

WELCOME BACK

We are excited to announce the reopening of our lobby! We look forward to seeing our members again. As we navigate these unprecedented times, please follow our three recommendations to the right.

WHILE YOU'RE IN, PLEASE:



Use Hand Sanitizer



Social Distance



Wear a Mask
(Your Choice)

NEWSLINE

July 2020

In this Issue: **Director Biography** pg 3 **Save Energy!** pg 4

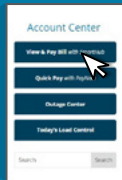
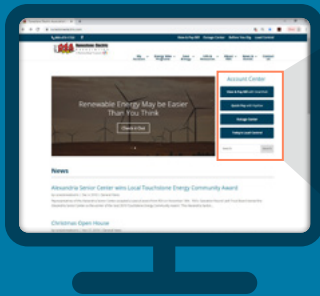
Take Control of Your Account SmartHub monitors energy use, and lets you pay your bill your way

SmartHub provides the convenience our member's expect. Members can access their account information, pay their bill and keep on top of their account. SmartHub just makes it easier to do all this and more, from anywhere using your computer, tablet or mobile phone with the SmartHub mobile app.

Top 10 Reasons you'll love SmartHub

1. Provides 24/7 secure access to your account from a computer, tablet or mobile phone.
2. Notifies you when a new electric bill has been generated and includes a link to your account for quick payment of your bill or to review your account information.
3. Allows you to pay electronically using your Visa, MasterCard or Discover OR an electronic check transaction.
4. Allows you to set up recurring automatic payments using your checking or savings account.
5. Displays postings of payments in real time, so you know your payment has been applied.
6. Provides current and historical billing information and payment history.
7. Shows daily, weekly and monthly electrical usage in easy to understand graphics so you can match electric use to your bill.
8. Gives you the option to go paperless, if you choose.
9. Allows you to set up payment alerts.
10. Includes a FREE app for your smartphone or tablet. Simply search for "SmartHub" on either the Apple Store or Google Play. Once the app is open, type in "Runestone Electric Association" as the power provider. Your login information is the same as what has been set up in SmartHub.

Signing up for SmartHub is *Easy*



Step 1:

Go to runestoneelectric.com and click on the "View & Pay Bill with SmartHub" under Account Center.



Step 2:

On the SmartHub login page, you will click on "Sign up to access our Self Service site" that's located right next to "New User?".



Step 3:

Fill in the required information and click submit.

HELPFUL HINT!

You will need your account number and an email address to create an account.

Not sure what your account number is?

No problem! Your account number is located on the bottom portion of your bill OR feel free to call the office to get that information.

Pancake Feed Canceled

With the cancellation of the Minnesota State Fair and surrounding county fairs due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the REA Board of Directors has canceled the REA Member Appreciation Pancake Feed scheduled for August 22. We will miss seeing our members but the safety of all is most important. We hope to continue the tradition of the REA Pancake Feed in 2021.



Al Haman,
Interim CEO

A Note from the Interim CEO: REA Lobby Open for Business!

Al Haman, Interim CEO, Runestone Electric Association

The lobby is now open! Those are good words to hear for all of us. Concerned with COVID-19, we chose to close the lobby on March 17th as a precaution to protect our employees, our members, and the general public. Since that time, access into our facility has been restricted, events canceled or postponed and

the March and April Board meetings were conducted electronically.

Despite the locked front door, internal office operations have continued as usual. I'm pleased that members have adapted well to using a variety of payment options such as SmartHub for online payments, making payments over the phone, mailing payments, or using the drive-up drop box in our parking lot. Most importantly, help was and continues to be, just a phone call away any time of the day by calling 800-473-1722. Check out the SmartHub article on page 1 to learn more about the benefits of this online tool for paying your electric bill and helping you monitor your energy usage.

Now that the lobby is back open for business, we ask that you keep the safety of everyone in mind by keeping a 6-foot distance from employees and other folks in the lobby. We have hand sanitizer and disposal masks available for your use. If you are looking for advice on a new heating or cooling system, a standby generator, need to sign up for service, or any other questions you may have, our employees are happy to meet with you in the open spaces of our lobby. Our goal is to serve you, our members while keeping everyone safe.

