

Menard Electric Cooperative's

# Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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**More than 8,556 current and former members are receiving capital credits this year!**

The Board of Directors has approved a capital credit refund of \$300,000 for margins acquired in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and a portion of 1991.

Were you a member of Menard Electric in those years? If so you may receive a credit on your June bill or a check in the mail.



## All about capital credits

**We've refunded over \$7.9 million to members; it is the cooperative difference!**

### What are capital credits?

Unlike other utilities, Menard Electric does not exist to earn a profit. Any revenues over and above the cost of doing business are considered "margins."

These margins represent an interest-free source of operating capital by you and the rest of the membership to the co-op. This capital allows us to finance operations and new construction, with the intent that this capital be repaid to you in later years. We are currently on a 24-year retirement cycle.

We work hard to keep your rates as low as possible and we don't seek to earn a profit. But it sure is nice to know that when we do, you as a member-owner share in those profits in the form of capital credits.

### How are capital credits calculated?

Every member who purchases electricity during a year in which margins are earned is allocated capital credits. The amount of credits you earn in a year is based upon the amount of capital you contributed to the co-op through payment of your monthly bill. The more electric service you bought, the more capital credits you earned.

The sum of your monthly bills for the year is multiplied by an allocation factor to determine your capital credits. The allocation factor varies from year to year,

depending on the success of the co-op. Capital credits are only allocated for a year in which the co-op earns margins. Since credits are a member's share of the margins, no credits are allocated for a year with no margins.

### Will I receive credits every year?

Each year the Board of Directors must approve a capital credit retirement after reviewing the financial health of the co-op. If the board determines that the co-op cannot afford to retire credits, they will not authorize a retirement.

### What happens to my capital credits if I leave the co-op service territory?

Your capital credits remain in our system in your name until they are retired. Make sure we always have your current address so we can mail a check to you.

### What happens to the capital credits of a member who dies?

Capital credits of a deceased member may be paid at a reduced present value without waiting for a general retirement, or may be transferred to a surviving spouse if the membership was jointly held; contact Michelle for an estate retirement form.

## Member Spotlight

# Horse Sense

**B**right Star Equestrian Centre is run by a few members of Menard Electric and located just down the road from our office on State Hwy 97. If you've driven this way you've surely noticed the stone-front barn with the large star.

We spoke with Trisha Nichols who says Dana Ingle's husband built the barn for Dana, who knew instantly she couldn't keep it all to herself. But what to do with it was a mystery until Trisha brought her an idea.

It all began when Trisha asked if she could bring her son Ellis to meet one of the horses. Trisha says, "Ellis has Aspergers. As we were leaving he said, 'Mom, that horse, he gets me. People don't get me, but he did.' I realized that if at 10 years old my son finally felt he was understood that was a huge thing. And maybe other kids needed that too. I called Dana up and said, 'don't think I'm crazy, but we should do something with this.'"

Dana agreed and the two quickly moved on the idea. That fall they started working with eight kids on a volunteer basis.

The real changing point came when they met PATH Certified Instructor Ceci Maloney. "PATH, the Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship, is the gold star/elite licensure," says Trisha. Ceci is a special education teacher for District 186 and had operated a horse therapy organization in Pawnee for 15 years. She was searching for a facility she could work with and focus on teaching.

"With Ceci's help we were able to quickly become a PATH certified center, which is a big deal and usually takes years to accomplish," says Trisha. The Centre became PATH Certified and a non-profit agency in February this year.

As we prepared this issue the first official classes were days away from beginning, filled with kids from Petersburg, Springfield, Chatham and Edinburg who have physical, cognitive,



*(Above) Trisha is shown here with Mickle (horse) and Seth. "Seth has autism and doesn't make eye contact or speak much. When he mounted up on Mickle he looked me straight in the eye and spoke to me," says Trisha.*

*(Right) Ellis, the inspiration for the Centre, is shown here with Captain.*



behavioral or other disabilities.

The program would not be possible without a number of volunteers. "We have wonderful volunteers," says Trisha, who also stresses, "We always have room for more!"

