

MONROE ELECTRIC NEWS

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Alan W. Wattles

Across The President's Desk

MCEC holds 87th Annual Meeting

A record crowd of more than 600 members and guests attended Monroe County Electric Cooperative's (MCEC) 87th Annual Meeting on June 13 at the cooperative's headquarters in Waterloo. Members enjoyed a catered breakfast, a petting zoo, children's activities and updates from cooperative leadership on the state of the electric cooperative and future initiatives.

Board President George Obernagel called the meeting to order and spoke about the changing energy landscape and the challenges facing electric utilities. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a balanced energy portfolio that supports reliability, affordability and environmental responsibility while meeting the nation's growing demand for electricity.



Obernagel noted that electric cooperatives continue advocating practical energy policies that protect reliable, affordable electricity for rural consumers while navigating evolving regulations, advancing technologies and increasing demand from emerging industries.

"The electric cooperative model was built for times like these," Obernagel said. "Because when it is all said and done, this isn't just about power plants or policies. It's about people. It's about community. And it's about keeping the promise that rural America will always have reliable and affordable electricity."

President and CEO Alan Wattles reviewed the cooperative's 2025 performance and shared an outlook on future projects, power supply challenges and upcoming rate changes. "I love to see all the people here today," Wattles said. "Your attendance and your participation in the annual meeting process is what makes a cooperative work. An annual meeting is an important part of being member-owned."

Wattles reported that both electricity sales and purchases increased over

the previous year, while power supply costs rose approximately \$1.7 million, representing the largest expense increase. Despite rising costs and significant storm-related expenses, MCEC continued investing in system reliability through infrastructure improvements and ongoing maintenance.



Among the projects highlighted was a planned looped transmission feed serving the Waterloo, Poe and Fults substations. The project, being developed by Southern Illinois Power

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Cooperative (SIPC), will improve system reliability and provide greater operational flexibility once construction begins. MCEC also remains on schedule with its pole inspection and replacement program and continues an aggressive tree-trimming and vegetation management cycle designed to reduce outages.

Wattles also discussed the cooperative's participation in a shared warehouse project with Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association (EECA) and SIPC. The project will improve material availability and strengthen emergency response capabilities throughout the region. MCEC recently received approval for a \$1 million, zero-interest Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) loan to help fund the project.

Members also learned that a recent cost-of-service study resulted in a systemwide rate adjustment of approximately 2.6%, which will take effect beginning with October bills. Wattles explained that increasing power supply costs and tightening generation capacity across regional markets continue to place upward pressure on electric rates.

The cooperative also highlighted the success of its Peak Power Rewards Program, which encourages members to reduce electricity use during periods of high demand. Approximately 300 members have enrolled in the program and can earn bill credits by reducing energy consumption during conservation events.

During the meeting, members paused to remember longtime

employee Ron Rusteberg, who passed away in October 2025. Rusteberg joined MCEC in 1987 and dedicated nearly four decades of service to the cooperative and its membership.

Attorney Kurt Schroeder conducted the board of directors' election. Members reelected Richard Neff to represent the Northern District, George Obernagel to represent the Central District and Jeff Hoffmann to represent the Southern District. Each will serve a new three-year term.

As a thank-you for participating, all registered members received a \$25 bill credit. MCEC also awarded 18 \$500 scholarships to recent high school graduates who attended the annual meeting.

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

One of the best ways to protect yourself from online scams is by using strong passwords. While many people focus on complexity—adding symbols, numbers and capital letters—password length is equally important. A longer password or passphrase is generally harder for cybercriminals to crack than a short, complex one. Consider creating a memorable phrase made up of several unrelated words, and avoid using personal information like birthdays or pet names. Use a unique password for each account and enable multi-factor authentication when possible. Taking these simple steps can help keep your personal information and online accounts secure.

