

POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



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Oak Run on course for growth

Savings defined

Communities often have defining features – things they're known for or that set them apart. For the resort community of Oak Run in rural Knox County, where sun, fun, and outdoor recreation reign supreme, the local defining features are beautiful 600-acre Spoon Lake and the 18-hole championship Oak Run Golf Course.

So when, after more than 40 years in service, the original Oak Run clubhouse and restaurant had outlived its usefulness, attention turned to creating a venue that would highlight the course and contribute to its role as a hub for this vibrant, tight-knit community. Since the board of directors of the Oak Run Property Owners' Association (POA) runs both the resort community and the golf course, they wanted the new clubhouse to be both a focal point for the POA residents' activities and a positive representation of the Oak Run community to members of the public.

Cost controls and credits

After securing the general contracting services of Davenport, Iowa-based Bush Construction, the clubhouse project got underway in early 2016. As with all construction projects, cost controls were a major part of the project's management responsibility. Oak Run POA's General Manager Mike Davison was up to the task, but



he was surprised to find a little help along the way from Corn Belt Energy, the rural electric cooperative that served the Oak Run community.

"When we first started talking with Bush Construction, we were planning on a conventional HVAC system to heat and cool the building. That's what we'd had in the old building, and what we knew, so it was a logical choice for us," says Davison.

But the project managers at Bush Construction encouraged Davison and the Oak Run board to ask Corn

Belt Energy about possible rebates, incentives, tax credits and energy programs available for projects like the clubhouse. He reached out to Corn Belt Energy, and connected with Justin Stuva, Corn Belt Energy's Marketing & Member Services Manager.

Over the course of several meetings and blueprints, Stuva helped Davison, the Oak Run board, and the construction managers understand the options for energy efficiency programs, including the POWER MOVES® program Oak Run

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eventually utilized. Energy program offerings were diverse, and provided a combination of immediate cost savings through incentives and rebates and long-term paybacks through extended tax credits and operational efficiencies. Knowing the options available to them changed the course of thought for Davison and his board.

“After talking with Justin and with our construction company, it became clear that a geothermal system was going to give us much greater immediate and long-term return on our HVAC investment. The board and I reviewed the numbers, and the more we reviewed, the more it became a ‘no-brainer’ decision for us,” explains Davison.

Because the ground maintains an ambient temperature year-round, it acts as a neutralizer for the antifreeze solution, drawing out heat on hot days, and warming up the solution on cold days. A heat exchanger then transfers the heat between the pipes and the air, raising or lowering the temperature in the clubhouse with little use of energy or supplementary heating or cooling sources.

Ground temperatures in Illinois average about 52°F all year, which means winter heating with geothermal systems requires just enough energy to heat the air about 18°F more while summer cooling requires almost no additional energy. This efficiency provides immense cost savings each year compared to

“Our geothermal system cost us \$84,000,” he explains, “but the incentives saved us almost \$45,000 of that, and the tax credits amounted to another nearly \$16,000. When you add in the operational cost savings of running a geothermal system versus a conventional system, we have a 40-50% reduction in yearly heating and cooling costs. What that means to us as an organization is that the system pays for itself in about two or three years.”

As elected officials entrusted with good stewardship of the POA’s communal funds, that was exactly what the Oak Run board wanted to hear. The geothermal system was installed during the construction process in late 2016, and the building opened to the public in February 2017. The final HVAC design set up several temperature management zones for areas like the pro shop, the kitchen, the restaurant dining room, and the bar, where traffic and activities like cooking or dancing could alter the heating and cooling needs.

On course for growth

So far, the response to the new Oak Run clubhouse has been overwhelmingly positive. Traffic through the clubhouse is up more than 30% compared to last year, and accolades for the facility, the pro shop, the course itself, and the new Watering Hole restaurant are pouring in on social media. Davison and the staff regularly receive calls for tee times and event bookings from well outside the Oak Run community, including Peoria, Bloomington and the Quad Cities. The facility is on “course” for more growth next year, showing it truly has become the defining feature the Oak Run community and board of directors hoped it would.

