

WIEC welcomes new employee

Mitchell Reed joins co-op

On October 25, Mitchell Reed joined the WIEC team as a mechanic. In addition to keeping the co-op's fleet of vehicles and many other pieces of motorized and hydraulic equipment in top working order, he will serve double-duty as a groundworker helping to maintain the electrical grid and participating in the after-hours on-call rotation.

Mitchell, his wife, and their three kids live in Colchester. The boys (11 and 7 years old) spend time practicing judjitsu and like to trap shoot. Little sister (just 3 years now) tries hard to keep up. Wife and mother, Jenna, runs



a licensed in-home daycare and has been providing care for over 12 years now. **5710-7**

When the weather's nice and this family of five isn't at home, you can probably find them camping and boating at Mark Twain Lake. They keep a pontoon boat there

and have been able to enjoy many good times on the lake over the past couple of years. Mitchell says, "Wrenching is all I know how to do. It's what I've always done." The work is rewarding to him, he says, because it's honest work.

Welcome to the WIEC family, Mitchell, we're glad to have you.



Please be aware that supply chain issues may have a direct impact on new construction and service upgrades for WIEC members. Lead times for many basic items such as secondary pedestals and transformers that are used by the co-op are now being measured in months instead of days and weeks that we have been accustomed to.

We have been trying to keep material on our shelves by ordering larger quantities of items when they are available or finding comparable alternatives. Even with these measures, there is a possibility of delays. Please note that these issues will not affect the daily operations and maintenance of WIEC's electric grid.

To help minimize these issues, please contact WIEC as early as possible when considering new construction or service upgrades.



**M E R R Y
CHRISTMAS**
— & —
HAPPY NEW YEAR
from the WIEC Board of Directors and employees

Our office will be closed at noon on December 23
and all day December 24 for Christmas.
We will also be closed at noon on December 30 and
all day December 31 for New Year's.



Western Illinois
ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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OFFICE HOURS

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

BUSINESS OFFICE

217-357-3125

TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

800-576-3125

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MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four members' map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

2022 Operating Budget

Upon request, copies of the Western Illinois Electrical Coop. operating budget for 2022 will be available at the office during regular business hours starting in January.

**Energy Efficiency
Tip of the Month**

**Heading out of town for
the holiday season?**

Remember to unplug electronics that draw a phantom energy load. Some gadgets like TVs, phone chargers, gaming consoles and toothbrush chargers use energy when plugged into an outlet—even when they're not in use.



Welcome New Members

Arden L. Bollin Trust DTD
Living Trust of Donald & Lillian Bray
Zack & Ashley Burling
Mackenze L. Harman
Michael R. McLain
James Meyers

Ed Murphy & Sue Loyd
Jeremy Smith
Timothy Strangland
Vaughn Family Farms 1865 LLC
Travis Winters
Nick & Brandy Zanger

**September
2021**



Deck the halls safely

There's nothing like putting up lights and decorations to get you in the holiday spirit. It's something that many do each and every year without incident, yet the holidays are also one of the most hazardous times of the year when it comes to electrical fires and accidents.

Safe Electricity offer several tips as you deck the halls this season:

-  When decorating outside, look up and around for power lines. Never throw light or other decorations into trees near power lines.
-  Keep ladders, equipment, and yourself at least ten feet from power lines.
-  Match plugs with outlets. Do not force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet or extension cord.
-  Outside, use only lights, cords, animated displays and decorations rated for outdoor use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use them. Ensure outdoor outlets or extension cords are equipped with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs).

-  Never string more strands of lights together than recommended by the manufacturer.
-  Do not staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords. Use plastic or insulated hooks to hang lights.
-  Do not attach cords to utility poles.

The outside of your home is not the only place where you need to be cautious of electrical dangers. Also be careful when placing a decorating trees inside your home. The outside of your home is not the only place to use caution. Use care when placing and decorating trees inside your home. Place fresh-cut and artificial trees away from heat sources such as registers, fireplaces, and radiators; water fresh-cut trees frequently. Turn lights off before you go to sleep. Use a timer to help. **7519-45**

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. and Safe Electricity wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. For more information on holiday safety tips visit, SafeElectricity.org.



