



# Attention High School Seniors!

## It's Time to Apply!

Apply for one of ten \$1,000 scholarships available through a random drawing.

The deadline to apply for the REA scholarships is March 1, 2021. Winners will be announced in April. Scholarship applications can be filled out online at [www.runstoneelectric.com](http://www.runstoneelectric.com).

# NEWSLINE

January 2021

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## Maintain independence with Heartland Security's Belle

Medical alert pendants continue to improve to help senior citizens maintain their independence and engage in active lifestyles.

Heartland Security, a subsidiary of REA, now offers a new medical alert pendant called Belle.

Belle is a small, easy to use mobile medical alert pendant that works with the 4G Verizon cellular network across the country (although some limitations may exist based on the signal in some areas). Belle enables users to easily get help at home or away from home with the press of a button.

Features include:

- The call button is simple to operate. It is one button that can be pressed to speak with a specialist and get help. It is that easy! The button also has a circular light around it that lets you know when a call is in progress or when the pendant needs recharging.
- A powerful microphone allows you to speak clearly with a specialist so they can send emergency help or contact a loved one to assist you.
- Belle lasts up to 30 days/charge. It comes with a charging cradle and is fully charged in two to three hours.
- Belle is lightweight and easy to wear or carry with the included lanyard and belt clip. It includes WiFi location technologies and is water-resistant.

The Belle lease costs \$45 to install and monthly monitoring costs \$49.95. Call Heartland Security at 888-264-6380 or visit [www.heartlandss.com](http://www.heartlandss.com).

The Belle medical alert pendant is light-weight and easy to use. It can help senior citizens stay active, knowing that help is a simple push of a button away.



**Sign up for Text Message Load Control Notifications**

**Simply text #loadcontrol to 22300**

*Msg and data rates apply*

## #PowerOn GIVEAWAY WINNERS

In addition to the Chlian's that were mentioned in last month's *Newsline*, below are the other two winner's of the randomly drawn giveaway.



**Michelle Ahlgren:**  
I am grateful for REA and electricity so I can enjoy beautiful things such as this tree in my home!



**Cheryl Penkivech:**  
It takes reliable electricity to power up the COVID quilting.



**Al Haman**  
CEO

# A Note from your CEO

## Highlights of the 2021 Budget

As we start the new year, the timing is right to provide you with highlights of the 2021 REA Budget. We usually take time at the District Meetings to review the budget; however, the board has postponed the District Meetings until June and the Annual Meeting until August, hoping COVID-19

restrictions will be lifted and we can gather together as a group once again. We will keep you posted as details fall into place.

I have worked with the management staff to put together the 2021 Budget. We are forecasting just under \$1 million in REA margin and will meet all of our financial benchmarks, which means we expect rates to remain steady throughout the year. We feel the budget is sufficient to meet our obligations to properly operate, maintain, and improve the distribution system in a responsible manner while providing you with safe and reliable electric service.

### Highlights of the 2021 Work Plan

- Trees continue to be a leading cause of power outages and safety concerns. The right-of-way clearing budget for 2021 is \$750,000. We are trying to stay near a 10-year rotation.
- Our pole inspection and replacement program will replace 250 poles and retire poles in areas where underground is a better option (such as heavy tree areas).
- Cable replacement has significantly reduced the number of power outages. We keep a prioritized list of line segments needing to be replaced and move projects up or down the list as new failures occur.
- The budget includes an estimate of 165 new electric services.
- Four substation improvement projects will upgrade reclosers and SCADA communications equipment.
- Fleet management is an on-going challenge. We plan to replace two pole trailers, a pickup, and a forklift. We also plan to purchase a dump truck.

- We will begin the construction of a new Lake Mary 115 kV substation, which will replace our current Lake Mary Substation. We expect to spend approximately 50% of the \$1.4 million project in 2021.
- We will begin our load control replacement project with plans to complete the project by January 1, 2026.
- With the uncertainty of continuing COVID-19 restrictions, there will be no Pancake Feed at the REA headquarters in 2021. Instead, we plan to combine the Annual Meeting and a member appreciation event in August.

