



THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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HOLIDAY GIVING

Concern for community rings true at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative!

2021 has been an interesting year as we all navigate through this ever-lasting pandemic. At MLEC, we were happy to get back to some of our usual activities like participating in parades and having in-person meetings.

Concern for community is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. We take this responsibility to heart and try to spread as much good as possible. While our purpose as an electric cooperative is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, our members, we have a greater mission - to make our service area a better place.

This year, our donation bins were overflowing with new toys for Operation Christmas! Operation Christmas is a program coordinated by volunteers working with Aitkin, Hill City, McGregor, Palisade and Tamarack area businesses and service clubs to collect and distribute Christmas gifts for Aitkin County families in need of help. MLEC employees and board members donated \$1,010 to Operation Christmas of Aitkin County. MLEC matched \$300 for a grand total of \$1,310!

In December, MLEC employees volunteered to ring the bell for the Salvation Army. We hope that our members chose to put some cash in a red kettle this year. Any little bit counts!

We are looking forward to what 2022 brings. As a cooperative, we will continue to keep the lights on and keep our

communities' and members' needs at the forefront of our efforts. Never forget that your co-op cares! We hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and wish you a happy and healthy new year!



2021 TOUCHSTONE COMMUNITY AWARD

Congratulations to this year's winner, Aitkin Youth Fastpitch!

Aitkin Youth Fastpitch is MLEC's 2021 Touchstone Energy Commitment to Community Award winner. An award plaque and a \$500 check was presented to the organization on December 15th.

Aitkin Youth Fastpitch was founded in 2018. It began with a small group of parents committed to creating a developmental youth softball league that fosters love of the game, stresses sportsmanship, teaches fundamentals, and encourages community involvement. The program started with one team and 17 girls. Today, it has grown into a full program of over 150 girls at 6 different levels! The program continues to have a positive impact on all of the players' families, volunteers in the community, and of course all of the participants. Girls ages 4-18 get a chance to play softball throughout the summer where high quality and memorable experiences are shared.

This is the 18th year of this award recognizing a group that shows a strong commitment to community and is helping make the area a better place to live and work. Mille Lacs Energy Co-op is a Touchstone Energy Co-op and "Concern for Community" is one of the guiding principles.

Aitkin Youth Fastpitch will go on to contend for the statewide Touchstone Energy Community Award, which has a cash prize of \$1,000.



DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.



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

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bwelty@mlecmm.com
Secretary/Treasurer

Carol Pundt - District 2
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Sarah Cron - CEO
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Find minutes from MLEC Board meetings at:
<http://www.mlecmm.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

A GREAT BUSINESS MODEL

Dear Member:

A cooperative is a unique and amazing business model. A cooperative does not earn a "profit". Instead, revenues less the cost of doing business are considered margins and are allocated back to our members in the form of capital credits. These margins are distributed to MLEC members based on each member's total electricity purchases for that year. MLEC retires capital credits on a First In First Out (FIFO) basis, meaning the longest standing members of the cooperative receive their retirements first. The next year, the cycle starts all over again.

Capital credits are your share of the ownership of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative. Each and every member has a role in the necessary functions that keep the lights on. Line construction, equipment repairs, tree clearing, helpful customer service, 24-hour outage dispatch, and a brick-and-mortar location where we can call home would not be possible without our 13,531 cooperative members. The best part is you get reimbursed for your contribution over time!

Since inception, our cooperative has returned over \$20 million back to the MLEC membership! We have retired capital credits to members with electricity purchases through the year 2005; and, in 2021 we retired the largest capital credit amount in the history of our cooperative. We returned \$1,000,835 back to our members!

The notion of Members' Economic Participation isn't new. This is just one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that was created in 1844 by a group of tradesmen in England. Today, there are over 64,000 cooperatives operating in the United States providing services that include electricity, banking, brewing, childcare, insurance, health care, grocery, housing, agriculture, and more. Like the tradesmen in 1844, cooperatives are often created due to a lack of access, market instability/sustainability, and a genuine Concern For Community. A perfect example of this is shown right here at MLEC. Many parts of rural America are only electrified because cooperatives were formed. What was deemed too risky by for-profit utilities in the 1930's turned into something great, as evidenced by the \$20 million MLEC has given back to you.



Sarah Cron
CEO

Being a cooperative member means being a part of something bigger. Individual, statewide, nationwide, and worldwide, cooperatives have a network that stretches across many industries. I am proud of what our little Minnesota cooperative has done this past year and am lucky to have a great board of directors and management team by my side. Each challenge we have faced has landed on the side of positive results. I look forward to what 2022 brings and will continue to serve MLEC with the best interests of our members and my staff at heart.

Happy New Year.

YOUTH TOUR 2022

MLEC is now accepting applications for the 2022 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 14-19.

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, www.mlecmmn.net/youth-tour, or by emailing Kassie Peterson at kpeterson@mlecmmn.com. Applications must be received by March 1, 2022.

LET'S DISH

Thank you to Val Pender of Andover for sharing this month's recipe.

