



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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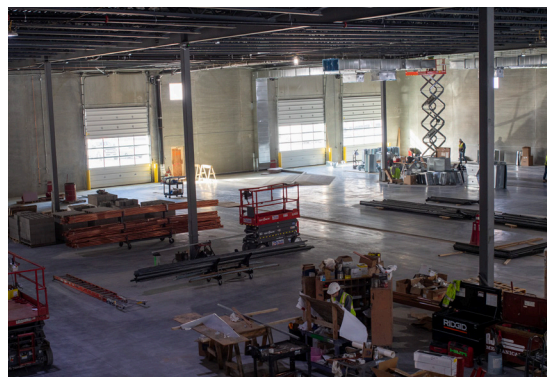
## NEW HEADQUARTERS PROGRESS

### *An inside look at the MLEC headquarters construction site.*

On Tuesday, January 16th, Mille Lacs Energy hosted lunch for the new headquarters construction crew. For many employees, this was their first look inside the building. So far, construction has gone smoothly and is on track to be finished in September of 2024. The building is enclosed, and interior work has begun.

"We are excited to welcome our members into our new facility this fall. Your MLEC Board of Directors and management team have worked hard to get to this point and have closely monitored the project every step of the way," said Sarah Cron, CEO of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative.

If you have questions regarding the building project, contact our office at 218-927-2191 or visit our website for project updates and more information.





# 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! MLEC 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*

\$750 - Centrally Ducted Air Source Heat Pump Installation

\$50 - SEER 2 - 13.8 up to 16 AC

SEER 2 - 14.3 or higher Ducted ASHP



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

ENERGY WISE  MN

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

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Find minutes from  
MLEC Board meetings at:  
**<http://www.mlecmn.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,  
Marketing & Communications Administrator

# YOUTH TOUR 2024

MLEC is now accepting applications for the 2024 Youth Tour!

Current sophomores or juniors in high school whose parent or guardian is a MLEC member are eligible to apply. This year's Washington DC Youth Tour is June 18-23.

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 with more than 50,000 alumni from 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@mlecmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmn.com). Applications must be received by March 1, 2024.**



# FOCUS ON RELIABILITY

Dear Member:

January is here, and with it is a sense of renewed hope and optimism about the future. As we move into the new year, MLEC leadership is thinking about ways we can better serve you, our members. Thoughts of strategic planning, setting goals, finding efficiencies, and prepping for the move into our new headquarters building fill our heads each day.

Looking ahead, we are exploring ways to innovate and utilize new technologies to improve our services. As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more critical. We're committed to powering—and empowering—our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So, how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power while adapting to a changing energy landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs counties. You may not realize it, but MLEC doesn't generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from our energy provider, Great River Energy (GRE), and from there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community. GRE's 2027 projected energy resource mix consists of 57% renewable energy and the other 43% natural gas, hydro, and market purchases.

We're increasingly using more electricity generated from renewable energy sources. However, we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power that's available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, MLEC uses technology to enhance our local grid, limit service disruptions, and improve outage response times.

Advanced metering technology, also known as AMI, helps pinpoint the exact location of outages and can even analyze damaged or tampered meters. AMI helps MLEC save money with real-time data and ultimately improves power reliability for our entire community.

Proactive tree trimming is another way we limit service disruptions.

Scheduled trimming keeps power lines clear from overgrown limbs that are likely to fall. Our aggressive Right-of-Way approach has made a huge difference, resulting in shorter and less frequent power outages.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric co-ops in Minnesota and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model because, for us, it's about cooperation, not competition.

As we turn our focus to 2024, MLEC will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable electricity you expect and deserve—for today and tomorrow.



*Sarah Cron, CEO*

## IS A HEAT PUMP RIGHT FOR YOU?

Many companies and homeowners are placing an increased emphasis on reducing their use of fossil fuels by looking for new ways to use electricity to help them achieve their goals.

This strategy of replacing direct fossil fuel use with electricity in a way that reduces overall emissions and energy costs is called "beneficial electrification." It's made possible as utilities, including MLEC, continue incorporating more carbon-free sources of energy into their power supply portfolios.

There are many opportunities for beneficial electrification across the residential and commercial sectors, including making the switch to an electric vehicle or an electric heating system — as long as the end-user and environment both benefit from the change.

One home appliance that provides the opportunity to reduce fossil fuel use and replace it with electricity is the heating

system. Heat pumps have become increasingly popular as the technology advances to support heating in colder climates.

