



# THE OUTLET

Monthly Publication of Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

VOLUME 54  
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MAY 2023

## FOOD TRUCK DAYZ AT THE CO-OP

*Tasty lunch options are coming to MLEC this summer!*

We have a full schedule of food trucks coming to Mille Lacs Energy starting June 1<sup>st</sup>. Stop by during your lunch break or make a plan to grab something on your way up to the cabin. Take your food to go or stay a while and enjoy the fresh air at one of our picnic tables. Food Truck Dayz are open to everyone so bring your family and friends to try some new cuisine! Stay updated by following MLEC on Facebook.

### JUNE SCHEDULE

**June 1** - Benny's Hotdogs & Lemonade

**June 8** - Theresa's Wicked Tasty Food

**June 15** - Barajas Mexican Grill

**June 22** - Crabby Dale's BBQ

*\* Dates are subject to change. Follow the Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative Facebook page for updates/ cancellations\**



*Theresa's Wicked Tasty Food*



*Benny's Hotdogs & Lemonade*

### FOOD TRUCK DAYZ AT THE CO-OP

*Crabby Dale's BBQ*



*Barajas Mexican Grill*





## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

### *Air source heat pumps are a safe and efficient home solution!*

A smarter solution is available for members seeking to more efficiently heat and cool their home year-round: air source heat pumps (ASHPs).

ASHPs provide a safe, environmentally-friendly solution for home comfort conditioning as well. They don't use an open flame or create products of combustion – such as carbon monoxide and other emissions – so there is no need for venting, and their extended equipment life means less pollution associated with discarding old units or parts and manufacturing their replacements.

Able to deliver hyper-efficient home heating and air conditioning, ASHPs help members realize savings in energy consumption as well as cost. You can save up to 30% on your home cooling expenses by using an Air-Source Heat Pump instead of other conventional air conditioning units. They are also 200-400% more efficient when it comes to home heating. This is possible because it uses advanced technology to transfer more energy than it consumes.

The warmth provided by ASHP technology is superior in quality compared to conventional furnaces. The heat distributed by an ASHP is distributed more evenly and holds its moisture better, resulting in more natural, comfortable warmth.

For a limited time, if installed in June, July or August, you can double your rebates on ducted air source heat pumps when installed by a qualified contractor and put on our dual fuel program.

Air Source Heat Pump	Regular Rebate	Promo Rebate
SEER 14.5	\$480	\$960
SEER 15	\$580	\$1,160
SEER 16+	\$630	\$1,260

\* Ductless ASHP rebates are \$750

\*Limited funds are available and awarded on a first-come, first-service basis. Rebate amount and programs are subject to change without notice. Low interest financing is available for qualified members. Mini-split ductless air source heat pumps do not qualify for the double rebate.

**Questions? Contact our Energy Services Team  
at 218-429-0432 or 888-433-4279.**

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

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manderson@mlcmmn.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



**ENERGY  
WISE MN**



# BETTER BY EVERY MEASURE

Dear Member:

I invite you all to attend our Annual Meeting on May 18, at the Minnesota National Golf Course in McGregor. Please RSVP (further details on page 4) to ensure we have enough food for everyone in attendance. We want to thank the team at Minnesota National for their quick response to our unexpected needs and excellent service last year. We have read all the member feedback and hope you notice the changes we are making based on your valuable input.

Our slogan for this year's Annual Meeting is "Better by Every Measure." We all hoped 2022 would not be as challenging as 2021; however, we had another year of interesting hurdles to jump. Despite everything we have faced in the last three years, we still received very positive results in our member satisfaction survey. Our ratings by you, our member, increased in nearly every category. These include Overall Member Satisfaction, Charging Reasonable Rates, Member Expectations, Charging Reasonable Monthly Service Fees, Compared to Ideal Utility, Having Knowledgeable Employees, Providing Community Support, and Having Our Members Best Interests at Heart. All these scores and more improved from our last survey in 2019. I would say that it is better by every measure!

I am very proud that we have held rates stable and returned record capital credits during my time at MLEC. Your entire MLEC team has been working hard to provide you with the excellent service you have grown to expect. Their dedication to this cooperative is next to none. With that said, we cannot ignore the fact that during these difficult economic times, record inflation, and unthinkable product price increases, we, too must react to what is happening regionally, nationally, and globally. That is why your MLEC Board of Directors unanimously voted to adjust the monthly Access Charge. Harold and I will discuss this in detail at the Annual Meeting.

