

Face Covering Required
While Visiting the REA Office
In compliance with Executive Order #20-81, face coverings are REQUIRED at Runestone Electric Association.

THANK YOU!

Then. Now. Always.
We're proud to power your life.
October is National Co-op Month.

#PowerOn

NEWSLINE

October 2020

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WCA 1st School in MN with 'Sota Grown Project



West Central Area High School (WCA) in Barrett celebrated their new 'Sota Grown hydroponic growing container with a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 25th. Pictured above from left to right is REA's Energy Services & Business Development Manager Ryan Rooney, Representative Jeff Backer, REA Director Matthew Mattson, H-K and Elbow Lake Food Shelf Director Debbie Lacey, REA Director Mike Loken, Senator Torrey Westrom, REA Director Audrey Hjelle, Horizon Public Health Educator Crystal Hoepner, WCA Superintendent Dale Hogue, WCA Students - Kennedy Porter, Colin Anderson and Meadow Christenson, WCA Ag Instructor Eric Sawatzke, WCA Ag Instructor Ben Johnson and WCA Secondary School Principal Susan Knutson.

"Runestone Electric, Great River Energy and Horizon Public Health are excited to have West Central Area Schools as a partner in this 'Sota Grown project," said Ryan Rooney, REA's Energy Services Manager. "This project provides hands-on experience for WCA students resulting in year-round local produce, even during Minnesota's long winters."

WCA's 'Sota Grown project utilizes a GroShed container manufactured in Emily, MN. This prefabricated and self-contained ecosystem integrates automation and maximizes efficiency, demonstrating the capabilities of hydroponic agriculture.



The WCA GroShed is ready to harvest lettuce and cucumbers with tomatoes coming next. The produce will be donated to local food shelves.

WCA Ag Instructor Eric Sawatzke holds lettuce that took four weeks to grow in the GroShed.



#PowerOn GIVEAWAY

Whether you're working from home, flipping on the lights, or charging your car, electricity powers our daily lives!

To celebrate co-op month, we are giving away **THREE \$50 bill credits** to REA members! All you have to do is submit a photo of how REA powers your life or, in other words, how we help you #PowerOn!

To submit a photo, send us a message on facebook, email us at rea@runestoneelectric.com or send it in the mail.

Here's the rules:

1. Submit your photo (1 per membership) by October 29, 2020 to rea@runestoneelectric.com or via Facebook. Photos can be mailed to REA, 6839 Power Lane SW, Alexandria, MN 56308.
2. Be sure to send a short description of how REA helps you #PowerOn, your REA account number, and your name.
3. Photos may be used in future cooperative publications.
4. A random drawing will select the winners of the giveaway. The winners will be announced on October 30, 2020.
5. You must be a Runestone Electric Association member to win.

We can't wait to hear how our members **#PowerOn**



Al Haman
Interim CEO

A Note from your Interim CEO

Co-op Month

REA - what makes us different from other utilities?

October is National Cooperative Month. In a normal year, members enjoy apple cider and cookies in our lobby. But as you all know, 2020 has turned out to be anything but normal!

Even though we won't be celebrating with cider and cookies, it is good for us to reflect on what makes Runestone Electric Association (REA) different from other utilities. The purpose of a cooperative like REA—above all else—is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electric service to its membership. Let's take a look at other ways we are different from other utilities.

You're a member, not a customer. Cooperatives are unique because they are owned by you, the member. This means you have a voice in the way we run the co-op. Members elect the co-op's board of directors and can run for a seat on the board if they wish to do so. Your vote and participation help shape the direction of the cooperative.

We focus on service, not profits. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which are operated to make the most profits for

shareholders, electric co-ops do not earn profits. Instead, any margins or revenue remaining (after all expenses have been paid) are returned over time to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credit returns are based on each member's years of participation in the co-op.

We're local, community-focused businesses. Because we are owned by the members we serve, electric cooperatives have a strong commitment to our local communities. In addition to providing safe, reliable, and affordable power, electric co-ops, like REA, are involved in local community development programs and projects such as revolving loan funds, Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, United Way, and Operation Round Up.

