



More Power to You

750 People of All Ages Attend Co-op's First Pancake Breakfast

By Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

*"It was a really stellar morning!
We really DID feel appreciated!"*

That comment came from a member who attended our Member Appreciation Day on Sept. 18. For Rock Energy Cooperative's employees and board of directors, it was mission accomplished.

Each fall we host a gathering to show our members how much we appreciate being their energy provider. In the past, we've served a picnic lunch, but we wanted to try something different for this year's 10th annual event.

Even though it was a Saturday morning, our alarm clocks woke us early so we could provide members with an all-you-can-eat pancake and sausage breakfast. Employees and directors, who were easy to spot in their bright yellow shirts, filled syrup bottles, wiped off tables, popped popcorn, staffed the bounce house, operated the bucket trucks, collected garbage, and helped in countless other ways. You might have seen me there. I was one of the guys traveling between tables handing out ice cream and performing "all other duties as assigned."

There's something about a pancake breakfast that brings out the best in people—sort of a dairy breakfast atmosphere without the farm animals.

Pancakes hot off the grill were flipped right onto your plate. The guys from Chris Cakes, who catered the meal, were very entertaining and certainly know how to cook a lot of pancakes in a short period of time. I particularly liked the way the specially designed dispenser rolled over the grill and plopped perfectly formed circles of batter into neat rows.

Although pancakes were the star of the event, members and their families had lots of activities awaiting them. There were bucket truck rides, jugglers, balloons, health screenings, prizes, ice cream, and popcorn.

In previous years, we've had good weather for Member Appreciation Day, but we weren't quite as lucky this year. Looking at the day's forecast, we were worried that rain would keep people away and also prevent us from providing bucket truck rides. A brief downpour did ground the buckets for a short time, but attendance was as good as ever with a crowd of about 750 people.

Between the raindrops, our line crews took people of all ages up in the sky for a spectacular view. One member wrote: "The bucket ride guys were really sweet and made my 3-year-old feel comfortable enough to take the ride, which he LOVED!"

The dreary weather outside was a sharp contrast to the festive, cheery atmosphere inside, where most of

the activities took place. The smell of popcorn and sounds of kids playing and adults chatting filled the warehouse.

The bounce house and jugglers are always a big hit with the kids. Adding to the excitement this year was "the balloon lady" from the Oregon Jugglers Group, who took the time to make something special for each of the kids even though she had a really long line. Did you see that balloon alien she made?

Many of our longtime employees and directors have told me that they were delighted to see so many young faces at the event. And one member who attended wrote: "The kids had a great time, and the staff went WAY above and beyond to make sure the kids were having fun."

Members who stopped at the information tables could pick up tips about how to save energy and money during the winter heating season, learn the benefits of switching to compact fluorescent lights, and find out how to manage their energy account with eBill. All that information also is available at both Rock Energy offices and on our website.

On behalf of all the employees and directors, I want to thank everyone who attended Member Appreciation Day. Special thanks go to the members who enrolled in Project Lift Up, our voluntary member donation program

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Energy Assistance Available for Low-Income Households

High unemployment rates will make the 2010-2011 heating system another challenging one for many Illinois households. In some cases, families will be forced to make painful decisions about which bills to pay and which necessities to cut.

The federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible low-income households pay for winter energy services. Fortunately, Rock Energy Cooperative works with LIHEAP, which benefits about 300,000 Illinois households each year.

LIHEAP Details

LIHEAP heat and electric assistance is a one-time benefit payment per heating season that is intended to help pay a portion of a household's heat and electric costs. The benefit amount depends on household size, income, and energy costs.

In most cases, the benefit is applied as a credit directly to the household's Rock Energy account. You do not need to duplicate your efforts by applying for assistance with both your local agency and Rock Energy. We will send you a letter about one month after receiving your application that will include details on your assistance status and dollar amounts.

