



More Power to You

Looking Back on a Great Year

Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

As I talked with members who attended the co-op's 76th Annual Meeting on March 26, I truly appreciated what an honor it is to be part of such a wonderful organization. One of my favorite parts of the evening each year is chatting with members. The business conducted at the meeting certainly is important, but the camaraderie among friends and neighbors is what really makes me proud to be part of the Rock Energy Cooperative family.

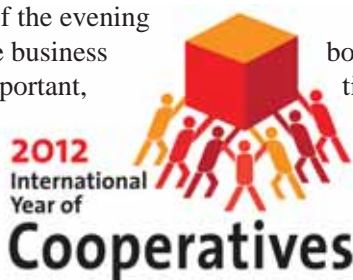
Thanks to everyone who attended the annual meeting and helped make it a big success. Our final count shows that we had a total of 739 people at the Eclipse Center.

In February, we celebrated five years of bringing the Illinois membership into our family. Without a doubt, the joining of the two states has been extremely positive from a service and rate standpoint. With the size and scale of that acquisition, we have been able to keep our rates extremely competitive, while providing enhanced member support.

The future cost of electricity, however, remains uncertain as the Environmental Protection Agency imposes more stringent regulations on electric utilities. Those tougher regulations come with a hefty price tag. Power generators will be spending billions of dollars to retrofit power plants. Those that are deemed too inefficient to update will be shut down.

The vast majority of plants that will be affected are coal plants, which currently generate about 50 percent of all electricity in this part of the country. The Midwest has dozens of coal plants, so whatever happens—whether these plants are updated or mothballed—we will see an impact on costs.

As the issue unfolds, co-op members will be asked to contact their elected officials about the importance of keeping electricity affordable and reliable while still meeting the nation's environmental goals. When co-op members from around the state and country take up a cause, their voice is very powerful.



Share Brandt, manager of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association, told members gathered at the annual meeting that electric co-ops have a long history of grass-roots advocacy. She urged members to continue their efforts to keep energy costs affordable by talking with their elected officials and writing to them.

In their comments to members, Darrel Weber, board chairman, and Duane Noland, chief executive officer of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, noted that 2012 has been designated International Year of Cooperatives. It's an opportunity for co-ops around the world to celebrate that putting people first is what's important in business.

During the business meeting, members re-elected two incumbent directors, Darrel Weber and Morris Nelson, and a member from Roscoe Township—Gordon Alexander—joins the board. Gordon was elected to the District 5 position previously held by Bill Fischer, who retired from the board after serving nine years. I want to personally thank Bill for the common sense and dedication that he has provided to the board through the years. I wish him and his wife, Dorothy, the absolute best.

Members also approved changes in bylaws that were recommended by the board and learned that the co-op is financially strong.

With the future cost of energy uncertain, I reminded members how they can save a significant amount of money by using their Rock Co-op Connections Card. The local card is part of a national program that has more than 32 million cards in circulation. That makes the Co-op Connections Card the largest discount card program in the country, even bigger than AARP.



We started offering the discount card in late 2008 and have partnered with local businesses to give members discounts. The card also provides discounts on prescription drugs for members whose insurance plan doesn't cover them. Since the program began, Rock Energy members have saved more than \$46,000 on their prescriptions.

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76th Annual Meeting March 26, 2012

Above: Chief Executive Officer Shane Larson addresses members during the co-op's 76th Annual Meeting at the Eclipse Center in Beloit. Right: Snappy, the mascot for the Beloit Snappers, invites members to the co-op's Family Night at Ballpark on Saturday, June 30. Below: Students who will represent the co-op during the Youth Tour to Washington in June are, from left, Zachary Blevins, Becky Dal Santo, both of Hononegah High School; Stephanie Drefahl, Parkview; and Micah Topel, Evansville.



Above: Chairman Darrel Weber, right, presents a plaque to Bill Fischer, who retired from the board after serving nine years. Right: Pickles the Clown entertains kids with balloons and face painting.

Don't Hide Your Natural Gas Meter

In an emergency, easy access to the natural gas meter outside your home is essential for the protection of life and property.

Rock Energy Cooperative employees as well as fire and rescue crews must be able to easily locate the natural gas meter so service can be shut off when necessary, said Randy Gant, natural gas superintendent at Rock Energy. In the event of a natural gas leak, workers must disconnect the supply to prevent a possible dangerous situation. Any obstructions to the meter could delay the response time and lead to tragedy.

Placement of this air conditioning unit does not provide the required three feet of clearance from the meter.



Building an enclosure around natural gas meters, like this deck and latticework, prevents easy access to the shutoff valve.

People often want to hide their meters behind bushes, fences, decks, or other enclosures to make their property more attractive, Gant said. But safety is much more important than aesthetics.

