

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* October 2026 NEWS



Jump River Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.

Since 1938

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

## DYNAMIC DAIRY

CO-OP MONTH AND COW LESSONS

PORK RECIPES

KIDS AND CRITTERS





# POWERED BY PURPOSE

By Kurt Harris, General Manager/CEO



Jump River Electric  
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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

This month, electric cooperatives across the country take time to celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of being part of a cooperative. It's also the perfect time to thank you—the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As the General Manager/CEO of Jump River Electric Cooperative, I see purpose in action every single day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our co-op doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you—our members, our neighbors, and our communities. That purpose is what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op operates. You elect board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away; they're made here at home by people who care about the same things you do.

As a member-owned cooperative, our local accountability keeps us focused on what matters most, which is providing value to the people we serve. Each month, the revenue from your electric bill is used to operate, maintain, and improve our electric system. Any revenue remaining after operating expenses, called margins, is allocated back to members as capital credits and returned over time.

One way we provide value is by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technology that strengthen our electric system to help ensure safe, reliable, affordable electric service for years to come. To keep you informed about these efforts, we added a monthly

Construction Corner article to this magazine that highlights these system improvements.

The board and co-op staff work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible—because we know how much rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. Last month we provided you with an update on two local utility-scale solar projects from which we will purchase electricity at a fixed long-term rate, providing greater price stability for our members. Our board also just approved having a third-party consultant perform a rate study that will help us evaluate all rate classes to help ensure rates are equitable, reflecting the cost of providing service.

When storms hit or outages occur, our crews are here and ready to respond quickly, because we live here too. But our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Co-ops were built to meet community needs, and that purpose extends well beyond delivering electricity. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs, partnering with volunteer organizations, or rolling our sleeves up and pitching in to revive or restore a community resource during

our annual Cooperative Day of Service, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought—it's part of our mission.

We're also planning for the future. As electricity demand grows due to new technologies and economic development, we are working with Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale provider, to ensure we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about affordability and dependability, and we're committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer, you're a member-owner and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected, and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative and remain committed to serving you every day. Whether you connect with us online, through SmartHub, on social media, or in person, we're here when you need us.

## SAVE ENERGY THIS *Fall and Winter*

Follow these simple DIY tips to reduce energy use and keep you warm this season:

- Seal gaps around windows and doors with caulk or weatherstripping.
- Close curtains and blinds at night to keep the cold out.
- Open window coverings on sunny days to let the sun in.
- Clean or replace furnace filters.
- Run ceiling fans clockwise to push warm air down.
- Check insulation in your attic, attic hatch and crawl space.
- Use a smart thermostat to lower temperatures when asleep or away.
- Close the fireplace flue when not in use.
- Schedule a home energy audit to find and fix energy wasters.

For more tips, visit: 

# MEMBER MEMORIES: *A Look at Years Gone By*

**J**ump River Electric Cooperative has been serving the members of rural Wisconsin since 1938. In honor of National Cooperative Month, we are sharing memories from two members who experienced firsthand what life was like before electricity—and the changes that followed when it finally arrived.

To put a fun, modern twist on the topic, we used today's AI technology to describe what life was like before electricity. ChatGPT provided the following paragraph as a response to our question. How accurate do you think it is? Read on, then compare its answer with the memories shared by longtime members Zola Geisler and Stanley Kromrey.

Before electricity came to rural Wisconsin in the late 1930s, daily life was shaped by daylight, weather, and hard physical work. Farm families relied on kerosene lamps, wood- or coal-burning stoves, iceboxes, and root cellars, while tasks such as pumping water, washing laundry, milking, and other chores often required hand, animal, or mechanical power. Evenings were dim and limited, and modern conveniences such as radios and electric appliances were largely unavailable. The arrival of electricity through Jump River Electric Cooperative in 1938 marked the beginning of a new era, bringing light and power to rural communities and transforming the way people lived and worked.

Now, let's see how this compares to the real-life experiences shared.

## ZOLA GEISLER OF BRUCE

Zola remembers a time when everything was cooked on a wood range, they milked the cows by hand, a wood-fired heater was used to heat the entire home, and hot water bottles warmed the bed before climbing in at night. She relates her experience of life without electricity to camping, but there was one important difference: "Camping today is a treat. Back then it was a way of life."

Keeping food cold was a challenge. During the winter, her family would cut blocks of ice out of the river, pack them in sawdust, and store them for later use. Meat had to be refrigerated or canned, and they canned a lot. Her mom would store most of their meat at Jump River's meat locker and then pick it up as needed.



