

Caring Members
Help a neighbor in need

Safety
Share the road with farmers

Teacher Totes
Supporting local educators



October 2022
National Co-op Month

Co-op Advantage

2 EMPLOYEES ARE FEELIN' 22 Careers in Energy Month

The year 2000 surprised everyone when the Y2K bug didn't materialize. It was also the year that IT Support Analyst Elaine Armstrong and Fleet Technician Clint Krueger began their careers at ECE. Both have different job duties but provide an essential service to our members. Let's check in with these two employees who are celebrating 22 years in 2022!

Elaine Armstrong

IT SUPPORT
ANALYST



Elaine was originally hired to work in the contact center. Since then, she's conquered various projects and is now part of the IT team thanks to the opportunity for internal growth at the co-op. She shares, "Compared to my prior jobs, there's a huge difference in the way our co-op treats employees as real people, with kindness and respect, instead of as a resource to be used."

With a degree in art and literature, Elaine doesn't find her career path unusual since she's always enjoyed science and tech but didn't like the cold corporate culture of her former employer. Like other cooperative employees across the country, she appreciates the short commute because it allows for better work/life balance.

*"My best piece of advice?
Always be open to learning
and growing!"*

Clint Krueger

FLEET
TECHNICIAN



Clint has always been a self-proclaimed tinkerer, entering the vehicle mechanic world at an early age. After working for various companies, he has the most seniority of ECE's four fleet technicians.

*"Not every co-op has a designated
fleet team, so ECE is really lucky."*

The fleet team is responsible for over 180 units, which includes 23 bucket trucks, 43 pickups, and various other machinery. "The things I learned for my associate degree are now 25 years old, which makes continual training extremely important."

Clint regularly travels from Braham to ECE's other locations in Milaca, Finlayson, Wahkon, and Superior to do maintenance work. He's seen incredible growth in the industry, which allows for faster response times, streamlined communication, and automated tasks.

It takes a wide range of skills to keep an electric co-op running efficiently. Could you be our next coworker? Keep an eye on ECE's careers page at eastcentralenergy.com > Your Cooperative > Careers & Job Openings.

Ready to learn more about working in the energy industry? Visit getintoenergy.org!





Caring Members Neighbors helping neighbors

For those struggling to pay the electric bill, our Caring Members program is a blessing. In 2021, over 50 households received over \$11,000 in assistance to keep the lights on.

Marti Reynolds, Member Accounts Supervisor, notes, “For single parents or someone battling cancer, the Caring Members program makes a world of difference. It is so meaningful when our team can offer help to those who need it most. Even better, ECE matches funds, so donations are essentially doubled.”

You can help fellow members resolve an energy crisis by having a monthly amount added to your electric bill, or by making a one-time donation. The program is administered by Lakes and Pines Community Action Council (MN); Tri-County Action Program, Inc. (MN); and Rural Housing Development (WI).

As cooler weather sets in, stretch your donation fund twice as far by contributing to the tax-deductible Caring Members program. Call 1-800-254-7944 and make a tangible difference to a neighbor in need.



with Farmers

Farm season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Farmers must move slowly in large equipment, but public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and **do the following to keep everyone safe:**

1

Be alert and cautious, and give large farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.

Do not pass in a “No Passing Zone,” or in any area where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges, and railroad crossings, among others.

2

3

Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.

Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator’s blind spot.

4

5

Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe to do so.

Source: Texas Table Top
Texas Farm Bureau

 Safe
Electricity.org

Do you have a power concern?

Low levels of A/C (alternating current) voltage on the grounded conductors of an electrical wiring system are a normal and unavoidable consequence of operating electrical equipment. This voltage, sometimes called stray voltage, is referred to as neutral-to-earth voltage (NEV) when it can be measured between two objects which may be simultaneously contacted by livestock.

If you suspect NEV or other electricity-related issues, such as low voltage, electromagnetic fields, or power quality concerns, contact us. We have qualified employees who can answer your questions and investigate any suspected problems.

Please note: if a person feels an uncomfortable tingling sensation, the condition is probably not NEV but faulty equipment or a serious problem with your wiring system. This situation requires immediate attention and an electrician should be contacted to investigate and correct the problem.



When most people think of a “tote,” they imagine a reusable grocery bag. Here at ECE, our version is a large plastic storage bin. This year we delivered over 50 containers filled with school supplies to elementary teachers in Rush City, Milaca, Ogilvie, East Central, Braham, Hinckley, and Finlayson.



