



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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## KEEPING THE LINES CLEAR

As the MLEC line crews head into the busy summer months, the Right-of-Way (ROW) crew is doing the same. Clearing trees and overgrown vegetation is vital to provide safe, reliable power to our members. MLEC has taken an aggressive approach to clearing ROW and operates with a four-man crew. You may find Mille Lacs Energy in your neighborhood identifying and addressing hazardous trees and vegetation. We ask that you give the crew room to work, so all can stay safe. If you need to pass the bucket truck, please do so with care.

***We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as Right-of-Way, to:***

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Keep crews and members of our community safe
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs

Are you planning on planting some trees this summer? There are many beautiful varieties of low-growing trees and shrubs that provide color, screening and shade. Consider the types of trees that coexist well with power lines and the environment to avoid the need for trimming for line clearance.



BEFORE



AFTER

# TUNE-UP THIS SUMMER

The best way to ensure efficient operation of your cooling system is by having it tuned-up every two years. A tune-up by a service expert can improve your unit's efficiency by as much as 20 percent, extend its life, and help protect the environment.



## To qualify for a \$25 tune-up rebate:

1. Tune-up must be conducted where electricity is supplied by MLEC.
2. The CAC or ASHP must be in operating condition, over three years of age, and not had a tune-up in the last two years.
3. Rebate submittal must follow the guidelines as listed.
4. Program is subject to change or cancellation without notice. Call MLEC to verify rebate status.
5. Program is for tune-ups only; it does not cover the cost for repairs of the air conditioner or heat pump.

## Contact a local HVAC contractor and receive the rebate!

- Hire the contractor.
- After completing the tune-up, have your contractor fill out the contractor portion of the coupon below.
- Complete the member portion of the coupon.
- Return the coupon to MLEC along with a copy of the contractor invoice.
- The rebate option is available to members through Dec. 31, 2022.

ENERGY WISE  MN

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

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manderson@mlecmmn.com

**Derik Midthun - District 2**  
218/821-4349  
dmidthun@mlecmmn.com

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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

### Member Information

Member name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Account number \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that a tune-up has been performed at the residence above by a HVAC contractor

Member signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:  
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative  
PO Box 230  
Aitkin, MN 56431



### Contractor Information

Equipment brand \_\_\_\_\_

Model number \_\_\_\_\_

Serial number \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. age of unit \_\_\_\_\_ yrs. SEER rating \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have completed the following on this unit.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> clean condenser coil        | <input type="checkbox"/> check belt, if needed                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> check coolant level         | <input type="checkbox"/> lube motor, if needed                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> check coolant pressure      | <input type="checkbox"/> visually inspect the entire system    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> test all controls           | <input type="checkbox"/> blow out drain lines                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> check indoor furnace filter | <input type="checkbox"/> educate homeowner on system operation |

Contractor signature \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor company \_\_\_\_\_

# THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Dear Member:

The late Colin Powell had a saying: “Bad news isn’t wine. It doesn’t improve with age.” While there are so many topics I would like to cover this month – namely the prolonged, inconvenient, and dangerous power outages that plagued 80% of our members last month – I need to address the current state of our economy and the predicted future of energy prices for you, our member.

Again, as I scroll the headlines, the news isn’t getting better: “Gas Prices Are at Record Highs in Every State.” – Forbes Advisor, June 13, 2022; “US, European Economies Slow Sharply as Recession Risks Grow” – June 23, 2022; and “Lithium Landgrab Sparks New Electric Car Risk” – Reuters, June 23, 2022.

Inflation is at a 40-year high. Interest rates, including mortgage rates are going up, while retail and home sales are going down. The war in Ukraine has shot energy prices through the roof causing the demand for food, goods, and services to go the other way. Every single business sector is increasing prices, all the while bracing for a recession. With all this looming, we can’t forget that we are still facing the ups and downs of a global pandemic that will no doubt rear its head again this fall.

Locally, this has had a cascade impact on how MLEC does business. The supply chain issues are easy to detect and see. Simply put, supplies we need to build and maintain line are out 6 to 36 months and the prices are higher than they were a year ago. The biggest wrinkle is the number and severity of storm related outages we have experienced in the last year has caused us to run through our reserves. We are buying more supplies on tighter deadlines at higher costs.

