

THE GRID

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



History of Christmas Lights

Long before electricity, people brightened the dark winter months with firelight, from the burning of the Yule log to candles placed around the home. The first recorded candlelit Christmas trees appeared in Germany in 1660 and eventually spread across Europe, reaching the United States later in the century.

While the glow of the candles was festive, it also posed a serious fire hazard, so the light could only be enjoyed for a short time.

A revolutionary spark

While Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb in 1879, it was his colleague, Edward H. Johnson, who created the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1882. He hand wired 80 colored bulbs around a revolving tree in his parlor, all powered by a generator.

Johnson's lights were ahead of their time, as electricity was not yet routinely available, and electric lights were considered expensive. President Grover Cleveland and his wife, First Lady Frances Cleveland, helped boost acceptance in the 1890s, when the White House Christmas tree was illuminated with colored bulbs to delight their young daughters.

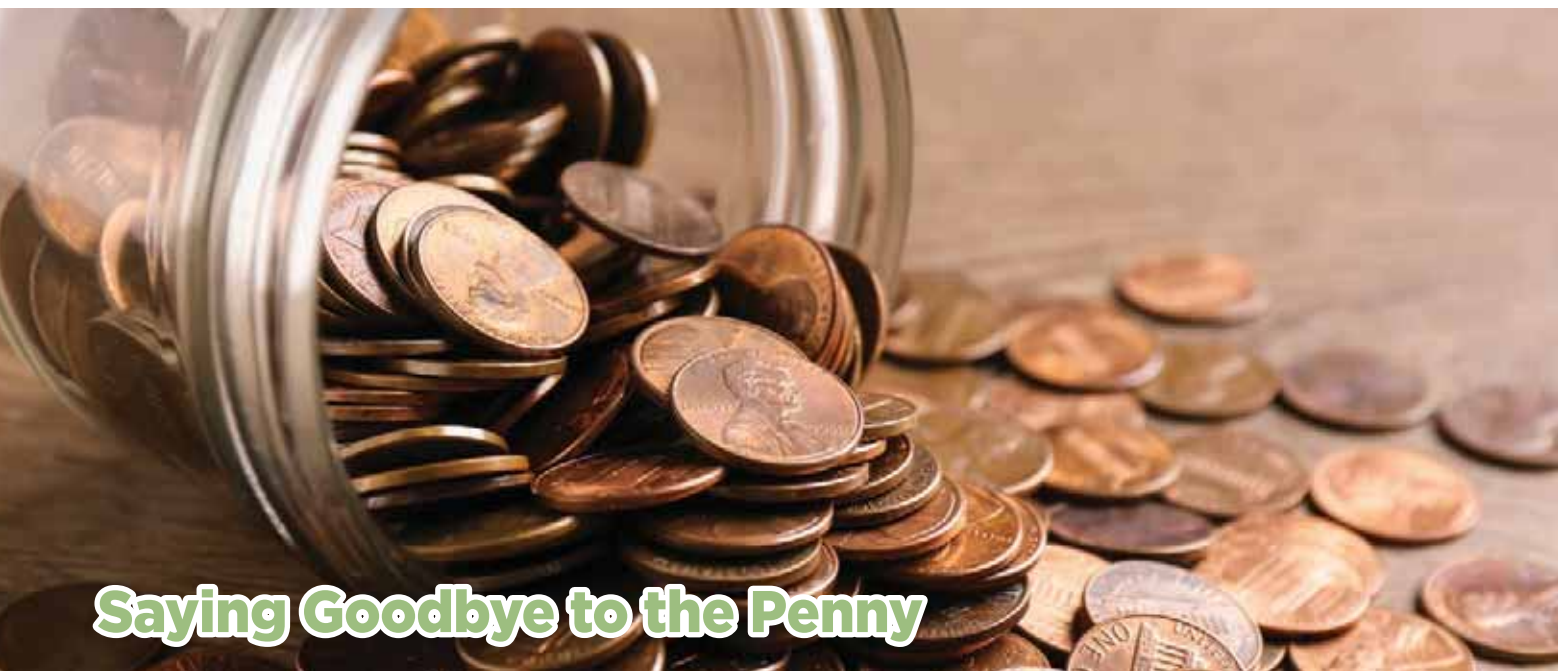
The tradition of outdoor light displays, which we now associate with driving around to view beautifully lit homes and elaborate light shows, began in North America. This expansion was made possible by the development of safe outdoor Christmas light bulbs and light strings in the 1920s.