Although traffic in our lobby has been limited the past four months, the employees at REA have been very busy. Many homes have been bought and sold. There have been many inquiries for our Energy Management programs such as water heaters, heat pumps, dual fuel systems and more. The Operations Department has built many new electric services, changed out poles, replaced stretches of overhead power lines with underground cable, as well as other projects to enhance the reliability of our system.

A big project completed in early May was the replacement of the transformer in the Leaf Valley Substation. A new substation transformer is very expensive (\$223,000)

and something we thankfully do not have to replace often. The transformer in the Leaf Valley Substation was fifty years old and served our cooperative well. The new transformer has a larger capacity to provide electricity to the growing loads in Leaf Valley and Ida Townships, and portions of Millerville, Brandon, Miliona and Carlos Townships for many years to come.

NEW - Director Spotlight

This month we are pleased to present a new feature in our newsletter, Director Spotlight. Each month we'll introduce you to one of the seven REA Board of Directors. We'll begin with District 3 Director Audrey Hjelle from Barrett. Did you know that Audrey was the first woman director on the REA Board? In her late teens, Audrey spent several summers working at a lodge at the end of the Gunflint Trail. You can read more about Audrey on page 3.

At a time when we have limited interaction with those in our communities due to COVID-19, we hope you enjoy getting to know the directors that represent you, our member-owners.



REA Linemen install a new radiator for cooling the transformer oil at the Leaf Valley Substation.



A crane removes the old transformer and places the new transformer into the Leaf Valley Substation located north of Garfield.

REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - May 2020

- » Mrs. Nelson reviewed the Financial Report for April 2020 noting monthly electric sales were ahead of budget for the first time this year. The YTD margin is ahead of budget, primarily due to operating expense variances. Some of these, particularly in the administrative area, may remain under budget the balance of the year, because of restrictions in training and member engagement opportunities due to COVID-19.
- » Reviewed and approved the updated Schedule of Charges.
- » Approved a special retirement of capital credits.
- » Reviewed the Form 990.
- » Reviewed renewable energy information on the cooperative's financial statements.
- » Approved Great River Energy's resolution for new wind energy generation resources.
- » **The regular July Board Meeting will be July 28, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.**

DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Audrey Hjelle

Audrey Hjelle is the District 3 Director, representing the North West region of REA's service territory. Audrey is more than a director though, she is a mom, a grandma, a tractor enthusiast, and more. Get to know more about Audrey in the interview below:



BONUS! Fun Questions:

Tractors - Red or Green?

ORANGE - Allis Chalmers is my brand!

Lefsa - Sugar or No Sugar?

Sugar of course.

Do you say Wash or Worsh?

Wash

How many years have you been on the board?

I have been on the REA board for 24 years. I was the first woman to be elected to the board and the first female to be secretary and president. I am also the first woman to be elected to an executive office (secretary) on the Great River Energy board.

Where do you live?

I live on a farm in Lien Township just west of Barrett. It is a century farm and has been in the Hjelle family since 1887.

Where is your hometown/high school?

I was born in Fulda, MN and graduated from Hoffman High School.

Tell us about your family.

I met my husband, Tom, at the Grant County Fair in Herman. Tom passed away in 2015. My son and his wife farm the family land and my daughter recently moved to the area after retiring. I have two grown granddaughters and five "grand" kittens.

What is your passion as a board member?

My passion is to have safe, affordable and reliable electricity. Safety first for our crews and our members is my priority.

What keeps you busy outside of being a director for REA?

I mow A LOT! I still help with farming. If they need a grain cart driver, parts runner or just a ride now and then, I'm their gal. I still like the old tractor and threshing shows. Each fall I work at the Lake Region Threshers Show in Dalton. I am involved at church and the Barrett senior citizens group. I still embroider dish towels and donate them to the community center, church and whoever needs them. I am also on the Great River Energy board and the Cooperative Network board.

Three words that best describe you:

Friendly, Caring, Trustworthy

What is the best advice you've either given or received?

Listen and keep an open mind. There is always two sides to every issue.

What is something others might not know about you?

I just found out I am not all German. My DNA test said only 54.2% - quite a surprise!

What is your favorite REA program?

I have two favorite programs - Operation Round Up and the generator program.

