

# Newsline

April 2011



## 2011 Coal Creek Tour

Call today to register for the 2011 Coal Creek Tour departing for Bismarck, ND, on Monday, July 11 and returning Wednesday, July 13. The cost is just \$100 per member. This amount is applied toward the cost of the transportation, lodging, four meals and all tours. Other meals and expenses are "on your own."

### Stops on the tour include:

- Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park
- Coal Creek Station
- Falkirk Mine
- Garrison Dam
- Headwaters Fort Mandan Visitors Ct.
- Jamestown Frontier Village

For more information, or to sign up, call the Runestone Electric office at (320) 762-1121 or (800) 473-1722 or send an email to [rea@runestoneelectric.com](mailto:rea@runestoneelectric.com).

## REA Celebrates 75th Annual Meeting

Over 600 Runestone Electric Association (REA) members and guests gathered Saturday, March 26, at Jefferson High School in Alexandria for the 75th Annual Meeting.

Elections were held for the Runestone Electric Board of Directors. Incumbent directors Audrey Hjelle, District 3; Bryan Withers, District 6 and Mike Johnson, District 7 were reelected for three-year terms.

Board President Audrey Hjelle and CEO Rick Banke gave reports on the activities and the financial condition of the cooperative. The Cooperative reported assets of \$60 million with over 13,600 accounts at the end of 2010.

Additional speakers included outgoing Member Advisory Council Chairman Andy Lopez and Bill O'Brien, Runestone Electric's representative on the Great River Energy Board of Directors. Mr. Lopez recapped the activities of the Member Advisory Council and encouraged members to serve on the Council. Mr. O'Brien shared Great River Energy's highlights of 2010. Great River Energy is Runestone Electric's wholesale power supplier. REA thanks Great River Energy for their \$1,000 Operation Round Up® donation.

At an organizational meeting after the Annual Meeting, the following officers were elected: President – Audrey Hjelle; Vice President – Bryan Withers; Secretary – Barbara Johnson and Treasurer – Bill O'Brien. Other directors include Ron Holm, Mike Johnson and Wilbur Burquest.



**Audrey Hjelle**  
District 3 Director



**Bryan Withers**  
District 6 Director



**Mike Johnson**  
District 7 Director



At the close of the Annual Meeting, President Hjelle honored Bruce Ferris (left), Jeff Dreier (center) and Jerome Hagen (right) for completing nine years of service on the Operation Round Up® Trust Board.

## Call before you dig

If you're planning to dig a hole more than a foot deep, please read this notice!

It is YOUR responsibility to call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) at least 48 hours before you dig. GSOC will notify utilities in your area. Utilities will then locate their facilities.

**REA will locate power lines up to your meter. If you will be digging between the main meter and your home or other buildings, you will need to hire a private locator.** Most electricians will locate these private power lines, and GSOC also has a list of locators on their website:

[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

You can also request and view the status of your locate on-line. Call GSOC at **1-800-252-1166** or visit the website at least 48 hours before you dig.

**It's the law!**



## Board Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Runestone Electric Association was held on February 18, 2011.

- Accepted contracts as part of the 2011 Operations and Maintenance Budget.
- Accepted the names of Dean Yohnke (District 1), Rod Seward (District 1), Glenn and Dorothy Van Amber (District 2), Gene & Eunice Eblen (District 3), and Kathleen & Randal Josephson (District 4) to be approved for the Member Advisory Council.
- Reviewed a meeting recently held at Runestone Electric in which neighboring cooperatives gathered to discuss distributed generation.
- Accepted changing the renewable energy interconnection application fee to a two-tiered fee approach of \$100 for systems less than or equal to 20 KW and \$250 for systems greater than 20 KW requesting net energy billing.
- Approved the 2010 Long Range Load Forecast in conjunction with Great River Energy.

The regular April Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26.

## March Heating Degree Days

2011 . . . . .	1,326	March was cold!
2010 . . . . .	897	
2009 . . . . .	1,225	
2008 . . . . .	1,303	

### February 2011 Statistics

#### Kilowatt-hours Sold

2011 . . . . .	21,091,236
2010 . . . . .	20,524,773

#### Cost of Purchased Power

2011 . . . . .	\$1,210,434
2010 . . . . .	\$1,098,796

#### Cost per Kilowatt-hour Purchased

2011 . . . . .	\$.054
2010 . . . . .	\$.051

#### Number of Accounts

2011 . . . . .	13,602
2010 . . . . .	13,526



## Thinking of purchasing a wind generator?

### Keep REA in the loop!

by Staff Assistant Jim Hultman

Wind energy is a hot topic these days, and many of our members have told us that they have been approached by vendors with a wide range of proposals to sell them a wind generating system. Runestone Electric has no position, for or against such generators, but we do have an obligation to our members to share what we know and help you make informed decisions. We've been involved with wind generation systems since the first one appeared on our grid in the late '70's.

