



# Co-op Advantage

## Get on board! Director nominations now open

Do you have a strong sense of community service and proven leadership skills? Like you, the ECE Board of Directors are members who live and work locally.

Nominations are now open for those who live in districts 1, 3, and 6. Directors whose terms expire in April 2022 are Diane Zimmerman in District 1, Wayne Eller in District 3, and Jim Jesok in District 6. All are four-year terms. To learn if you live in one of these districts, please check your bill on the upper right under your account number.

Our board members attend monthly meetings, manage co-op policies, and review the budget. They also monitor progress of the strategic plan and help ensure the long-term health of your electric cooperative.

If you live in an eligible district and are interested in becoming a nominee, visit our website to review the ECE Bylaws, which specify the eligibility requirements you must meet. Then contact us for a director nomination packet at 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8046. The packet must be completed and returned by 10 a.m. February 15, 2022, after which all nominees will be notified regarding the status of their candidacy.

*We retain the services of Survey and Ballot Systems to conduct the election, and the entire election process is overseen by co-op members who serve on the Credentials and Election Committee.*

### DISTRICT MAP

(Visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) for a detailed map)

#### District 1

**Serving Wisconsin townships:** Amnicon, Bennett, Blaine, Dairyland, Frog Creek, Gordon, Hawthorne, Highland, Lakeside, Minong, Oakland, Parkland, Solon Springs, Summit, Superior, and Wascott.

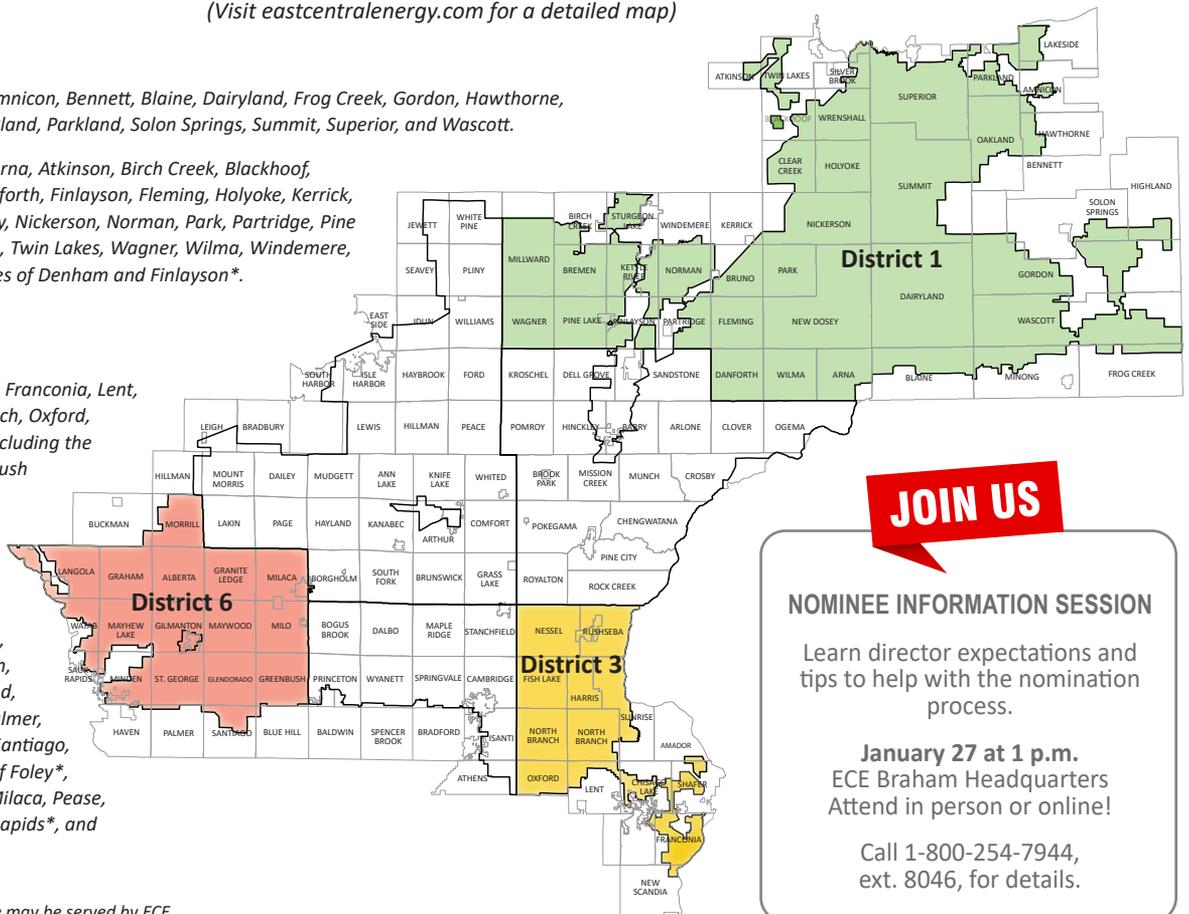
**Serving Minnesota townships:** Arna, Atkinson, Birch Creek, Blackhoof, Bremen, Bruno, Clear Creek, Danforth, Finlayson, Fleming, Holyoke, Kerrick, Kettle River, Millward, New Dosey, Nickerson, Norman, Park, Partridge, Pine Lake, Silver Brook, Sturgeon Lake, Twin Lakes, Wagner, Wilma, Windemere, and Wrenshall, including the cities of Denham and Finlayson\*.

