



# Co-op Advantage

## President/CEO Steve Shurts to retire

After nearly ten years as President/CEO, Steve Shurts is preparing to step down. The fourth general manager to serve in ECE's 83-year history, Shurts began his tenure with the cooperative in July 2010. In the years since, the cooperative celebrated a milestone 75-year anniversary, seen a solar array constructed at Braham Headquarters, bought our first electric vehicle, and improved reliability with an upgraded metering system.

"I am incredibly proud of everything we have accomplished over the last decade," Shurts said. "To be frank, ECE is the best place I've worked in my 43-year career."

Shurts began his career as a nuclear engineer and eventually became a manager at United Power Association before it merged with Cooperative Power Association to become Great River Energy in 1999. After a vice president position at Split Rock Energy, Shurts served as general manager of Owatonna Public Utilities before coming to ECE.

Board Chair Linda Laitala noted, "Steve's leadership has sharpened our focus on members. He has positioned the cooperative for continued success while creating an upbeat, positive culture in the organization. We're going to miss him. We're grateful for the years of service Steve has provided and wish him the very best in retirement."

The Board of Directors is conducting a comprehensive search for ECE's next President/CEO and plans to hire a successor before Shurts' July 2020 retirement date.

"We are beginning a deliberate and thoughtful recruiting process," Laitala shared. "The board's main goal is to hire a President/CEO who can guide ECE into the future while maintaining the mission, vision, culture and values that have been built over the years. The future of energy is changing; we're looking for a leader who will help us adapt."



*"I have been honored  
to serve the needs  
of our members and  
communities."*

September 2019



*over to our  
Member  
Appreciation Events*

**OCTOBER 3, 4-6 P.M.**

### **LOCATIONS**

**Braham Event Center**  
655 8th St. SW, Braham, MN

**Finlayson Service Center**  
2200 Finland Ave., Finlayson, MN

**Milaca Service Center**  
270 10th St. NE, Milaca, MN

**Superior Operations Center**  
3617 E. Baumgartner Rd., Superior, WI

*Drawings  
at each location*

- \$200 energy credit
- \$100 energy credit
- 20-inch boy's bike
- 20-inch girl's bike

### **FREE MEAL**

Pulled pork sandwich • Salad  
Chips • Cookie • Beverage



# Watt's Cookin'

Congratulations to Dale Beidleman, a seasonal member from Anoka, MN, for winning the Watt's Cookin' 10-minute meal contest. Dale will receive a \$25 energy credit.

## SOUPED-UP RICE

1 can "cream of" soup of choice  
1 can tuna (drained)  
¼ c. onions (chopped)  
½ c. corn  
½ c. shredded cheese of choice  
2 c. instant rice



Make soup as directed on can. Add tuna, onion, and corn. Bring to a slow boil. Mix in rice then top with cheese. Cover and let set for five minutes. Fluff with a fork. Yields four servings.

*To enter our Watt's Cookin' contest, mail your favorite pie recipe to Watt's Cookin', P.O. Box 39, Braham, MN 55006. Entries must include your name, address, telephone number, ECE account number, and be received by Oct. 11, 2019. The winning recipe and the contributor's name and city will be featured in a future edition of the Co-op Advantage. Recipes can also be emailed to info@ecemn.com.*

## Sales tax exemption for electric heat

If you are a Minnesota resident, you may be eligible for a sales tax exemption on your electric bill from November through April each year if electricity is the primary source of heat in your home.

To apply for a sales tax exemption, call 1-800-254-7944, visit our website, or pick up an application at any ECE Service Center.

Residential accounts in Wisconsin are automatically exempt from sales tax from November through April.



## Distracted walking is dangerous

As school begins, kids have a lot of distractions to deal with, from new friends to carpools, early schedules, after-school activities, and bus traffic. Make sure they get home safe by discussing distracted walking. Distracted walking refers to walking while using a mobile device of any kind.

- Never walk while texting
- Move out of the way of others if a text absolutely must be read
- Do not walk with headphones in ears
- Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street
- Cross only at crosswalks

Remind children to stay aware of their surroundings—and adults, remember to be a good walking (and driving) role model.



## Auto Pay WINNER

Visit our website to learn about Auto Pay. If you would like to be entered in the monthly drawing, sign up for Auto Pay today!

Members who currently participate in Auto Pay will automatically be entered in the drawing.

Congratulations  
Scott and Sherry Holt, Center City, MN

# Can my power be turned off in the winter?

## YES

Disconnection is prohibited only when it affects the primary heat source for the household and as long as ALL four conditions are met:

1. You declare an inability to pay by completing the Inability to Pay Form.
2. You provide proof of last three months total gross household income.
3. Your total gross household income, not individual income, is less than 50 percent of the state median income, or you are a current recipient of any public assistance with qualifying income requirements, including energy assistance.
4. Your account is current or reasonably on time with a payment plan or you make and keep a mutually acceptable payment plan at any time that considers the financial resources of the household.