### Annual Audit

We have contracted with an accounting firm to conduct our annual financial audit in February. We work with the auditors to provide all records, board minutes, and reconciliation files needed for their review. The auditors will issue an audit report for the year ended 2020, and they will make a presentation at the March REA Board of Directors meeting. We will provide you a summary of REA's 2020 financial statistics following the audit.

Our budget process involves a look back at previous years and a forecast of what we expect to accomplish in the near future. Unfortunately, 2020 was full of challenges for us, but more importantly, all of you. This is not forgotten and we will continue to serve you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity.



*Work on REA's system continues year round.*

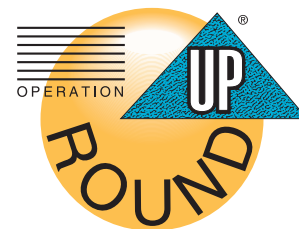
## REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - November 2020

- » Mrs. Nelson reviewed the Financial Report for October 2020 noting margins for the month of October are above budget due to lower expenses and higher energy sales. The power cost adjustment received from GRE for the month will not be passed through on our bills.
- » Director Hjelle gave the Great River Energy Report, sharing details on GRE's positive financials, IT upgrades, an IRS audit, and the future plans for Coal Creek Station.
- » Authorized an additional \$100,000 in right-of-way clearing in 2020.
- » Mrs. Nelson and CEO Haman presented the draft 2021 Budget and answered questions from the Board.
- » Selected Director Anderson as the delegate and Director Loken as the alternate for 2021 MREA membership meetings.
- » Approved refunding \$950,000 in capital credits with \$525,000 going to the oldest membership allocation (1992 capital and a portion of 1993 capital) and \$425,000 going to members receiving service in 2019.
- » **The regular January Board Meeting will be January 26, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.**

# Generosity of REA Members Impacts Area Organizations through Operation Round Up®

Runestone Electric Association's Operation Round Up® has distributed over \$1 million in grants to community-minded groups and organizations throughout the Cooperative's service territory since its inception in 2003. Over 65% of REA's members allow their bills to be rounded up to the next dollar, with the average yearly contribution of \$6.

The deadline for the next round of funding is February 5th. Go to [www.runestoneelectric.com](http://www.runestoneelectric.com) to apply.



## Recent Grant Recipients:

### Seniors

- » Osakis Senior Nutrition Center (\$500)
- » Central Minnesota Elder Network (\$750)

### Youth

- » Osakis D.A.R.E program (\$500)
- » Osakis High School Trap Team (\$200)
- » Alexandria Youth Football (\$200)
- » BIO Girls, Inc. (\$200).

### Fire Departments & First Responders

- » Ashby Fire Department (\$1,000)
- » Millerville Fire Department (\$1,000)
- » Cyrus First Responders (\$1,000)
- » Kensington Fire Department (\$1,000)
- » Garfield First Responders (\$1,000)
- » Lowry Fire Department (\$1,000)
- » Osakis Emergency Medical Responders (\$500)
- » Holmes City First Responders (\$850)

### Community

- » Grant County Humane Society (\$500)
- » Lake Amelia Cemetery (\$250)
- » Ida Lake Association (\$250)
- » Honor Quilts (\$1,000)
- » Jingle Bells Foundation (\$1,000)
- » Evansville Community Club (\$250)
- » Lake Leven Cemetery (\$250)
- » Grant County Historical Society (\$500)
- » Bethel Memorial Cemetery Association (\$250)
- » Douglas County Car Care, Inc. (\$1,500)
- » Red Willow Arts Coalition (\$500)
- » Salvation Army (\$1,000)
- » Pope County Families in Need (\$1,000)
- » Titus II, Inc. (\$750)
- » True Friends (\$750)
- » The Written Gift (\$500)
- » Love INC of Douglas County Lakes Area (\$1,500)
- » Inclusion Network (\$250)
- » Indherred Lutheran WELCA (\$250)
- » Pope County Humane Society (\$300)
- » Radiothon to End Child Abuse (\$1,000)
- » Fryksande Cemetery Association (\$250)
- » Andes Tower Hills Ski Patrol (\$500)

## Unsure if you participate in Operation Round Up?

Look for it on your bill or give REA a call at 800-473-1722 and we can look for you.

