



More Power to You

Great Things Can Happen When People Join Forces

Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

Observing Co-op Month each October began in Minnesota in 1948, and the celebration quickly spread to other states. Then in 1964 then Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proclaimed the first National Co-op Month. This year's theme, "Collaborate, Communicate, Cooperate," emphasizes how great things can happen when people join forces and collaborate.

Rock Energy Cooperative is proud to be part of America's cooperative network, which employs more than 850,000 people. Across the nation, 29,000 co-ops generate \$74 billion in annual wages and nearly \$500 billion in revenue. Co-ops operate in many industries, including agriculture, finance, food, health care, child care, insurance, housing, and many more. In the energy sector, 900 electric co-ops serve 42 million people in 47 states.

Cooperatives are member-centered businesses based on collaboration—people working together. Sharing ideas, resources, and capital helps individuals accomplish more when they work together than they can on their own.

At Rock Energy that collaboration started 77 years ago. Area farmers realized that electricity was a necessity for progressive farming and asked the local investor-owned utility to provide them with the same conveniences that city residents had enjoyed for years. But they were told it wouldn't be profitable to construct power lines in rural areas where there might be just one farm on a mile or two of line.

Undeterred, the farmers banded together to accomplish what individuals alone couldn't do. They founded the co-op, signed up members, borrowed money, hired employees, put poles in the ground, and strung wire.

When people join together to form a cooperative, the business is founded on their values and their needs: democratic principles, community commitment and interaction, cooperative buying power and economic advantage, and people helping people. Communication—aimed at keeping members informed, educated, and involved—is a key component of thriving cooperative businesses.

While other businesses have a structure that pushes them to benefit distant shareholders, cooperatives have a structure that pushes them to meet their local members' needs. Cooperatives put people ahead of profits. As a member of Rock Energy, you share in the profits in the form of capital credits. The cooperative works hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible, and when there are profits they go back to you.

In 2013, Rock Energy distributed more than \$700,000 in capital credits to members. Since the co-op was started 77 years ago, about \$12 million has been paid back to past and current members.

Here at Rock Energy we work hard to deliver safe, affordable, and reliable energy to our members every day. But we don't stop there. Because we're a cooperative, we strive to do much

more—to find ways of providing *real value* to you and the communities we serve.

So what exactly does *real value* mean? Well, in some ways it's basic, like connecting with a real, local person rather than just a recording when you call our office. It could be finding a copy of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* or *Illinois Country Living* in your mailbox every month to keep you informed about co-op business. Or it's getting the lights back on more quickly after a storm. If the storm is severe and outages are widespread, we can rely on mutual-aid agreements and bring line crews in from other co-ops.

October marks National Cooperative Month, when we take time to celebrate co-ops and talk about why our not-for-profit, consumer-owned business model is special. Offering our members *real value* and working to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve are ways that we set ourselves apart.

This may be the official Co-op Month, but we like to think that every month is Co-op Month. We never want to lose sight of our purpose: to serve our members. As always, if we can do a better job serving you, please let us know. ■





Team **FIRES UP** the Barbecue

What started as a backyard barbecue competition about five years ago has mushroomed into a tasty hobby that will take three area couples to Kentucky later this month for the Big Buffalo Crossing BBQ Cook-Off.

The Smok'n Booty BBQ team consists of pitmaster Craig Dunaway and his wife, Cindy, of South Beloit, Ill.; their daughter, Stefanie Whiteley and her husband, Thomas, also of South Beloit; and family friends Jeff and Susan Hanfeld of Loves Park, Ill.

In the early-morning hours of Saturday, Oct. 19, Craig will fire up his two smokers to get ready for the event sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Society. The team will cook chicken, ribs, pork, and brisket. Each category will be judged on appearance, taste, and tenderness.

As pitmaster, Craig is in charge of the barbecuing, but the competition is a team effort. Jeff and Stefanie are the official tasters. Their job is to make sure that the taste is just right and that every layer of seasoning—sweetness, spiciness, and smokiness—hits the taste buds. Cindy and Susan handle the parsley. Each entry is presented to judges on a bed of parsley. Cindy also keeps the team's records. When asked about Thomas's role, the group chimes in: "He carries stuff." That's a big job, considering the team travels with a trailer filled with the two smokers, wood for fuel, a grill, seasonings, all the essential barbecue tools, and—most important—the coolers of meat.

