

Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Linemen Showcase Commitment to Community

Our linemen give back even more than they planned thanks to CoBank's Sharing Success program

One of the founding principles of Menard Electric Cooperative is Commitment to Community. (See article on 16c for more about our principles.) Our board members and employees are invested in this area as they work and raise their families in the communities we serve.

Several of our linemen have been able to demonstrate this commitment by volunteering their time to work on the electrical system at the Menard County Fairgrounds.

Over the past two years our employees have been helping out as problems with the system have occurred. Our system engineer and many of our linemen have donated their time and Menard Electric as a co-op has provided use of our equipment. We've also provided new or used materials at wholesale cost.

This spring, the co-op was approached by the fairgrounds with a request to help out with a little bigger project. Leadman Brandon Blair and Lineman Jeremy Willis organized crews of volunteers to work several weekends at the grounds.

"They needed the work done and couldn't afford to hire anyone," says Blair with a shrug. "The co-op was generous enough to let us use the equipment and we donated our time. Simple as that."

The fairgrounds are unique in that they own their own electrical distribution system within the grounds. The



Several Menard Electric Cooperative linemen volunteered their time to the Menard County Fairgrounds and made possible a \$4,000 donation from CoBank. They are shown here presenting the check to several board members of the fairgrounds. From left are Apprentice Lineman Stormy Hild, Leadman Rob Hanner, Lineman Jeremy Willis, Leadman Brandon Blair, Fair Board Member Jeff Sampson, Lineman Daren Deverman, Fair Board Member Ben Hollis, Lineman Kyle Hill, Fair Board Member Christopher Schirding, Lineman Jason Beggs, Area Serviceman Kevin Masten and System Engineer Brady Smith. Not pictured was Area Serviceman Troy Shafer.

system was originally at a military base and was installed on the grounds in the 1950s. Its age is unknown. "The fair has grown a lot of course since the 1950s, and the system needs updated and expanded," says Ben Hollis, one of 15 members of the fairgrounds' board. "We owe a deep gratitude to Menard Electric Cooperative. Without their help I don't know what we would have done."

The grounds are used by organizations throughout the year, but the major use is during the Menard County Fair held each July and now in its 158th year. Just think of the lights, sound systems, food vendors and displays that all use power during the fair.

And don't forget all those fans in the livestock area used to keep the animals cool. In past years, breakers

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kept tripping and needing reset in that area due to the large load. This year they didn't have any problems thanks to the linemen's work. And that's just one example of how the work helped.

But the help doesn't end there.

CoBank, a cooperatively-owned bank serving agribusinesses, electric cooperatives and others, offered up funding to match donations made by its members through its Sharing Success program again this year. As a member of CoBank, Menard Electric's Board began investigating ideas of how to use the funds.

"There are plenty of worthy causes in our communities that could use

the funding," says Menard Electric General Manager Lynn Frasco. "It was a difficult decision but when the Board learned about the linemen's donation of their time this spring, they concluded that if the project is that important to the co-op's employees it is a worthy place to use the funds." The Board also took into consideration the co-op's policy to support agricultural entities, and that many of our members participate in and support the fair as well as use the fairgrounds for other purposes.

"We approached CoBank with the idea that the value of the linemen's donated time was worthy of a match

donation," says Frasco. "They agreed and issued a check for \$4,000. The linemen didn't know at the time that their voluntary work would lead to this donation, and they deserve all the credit for its having happened."

"Our intentions are to use this money to help us continue to update the electrical system," says Hollis. "We are securing more funding at this time to complete an extensive update project. We've already seen a big improvement in our system from the work the linemen donated."

"If they get the funding to do more out there, we will be out there helping them do it," says Blair.

Awarded Lineworker Scholarship

Brandt Turasky has always known he wanted to be a lineman. "I remember telling my mom when I would see linemen up on a pole that someday I wanted to be climbing that pole and fixing the power lines. Of course, as I got older I realized not only how difficult and rewarding this field would be, but that it would also give me the opportunity to learn and work in a very important trade," he says.

Brandt graduated last May from PORTA High School in Petersburg and came to work at the co-op as part-time summer help to gain some valuable experience before enrolling in lineworker's school this fall.

To further aid him in this endeavor he applied for and was awarded the 2013 LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship. The \$1,500 scholarship is to help pay for costs to attend the lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield.

The scholarship was open to co-op members, relatives of employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard. The scholarship was endowed by LaVern and Nola McEntire; LaVern served as a lineman for McDonough Power Electric Cooperative from 1949-1991.



From left: Menard Electric Cooperative Manager Lynn Frasco was on hand when LaVern McEntire presented the \$1,500 2013 LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship to Brandt Turasky.

How We're Special

Celebrating Cooperative Month

Every October since 1930, not-for-profit cooperatives of all kinds have recognized National Cooperative Month in October as a way to educate the public about how co-ops work and to appreciate their many members.