#### District 3

**Serving Minnesota townships:** Amador, Chisago Lake, Fish Lake, Franconia, Lent, Nessel, New Scandia, North Branch, Oxford, Rushseba, Shafer, and Sunrise, including the cities of Harris, North Branch\*, Rush City, and Scandia\*.

#### District 6

**Serving Minnesota townships:** Alberta, Blue Hill, Buckman, Gilmanton, Glendorado, Graham, Granite Ledge, Greenbush, Haven, Langola, Mayhew Lake, Maywood, Milaca, Milo, Minden, Morrill, Palmer, Pease, Sauk Rapids, St. George, Santiago, and Watab, including the cities of Foley\*, Foreston, Gilman, Glendorado, Milaca, Pease, Rice\*, Ronneby, Santiago, Sauk Rapids\*, and St. Cloud\*.



#### NOMINEE INFORMATION SESSION

Learn director expectations and tips to help with the nomination process.

**January 27 at 1 p.m.**  
ECE Braham Headquarters  
Attend in person or online!

Call 1-800-254-7944,  
ext. 8046, for details.

\*All or part of the areas listed above may be served by ECE.



## Electric Cooperative Youth Tour

The annual six-day, all-expense-paid Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. is a GO for 2022! Scheduled for June 14-19, the Youth Tour is open to high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors whose parent or guardian is an ECE member.

Spend a day on Capitol Hill with elected officials and address your concerns directly with legislators, learn more about electric cooperatives and how they help power communities just like yours, and meet other teens from across the country. Don't miss out on this opportunity, as ECE covers the total cost of the trip, including airfare.

Tour information is available on our website. Students may request an application by emailing [desiree.cuda@ecemn.com](mailto:desiree.cuda@ecemn.com) or calling 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8031. Completed applications and essays are due February 21, 2022.



### Congratulations

Glenn Stream  
Rush City, MN

Visit our website to learn more about Auto Pay.

## Taking our show on the road

After months of collaborative design and construction of a safety presentation trailer, we are excited to share the completed result! Your co-op's new demonstration unit is over 30 feet long and can be energized to just under 8,000 volts. To avoid rust caused by salt during our wet winters, the trailer was intentionally constructed using aluminum; this will help preserve our investment for years to come.

If you see the trailer going down the road, you'll notice we used all available space to share additional safety messages. Hidden compartments allow for extra storage, and an American flag is showcased with its own individual spotlight.

Safety Administrator Ben Smith points out, "ECE's new safety trailer will take us to the next level of presenting electrical safety. We can show how power gets to homes from our lines, and how to stay safe when there is a risk of electrical exposure. We are very excited to present electrical safety to our communities."

While we don't offer compliance training or certification, we can customize a free, fun, and educational experience for schools, businesses, and community groups of all ages. Contact us by visiting our website under Safety > Request a Presentation or emailing [info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com).



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# Change a life with your spare change

## “We’re more effective with the proper tools”

Because of the generosity of our members, ECE has made a meaningful impact with nearly \$2.3 million in Operation Round Up (ORU) grants to the causes closest to your hearts. Thank you to those who round up your bill to the nearest dollar! Read on to learn how three organizations are using ORU grants to mitigate the impact of traumatic experiences.

### **Gordon-Wascott EMS**

When you call 911, your first responder might be using gear they received from an ORU grant, like the capnography machines recently purchased by Gordon-Wascott EMS. As employee Irene Bott recently explained, “These small but mighty machines measure carbon dioxide and respiration rate. When our neighbors are in distress, we’re often on scene before the ambulance, and this equipment literally helps us save lives. Without ORU, there’s some equipment we simply can’t afford. We’re truly thankful for every dollar.” For Irene, there is no better profession than one that serves her neighbors and friends in their greatest time of need. “Thank you for rounding up—you’re helping us help you.”

