



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## EV SAFETY TRAINING

### *MLEC hosts EV safety training for local first responders*

On Tuesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, Mille Lacs Energy welcomed local first responders from Aitkin, Palisade, Garrison, McGregor, and Onamia to learn more about electric vehicle (EV) safety. There were approximately 60 people in attendance. Aitkin Motor Co. and Great River Energy both brought EVs to show.

Safety and Security Consultation Specialists, LLC (a first responder training company based out of southern MN) led the course and covered a variety of topics including types of electric vehicles, electric vehicle emergency response – EV crash and EV fire response, shutting down/disabling an EV, emergency responder safety, and debunking EV response myths.

It is MLEC's goal to keep our community safe. We hope to help our first responders mitigate the hazards involved with electric transportation accidents while eliminating false perceptions around the safety of EVs when damaged. Thank you to all who attended!



# YOUTH TOUR 2023

MLEC is now accepting applications for the 2023 Youth Tour! Current sophomores or juniors in high school, whose parent or guardian is an MLEC member, are eligible to apply. This year's Washington DC Youth Tour is June 13-18. Meet student leaders from nearly every state in the country. The tour includes visits with congressional representatives. You'll get the chance to visit some of the most famous museums in the world, and experience monuments dedicated to our country's leaders and heroes. You'll be a part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. Senators and CEOs. You'll make memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. Don't miss this chance for an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital!

**Applications can be found on our website, or by emailing Kassie Peterson at [kpeterson@mlcmmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlcmmn.com). Applications must be received by March 1, 2023.**



# NEW YEAR, NEW REBATES

With rebates on everything from appliances to air source heat pumps, it's easy to make your home more cost-effective and energy efficient! Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative continually works to provide rebates that not only save energy, but also save our members money. It is important to note that limited funds are available, and rebates are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. A dated copy of the sales receipt is required within 90 days of purchase.

## We provide rebates on the following:

- \$25 - Energy Star® Dehumidifier
- \$25 - Energy Star® Dryer
- \$50 - Energy Star® Refrigerator and/or Freezer
- \$25 - Recycling or Haul Away of Refrigerator or Freezer
- \$25 - Smart Thermostat
- \$30 - LED Yard Light
- \$50 - HVAC Electronically Commutated Motor (ECM)
- \$500 - Ductless Air Source Heat Pump
- \$400 per ton - Ground Source Heat Pump
- \$50 per kW - Off Peak Heating
- \$100 - Peak Shave Water Heating
- \$400 - Off Peak Water Heater
- \$500 - Off Peak Electric Vehicle & ChargeWise
- \$500 - Heat Pump Water Heater
- \$25 - AC Tune Up



## Central Air Conditioning & Ducted Air Source Heat Pumps

*Must have a registered contractor install*

- \$50 - SEER 2 - 13.8 up to 16 Central A/C
- \$480 - SEER 2 - 13.8 Air Source Heat Pump Installation
- \$580 - SEER 2 - 14.3 Air Source Heat Pump Installation
- \$630 - SEER 2 - 15.2 Air Source Heat Pump Installation

**Contact our Energy Services Team at 218-429-0432 or 888-433-4279 for details or go to [www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net) to get more information and rebate forms.**

## Questions or concerns? MLEC's Board of Directors represent you!

**Mark Anderson - District 1**  
320/469-0951  
[manderson@mlcmmn.com](mailto:manderson@mlcmmn.com)

**Derik Midthun - District 2**  
218/821-4349  
[dmidthun@mlcmmn.com](mailto:dmidthun@mlcmmn.com)

**Harold Harms - District 3**  
218/232-2935  
[hharms@mlcmmn.com](mailto:hharms@mlcmmn.com)  
President

**Aileen DeMenge - District 4**  
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[ademenge@mlcmmn.com](mailto:ademenge@mlcmmn.com)  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Don Appel - District 5**  
218/927-4134  
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**Bruce Robinson - District 6**  
218/851-4760  
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Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

