

POWERLINE

A monthly newsletter for member-owners of Corn Belt Energy

October 2011

It's a Matter of Principles

You might be surprised by the number of cooperatives around you. Co-ops have been formed to sell produce and electricity, offer financial and banking services, provide housing and health care, and much more.

So where did the bright idea for co-ops come from? It's a matter of principles - seven, to be exact! The modern movement traces its roots to a store started by weavers in the town of Rochdale (*pronounced Rotch-dale*) in northern England in 1844. The group was guided by a set of principles drawn up by one of its members, Charles Howarth. When introduced into the U.S. by the National Grange in 1874, these "Rochdale Principles" fueled a cooperative explosion.

Although stated in many ways, the Rochdale Principles require that a co-op must be open for anyone to join. Every member retains one voice, one vote. Electric co-ops hold member business meetings annually, allowing members to elect fellow consumers to guide the cooperative and have a say in how their utility is run.

There also have to be real member benefits. For example, members of electric co-ops often get money back (*called capital credits or patronage refunds*) when the co-op's in good financial shape. More than \$11 million has been returned to Corn Belt Energy members, including over \$4 million that was refunded in 2010.

Education remains another big focus. Electric co-ops provide safety information in schools, share ideas on how to make your home more energy efficient to keep electric bills affordable, and make sure elected officials and opinion leaders know about the co-op business model.

Because there is strength in numbers, co-ops tend to stick together when tackling regional and national issues. Perhaps most important of all, co-ops are independent and community-focused, not tied to the purse strings of far-flung investors. Co-ops help drive local economic development, fund scholarships, support local charities, and work to make life better in the areas they serve—the heart of the cooperative difference.

Corn Belt Energy and cooperatives worldwide generally operate using these seven principles adopted in 1995 by the International Cooperative Alliance:

Membership Open to all without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination. **1**

2 Democratic Member Control One member, one vote.

Member Economic Participation Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. The economic benefits of a co-op operation are returned to the members, reinvested in the co-op, or used to provide member services. **3**

Autonomy and Independence Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. **4**

Education, Training & Information Co-ops provide education and training for members so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-ops. They inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperation. **5**

Cooperation among Cooperatives Co-ops serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international structures. **6**

Concern for the Community While focusing on member needs, co-ops work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members. **7**



Learn more about cooperatives and the principles that define them at www.go.coop.

Practicing What We Preach

Energy efficient upgrades are already adding up to big savings

Corn Belt has been an ardent supporter of energy efficiency; as a cooperative, we're owned by the members who use our services and your best interests are our best interests. If you're a regular reader of our newsletter, you're familiar with our support of energy efficient lighting and geothermal heating & cooling.

We've frequently explained how incorporating these technologies into your home or business can add up to big savings on your energy bills. Now we're happy to report that we're benefiting from our own advice at our Bloomington headquarters facility!

Installing Geothermal

In April, we began seeking bids for the installation of a geothermal system for our Bloomington facility. Our old heating and cooling system received maintenance regularly, which prompted us to explore replacement options. Design-Air Heating and Air Conditioning, located in Decatur, was the low bidder and contractor selected. The Hole Deal, Inc. of Goodfield began the process by installing the ground loops required for the systems to operate.

Fifty 200' vertical wells were drilled into Corn Belt's front yard off of Highway 150. A u-shaped coil of high density pipe was inserted into the bore hole and the holes were then backfilled with a sealing solution. From the header pits, the lines were then horizontally bored into four separate utility rooms.

Design-Air installed ten 5-ton WaterFurnace Envision geothermal units that replaced the electric strip heat and central air conditioning units that had been utilized. Additionally, the geothermal system is much quieter when operating.

The office building has been zoned in order for smaller office areas to have separate thermostats, which makes the building even more efficient, keeps employees comfortable, and further reduces the units' run-time. For example, one of the geothermal units is used strictly for Corn Belt's server room in order to maintain a consistent, cool temperature.



our water. Our Princeton office has been utilizing geothermal heating and cooling for over 15 years.

Efficient Lighting

June marked the completion of an extensive lighting upgrade in three of our garage areas in Bloomington, Galva and Princeton. All 400W metal halides were replaced with energy efficient florescent high bay fixtures. Daylight harvesting occupancy sensors were also installed to reduce the run time of the new fixtures. After 15 minutes of no movement, the occupancy sensor automatically turns off the lights. The fixtures and sensors offer a safer work environment by providing brighter lighting that instantly comes on without the flip of a switch!

Initial Results

The initial savings we've experienced after implementing these energy efficient upgrades is impressive. Comparing our July 2011 electric usage to July 2010, our facility's electric usage dropped 33% (*even though July 2011 was 25% hotter*), while our August 2011 electric bill was 37% lower compared to August 2010!

Interested in learning how energy efficient improvements in your home or business can reduce your energy bills? Contact our Energy Advisor, Justin Stuva, at 309-664-9235 or justin.stuva@cornbeltenergy.com.



