

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS:

It's time to apply for one of
ELEVEN \$1,000 scholarships
available through a
random drawing.



NEWSLINE

December 2019

In this Issue: Legislator visits REA pg 2 Alexandria Senior Center Award pg 3

Scholarships for High School Students Exclusive Benefit for REA Members

Applications for the REA Scholarship Program are now being accepted. REA is pleased to announce that eleven \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded at the REA Annual Meeting on April 16, 2020.

Applicants must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or legal guardians are members of REA. Students attending public, private, parochial or home schools are eligible to apply.

These eleven scholarships will be randomly selected. The only requirement is that a parent or legal guardian is a member of Runestone Electric Association and that the student wishes to further their education.

"Scholarships reflect REA's values as well as the Cooperative Principle of Education. Post-secondary education can be very expensive, and we want to help students achieve their goals," said REA Board President Barbara Johnson.

The money for the eleven scholarships is funded through REA's unclaimed capital credits. This is money that would otherwise be claimed by the State of Minnesota.

The deadline to apply for the REA scholarships is March 2, 2020. Winners will be recognized at REA's Annual Meeting on April 16, 2020, at Alexandria Area High School. Applications can be found at www.runestoneelectric.com/news or call REA for an application: 1-800-473-1722.



Friday, December 20 • 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Stop in for a visit with the REA Board of Directors!
The coffee will be hot and served with cookies from Luther Crest.
Pick up a 2020 calendar as a token of our
appreciation for your business.

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Our office will be closed
Wednesday, December 25, and Wednesday, January 1.
To report a power outage or other emergency,
please call 800-473-1722.
We have a 24-hour service to take your call.

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**REA wishes you and your family a
very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

**Use your Annual
Meeting Gift Certificate
before it's too late!**
Gift Certificates Expire
December 31, 2019

**REA'S
ANNUAL
MEETING**

APRIL 22, 2019

\$25.00
GiftCertificate

The Annual Meeting Gift Certificate was an attendance gift for members who attended the Annual Meeting.

If you attended the REA Annual Meeting in April and received a gift certificate, please remember, gift certificates expire 12/31/19.



CEO, Kristin Dolan

A Note from the CEO: REA Welcomes Representative Wagenius to Co-op

Kristin Dolan, CEO, Runestone Electric Association

Representative Jean Wagenius visited with Runestone Electric in October to learn more about the cooperative and to listen to the concerns of rural utilities. Representative Wagenius represents District 63B of the House of Representatives, which includes portions of Minneapolis. She is chair of the Energy and Climate Finance and Policy Division for the House of Representatives. The Representative is also a member-owner of Runestone Electric.

During her visit, we explained why a rural electric cooperative is different than other electric utilities. We serve those portions of Minnesota that no one else would nor still wants to serve due to a matter of economics driven by economies of scale. REA averages 4.8 members per mile, while utilities serving population centers average 35. To illustrate this difference in scale, the cost to build a three-phase mile of line is \$80,000. This unit cost is shared amongst 4.8 members at REA compared to 35 at other utilities.

I am very proud of REA in our ability to serve our members incredibly cost-effectively, considering this large disparity. Other utilities serve 7.3 times more consumers than REA does, while in comparison our costs average 1.3 times higher. We also

discussed the disparity in the types of loads we serve with the Representative. Our system is built to serve the needs of primarily residential, farm, and seasonal members. We have very few commercial and industrial members (C&I). C&I accounts use energy on a more consistent basis contributing to an efficient utilization of the capital investment of an electric utility.

The disparity of serving a rural demographic has driven REA and cooperatives like us to focus on innovation and efficiency to serve our members affordably while preserving reliability. We showed the representative innovative solutions we employ to serve our members. Al Haman, Manager of Operations at REA, walked the representative through software our industry developed to track and manage individual and large scale outages. He also explained our metering technology and other technologies we use for the efficient operation of the distribution grid.

We demonstrated electric cooperatives are flexible in solving the needs of their members. This adaptability is a natural aspect of cooperatives because they are community built and member owned. We explained how the electric cooperative industry works efficiently together in finding needed solutions. We have established partnerships for enhanced service offerings, as well as cost-sharing and savings. We offer solutions such as community solar, public charging for electric vehicles, and working with our members on distributed generation. Collaboration, efficiency, and flexibility not only describes REA, it also describes you, our member-owners. Fundamentally this organization is a reflection of our communities' energy needs. This is not a surprise because REA is member-owned and member-governed.

