



Waterloo, Illinois • 618.939.7171 • 800.757.7433

Principles in action

There are Seven Cooperative Principles that give all co-ops guidance.

By Adam Schwartz



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

October is National Co-op Month. The time of year when the 29,000 plus co-ops in the U.S. take a few moments to ensure their employees, members and the general public truly understand the value of the cooperative business *they own*. While I applaud any effort that brings more attention to co-ops, my feelings are best represented by a T-Shirt slogan, "October is Co-op Month - But I Cooperate All Year Long!"

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). Cooperatives trace the roots of these principles to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England in 1844.

All cooperative businesses have at their foundation these seven cooperative principles to follow:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control

3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

One of the ways co-ops demonstrate that they are different from investor-owned businesses is by actually living the principles. Principle 6: *Cooperation Among Cooperatives*, is our focus this month, and there are many examples that demonstrate how co-ops do this every day. In theory this sounds so simple, answering the question, "Can't we all just get along?" As it turns out, it's easier to get along when we focus on what our personal or organizational self-interest is - and find others who have a similar self-interest.

This is how Monroe County Electric Co-Operative got started. Ordinary folks realized they would be better off working together if they wanted to bring electricity to their community. Once the co-op was established, we soon realized that if we work with our sister co-ops, we can gain control of our power supply, so we formed over 60 generation and transmission cooperatives such as Southern Illinois Power Cooperative, your local generation and transmission cooperative.

This pattern kept repeating, and soon electric co-ops cooperated to form new co-ops that offer a variety of services, such as financing, insurance, IT services and more to ensure that they had ownership and control over these core products. This was done to help serve you, our member-owners, by making sure there would be no interruption in these vital services that help us bring electricity to you.

This *cooperation among cooperatives* continues today, not only with co-ops directly related to the provision of electricity but in other sectors as well. Electric co-ops partner with credit unions, food co-ops, housing co-ops and others to help bring critical services to rural residents and businesses throughout the country.

In the wake of storms and power outages, electric cooperatives send their line crews with trucks to help neighboring electric cooperatives in need when their manpower is stretched thin during times of crisis.

So while we take special note of the value of our cooperative in October, we are delighted to be a part of our community delivering vital services to you all year long.

Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, speaker and a member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative or email him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.

Fall into a season of savings

Use your free Co-op Connections Card today!

As a Monroe County Electric Co-Operative member, make sure to use your free Co-op Connections Card for discounts and valuable offers at local businesses and national retailers for those everyday purchases and holiday gifts. Over 120 local offers are listed on the following pages. Go online to search for local and national deals by zip code or by category at www.connections.coop.



Need a New Card?

Contact us at 1-800-757-7433, 939-7171 or email amasterson@mcec.org to request wallet cards. Simply show the card at participating businesses to receive your discount.

Promote your Business

Would you like to promote your product or service to thousands of

southern Illinois households for free? Contact us at amasterson@mcec.org to learn more about this great program.



Smart Phone App

Saving with your Co-op Connections Card is even easier when you download the free app for your Apple or Android smartphone!

Use the GPS function to easily find local offers near your current location. Identify your favorite local offers and save them in "My Deals" for easy access.

To download the app, visit www.connections.coop.

*Healthy savings discounts are not insurance and are not intended as a substitute for insurance.

RX - Use your card for prescription discounts!

Your free Co-op Connections Card can save you 10% to 60% on prescriptions at participating pharmacies, including CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart, Target and many more!

Use your card to purchase prescriptions not covered by your insurance plan. Simply present your Co-op Connection Card with your prescription at any participating pharmacy and pay the discounted price; no additional forms or paperwork are needed.

Visit www.healthysavings.coop to look up drug prices by location and find participating pharmacies.



Co-op Connections Card saving members \$\$\$

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative members saved over 48% on prescriptions in 2014 as of July, using the Co-op Connections Card. There were a total of 66 prescriptions filled for a total savings of \$1,964.