Zola (age 10-12) with her uncle Pete

Zola's family lived near Jump River, where electricity was first established by JREC. She remembers her mailman, Ward Herrick, and Dan Beckler getting people signed up to be part of the Cooperative. Zola believes she was around the age of 10 to 11 when the process of establishing the co-op began and around 14 when electricity finally reached their farm. As they waited for electricity to come, she remembers how her family looked forward to the day they would no longer need to carry around kerosene or



Zola Geisler

gas lamps or clean the chimney as often.

Some of her fondest memories of getting electricity include reading whenever she wanted to, and then much later, having running water. She (and the grownups) enjoyed not needing to pump water by hand in the wintertime for the house and barn. Their house was wired first for electricity and then a new barn was built later. Some of the first electric items purchased were lamps and an iron.

Much later, her family purchased a refrigerator. Zola said, "I enjoyed being able to have ice cream more often. Usually, vanilla, and made from scratch."

As money became available, her family continued to add electric appliances, like an electric sewing machine that was purchased around the 1950s. Zola believes that just about every woman who had a wringer wash machine looked forward to the day they could replace it with an electric washer and dryer.

## STANLEY KROMREY OF LADYSMITH

Like Zola, Stanley remembers in his teen years the transition from life without electricity to life with it. One of his fondest memories was watching linemen Leo Johnson and Mr. Krenzleok dig holes to set the poles and then seeing them string the wire to his house.

Before electricity arrived, Stanley remembers how food was kept cold in the cellar and that he studied at night by the light of an old lantern. "The lantern was your best friend in those days," he recalled.

Then came electricity, and, as Stanley put it, "What a difference the electricity made. It was life changing." Having electric lights in the house and barn meant he could read by light and do his homework at any time. It also eliminated the worry of a cow kicking over a lantern and potentially starting a fire.

As with Zola's family, electric appliances were added over time. The first major appliance for Stanley's family was an electric washer and dryer. His mother had washed clothes for a family of seven using an old Maytag wringer washing machine, so this new modern convenience saved her a tremendous amount of time and physical work.

Another major improvement came when electricity was extended throughout the house. The family was able to stop using the old hand pump and install running water. Stanley remembers this as one of the greatest changes electricity brought to their lives. It made everything, from taking showers to watering the cows, much easier.

Stanley said that in his youth he would never have imagined how you could turn electricity on with the flip of a switch nor that it



Carl Hoff (seated) and Leo Johnson



Stanley Kromrey served on JREC's board of directors from 2011 to 2014. He's shown here presenting a donation from JREC.

would have made such a difference in his life to come. Electricity meant chores were less labor-intensive and allowed the family to work later into the evening. Jump ahead to today, and he believes having electricity saves about a third of the time doing everyday tasks because of how much manual labor it has eliminated from our lives.

When asked what he would tell today's youth about what life was like before electricity, Stanley kept his answer simple: "I'd tell them how lucky they are today to have electric lights."

Stanley believes electric stoves to be the most useful of all electric appliances and the one he'd miss the most as he has no desire to go back to the wood stove for cooking.

While ChatGPT did a good job describing what life was like before electricity, hearing firsthand accounts from those who lived through that time provides a different perspective. Each person and family experienced that era in their own way, creating memories and takeaways that AI simply can't capture.

As we celebrate National Cooperative Month, we'd like to take this opportunity to say "thank you" to the men and women who worked so hard to establish JREC over 88 years ago. Their vision, determination, and willingness to work together changed the lives of generations to come. This cooperative was born from this community, and today, we remain committed to carrying on that legacy by serving our members and the communities we are privileged to call home.

We'd love to hear your memories from years gone by. If you'd like to share your story, please contact Denise at 715-532-5524.



MY CO-OP

# OCTOBER HAPPENINGS

## OCTOBER 7

## NATIONAL LED LIGHT DAY

This day may be an unusually illuminating day considering it is National LED Light Day. We have a few frequently asked questions (FAQ) and fun facts about LED lights to brighten your day!

### LED FAQ:

**Q. When were LED lights first created?**

*A. The earliest LEDs created in the late 1950s and early 1960s produced only red-colored light.*

**Q. Do LED lights come in a solar energy model?**

*A. Yes. LED lighting is available with solar charging capacity for a variety of uses.*

**Q. What is the average lifespan of an LED bulb?**

*A. Depending on the manufacturer, LED bulbs can last from 35,000 to 50,000 hours. Compare that to an incandescent bulb at up to 2,000 hours.*

### FUN FACTS:

We are all born as incredible detectors of light. We intuitively notice differences in color and brightness. People respond emotionally to light and color, using its consistency to draw us in, like moths to a glowing light. The power of LED lighting affects all of us in emotional, economic, and environmental ways, too.

The low power consumption, high reliability, and long lifespan allow us to realize significant energy savings.