Our wholesale power provider, Great River Energy (GRE) is seeing the same financial challenges we are seeing – only on a much larger scale. I have indicated previously in this column, a full one-third of the upcoming Access Charge increase is due to our rates from GRE. You will notice that beginning on the May bill, for April's usage, you will no longer see a wholesale power cost adjustment (WPCA) unless we see unexpected and unusually high charges from GRE. Throughout the year, our residential members currently pay an average of \$6 per month in WPCA fees for costs incurred from GRE. Rather than having surprise and erratic monthly charges, we worked with GRE, analyzed predicted costs, and captured those fluctuating costs into a stable fixed fee. GRE's President and CEO, David Saggau, will be at the Annual Meeting to speak more about GRE and what to expect from our wholesale power provider.

We have stabilized our internal Right-of-Way (ROW) costs through the five-year reclamation process and intend to maintain a healthy ROW into the future. As indicated in the past, investment in our Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system, in conjunction with a clear ROW, has already proven we are on the way to monetizing these systems. Efficient staff time, fewer truck rolls, quicker outage identification and restoration has shown a documentable reduction in certain areas of operations and maintenance costs. Unfortunately, the overall cost of the equipment necessary to make plant investments is increasing significantly and



Sarah Cron  
CEO

outweighs the funds saved from the efficiencies we have put into place. This is why we need to recover costs through an Access Charge increase. This decision was not taken lightly and passed unanimously by the MLEC Board.

Everyone has heard about the potential new building project for the past three years. Much like the \$1.9 M McGregor Fire Hall or the \$30 M Mille Lacs Health System hospital expansion, MLEC is a critical infrastructure that supports three counties, 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Our staff ensures these essential services, so your homes and businesses have electricity every day – whether you are there or not. When outages occur, MLEC employees get out of bed, leave family gatherings, and drop everything to get your power restored as quickly as possible. Your MLEC Board fully supports that we need a secure, safe, healthy, and modern facility that can adequately house the human capital and equipment necessary to provide you with the critical service that powers your life. We understand how vital your cell phone, water heater, furnace, well pump, septic pump, garage door opener, EV charger, and oxygen tank are. Your elected board representatives and many of our employees are MLEC members and ratepayers just like you, and we also want these things to work when we need them most. The board and I will address these items at the Annual Meeting.

The theme for our 2022 Annual Meeting was "Going from Good to Great." At the Annual Meeting, Kassie Peterson will review some of the information from our 2022 Member Satisfaction Survey that shows why we say we are "Better by Every Measure." Once again, it is a bold statement, but I know the men and women I work with are up to the challenge.

Thank you for letting me serve a great organization, and thank you for helping make MLEC a better electric cooperative.

# 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



## TASTY 'N TEMPTING FROZEN LIME DESSERT

### Crust:

6 Tbsp butter or margarine  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 3/4 cup pretzels (save 1/2 cup for garnish)

### Filling:

1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk  
1/2 cup lime juice  
1 lemon lime Kool-Aid drink mix packet  
1 tub (8 oz.) whipped topping

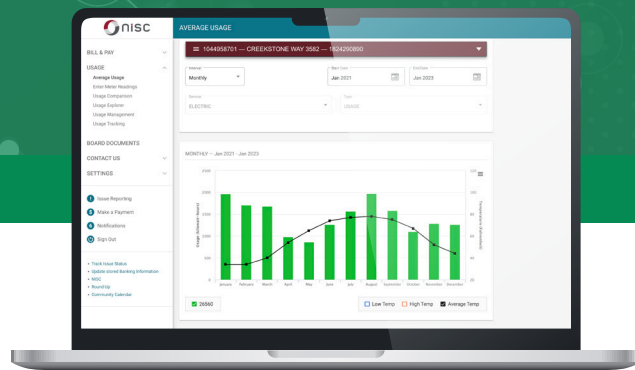
In a mixing bowl, combine butter or margarine, sugar, and 1 1/4 cups pretzels. Firmly press crust mixture onto bottom of 9x9 pan. Refrigerate until ready to fill. In another bowl, mix sweetened condensed milk, lime juice, and Kool-Aid mix until smooth. Set aside 1/2 cup of the whipped topping, then gently add the remaining whipped topping into the mixture. Pour evenly into the prepared crust. Freeze for at least 6 hours or overnight. Before serving, garnish with the left over 1/2 cup whipped topping and 1/2 cup pretzels. Enjoy!



## UPGRADE UNLOCKED

### New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

Manage your account like never before with the new, improved SmartHub web application. A simplified yet enhanced design is coming your way soon. This new version of SmartHub puts your usage and payment details front and center for fast, easy access and the simplified menu structure makes navigating the site a breeze. Keep an eye out for more details soon!



**Questions? Contact us at (218) 927-2191**

# JOIN US AT THE ANNUAL MEETING!

You're invited to the 2023 MLEC Annual Meeting! Join us May 18<sup>th</sup> at the beautiful Minnesota National Golf Course for a free meal, lots of door prizes, and the most up-to-date information regarding your cooperative.

