

# COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

## Cooperative Principle #6



Richland Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



MY CO-OP

**O**ne-hundred-year flood. A phrase that we have heard all too often the last few years. It would seem that a 100-year flood has happened every year for the past three to five years. Though you may only see the devastation of our small communities, what you often don't see is what goes on behind the scenes. National news outlets will often focus on the images or videos that will give them the most ratings, not the numerous volunteers who have sacrificed their time to help others. Our small communities will often band together to help one another in the worst of times.

The same can be said of electric cooperatives. As so many things are happening on the front lines and communities are preparing for the worst, electric cooperatives are strategizing how to keep the lights on. They are preparing to head out in the worst conditions. It should be noted that even during the worst of conditions, they never sacrifice their safety. Safety has been and always will be the number-one priority for Richland Electric Cooperative.

Although we are as prepared as we can be, sometimes we just need help. Sometimes the damage is severe enough that we have all crews dispatched. Sometimes certain lines will need more attention due to safety concerns. And sometimes we just can't get to certain areas. In the Dairyland system we have what is called ROPE (Restoration of Power in an Emergency). This is a mutual aid assistance program in which we will ask for assistance

from any electric cooperative willing to help. Last year, you might recall a Jackson Electric Cooperative truck assisting us during outages. Or Curt Brockway and Grant Worthington heading to Florida to assist Clay Electric Cooperative in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. This system is a key component of the sixth cooperative principal, Cooperation Among Cooperatives.

We are very grateful that the latest round of flooding did not impact us as much as it has in years past. Our neighbors at Vernon Electric Cooperative, on the other hand, did not fare as well. Their service territory was hit extremely hard, most notably the Timber Coulee region where they lost 50-plus power poles, some of which they could not find. Although Vernon Electric is a much larger co-op than us, they still needed aid. Our ROPE system came into play as MiEnergy (Rushford, MN), Eau Claire Energy (Eau Claire, WI), Riverland Energy (Arcadia, WI), and Dairyland Power



Two linemen from Richland Electric Cooperative were among the contingent of operations personnel from Wisconsin electric cooperatives that traveled to Florida last year to assist with restoration efforts after Hurricane Irma.

(La Crosse, WI) Cooperatives all came to the aid of Vernon Electric.

Unfortunately, Richland could not provide help as there was no way for us to get across the Kickapoo River. However, we were able to assist in other ways. Vernon had asked us to fly our drone over the crews in the Timber Coulee area to help portray the immense damage in the region. We also put together a video for them highlighting the work that was done. Please check the Richland Electric or Vernon Electric Cooperative Facebook page to view the video.

Although we cooperate with other co-ops during mutual aid, we are often working together in other departments, bouncing ideas off from one another to try something new. Cooperatives throughout the state often try things that other co-ops already have. We are not competing with one another, so it's very easy to help each other,

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whether it be marketing strategies, video production, scholarship programs, etc. We have the mentality of "why reinvent the wheel." We have our statewide, WECA, to help bring our issues as a whole to legislators. We have our generation and transmission co-op, Dairyland Power, to help bring marketing materials to all cooperatives so that we don't have to each say the same thing.

So no matter what is involved, cooperative principle number six is a key factor in the success of co-ops.

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# WE'RE THANKFUL FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP

## “Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

In the spirit of this quote by author William Arthur Ward, we'd like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of your connection to Richland Electric Cooperative, we are able to make our community a better place.

We think it's equally important to let you and other members of REC know

...we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

just what an impact you have on our co-op and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is “Concern for Community.” While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy, we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

We work closely with our local schools to provide safety demonstrations, award college scholarships, and facilitate tree planting for Arbor Day. REC also participates in an annual Youth Leadership Congress where we take our community's brightest young people to UW-River Falls to learn the importance of cooperatives while enhancing their leadership and teamwork skills. The trip is inspirational for many students, and we are both humbled and honored to be a part of this leadership development journey. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you! You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

When you attend co-op events, alert us to problems, or provide suggestions online or to our employees, you help us improve operations and thereby better serve the larger co-op membership.

Because we are locally governed by members of our community, we are able to get a firsthand perspective on community priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments, such as high-speed broadband or community solar programs.

We are thankful that our co-op board members carve out time to attend important training sessions, participate in planning meetings, and keep abreast of industry trends. This investment in time results in better informed advisors that serve the co-op's interests in a way

that our consumer-members expect and deserve.

On a more personal note, we appreciate the countless acts of kindness our lineworkers and other employees receive when they are working in severe weather and dangerous conditions. Our employees are thankful for your patience and consideration when we are trying to restore power during challenging situations and prolonged periods.

REC was originally established 82 years ago to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. Together, let's continue making our corner of the world a better place. We can't do it without you, and for that, we're thankful for your membership. 





# BOSS COWS AND THIRSTY CALVES

**Generally, our cows got along with one another. The presence of a boss**

**cow helped. She was always in the lead when the herd, in single file, walked from the pasture, down the dusty lane to the barn, twice a day. How the herd selected the boss cow remained a mystery. Perhaps she took the leadership responsibility on by herself, as she was usually an older cow that the others respected. Or maybe she earned the role in a head-butting contest with another cow for the boss role, something I observed a time or two.**

The boss cow would stay in her role as leader for as long as she remained on the farm and was able to carry out her leadership duties—sometimes as long as 10 years. Later in life, when I occasionally wondered if some group I was involved in didn't really need a leader, I remembered our boss cows, who in their quiet way kept the herd working together and got things done—even if the goal was as simple as returning home from the pasture in an orderly fashion.

When a calf was born on our farm, teaching it to drink from a pail was often my job. Drinking from a pail is a learned skill, as a calf's natural way of taking sustenance is directly from its mother, nuzzling her udder until it discovers a teat and then begins sucking. To teach a calf to drink from a pail, first you must corral the little calf (this is the easiest part of the process) and then straddle it between your legs, holding the hungry little animal firmly in place. Grab the pail half-filled with milk from the calf's mother, stick your hand into the warm milk, and encourage the calf to suck on your fingers. Once the calf begins to suck, gently push its muzzle into the pail of warm milk, hoping it will continue sucking when you remove your fingers from its mouth.

At this point in the process, you learn that each little calf, like every cow, has its own personality. Some calves take immediately to drinking milk from a pail; others take three or four tries. Some little bovines seem to take pleasure in sticking their muzzle in the pail of milk and then tossing their head up and out of the pail, soaking your pants. This happened frequently, and it taught me to control my temper and keep patience ever firmer in my grasp. I also learned that not all teaching is comfortable—think wet pants and a challenged ego (after all, I was bigger and smarter than this little creature)—and that some lessons must be taught many times before they set in.

It turned out that newborn calves are not that much different from some of the students I would work with later on in my job as teacher. Recently I realized that I had learned several good lesson from working with our small dairy herd. I didn't realize that I would be putting the lessons to good use throughout my teaching career. [Excerpted from, *Simple Things: Lessons From the Family Farm*, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2018.]



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