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 Cooperative
P.O. Box 230
Aitkin, MN 56431

OR E-MAIL:

kpeterson@mlecmn.com



BUFFALO CHICKEN DIP

2-3 large chicken breasts
1 block cream cheese (8 oz.)
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
1 cup Hidden Valley Ranch Dressing
1 cup Frank's Original Red Hot Sauce
chopped green onions (optional)

Boil chicken for 30-45 minutes until thoroughly cooked. Run under cold water, then shred chicken. While chicken is boiling, cut cream cheese into cubes. Place in a greased glass pan. Sprinkle cheddar cheese over cubes of cream cheese. Pour ranch dressing and red hot sauce over cheeses. Bake at 350 degrees for 7-10 minutes. Stir until well mixed. Add shredded chicken, stir, then cover with foil and bake another 20-30 minutes. Pour into a serving bowl and garnish with green onions. Enjoy!

TRUST BOARD AWARDS GRANTS

The Mille Lacs Community Trust Board meets quarterly to distribute funds raised through Operation Round Up. This December, the board awarded \$24,200 in grants to local non-profit organizations including: ANGELS, Cuyuna Range Youth Center, Great River Strings Ensemble, Home & Away Ministries *DBA Ruby's Pantry*, Kinship Partners Inc., Mille Lacs Indian Museum, Mille Lacs Trails, Mounted Eagles Inc, Nexus – Mille Lacs Family Healing, Riverwood Auxiliary, Ross Lake First Responders, Second Harvest North Central Food Bank, True Friends, and Wild and Free.

Operation Round Up is a voluntary program at Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative where our generous members round-up 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, Linda Weimer, Jack Gilbertson, and Lowell W. Larson.

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.

*Photographed L to R: First Row - Evon Pearson, Jackie Dilley, Leo Offerman, Kathy Hachey, Mara Lundquist, Ashley King
Second Row - Travis Zimmerman, Cathy Wilke, Amy Gray, Denny Davis, Jeremy Janski, Rich Aulie, Mary Aulie, Lyn Sahr.*



BOARD ELECTIONS

Candidate filing for MLEC director positions from Districts One and Two is now open!

District One includes members whose electric account numbers start with 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, and 69. The present director is Barbara Welty of Garrison. Barb has served the maximum term, and therefore, is ineligible to run again at this time.

District Two includes members whose electric account numbers start with 35, 38, 49, and 50. The present director is Carol Pundt of Deerwood.

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@mlecmn.com for director election filing forms and a complete information packet.

All filings must be received at the Cooperative by February 25, 2022.

You can find additional district and annual meeting information on the MLEC website www.mlecmn.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

Then contact a licensed electrician
to locate your secondary wires.

MN Electrical Inspectors

Aitkin County &
South East Crow Wing County
Nathan Readle 218-537-8419

Northern Crow Wing County
Jeff Overmyer 218-252-0919

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 under *Quick Links*.



Visit our website -
www.mlecmn.net
E-mail us - mlec@mlecmn.net

WELL WISHES FOR BARB WELTY

MLEC would like to extend well wishes and thank yous to Barb Welty as she finishes her final term as an MLEC director. Barb joined the board in 2001 and has served as the District 1 director for seven consecutive 3-year terms (21 years). She has served as a board member for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and participated in many other groups within the energy industry.



"As President, I have appreciated Barb's knowledge of all things MLEC. She was an excellent mentor for all of us on the board. She cared for all of the members, but was especially watchful for her district. Thank you Barb for your many years of dedicated service to MLEC and I wish you the very best in your retirement. You will be missed." –Harold Harms

"Thank you so much for all your years of service on the Mille Lacs Energy Board. I want to also tell you that your "connections" and work ethic have been instrumental in helping us make the cooperative become better. I want to wish you many blessings in your future endeavors." –Mike Reem

"Everyone at MLEC thanks Barb Welty for her years of service on the MLEC Board. Barb has an inherent dedication to, and passion for, the electric cooperative industry. Her years of experience have given her a depth of knowledge that will be hard for us to replace. Her kind, welcoming, and inclusive personality has successfully cultivated invaluable relationships with our employees, members, legislators, and other external stakeholders that are critical to the ongoing success of MLEC. Barb's commitment will be greatly missed." –Sarah Cron

"MLEC has been honored and privileged to have had Barb serve on our board for the past several years. Her relationships with our legislators and her constituents have been an extremely positive asset to MLEC. Barb not only has been a wonderful board member, but also a friend to all. God speed Barb." –Aileen DeMenge

"Barb is our senior member and has helped guide the board with her many years of service. She remembers many issues from the past and how the board dealt with them. She has a large family and is very proud of them. Great attitude and always upbeat."

–Bruce Robinson





2022 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!

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Maximize your heating system's performance by inspecting, cleaning or replacing air filters once a month or as needed to reduce energy costs and prevent potential damage to your system.

Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers aren't blocked so air can flow freely.

Source: Dept. of Energy



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 **January 31st**.

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

OR E-MAIL:
kpeterson@mlecmn.com

Who was chosen as the winner of the 2021 Touchstone Commitment to Community Award?

Name:

Address:

Congrats to H Ross of Onamia, the November gift card trivia winner!