Power supply is a little more complicated because we don’t touch and feel it. We all flip the switch and power is there (until it isn’t). Besides coal, which you know the State wants us to get away from to produce electricity, we rely heavily on natural gas. The price of natural gas has nearly doubled over the last year. There are also transmission line constraints (the big lines that bring the power to our substation so we can deliver it to you). These constraints impact supply/demand in the energy market, causing great price increases during times of peak energy demand. Great River Energy, our power supplier, is facing the same cost pressures that we are seeing. It is increasingly likely that they may be forced to raise rates, which would be passed on to us and their other cooperative members.

We are working with both the federal government and Governor Walz in an attempt to get some relief on asset classification and Department of Revenue over-reach that is having significant financial impacts to our cooperative. We are cleaning up processes and finding efficiencies internally. Finally, we discuss the prospects of a new building. The fact is – if we do not build a new building, we will still need to invest \$4 to \$5 million in our existing facility to make the necessary repairs and upgrades to keep our employees operating in a safe and functional facility. All these things add up to the fact that our core cost of doing business is going up. While we held rates stable for the last three years – during the height of COVID, we will need to pass some form of rate adjustment on to you, our member at some point in the future.



Sarah Cron  
CEO

***“While we held rates stable for the last three years – during the height of COVID, we will need to pass some form of rate adjustment on to you, our member at some point in the future.”***

In the next few months, our Accounting and Finance Department will work to finalize our 10-Year Financial Forecast to determine what all these changes mean. We will come up with the best plan we can to move forward and have the lowest impact on our membership. We will continue to communicate with you so you can be prepared for what is ahead.

It’s a pretty dark picture, but bad wine doesn’t get better. I thought you should know.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'S Cron', written in a cursive style.

# 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@mlecmmn.com



## APPLE CINNAMON WHOLE WHEAT MUFFINS

1 cup flour  
1 cup whole wheat flour or ground  
whole wheat cereal (shredded wheat)  
1/2 cup sugar  
2 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1/4 tsp salt  
2 cups shredded apples

1/2 cup shredded carrots  
1/2 cup ground raisins  
1/2 cup oil  
1/4 cup milk  
2 eggs  
2 tsp vanilla extract

Mix liquids, add dry ingredients, then apples, carrots, and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Recipe makes 12 large muffins or 24 mini muffins (bake for half of the time). Enjoy!

Thank you to Vivian Fowlds of Palisade for sharing this month's recipe.

# BETTER INDOOR AIR QUALITY

*Breathe easier with these tips for better indoor air quality.*

We spend a lot of time indoors. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average person spends 90% of their life indoors. Additionally, our homes are becoming more energy efficient—they're better insulated and sealed with less ventilation—which is great for our energy bills but not so much for our indoor air quality.

The thought of breathing in pollutants can be scary, but the truth is, indoor air pollution is common and simply unavoidable. The good news is there are ways you can easily improve the air quality of your home.

Here are five tips to help you breathe a little easier.

### **Change your air filter often.**

Clogged, dirty filters reduce the amount of airflow and the HVAC system's efficiency. When a filter becomes too clogged, the excess dirt and dust are sent through your air ducts, adding unnecessary allergens and other unwanted particles into your living space. During the cooling season (summer months), the Department of Energy recommends replacing your air filter every month or two. This is one of the easiest ways to promote better indoor air quality and energy efficiency.

### **Regularly vacuum carpet and rugs—especially if you have furry friends.**

The cleaner the home, the healthier the home. Vacuuming carpet and area rugs once a week can greatly reduce the accumulation of pet dander and dust inside your home. Frequently clean other areas that collect dust, like drapes, bedding and cluttered areas.

### **Use vents to remove cooking fumes.**

Those exhaust fans aren't just for when you burn the bacon. Fans help remove fumes emitted while cooking and eliminate unwanted moisture and odors. They may be a bit noisy, but these handy tools can help you improve indoor air quality while

you're preparing that culinary masterpiece (or even a grilled cheese sandwich!).

### **Get a handle on humidity.**

Summer months typically bring more humidity than we'd like, especially if you live in a high-humidity climate zone. Moisture in the air can carry bacteria and other unwanted particles that you eventually breathe in. Dehumidifiers work to remove that moisture from the air, reducing the amount of bacteria, mold and other allergens in your home.