We were very proud to host Representative Wagenius at REA. We are grateful for her curiosity in wanting to get to know us and learn about our collective needs for affordable and reliable electricity. We especially are thankful for her wishing to engage in energy policy discussions going forward. Energy policy has an increased effect on rural members simply due to economies of scale, and so it remains important for all of us, including you, to engage in this discussion. Please look to continued future communications from REA in how you can participate in this important dialogue.

We congratulate Representative Wagenius on her decision to retire. We wish her all the best in her last year of service to our state and in her retirement at the end of next year.

We hope you and your family enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with your loved ones. We at REA are thankful for the privilege to serve you our members.

Be sure to stop by REA on December 20th for our Christmas Open House. See details on page 1. The Christmas Open House is a nice opportunity to visit with your board of directors and employees of REA. I hope to see you on the 20th!



Rep. Jean Wagenius and REA CEO Kristin Dolan listen to REA Operations Manager Al Haman as he demonstrates the use of technology to aid in outage restoration.

REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - October 2019

- » Mrs. Nelson reviewed the Financial Report for September 2019 and noted September kWh sales were down from budget and down from last September. For the year, sales are 1% ahead of budget. Right now, the year-end REA margin is expected to exceed the budget with a higher gross margin and non-operating income.
- » Mr. Rooney shared activities of the Energy Management Department, including a letter sent to REA members with a non-automatic backup heating source for their off-peak electric heating system to verify that their backup source is ready for the heating season
- » CEO Dolan reviewed variety of topics, including a transmission control pilot program; MN Rep. Jean Wagenius' visit, concerns over third-party access to

member data; submission of GroShed grant application; development of a employee wellness room and other personnel-related issues.

- » Directors Anderson and Loken were recognized for completion of the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate (CCD), and Director Hjelle was recognized for completing the NRECA Board Leadership Certificate (BLC).
- » Douglas County Car Care Program, Central MN Elder Network, and Let's Go Fishing - Alexandria will be presented \$1,000 donations from CoBank's Sharing Success Program at the REA Christmas Open House December 20.
- » **The regular December Board Meeting will be December 20, 2019.**

Alexandria Senior Center wins local Touchstone Energy Community Award

Representatives of the Alexandria Senior Center accepted a special award from REA on November 18th. REA's Operation Round Up® Trust Board named the Alexandria Senior Center as the winner of the local 2019 Touchstone Energy Community Award.

"The Alexandria Senior Center clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to community that we at Runestone Electric value highly," REA Community Trust Board President Rod Borden said. "We are very pleased to recognize Alexandria Senior Center's contributions to our local communities."

Despite being on the brink of closing, the Alexandria Senior Center has grown from a low of 54 members six years ago to over 800 members today. "It's great to see smiles on everyone's faces when they come in," said Jim Bjerknes. Jim serves on the Senior Center's board of directors. The mission of the Center is to support healthy, active living for people over 50 by providing social, educational, nutritional and informational services. "There's always something going on at the Senior Center," Bjerknes said.

"Our Sunday music programs are very popular," Alexandria Senior Center Executive Director Nancy Haggenmiller said. "Usually sixty or more people attend, and some even get up to dance. Everyone enjoys the music provided by local musicians. Sunday is known to be a big isolation day for seniors, so having activities on Sunday is very important to us."

Membership in the Senior Center is \$20 per year for a single membership or \$30 per year for a couple. Everyone is welcome

to participate in activities at the Senior Center, including the nutrition program with congregate dining and Meals on Wheels Monday through Friday.

"It's no fun eating alone, that's why I like to eat lunch at the Center. The food is great, and I usually stick around to play cards or visit with friends," Bjerknes explained.

"This area is blessed with many organizations that are doing wonderful things to better our communities," REA CEO Kristin Dolan said. "We are pleased that as a Minnesota Touchstone Energy cooperative, we have this opportunity to recognize those who positively impact our communities."

The Alexandria Senior Center received \$500 and their application will be submitted for consideration of the statewide Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award. The statewide award recipient will be selected from local award winners from around Minnesota. The winning organization will receive \$1,000 to go toward their community cause. The Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award will be presented to the award recipient in March, during the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's Annual Meeting in St. Paul.

