manager, at 507-387-7963 or via email at [kathyg@BENCO.org](mailto:kathyg@BENCO.org). Nominations for director must be received no later than Friday, October 27.

## BENCO SUPPORTS LOCAL COUNTY FAIRS



Ryan Hermanson • Norseland 4H Club



Braya Hunstad • Amboy 4H Club



Landry Case • Ceresco 4H Club

Carol Schrader

Faribault Co. 4H



Riley Stevermer

Faribault Co. 4H

Not Pictured: Clara Bach • Faribault Co. 4H



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## what's cooking?

Receive a \$20 credit on your electric bill if your recipe appears in the newsletter.



This newsletter is published monthly by BENCO Electric Cooperative.

**Office Hours:** Mon -Fri - 7:30 am - 4:00 pm  
**Phone:** 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626

**Outages/After Hours:**  
387-7964 or 1-888-792-3626

Kathy Gerber - Member Services Manager  
Chelsea Germs - Editor

## PUMPKIN ICE CREAM DESSERT

From the Kitchen of: Keith Freundl

### Ingredients:

- 2 C canned pumpkin
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 C sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 gallon vanilla ice cream
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 36 ginger snaps

### Directions:

Combine first six ingredients and fold into ice cream. Line 9x3 inch pan with whole ginger snaps. Pour 1/2 ice cream mixture on top. Then top with more ginger snaps and freeze. Remove from freezer and cut into desired squares. Top with Cool Whip!



### Board Meetings:

Board meetings are held the last Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to contact directors with items of interest in advance of the meeting or wish to attend. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

### Board of Directors:

**Brad Leiding** - President - District 3  
**Marilyn Lynch** - Vice President - District 5  
**Scott Johnson** - Secretary - District 9  
**Terry Genelin** - Treasurer - District 1  
**Don Westphal** - District 2  
**John Wells** - District 4 - MREA Director  
**Blake Meshke** - District 6  
**Gary Stenzel** - District 7 - GRE Director  
**Duane Ehrich** - District 8  
**Dave Sunderman** - CEO  
**Christopher M. Roe** - Attorney

**ENTER TO WIN. SEND YOUR FAVORITE RECIPE TO:**

BENCO Electric Cooperative, Attn: Chelsea, PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002