



*More Power to You*

## From Polar Vortex to ‘Refriger-Nation’?

*Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer*

Let’s hope an early first snow of the season like we woke up to on Halloween morning isn’t an omen of the winter that lies ahead. Who can forget last winter? It was the coldest one in 35 years and one of those rare winters with snow cover for a solid three months.

Now that the weather is getting cooler and most of the trees have shed their leaves, memories of the polar vortex winter come flooding back. What I don’t remember about last winter though is whether the meteorologists saw it coming. If they were predicting a long, cold winter last year at this time, I don’t recall hearing about it.

So, looking ahead, what does the winter of 2014-2015 have in store for us? If you listen to the scientists, this winter isn’t expected to be so bad—temperatures warmer than last winter and below-normal snowfall.

But the Old Farmer’s Almanac is predicting that

our area will experience “vicious cold” this winter with monthly average temperatures below what happened last winter. The folks there even coined a new term: “Refriger-Nation.”

Others look for signs in nature to predict what’s ahead. According to folklore, these are all signs of a harsh winter: long black bands on woolly bear caterpillars, vivid fall colors, abundant acorns, plentiful dogberries, hornets’ nests higher in trees, and early geese migration. You might have your own special way to predict the coming winter weather. But whatever happens in the next three months, you can rest assured that Rock Energy Cooperative is here to provide the energy you need.

Some people, however, have difficulty paying their energy bills in the winter. In 2009 the co-op’s board of directors approved the creation of Rock Cooperative Care to help supplement other energy assistance programs and benefit members who otherwise might fall through the cracks because their incomes are too high to qualify for federal programs but too low to make ends meet.

Rock Cooperative Care is partially funded by Project Lift Up, a voluntary member donation program that allows members to round up their monthly energy bill to the nearest dollar, add a set monthly contribution, or make a one-time donation.

As you count your blessings this holiday season and are planning your holiday giving, please consider making a donation to Project Lift Up. Just as the name implies, Project Lift Up helps give people a financial lift. The people who benefit truly are grateful for the assistance. Here’s an excerpt from a letter we received last year: “Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this blessing. I never knew a program like this existed, but I am eternally grateful for this one-time assistance in my hour of need.”

More than 230 co-op members have donated about \$10,000 to Project Lift Up in the past six years. If you’d like to join them, just choose one of the options on the form on this page and return it to Rock Energy.

If you already participate in Project Lift Up, you can help make the holidays even brighter for others by adding a one-time donation to your generous contribution. Whether you’re new to the program or increasing your

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**Yes, I want to make a holiday gift to Project Lift Up and receive 3 free CFLs!**

*(Choose only one option.)*

- Round up my monthly energy bill to the nearest whole dollar.
- Add \$1 each month to my budget billing plan.
- Add a monthly donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount.)
- Add a one-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my next energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount; minimum of \$10 donation required for light bulb offer.)
- I already am enrolled in Project Lift Up but want to add a one-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my next energy bill. (Please enter dollar amount; minimum of \$10 donation required for light bulb offer.)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

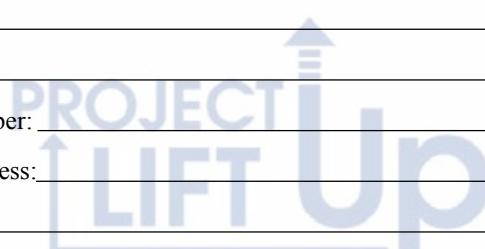
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





# Holiday Memories

Holidays are a special time to spend with loved ones and create wonderful memories and carry on family traditions. Here are some stories submitted by Rock Energy Cooperative members and employees:

## A Special Doll

I've been blessed to spend so many holidays with family and friends, but the Christmas of 1959 still sticks out in my mind. My grandparents and my twin uncles were with our family that year. At some point we started opening the presents. I opened the one from my grandparents, only to be let down. It wasn't my present. It was baby clothes that I was sure were really for my 2-month-old sister. I handed them to Grandma and thought I was without a gift from her when she told me to go with one of the uncles to their car. We went out, and there was a box with my name. I opened it when we got back in the house and inside was a big doll. The baby clothes were for me, after all, to clothe my new doll. It just so happened that she was the same size as my sister. I



still have that doll and a few of those precious garments that were sewn and crocheted by my grandmother and great-grandmother.—*Cheryl Edwards, Beloit member*

## Holiday PJs

I always give my girls pajamas and a new ornament as a gift each year. They open them the night before and hang their new ornaments on the tree at midnight on Christmas Eve. Then they have to wear their new PJs so I can take pictures the next day. They look forward to this each year.—*Rosa Eddings, Member Service Representative*

## Cookie Bake

For the last 25 years on the second weekend in December, my mother, three sisters, one sister-in-law, and I get together for the annual Stern Christmas Cookie Bake. We each are responsible for making two different kinds of cookies and one candy. Our batches need to be big enough to split evenly among all involved. We start on Friday night and usually finish by 3 on Sunday afternoon. We all chip in to help each other out with their batches and dividing them up equally. On Saturday night the unfrosted cut-out cookies get brought out, and we all sit down as a big group, including husbands and children, and frost and decorate cookies till they are all

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# Rock Cooperative Care Offers Energy Assistance

Some Rock Energy Cooperative members need a little help paying their energy bills. They might earn too much to qualify for state and federal energy assistance, or they might need some extra money to supplement the other programs.

Either way, Rock Cooperative Care is available to help. Since 2010, more than \$110,000 has been distributed to help members.

A one-time grant of up to \$500 is available to help residential members who are struggling to pay their energy bills but do not meet more stringent state and federal requirements.

Check the following chart to see if your household qualifies for assistance. For example, a four-person household would be eligible if the total annual income is \$71,550 or less.

