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Load management

Device upgrade

Winter bills

Home energy efficiency

No Barriers

Opportunity for veterans



Co-op Advantage

February 2023

Touchstone Energy Community Award

Bringing the community together for housing stability

"We've found that if you present an issue and simply ask, there are many people who are more than willing to help," explains Mathew Viney, Executive Director at A Place for You (APFY) in Pine City, MN.



Michelle Salter, Shelter Manager; Michelle Young, Board Chair; Matt Viney, Executive Director; Linda Setterlund, Vice Chair

The ability to spark change and pull people together is why the organization was selected as ECE's 2022 winner of the Touchstone Energy® Community Award, which includes a \$1,000 prize.

The homeless shelter just marked its tenth year of serving the community. It covers six counties, including Pine, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Carlton, with the ability to house up to nine individuals at a time. The facility provides private rooms, laundry, cold food storage, and bathing facilities, along with

one-on-one case management, mental health referrals, and housing resource navigation.

Mathew notes, "Healthy communities do not allow their members to be homeless. If we want to end homelessness and the trauma it creates, we must give the community the opportunity to be part of the solution."

That solution includes a unique partnership with other organizations to leverage resources and build awareness. The shelter frequently works with mental health practitioners, thrift stores, churches, Girl Scout troops, restaurants, and others in the community. In 2021, APFY received over 350 calls from those who needed help, ultimately serving 111 individuals, a 10% increase from previous years.

"Funding is always an issue," Mathew shares. "Resources are used strategically and creatively. When there is a need, it is communicated and locals contribute what they can, ultimately creating a wave of energy. We can't thank the community enough for supporting A Place for You and helping homeless individuals navigate their way back to self-sufficiency."

ECE presents the Touchstone Energy Community Award annually to a local organization that is making a difference in its community. As the local winner, A Place for You will be entered in competition for the statewide award as well.

December blizzard

We experienced a historic outage event Dec. 14-17, 2022. At our highest, over 12,000 members were without power. We were grateful for the help from Brink Constructors, Dakota Electric Association, Meeker Cooperative, People's Energy Cooperative, Skyline Utilities, Steele-Waseca Cooperative, and Wright-Hennepin Cooperative. Our members showed their support with hot meals, phone calls, emails, messages on social media, and adorable handwritten cards from some of our youngest members at Hinckley Elementary. We appreciated the encouragement!





KNOW WHAT TO DO in an auto accident with power lines...

- Do not leave the car and warn passersby to stay safely away.
- Call 911 to have ECE notified.
- Stay in the car until a utility professional has told you it is safe to exit.
- The only reason you should leave the vehicle is if it is on fire so jump clear of the vehicle with your feet together (without touching it and the ground at the same time), and continue to **hop away with your feet together** as far as you can.



Annual Meeting
April 20, 2023

Attend in person at the Braham Event Center
or watch live on our Facebook page.

In-person registration begins at 5 p.m.
for business meeting at 6 p.m.

Watch our website for details!

Notice to small power producers and cogenerators

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and Small Power Production, Chapter 7835, we are required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

We provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Members interested in further information should call us at 1-800-254-7944 or visit eastcentralenergy.com.

Bootprints in the snow?



Our employees will soon begin replacing around 13,000 load control devices on member homes, a project that will need to be completed within the next few years. Current load management technology is becoming obsolete.

There is no additional cost to you, and this will be a quick process with little to no power interruption. You may notice an ECE Energy Services Specialist on your property (or bootprints in your yard). We'll also leave behind a door hanger with more information.

For those of you who participate in our load management programs, THANK

YOU! The device that's located near your load management electric meter helps the co-op shift energy use, saving power costs and resources. In exchange, you take advantage of lower energy rates.



GIVING US A CALL?

To help us serve you better, please have the following information ready when calling 1-800-254-7944:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Account number |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Address |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full legal name |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Birthdate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Social security number |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Businesses: Federal ID number |

5 ways to fight high winter bills



Winter months often bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. We're here to help you find ways to manage your home energy use and keep winter bills in check.

Here are five tips to help increase your home's energy efficiency this winter:

1. Mind the thermostat.

This is one of the easiest ways to manage your home energy use. We recommend setting your thermostat to 68° (or lower) when at home. When sleeping or away for an extended period of time, try to set it even lower, as there's no need to heat your home when away or sleeping.

2. Button up your home.

Air leaks account for 24-40% of energy used for heating and cooling. Caulking and weather stripping around windows and doors is a cost-effective way to increase comfort and save energy.

3. Use window coverings wisely.

Open blinds and drapes during the day to allow natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to keep the cold, drafty air out.

4. Consider your approach to appliance use.

Only wash full loads and unplug devices when not in use. Space heaters can provide affordable comfort if used for a short time to heat a small space, but one heater can add more than \$100 per month to your electric bill!

5. Think outside the box.

Still feeling chilly at home? Add layers of clothing, wear thick socks, and cozy up under blankets. You can even add layers to your home with an area rug to block cold air that leaks in through the floor.