So what's the deal with all these wind generator proposals? Here are some basic facts.

✔ **If your qualifying generator (that usually means wind or solar) is under 40KW, there are a few key Minnesota laws that apply:**

- Your utility must allow you to "Net" your electric bill with your energy production. Of course you can directly produce and use your own power, but you can also produce energy one day and use it another day, basically "storing" power on the REA system. At the end of the month we take the amount you sold to REA and compare it with the amount you used. Based on that "Net", you either get a bill, if you bought more than you sold, or a check (or credit), if you sold more than you bought.
- Your utility must pay you their average retail rate for any net energy they buy from you. Right now that is 9.2¢ per kWh.
- "Net Energy Billing" means just that. To qualify for the program, you must have something to "net" against. In other words, these systems must be installed where you have an existing active electric service. If your generator is built independent of an existing service, or if it is 40KW or over, you may still inter-connect, but it would

not be considered a net energy billing account and the price you will receive for the energy sold to REA would be currently about 1/3 of the net energy billing price.

✔ **Interconnection rules are fairly strict** – you must meet electric code and safety requirements to ensure the safety of the public and utility line workers.

Primary among these is a requirement that your wind turbine or solar panel shut down during an REA outage. In other words, you generally cannot generate your own power while REA power is down.

✔ **The cost of REA's part of your interconnection can vary** – You would be responsible for the additional cost of a meter that can measure both directions, possibly a transformer upgrade plus labor as required. We'll give you an estimate that you would pay before you start the project, and then adjust that to actual cost when it's finished.

✔ **Rebates** – Yes, there are significant rebates available from the Federal Government and even occasionally from the State. And there are tax and depreciation benefits as well. REA does not track such programs, and it is best to consult an accountant to see what you may qualify for and what programs are active. For example, the State of Minnesota had both a solar and small wind rebate available last year, but we are told now that both funds are currently out of money. You will need to know the current status and requirements of all such programs.

That's really all there is too it, but we feel that the most important part is what you do to prepare for such a significant purchase. The advice we give to customers is simple; **DO YOUR HOMEWORK!** Talk to people who

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## Small change makes a difference!



REA's Operation Round Up® has distributed over \$475,000 in grants to community-minded groups and organizations throughout the Cooperative's service territory since its inception eight years ago.

Recently thirty-six area organizations shared \$13,350 in grants from Operation Round Up. A complete list of recipients as well as application forms can be found on our website [www.RunestoneElectric.com](http://www.RunestoneElectric.com).



Representing some of the organizations receiving Operation Round Up® grants in March (front row from left to right): LoAnne Jaek, Stevens County Food Shelf; Barb Wiener, The Diaper Drive; Carla Beem, Operation Round Up and McKenna Blehr, West Central FCCLA. (middle row from left to right) Tina Johnson, Lakes Area Kids Day 2011; Jody Cunningham, Hancock Post Prom; Melanie Greseth, Lakes Area MOPS, Emily Siira, Kid's Groundwater Festival; Kaitlin Bruns and Paige Stark, West Central FCCLA. (back row from left to right) Ken Voigt, American Red Cross; Jenny Kokett, Millerville Summer Rec; Sharolyn Sievert, Central Lakes Search & Rescue; Amanda Schmidt, Millerville Summer Rec; DeWayne Bisek, Operation Round Up; Karen Kuhnau, Spruce Hill Foundation; Iris Stark, Smokey Timbers Camp Foundation, Jerome Hagen, Operation Round Up; Ron Domschot, Outreach Food Shelf; Norman Stark, Smokey Timbers Camp Foundation and Tina Christenson, Someplace Safe.

## Spotlight on Grant Recipients

What began as a small idea, is making a huge difference in meeting a basic human need of families across Minnesota that need diapers. As it approaches its one-year anniversary, **The Diaper Drive** is collecting diapers in Alexandria at Elden's Food Fair; Alexandria Area Y; Roundabout Sports, Kids and Fun; Walgreens and Trumm Drug downtown. Look for the Pack n' Play!