To learn more about geothermal heating and cooling, visit the Geothermal Alliance of Illinois website at www.gaai.org.



Installing geothermal will also help Corn Belt save money on heating water. An 85-gallon Marathon water heater was installed as a preheat tank for the

desuperheater that was added to one of the geothermal units. (*A desuperheater is a small, auxiliary heat exchanger that uses superheated gases from the heat pump's compressor to heat water. This hot water then circulates through a pipe to the home's storage water heater tank.*) In the summer, the desuperheater uses the excess heat that would otherwise be expelled to the ground to heat all of our water. During colder seasons, we'll rely more on the storage water heater to heat

Nicor Gas Customers: You have a choice!

With cooler weather just around the corner, it's time to think about your natural gas heating costs. If you're a Nicor Gas customer, you can choose who supplies your gas through their Customer Select program.

Nicor will continue to deliver your gas, but you can select Corn Belt Energy to supply your natural gas. We offer two competitive variable therm rates and convenient billing options. There are no monthly fees or termination fees and no equipment to install. The Corn Belt Energy supplier cost will be conveniently included on your Nicor Gas statement, so you only receive and pay one bill.

Enroll by October 31 and we'll send you a \$20 check after your first bill!



GREAT RATES • NO FEES • LOCAL SERVICE

Current Rates per Therm:

50¢

Market
Advantage
Plan

50¢

Winter
Protection
Plan

Market Advantage Plan

By selecting this plan, your natural gas therm cost will fluctuate according to current market conditions. You will benefit from this plan if it's a mild winter and market prices remain stable or decline.

Winter Protection Plan

With this plan, the goal is to protect you from the volatility of the winter market. You'll benefit from this plan if it's an extremely cold winter causing higher market prices.

\$20 Switch now and get \$20!
www.countoncornbelt.com

SLAYING THOSE ENERGY VAMPIRES

Did you know that you're sharing your home with "energy vampires"—electronic and electrical devices that continues to suck electricity even when turned off? On average, these items are responsible for 10% of the electricity you use every month.

Corn Belt is here to help you drive a stake through the heart of these vampires, saving you both energy and money.

One way to identify energy vampires is to look for devices with remote controls—TVs, DVRs, and audio equipment, for example. Then target gaming consoles, computers, monitors, and printers as well as

chargers for cells phones, iPods, small DVD players, and laptops. Chargers draw energy even when they're not charging anything. An easy way to seal the coffin on energy vampires is to plug components of your computer or home entertainment system into a power strip. With a single flip of a switch, you can fully cut power to them.

And don't forget to unplug any appliances—such as coffee makers and toaster ovens—with digital clocks when you aren't using them. As *TogetherWeSave.com* has shown, pulling plugs and employing power strips can save you over \$200 per year on your electric bills.



For other tips on how to save energy and money, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com or call our Energy Advisor at 1-800-879-0339 x235.



Contact Us

1-800-879-0339

Call this number to report an outage and call from a phone associated with your account if possible.

LOCATION

1 Energy Way
Bloomington, IL 61705

OFFICE HOURS

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Monday - Friday

cbec@cornbeltenergy.com
www.cornbeltenergy.com



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**Check out these
local, family
friendly events**

Scholarships for High School Seniors

This year, eight scholarships of \$1,250 each will be awarded to eligible high school seniors through the Illinois Electric Cooperative (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Four scholarships will be awarded to students who are children of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the cooperative, including Corn Belt Energy members.

A fifth scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, is awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee.

The sixth and seventh scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college who are children of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

A new eighth scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship, will be awarded to help pay for costs associated with lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield. Relatives of cooperative members are eligible to apply.



Candidates are judged on the basis of grade point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay that demonstrates their knowledge of electric cooperatives. Applications will be posted at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community" until December 31. Applications must be postmarked by January 1, 2012.

Wild West Show

Mackinaw Valley Vineyard
Sunday, October 2
MackinawValleyVineyard.com

Step back in time for a fun filled day with the whole family! Western legends will come alive at the vineyard from 12:00 - 6:00 PM! Dig out your best western gear to join in the fun. Activities will last all day including: storytelling, wagon rides, square dancing, shootouts, saloon entertainment by Patsy Stone, old-fashioned games and much more! Admission is \$5 each or \$25 for two adults and up to four children.

Autumn Celebration

Sugar Grove Nature Center
Saturday, October 22
SugarGroveNatureCenter.org

Enjoy fall color walks, a scarecrow factory, and our pumpkin patch. Children will delight in old-fashioned fun like bobbing for apples and pumpkin bowling. Step back in time to visit a 1750's trading post and frontiersman's camp, and meet other historical reenactors. Enjoy music featuring old-time rock and roll by The Indras and celtic tunes by The Emerald Underground. Explore the works of local artisans, crafters, photographers and so much more! \$3/person, ages 3 and under are free.