The winter of 2017-2018 will be the first full winter for the new



Warming up to geothermal

The Oak Run board opted for a field-type, closed loop geothermal system. Their geothermal system uses a large group of buried pipes to run an antifreeze solution – twenty-seven tons of it! - under the ground.

conventional HVAC systems. Despite being more expensive to construct due to the materials and excavation costs, many geothermal systems pay for themselves within a few years. This is exactly what Davison has discovered at Oak Run.

geothermal system, but even the partial year's results from last winter are showing satisfactory efficiencies and cost reductions compared to the conventional alternatives. Based upon those results, the two- to three-year payback window the board had planned for seems on target.

As for Davison, he's happy with the choice to pursue the geothermal system, and process Oak Run went

through to make it a reality.

"In a large project like this, it's important to have good partners, and we had that with Bush Construction and Corn Belt Energy," Davison says. "The three things that contributed most to the success of this project were the early-stage planning, the flexibility of the design-build approach, and the ability we had to get everyone together in the same

room at the same time and work through our questions and the steps needed to accomplish our goals.

To learn more about the POWER MOVES® rebate and incentives programs and other energy efficiency initiatives, contact the Member Services Department at Corn Belt Energy at 800-879-0339.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

Find rebates and incentives that may apply to your home, business, farm or school. The Corn Belt Energy rebate programs include: HVAC, geothermal, heat pump water heaters and lighting.

Learn more about the rebates offered by Corn Belt Energy at www.powermoves.com or by calling us at 800-879-0339.



Application deadline February 28 for Youth Day and Youth to Washington Tour

High school sophomores and juniors with a passion for leadership and government are encouraged to apply for an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. in June!

Parents or grandparents who currently receive electricity from Corn Belt Energy are welcome to nominate their student to attend the electric cooperative Youth to Washington Tour. Up to ten applicants will be selected by an impartial panel of judges to attend Illinois Cooperative Youth Day in Springfield on April 18, 2018.

From that group, up to two students will be chosen to represent Corn Belt Energy by attending the Youth to Washington Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. June 8-15, 2018, with other statewide winners.

The Youth to Washington Tour has been bringing high school students to Washington D.C. for over 50 years. On the tour, students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as an American citizen.

They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their representative and senators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital.

Applications can be found at www.cornbeltenergy.com under "Community." Applications must be received by February 28, 2018.

For more information, call Corn Belt Energy at 800-879-0339 x250 or send an email to hillary.cherry@cornbeltenergy.com.



When temperatures drop, energy costs rise

You don't need to be a meteorologist to know that winter can be blustery and fierce. This winter sub-zero temperatures and wind chills have become the norm. Many of us will feel an extra chill when we receive our winter energy bills since most of a home's energy use is related to heating during the winter.

The extremely cold weather means our heating systems have been running a lot harder to keep us warm.

Chances are you've been stuck at home more often than usual, too. Staying home using lights, TV's, and appliances will also add to your electric bill.

To view your own electric usage compared to previous months, log in to your SmartHub account at www.cornbeltenergy.com. You can also overlay temperature data with your usage to see how the weather plays a significant role in your energy use.

Levelized billing option



Levelized Billing gives you a way to guard against large fluctuations in your monthly electric bill, without ever having to play "catch-up" at the end of the year. With Levelized Billing, your monthly electric bill becomes a "rolling average" of your electric usage for the most recent 12 months. By averaging your changes in usage

over a 12-month period, your bill will remain fairly consistent every month, even in very cold or hot months when usage may be significantly higher.

Our Levelized Billing program is completely free for members with accounts in good standing and with at least 12 months of service history.

Members can deactivate the Levelized Billing program at any time by contacting the Corn Belt Energy Billing Department at 800-879-0339. If a member on Levelized Billing becomes delinquent or enters into a delayed payment agreement, they will be removed from the program.

CONTACT US

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