

A look back at 2017



**Richland Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

We would venture a guess that you are thinking the same thing as we are right about now. Where did the year go? We live in such a fast-paced society that we barely have time to reflect on our accomplishments. We are always moving on to the next thing, without even looking back. Our winters are spent celebrating the holidays, plowing snow, cutting firewood, and doing many other things. Our summers are spent at weddings, mowing lawn, boating, and trying to get as much stuff done outside as possible before winter gets here.

In this issue, we wanted to reflect on some of the highlights from this past year.

First full year of solar

2017 was the one-year anniversary of the introduction of Transition Energy, and we are very happy to say that the solar panels performed optimally and probably better than we had anticipated. We currently have over half of our solar panels sold, and there are still subscriptions available. If you would like learn more about Transition Energy, be sure to check out our website or stop into our office. If you are curious about how the panels are performing on certain days, you can find an active tracker on our website as well.



Transition Energy

Jocelyn Parker serves as intern and Wisconsin representative on National Youth Board

Many of you already know Jocelyn Parker from our previous introductions. She is a recent graduate of Kickapoo High School and currently attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Jocelyn attended Youth Leadership Congress twice and was elected to the youth board. She was then elected to represent Wisconsin as a national youth leader, which allowed her to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) annual meeting in San Diego last February.

This past summer Jocelyn worked as an intern for REC. She is currently deciding whether to major in international business or communications.

Jocelyn Parker served as a national youth leader at the 2017 NRECA annual meeting in San Diego.



She came to us at the beginning of the summer to tell us her plans and that she was interested in cooperative work. We took advantage of her interest and the board approved hiring her for the summer. Jocelyn wrote a feature article for us in our August edition of the *WECN* magazine.

“Having Jocelyn intern for the summer helped us out immensely with daily tasks. Being a smaller co-op, our staff is asked to wear multiple hats and she took a lot of work off their shoulders that needed to be done. We were so happy to have her and wish her nothing but the best,” REC Chief Financial Officer Amy Martin said.

Sterling Kleist selected to the youth board

Once again REC sponsored seven area students to attend Youth Leadership Congress in UW-River Falls. Joey Crotsenberg-Fraser, Shawn Spencer, Sterling Kleist, Kayla Monson, Lindsey Neefe, Scott Turgasen, and Kayla Turgasen were the participants this year. Director Jeff Monson also attended this year as a chaperone. He said, “It was great to experience this conference firsthand. I have always wanted to attend and now I have a better understanding of just how great this conference is for students. It was great to watch the students become better leaders in just a couple days.”

Sterling Kleist campaigned for the youth board but fell just a few votes short of being selected. However, due to a scheduling conflict a youth board member will not be able to attend this year’s Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. Sterling was asked to attend and was accepted to be a part of the youth board. Congratulations, Sterling!

G.R.A.C.E. Fundraiser

If you had the chance to read our December issue, you noticed that REC and Genuine Telecom partnered to raise money for G.R.A.C.E. This was the first fundraiser we’ve done of this magnitude. We decided early on that we were going to match the total number of donations throughout the month of October. We were very excited when the donations from our members tallied up to \$1,025, and with our matching dollars the total became \$2,050!





Members continued to appreciate the casual “business and breakfast” format at the annual meeting in March.

Annual Meeting

Richland Electric Cooperative continued its annual meeting with the “breakfast and business” format. The new format allows for a shorter, less “boring” meeting for our members, directors, and employees. We’ve had very positive feedback about the new format and have been told to “never go back to the old format!” Needless to say, we will continue with the new format to a large extent.

Members were once again given scratch-off tickets for prizes and were given LED light bulbs as an attendance gift. Director Jeff Monson assumed the role of Dairyland director for REC. The position was previously held by Director Judy Murphy for 23 years.

Two of our three director elections were contested this year. Dan Hillberry was unopposed in this year’s election. Incumbent Judy Murphy defeated candidate Connie Champnoise, and incumbent Calvin Sebranek defeated candidate Leonard Frye. All voting was once again done by mail-in ballots.

Hurricane Irma relief

America was hit pretty hard in a couple short weeks by



Journeyman Linemen Grant Worthington (left) and Curt Brockway helped restore power in Florida after Hurricane Irma hit.

hurricanes, the first being Hurricane Harvey. Most thought that this would result in electric cooperatives from around the country coming to the aid of Texas. However, Texas did not need any additional assistance. But just a few weeks later, Hurricane Irma made landfall on the United States. Extensive damage was caused in southern Florida, but the storm worked its way up through the peninsula, targeting more rural areas. Clay Electric Cooperative of Florida was seeking aid prior to the storm making landfall. Wisconsin electric cooperatives quickly answered the call. Richland Electric was represented by Journeyman Linemen Curt Brockway and Grant Worthington.

“It was a great experience and a rewarding one helping get the lights back on,” Worthington stated. “I think there is a sense of pride knowing the Wisconsin co-ops are willing to help out on something major like that. Clay Electric had many more miles of line and linemen than we do, but we all do the same job to get things back up and running, and that was great to see.”

Shannon Clark – Regional and ACE Award

It was quite a year for Shannon Clark, our CEO and general manager, who received two very prestigious awards only months apart. Clark received the regional outstanding service award from NRECA in September, followed by the Ally of Cooperative Education (ACE) Award, presented by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) in November. The ACE award is the highest award given by the WECA.