We're responsive to your needs. Because we answer to local members rather than far-away shareholders, REA responds quickly to member needs. We are committed to problem-solving with innovation to benefit the local communities and the members we serve.

Celebrating co-ops in October also reminds me of the fall harvest. I wish all area ag professionals a safe, bountiful harvest. Please take a moment to review the safety reminders below because your safety is our priority.

FOR EVERYONE YOU LOVE COME HOME SAFE TONIGHT



REMEMBER: LOOK UP AND LIVE

Almost half of all power line contacts involve large equipment. Always be aware of your surroundings, such as overhead wires.

PLAN YOUR WORK IN ADVANCE

Take time to note the location of all power lines in and around your worksite. Always use a spotter on the ground to warn you of any dangers when moving equipment.

KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE

If you see a downed power line, stay away and report the downed line immediately by calling (800) 473-1722 or 911.

STAY PUT AND SURVIVE

If you contact a power line, DO NOT get out of your vehicle. Immediately call (800) 473-1722 or 911. Tell bystanders to stay away.

REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - August 2020

- » Mrs. Nelson reviewed the Financial Report for July 2020 noting kWh sales were strong again. Margins were negative for the month, due to high power cost demand charges and high operating expense. The coincident peak happened on July 2nd, before the busy 4th weekend in the area. Operating expenses were over budget with tree clearing expense now exceeding yearly budget amounts. The year-to-date margin remains well above budgeted margin.
- » As part of the CEO report, Mr. Haman reminded the Board of the need to upgrade and move the Lake Mary Substation located directly south of the REA headquarters. Updates on the

project will be provided at a future board meeting. Mr. Haman also provided a review of actions taken, actions in process, and actions planned in response to COVID-19.

- » Mr. Rooney provided a review of a load control pilot program and an interruptible Irrigation pilot program.
- » Mrs. Lundeen shared videos available on the REA website www.runstoneelectric.com highlighting Operation Round Up surpassing \$1 million in grants and the director spotlight series.
- » **The regular October Board Meeting will be October 27, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.**

Cooperatives Work With Their Members

Let us answer your questions about cold weather shut-off protection for residents and military personnel

What is the Cold Weather Rule?

The Cold Weather Rule protects some members from having their electricity shut-off due to non-payment between October 15 and April 15.

If my electricity has been disconnected, how can I be reconnected?

In order to re-establish power, contact Runestone Electric for the total balance due, which will include additional fees and a deposit.

Will you disconnect me without my knowledge?

No. You will receive a "Notice of Disconnection." The letter will contain an income verification form for you to complete and return. There will also be a list of rights and responsibilities for you as well as the Cooperative and a list of agencies that may help you. If you receive a Notice of Disconnection, you MUST take the next step and call us and the agency that serves your county to see if they can help you.

We will not disconnect electricity without first notifying you by letter. We also attempt to make phone calls if we have correct phone numbers. We will not shut-off electricity on a Friday, a weekend, or the day before a holiday.

What must I do to receive shut-off protection?

If you are behind in your electricity payments and you will not be able to catch up, your first step is to call Runestone Electric Association.

We don't want to shut off anyone's electricity. We will work with you to set up a payment arrangement or help you to see if you qualify for shut-off protection. To the right is a list of providers that can help with your energy bills. It is up to you to contact them for help.

Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

Yes. The Cold Weather Rule still allows electricity to be shut off for non-payment. You will only be protected if electricity provides your primary source of heat AND you have done all the following things:

- » Your household income meets the state guidelines (at or less than 50 percent of the state median income)
- » You provide Runestone Electric with a completed Inability to Pay Form
- » You have a payment arrangement with the Co-op for which you have remained reasonably current

Active Duty Military Shut-off Protection

When a household member has been ordered into active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects these military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their utility bills in full. For more information or to apply for protection and set up a payment plan, please contact Runestone Electric. If a serviceman or woman and Runestone Electric cannot agree on a payment plan, you have the right to appeal to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Runestone Electric will not disconnect your service during the appeal process.

Small Change from REA Members has Big Impact!