### **Pine City Fire Department**

Can you imagine being injured deep in the woods and having to wait hours for rescue? Thanks to new transport equipment purchased with an ORU grant, the Pine City Fire Department can navigate to scenes faster and safer. Chief Tom Miller described a recent purchase: “We used ORU funds to outfit our UTV with a wildland firefighting unit and a mount for remote rescues. Between permanent residents and holiday visitors, sometimes we’re responsible for 30,000 people. With everyone spending more time outdoors since the pandemic, we’ve seen a rise in medical emergencies—and not just fire calls. Without members contributing to ORU, I don’t know when it would have been possible for us to purchase this equipment.”

### **North Star Family Advocacy Center**

It is critical for children who have been physically or sexually abused to feel safe while disclosing their stories and undergoing treatment. In recent years, two separate ORU grant cycles have made a positive impact for North Star Family Advocacy Center in Braham: one for security and another to create a facility walk-through video. Family advocate Jenna Furlong clarified, “This process can seem intimidating to an already-frightened child. Rather than police walking through the lobby with all their gear, ORU allowed us to implement a secure, private entrance. We also received a grant to create a virtual tour video that highlights the facility with the goal of reducing anxiety of victims and their families.”

These are only a few examples of the difference Operation Round Up has made to those in our area. From the moment your cooperative was created over 85 years ago, ECE’s biggest strength has been our members. Please consider rounding up your bill or making a one-time donation. Help us provide more opportunities in the small towns we call home! Call 1-800-254-7944 to donate today.



*(L-R) Irene Bott, Gordon-Wascott EMS; Tom Miller, Pine City Fire Department; Jenna Furlong, North Star Family Advocacy Center*

## Promoting reliability with IVM

To better control vegetation near electrical conductors, we employ the industry-best practice known as Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), which offers better right-of-way access for our crews. It also helps prevent outages and keeps line workers, arborists, and the public safe.

IVM consists of a blend of manual, mechanical, chemical, and cultural control of unwanted vegetation. The result is a thriving ecosystem of low-growing plant species, which is beneficial to wildlife, pollinating insects, and butterflies.

We work with line clearance contractors and typically conduct maintenance on a five-year cycle; regrowth is treated two years after. Split between 14 projects, we’ve scheduled about 700 miles of line for clearing in 2022. Interested in where we’ll be working? Check out the detailed map on our website under Trees & Lines > Vegetation Management.



Part of ECE's commitment to community is being a good neighbor and being there for others when they need help. This is why, when the city of North Branch approached ECE regarding its ability to continue operating its electric utility, we welcomed the conversation.

While I caution that there is work left to do, I want to share the conversation thus far. Due to a number of reasons, North Branch Water & Light (NBWL) was on a path to being overwhelmed. The commission has decided it is in the best interests of its customers to wind down the utility, affecting approximately 2,000 homes and businesses within the city of North Branch. Because ECE serves much of the surrounding areas, this past summer we signed agreements regarding emergency mutual aid as well as operational support.

Right now, our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE), is working toward an agreement that would facilitate a complete transfer of service. The power supplier known as Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency has a contract with NBWL until 2050, an obligation that GRE would need to assume for ECE to be able to distribute electricity to the city.

Meanwhile, we're reviewing financials and the value of the electrical system to ensure any deal would be in the best interest of our entire membership. From a distribution standpoint, picking up a well-populated service area is advantageous for ECE's bottom line. We recognize that this change could cause concern for the residents of North Branch and we plan to communicate regularly throughout the process.

As this exciting potential project takes shape, I want to personally remind North Branch residents that going from a municipality to a cooperative has many advantages! Becoming part of ECE allows access to things like Operation Round Up grants, scholarship opportunities, capital credits payouts, and of course our exceptional service and reliability.

Being a good neighbor—to both members and prospective members—is one of our core principles. Please keep an eye on our communications as we move forward with this project.

At your service we remain,



East Central Energy  
P.O. Box 39  
Braham, MN 55006

Braham Service Center  
Monday-Friday  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1.800.254.7944

General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: [info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com)

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Assistant Wendy Leibel at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting highlights and board operating policies can be found on SmartHub.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website: [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com)



**SAVE THE DATE**

**ECE Annual Meeting  
April 21, 2022**

Watch our website for details!





# Change a life with your spare change!

**For less than \$1 per month, you can support local organizations by “rounding up” your bill to the next dollar.**

**Sign up for Operation Round Up via SmartHub or call us today!**

*ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

**ECE** 1.800.254.7944  
eastcentralenergy.com