



**Richland Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MEMBERS...

This past month Richland Electric Cooperative joined cooperatives around the country in recognizing Co-op Month. These celebrations and activities are always focused around the members, as the cooperative form of business is not just about the employees and directors who work for and serve the co-op. It's about the members who own the co-op and contribute to its success. October Co-op Month is an opportunity for us to show appreciation to our members and thank them for actively participating in the co-op's affairs, whether it's by voting in director elections or simply letting us know what types of services members are interested in.

You may have heard us talk about our cooperative principles. These seven principles, by which all cooperatives abide, help guide us in areas beyond the business of providing safe and reliable electricity. For example, cooperative principle #7 is Concern for Community: "While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members."

For Richland Electric, that means being an active participant in our community. This October, we expanded our member appreciation picnic by inviting Focus on Energy and Techniart. They were able to help

members save energy and money by offering an opportunity to purchase LED lighting at a very discounted rate. Not only that, members were able to exchange up to 12 old incandescent or halogen bulbs for new, energy-saving LED light bulbs. A great number of members took advantage of this opportunity.

In the spirit of Co-op Month, REC also participated in the Canyon of Lights parade in Richland Center. It had been a number of years since our last parade entry, but we came back strong this year. Our employees volunteered to help decorate our new digger truck (*above*) and hand out glow sticks (*below*) during the parade. Some of our youngsters even participated by riding in the back, an experience they thoroughly enjoyed.

Speaking of our youngsters, for the first time REC hosted a pumpkin-carving activity for our little ones. We understand that our young members are our future, and we wanted to find a way for them to get involved with the co-op. And what child doesn't get pure joy from "pulling the guts" out of a pumpkin? We made sure they had everything they needed to get the job done by providing the carving kits and pumpkins. Even your board of directors took in the fun. We are so thankful that our members took advantage of this opportunity, and we hope to do it again next year!





COOPERATIVE EFFORT HELPS LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT

One of the ways Richland Electric Cooperative abides by the seventh cooperative principle, Concern for Community, is by working with our area's service organizations as they pursue ways to better serve the community.

Just recently, we were able to help the Cazenovia Fire Department obtain state-of-the-art Ultra High Pressure (UHP) fire extinguishing equipment, which will shorten the time it takes to put out a fire.

In addition, we were able to practice the sixth cooperative principle, Cooperation Among Cooperatives, at the same time by working with the La Valle Telephone Cooperative in achieving this goal.

"Any time two neighboring co-ops can work together to solve problems for our shared community and members, it always seems to work out better," said Shannon Clark, CEO & general manager of Richland Electric Cooperative. "LaValle Telephone and Richland Electric were able to do more together

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Shannon Clark, CEO & General Manager,

than either of us could do individually, and in this case that could be the difference between a tragic fire and one that, while unfortunate, is manageable."

When responding to emergencies such as medical issues or fires, every second counts. Getting water to a rural fire scene is a significant challenge, which often involves numerous tankers, portable tanks, and a supply source. Water supply sources can either be a nearby municipality with fire hydrants or a river, pond, or lake. In any event it usually means shuttling water from several miles away to the fire scene, which takes time and extra equipment.

The Cazenovia Fire Department saw an opportunity to improve the time



Left to right: John Bartz, general manager of LaValle Telephone Cooperative; Cazenovia Fire Chief Darrel Slama; and Shannon Clark, CEO & general manager of Richland Electric Cooperative.

it takes to extinguish a fire using this new UHP technology. UHP equipment drastically reduces the time necessary to put out a fire, and as an additional benefit, it uses far less water. Rural fire departments, usually made up of volunteers, have been adopting UHP methods for several years and the reviews are fantastic. UHP equipment is smaller and more compact so it's easier to deploy and handle, and it's at least equally effective—if not more—in various fire scenarios.

When the Cazenovia Fire Department started investigating the possibilities of putting UHP into their firefighting arsenal, they learned that it would take additional funding over and above present budgets. As is often the case with volunteer departments, they were not deterred and began raising funds. The Cazenovia Fire Department had raised enough money to cover all of the equipment needed with the exception of a truck chassis, and it looked like it might take as much as another year or two to get to the goal of having a "fire-ready" rig put in service.

Chief Darrel Slama made a call to John Bartz, general manager of LaValle Telephone Cooperative (LTC) and a fellow volunteer firefighter, to inquire

how the cooperative might be able to help get the new rig in service quicker. Slama had heard that LTC secured a USDA-sourced grant to provide a loan to the LaValle Fire Department for equipment. Richland Electric Co-op provided technical assistance to LTC during the initial efforts to secure the grant based on REC's experience from establishing its own program several years ago.

Bartz then reached out to Clark to see what the two cooperatives could do to help expedite getting this vital equipment in service. The two co-op leaders developed a plan where each cooperative would make a no-interest loan for half of the cost of the chassis to the department, to be repaid by continued fundraising and budget appropriations, as available.

"This equipment can make such a difference for a small, volunteer department when it comes to fighting rural fires, although it is certainly being used in urban areas as effectively. Less water, easier deployment, and speed of extinguishment is vastly improved and we felt we had to help," said Bartz.

Working together, LTC and REC were able to help even more. That's the co-op way.