Fourteen scholarships up for grabs

Illinois electric cooperatives will award 14 scholarships in 2022 to financially assist students in the electric cooperative family. The scholarships, \$2,000 each, will be awarded through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

- 8** scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric co-op member.
- 1** scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director.
- 4** additional scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full time at a two-year Illinois community college who are the sons or daughters of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.
- 1** scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, will help pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill. Sons and daughters of co-op members, relatives of co-op employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard are all eligible for this scholarship.

Deadline to apply for the first 13 scholarships is Dec. 31, 2021. The lineworker scholarship deadline is April 30, 2022. For more information regarding the scholarships, contact Western Illinois Electrical Coop. **6528-3** Information has also been shared with area high school guidance counselors and is available online at wiec.net or at aiec.coop/iec-scholarship/.

Beat holiday stress: Tips for a calmer season

Old songs call it the most wonderful time of the year, but the holiday season carries a high degree of stress for many people. The final months of the year include added pressures that may affect well-being, relationships, finances and other factors that contribute to anything but a merry and bright time.

Common causes of holiday stress

Although it sounds obvious, the best way to manage stressors is to remove or avoid them as much as possible. This is often easier said than done. Are there holiday-related events or tasks that are daunting? If so, consider not doing them if they aren't necessary.

An overbooked holiday schedule is not the only thing that can cause strife and discontent, however. Here are other seasonal but common causes of stress, anxiety or depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

As daylight hours become shorter, the rates of depression increase. If you are diagnosed with SAD, follow your doctor's advice. Options include light therapy, counseling and medication.

Unrealistic expectations

These anxiety-producing thoughts and feelings can either come from external sources or ruminate in our minds. Outside expectations from family members, children, bosses, friends and others can leave you feeling like you are not enough or that you are spread way too thin. Internal expectations can push you to do more than is healthy or reasonable. Consider reframing your thoughts and anticipating unreasonable expectations by:

- Knowing your limits for work hours, budgets or patience with specific people or situations
- Practicing or writing down polite refusals that you can use with others who pile on the pressure
- Recognizing that it is okay to have negative thoughts and feelings sometimes
- Realizing that while others may put their best holiday foot forward, this does not mean that they will have a perfect holiday season (which is also unrealistic). Social media posts are not always as they appear

Financial difficulties and debt

Financial stress is often paired with unrealistic expectations. According to a Magnify Money survey conducted in 2020, more than 30 percent of shoppers went into an average of \$1,380 of debt for holiday gift buying and other expenses. This type of strain on your budget lasts far longer than the celebrations. Consider:

- Setting a limit before you begin to shop
- Tracking expenses



- Putting credit cards aside and using only cash for gift buying
- Setting aside money each month as a Christmas or holiday fund

Loneliness and family issues

Memories of pleasant holidays or comparisons between your life and others enjoying the season can exacerbate loneliness. **6612-7** With so much focus on sharing time with others, people without positive familial or social connections can experience more sadness during the holiday season than during other times of the year. Consider:

- Creating new traditions with friends
- Volunteering for an organization that helps others, such as serving food on Christmas Day
- Getting help if you need it by seeking out counseling

Tips to alleviate stress

If you find you are overstressed, don't feel like yourself, or all the joy has been zapped from the most wonderful time of the year, try out some of these stress-alleviating techniques.

- Identify negative self-talk and immediately refocus on a more positive message
- Maintain a healthy eating and exercise regimen to minimize physical stress
- Keep your distance from toxic or negative people and focus on quality relationships
- Use positive affirmations and take the time to pamper yourself

The holiday season may come with more stressors than at other times of the year, but self-care, tempering expectations, reaching out to positive people and sticking to both financial and time budgets will help you avoid a blue Christmas and instead focus on the warmth of the season.