



Co-op Advantage

Touchstone Energy Community Award Local group addresses an unfortunate reality

“We would love to work ourselves out of a job,” explains Cassie Dibeler, Forensic Interview Program Coordinator at North Star Family Advocacy Center of Braham, MN. “In the meantime, our mission is to support children and vulnerable adults who have been impacted by abuse.”

North Star’s comprehensive support and multidisciplinary approach to the investigation, treatment, and prosecution of sexual and physical abuse is why the organization has been selected as ECE’s 2021 winner of the Touchstone Energy® Community Award. By providing forensic interviews, medical exams, mental health referrals, and victim advocacy in a centrally-located facility, victims are able to receive quality treatment under one roof. Since 2016, local families have been grateful to stay close to home rather than travel to Minneapolis, St. Cloud, or Duluth.

Cassie shares, “The impact of child abuse can be far reaching and long lasting. Our advocates work with each family to determine the most appropriate healing process, which includes experienced medical professionals and case tracking.”

North Star provides the opportunity for a child or vulnerable adult to tell their narrative of abuse without having to repeat



(L-R) Jenna Furlong, Family Advocate; Cassie Dibeler, Forensic Interviewer; Jeremie Reinhart, Executive Director with Lola, therapy dog in training.

the information to multiple agencies, thus potentially causing more trauma for the victim. In addition, the team works hard to educate the community by forming partnerships, including schools, daycares, churches, hospitals, and other youth-serving organizations. Specialized curriculum helps spread the message that child abuse is a community issue and therefore everyone’s responsibility.

“No single individual can successfully manage and investigate these kinds of cases,” Cassie mentions. “It takes a team, and at North Star, we always put the child and family first.”

ECE presents the Touchstone Energy Community Award annually to a local organization that is making a difference in its community. Due to the financial strain of the pandemic, all applicants received a donation from ECE. As the local winner, North Star will be entered in competition for the statewide award as well.



northstarfac.org

Visit their website for an engaging virtual tour of the facility.

DIYers:

HOW SAFE IS YOUR WORKSHOP?

MAKE SAFETY YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY



INSPECT TOOLS FOR DAMAGE BEFORE USING THEM



USE HEAVY-DUTY, PROPERLY RATED EXTENSION CORDS AND INSPECT THEM FOR SIGNS OF WEAR



USE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB



USE ELECTRICAL OUTLETS EQUIPPED WITH GFCIs (GROUND FAULT CIRCUIT INTERRUPTERS)



KEEP FLOORS AND WORK AREAS AS CLEAN AND DRY AS POSSIBLE



MAKE SURE YOUR WORK AREA IS WELL-LIT



ENSURE CORDS ARE NOT A TRIPPING HAZARD



USE A CLAMP OR VISE TO SECURE WHATEVER YOU ARE WORKING ON



WEAR PROPER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND AVOID LOOSE CLOTHING OR JEWELRY

Source: SafeElectricity.org



Working from home?

4 easy ways to save energy

Many of our members are still working from home, and more time spent at home means more energy used throughout the day. Here are steps you can take to reduce your energy use and save on electric bills.

1

USE A SMART POWER STRIP

Plugging in your most-used devices to a smart power strip ensures these devices aren't drawing power when not in use.

2

CHOOSE ENERGY STAR®

Purchasing new items for your workspace? Look for the ENERGY STAR label to get the most energy-efficient features, plus equipment that is designed to run cooler and last longer.



3

USE NATURAL LIGHT

It's still chilly, so take advantage of natural light and warmth from the sun. When you're working during the day, open the blinds and turn off lights to reduce energy use.

4

LOWER THE THERMOSTAT

Home heating makes up a significant portion of your energy bills. Turn the thermostat down a couple degrees during the day to reduce energy use, save money, and increase concentration.

Working from home doesn't have to take a toll on your energy bills! Call us if you have questions about your bill or want more information about energy-saving products and rebates.



ECE's Executive Team

ECE VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 21 - 6p.m.

Attend an in-person live broadcast (registration 5 p.m.)