*The Cold Weather Rule, in effect from October 15 to April 15 in Minnesota, governs how we handle disconnects; it does not prohibit them. We use the MN guidelines for everyone in our territory. We are prepared to work with you if you are struggling to pay your electric bill. A list of energy assistance agencies is available by calling us or at [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com). For more information about the Cold Weather Rule, see MN Statute 216B.097.*

# Military service personnel assistance

According to Minnesota law, a utility may not disconnect your service if a member of your household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during the period of active duty, deployment, or change in duty station.

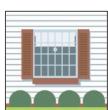
How can your military household qualify for exemption?

- If your household income is below the state median household income or you are receiving energy assistance, AND you have entered into a satisfactory payment plan with ECE and remain current with payments under that plan.
- If your household income is above the state median household income AND you have entered into a plan with ECE, establishing a reasonable payment schedule that considers the financial resources of your household, and you remain current with payments under that plan.

*We use the MN guidelines for all members, including those in WI. Forms are available from ECE. For more information about military shut-off protection, see MN Statute 325E.028.*

**Have questions about either program?  
Give us a call at 1-800-254-7944  
or visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com).**

## 3 Simple ways to lower your energy bills this winter



Open shades during the day to allow sunlight to warm your home. Close them at night to keep cold air out.



Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which use at least 75% less energy.



Wash clothes in cold water.

*Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy*

## Touchstone Energy Community Award

Each year, we celebrate volunteerism and community service with the Touchstone Energy® Community Award. One winning organization will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and will compete with winners from other electric cooperatives for statewide recognition and an additional \$1,000 cash prize.

Any civic organization or non-profit in our service territory is eligible to compete for the award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the local community.

Organizations are eligible to apply for the award themselves, or community members may apply on behalf of a deserving organization.

Applications for the award are now being accepted, and are available at [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) or by calling 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8031. Completed applications must be received at our Braham Headquarters office by Monday, Oct. 21.

**\$1,000 CASH PRIZE**

# Substation dedicated to former director Robert Kaeter

ECE board members came together on August 1 to honor former director Bob Kaeter by dedicating the Duelm substation in recognition of his nearly 40 years on the ECE Board of Directors.

Kaeter was first elected to the board in 1979. Since then, the cooperative has grown by almost 40,000 members. Kaeter has worked with nearly 50 different directors, and witnessed the birth of programs like Caring Members and the implementation of Operation Round Up®. He has guided the co-op through three ECE presidents, two mergers, the technology fears of Y2K, a name change,

the building of new facilities, and the application of new metering equipment.

"My wife, Bonnie, and I started our lives on farms without electricity, so you can imagine what electricity means to us," Kaeter has said. "East Central Energy expanded immensely during my tenure on the board."

During the dedication ceremony, President/CEO Steve Shurts offered words of praise and thanks for the contributions Kaeter has made to the cooperative and its members.



***"Your guidance has played a pivotal role in the betterment of our members' lives. With the dedication of this substation, your legacy now has a permanent place to reside," said Shurts.***

***Kaeter, pictured far right, with family at substation dedication. (Sign enlarged to show detail)***



## ENERGY MATTERS

with ECE President/CEO Steve Shurts

### With AMI, the future is now

With the advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) project completed last year, we are now able to pinpoint the location of outages, helping us quickly restore power and address service concerns. Faster data collection from the meters is allowing us to provide more timely information to members as well.

In the case of outages where several members are affected, the meters remotely verify that power has been restored at each location, reducing return trips to address one remaining outage on the line.

The new meters are helping to identify possible problems before they result in an outage. The meters have alerted us to unreported service concerns, allowing repairs to be made before further issues arise.

If you use SmartHub, you have a wealth of information readily available thanks to the new meters. You can view your energy use by the day, week, month and year. We are continuing to explore other options the new meters may make possible.



East Central Energy  
P.O. Box 39  
Braham, MN 55006

**Service Center locations:**  
Braham, Milaca, and Finlayson  
Monday-Friday  
Hours vary by service center.

**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 Administrator Julie Johnson at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information.

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](http://eastcentralenergy.com)





invites you to

**POP!**

over to our  
**Member**

**Appreciation Events**

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## Locations

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Finlayson Service Center

Milaca Service Center

Superior Operations Center

## Drawings

Energy credit drawings

Kids' bike drawings

Visit our website for details  
and driving directions.

