

President's Report



William R. Dodds
President/CEO

Smart appliances offer convenience, but have a ways to go

It seems like everything is “smart” these days; cars, the grid, watches, houses, phones and...appliances. When I hear the term “smart appliance,” the Jetsons – with their fully automated home – immediately come to mind. Dinner was cooked, laundry done and dishes washed by a smart machine.

In reality, smart appliances utilize modern communications technology to make functions faster, cheaper and more energy efficient.

The annual Consumer Electronics Show features more smart appliances every year. Refrigerators, stoves and ovens, freezers, washers and dryers, garage door openers, dishwashers, water heaters – the wave is coming.

Even though today’s smart appliances can give many of us sticker shock, experts predict these new technologies will deliver major benefits in energy efficiency, convenience and maintenance. So what makes today’s smart appliances stand out from others?

From the smart screen on your dazzling new refrigerator, you can check the weather while grabbing your orange juice. You can even browse the Internet for recipes – all on the conveniently placed touchscreen.

Remotely monitor your oven to turn it on and adjust temperatures. Running late from work and need to get the kids somewhere? Stop for a frozen pizza on the way home, and preheat the oven so you can pop it in upon arrival. That’s pretty neat. And of course, the panic moment

while winging off on vacation of, “Did I leave the oven on” will be a thing of the past.

Got a load of clothes in the washer you forgot to start? Log in and start the cycle from the golf course.

How about this one? Wifi-connected appliances with clocks will reset themselves for Daylight Saving Time! One less digital device to tinker with twice a year.

Eventually, I see smart appliances becoming extremely useful to the average homeowner. A refrigerator that reads the bar codes of what you put in and tracks consumption could recommend a shopping list if it noticed something getting low or out of date. No more cracking open the milk to sniff for freshness. I can go for that!

Maintenance is an area of huge potential. Let’s say one of your smart appliances is feeling sickly. One day it may call the manufacturer and get a diagnosis. You won’t have to wait at home for a technician who may or may not find the problem – or have the right parts. With your permission, the tech can show up to your home with everything needed to make the repair. How convenient that will be!

Finally, from an energy efficiency and load management point of view, smart appliances present an opportunity to manage energy load more discretely in the quest to give co-op members the highest possible quality of service at the lowest possible price. Sure, the Jetsons’ flying car is a long way off – but not their appliances.

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

GE introduces its first freestanding ranges with Wi-Fi capability that allows consumers to control their oven while away from home. Source: General Electric.



Spoon River Electric Cooperative

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Spoon River Electric Cooperative – By the Numbers

Miles of line energized: 1,255
Number of members served: 4,808
Number of power poles
in territory: 29,255

Co-op teams up with CRC

Spoon River Electric Cooperative has made the decision to move to a new dispatch center effective February 16. The cooperative has switched to Cooperative Response Center (CRC). CRC is a service-based cooperative, based in Austin, Minn. and also has offices in Dunlap, Tenn. and Abilene, Tx. Taking after-hour calls for cooperatives is their business

'Live' customer service call handling is CRC's specialty. With over 50 percent of all outage calls completed with live agents, the logistics of unplanned outages make it impossible for any entity to answer

every outage call with a live person. CRC's supplemental use of automated call handling, integrated with the Co-op's electric distribution platform, means an automated call gets reported to crews just as quickly as a call handled by a live customer service representative.

We ask members to make sure they have their phone numbers updated and handy and also know the name on the account when calling in an outage. As our numbers haven't changed, please continue to call either (309) 647-2700 or 1(877) 404-2572 to report an outage.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Programmable thermostats can save up to \$160 a year in energy costs. Match thermostat settings to your schedule: cold when you're away and warm when you're at home. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day (lower at night when you're snug in bed). By turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for at least eight hours, you can shave 5 to 15 percent from your heating costs.

*Source: TogetherWeSave.com,
U.S. Department of Energy*

Correction:

In the February 2016 issue, Prairie Power, Inc. was referred to as an investor-owned. Prairie Power, Inc. is a member-owner generation & transmission cooperative that supplies power that Spoon River distributes to you.