- Milaca High School
- Hinckley-Finlayson High School
- ECE's Superior Operations Center

Coffee & cookies!

OR join us from the comfort of your own home

(register via SmartHub to attend online beginning April 4)

Details dependent on current pandemic restrictions.
Watch our website for the most up-to-date information.

Retirements

BILL CORT, 33 YEARS

What does retirement look like for Bill? More time with his two grandchildren, River and Phoenix, and long days on the lake with his beautiful wife (when he's not hunting or traveling). Bill is also looking forward to perfecting his meat-smoking craft.



ED COWART, 27 YEARS

After his retirement, Ed plans to travel with no worries of getting back in time for work. He's looking forward to golfing, making memories with his adorable granddaughter Zoe, and (best of all) not working out in the cold anymore!



RON PIECHOWSKI, 16 YEARS

Ron plans to be more active with the Hillman American Legion, particularly the Memorial Rifle Squad for Camp Ripley. He's also hoping to find time to finish about twenty years of unfinished home projects.



JEAN ERICKSON, 7 YEARS

Jean can't wait to check off some travel items from her bucket list. As a recent first-time grandma, she's also planning to spoil her grandson Jordan. While she will miss the co-workers who have become like family, Jean is ready to embrace life and all its adventures.

We wish them all the best of luck!

Neighbors helping neighbors



Photos courtesy of Riverland Energy Cooperative

On December 16, 2021, ECE sent six linemen to Wisconsin to provide mutual aid following a destructive winter storm. Thank you to Keith, Ryan, Chris, Tor, Toby, and Joel for their willingness to spend a few nights away from home to help restore power to Riverland Energy Cooperative members.

Notice to small power producers and cogenerators

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules Relating to Cogeneration and Small Power Production, Chapter 7835, we are required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

We provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for inter-

connection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the cooperative.

Members interested in further information should call us at 1-800-254-7944 or visit eastcentralenergy.com.



**PRESIDENT/CEO
JUSTIN JAHNZ**

THIS JUST-in ECE

Over the last year, there have been many conversations about Coal Creek Station, a coal-fired power plant owned by our power supplier, Great River Energy, and located in North Dakota. Coal Creek Station has been in operation for over 40 years and has been an important part of GRE's power supply mix. The two boilers that make up Coal Creek Station produce enough electricity to power many homes and businesses across our rural landscape.

The potential for this plant to be sold, closed, or continue operation has been met with many different opinions and spurred healthy debate about the future of electricity. As we engage in conversations about the future of Coal Creek Station, ECE's perspective has always been about keeping energy affordable, reliable, and making it increasingly clean. Many people don't believe all three of those characteristics can exist at the same time, but GRE is moving toward a future where it is possible.

Due to increasing natural gas prices, electricity markets have been trending up and this has resulted in Coal Creek Station being competitive relative to market prices for electricity. In summary, it has been a good year for Coal Creek Station. However, recent history has shown us that owning the coal plant has cost more

than other market options. Because of that, GRE's long-term motivation to move away from owning and operating the plant remains strong.

Selling or closing a coal plant is a big move and one that requires a lot of planning and thought. GRE operates a fleet of modern natural gas peaking stations that are strategically located and possess the collective ability to produce more than 1,300 MW of electricity. At the same time, they are looking into low-cost renewable energy purchase agreements that will provide wind energy that is competitive in the market. By buying wind output at a good price and selling that energy into the market at a higher price, GRE will create economic advantages for all ECE members.

At the end of the day, GRE is committed to providing reliable, affordable, and increasingly clean energy to ECE and the rest of its 28 member-owned electric cooperatives. Their future is bright and they are moving forward in ways that will set us up for success in the future. As always, thank you for the opportunity to be your electric provider.

At your service we remain,

STORAGE WATER HEATING
Savings the whole family can enjoy!

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REBATES UP TO \$700

SPECIAL LOW RATES



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

East Central Energy
P.O. Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

Braham Service Center
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1.800.254.7944

General business calls are answered from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call Executive Assistant Wendy Leibel at 763-689-8046 to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting highlights and board operating policies can be found on SmartHub.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website:
eastcentralenergy.com



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