You are eligible for heating assistance if your household's combined income is at or below the levels shown on this chart:

Illinois LIHEAP Income Guidelines for the 2010-2011 Heating Season

Household Size	30-Day Household Income	Annual Household Income
1	\$1,354	\$16,245
2	\$1,821	\$21,855
3	\$2,289	\$27,465
4	\$2,756	\$33,075
5	\$3,224	\$38,685
6	\$3,691	\$44,295
7	\$4,159	\$49,905
8	\$4,626	\$55,515

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity



Where to Apply

To apply for assistance, you'll need to complete a Home Energy Plus application and provide information on each household member and their income as well as records of your heating costs.

For more information and application details, please contact your local office:

Winnebago County

Rockton Township
1315 N. Blackhawk Blvd.
Rockton, IL 61072
(815) 389-0914
(815) 624-7788
(South Beloit, Rockton, Roscoe residents only)

Stephenson County

Northwestern Illinois
Community Action Agency
103-109 N. Chicago Ave.
Freeport, IL 61032
(815) 232-3141 or
(800) 883-1111

Boone County

United Way of Boone
County
220 W. Locust St.
Belvidere, IL 61008
(815) 544-3144

McHenry County

McHenry County Housing
Authority
1108 N. Seminary Ave.
Woodstock, IL 60098
(815) 338-7752

Weatherization Services

When you apply for energy assistance, the local agency also will see if you qualify for the Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps fund energy efficiency home improvement projects. If you are eligible for weatherization services, an energy auditor will look at your home to see what can be done to make it more energy efficient.

Weatherization services differ with each home, depending on how it was built and its condition. Common services include reducing leaks through insulated attics, walls, and floors. You may even receive assistance with replacing water heaters, furnaces, or other appliances.

For general information, call toll-free (877) 411-9276 or visit www.illinoisliheap.com. ■

Enjoy an EverGREEN Holiday Season

Get the Most out of Energy During the Holidays

Holidays are a festive time of year, with gifts, fun decorations, family visits, and lots of laughter. But they can also ring in extra energy use for heating, decorative lights, and more.

So what steps can you take to make sure the holidays don't leave a surprise "gift" on your next electric bill?

One of the most popular ways to save energy without dimming holiday cheer is switching to light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights. These long-lasting, energy-efficient lights have been used for years in vehicles to let you know when you're low on gas or need an oil change. Over the past few years, prices have dropped enough to make these bulbs cost-effective for decorative use.

On the plus side, LEDs last longer than traditional incandescent lights. They run cool and colors don't fade over time. Best of all, they use about a tenth of the energy for the same amount of light.

The news isn't all cheery. Decorative LEDs cost much more than strands of typical lights—up to \$40 or more to outfit a tree, according to Consumer Reports, an independent product tester. But over time, the higher investment pays off.

When *Consumer Reports* compared LEDs and incandescent holiday lights in 2007, it found LEDs use between 1 and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 to 105 kWh for traditional lights. This translates into a savings of up to \$11 every year. Because LEDs are more durable, lasting more than 4,000 hours while incandescent bulbs burn out by the 2,000-hour mark, the initial investment pays dividends over the long haul.

Whether or not you fork out extra bucks to switch to LEDs, it's a good idea to turn off your holiday lights before you go to bed. Consider installing timers to reduce the time your holiday lights are on. Just 10 incandescent strands lit for 13 hours a day can easily add more than \$50 to an electric bill. Limit light displays to no more than six hours nightly.

Lights aren't the only holiday addition impacting your electric bill—family guests add to your costs, too. Because everyone wants to stay toasty during colder holiday months, heating usually accounts for the lion's share of cold-weather energy costs. Extra guests translate into extra water to heat for showers.

Make sure to set your thermostat as low as comfort permits. Each degree above 68 degrees adds 2 percent to 3 percent to the amount of energy needed to heat your home. Conversely, you'll save by lowering your thermostat (and leaving it there).

