

ECE

C6-6p

ADVANTAGE

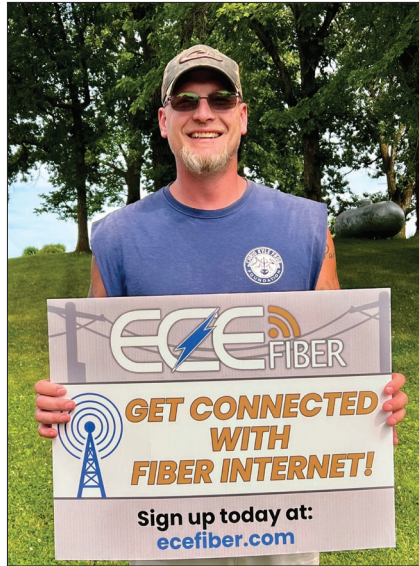
## ECE FIBER MEMBER EXPERIENCE

ECE Fiber has been a game-changer for many member households. Users experience significant improvements in their internet reliability and speed, enhancing their quality of life. Whether it's for streaming family entertainment, online education, or remote work, ECE Fiber delivers exceptional performance, earning enthusiastic recommendations from our members.

Braham-area member Jeremy Iverson's home has over nine devices connected to ECE Fiber, which has revolutionized his family's internet experience. Gone are the days of frustrating buffering.

*"It's so nice watching hockey games as a family and not having the internet buffer at all!"*

His experience has been overwhelmingly positive, making ECE Fiber an easy recommendation. He shared, "The minute we learned about ECE Fiber, we entered our address online. We've had service for several months and couldn't be happier with the speeds. It was worth the wait!"



Sarah N.

We haven't experienced any issues and I've been loving the chance to occasionally work from home.



Jeff M.

The technician was awesome. He explained everything and I now have 15 devices hooked up and working great!



Dylan N.

This is going to be life changing for my wife and I working from home.



Alan L.

Almost two weeks with high-speed fiber optic from ECE. So far, it's flawless; from running the cables, to install, to connecting 19+ devices! I love it.



Nita M.

Just got our ECE Fiber internet hooked up today! Service tech was great, and it works awesome. Super fast!

## ? FIBER FAQ ?

### I'm interested in ECE Fiber, what are the next steps?

The first step to getting ECE Fiber internet is to visit [ecefiber.com](http://ecefiber.com) and submit your address in the search bar, at the top of the page. If you submitted your address but have not officially selected an internet package yet, you are only pre-registered. You will be notified when you can place an actual order.

### When will I get connected to ECE Fiber?

The best way to determine when you might get connected is to email [info@ecefiber.com](mailto:info@ecefiber.com) for an update. You can also refer to the Service Area Map on [ecefiber.com](http://ecefiber.com), where you can see if your address is in an area that is:

- 1) actively serving ECE Fiber
- 2) currently taking orders
- 3) under construction, or
- 4) is a future-year build

### What is the monthly cost?

Residential packages range from \$64.95-119.95 and business packages vary between \$79.95-159.95. We also offer optional features like phone services, network and family security, Wi-Fi extenders, and custom IP addresses. As a reminder, we will provide all equipment needed to connect you to the internet at no additional charge.

**Want to experience reliable internet at blazing fast speeds? Visit [ecefiber.com](http://ecefiber.com) to place an internet order or pre-register!**

## Powering potential: Youth Tour 2024

This year, ECE sponsored two students for the June 18-23 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Along with educational visits to historic sites, Carter Lotz (Braham) and Riley Eberhardt (South Range) had the opportunity to meet with policymakers and learn about the importance of electric cooperatives. Beyond the educational aspects, our representatives also had a blast exploring the city, trying new foods, and creating lifelong friendships with 1,700 students from 44 states.

For Carter, the trip provided a tangible link to the past. "Being inside memorials, museums, and monuments really gave some perspective on our nation's history and the struggles they faced so we can live in the country we enjoy today," he reflects.

