



79th Annual Meeting Looks to Future

The 79th Annual Meeting of Richland Electric Cooperative placed a heavy emphasis on issues facing the cooperative in the future. From the opening event featuring children of all ages singing the national anthem and leading the Pledge of Allegiance to the end where a new director was elected, the co-op's leadership delivered ideas for the future.

Board President Calvin Sebranek pointed towards a future where mandates of the Environmental Protection Agency reign over carbon dioxide emissions and the impacts anticipated regulations will have on energy costs and reliability. Citing a constant and ever-evolving strategic planning process as one way the cooperative can ready itself for the future, Sebranek added that members need to stay abreast of the issues.

"A specialized outreach effort has been and is continuing to be developed that will give members greater insight into their cooperative through electronic communications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and our

website," said Sebranek. These new forms of communications are faster and available at the member's convenience, but he also added that more traditional media would also remain a key part of the co-op's communication strategy.

Judy Murphy, the board secretary and the cooperative's representative on the Dairyland Power Cooperative board of directors, expanded upon the comments made by Sebranek. She emphasized how much has been done to reduce power-plant emissions but added that these recent investments would pale in comparison cost-wise to carbon capture technologies that today

are not commercially available. Murphy explained the efforts underway at Dairyland to support its members by developing more renewable energy, including its investment in two large solar projects. She also explained how much rail service has been impacted by the crude oil being shipped by rail, noting that coal deliveries have consistently been treated as a second-class commodity much like the farmers have noticed when they tried to ship grain and fertilizer.

Members also heard from three attendees of last year's Youth Leadership Congress, two of whom appeared in person. Josie Parker and Cheyenne Larson spoke about the value of the program and what they learned while attending. They encouraged others to take advantage of the program to build valuable skills for the future. Unable to attend but sending written comments was John Darby-Luttig, another participant in the program. Throughout the meeting directors and staff encouraged members to nominate high-school students for attendance at





this event, which is held annually in July at the UW–River Falls.

In breaking news, CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark announced that the cooperative had reached terms with Junlyn Farms of Viola to purchase a piece of land adjacent to the Ash Ridge substation. He announced the co-op would be developing a community-owned solar energy project whereby members could own solar generation without having to site the project at their own home. He explained that other cooperatives across the region, including neighboring Vernon Electric Co-op, have completed similar projects and could serve as model for Richland’s program, thereby avoiding the need to invent the program from scratch.

Clark went on to announce to members that the cooperative would soon receive all of its long-term financing from a lender other than the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Over the years the cooperative has been using RUS less frequently, and given the current interest rate environment and the threat of rising rates, now was considered the right time to become independent of RUS.

Over 500 members voted in this year’s election. Jim Goplin was elected to the post vacated by Jim Lewis, who



retired from the board this year.

While the majority of the meeting was focused on the future, some historical perspective was also provided. The results of the independent audit of the cooperative’s financials completed by Bauman and Associates revealed the cooperative continued to meet all of its financial obligations and the accounting systems were all well-maintained, resulting in a positive report.

Retiring Director Jim Lewis was honored for his years of service to the cooperative after members heard of

the many changes that had taken place during his tenure.

In a special presentation including a short video, the audience learned about the critical role Richland played in keeping the Yuba Feed Mill in operation. Beginning in late July of 2014 the co-op worked with local community leaders and United Cooperative to develop a business plan allowing a new owner to take over and keep the business operational. Readers can expect a full feature story of this endeavor to appear in an upcoming issue of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*. ■



Beat the Heat with Cool Products

By April Lollar, APR, CCC

When temperatures soar in the summer, utility bills can do the same. There are several small ways to manage your energy use this summer—and Richland Electric Cooperative is always happy to help you with those simple, no- or low-cost ways to save—but for those who are considering remodeling or making larger purchases, here are a few ideas that may help keep your energy use in check and keep your wallet cool.

Remodeling?

If you are making esthetic changes to your home, consider products that will also make it work more efficiently. The biggest energy users in our homes are heating and cooling systems, so if you are making upgrades to your floors and cabinets, consider making some energy efficient upgrades to your HVAC system, too.



Programmable thermostats, if used properly, typically pay for themselves within a year due to money saved on heating and cooling systems, usually the biggest energy users in a home.