**Michael Reem - District 7**  
218/839-5697  
[mreem@mlcmmn.com](mailto:mreem@mlcmmn.com)  
Vice President

**Sarah Cron - CEO**  
218/927-8224  
[scron@mlcmmn.com](mailto:scron@mlcmmn.com)

Find minutes from MLEC Board meetings at:  
<http://www.mlecmmn.net>  
under **My Co-op**

*This newsletter is the voice of your tax and interest paying RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, an organization which was formed to supply you with low-cost, dependable electricity when other sources failed to do so.*

Managing Editor: Kassie Peterson,  
Communications Specialist



# YOUR QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Dear Member:

I want to thank everyone that called in last month to ask questions and discuss the information from my column in the January Outlet. While not all the conversations were easy to have, most of them were respectful and collaborative. Many members gave me great ideas and have already been shared with our management team.

The reason that I am thankful for this dialogue is because that is what a cooperative is all about. The late Paul Wellstone often said, "we all do better when we all do better." By sharing information, contributing positive solutions, and working to build a better MLEC, we WILL have a better MLEC.

The members I spoke with had a lot of questions after reading the January Outlet. I imagine that if they are asking these questions, many other members must have the same ones. So, I would like to share some of them at this time.



*Sarah Cron, CEO*

**Q: Is the access charge increase because you are building a new building?**

A: Not entirely. Approximately one-third of the access charge increase will formalize costs you are already incurring each month. The goal of this rate methodology is to eliminate (or greatly reduce) the wholesale power cost adjustment (PCA) you see on your bill from Great River Energy and have a stable "fixed" amount you can plan for. Approximately one-third of the access charge increase is due to the pure cost of doing business. Just like you see at home, our expenses have gone up and we need to recover those costs. My best example is equipment costs: in 2019, we paid \$1,407 for a 25 KVA pad mount transformer. In 2022, that price went up to \$2,577. We are being quoted \$4,038 for 2023 – if we can get them. Lastly, one-third of the access charge increase is due to building costs; however, it is important to know that we would have added approximately \$3 per month if we did not build a new facility, just to cover the cost of necessary upcoming current building repairs and upgrades. Your MLEC board of directors universally agreed that it was the best use of the members' money to invest in a new facility than spend millions of dollars on a 60-year-old building.

**Q: How much is this new building going to cost?**

A: Current construction estimates are approximately \$16M. We have been working with our partners Architectural Resources Incorporated and McGough Construction to keep the cost of construction as low as possible and ensure that any contingency reserves get returned to MLEC and our members.

**Q: What will you do with the existing building?**

A: Our first plan will be to work with economic development agencies to help us find potential buyers for our facility that are willing to invest in Aitkin and the greater area. We will continue to reside in, and support Aitkin County as well as the other counties we serve. We want to ensure the future growth and sustainability of this wonderful community.

**Q: Why have you returned all the capital credit money recently if you need to raise the access charge?**

A: This gets a little complicated. We have had years of high margins in the past and the projected outlook for paying back those allocated capital credits and still maintaining our financial covenants was looking challenging. In these situations, cooperatives have a few options. Two common options are two to raise rates or borrow money to return capital credits. Because we had excess margins the past three years, we did not have to do either of those two things. We chose to use our excess margins to get ahead of some of the challenging years we knew were coming and retire capital credits quicker than we normally would to even out the retirements of the next ten years.

Over the months to come, I will continue to talk with members and answer questions. Your MLEC Board of Directors, management team, and myself will work together to talk through your suggestions for improvement and do what we can to move through this difficult economic time with the lowest financial impact on each of you.

Until next month, remember that the days are getting longer, and boats will be in the water soon!