They currently have 11 horses, including two miniature horses and three ponies. Presently, the facility is limited to only an outdoor riding ring but plans are in the works for an indoor ring when the funds are raised to build it.

"And for neuro-typical kids [without disabilities] we are going to have day camps this summer. We will also offer line dancing lessons on Thursday eve-



nings for anyone ages 5 and up; kids can come to learn alone or families can make it a night together. We'll have adult and kid separate areas and instructors," Trisha says.

For more information on the Centre, including how to volunteer, see their website at [www.brightstarequestrian-centre.com](http://www.brightstarequestrian-centre.com) or find them on Facebook. You can also call 217-415-0431. For more information on PATH visit [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org).



## And the survey says....

Every few years a random sampling of our members receive a phone or mail survey conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Last fall 250 members responded by phone and 270 responded to a mailed survey that gave them the opportunity to rate us on a variety of topics.

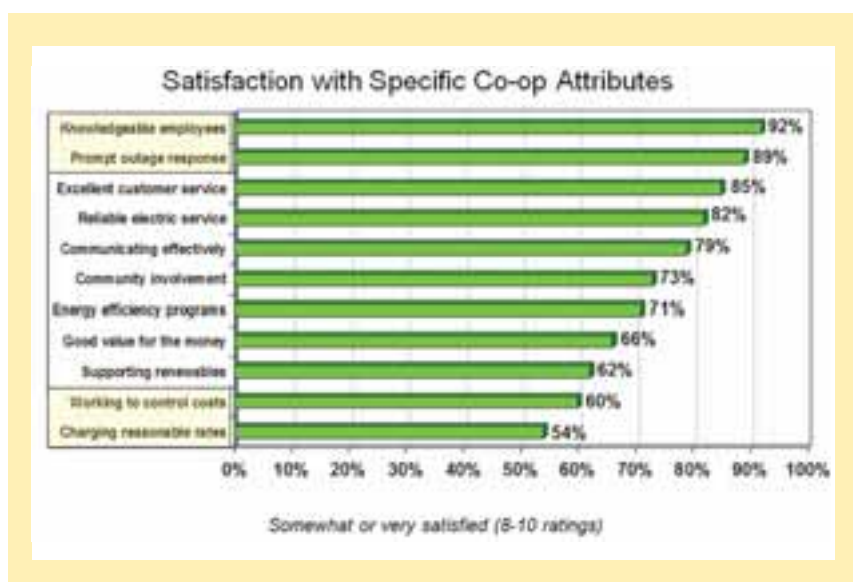
Our employees and Board review the results to help us see how our members' attitudes and expectations continue to change. Here is a highlight of some of the findings.

Our membership continues to change; 25 years ago farmers made up 33% of respondents and retirees were 10%; today we see 14% farmers and 35% retirees. The average age today is 58. You might be surprised by those numbers if you live in a farming community, or in a subdivision filled with young families.

80% of members completing the phone survey said they were satisfied with the co-op and 3% said they were dissatisfied. 72% said we greatly exceeded their expectations and 1% said we fell short of their expectations.

Members receiving the mail survey marked their satisfaction in several areas. We are pleased that 92% said we had knowledgeable employees and 85% felt we offered excellent customer service. We think those high numbers stem partially from the fact that we have many long-term employees, several have over 30 years of experience.

89% said we had prompt outage response and 82% said we offered reliable electric service. The lowest numbers



were given to reasonable rates and working to control costs, although both were above 50% and reasonable rates increased slightly from the last survey in 2011 even though we had a rate increase in 2012. We think some members are seeing an increase in the value of electricity as they experience rising prices for other services and products.

See the chart above for all of our satisfaction numbers.

We've seen some growth in the number of members utilizing technology and 2/3 of members said they would like the co-op to utilize social media or text messaging. We've listened to this and our Facebook page is located at [www.facebook.com/MenardElectric](http://www.facebook.com/MenardElectric). We will provide co-op news, energy efficiency and safety tips, and information on large or prolonged outages.

