



**Mike Smith**  
President and CEO



## Coats for Kids: 19 years of warmth, care and community

For 19 years, our Coats for Kids program has helped ensure that children across our service territory have what they need most during the coldest months — a warm, brand-new winter coat. What began nearly two decades ago as a simple idea to help local students has grown into a meaningful tradition rooted in compassion, cooperation and community pride.

This year, we were able to distribute **250 winter coats** to elementary schools throughout our region. Each coat represents more than just protection from the

cold — it's a message to each child that their community cares.

### How the program is funded

Coats for Kids continues to thrive because of the generosity and commitment of many partners. Funding is made possible through:

- Proceeds from the sale of scrap metals
- Contributions from employees and directors **5132C9-1100B**
- Support from the CoBank Sharing Success matching grant program

Together, these resources allow us to purchase high-quality coats each year and ensure students receive brand-new items they can feel proud to wear.

### The difference it makes

The program's impact extends far beyond warmth. Teachers and school staff regularly share stories about how receiving a new coat boosts a child's confidence or eases a family's financial burden. For parents, it can mean one less worry. For

**Continued on page 18B**





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**"Coats for Kids" continued from page 18A**



students, it's a tangible reminder that they are supported and valued.

Across our service territory, these coats help children arrive at school warm, comfortable and ready to learn — making a real difference in their daily lives.

### **A reflection of cooperative values**

Coats for Kids continues to embody the cooperative principle of **Concern for Community**. This program brings together employees, directors, local partners and donors who believe in taking care of

one another. By pooling resources and working together, we're able to meet a basic need that has long-lasting effects on the well-being of local families.

As we celebrate our 19th year, we are grateful for everyone who helps make this program possible. Your support allows us to continue providing warmth, dignity and encouragement to children throughout our communities. **4118D2-1108B**

**Keeping kids warm — one coat at a time. Here's to another wonderful year of giving back!**



# Operation Round-Up awards \$6,000 to local community projects in 3rd Quarter 2025

The Operation Round-Up trustees met to review community grant applications, awarding a total of **\$6,000** to organizations working to meet local needs and improve quality of life throughout our service area. Since the program's inception in 2016, Operation Round-Up has now granted **\$254,287.16** to nonprofits, schools and community groups — thanks to the generosity of members who round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar.

## 3rd Quarter 2025 grant recipients

### Salvation Army – Christmas Meal Box (\$1,200)

The Salvation Army will use its grant to support its annual Christmas Meal Box program, which ensures local families have access to a full holiday meal. These boxes provide both nourishment and comfort during the winter season, helping families celebrate the holidays with dignity.



### Alternatives for the Older Adult – Connecting McDonough County Residents (\$1,200)

Funding will help cover travel expenses that allow staff to connect directly with older adults throughout

McDonough County. This outreach ensures residents receive essential support, resources and assistance — especially those who may face mobility or transportation challenges.

### McDonough County Genealogical Society – Newspaper Digitization (\$1,200)

This project focuses on digitizing rolls of microfilm containing long out-of-print newspapers from communities across McDonough County. The grant funds will be matched by the society's own fundraising efforts, helping preserve valuable local history and making these records more accessible to the public. **11131B7-1002C**



### GFWC Macomb Women's Club – Slim Jims for Glass Recycling (\$1,200)

The Women's Club will use its grant to purchase "Slim Jim" containers for businesses and public locations to aid in the collection of sin-

gle-stream glass. Funding also covers decals for the containers and a sandwich board to place at the Purple Bin site when the bin is temporarily removed for emptying. Establishments will empty their collected glass into the Purple Bin located at Farm King, further supporting community recycling efforts. If your business is interested in a Slim Jim please reach out to the Macomb Women's Club for details.

### West Prairie CUSD #103 – Interactive Learning for Every Classroom (\$1,200)

West Prairie will put its funds toward the purchase of electronic classroom displays and necessary mounting hardware. Their goal is to equip 20 classrooms across the district with interactive technology that enhances student engagement and modernizes instruction.



Operation Round-Up continues to demonstrate the power of small change making a big difference. We thank our members for contributing to this program and helping support meaningful projects that strengthen our communities. If you know of a nonprofit organization or community group that could benefit from funding, encourage them to apply for the next grant cycle! Full details can be found at [mcdonoughpower.com](http://mcdonoughpower.com).

**Member Prizes**

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find the map location number that corresponds to the one on your bill (found above the usage graph), call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.

# Save money with a DIY home energy audit

Want to cut costs and make your home more comfortable? A DIY home energy audit can uncover hidden energy drains, like leaky windows, drafty ducts and inefficient appliances. Identifying trouble spots now can set you up for savings and comfort year-round.

## Your step-by-step efficiency guide

Before you dive in, grab a few basic tools: flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and something to take notes (your phone works great!) We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

### Step 1: Adjust your thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Lowering the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. It automatically adjusts based on your schedule.

### Step 2: Lower water heater temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140 F, but most households only need 120 F.

### Step 3: Find and fix energy vampires

- Shut off energy vampires — devices that draw electricity even when turned off. This idle load can account for 23% of your home's energy use.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles.
- Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once — it's an easy way to stop energy waste at the source.

### Step 4: Check your lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer. Lighting can account for about 10% of your electric bill.
- Add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.
- Don't overlook outdoor fixtures. Choose LEDs with features like

daylight shut-off or motion sensors for even more savings.

### Step 5: Review major appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new. If your refrigerator, washer, dryer or heat pump is more than 10 years old, it may be worth replacing rather than repairing. Newer appliances are more energy-efficient and can often pay for themselves in savings within a few years.
- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years depending on the type and maintenance. If yours is older, start planning ahead for an upgrade.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

### Step 6: Seal leaks

Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix. Here's where to look and how to seal them:

- Check baseboards, floor edges and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors.
- Focus on where different materials meet outdoors.
- Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing and outlets. **742C3-606C**
- Use caulk for gaps around windows, doors and baseboards.
- Add weatherstripping to doors and operable windows.

### Step 7: Inspect insulation

#### Check attic insulation:

- Grab your dust mask and tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, but you may need more depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.
- Spread insulation evenly. Loose-fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy with even coverage, while rolled batt insulation should fit snugly with no gaps.

#### Inspect exterior walls:

- Check insulation by turning off the power, removing an outlet cover or

switch plate and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more.

- Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.

#### Don't forget the basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces.
- Add insulation to pipes and duct-work for an extra efficiency boost.

**For renters:** You may not be able to make major upgrades, but you can ask your landlord to seal leaks or start small with temporary fixes.

### Enjoy your energy savings

Congratulations — you've taken important first steps toward lowering your energy bills and boosting comfort.

### Tips to manage your energy bill

The budget billing option averages your past energy use and spreads the cost evenly across the year, so you pay the same amount each month. It can bring peace of mind during extreme weather periods when bills usually spike. Keep in mind: Budget billing helps you manage monthly costs but doesn't lower your overall annual expense.

With the SmartHub app or online portal, you can monitor your usage, make payments, and stay updated — all from your phone, tablet or computer. Manage your energy usage by viewing daily or hourly usage to understand how weather, habits or appliances impact your bill. Compare usage month-to-month or year-to-year. Set usage alerts to know when your consumption spikes. Visit mcdonoughpower.com to log in to your account or get registered.