The cook-off in Munfordville, Ky., offers \$15,000 in prize money and, of course, bragging rights that are priceless. In addition to the four regular meat categories, this cook-off has a fifth competition—Destination: Bacon Domination. The couples hope their baconnoli concoction will be their ticket to Las Vegas for the Bacon World Championship in November. Rules of the contest specify that bacon may be paired with additional proteins or veg-



The Smok'n Booty BBQ team, from left, Jeff and Susan Hanfeld, Craig and Cindy Dunaway, Thomas and Stefanie Whiteley.

etables, and creative use of bacon is encouraged. Certainly, a cannoli prepared with bacon will win creativity points.

In the regular categories, the team has high hopes after a strong showing in August at the Grill Games BBQ Competition in Kenosha. Out of 43 teams, Smok'n Booty placed third in the chicken category and eighth in ribs. When the winners were being announced, Craig admits that he thought his team had a shot at winning grand champion. The couples were expecting to do well in the

pork and brisket categories. Because the chicken and ribs winners were announced first, the grand champ designation seemed within reach. But it wasn't meant to be, and the team finished 15th—still an admirable showing considering this was only its sixth sanctioned competition.

Smok'n Booty will enter three competitions this year, and the team hopes to add two more events next year. When the Dunaways retire from their day jobs, they plan to travel the barbecue circuit, entering 15 to 20 contests every year. Next year they hope to open a roadside barbecue stand in South Beloit.

Craig has been entering barbecue contests for about five years, starting with that backyard competition. In 2011, he and the team entered their first sanctioned competition, Poor Que in Montello, Wis., placing 20th out of 41 teams. Not bad for a first try. Later that summer they

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Entries—chicken, left, and brisket—are presented to judges on a bed of parsley.

Rock Linemen Power Our Members



During this football season and throughout the year, Rock's linemen provide the power you need.



(866) 752-4550



Smok'n Booty BBQ Team

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entered Smokin' in the Bogs in Warrens, Wis., again placing in the middle of the pack but this time winning third for their brisket.

The team only competed twice in 2012, mostly because everyone was busy with Thomas and Stefanie's wedding. As thanks for all they did for the wedding, Craig and Cindy received a gift certificate from their daughter and new son-in-law to attend Johnny Trigg's Barbecue Class in Louisiana. In February, Craig and Cindy learned some secrets of barbecuing from Trigg, who is known as the "Godfather of BBQ." They must be quick learners because in their next competition Smok'n Booty BBQ placed 22nd out of 70 teams and won fourth place for chicken in the Red, White & BBQ contest in Westmont, Ill. It was quite an improvement from their showing in 2012 when they placed 56th out of 66 teams.

Craig says he learned lots of useful information, including tips on trimming meat, the secrets of seasonings, and the significance of scheduling everything just right to



Craig tends the smoker, which he built.

deliver a delectable dish to the judges. Timing is essential because teams have just a 10-minute window to turn in their entry. Their fate then rests with the judges, who will rate their hours of hard work with a single bite.

When the competition is over, one would think that the couples would sit down and enjoy the fruits of their labor. But they all agreed that the first thing they want to do is go out for pizza.

The team isn't ready to reveal its barbecuing secrets, but Cindy is sharing her beans recipe with fellow Rock Energy Co-op members.

You can follow the team by checking out Smok'n Booty BBQ on Facebook. Warning: Don't look at the food photos if you're hungry! ■

Smok'n Booty BBQ Beans

½ pound bacon
½ stick butter
1 large onion, diced
1 large red pepper, diced
½ cup packed brown sugar
½ cup favorite barbecue sauce
1 Tbsp. Tiger Sauce
¼ cup syrup (maple preferred)
2 28-oz. cans Bush's Original Baked Beans
1 cup chopped smoked meat, as desired
(brisket, pulled pork, or ribs)

Cook bacon, drain, chop, and set aside. Melt butter and saute onion and pepper until tender. Add beans, barbecue sauce, Tiger Sauce, brown sugar, and syrup. Mix well. Add bacon and smoked meat. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Cook in 9-by-13-inch pan covered loosely with foil. Bake 60 minutes, stirring every 20 minutes.

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 31, 2014, annual meeting. Districts up for election are:

- **District 6:** Beloit and Rock townships in Wisconsin; Rockton Township in Illinois.
- **District 7:** Newark and Plymouth townships in Wisconsin.
- **District 8:** Avon, Spring Valley, and Spring Grove townships in Wisconsin; 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. ■



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