### **Incorporate air-purifying plants into your living space.**

There are several varieties of indoor plants that can help detoxify your home from dust and germs found in a variety of home products, furniture and other materials. A few low-maintenance, air-purifying plants to consider are snake plants, aloe vera plants and pothos plants (also known as Devil's Ivy). These vibrant, lush plants are eye-catching and beneficial for any home. Remember to review care conditions and think about placement for any new plants you add to your home. Taking simple steps to purify indoor air can improve health and overall quality of life. With a little effort, you can improve the indoor air quality of your home and breathe a bit easier.



# FOOD TRUCKS

Fun lunch options are coming to MLEC this summer! Food trucks will be visiting the co-op to serve our members and the public. Stop in for something tasty on the dates listed below.

## SCHEDULE

7/21, 8/18 - Benny's Hotdogs & Lemonade  
7/28, 8/25 - Eliana & Brothers Mexican Food  
8/11 - Pit Happens BBQ



\* Dates are subject to change. Follow the MLEC Facebook page for updates/ cancellations\*

# FOOD TRUCK DAYZ AT THE GO-OP

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



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

# TRUST BOARD AWARDS GRANTS

The Mille Lacs Community Trust Board meets quarterly to distribute funds raised through Operation Round Up. This June, the board awarded \$20,750 in grants to local non-profit organizations including: Aitkin Alzheimer's Team, Aitkin American Legion, Aitkin Farmer's Market, American Legion Riders, Post # 395, Angels Anonymous, Aitkin County, Committee for Awareness and Prevention of Suicide (CAPS), Garrison Bay Lake Area Lions, Knights of Columbus Cuyuna Range Council, Lakes Area Chaplaincy, Lakes Area Music Festival, Lakes Area United Way, Long Lake Conservation Foundation, Mille Lacs County Operation Community Connect, Riverwood Foundation, Ruby's Pantry, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post #1727. The total amount of grants awarded since the start of Operation Round Up has reached an astounding \$1,411,629!

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, 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.

Front row left to right: Beth Sumner, Scott Clement, Jan Burt, Paula Fisher, Dave McMillan, Wendie Bright, Cathe Picek, Mark Greninger.

Second row left to right: Doyle Jelsing, Jeff Benson, Nicole Olson, Gary Tibbetts, Cindy Roden, Irmgard Boyer, Steve Harrison, Scott Lykins.

Third row left to right: Brian Barnett, Matt Olson, John Aga, Bob Carlson, Thomas Fielder, Stacey Durgin Smith, Jim Olson.



# 2022 PHOTO CALENDAR

See your photo in MLEC's 2023 Calendar! We're asking members to submit photos by October 28, 2022. Winning photos will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill. Voting will take place after the deadline on the MLEC Facebook page. The 12 photos with the most likes will be featured in the calendar.

Photos must be emailed to:  
**photos@mlecmm.com**  
by 11:59 p.m. on October 28, 2022.

*Winning photographers automatically give MLEC permission to use the photos in the calendar, in other publications, member presentations, or electronically online.*

## Photo Contest Guidelines

- Only MLEC members are eligible for the contest.
- Photos must be electronic.
- Photos should capture the beauty of the area we serve, if possible, but any Minnesota photos are acceptable.
- Pets, animals, food, etc. are acceptable.
- **PHOTOS MUST NOT INCLUDE PEOPLE.**
- The photos must be taken by the member.
- Please include the name of the member submitting, location taken, and a title for each photo.
- You may submit up to 8 photos each year, but we limit each photographer to no more than two winning entries each year.
- Entered photos must be in color and appropriately sized for printing at 12 inches wide by 9 inches high (300 ppi resolution).
- Only horizontal photos will be accepted. Vertical photos do not qualify.



Helping students stay connected.

Learn more about MLEC Fiber and stay updated on expansion projects!  
(218) 429-0433 • [www.mlecmm.net/fiber](http://www.mlecmm.net/fiber)

## 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 **July 31<sup>st</sup>**.

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

**OR E-MAIL:**  
[kpeterson@mlecmm.com](mailto:kpeterson@mlecmm.com)

What is the deadline for the 2023 Photo Calendar Contest?

\_\_\_\_\_

Name:

Address:

*Congrats to Brenda Besch of Aitkin, the May gift card trivia winner!*



MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE

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