You can expect extra guests to strain your electric water heater—folks often take longer showers in colder weather, increasing water-heating costs. Before guests arrive, consider installing a low-flow showerhead to reduce the amount of water used, and try to keep showers to six minutes or less.

Finally, in the average home, 75 percent of the electricity used to power electronic gifts and gadgets is used while the products are off. This phantom power use can be avoided by unplugging the items or using a power strip.

To learn more about ways to cut home energy use, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com. ■



Light up holiday savings with LEDs

Decorating with lights this holiday season? Consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They cost more initially but last twice as long as traditional lights, and you'll recover the difference in three to four years.

- **Efficient.** LEDs use between 1 kWh and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 kWh and 105 kWh for traditional lights, saving \$11 every holiday season.
- **Durable.** LEDs last about 4,000 hours. They're also made of plastic and less likely to break.
- **Don't want to use LEDs?** Consider trimming back the number of hours your traditional lights are on to six hours or less each day.

Sources:
Consumer
Reports,
Alliance to
Save Energy



Director Nominations Open

The Rock Energy Cooperative Nominating Committee will be selecting candidates to run for board of director positions that will be up for election at the March 28, 2011, annual meeting.

Districts up for election are:

- District 6: Beloit and Rock townships in Wisconsin and Rockton Township in Illinois.
- District 7: Newark and Plymouth townships in Wisconsin.
- District 8: Avon, Spring Valley, and Spring Grove townships in Wisconsin and Durand, Laona, Shirland, Rock Grove, and Rock Run townships in Illinois.

Active members who are interested in running for a position on the REC Board of Directors must permanently reside in one of the areas up for election and meet all other qualifications. Please contact REC headquarters at (608) 752-4550 or (866) 752-4550, or send an e-mail to questions@rock.coop by Dec. 1. ■



Have a Safe and Wonderful Thanksgiving!



Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 25, and Friday, Nov. 26, in observance of Thanksgiving. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Monday, Nov. 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.

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designed to help low-income members pay their energy bills. Members who signed up during the event received five free CFLs. Focus on Energy estimates that consumers can save about \$35 in annual energy costs by replacing the five most frequently used lights in their homes with CFLs.

With Project Lift Up, you can contribute by having your energy bill rounded up to the nearest whole dollar amount or making a set donation each month. If you missed Member Appreciation Day, it's not too late to sign up. Just fill out the form at either our Janesville or South Beloit offices, and we'll give you three free CFLs. You also can go to our website, www.rock.coop, to print out a form.

By switching to CFLs, you'll see a savings in your energy bill. And by donating to Project Lift Up, you'll feel good about giving part of your savings to help someone less fortunate. All of the money donated goes directly to our Rock Cooperative Care program, which I'll tell you more about next month.

If you couldn't attend this year's event, I hope you will join us next fall. For the past 10 years, Member Appreciation Day, which we fondly call MAD, has been a way for our directors and employees to show you how much we appreciate you. In many cases, that appreciation is mutual. One member wrote after the event: "Our house really appreciates all that you do for us—the fact that you do this for your members and the employees take time out of their lives to help with the event."

We are happy to host this event to show our thanks to you. It truly is a privilege to serve your energy needs. If we can do anything to improve our service, please don't hesitate to give us a call or stop by the office. ■

Get Connected

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



Grommes Millwork – Beloit, WI
(608) 362-8928 – www.grommesmillwork.com

Architectural casework and millwork. Cabinets, countertops, doors, and trim. Built, pre-finished, and installed. Any wood, laminate plastics, solid surface products, stone, and metal. Residential, commercial, and liturgical.



5% Discount

Vibrational Energy Solutions – Edgerton, WI
(608) 359-1613 – www.vibrationalenergysolutions.com
Providing the body with stress reduction and relaxation services, naturally increasing awareness, including biofeedback, hypnosis, and Erdsal Zone Therapy—an advanced form of reflexology. At Vibrational Energy Solutions, we believe that healing begins from within.



20% Off Stress Reduction Services

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