Last month we were thrilled to announce surpassing \$1 million in grants to local non-profit organizations and community service programs.

CONGRATULATIONS and THANK YOU REA Members!

The list of area organizations who shared \$15,505 in grants from Operation Round Up in August can be found on our website:

<https://www.runstoneelectric.com/information-resources/operation-round-up/>

Are you participating in Operation Round Up?

Simply look on the top portion of your bill to see if Operation Round Up is listed. If it doesn't appear on your bill, and you'd like to participate, please call 800-473-1722 or email rea@runstoneelectric.com.



Energy Assistance Providers

Douglas, Grant, Pope and Stevens Counties:

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.
(218) 685-4486
1-800-492-4805

Todd County:

Todd County Social Services
(320) 732-4516
1-888-838-4066

Otter Tail County:

Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.
Detroit Lakes - (218) 847-1385
Fergus Falls - (218) 739-3011
1-888-458-1385

Meeting your payment obligation

Please contact our office if you find that you cannot pay your electric bill. We will work with you to set up a payment schedule during the cold weather months if you think you will be unable to pay your bill on time. It is your responsibility to call our office to arrange a payment schedule.

Failure to respond to a disconnect notice may lead to shut-off of service, even in winter.

Our members are important! We'd rather work with you to set up a payment plan than shut-off your electricity.

**If you are in need of help, don't delay - call today:
320-762-1121 or 800-473-1722**

DIRECTOR

SPOTLIGHT

Gary "Andy" Anderson

Gary, also known as Andy, is the District One Director, representing the northeast townships of the REA service territory. In addition to being an REA director, Andy works hard in the communications and fire training field. Read more about Andy below:



NEWSLINE

The official monthly publication of Runestone Electric Association.

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Office Hours:
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

How many years have you been on the board?

I have served on the board for five years.

Where do you live?

I live on Lake Vermont, northwest of Miliona.

Where is your hometown/high school?

I grew up in Parkers Prairie and attended Parkers Prairie High School.

Tell us about your family.

Kathy and I will be married 38 years on the 22nd of October. She will be surprised that I remembered that date, but I practice! We have two daughters - Heather and Matt live in Moorhead with their two kids, Brooklyn and Asher. Amber and Ben live in Sauk Centre, and they have two kids, Tucker and Aubrey. We're lucky to be in the middle and get to see them a lot!

What is your passion as a board member?

I look at the whole REA operation as a huge family. I see that in the employees, and I see that in the way the whole operation works. We all want to deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to all of our members, which is our mission statement. I have to put a kudos out to the rest of the board. I really enjoy working with them. We have some pretty smart people at REA. We are blessed!

What is your favorite REA program?

Of course, Operation Round Up is going to be everybody's answer, but reaching a million dollars in donations, that's huge! Another favorite program is the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project completed a few years ago. AMI is a tool that gives the employees and the board data so that we can make good, solid decisions. With the new metering system, and using the SmartHub program, members can see their daily usage to determine if they have something drawing more power than it should.

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

I work for Arvig Communications doing installations of new services, repair, and lining up construction projects. In another part of my life, I'm the coordinator for the fire training program at Alexandria Technical & Community College, and we have an affiliation with Ridgewater College in Willmar and St. Cloud Technical & Community College. Kathy and I also have a company called Advanced Fire Training and Asbestos Inspections. We do between 40 and 50 inspections a year, so that keeps us pretty busy too.

What is something others might not know about you?

I wear my emotions on my cuff. I'm so happy when something good happens to someone that it's easy for me to get emotional and to tear up.

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

Some of the best advice I've been given was from the school superintendent when I graduated. He told me, to be a good leader, you have to be a good listener, and you always have to listen to both sides of the story.

Three words that best describe you:

Friendly, honest, and probably aggressive, meaning that I'm not scared to jump into a new venture.

BONUS Questions:

Tractors - Red or Green?
One grandson and son-in-law likes green and the other two like red, so I'm going to say Fords!

Lefsa - Sugar or No Sugar?
Sugar and butter

Do you say Wash or Wash?
Wash