"It's no fun eating alone, that's why I like to eat lunch at the Center. The food is great, and I usually stick around to play cards or visit with friends,"
Jim Bjerknes



Ron Borden, REA's Operation Round Up® Community Trust board president (center right) congratulates Donald Semerad, Alexandria Senior Center board president (center left) on receiving the 2019 Local Touchstone Energy Community Award. Others pictured include (from left to right) Janet Johnson, Community Trust board member; Nancy Haggenmiller, Alexandria Senior Center executive director; Jim Bjerknes, Alexandria Senior Center board member; Vern Lorsung, Community Trust board member; Ron Tschaekofske, Community Trust board member; Deborah Anderson, Community Trust board member; Barry Wahlberg, Community Trust board member; Kristin Dolan, REA CEO; Jeff Gaffaney, Community Trust board member, and Barbara Johnson, REA board president.

Cooperative Principle #5:

Training to effectively contribute to the development of the cooperative.



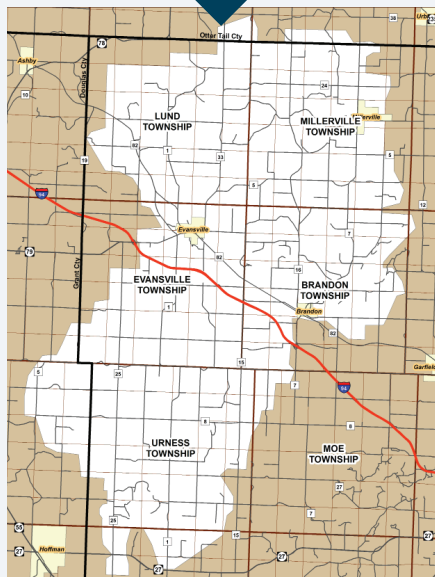
REA directors were recently recognized for completing cooperative director education programs. Pictured from left to right: REA Directors Audrey Hjelle for completing the Board Leadership Certificate program, and Mike Loken and Andy Anderson for completing the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate program.

Working Hard to Keep Your Lights on

Vegetation Management leads to fewer outages



Runestone Electric
Association
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Trees are the major cause of outages for REA members. That's why REA manages an extensive right-of-way maintenance program. To ensure reliability and safety, this year we will spend over \$900,000 on tree trimming, tree removal, and mowing and spraying under our distribution lines. This winter our contractor, **Carr's Tree Service**, will be working in areas served by the Brandon Substation (see map on left). Please contact REA with any questions you may have regarding our right-of-way maintenance program.

Enhanced Driver's License and REAL ID Cards



Planning to use your REA bill as a proof of Minnesota residency when applying for an Enhanced Driver's License or REAL ID? Here are a few important tips:

- The utility bill must be issued no more than 90 days before the application.
- Verify how your name appears on your REA bill. The name listed must be your legal name.
- The utility bill will NOT be accepted if two unrelated people are listed on the bill.

For more information, please visit www.dps.mn.gov and search for Enhanced ID or REAL ID.

Do you need to change how the name or names appear on the REA bill?

Changing or adding a name includes important documentation due to your ownership in REA. In order to get a bill which reflects the name change, call REA at least 30 days before you need it.

Please feel free to call REA at 800-473-1722 to discuss the process for your unique situation.

FREE
Christmas
String Lights
Recycling

Recycle Christmas/Holiday string lights & power cords at the Pope/Douglas Solid Waste Recycle Center, ALP, REA or Ace Hardware Glenwood & Alexandria. Accepted until 1/17/20

NEWSLINE

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6839 Power Lane SW
Alexandria, MN 56308

320-762-1121
Fax: 320-763-4149

rea@runestoneelectric.com

24/7: 800-473-1722

Office Hours:

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mon- Fri.

Memorial Day to Labor Day:
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon- Fri.

Board of Directors

District 1: Gary (Andy) Anderson, Secretary

District 2: Barbara Johnson, President

District 3: Audrey Hjelle, Director

District 4: Dave Staples, Director

District 5: Mike Loken, Treasurer

District 6: Clif Patrick, Vice President

District 7: Brad Burkland, Director

Editorial Staff

Kristin Dolan, CEO

Sue Lundeen, Editor

Ally Coleman, Communications Specialist

In Case of a Power Outage

- » 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 a corded phone or a charged cell phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- » Program the number above your into your cell phone for easy access.
- » Never assume we know you are without power. Always call to report an outage.

REA is an Equal Opportunity Provider

3 Ways to Improve Fireplace Efficiency

- Close the flue damper when a fire isn't burning.
- Ensure seals around the fireplace damper are tight.
- Insulate your chimney with liners for maximum efficiency.