Operation Round Up has been great for our communities and it is amazing what pennies can do. I first heard about the program at a national meeting years ago and thought it would be great for REA. It has been great, and we will hit the million dollar mark in donations this year!

Second, I love the generator program. Once a year the REA technicians come out and change the oil and check everything for me. Peace of mind is important especially when you live alone!



REA's Standby Generator program offers member's simple peace of mind. Here's five common reasons members say they purchase standby generators:

"Keeping our fridge and freezer running during a storm has saved us a lot of money and wasted food."

"We travel often in the winter months and worry about the pipes freezing if the power is out and house has no heat; not the kind of surprise we want when we come home."

"I often travel on business and need to know that if the power goes out, my family and home are safe and secure when I'm not there."

"We have a well and without electricity we have no water - no drinking water, no flushable toilets and no showers."

"I did not want to hassle with my tractor-driven PTO generator any more. I wanted a generator that would start automatically, whether I was home or not. I did not want my wife worrying about how to get the tractor started and hooked up if I was on the road."

Contact REA's Energy Management Department for more information! 800-473-1722

3 WAYS To Get Kids Interested in Saving Energy

Getting kids interested in saving energy can seem tough at first, but it doesn't have to be. With warmer months upon us, saving energy will be crucial for keeping electricity bills low, and getting kiddos engaged now will help them form energy-saving habits for the future. Believe it or not, there are fun ways to teach kids how to be energy efficient that will actually get them excited about saving energy.



1 Turn the learning experience into a game

Games create a fun, interactive option for kids to become engaged with learning more about saving energy. One example is to create an "energy treasure hunt" around the home, where the family searches for devices or appliances that use the most electricity. After finding these items, you can discuss with your kids a few ways for those devices to use less energy. You could also have them search for other proactive efficiency measures, like weather stripping, LED bulbs and air filters.



2 Create a reward system

One simple method is a star chart. You can use the chart to keep track of stickers and reward your child for every 10 stickers that they earn for doing some activity that saves energy. Stickers could be earned every time your child remembers to turn off the light in a room after they exit, unplugging devices (like phone chargers) that they're not using, or showering in less than five minutes. Rewards can vary according to the age of your child. These actions taken by your kids will add up over time and help save energy around the home.



3 Discuss lifestyle changes as a family or as an individual, but also making the changes fun

This could be getting the family together to play a board game instead of watching television. You could also suggest reading a book together instead of using electronic devices. Encourage them to play outdoors with friends instead of playing video games indoors. Incorporating energy-saving practices into everyday life is the best way to ensure the habit has a lasting impact.

5 Home Energy Hogs



Old Fridge or Freezer

If the model was produced prior to 1990, it's likely using twice as much energy (or more!) than a newer ENERGYSTAR®-rated model. REA offers a \$50 rebate when you recycle your fridge or freezer.



Poor or no Insulation

Cooling or heating an uninsulated workshop or garage can be expensive. If you really want to heat or cool these types of spaces, they need to be well insulated and heated/cooled efficiently, perhaps with a ductless mini-split system.



Hot Tub

The average operating cost of a hot tub is at least \$250 for an indoor unit. But that amount may be higher if your hot tub is outdoors, and is an older, less efficient model.



Swimming Pool

If you have a swimming pool, consider installing a more efficient pump and reducing how often it runs, installing a larger filter, and maximizing the flow of water through the pipes. These measures could cut your electric use for the pool pump.



Pumps

Consider replacing the oldest and most-used pumps over time with new, more efficient ones that are sized correctly for their task. Also, make sure you're eliminating leaks in the water lines, which make your pumps work harder and longer.

NEWSLINE

The official monthly publication of Runestone Electric Association.

6839 Power Lane SW
Alexandria, MN 56308

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

rea@runestoneelectric.com
www.RunestoneElectric.com

24/7: 800-473-1722

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

May 4 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, Vice President
- District 4: Dave Staples, Director
- District 5: Mike Loken, Treasurer
- District 6: Clif Patrick, Director
- District 7: Matthew Mattson, Director

Editorial Staff

- Al Haman, Interim 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 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

Know what's below, Call before you dig!



Call 811 or visit
gopherstateonecall.org
before you dig