# LET'S DISH

## SEND US YOUR RECIPES!

We'll credit your account **\$10.00** if it's printed in THE OUTLET

### MAIL TO:

Kassie Peterson  
Mille Lacs Energy  
P.O. Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431

### OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



## MARGE'S - BLT DIP

- 1 lb. bacon
- 5 Roma tomatoes
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup real mayonnaise

Fry the bacon until crispy. Crumble bacon using a rolling pin and set aside. Remove and discard the tomato membranes, then chop tomatoes into quarter inch cubes. Add sour cream, mayonnaise, bacon, and tomatoes into a bowl and mix thoroughly. Enjoy!

Thank you to Marjorie Hanlon of Aitkin for sharing this month's recipe.

# TRUST BOARD GRANTS

***This month, the MLEC Trust Board awarded \$20,500 to local organizations!***

The Mille Lacs Community Trust Board meets quarterly to distribute funds raised through Operation Round Up. This December, the board awarded \$20,500 in grants to local nonprofit organizations including: Aitkin Co. Environmental Services, Aitkin Co. Habitat for Humanity, Cuyuna Range Youth Center, Great River String Ensemble, McGregor Post Prom Committee, Mille Lacs Indian Museum, Mille Lacs Trails, Nexus-Mille Lacs Family Healing, Onamia After Prom Party, Riverwood Auxiliary, St. James-Cross Catholic Outreach, True Friends, and Wild and Free. The total amount of grants awarded since the start of Operation Round Up has reached an astounding \$1,454,729!

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative where our generous members roundup their electric bill payment to the nearest dollar. All of the funds raised go into the trust fund which is donated back to the community. Board members include: Lisa Anderson, Kim Waffensmith, Darlene Stigen, Bethany Sellers, Charles Schotzko, Becky Joerger, Bob Nelson, and Doyle Jelsing. To receive a Trust application, contact Deb Chute at 218-927- 8221 or 1-800-450-2191.

The Trust Board meets the second Wednesday in March, June, September and December. Applications are accepted at any time. Those submitted a week before the quarterly meetings will go to the board. Anything submitted after will be seen at the next board meeting.



*First Row Left-Right:  
Cara Shaver, Colleen Miller,  
Luanne Beyreuther*

*Second Row Left-Right:  
Rhonda Conner, Kimberly Burton,  
Paula Fisher, Ashley King, Jeremy  
Janski, Bob Nelson.*



# BOARD ELECTIONS

## *Candidate filing for MLEC director positions from Districts Three and Four is now open!*

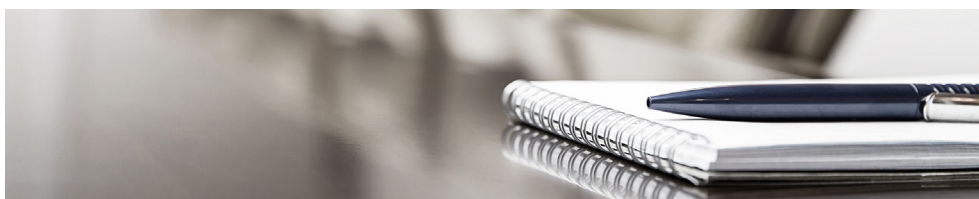
**District Three** includes members whose electric account numbers start with 52, 54, 55, 58, or 59. The present director is Harold Harms of McGrath.

**District Four** includes members whose electric account numbers start with 17, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 42, or 43. The present director is Aileen DeMenge of McGregor.

If you are an MLEC member receiving electricity in one of the districts listed above and are interested in filing for a director position, call Kassie Peterson at 927-8243 or 800-450-2191 or, email [kpeterson@mlcmmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlcmmn.com) for director election filing forms and a complete information packet.

**All filings must be received at the Cooperative by March 3, 2023.**

You can find additional district and annual meeting information on the MLEC website [www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net).



Regular office hours are  
Mon-Fri 8:00 to 4:30

927-2191 or  
800-450-2191 (toll free)



48 hours before you dig  
Dial 811 - Gopher State  
One Call or log on to:  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

Then contact a licensed electrician  
to locate your secondary wires.