The bonds he formed with fellow participants are among the most treasured aspects of the experience.

*"This trip helped me connect to people across my state and I have made so many friends because of it."  
~ Carter*

Riley was equally moved by the historical significance of the sites, but meeting legislators and their assistants was a standout moment for her. "The assistants shared how they started working for senators and specific things in the energy field that pertained to our lives as members of rural electric cooperatives," Riley explains. These interactions were especially meaningful, as she aspires to a career in law and government.



One of Riley's most profound experiences was sitting in the House of Representatives gallery. She describes it as "unforgettable," imagining herself among the historic figures who have shaped the nation from those very seats.

*"I imagined all the history that had been made in that room."  
~ Riley*

## Under the summer sun

Your co-op kicked off summer in a big way this June!

We began by traveling to Danbury, WI, where we staid three cabins and a shed at Dairyland Outdoor Veterans Retreat, and donated a bench made from recycled materials (pictured right).

Following this, we participated for the first time in the Breakfast on the Farm event at Haubenschild Dairy Farm, known for its innovative use of cow manure to power their operations through ECE.

We also hosted our third-annual Pollineighbor Party at the 100 Acre Homestead in Princeton, along with our power supplier Great River Energy and UMN Extension-Isanti County Master Gardeners.



## Can you help us find former members?

We are trying to find current addresses for former members. To view the list, go to [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) > Your Cooperative > Capital Credits, or call 1-800-254-7944 and we will mail the list to you.



PRESIDENT/CEO JUSTIN JAHNZ  
**THIS JUST-in** ECE

I am constantly reminded of the deep connection between the health of our cooperative and the well-being of our communities. This relationship mirrors the bond between bees and flowers, where both thrive through their interaction.

Just as bees pollinate flowers, leading to a vibrant ecosystem, a strong community nurtures our co-op, allowing us all to grow and prosper.

A prime example of this symbiotic relationship is our newly launched "Be the Light" program. This initiative empowers our employees to take an active role in community engagement through a voluntary payroll deduction.

The funds are pooled together, and every two months our employees choose a local nonprofit, rotating through each of ECE's six districts.

"Be the Light" is more than a donation program—it represents our co-op's commitment to illuminating the lives of those around us. This 100% employee-driven effort directly invests in the health and vitality of our neighbors, ensuring everyone thrives. The enthusiasm and generosity of our employees have been truly inspiring, showcasing the collective power we have to make a significant impact.

Just as a healthy garden attracts more bees and yields more flowers, a strong, engaged community attracts more opportunities for growth and development. By working together and supporting one another, we create a brighter future for all.

How can you be the light for those around you?

At your service we remain,



## Passing the MRC torch

The members of our Member Resource Council are nearing the end of their tenure in the program, and we will soon be seeking new participants. Over the last two years, they have attended quarterly meetings to offer suggestions and feedback to staff and our board of directors.

Comprised of members from each district, plus a representative from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, this group is not afraid to speak up, is comfortable contributing in a team environment, and loves finding new ways of doing things.

Keep an eye on your email for future recruitment opportunities! A hearty thank you to our outgoing members, whose terms expire in October.

- District 1: Aaron Gustafson, Nancy Liebelt
- District 2: George AP Johnson, Amy Ralidak
- District 3: Judith Kissner, Ashton Sorenson
- District 4: Julie Immel
- District 5: Brent Thompson, Angela Tvedt
- District 6: Ann Erickson, Tamara Schmidt
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe: Aarik Robertson

**SLAM THE SCAM**

**BEWARE OF SCAM CALLS**

**STAY CALM.** Don't give personal information.

**HANG UP.** Don't react to high-pressure tactics.

**CALL ECE.** Verify account status.

**1.800.254.7944**

**ECE**  
East Central Energy

# Legacy on the lines

## Doug Bitzan retires



When the time came to interview Area Service Foreman Doug Bitzan for his retirement article, he asked to reschedule because he needed to assist the DNR with an eagle stuck in a tree. “Never a dull moment,” he laughs.