“Living in a rural area often means taking care of neighbors and those in need,” describes Communications Coordinator Desiree Cuda, who organizes the Teacher Totes project. “Educators are a critical part of our communities, and seven years ago we decided to support local schools by donating our time, energy, and resources thanks to a CoBank Sharing Success grant. This year, we donated \$10,000 which was matched by CoBank to total \$20,000 in supplies.”

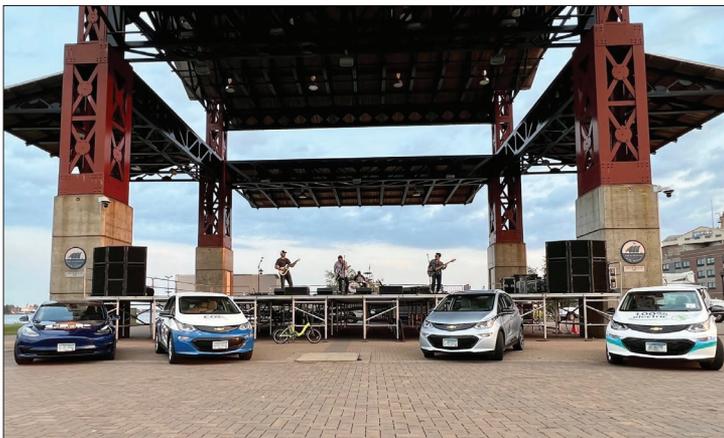
Prompted by the perpetual need for teachers to purchase their own supplies for classrooms, Teacher Totes represents a collaborative effort by our employees from every department who worked together to purchase and sort the supplies, then assemble and deliver to districts within our service area. Supplies included high-value items like label makers, headphones, and snacks.



We hope all schools in our service area have a successful school year!



North Country EV Show & Tell Event



In September, we teamed up with neighboring cooperatives and our power supplier, Great River Energy, for the free North Country EV Show & Tell Event at Bayfront Festival Park in Duluth. Food and beverage trucks provided delicious refreshment while several electric vehicles were on display. A lively discussion panel allowed industry experts to share their experience with EVs. Afterward, Mason Dixon Line took the stage for a public concert.

“Our members are learning EVs look like any other vehicle,” mentions Communications Supervisor Tina Lanhart, who helps coordinate ECE’s participation in the event. “This is a great annual opportunity for us to dive into the future of EVs, while reminding members we are always available to discuss electric vehicles.”



What makes cooperatives different from other business models? Why is ECE so proud to be a co-op rather than an investor-owned utility?

There are **7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES** that help guide us:



VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP. A co-op is not some secret club—we're available to anyone who can use our services and is willing to accept the responsibilities of membership—and we don't discriminate.



DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL. The power is in YOUR hands, not a single owner or group of investors. Our board is elected and held accountable by you. In addition, every ECE member has equal voting rights: one member, one vote. Be sure to vote when/if your district has an election.



MEMBER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION. As a member-owner, you contribute to, and benefit equitably from, the capital of the cooperative. Capital credits are a great example of this principle!



AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE. All our business decisions keep self-sufficiency in mind. We never want to place our members or their interests in jeopardy. Regardless of the partnerships we're involved in, we always put our membership first.



EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND INFORMATION. We place extra emphasis on educating our members, employees, and directors because we value the future. Constant improvement benefits us all.



COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES. There's nothing more rewarding than helping a neighbor in need. Co-ops are proud to work together and support one another, especially after major storms.



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY. While focusing on member needs, we work for the sustainable development of all our communities—including working at food pantries and supplying teachers with school supplies. For ECE, this principle also encompasses our social and environmental impact.

The cooperative model dates back to 1840s England and has been adopted worldwide in many different industries, including food and housing. For nearly 200 years, people have found that working together is the best way to meet their needs. This Cooperative Month, take a moment to consider how different your life would be if local farmers hadn't worked together to bring electricity to this area in the 1930s.

At your service we remain,

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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

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



Holiday office closings

November 24 and 25
December 26





This winter, help keep the lights on
for a neighbor in need.

Donate to East Central Energy's

Caring Members Program

Did you know ECE matches donations?

Call us today to make a difference.

 1.800.254.7944
eastcentralenergy.com

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