“People that generally receive this award are either retired or are retiring. I am not doing either,” Clark stated with a chuckle.



CEO Shannon Clark accepts the ACE award at the 2017 WECA annual meeting.




CEO Shannon Clark received a regional service award at the Region V and VI NRECA meeting in September. He's shown here with his wife, Tammy, and (standing, l-r) Directors Don Huffman, Timothy Tiller, and Board President Calvin Sebranek.

New metering technology

Perhaps the most significant change in 2017 was our new meter deployment. Countless hours of inquiries and research went into making this a reality for us. We, as well as Oakdale Electric Cooperative and Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, decided to work with Landis and Gyr. The new metering technology allows us to get 15-minute intervals for a more accurate representation of usage.

"This technology not only helps us, but the members as well. We are able to get real-time data to help the members understand their usage. In coordination with SmartHub, members are able to view their usage on particular days, months, and years. This has been a great project to be a part of and we are excited for its completion," said Director of Energy Services Jeff Joseph.

New REC sign

To end 2017, REC worked with REC member BL Signs to create a new sign for the headquarters building. REC has been in its current building since 1956 and we have always had the sign on the front of our building. However, the trees have grown rather large since that time, hiding the letters slightly. Our Touchstone Energy sign lost its light earlier this year, so we decided to create a new, energy efficient one with the help of BL Signs. 



5 Ways to Save Energy this Winter

Energy efficiency projects taken on to reduce winter bills add up to good dollars and cents, and the payoffs continue throughout the year. We've got five tips to jumpstart the savings:

1 Button up:

Caulk, weather stripping, and wall and attic insulation help seal gaps, keeping conditioned air in. A radiant barrier under carpet padding or flooring felt puts comfort at your feet.

2 Switch off:

Power strips are ideal for those home spaces tied to occasional use. Electronics in workshops, craft nooks, game rooms, home offices, and guestrooms are great for one-touch switch off.

3 Check the over/under:

One of your best bets for saving is adding a full ductwork inspection under floors and over ceilings to your seasonal heating system checkup. Collapsed connections, tears, animal damage, and register gaps can all leak conditioned air into unused spaces.

4 Lead with LEDs:

The more use a kitchen gets, the greater the potential savings with LEDs. Replacing every bulb with new-generation LEDs is a bright idea for winter that will help keep your cooking space cooler in summer.

5 Legacy losers:

The more than 60 million refrigerators in the U.S. that are at least 10 years old cost consumers over \$4 billion a year in energy. Replacing that old family-sized extra fridge with a smaller ENERGY STAR model will save money for years to come.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



SLOWING DOWN IN WINTER

When the frigid winds of winter pour over the land, much of nature

slows down, relaxes, and waits for the rejuvenation of spring. The black oaks stand naked at Roshara, except for the dead leaves that rattle in the breeze. But new growth, new life for the oaks remain in the buds that are varnished and waterproofed. The oaks rest throughout the cold days of winter, snapping and cracking when the temperature dips below zero, and gently swaying in the face of a northwest wind.

Deep within a hollow oak, a full grown queen hornet sleeps half-frozen, waiting for the warmer days of March and April. Roshara's ponds, buried in snow, carry a heavy layer of ice, keeping out the sun's rays and preventing the water plants from producing life-giving oxygen for the few fish that live there. The fish move slowly, using as little oxygen as possible, waiting until the ice melts and a new supply of oxygen mixes with the water. Along the banks of the ponds, frogs sleep in hibernation, not really living but nonetheless staying alive.

Much of the year the wild creatures prepare for winter. Animals eat heavily in the fall, laying on a protective coat of fat. Squirrels bury acorns throughout the woodlot, spending the long winter days in search of their caches. Songbirds and many kinds of waterfowl prepare for winter by flying south, leaving the problem of survival in a frigid land behind.

The young of most animals are born in the spring so they are strong enough by winter to forage for days without food during long winter storms. We humans also prepare for winter in a variety of ways. When I was a kid growing up on a farm, we spent much of the year preparing for winter. We harvested hay and stored it in our barn. We cut corn for silage, which fermented in our silo, and then was fed to the

farm animals in winter. We cut grain, threshed it, and stored the grain kernels in our granary, which was later ground into cow feed, along with the ear corn that we had shoveled into our slatted corncrib. During late summer and fall, my mother canned vegetables and fruits, most of which we grew on our farm. Usually, in November we butchered a pig, had the bacon and hams smoked at a butcher shop in Wautoma, while we rendered the lard and canned much of the other meat.

Unfortunately, most of us humans don't pay attention to what nature is doing in winter—slowing down. The natural urge is to take things a little easier in winter, enjoy some time sitting by a fire, reading a good book, or taking a long nap after lunch.

In our hurry-up world we're led to believe that there is no time for slowing down, no time to take it easy when the cutting winds whistle around the corner of the house. Unlike the rest of nature, we hurry through winter cursing the snow that makes roads slippery, despising the cold that tightens car engines. We need winter as an opportunity to retreat from the pressures of the rest of the year. How about slowing down and relaxing a bit more.




Go to www.jerryapps.com for more information about Jerry's writing and television work. Contact Jerry at jerryappsauthor@gmail.com with questions or comments.

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