LED bulbs have a much smaller impact on the environment than other light sources because typically few are changed, meaning fewer bulbs are thrown away.

— Source: *Nationaldaycalendar.com*

**PRO TIP:** Members of JREC are eligible to receive rebates on LED bulbs and fixtures.

Visit [jrec.com/energy-sense-rebates](http://jrec.com/energy-sense-rebates) for details and rebate forms.

## OCTOBER 15

## BLOOD DRIVE

JREC's third annual blood donation drive will be held in the Community Room of the Ladysmith headquarters office on Thursday, October 15. Please consider giving the gift of life as the American Red Cross is not only experiencing a blood supply shortage, but it is now at a four-year summer low.

When you donate blood, you can help save more than one life and every two seconds within the U.S. someone needs blood. You can give blood every 56 days, up to 6 times a year. If you are unable to donate at this event, please go to [redcross.org/give](http://redcross.org/give) to find another location that may work for you.

**Thursday, Oct. 15**

**9 A.M. – 3 P.M.**

JREC Community Room  
1102 W 9th St. N., Ladysmith

Schedule your appointment today: [redcross.org/give](http://redcross.org/give) | Scan the QR code:



## OCTOBER 30

## TRUNK OR TREAT



You can count on us to help you have a **SPOOKTACULAR** time this Halloween. Our drive-thru community event allows you and your family the opportunity to fill up your goodie bags without even getting out of the vehicle. Community businesses will be joining us again as we conclude October Co-op Month with an exciting event for the entire community, with, of course, lots of candy!

**COME ON IN. . . WE'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU!**

## CONSTRUCTION CORNER

Throughout the summer we've highlighted right-of-way maintenance and overhead-to-underground projects being completed throughout our service territory. These projects have all helped to improve reliability, power quality, and balance the system.

Our efforts to improve reliability and system efficiency also extend to managing demand on the power grid. This year, we have been working with Dairyland Power Cooperative, our wholesale provider, to implement a new Load Management Modernization (LMM) program. This program will help us manage demand more efficiently while maintaining the benefits of our existing load management program.

A key part of this modernization effort is replacing older load-control switches installed in the homes of members enrolled in the load management program with newer technology. These upgrades will improve reliability, flexibility, and communication with participating members.

The LMM program is intended to:

- Replace or modernize older load-control equipment.
- Improve Dairyland's ability to manage electricity demand during peak-use periods.
- Support more accurate, timely communication with participating devices and members.
- Help control power costs and reduce the need for additional generation or energy purchases when market prices are high.
- Maintain the benefits of load management programs while preparing for changing energy needs, including increased electrification and distributed energy resources.

Members participating in this program will be notified when we are scheduled to be in their area to replace the load-control equipment. We appreciate all the members who participate in this program and help support grid reliability, manage energy demand, and help to control power costs.

## Willie's PowerUP Pick



*The power is in your hands with...*

### PREPAID BILLING

Take the stress out of due dates and late fees with Prepaid Billing. This program empowers members to pay for electricity as you go. You can monitor your energy use and know when you need to conserve with SmartHub. A few benefits of participating in the prepaid billing program are:

- NO monthly bill.
- NO deposit required.
- NO additional cost or late fees.
- You choose how much and when to pay.
- Provides absolute control over how much money is spent on electricity.
- Helps you understand your daily usage and your energy consumption better.

Industry studies show that members who participate in a prepaid metering or billing program use as much as 10 percent less electricity than their counterparts. The same rates and monthly charges apply. Only single-phase services can enroll, and you must have a SmartHub account. Learn more at [jrec.com/prepaid-billing](http://jrec.com/prepaid-billing) or call our office at 715-532-5524.

## LOCAL STUDENT ATTENDS YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

JREC sponsored Taylor D. (pictured at right), from Lake Holcombe High School, to attend this year's Youth Leadership Conference (YLC), held at UW-Stout. The YLC is a three-day, high-energy event that is filled with activities designed to build leadership skills while discovering how they can make a positive impact within their local communities.

Taylor said that YLC taught her how to better communicate with her peers and how to better understand opinions and viewpoints that may differ from your own. She also learned the importance of being confident when sharing her ideas and stepping outside her comfort zone. "It's a fun and motivating experience that encourages students to become great leaders in their schools," she added.

Youth who attend can also enter an essay contest with top prize being a \$1,000 scholarship. To find out more about YLC and how you can attend in 2027, visit [jrec.com/youth-leadership-conference](http://jrec.com/youth-leadership-conference).



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Find us on Facebook, X, and Instagram

**Denise Zimmer, Editor**



Scan the QR code to find us on Facebook (left) and Instagram (right).

**Jump River Electric Cooperative, Inc.**  
Since 1938  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

*JREC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*