The Salvation Army office administers the Rock Cooperative Care

program. If you meet the eligibility requirements, call either of these offices during regular business hours to schedule an appointment: Janesville, (608) 757-8300, extension 26; Beloit,

(608) 365-6572; or Rockford, (815) 972-1135. Be sure to point out that you would like to schedule an appointment to apply for the Rock Cooperative Care program. ■

Rock Cooperative Care Income Guidelines for the 2014-2015 Heating Season*						
150% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$500 grant)			200% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$350 grant)		300% of Poverty Level (eligible for up to a \$250 grant)	
Family Size	30-Day Income	Annual Income	30-Day Income	Annual Income	30-Day Income	Annual Income
1	\$1,458	\$17,505	\$1,945	\$23,340	\$2,917	\$35,010
2	\$1,966	\$23,595	\$2,621	\$31,460	\$3,932	\$47,190
3	\$2,473	\$29,685	\$3,298	\$39,580	\$4,947	\$59,370
4	\$2,981	\$35,775	\$3,975	\$47,700	\$5,962	\$71,550
5	\$3,488	\$41,865	\$4,651	\$55,820	\$6,977	\$83,730
6	\$3,996	\$47,955	\$5,328	\$63,940	\$7,992	\$95,910
7	\$4,503	\$54,045	\$6,005	\$72,060	\$9,007	\$108,090
8	\$5,011	\$60,135	\$6,681	\$80,180	\$10,022	\$120,270


\*These figures are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2014-2015.

## More Power to You

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donation, we'll give you three free CFLs to help save money on your energy bill.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all the folks who are donating to this program. Your act of kindness shows the true cooperative spirit of Rock Energy members, who are always willing to lend a hand to help a neighbor facing difficult times.



**ROCK ENERGY COOPERATIVE**  
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If you think you might qualify for assistance, you can find the income guidelines above.

I hope everyone had a Thanksgiving filled with lots of food, football, family, and friends. That November day always marks the beginning of the annual holiday season, which is filled with family traditions and special memories. This year we asked members and employees to share a holiday memory that they hold dear to their heart. You can read them on page 16b.

All of us have holiday memories, and I hope those memories take you back to a time that warms your heart. When I think back to when I was a kid at Christmas, I fondly remember a certain plastic Santa face that when plugged in made me feel like Santa was in the room. I recall waking up early each morning so I could open a tiny little window on a Christmas

calendar. Each new day revealed something new and different: a partridge in a pear tree, French horns, golden rings, swans, and all of the other remaining 12-day ensemble. I didn't really give a leaping lord what was in the window. I just knew that by opening that window, it brought me one day closer to that magic day!

Also on page 16b is the co-op's holiday greeting to members. During our annual Member Appreciation Day in September, we gathered employees, directors, and their families outside the Janesville warehouse for a group picture. I hope you enjoy seeing the smiling faces of the people here at Rock Energy who believe it's a privilege to serve your energy needs. Please have a blessed holiday season, and be sure to make some wonderful memories. As always, if we can do anything to improve, please let us know. ■

# Scholarships Offered to High School Seniors

Rock Energy Cooperative again is offering scholarships of \$500 to graduating high school seniors who enroll at an accredited school. Students whose parents or guardians are active members of REC are eligible.

Our independent scholarship committee will judge applicants based on general merit, cooperation, leadership abilities, financial need, and class ranking.

Since 1989, Rock Energy has awarded more than \$82,000 in financial aid to deserving students.

An application form must be completed by the student as well as by the student's guidance counselor. Applications are available at area high schools, at our



Janesville and South Beloit offices, and online at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Just click on Your Benefits.

The deadline for returning completed applications is Jan. 12. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Uebelacker at (866) 752-4550 or [barbu@rock.coop](mailto:barbu@rock.coop).

In addition, scholarships of \$1,500 will be awarded through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program. These scholarships are available to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of an Illinois electric cooperative member receiving service from the co-op. Applications are available at area high schools, our co-op offices, and online. The deadline is Dec. 31. ■

## Christmas Memories *(Continued from page 16b)*

done. Grandma preorders the cut-out cookies from a bakery, and she usually orders nine dozen. Over the years the kinds and quantities have changed, but we always do it the second weekend of December. Many laughs and lots of cookie sampling are done throughout the weekend. It is also neat to see now that the grandchildren are getting older that they are getting involved more with

helping and making batches to share, so they in return will get cookies to enjoy for the holiday season. Many of the cookies and candies made are shared among friends, neighbors, and co-workers.—*Tonya Zakovec, Member Service Representative*

## Christmas Eve Fire

I was on call at the co-op one Christmas Eve when there was a house fire. Linemen go on fire calls to shut the power off for the fire department. So we went down there and disconnected the power. A single mother with two girls lived there. It was Christmas Eve, and her house was burnt to the ground. She came up to me and thanked us for coming down there. She said, "I didn't want to ruin your Christmas Eve." And I said, "You didn't ruin our Christmas Eve."—*Denny Dolgner, Assistant Operations Manager*

## Surprise Family Gift

I still remember the excitement of waking up on Christmas morning when I was younger and seeing all the presents under the tree. They weren't there when we went to bed but magically appeared during the night. As the oldest of three kids I figured out what was going on before my brothers but played along with the Santa routine for their sake. As we got older, Dad continued the Santa tradition with a surprise family gift. He would go shopping on Christmas Eve afternoon and pick out something special that the whole family would enjoy. That gift was always the last one we opened on Christmas morning, and it was the best one!—*Barbara Uebelacker, Communications Specialist* ■

Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Wednesday, Dec. 24, and Thursday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas and Wednesday, Dec. 31, and Thursday, Jan. 1, for the New Year's holiday. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekends. 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.