



July 2023

# Co-op Advantage

## Still community-focused after 87 years

Since the inception of ECE's Community Engagement Committee in 2021, and the end of pandemic restrictions, your co-op has been busy finding ways to support members where you live, work, and volunteer. Along with assisting local organizations through Operation Round Up®, we've been interacting more and finding additional opportunities for engagement.

During the early part of this year, our employees delivered hand-crafted Valentine's Day cards to senior residents at Elmhurst Commons in Braham. The co-op also sponsored a table at the Anoka-Ramsey Community College scholarship fundraiser, where President/CEO Justin Jahnz was also the keynote speaker.

As spring approached, we reached over 350 students at the Milaca High School career fair, then sponsored exciting Bakken Museum War of the Currents presentations for Pine City students. Our employees highlighted the cooperative's sustainability efforts during the Rush City GreenStep Expo on Earth Day, and offered electrifying safety and tree-climbing demonstrations on Arbor Day. Warm weather welcomed our return to career presentations, two touch-a-truck events, and local parades.

We're looking forward to the second half of 2023. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for upcoming events!



*Bakken Museum War of the Currents presentation*



*Touch-a-truck event, Cambridge*

## Congratulations to the 2023 ECE \$1,500 scholarship recipients

### **Braham High School**

Jaden Carey  
Allyson Floding  
Julia Kuhnke  
Alison Shockman

### **Cambridge-Isanti High School**

Leslie Bleess  
Ava Lowman  
Thomas Moran  
Emily Nystrom  
Croix Vavra

### **Chisago Lakes High School**

Natalie Gorton  
Nathan Holt  
KaiAnna Senne

### **East Central High School**

Ryan Cassman  
Dante Tillman  
Joel Wifler

### **Foley High School**

Charles Albers  
Andrew Rahm

### **Hinckley-Finlayson High School**

Mykenna Johnson  
Corrina Tvedt  
Isabella Ziegler

### **Isle High School**

Hunter Haggberg  
Madison Hebeisen  
Nevaeh Merrill

### **Milaca High School**

Clay Anderson  
Dylan Greninger  
Aria Shoemaker  
Ethan Schindeldecker  
*(Milaca Scholarship Foundation)*

### **Mora High School**

Cole Gmahl  
James Oslin  
Allen Ramberg

### **North Branch High School**

Brianna Hendren  
Summer Lor  
Mykala Sierra

### **Northwestern High School**

Justin Fouts

### **Northwood High School**

Kelsey Schultz

### **Ogilvie High School**

Bryce Bier  
Natalie DeVito  
Alexa Peterson

### **Pine City High School**

Vivian Cavallin  
Claire Emmons  
Kloey Lind  
Carly Tyberg

### **Princeton High School**

Dylan Foede  
James Kohl

### **Royalton High School**

Cylie Brezinka

### **Rush City High School**

Emmalee Angstman  
Brayden Blatz  
Madison Jeske  
Kayden LaMont

### **Sauk Rapids-Rice High School**

Annika Broman  
Alexandra Hill

### **Superior High School**

Grace Lemke  
Chloe Moen  
Taylor Thursby

### **Willow River High School**

Shawn Eckerman

### **Wrenshall High School**

Janae Sjodin

# ECE FIBER CONSTRUCTION BREAKS GROUND

Powered by East Central Energy



Board Chair Joe Morley and President/CEO Justin Jahnz

Your cooperative is proud to announce that construction for ECE Fiber started on May 8. Construction will consist of installing both overhead and underground fiber lines starting in Dalbo before moving to the Braham, Ogilvie, and Pine City areas throughout the remainder of the year.

To recognize the start of fiber construction, we held a “ground-breaking” event in Dalbo where the first fiber lines were hung (pictured right). ECE leadership gathered with officials from both of our project contractors, ITG Communications and National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) Broadband Solutions, to celebrate this accomplishment. Construction is scheduled to take place over the next five years.

“Our mission is to make sure all ECE members have access to reliable, high-speed internet,” says VP/CIO Ty Houglum. “We take pride in providing energy to both urban and rural members, and we are looking forward to serving our members better by adding high-speed internet to our docket.”

With the help of our contractors, 35 miles of overhead fiber lines were installed throughout the first week of construction. In order to keep that momentum moving forward, ITG will extend their work weeks to include Saturdays throughout the summer

months. Saturday work will only consist of installing overhead lines; underground installations will not take place outside of regular business hours.

“The fiber internet that ECE will provide is truly world-class,” mentions Broadband Manager Dennis Rice. “The quality service and internet speeds that members will receive is something other competitors can’t provide at the prices we have.”



ECE members are encouraged to visit [ecefiber.com](http://ecefiber.com) and sign up to express interest in fiber internet services. By signing up online, members will be notified as ECE gets closer to building in their area and receive updates via email. Visit the site today to review pricing and package tiers, along with our most recent ECE Fiber updates!



**REPORTING AN OUTAGE HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER**

**POWER OUT? Let us know.**  
Text “OUT” to 768482

**Want status updates?**  
Text “STATUS” to 768482

**Mobile number must be text enabled via SmartHub.**

**Visit our website to learn more.**



Protect yourself  
and our crews!