Vacationing on a shoestring

The new normal seems to be that, while enjoying enviable travel, our friends, family and social media acquaintances must post photos and stories to turn everyone green with jealousy. But not everyone can afford a month of wine tasting in Europe or the gear and guides to dog sled through the Yukon to experience the Northern Lights. Many simply have different priorities for their money. Luckily, opportunities exist for singles, couples or family travel on less luxurious budgets.

Local tourism

Many people do not know every nook and cranny of their neighboring towns and cities. There are likely museums, restaurants, breweries, shops, nature areas or sporting events you have wanted, but never managed, to explore. Do it! You will spend minimally on travel and food while staying for free in your own home and supporting your local economy.

National Parks and camping

Every U.S. state and territory has a National Park. Explore nature and

history on a day trip or multiple-day stay by either camping or staying in off- or on-site lodgings. Some National Parks are free, while others require a fee to enter; if you're planning to visit multiple parks in a year, an annual pass might be the most economical choice for you. Seniors, active military and the disabled are eligible for free or reduced prices for annual passes.

Whether in a National Park or other natural area, camping is a great way to get away while controlling costs. True, you'll need gear, but it can be rented or borrowed until you are certain you love camping and will make it a hobby worth investing in. In addition to the cost of equipment, you'll need to pay for the gas to get there and the groceries you'll need to eat, both of which are easily controlled based on the distance of your camp site and the length of your trip.

Make the most of free, inexpensive and discounted things

Airfare fluctuates on a daily basis, not merely season by season. Stalk the fare you want or commit to

going whenever the price is right. Grab the last-minute, discounted cruise cabin. Search fare sales, bidding sites and package deals to save on airfare and lodgings. Stay in a hostel, bed and breakfast or dormitory-style lodging. Once on the ground, take advantage of public transit and rail, free museums and sites, museum passes, free tours, the local paper's events guide and Groupon deals for local restaurants and activities with good reviews.

Research and save, then spend cash

Do your due diligence. Research attractions, estimate the cost to do everything you'd like and do your best to save. Set a budget for necessities like food and a separate budget for extras like souvenirs and side trips. Once on your trip, try to spend only cash. Spending cash on hand will help you realize and control how much you spend—without causing you to spend the next year paying off that getaway you put on your credit card.



ATTENTION 2015-2016 SENIORS!

Spoon River Electric Cooperative is Awarding Two \$1,000 and One \$500 Scholarships to High School Seniors

High school students who are seniors during the 2015-2016 school year, and are the son or daughter of a Spoon River Electric member are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Scholastic Scholarship, a \$1,000 Honorary Scholarship, and the \$500 Scott Parrish Memorial Scholarship, which will be awarded at this year's Annual Meeting on June 16, 2016.

Please fill out the form at the bottom of the page and return it to the Cooperative to participate. Applications must be turned in by **May 31, 2016** to be considered. Please see official rules and descriptions of scholarships below.

OFFICIAL RULES

- **Applying students and their parent/legal guardian must be present at the Annual Meeting June 16, 2016, to win.**
- Students must be a son or daughter of a Spoon River Electric Cooperative Member.
- Students must be a high school senior during the 2015-2016 school year and begin college undergraduate studies in the 2016-2017 school year. -Students must plan on attending a two-year or four-year accredited college or university, including vocational/technical schools.
- Scholarship winners must be full-time students (at least 12 hours) during the 2016-2017 academic year.
- Scholarships are for one year and are non-renewable.
- Past Spoon River Electric Cooperative scholarship winners are not eligible to receive another one.

SCHOLASTIC AND SCOTT PARRISH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

- The Scholastic and Scott Parrish Memorial Scholarships will be awarded based on an application detailing GPA, college entrance test scores, work and volunteer experience, participation in school and community activities, and a biographical statement.
- Semi-finalists will be notified by mail with a time and place for a personal interview.
- Those not chosen as semi-finalists for the Scholastic and Parrish Scholarships will be automatically placed in the Honorary Scholarship drawing.

HONORARY SCHOLARSHIP

- The Honorary Scholarship will be awarded by a drawing as students are recognized at the Annual Meeting.
- All applicants are eligible for the Honorary Scholarship drawing except the Scholastic and Parrish Scholarship winners.



Scholarship Participation Request

Name of Student _____
Address of Student _____
Name of Parent/Guardian _____
Telephone Number _____

Return To: Taryn Martin
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