We also learned that 45% of mem-

bers indicated climate change is a serious problem and 1/4 said they'd be willing to pay 5-10% higher rates to support a higher level of renewable energy. 3/4 want to keep rates as low as possible and continue to support traditional fuels such as coal and natural gas. 74% of members said they were concerned with how EPA proposals will affect their bills and 68% said they would be willing to contact Congress. This insight helped the Board make the decision to strongly support the Action.coop initiative from the National Rural Electric Cooperative. You received a letter from the manager concerning this in your April bill. Visit [action.coop](http://action.coop) for more details. Nearly 25% of our membership responded to the letter and supported the initiative.

We appreciate all of our members who took the time to complete the surveys.

### Tip of the Month

Going on vacation? Remember that much of your home runs as usual when you're away, consuming electricity. Use a timer for any lamps left on; set your water heater to its lowest setting; set your thermostat higher; make sure to unplug unneeded phantom loads like phone chargers, game consoles, tvs, and anything with an electric clock; and leave yourself a note to remember to set it all back when you return!

# Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) or contact our office.

**P**resent were Directors Gary Martin, Jerry Brooks, Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney, Jodine Tate and Steven Worner; Director of Member Services Trish Michels; Manager of Accounting & Information Systems Chris Hinton; System Engineer Brady Smith; Manager Lynn Frasco and Attorney Charles Smith.

Michels and Frasco reviewed the AIEC 2014 Member Satisfaction Survey.

Smith and Hinton reviewed the 2014-2017 Construction Work Plan in conjunction with the RUS Loan Application.

Frasco advised that staff was doing a

field audit to review inactive accounts and correct records.

He advised the Policy Committee would need to review a draft of the Concealed Carry Policy as well as a Medical Marijuana Policy.

The co-op purchased two bucket trucks and a chipper for use with Spoon River Electric Cooperative crews for tree trimming purposes.

Frasco advised 21 new irrigation systems were completed and many were currently under construction.

He stated the co-op received patronage distribution from CoBank; the cash portion was \$149,250.53. He reviewed the CFC-2013 Annual Ownership Statement.

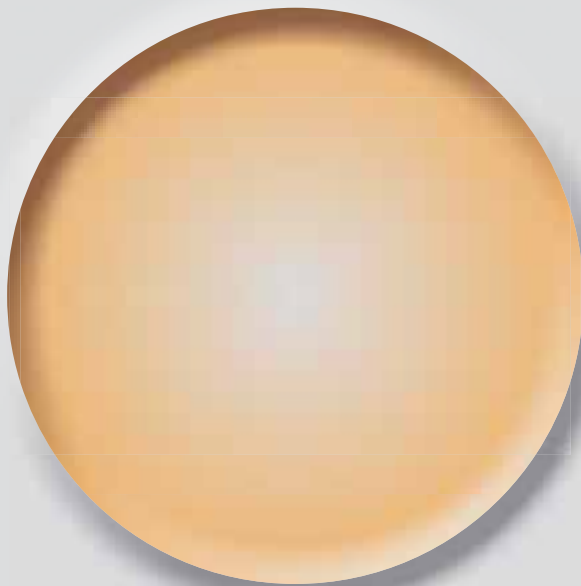
Frasco discussed his letter to members asking them to voice their support for action.coop by signing and returning the letter.

Brooks and Michels discussed plans for the 2014 Annual Meeting of Members June 7, 2014.

February year to date margins were \$167,643 compared to (\$226,521) a year earlier. Equity as of the end of February was 34.62% and the number of members served was 10,709 compared to 10,558 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at the end of February was \$41,148,379 compared to \$38,806,687 last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

## If you had a hole this big in your front door, you'd fill it in – right?

**D**id you know a crack just ¼-inch wide beneath your door will let in the same amount of hot air this summer as this 3-inch hole? Apply weather stripping and caulk as needed around doors and windows; you'll use less energy keeping your home cooler this summer and warmer this winter. Find more tips at [www.togetherwesave.com](http://www.togetherwesave.com).



## June is Budget Billing "true-up" month

**O**n our budget billing plan? Then you've paid the same amount for electricity each month for the past 11 months. This month's bill will contain either a credit (if you used less electricity than predicted) or an amount due (if you've used more).

Want to get on budget billing? You can sign up any time, but now is great because next month starts our new cycle. Just call the office for details.