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc.

6132 State Rt. 3, P.O. Box 128, Waterloo, Illinois 62298 • 618-939-7171
Office hours: Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. • 800-757-7433

Looking to save on energy bills, but not sure how?

Call our Member Service Department for a free home energy audit

Many times when members open their electric bills and are surprised on how much electricity they've used, they may quickly jump to the conclusion that their meter is wrong or there is a problem with their heating and cooling system.

First, our electronic meters are actually very accurate. We used mechanical meters in the past up to 2004, when we upgraded to an AMR (Automatic Meter Reading) system with electronic meters. Mechanical meters, because of all the small gears and wheels inside, tended to slow down over time because of wear and dirt particles. The new electronic meters do not have any moving parts so their accuracy, which is spot on, can last much longer. Sometimes, however, electronic meters may be damaged because of lightning storms or electric disturbances in the power line. Because we get meter readings every day, we can catch most of those meters that have stopped communicating because of a problem, quite quickly and get them changed out.

Second, problems do arise with heating and cooling systems where the electric usage increases suddenly. An example is an air source or ground source heat pump system with electric resistance heat backup. If the heat pump should develop an issue, it would automatically switch to the emergency heat side which is the less efficient side of the system. These problems do not happen very often, but occasionally they do. Another big advantage with our AMR system is that we can catch a lot of those accounts whose usage increases significantly before the month finishes out and they're left with a huge electric bill to pay.

I think a major reason most electric (and gas bills for that matter) are high during the peak heating and

cooling months is because of the construction of the member's house itself.

If the house is not "air-tight" and insulated well, it will always be inefficient and cause the heating/cooling system to work harder and cost the member more in energy costs. Air infiltration is the major factor in high energy bills during the summer and winter, with insulation coming in a close second. A drafty house with good insulation will still be inefficient because it will still be drawing in outside air on a regular basis instead of holding in the conditioned air allowing the heating/cooling system to cycle normally. Insulation works most effectively when the "thermal barrier" around the house is "tight" and "in-tact." A tight house allows the insulation to do its job.

Monroe County Electric Cooperative (MCEC) offers a free home energy audit program to their members using a blower door test system along with an infrared camera. With the blower door system, we place a fan in an outside door and then seal the rest of the doorway. We turn the fan on to blow air out of the house which creates a suction or "negative pressure." This actually simulates a windy day with air speeds up to 20 mph. The places where the house is leaking will be exaggerated and we note all those places for the homeowner who can address them by sealing them up. We also evaluate the insulation levels in the house and make recommendations there also.

There are two levels of our energy audits program:

- The whole-house audit is a comprehensive audit that takes several hours. A blower door will be used to simulate weather conditions that



increase air loss. The auditor will also use an infrared camera to find areas where air sealing and insulation can improve the comfort of your home. You will receive a written report on the problem areas that were found and recommendations for resolving them. The cost of this audit is free to the MCEC member.

- The walk-through audit is a lighter version of a whole-house audit. The auditor will examine your home, discuss comfort issues, review bills and show you areas where air loss can increase energy costs. This is a good opportunity to ask any questions you have about your home's insulation and air sealing. The cost of this audit to MCEC members is also free.

If you're interested in learning more about the benefits of an energy audit, call the Cooperative office at 939-7171 or 1-800-757-7433.

Lumens, LEDs, CFL, the NFL? – Confused yet on efficient lighting choices?

How different lights compare in brightness and usage cost:



Join us next month for our fall area member meetings.

Check for locations and times in the November issue.



OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH



Cooperatives and Jobs...



Cooperative businesses are run by those who live and work in the community keeping jobs at home.

Lots of businesses talk about growing their communities. For cooperatives, it's not just talk. It's what we're all about.

We're in it for the long haul ... strengthening communities through jobs, service and community involvement.

Maybe that's why we're more trusted than businesses owned by Wall Street investors.

Cooperatives

Owned by Our Members, Committed to Our Communities