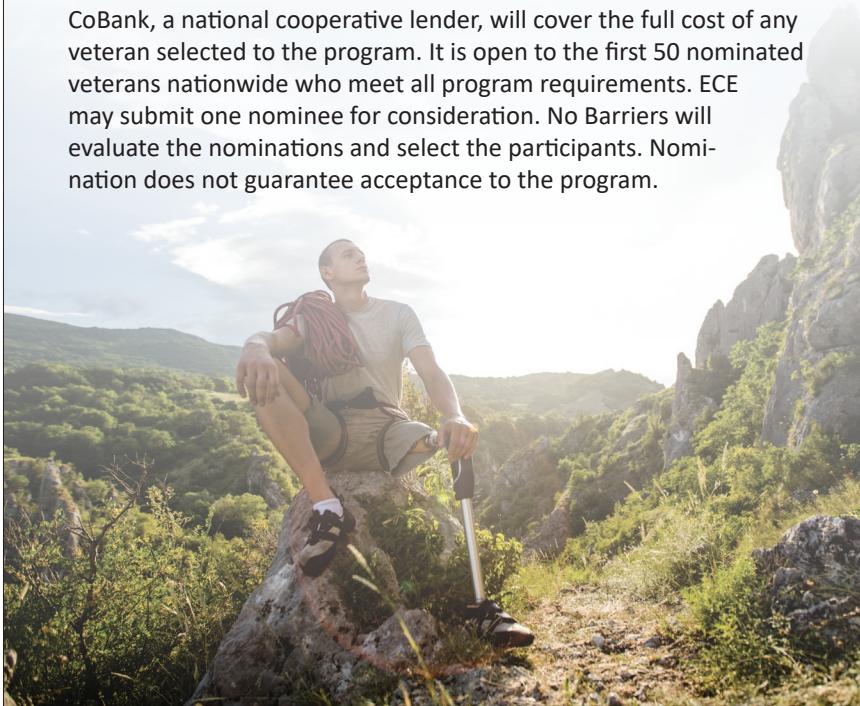
If you're taking steps to save energy but continue to see major increases in your bills, give us a call at 1-800-254-7944. Our energy experts can help identify factors impacting your home energy use and recommend next steps.

No Barriers Warriors expedition Opportunity for veterans

We are participating in a national program to nominate veterans with disabilities for a chance to go on a 2023 No Barriers Warriors expedition. The program is meant to transform lives through curriculum-based experiences throughout five days in beautiful Colorado. It also fosters camaraderie, helps veterans push through adversity, and offers a sense of community. Activities include mountaineering, rafting and rock climbing tailored to accommodate disabilities. Veterans with a VA disability rating can apply to attend the program.

Do you know a veteran with a positive attitude and a willingness to overcome challenges? Details are still in progress for the 2023 No Barriers Warriors program, so watch ECE's website and Facebook page in the coming months. More information is available at nobarriersusa.org.

CoBank, a national cooperative lender, will cover the full cost of any veteran selected to the program. It is open to the first 50 nominated veterans nationwide who meet all program requirements. ECE may submit one nominee for consideration. No Barriers will evaluate the nominations and select the participants. Nomination does not guarantee acceptance to the program.



No longer in the Viasat business

Since 2005, ECE was a partner (along with Lake Country Power and North Itasca Electric) in a limited liability corporation called Northland Connect Broadband. This satellite-based internet service was open to anyone, co-op members and non-members alike. Northland Connect exited the Viasat business on December 31, 2022, but not before arranging for a rural-focused telecommunications cooperative, NRTC Rural Broadband, to service existing Viasat subscribers. The number for technical support will not change; subscribers should continue to use 1-888-817-8962.



This month, many of our members will celebrate Valentine's Day with flowers, cards, and candy. Here at your local electric cooperative, we want to celebrate by showing our appreciation to you, our members. Because of your membership, we continue to build partnerships that strengthen every community we power, from economic development projects to Operation Round Up® grants, scholarship programs, food distribution events, and more.

No matter the time of year, ECE employees and directors value the connections we've built with you. We appreciate every

comment, email, phone call, and conversation in the grocery store—even when you mention room for improvement.

Open and transparent communication is the foundation for every healthy relationship. Please continue to share what you believe in. Not only is that your right as an ECE member, but it also helps us understand what is important to our communities. Your needs are evolving and we want to stay relevant to your daily life.

However you celebrate Valentine's Day, remember you are truly at the heart of everything we do at ECE. When you turn down the lights for that romantic dinner, or flip on the television for a cozy movie night at home, you are enjoying the benefits of electricity provided by a cooperative that cares.

If you need us for anything, or just want to share your opinion, please reach out. We always welcome your input and appreciate the opportunity to connect with you.

At your service we remain,

Nearly \$15 million in broadband grants



In December, it was announced that ECE was awarded three Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Development grants totaling nearly \$15 million. The funds are specifically meant for broadband efforts in northern Isanti county, central Kanabec county, and southern Pine county.

We serve some of the most impoverished counties in Minnesota, which also rank lowest in internet coverage. As access to online services becomes more critical than ever, we've set our sights on fiber broadband as a central component to spur growth and economic development across our 14-county service area. A high-quality fiber connection will deliver major services such as telework, telemedicine, and online schooling.

We plan to begin construction within specific areas of Isanti, Kanabec, and Pine counties in 2023 to meet the grant requirement of project completion by June 2025.

Please watch eastcentralenergy.com as broadband plans continue to unfold.



East Central Energy
PO Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

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

1.800.254.7944
General business calls are answered Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

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





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Visit our website to learn more.

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