Diapers are distributed through the Outreach Food Shelf, Love INC, Someplace Safe, West Central Communities Action, Recover Health, and Birthright International.

If you would like information on how you can bring The Diaper Drive to your community, please contact Barb & Chuck Wiener (320) 762-1096 or email them at [douglascounty@thediaperdrive.org](mailto:douglascounty@thediaperdrive.org). Visit [www.thediaperdrive.org](http://www.thediaperdrive.org) for more details.

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have been there and done that. Don't reinvent the wheel.

In most cases, the sales person will provide estimates of energy production and the resulting revenue produced by these generators. This is, of course, the bottom line; what will the return be on your investment. They will also give you a list of available rebates and tax credits. These often represent a "best case" scenario, and here is where a little "homework" might be in order.

Your co-op has been gathering production data from over a dozen wind and solar installations on the REA system for many years, and we would happily share this information with you if you are seriously thinking of purchasing a system of your own. We might even have data on the specific brand you are considering. In most cases, the owners of these existing systems have given REA permission to share their data and some are even willing to be listed as resources for you to talk to before you make a final decision.

We also recommend that you consult an accountant or tax preparer to see what rebates and tax credits apply to your specific situation. Some are complex, and you should not assume that this money is automatically available once you purchase a system.

These systems can cost up to \$225,000, and doing a little research before you spend the money seems like a logical approach. **Give us a call at REA if you have questions!**

# SPECIAL LIMITED TIME OFFER



## HUGE SAVINGS on Steffes Heating Systems



The promotion offers you savings on the equipment and allows you to improve your personal comfort and heating costs.



For more information on how the Steffes Heating Systems can benefit you, go to [www.heatforlessnow.com](http://www.heatforlessnow.com).

Good only on purchases made between February 21 and June 10, 2011

The special rebate offer above can be added to REA's rebates: \$50/kw up to \$2,000 and then \$25/kw over 40 kw

### Area Steffes Dealers (35 mile radius of Alexandria)

Mid Minnesota Heating & AC	Parkers Prairie, MN 56361	218-267-2939
Ellingson Plumbing	Alexandria, MN 56308	320-762-8645
Greeley Plumbing, Heating & AC	Glenwood, MN 56334	320-634-4486
Mohr's Plumbing and Heating	Morris, MN 56267	320-589-1006
BK Heating & A/C	Battle Lake, MN 56515	218-849-5021
Johnshoy Plbg., Htg.&A/C	Starbuck, MN 56381	320-239-4555
Ralph's Electric, Inc.	Alexandria, MN 56308	320-834-2598
S.P. Olson Heating	Alexandria, MN 56308	320-763-1717

## Be An EnerGenius



**\$2 OFF** instant savings at select Walmart stores

Save on select GE Energy Smart® CFLs until July 31, 2011

Enter for a chance to win a \$500 energy credit at [www.mnbrighterideas.com](http://www.mnbrighterideas.com)



REA reserves the right to discontinue this promotion at any time. Due to the presence of mercury, CFLs must be recycled in Minnesota. It's illegal to place them directly in the garbage.



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**Office Hours**  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Monday - Friday

**24-hour outage & emergency service**  
(800) 473-1722

**Underground cable locations**  
**Gopher State One Call**  
(800) 252-1166

**Board of Directors**  
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Bryan Withers, Vice President  
Barbara Johnson, Secretary  
Ron Holm, Treasurer  
Bill O'Brien, Director  
Mike Johnson, Director  
Wilbur Burquest, Director

**Editorial Staff**  
Rick Banke, CEO  
Sue Lundeen, Editor

### In case of a power outage

- Make sure the problem is not on your side (Members may be billed for service calls if the problem is caused by their own equipment).
- Check your own fuses and circuit breakers in your home and by the meter pole (Call us for help if you are unsure of the location of your breakers).
- Check with your neighbors to see if their power is off and if they have reported the outage.
- If the trouble is not on your wiring, please call (800) 473-1722 for 24-hour service. Please report any tree branches in lines, twisted wires, broken poles and if your neighbors are also out of power.
- Be sure to have one corded phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- Program the number above into your cell phone for easy access.

*REA is an equal opportunity provider*