Source: CISA



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

August heat can put your air conditioner to the test, making it a great time to check your system's air filter. A dirty, clogged filter restricts airflow, forcing your cooling system to work harder than necessary to keep your home comfortable. That extra strain can reduce efficiency, increase energy use and contribute to unnecessary wear and tear on equipment. Inspect your filter monthly during periods of heavy air conditioner use and replace it if it appears dirty. A clean filter supports efficient operation and can even enhance indoor air quality—helping you stay cool and comfortable during the hottest days of summer.



MCEC line outages June 2026

Date	Duration	# Out	Map Location	Cause Desc	Substation
6/1/26	0:49	2	Rt 3	Lightning	Poe
6/1/26	0:44	27	Zingg Rd/Saeger Rd	Lightning	Millstaddt
6/4/26	0:36	2	Kaskaskia Rd	Small Animals or Birds	Fults
6/5/26	0:04	19	Columbia Quarry Rd/ Braddock Pt	Maintenance	Millstaddt
6/6/26	1:04	4	Moredock Lake	Other, Deterioration	Fountain
6/11/26	2:01	796	East Carondelet Area	Power Supplier	E. Carondelet
6/11/26	0:34	651	North Waterloo Area	Power Supplier	N. Waterloo
6/13/26	1:35	6	Sparrow Creek Ln	Small Animals or Birds	E. Carondelet
6/14/26	1:32	2	Klein School Rd	Small Animals or Birds	New Athens
6/14/26	1:11	30	LI Rd/Smith Rd	Other, Deterioration	New Athens
6/22/26	0:38	21	Roscow Rd/Asselmeier Rd	Other, Faulty Equipment	Poe
6/23/26	0:59	2	W Apple St	Trees, Other	Smithton
6/25/26	1:15	2	W Apple St	Trees, Other	Smithton
6/27/26	0:50	14	Kropp Rd/Paradise Ln	Other, Birds Or Animals	Millstaddt



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Making their mark

Local students represent MCEC in D.C.

Students representing electric and telephone co-ops across the state recently returned home following Youth Tour, a tradition spanning decades that sends students to Washington, D.C., for an unforgettable weeklong trip.

This year, 49 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone co-operatives took part in the 2026 Youth Tour, held June 15-22, to visit the nation's capital for an immersive experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

Monroe County Electric Cooperative sponsored two students within its service territory. These students included Makenna Esker from Freeburg High School and Brodie Stenzel from Red Bug High School. They joined more than 2,000 students representing 44 states for the annual event.

"Electric and telephone cooperatives across the state are investing in the next generation through Youth Tour," said Brooke Gross, member services manager and facilitator of youth programs at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. "It gives students a chance to see our nation's history and government up close. Just as importantly, it helps them discover their own potential as leaders."

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives headquartered in Springfield,

where they selected the co-op's board of directors. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making and budgeting — giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate. All students were members of the co-op.

Co-op leadership included manager Josephine Meyer, Tri-County Electric Cooperative; board chair Elizabeth Hampton, Shelby Electric Cooperative; vice chair Brenna Hays, Wabash Communications CO-OP; secretary-treasurer Isabella Smith, Menard Electric Cooperative; and board members Iris Mount, SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, and Reece Whitley, Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative.

"Being part of this co-op helps students understand what makes a cooperative different," said Gross. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone — not just one person or company."

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks, including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery and the U.S. Capitol, where they had the opportunity to meet U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. They also strolled the National Mall and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they joined hundreds of other teens from

across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.

In addition, a student was selected to represent Illinois on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to be interviewed for the position.

Corn Belt Energy Corporation's Colton Leonard was selected as the 2026-2027 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead.

"It's so awesome that the co-ops are able to do this for us all," Leonard said. "Everyone comes from so many different perspectives, and getting to meet other individuals is just so empowering."

The week concluded with a farewell dinner and dance, and by the time students returned home on June 22, many said they felt changed by the experience.

"These students arrive in Washington, D.C., not knowing what to expect," Gross said. "By the end of the trip, they've built friendships, expanded their perspectives and gained a better understanding of how they can make a difference in their communities."

High school students who live within the service area of MCEC are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to youthtour.coop or facebook.com/ILYouthTour.