Generators can come in handy if the power goes out during a storm. But it's important to use them properly to keep yourself, your neighbors, and East Central Energy employees safe. Backfeed occurs when power is sent back through your home's electrical lines in reverse, creating a dangerous level of electricity that puts ECE crews at risk of severe injury or death.



## USING A GENERATOR?

### 8 DANGEROUS MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE



#### 1 IN ENCLOSED SPACES

Always use it in a well-ventilated area.



#### 2 NEAR WINDOWS OR DOORS

Place it at least 20 feet away from windows and doors.



#### 3 IN A GARAGE

Even if the door is up, never use a generator in a garage.



#### 4 IN THE ELEMENTS

Run it on a dry surface under a canopy-like structure (but not in a carport).



#### 5 PLUGGED INTO A WALL OUTLET

This can be deadly to you, family members, neighbors or utility workers.



#### 6 WITH THE WRONG EXTENSION CORD

Use a properly rated cord to plug appliances into a generator.



#### 7 WITHOUT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) TESTERS

CO detectors should be on every level of your home (test them monthly).



#### 8 IN DISREPAIR

Make sure your generator is well-maintained and in good working order.

Safe  
Electricity.org

Learn more at [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) > Safety > Generator use

## The time value of electricity

Time is the one thing you can't get back, so finding ways to use it efficiently is key. That's where electricity comes in handy!

No need to light a candle or oil lamp when dusk arrives. Electricity offers more productive time in the day. With the flip of a switch, you can catch up on chores and complete other tasks outside of daylight hours. Even better, switching to LEDs in your home will also save you time since you won't need to buy and replace them as often as standard incandescent bulbs because the longevity of an LED light bulb is exponentially longer than traditional.

Electric-powered appliances cut down time in the kitchen. Items like microwaves, electric pressure cookers, air fryers, and slow cookers allow you to "set and forget" while moving to other tasks. One emerging technology, induction stovetops, consume 90% of the

electricity they create, meaning there's little energy escaping, giving you instant heat and controlled temperature.

Farm equipment manufacturers are developing electric farm implements with the potential to require far less energy and maintenance. The global market for electric tractors is expected to grow rapidly in the next decade. Automated processes are being applied to many kinds of machines, such as robotic milking operations, which help farmers reduce labor demands while increasing efficiency, freeing up time for farmers to work on other duties. Robotic milking machines also remove more milk per cow and create more rest time for the animals.

These examples, and more, show that the value of electricity extends beyond just its cost, especially when it comes to all the ways it saves us time.



# INTRODUCING



Transparency is an important component of a member-owned cooperative, and ECE is committed to building trust, strengthening relationships, and empowering members to actively participate in their cooperative. I'm delighted to introduce a new avenue of communication that will further enhance ECE's transparency efforts: the Power Talks podcast.

Each episode of Power Talks will cover a wide range of topics that are not only relevant to the energy industry but also your daily life. We will explore subjects such as renewable energy initiatives, technological advancements, energy efficiency tips, and challenges posed by weather events.

The podcast will feature industry experts who will share their insights, expertise, and perspectives on important topics. Our goal is to equip you with the knowledge you need to actively



participate in discussions and decisions that shape the future of ECE.

Accessing Power Talks will be convenient and easy. You can find each episode on our website or subscribe through your preferred podcasting platform. We will also provide regular updates through our existing communication channels, including our newsletter and social media platforms.

As we embark on this new communication journey together, I invite you to join us in embracing transparency and fostering trust, and creating an environment where your voice is heard, respected, and valued. I encourage you to submit your inquiries and topics you would like us to cover by emailing [info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com).

At your service we remain,

## Is your contact information current?



If we ever need to contact you regarding your account, and to help us better serve you, it's important we have accurate contact information for your account(s).



Having the correct information on file helps during storm situations, scheduled outages, and even capital credit payouts. For example, if you move out of ECE's service area, the capital credits you accumulated will remain with the cooperative. As a former member, you will continue to receive payouts until your capital credits balance is zero, but only if we have your correct address on file!



Current phone, mailing and email addresses can be updated on SmartHub or by giving us a call.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**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](mailto:info@ecemn.com)

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

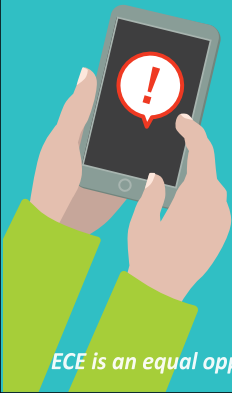
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ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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



# AVOID UTILITY SCAMS



Don't fall victim to utility scams. Beware of callers who threaten to shut off power or pressure you to pay immediately.

*ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

- ❗ ECE will never demand immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, or gift cards.
- ❗ Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor.
- ❗ When in doubt, check your account on SmartHub or give us a call.

**Visit our website for more tips to protect yourself from scams.**

**ECE** 1.800.254.7944  
eastcentralenergy.com