REC CONTRIBUTES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE

Southwest Partners unites efforts in advancing area's business interests

Throughout its history, Richland Electric Cooperative has been an active participant in efforts to improve the economic vitality of the greater Richland County area. Over time, the role of economic development has differed. Historically there were industrial development groups focused on attracting more manufacturing, broad-based quasi-government economic development agencies, private groups with an interest in growing capital investment, and various private business groups, each approaching things in a different way.

Several years ago when the Richland County Economic Development Corporation—an entity that brought together business and industry, individuals, the education sector, and municipalities—was abandoned by key participants, there

was no longer a single “go-to” place for those seeking to advance their business interests in Richland County.

The vacuum created by the loss of a central effort forced Richland Electric Cooperative to develop in-house programs to aid new and existing businesses

in our community. Creative financing programs, business development services, matching entrepreneurs with state and federal resource assistance, and low-interest economic development loans became part of our in-house portfolio of services.

“While we had developed some good in-house programs, which we maintain today, we simply lacked the scale to be truly effective on a regional basis,” said Shannon Clark, CEO & general manager of Richland Electric Cooperative.

Richland Electric Cooperative was not the only one that experienced these shortcomings. Others including Richland Center City Utilities, local banks, and service groups all felt a united effort would be beneficial.

Trevor Clark, REC director of outreach, said, “The need for a common interest solution was met by the formation of Southwest Partners. Southwest Partners, which included our cooperative, brought common issues to the forefront and from there action plans were developed.”

The Richland Electric Cooperative Board of Directors

“...for us, Southwest Partners was a natural extension of our in-house efforts, and their economic development professional staff was a much-needed resource.”

Trevor Clark, REC Director of Outreach



Left to right: Southwest Partners Mike Breininger and Richland Electric Cooperative CEO/General Manager Shannon Clark

recognizes that a strong cooperative is only made possible by a strong community, so investing in Southwest Partners' economic development efforts was an easy choice. The board directed any funding to Southwest Partners for economic development work only because it is best aligned with the needs of REC members. Southwest Partners engages in a host of community projects, but the REC focus is squarely on the economic development aspect.

“Economic development is a budgeted item for REC with very specific goals and objectives. There are lot of good things outside of the definition of economic development happening that certainly improve the community at-large and we support those in other ways—for us

Southwest Partners was a natural extension of our in-house efforts and their economic development professional staff was a much-needed resource,” added Trevor Clark.

The Richland Electric Cooperative Board of Directors recognizes that a strong cooperative is only made possible by a strong community...



REMEMBERING THE BARN LANTERN

On a cold winter morning, after dressing in front of the dining room wood stove, I pulled on my old Mackinaw winter coat, slipped on my wool cap with the fur ear laps, and retrieved my barn lantern from its place near the kitchen wood box.

I took a match from the match box on the wall near the kitchen stove, lifted the lantern's glass globe, struck the match, and touched the flame to the lantern's wick. Then, carrying my lantern by its heavy wire handle, I was on my way to the barn, where Pa had gone a few minutes earlier.

The lantern cast long shadows on the snowscape as I briskly walked along the narrow path we had shoveled through the snow. Upon arriving at the barn, I hung my lantern on a nail behind the cows. Pa's lantern hung on a nail at the other end of the barn.

Grabbing my three-legged milk stool and a milk pail, I cozied up to a cow and began milking. Except for the sound of fresh milk zinging against the bottom of the milk pail and the occasional rattle of a cow's stanchion, it was quiet in the barn. The two lanterns provided just enough soft yellow light for us to see what we were doing.

When I finished milking my assigned cows, with lantern in hand, I climbed the ladder on the west wall of the barn to the hay mow above the stable. My daily task was to throw down hay from the hay mow, and then toss the dried hay through what we called "hay chutes" that led to an area in front of the cows.

Arriving in the cold and frosty hay mow, I hung my lantern on a nail pounded into one of the barn's wooden beams, well away from where I would be tossing hay, thus avoiding any chance of a fire. The warm, moist air from the cattle housed below filtered to the hay mow and gathered on the huge cobwebs found there. The moist air froze on the cobwebs, making wonderful pieces of art—at least that is what I thought of these beautiful cobweb creations. The soft, yellow light of the lantern made them even more beautiful.

By the 1930s, most people who lived in cities and towns

had central heating, indoor plumbing, and electricity. But lamps and lanterns still lit the rural countryside in central Wisconsin and many other rural locations. Then, in 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Act was passed by the U.S. Congress, and REA co-ops began stringing lines in the country. However, shortages during World War II led to a halt of that project—leaving lines strung within a half mile of our farm. So my family and many others in our community continued to use kerosene lamps and lanterns to light our way.

When electricity finally arrived at our farm, in 1947, we could leave our lanterns behind and walk to the barn in the glare of the electric yard light. With the flip of a switch, the barn was as bright as a summer day. But now we depended on someone else to provide for a basic need. We also had to pay a monthly electric bill, which amounted to several times more money than 15 cents a gallon for kerosene, which would last a week and sometimes longer. *[Excerpted from "Simple Things: Lessons from the Family Farm." Wisconsin Historical Society Press.]*



For more about Jerry's writing, go to www.jerryapps.com.

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