Like an air conditioner, a heat pump can cool your home. What makes them unique is that they can also provide heat. Unlike other electric heating options, air source heat pumps (ASHPs) do not use electricity to create heat but instead use it to move heat from outdoor air and transfer it indoors. With today's ASHP technology, this process of moving heat is extremely energy efficient even when it's cold outside.

MLEC provides incentives for ASHPs throughout the year. Be sure to check with us prior to purchase to confirm what options are available and to ask any additional questions.



# 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



## SOFT FROSTED PEANUT BUTTER CHOCOLATE CHIP BARS

2 cups creamy or chunky peanut butter	2 cups flour
12 Tbsp butter or margarine (softened)	1/2 tsp salt
2 1/2 cups sugar	2 (11.5 oz. ) packages Nestle Toll House Chocolate Chips
6 large eggs	
2 tsp vanilla extract	

Mix peanut butter and butter/margarine in a large bowl until well blended and smooth. Gradually mix in the sugar, eggs, and vanilla extract. Then, gradually mix in the flour and salt. Stir in (by hand) 1 of the 11.5 oz. packages of chocolate chips. Spread the batter evenly in a 15x10x1 baking pan. Bake the bars at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Evenly sprinkle the other package of chocolate chips on top of the warm bars. Let the chips melt on top for 5-10 minutes, then carefully spread the melted chocolate evenly. Let the bars cool completely, and enjoy!

# WORKING THROUGH WINTER

*Winter cold doesn't stop MLEC crews! Learn more about what keeps our Operations Team busy.*

Our Operations Team works diligently all year round, even in the harshest weather conditions. When the ice and snow come to Central Minnesota, our crews focus on network and equipment maintenance rather than new service construction or other building projects.

"The winter months are a great time to maintain our fleet, tools, and other things we use daily. Our belts and rubber goods are tested throughout the year but are professionally tested during this time. We also assess our trucks and heavy machinery in great detail and take the time to make repairs if necessary," said Construction and Right-of-Way Manager Cory Brix.

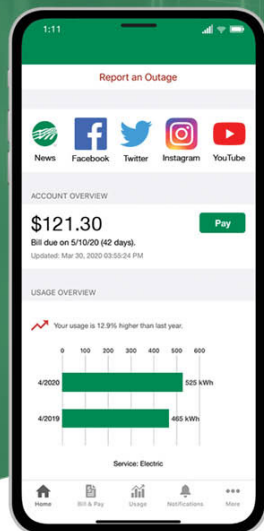
MLEC line crews patrol power lines on our system mile by mile and look for any areas of concern. Any broken or at-risk equipment, including power poles, guy wires, or transformers, are fixed at his time. To complete the entire MLEC service territory takes approximately five years. In addition, our Right-of-Way crew works throughout the winter, clearing trees that are potentially hazardous to powerlines. This work during the winter increases reliability across our system and prevents unplanned outages.

Winter is also when MLEC focuses on completing required annual trainings. All employees are CPR/First Aid certified, and the Operations Team completes a variety of OSHA-required training. Safety is our number one priority. Educating our staff and evaluating our equipment in detail keeps everyone safe and boosts reliability for you, our members.





# BILLING & PAYMENTS



Save time with easy payment options to avoid late fees and service interruptions.



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.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net) under *Quick Links*.



Visit our website -  
[www.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net)  
E-mail us - [mlec@mlecmn.net](mailto:mlec@mlecmn.net)

SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.

## BEST BETS FOR Winter Savings

Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

### UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE



Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.

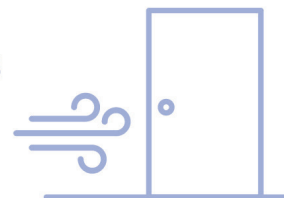


### MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT

Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.

### ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS

Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.



### USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER

Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.



### LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).







### 2024 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!

### Internet that donates to local organizations

Our employees donate quarterly to deserving groups and organizations that are doing good in our area. Get fast and reliable Internet service that gives back!



*Sarah Cron, CEO*

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

(218) 429-0433 • [www.mlecmn.net/fiber](http://www.mlecmn.net/fiber)

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### TIP OF THE MONTH

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.



## 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@mlecmn.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmn.com)

How much can you save on a Smart Thermostat with Mille Lacs Energy's rebate?

Name:

Address:

*Congrats to Nancy Lane, the December gift card trivia winner!*



**MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN 56431 • (218) 927-2191 / (800) 450-2191 • [www.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net)

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