After 37 years of dedicated service to ECE’s members, Doug is hanging up his hard hat and preparing for a well-deserved retirement. For him, linework is in his blood—his father Bernie was a lineman back in the 1940s, and now his nephew Aaron follows in their footsteps.

“Before the war, my dad was hired to hand-dig holes for power poles; each hole was worth ten cents,” Doug reminisces. After the war, Bernie came home and was hired up north at a co-op, where line life became a family effort.

“For safety, my mom always sent one of us kids on outage calls with my dad,” Doug explains. “After he’d get a member’s power back on, he would use their telephone to call my mom at home and see where we needed to go next.”



Unlike many retirees who flock to warmer climates, Doug has no intention of trading our rugged landscape for sandy beaches. He recalls a stint doing storm work in Florida, where encounters with massive spiders and “huge snakes slithering on top of the water” left a lasting impression. For Doug, home is where the heart is: his wife Paula, who has been the powerhouse behind his career.

“Line spouses don’t receive enough credit,” he affirms. “People always talk about the exciting work we do, but not a word is said about how much our families sacrifice. Paula’s support, and her ability to keep our family running, allowed me to do this for so long.”

Doug looks forward to the simple pleasures of retirement—the swish of a fishing reel, the foggy morning chill of hunting season—and most importantly, time spent with his seven grandchildren. He and Paula are planning to build a home in Two Harbors, surrounded by the natural beauty of northern Minnesota.

Looking back on his career, Doug shares, “I was hired during the 1980s recession. No one in our area was hiring; all the guys from my line school were working on the east and west coasts, and at the time, I was the first person ECE had hired in seven years.” When asked why he thinks he got the job in such a competitive market, he immediately replies, “It was definitely my good looks.”

As he embarks on this new adventure, that quick sense of humor is only part of Doug’s legacy: his hard work, resilience, and a deep-seated commitment to service reminds us there are quiet heroes working tirelessly behind the scenes, keeping our communities connected and thriving.

We wish Doug the best of luck on his next chapter!



East Central Energy  
PO Box 39, Braham, MN 55006

**Braham lobby hours**  
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.

The ECE Board of Directors meets  
monthly. Please call 1-800-254-7944  
and ask to talk to our Executive  
Administrator to confirm meeting  
information. Monthly board meeting  
minutes 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.

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



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## COMING SOON

### OUR WEBSITES ARE GETTING A NEW LOOK!



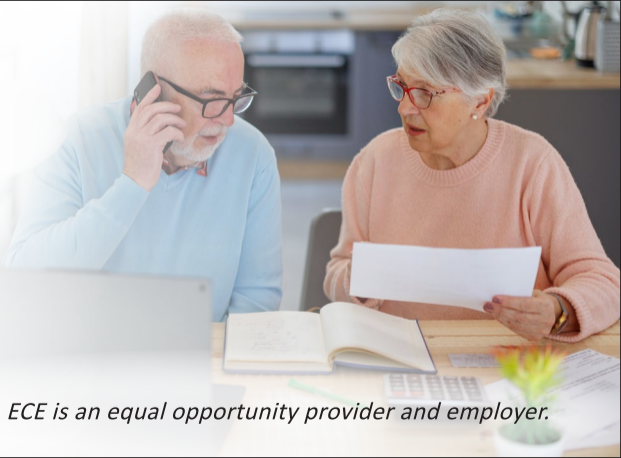


## Protect and educate your loved ones!

Scammers love to target the elderly by creating panic and confusion.

ECE will never ask you to purchase debit cards or money orders to avoid immediate disconnection. When in doubt, give us a call!

**ECE** 1.800.254.7944  
eastcentralenergy.com



*ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*