### **MN Electrical Inspectors**

Aitkin County &  
South East Crow Wing County  
Jeff Larson 320-227-3009

Northern Crow Wing County  
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Mille Lacs County  
Benjamin Husom 320-277-6277

Off-peak and dual fuel system  
consumers should call an  
electrician or heating contractor for  
service or repairs.

Find load control schedule at  
[www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net) under Quick Links.



Visit our website -  
[www.mlecmmn.net](http://www.mlecmmn.net)  
E-mail us - [mlc@mlcmmn.net](mailto:mlc@mlcmmn.net)

# 5 WAYS TO FIGHT WINTER CHILL

We all have our favorite season. Some people love crisp, cool weather and bundling up under a favorite blanket, while others prefer the warm temperatures summer brings and all fun outdoor activities that go with it. But there's one thing we can all agree on: high energy bills are never fun. MLEC is here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep cold weather bills in check.

## **1. Mind the thermostat.**

This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68 degrees (or lower) when you're home. When you're sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try setting it between 58 and 62 degrees; there's no need to heat your home when you're away or sleeping and less active.

## **2. Button up your home.**

The Department of Energy estimates that air leaks account for 24% to 40% of the energy used for heating and cooling a home. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is another simple, cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy. If you can feel drafts while standing near a window or door, it likely needs to be sealed.

## **3. Use window coverings wisely.**

Open blinds, drapes or other window coverings during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out. If you feel cold air around windows, consider hanging curtains or drapes in a thicker material; heavier window coverings can make a significant difference in blocking cold outdoor air.

## **4. Consider your approach to appliance use.**

When combined, appliances and electronics account for a significant chunk of our home energy use, so assess how efficiently you're using them. For example, if you're running the dishwasher or clothes washer, only wash full loads. Look for electronic devices that consume energy even when they're not in use, like phone chargers or game consoles. Every little bit helps, so unplug them to save energy.

## **5. Think outside the box.**

If you're still feeling chilly at home, think of other ways to warm up—beyond dialing up the thermostat. Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks and bundle up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home! If you have hard-surface flooring, consider purchasing an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

If you're taking steps to save energy but continue to see major increases in your bills, give us a call. MLEC's energy experts can help identify areas and other factors impacting your home energy use and recommend next steps for savings.

Winter months often bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. By being proactive about saving energy, you can increase the comfort of your home and reduce monthly bills.







## 2023 photo calendars now available at the MLEC office!

Photo calendars are free for all MLEC members. Stop by the MLEC office to get one while supplies last. Please only take one per membership. Thank you to all who submitted photos this year!

# YOU'RE INVITED!

Join us to learn more about Briggs & Stratton® standby generators and battery systems.

**When:** Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Where:** Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative  
36559 US Highway 169  
Aitkin, MN 56431

*BBQ lunch will be provided!*



## GIFT CARD TRIVIA!

Correctly answer the question below for your chance to win a gift card from a local business within our service area. The answer can be found within this issue of The Outlet. You must be an MLEC member to participate. Be sure to include your name and service address! Entries must be received by **February 28<sup>th</sup>**.

**MAIL TO:**  
Kassie Peterson  
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative  
P.O. Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431

**OR E-MAIL:**  
kpeterson@mlcmmn.com

*Fill in the blank*

Candidate filing for MLEC director positions from

Districts \_\_\_\_\_ is now open!

Name:

Address:


*Congrats to Dolores Warburg of Aitkin, the December gift card trivia winner!*

## A BETTER RURAL INTERNET IS HERE!

No matter what you use your Internet for, we've got you covered with the speeds you need. Whether you are streaming, online gaming, working from home, or monitoring security cameras. We have an Internet plan for your home, cabin, or business.



**MLEC fiber**  
Powered by Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative



**MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

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Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.