



July 2022

Co-op Advantage

When it comes to the communities we serve, there's no greater joy than when we get to personally interact with our members. As a cooperative, ECE remains outwardly focused and tries to support as many organizations as possible.

In 2021, we wanted to get involved at the ground level by supporting members where they live, work, and volunteer. An internal Community Engagement Committee was formed and has hit the ground running. This group of employees is committed to reaching as many demographics as possible across our 14-county service area in the most impactful ways we can find.



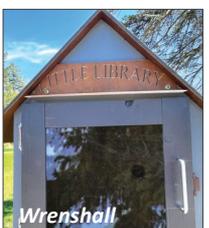
Loosened pandemic restrictions have allowed us to interact with more members and provide extended opportunities for employees to offer their time. Community leaders have reached out for assistance and ECE has responded. From supporting high school sports by sponsoring free popcorn at basketball games, to offering electric vehicle safety training to fire departments, we've had a wonderful year so far.



Northwestern wins Tiny Library contest Dr. Seuss-inspired design takes \$500 prize

One of our most exciting community projects this spring has been the Tiny Library contest. We reached out to all high schools to which ECE offers scholarships. Eight schools submitted a completed project by the deadline, which included Chisago Lakes, Foley, Milaca, Mora, Northwestern, Solon Springs, Superior, and Wrenshall.

Online voting took place May 17-22. With 8,686 votes cast, the winner of the \$500 grand prize was Northwestern High School's Dr. Seuss design, which received 3,817 votes. Along with a check to cover materials, all other schools received \$100 as a thank you for participating. Our employees hosted an internal book drive and each school was provided with books to help with the initial stocking of each library.





FIRE DEPARTMENT EV TRAINING

We started the year with electric vehicle safety training for local fire departments. Thanks to our partnership with Great River Energy, a total of 27 departments attended the February and March trainings, where they learned EV crash and fire response, how to disable an EV, and more.

RUSH CITY GREENSTEP

We participated in the Earth Day event sponsored by the Rush City GreenStep group in April. Attendees spun our trivia wheel for prizes, entered to win a pollinator house or STIHL® electric leaf blower, and asked questions about renewable energy. ECE's Chevy Bolt was also on display in the parking lot.



ARBOR DAY

In April, we spent the afternoon at Nyquist Elementary School in Isle, MN. Fourth and fifth graders got to help plant two flowering crab-apple trees on school grounds. Arborists performed exciting climbing demonstrations as our drone flew high above. Tabletop safety presentations illustrated the dangers of trees near power lines and playing near electrical equipment.

ANOKA-RAMSEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAREER DAY

Four employees highlighted the importance of electrical safety in May at the Cambridge campus of Anoka-Ramsey Community College. Our linemen had a great time interacting with local eighth-grade students using our exciting safety demonstration trailer.



HIGHWAY CLEANUP

Twice a year, we gather together for an afternoon of cleaning up ECE's section of Highway 65 from mile marker 51 to 53 through the Adopt-A-Highway program. Our spring cleanup resulted in 12 large bags of trash and other debris removed from the roadside.



DAIRYLAND OUTDOOR VETERANS RETREAT

Just in time for the Memorial Day weekend, we traveled to Danbury, WI, to help prepare a handicapped cabin for summer use at Dairyland Outdoor Veterans Retreat (DOVR). The morning started off chilly, but the physical work helped everyone stay warm. ECE also donated a \$500 check to help support DOVR's mission.

CAMBRIDGE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

Our employees connected with seniors at the Cambridge Senior Activity Center café on June 2. We served free ice cream sundaes and chocolate chip cookies while using the Plinko board to share important information about high energy bills, copper theft, pollinator issues, and scam calls. Visitors left with a free ice cream scoop and scam call magnet.



BRAHAM APPRECIATION DAY PARADE

When we were asked to participate in the Braham Appreciation Day parade in June, we realized it had been quite a few years since ECE appeared in a parade. We grabbed a bucket truck and asked employees to bring their kiddos along. It was a busy day filled with great weather, smiling faces, and lots of candy!

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On Memorial Day, our service area experienced a major weather event. Straight-line winds topped 65 miles an hour and at least one tornado was confirmed. Roofs were ripped from buildings and already-saturated ground resulted in uprooted trees, leading to downed power lines along with over 45 broken poles. At its highest, ECE's system saw outages impacting around 11,000 members.

When major weather impacts service to our members, the word "community" takes on a new meaning. Internal teams at ECE jump into action, answering panicked phone calls, assessing damage, entering information into the system, coordinating line crews, communicating with members and radio stations, preparing meals, working with electricians, and troubleshooting as needed.

Local communities also come together to support one another during major outages. From offering chainsaw help with massive fallen logs to suggesting trusted contractors, small towns know how to rally. Police and fire departments help keep the public safe, sharing messages of reassurance and responding to emergencies at all hours. Restaurants like the Grumpy Minnow and Braham Pizza Pub generously offered complimentary meals to us, which meant a lot to our exhausted employees.

As an electric utility, we are surrounded by a community of industry professionals who

frequently come to the aid of one another. After the Memorial Day storms, we greatly appreciated the help of teams from Dakota Electric Association, Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, and Skyline Utilities. Having additional boots on the ground allowed us to work through outages at a faster pace without exhausting our resources—ultimately resulting in a safer experience for everyone.

That focus on safety underscores every decision we make and is especially heightened during critical outage operations. As much as we'd like to put the pedal to the metal and blast through outages in the shortest amount of time possible, we won't sacrifice safety for the sake of speed. Working in dark, rainy, and unsafe conditions lends to workplace accidents and our employees deserve to go home safe to their families.

Thankfully, our members remained understanding and supportive, even when outages continued into the third day. We received hundreds of messages on social media, plus emails and phone calls that lifted our spirits and reminded our employees that despite the challenges of nature, a community can come together to accomplish great things.

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Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: 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.

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Jim Jesok appointed to the board

After Wes Siemers chose to end his time with the ECE Board of Directors to spend more time with family, the board appointed previous director Jim Jesok to serve in the open District 6 director position until the next election. State statute requires the open position to be on the next election ballot.



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