We would like to highlight the notions that guide all co-ops: the seven cooperative principles. These notions lead electric cooperatives like us to do business in a better way every single day. Here are real-life examples of how the principles affect us.

No. 1: Voluntary and Open Membership

No. 2: Democratic Member Control

Co-ops are open to anyone who is able to use their services—any person who moves onto our lines is allowed membership. Our annual meeting, held each June, serves as a way for you to get to know the people who run your co-op, and it's where we update you on business matters. Democratic member control means members vote for a director from the membership at the annual meeting to represent them on a board that governs the co-op.

No. 3: Members' Economic Participation

Because we are owned by our members, we do not create profits for distant shareholders. Any excess revenue,

called margins, is allocated back to the membership in the form of capital credits. Margins are used by the co-op as working capital for a period of time, then paid back to members. Currently, we have retired a total of approximately \$7,500,000 in capital credits.

No. 4: Autonomy and Independence

We are part of a vast network of electric co-ops stretching across 47 states and covering 42 percent of the nation's land mass.

We work with our co-op neighbors, but Menard Electric members are the sole governors of this co-op. Our member-elected board of directors approves policies and resolutions that govern the way we do business.

No. 5: Education, Training, and Information

We keep our members informed—not just about cooperative business, but also about topics like energy efficiency, safety and community contribution through this magazine and our website at www.menard.com.

No. 6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Even though co-ops are independent entities, we still rely on one another to share resources, information, and, in some cases, manpower.

Electric co-ops have long relied on one another to get power restored more quickly after severe weather emergencies. We've sent crews to help other co-ops restore power after a tornado or ice storm, and they've sent crews to help us.



No. 7: Concern for Community

While our first priority is delivering safe, affordable, reliable electricity to those we serve, we also feel strongly about supporting and contributing to the development of our communities. Our employees live in these areas, we're friends and neighbors first, and we strive to be good stewards of the communities we serve. We undertake a variety of projects, from food drives to school sports sponsorships each year. Read the article on 16a about a recent project demonstrating this.

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Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at www.menard.com or contact our office.

Present were Manager Lynn Frasco, Attorney Charles Smith, and Directors Gary Martin, Jerry Brooks, Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney, Jodine Tate and Steven Worner. Donald McMillan was absent.

Frasco advised he would bring updated construction cost calendar for coming year next month.

He advised general counsel for the AIEC discussed at the manager's meeting the concealed carry law and its effect on co-op policies.

Discussed new HomeE Lite program.

Informed co-op was interviewing applicants for apprentice program.

Reported on status of negotiations with IBEW; advised agreement reached on terms of new contract; discussed end result of negotiations; presented recommendations of labor committee as to contract. Board accepted recommendation of labor committee for approval of new contract.

Discussed new co-op website.

Discussed CoBank Program "Sharing Success" allowing for CoBank to match, up to \$5,000, a contribution by co-op to qualified charitable entity. Advised that co-op crews were instrumental in updating electrical system of Menard County Fairgrounds and

CoBank could match in kind contribution by the crews. Advised he would obtain further information for next meeting.

Year to date margins were \$1,533,650 compared to \$436,395 a year earlier. Equity as of the end of June was 34.93% and the number of members served was 10,664 compared to 10,568 a year ago. Net Utility Plant at the end of June was \$40,582,426 compared to \$38,070,694 last year. Co-op continues to meet requirements of RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Need Help Paying Your Electric Bill?

If you qualify, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) would provide a one-time lump sum payment directly to us on your behalf. The payment is based upon the number of people in your household and their combined 30-day gross monthly income. Family of one-\$1,439; two-\$1,939; four-\$2,944. Call your local office for additional amounts and information.

The LIHEAP program can also help with natural gas, propane, wood and heating oil payments, and can provide furnace assistance.

Applications accepted in September for persons age 60 and over and the disabled; in October additionally for families with children under five and those disconnected from service; and in November for the general public.

If you think you are eligible please contact an agent in your area.

Community Action Partnership of Central Illinois (CAPCIL)

www.capcil.org

Logan County-1800 5th Street, Lincoln, IL 62656; 217-732-2159

Mason County-301 S. Dale St, Havana, IL 62644; 309-543-6988

Menard County-1118 North Fourth St, Petersburg, IL 62675; 217-632-3878

Decatur-Macon County Opportunity Corp.

1122 E. Marietta St., Decatur, IL 62521; 217-428-0155 ext. 219; www.dmcoc.org

MCS Community Services (Cass & Morgan County)

345 W. State St., Jacksonville, IL 62650; 217-243-9404; www.morgancounty.il.com
MCS-Community-Services

Sangamon County Dept. of Community Resources

2833 South Grand Ave. East, Suite C100, Springfield, IL; 217-535-3120; www.co.sangamon.il.us/departments/resource

Tazewood Community Service, Inc. (Tazewell County)

2005 S. Main St., Morton, IL 61550-1540; 309-266-9941