Members will hear from MLEC leadership and learn important information about the past year and what lies ahead for MLEC.

We have many door prizes to give away to those in attendance. Prizes include an electric bicycle, Traeger pellet grill, Tineco wet/dry vacuum, Ryobi electric power washer, MLEC bill credits, free rounds of golf at MN National Golf Course, AND MORE! We hope to see you there!

RSVP by emailing [annualmeeting@mlecmmn.com](mailto:annualmeeting@mlecmmn.com). Include your name, account number, and number attending. **Remember, the RSVP is just to help with planning. A specific spot will not be reserved for you.**



**Bring a non-perishable food item and get a free LED light bulb! All will be donated to a local food shelf.**

# WE NEED YOUR HELP!

## Unclaimed Capital Credits Checks

Capital credits, patronage dividends, patronage refunds—these are all familiar terms with similar meanings: the allocation of operating margins as equity and, when appropriate, retiring them to the members of the co-op in the form of money or credit on the bill. The retirement of capital credits is one of the most important things we do as co-ops. It's unique to the cooperative business model.

Even if you move and are no longer a member of the cooperative, the capital credits remain in your account. Be sure to update your mailing address with MLEC if you move so we can send future capital credit checks to the correct address. If you are an heir to an estate, please contact MLEC if you think capital credits remain in the estate's account.

A list of unclaimed capital credits can be found on our website at [www.mlecmn.net/capital-credits](http://www.mlecmn.net/capital-credits). Maybe a check is waiting for you! If you know someone and how to contact them, please call our capital credits team at 218-429-0431.



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)

# BILLING MADE EASY

Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative understands how busy life can get. Whether working, getting kids to activities, spending time with family, or running errands, it can be easy to forget to make a payment. Luckily, MLEC offers many ways to pay your bill, so you can use what is the most convenient and works the best for your lifestyle!

## **BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS:**

**Pay Online** - Log in to view your bill electronically through the SmartHub site or the mobile app. You may authorize payment from your checking account or Visa/Mastercard.

**Quick Pay** - Do you want to make a quick, one-time online payment without logging into your SmartHub account? All you need is the account number and the first five letters of the primary member's last name. If you choose to allow another person to make a payment on your account by this method, please be advised they will be able to see your current balance or past due balance, but no other account information.

**Auto Pay Program** - Sign up for recurring payments through SmartHub using your bank account or a Visa/Mastercard. Simply sign-in or register for SmartHub to get started. Once you log in to SmartHub, choose Auto Pay Program under the Billing & Payments tab. After adding an account, the total bill amount will be withdrawn from your payment method on the due date each month. The program is ideal for travelers and snowbirds and assures your good credit rating with MLEC.

**Pay by Phone** - Make payments by phone with your credit/debit card or checking account using our automated phone system. This service is available 24/7. Just call 855-385-9813 and follow the step-by-step instructions.



**Pay by Mail** - Please allow mail time for payment to be received before the due date. Please call the billing team if additional time is needed. Mail billing remittance to:

**Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative**  
P.O. Box 811  
Albert Lea, MN 56007-0811

**Pay in Person** - Drop off your payment at our office located at 36559 US Highway 169, Aitkin, MN, 56431.

**Questions? Call MLEC at 218-429-0430 or  
877-634-4314 or visit [www.mlecmn.net](http://www.mlecmn.net)**





OUR OFFICE WILL  
BE CLOSED  
MONDAY, MAY 29<sup>TH</sup>  
IN HONOR OF  
MEMORIAL DAY

*In memory of many,  
in honor of all.  
Thank You!*

## FAST SPEEDS to fit your needs!

Can your Internet keep up with what's new? The more devices you have, the more speed you need. MLEC Fiber is the fastest and most reliable Internet available and offers different plans to fit your budget and lifestyle.

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

 **MLEC** fiber  
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## A Safe, Happy House

Four Easy Ways to Boost Electrical Safety at Home



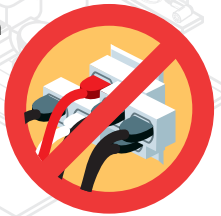
**DON'T**  
place flammable items,  
like potholders, napkins or  
dish towels near the stove  
while cooking.



**DO**  
keep electrical devices  
away from water to prevent  
electric shock.



**DON'T**  
overload electrical outlets with  
more devices than the circuit  
can handle.



**DO**  
ensure you're using the  
correct wattage in all  
light fixtures.

May is National Electrical Safety Month.

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

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

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

Fill in the blank.

The retirement of \_\_\_\_\_  
is one of the most important things we do as co-ops.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Congrats to Douglas Ludvigson, the March gift card trivia winner!



**MILLE LACS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

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