

# ECE Co-op Advantage

## Director nominations open in districts 2, 4, and 5

Are you interested in serving on the ECE Board of Directors? Like you, directors are members who live and work in the community. As a board member, you would represent ECE members by attending monthly board meetings, managing co-op policies, identifying goals through strategic planning, and reviewing the budget.

You would monitor progress of the strategic plan and work to ensure the long-term health of the cooperative.

Nominations are now open in districts 2, 4, and 5. Directors whose terms expire in April 2021 are Lonnie Johnson in District 2, Joe Morley in District 4, and Jerry Tvedt in District 5. All are four-year terms. To learn

if you live in one of these districts, check your bill; your district is listed on the upper right, under your account number.

If you live in District 2, 4 or 5 and are interested in becoming a nominee, visit our website to review the ECE Bylaws, which specify the eligibility requirements nominees must meet. If you meet those requirements, contact our Executive Assistant at 1-800-254-7944, ext. 8046, for a director nomination packet. The packet must be completed and returned by 10 a.m. February 16, 2021.

We retain the services of Survey and Ballot Systems to conduct the election, and the entire election process is overseen by co-op members who serve on the Credentials and Election Committee.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
ECE Annual Meeting  
April 22, 2021  
Format to be determined.

**Auto Pay WINNER**  
\$25 BILL CREDIT  
**Congratulations**  
Bruce Larsen  
Lindstrom, MN  
Visit our website to learn more about Auto Pay.

### District 2

**Serving Minnesota townships:** Arlone, Barry, Brook Park, Chengwatana, Clover, Crosby, Dell Grove, Hinckley, Kroschel, Mission Creek, Munch, Ogema, Pine City, Pokegama, Pomroy, Rock Creek, Royalton, and Sandstone.

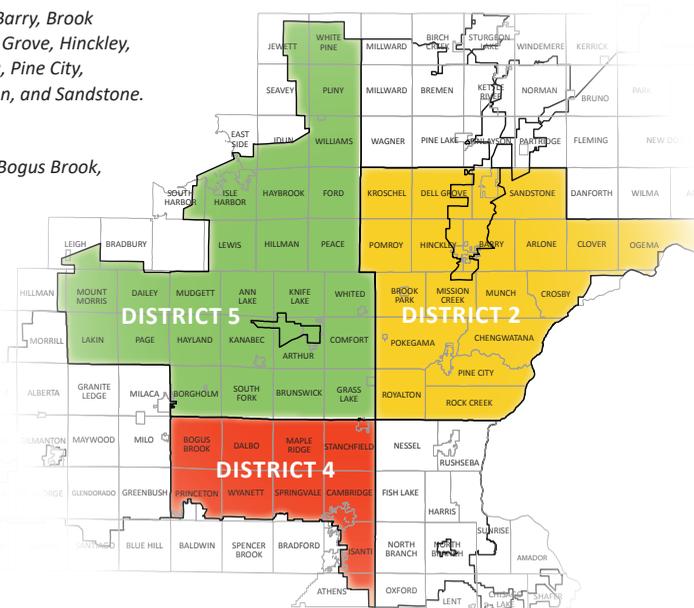
### District 4

**Serving Minnesota townships:** Athens, Bogus Brook, Cambridge, Dalbo, Isanti, Maple Ridge, Princeton, Springvale, Stanchfield, and Wyanett.

### District 5

**Serving Minnesota townships:** Ann Lake, Arthur, Bradbury, Borgholm, Brunswick, Comfort, Dailey, East Side, Ford, Grass Lake, Haybrook, Hayland, Hillman, Idun, Isle Harbor, Jewette, Kanabec, Knife Lake, Lakin, Leigh, Lewis, Mount Morris, Mudgett, Page, Peace, Pliny, Seavey, South Fork, South Harbor, White Pine, Whited, and Williams.

All or part of the townships listed above may be served by ECE.



## Watt's Cookin'

Congratulations to Susan Severson, a member from Braham, MN, for winning the Watt's Cookin' cranberry recipe contest. Susan will receive a \$25 bill credit.



### CRANBERRY CAKE WITH CREAM SAUCE

#### Cake:

- 1 c. sugar
- 3 T. butter or margarine
- 1 c. milk
- 2 c. flour
- 3 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2-3 c. uncooked whole cranberries (fresh or thawed)



Cream sugar and butter, then add milk. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Add to wet mixture. Fold in cranberries. Spread into greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Serve cake warm with cream sauce poured over each piece.

#### Sauce:

- ½ c. butter
- 1 T. flour
- 1 c. sugar
- ½ pint heavy whipping cream
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Melt and slightly brown butter; add flour and whisk in rest of ingredients. Heat until warm. Pour over slices of cake and serve immediately.



*Watt's Cookin' is Changin'... again*

Watch our January issue for more details!



## Snowmobile Safety

Beware of power poles and the wires that hold them in place

**SHARE THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION** with family, friends and anyone you know who rides a snowmobile.