Rock Energy's Gas Service Manual outlines requirements for placement and access to natural gas meters. Essentially, a clear path to the meter—free from trees,

bushes, plants, and other obstructions—must be maintained. There also must be three feet of clearance around the meter.

Vegetation near meters can obstruct their view and make access difficult for inspection, maintenance, and emergency response, Gant said.

If the co-op finds that access to a member's meter is insufficient when conducting its annual maintenance survey, a certified letter will be sent requiring the member to improve access within 30 days.

"If adequate clearance is not achieved at that time, our crews will do the necessary work at no charge to the member," Gant said. "However, we would prefer that the member do whatever trimming or transplanting is necessary so they can obtain the desired appearance for their yard."

Homeowners sometimes plant small bushes or other plants around their meters to improve the aesthetics without considering the potential size of the full-grown vegetation. Proper landscape planning can avoid potential problems in the future, Gant said.

"When we explain the safety aspects of providing proper access to the meters, members understand and are quick to comply with requirements," Gant said. "They appreciate that safety is one of the top priorities at Rock Energy." ■



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Have a Safe and Happy Memorial Day!

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on **Monday, May 28**, in observance of Memorial Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 29. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, standby crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call (608) 752-4550 or toll-free (866) 752-4550.

Get Connected

Check out these great deals offered with your Co-op Connections Card.



Marcella's Ceramics, 1150 E. Inman Parkway, Beloit – (608) 362-5056



Distributing hobby ceramic supplies and equipment since 1958. Our comprehensive inventory for hobby ceramics includes Greenware, Bisqueware, paint, brushes, tools, kilns, pottery wheels, and modeling clay. New in 2009, Blue Violet Studio at Marcella's. Our Blue Violet Studio is open pottery studios for all ages. Join us for birthday parties, bridal and baby showers, bachelorette parties, corporate parties, or even scouting.

20% Off Retail Products (excluding equipment)

Perfectly Plus Women's Consignment, 32 E. Racine St. Janesville – (608) 563-2626 – www.perfectlyplus.net

Plus-size women's clothing 14 (XL) and up. Shoes, jewelry, handbags, and accessories. Personalized service, weekly sales, and continuous markdowns.



Providing a wide variety of new and gently-used, plus-size clothing at affordable prices in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere. Our consignors always receive the greatest monetary return on their gently-used items. Dedicated to plus-size women who want to feel beautiful in what they wear as well as comfortable where they shop.

15% Off Entire Purchase

Introducing New Healthy Savings Discounts!

The same program that offers discounts at local merchants and has saved Rock Energy members \$46,000 on prescriptions now offers significant savings on dental, vision, hearing, lab and imaging services, and chiropractic work. To locate providers that participate in the Healthy Savings program, call (800) 800-7616 or visit HealthySavings.coop. Be sure to have your Co-op Connections Card handy.



Add Up Your Savings!

Tell us how much you have saved by using your Co-op Connections Card. If you have a story you'd like to share with other Rock Energy members, email Barbara Uebelacker at BarbU@rock.coop or call her at (866) 752-4550.

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Thanks to a new Healthy Savings program, the card now helps members save even more money with discounts on vision and dental care, hearing aids, lab work, and chiropractic care. To make sure that our members can easily access these discounts, new Co-op Connections Cards will be mailed. If you didn't get your card with your April statement, it should be coming this month. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the office and our staff will be glad to assist you.

Annual meetings provide us with a time to reflect back on the previous year and look ahead to the next year. In his address to members, Darrel reminded us that we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the co-op during 2011. He also pointed out that there's another milestone coming up in 2012—the 75th anniversary of electrifying area farms. The co-op's articles of incorporation were filed in April 1936, but it took many months to get the system energized. On July 15, 1937, the lights were turned on for the first time at a Rock County farm. Rural folks finally had the same convenience that city residents had enjoyed for years.

The co-op also received awards from the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association in 2011. In her address to members, Share recognized Rock Energy for awards previously presented during WECA's Education and Lobby Day activities in Madison. Retired Board Chairman Stan Dybevik received the Ally of Rural Electrification (ACE) Award for his 40 years of service to the co-op, and Communications Specialist Barb Uebelacker was presented the N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award for her role in producing Rock Energy's local pages in the monthly magazine. Barb also received an honorable mention for presentation of human interest material in the past year's editions of the magazine.

Thanks again to everyone who made our 76th annual meeting a success. I especially want to thank our board for being a group of nine members who are dedicated to making Rock Energy the best cooperative possible. I'd also like to thank all of our employees for performing their duties in a professional manner each and every day. And a special thanks to you, our members. Whether an employee or director, we understand that this co-op exists for the exclusive benefit of our members. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to improve our service to you. ■