## Matching Grants Awarded to Local Groups

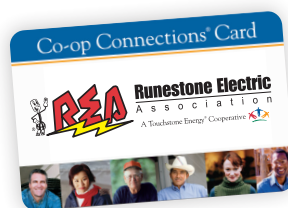
Runestone Electric Association partnered with CoBank (one of REA's lenders) in its Sharing Success charitable matching grant program. CoBank is a national cooperative bank servicing vital industries throughout rural America.

CoBank's Sharing Success program matches charitable contributions made by its cooperative members to local nonprofits to benefit their communities. Utilizing the Sharing Success matching grant program, REA awarded grants to the Smokey Timbers Foundation - \$500; Someplace Safe Alexandria - \$750; UCAN (United Communities Advocating Non-Violence) - \$1000 and Habitat For Humanity Douglas County - \$1000. These four organizations were also 2020 Operation Round Up recipients.

## REA No Longer Part of Touchstone Energy

Developed in 1998 as a means to promote electric cooperatives, REA has participated in Touchstone Energy over the past few decades. To utilize the Touchstone Energy co-brand, cooperatives need to meet and maintain a level of best practices, promote the Touchstone Energy brand, and pay annual dues. Touchstone Energy provides a number of services including website hosting, training programs, survey services and programs like the Co-op Connections Card.

After carefully weighing the costs and benefits of Touchstone Energy, REA has decided not to continue our membership in Touchstone Energy. With this change we will no longer offer the Co-op Connections Card. We thank the businesses that participated in the discount program and look forward to future opportunities to promote local businesses.



**As a cost saving measure, REA is no longer part of Touchstone Energy or the Co-op Connection Card.**

# DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

## Matthew Mattson

REA District Seven Director Matthew Mattson represents southern townships in REA's service territory. In addition to being an REA director, Matthew is busy raising kids and cattle.



## NEWSLINE

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### 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, 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

### How many years have you been on the board?

I have been on the board for 9 months. I represent the townships of Land, Donnelly, Rendsville, Swan Lake, Nora, Ben Wade, Reno, Framnas, New Prairie, White Bear Lake, Minnewaska, Glenwood, Hodges, Walden, Blue Mounds, Barsness, and Chippewa Falls.

### Where do you live?

We live in Nora Township, a couple of miles outside of Kensington, in Pope County.

### Where is your hometown/high school?

I grew up in this area. I graduated from Hoffman-Kensington High School, now West Central Area High School in Barrett. The home farm where I grew up is a mile south of my current home.

### Tell us about your family.

I went to college for an ag business major and animal science minor at River Falls, Wisconsin. I met my wife, Kerri, at college, and we've been married 26 years. We have three children. Our oldest son, Zachary (21), just moved back home from a ranch in South Dakota, and he now works for the Starbuck Locker. Austin is a senior and Taylor is a sophomore at West Central Area High School. Both are distance learning from home now.

### What is your passion as a board member?

I'm just getting started on the board, so I haven't had much experience yet. I enjoy learning about the electrical side of the business and the emphasis on safety.

### What's your favorite REA program?

It's hard to beat the support of all the members that participate in Operation Round Up. I also appreciate programs like SmartHub that provide members useful information that can be used to make decisions on improvements, etc.

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

I farm in a partnership with my parents. We have a cash crop grain operation along with raising beef cows and baby holstein steer calves. When my family is not farming together we like to play cards, board games, build bonfires and play ping pong.

### What is something others might not know about you?

I was adopted and I'm a cancer survivor.

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

I think the original version was from Proverbs, but Wayne Dyer has a version - "As you think so shall you be." So if you think positive and "can do" things, it helps you get through bad times and get through life. That's how I try to live.

### Three words that best describe you:

Patient, positive, and teachable.

### BONUS Questions:

Tractors - Red or Green?  
**Green, but I do have other colors and use whatever tractor it takes to get the job done!**

Lefsa - Sugar or No Sugar?  
**Brown sugar, butter and 10 seconds in the microwave**

Do you say Wash or Wash?  
**Wash**



**Recycle your old Christmas lights & power cords** at the Pope/Douglas Solid Waste Recycle Center, ALP, REA, Osakis True Value, or Ace Hardware Glenwood & Alexandria. *Accepted until 1/31/21.*