**SNOWMOBILING** underneath power lines can be dangerous. Keep these tips in mind this winter.

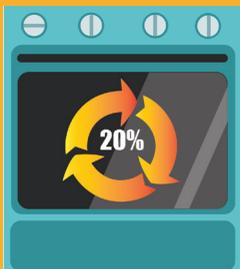
- Watch out for power poles and electrical equipment that can be hidden in the snow.
- Slow down, know the area and stay on marked trails.
- Power poles are often anchored with wires extending out from the pole. Avoid snowmobiling directly next to or underneath power lines.
- If you see a downed power line, stay away and call 911 to report it. Always assume it is live and can carry currents strong enough to kill.

## Better reliability with IVM

Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) employs the industry best practice to control vegetation near electrical conductors. It provides clear access for our crews, helps prevent outages, and keeps line workers, arborists, and the public safe.

IVM consists of a blend of manual, mechanical, chemical, and cultural control of unwanted vegetation. The result is a flourishing ecosystem of low-growing plant species, which is beneficial to wildlife, pollinating insects, and butterflies.

We work with line clearance contractors and typically conduct maintenance on a five-year cycle; regrowth is treated two years after. About 530 miles of line are scheduled for clearing in 2021, spread between 15 projects. Check out the detailed map on our website: Trees & Lines > Vegetation Management.



Convection ovens use **20% less** energy a month compared to a standard oven.

Source: [Energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov)



# Hacking the holidays: Stay cyber safe

Colder weather often motivates people to shop online. When you're looking for great holiday deals, you'll be susceptible to spam emails, phishing attempts, and even completely fake applications promising amazing discounts and savings. It's easy to accidentally click and unknowingly share your private information with scammers. This is a good time to keep some security basics in mind.

- 1. Protect your info.** Phony contests on social media and bogus gift cards are just some of the ways scammers try to steal your personal information and ruin your holiday cheer.
- 2. Stay informed.** While every large company has security in place, sometimes computer hacks do happen. Make sure you check your credit card statements vigilantly and stay on top of breaking news to be aware and prepared.
- 3. Do your research.** Whether online shopping, donating to non-profits, or tracking shipments of your gifts, do your research to make sure the company you're working with is legitimate. And instead of clicking on a link in an email, visit the site directly.



## Looking back: sending payments to Chicago

In 2016, we made the decision to outsource the processing of mailed payments, which had declined in recent years. Additionally, the equipment to process payments in-house was at the end of life and replacement would be costly.

Frandsen Bank & Trust offered a viable solution: ECE members could send payments to the bank's remittance processor in Chicago, where mail would be securely opened, scanned, and processed each day. The dollars are directly sent to the local bank with a secure file going to us to apply to member accounts. After a lot of research, employees and the board of directors agreed to take this route.

About four years have passed since we made the decision to change the address on our remittance envelopes, and we have experienced great results. By not replacing an expensive piece of technology, the cooperative has been able to reallocate resources to save money and time.

Members who prefer to mail their payment are able to do so, with no change in how their payments are applied to their accounts.

Most importantly, we're supporting a local bank and finding the best possible solutions to process payments.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

WISHING YOU AND  
YOUR FAMILY A  
SAFE AND HAPPY  
HOLIDAY SEASON!



Office closings:  
December 25  
January 1

1.800.254.7944 3



## Q&A with Staci Kuhnke ORU Board Member



A small group of ECE members serve on the Operation Round Up® (ORU) Trust Board. Each quarter, ORU provides grants to local organizations which are made possible by members who voluntarily round up their monthly electric bill to the next dollar. We spoke with Staci Kuhnke, a school social worker who also serves as an ORU board member, to discuss Operation Round Up. Staci and her husband Shawn have four daughters and live in Braham.

### How does the application/approval process work?

It's surprisingly simple. Local organizations submit an application by each quarter's due date. Then the trust board screens and approves donation requests based on ORU guidelines. Applicants are notified of our decision. Grant recipients receive a check, and when their project is completed, they're required to provide documentation on how funds were used.

### What makes ORU unique?

It truly is a community-run program. Not only is the grant money raised through member donations, the board is also made up of ECE members who are active in their communities. And honestly, it feels good to make amazing things possible for local organizations. It may seem like small change—the maximum yearly contribution from each participant is \$11.88—but when you add it all up, the money makes a huge difference.

### What kinds of organizations receive funds from ORU?

Grants are distributed to help local non-profit organizations that serve various ages and populations. We have awarded grants for community and school events, first responders, food distribution programs, fire departments, and more. Right now, about 23% of members round up their monthly electric bill for Operation Round Up. Imagine all the amazing community programs that would flourish if more members participated.

*Has Staci inspired you to donate to ORU? Sign up via SmartHub or call 1-800-254-7944. Find SmartHub on our website or download from your preferred app store. You can also make a one-time donation at any time and commit to your community today!*



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

Service Center locations:  
Braham and Milaca  
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](mailto:info@ecemn.com)

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please contact the Executive Assistant 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](http://eastcentralenergy.com)



ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To find the Statement of Non-Discrimination for ECE, go to [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) and select About Us, or call us at 1-800-254-7944.



The Mora Area Fire Department purchased vehicle extrication rescue tools with the help of an ORU grant in April 2020.



**YOU can make  
a difference!**

For less than \$1 per month,  
you can support local organizations  
by “rounding up” your bill  
to the next dollar.

**Sign up via SmartHub  
or call us today!**

**ECE** 1.800.254.7944  
eastcentralenergy.com



*The Mora Area Fire Department purchased vehicle  
extrication rescue tools with the help of an ORU grant.*

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