If you're making additions to your home or converting attics or basements into living spaces, a ductless heating and cooling system is a great option. A ductless system does not require adding pipes or ductwork to a home's existing system, making it a more affordable upgrade for many. Ductless systems tend to be more efficient, meaning homeowners will use less energy and save on their electric bills. Contact your local HVAC expert for more information.

If making changes to your heating and cooling system doesn't seem like the right upgrade for now, consider installing a smart thermostat. These "cool" devices learn your behavior and adjust heating and air conditioning settings with a goal to save energy. Smart thermostats also have the capability to connect to the Internet, allowing homeowners to manage energy use via

a smart phone app. There are several smart thermostat options available on the market, and they typically cost between \$200 and \$400.

Purchasing New Appliances?

If you are considering purchasing new appliances that will use less energy, but may not have the budget for a complete appliance overhaul, your clothes dryer is a great place to start as dryers are big consumers of electricity. For example, dryers typically use around 900 kWh each year as compared to a refrigerator, which uses around 455 kWh each year.

There have been big developments with dryers in recent years, and Energy Star awarded two standouts—the LG EcoHybrid Heat Pump Dryer and the Whirlpool HybridCare™ Heat Pump Dryer—the 2014 Emerging Technology Award.

Using heat pump technology, these dryers offer 40 percent in energy savings if operated on their most efficient settings and can save more than \$400 over the life of the dryer. If you are interested in purchasing other appliances or products, remember to visit energystar.gov and check out their "Most Efficient 2015" list to help you determine which products—from windows and HVAC systems to televisions and washers—are the most efficient for your home.



For more information on how to save energy, visit www.togetherwesave.com. ■

*If your appliances need an upgrade, many new models feature high-tech energy efficiency settings that make the upfront cost worth the investment. But remember—to see savings on your electric bill, you have to use the energy-saving settings.—
Source: GE*

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Hired Man

During World War II, Pa hired a man to help with the farm work each summer. Hired men were hard to find during those years as many young men were off fighting the war, but Pa managed to find Henry Lackelt. Henry was in his late twenties, tall, and thin. He had two possessions, maybe three if you counted the clothes he had on his back and couple extra shirts. He had an old Model T Ford car and a guitar. I marveled at both, especially was I impressed with his guitar and his ability to play it.

By the 1940s I was old enough to enjoy the WLS Barn Dance that we listened to every Saturday evening on our battery-operated Philco radio. From listening to the Barn Dance, I developed a great respect and appreciation for good guitar playing. And now, with Henry Lackelt living with us for the summer, I could see and hear guitar playing firsthand.

Every evening, after the cows were milked and turned out to pasture, and the cans of fresh milk were placed in the cooling tank, we would gather on the back porch of our old farmhouse. Pa, Ma, my twin brothers, me, and of course Henry Lackelt with his old, scratched-up guitar. Henry sat on the edge of the porch, crossed his legs, and strummed one string, then another, while he screwed on the little knobs at the end of the instrument. Soon he announced, "Good enough." He ran his thumb across the strings and began playing and singing. He started with "That Silver-Haired Daddy of Mine," a beautiful old tune that I knew from the WLS Barn Dance.

"In a vine-covered shack in the mountains, bravely

fighting the battles of time..." The sound of the guitar and Henry's voice hung on the cool night air just like the call of the whippoorwill that we often heard on summer evenings. His voice was among the best I'd ever heard, although I must admit that outside of the Barn Dance and a country-western singer or two at the Waushara County Fair, I hadn't heard many guitar-strumming singers.

When he finished the song, we all clapped. Then we sat quietly for a few minutes, feeling the cool night air moving up from the hollows and watching the mist rise over the alfalfa field in front of the house.

"Red River Valley" was next. "Come and sit by my side if you love me. Do not hasten to bid me adieu." It was such a beautiful tune, especially the way that Henry sang it.

That fall, when the potatoes were dug and the corn was cut and shocked, we bid goodbye to Henry Lackelt. My last memory of Henry was in his Model T car, heading down the driveway and turning onto the country road. He turned his head, smiled, and waved. We never saw or heard from Henry Lackelt again. But we surely remembered him. ■

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



By cleaning your air conditioner's air ducts, you can lower your energy consumption by between 5 and 15 percent.

Source: energy.gov