LEDs, smart displays and sustainability

Christmas lights have come a long way. Today's LED lights shine brighter than ever, creating beautiful displays while using less energy — they're built to last.

Every holiday season, millions of lights brighten homes across the country. From twinkling displays set to music to TV favorites like ABC's "The Great Christmas Light Fight," modern holiday lighting turns neighborhoods into dazzling shows filled with festive "flip the switch" moments.

Year after year, Christmas lights continue to brighten our lives and homes. Their evolution reflects our desire to bring light, warmth and joy to the darkest winter days — with a mix of new technology and timeless tradition that makes holiday lights truly magical.



Saying Goodbye to the Penny

Due to the U.S. Treasury no longer making the penny and our bank no longer accepting them, effective immediately, CMEC will no longer be accepting the penny for cash payments. Here are answers to some frequently asked questions:

Can I still write a check, use a debit or credit card? Yes, you will not need to round your balance if you are paying by check, debit or credit.

Only those paying with cash will be affected.

Will you change my bill and round it up or down? No, only your cash payment will need to be rounded up or down.

Are you keeping my money if I round up and not applying it towards my bill? No, if you round up instead of down the few cents will be a credit towards your next bill and will be reflected on your bill.

Here are examples on rounding up and rounding down:

Pin Your total due is \$100.13, and you **round up** to the nearest nickel. You will pay \$100.15, and you will have a credit (or overpayment) on your account of 2 cents that will be carried over and applied to your next bill.

Pin Your total due is \$100.13, and you **round down** to the nearest nickel. You will pay \$100.10, and you will have a balance due on your account of 3 cents that will be carried over and applied to your next bill.

Money bag **If I round down and carry a few cents balance to my next bill, will there be a penalty or disconnection?** No, if you round down to the nearest nickel, you will not receive a late penalty. The few cents will be carried over to the next bill without penalty or disconnection.

Money bag **Why are you doing this?** Due to the change from the U.S. Treasury, our bank informed us this week that we can no longer have pennies in our cash deposits.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.



*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!*

Our office will be closed:

- December 24th and 25th;
- December 31st and January 1st.

2025 Employee Service Award recipients

35 years

Bill Arthur

30 years

Eric Starwalt

15 years

Bob Schafer &
Julie Butler

10 years

David Welsh &
Jake Logue

3 years

Gavin Bennett,
Devon Durbin
& Mitch
Huddleston

1 year

Steven Baldwin,
Brandon Slifer
& Kaylee Reedy

Congratulations!





IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Powering Your Future

At CMEC, we believe the key to a brighter future lies in empowering the next generation. That's why electric cooperatives across Illinois are committed to investing in youth through scholarships that honor the legacy of our cooperative family while fueling the dreams and goals of tomorrow's leaders.

The electric cooperatives of Illinois will award **17 scholarships of \$3,000 each** to outstanding students as part of the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program. **Andrea Brettin**

This program is about more than financial aid — it's about empowering students. While honoring those who came before us, we are investing in the future. Illinois' electric cooperatives are always looking for ways to spark positive change in our communities, and supporting youth through scholarships is one

of the most impactful ways we can help shape tomorrow.

Scholarships Available:

- **Ten scholarships** will be awarded to high school seniors whose parent(s) are members of an Illinois electric cooperative and who plan to enroll full-time at a 2-year or a 4-year college, university or vocational/technical school.
- The **Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship** will be awarded to a student whose parent is an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director, honoring a legacy of service within the cooperative family.
- **Five scholarships** will be awarded to students enrolling full-time at an Illinois community college whose parent(s) are electric cooperative members.

- The **LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship** supports students pursuing a career in linework through enrollment in the lineworker program at Lincoln Land Community College. Eligible applicants include children of cooperative members, relatives of employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces or National Guard.

The general scholarship application deadline is Dec. 31, 2025, and the lineworker scholarship is due by April 30, 2026. For more information, contact Summar Smith at ssmith@cmeccoop.com, call our office at 217-235-0341 or visit our website at cmeccoop.com. You can also find information at aieccoop.com.

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative Scholarships

CMEC will once again be awarding six \$500 scholarships and the Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship for \$1000 in 2026! The Randall Beasley Memorial Scholarship honors long time CMEC employee and Navy Veteran, Randall Beasley. Scholarship applications are now open and the deadline to apply is March 31, 2026. Forms can be found on our website, in our office or can be requested by emailing ssmith@cmeccoop.com.



Monthly Board Meeting Minutes can be viewed on our website: cmeccoop.com