

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY

Cooperative

April 2021

NEWS

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON

**REC Annual Meeting
Saturday, April 24**



**Richland Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY IS APRIL 12



Richland Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Curt Brockway



Dave Darling



Grant Butcher



Grant Worthington



Jim Kaderavek



Jordan Simonson



Zach Swenson

This is the time of year when we take a moment to appreciate all that our lineworkers do to keep the power flowing. National studies consistently rank linework among the most dangerous jobs in the country, and for good reason. Laboring high in the air wearing heavy equipment and working directly with high voltage creates the perfect storm of a dangerous and unforgiving profession. But electric lineworkers are up to the task. These brave people are committed to safety, as well as the challenges of the job.

When the weather gets nasty and most of us hunker inside, lineworkers head out, no matter the time of day, or day of the week. They are responsible for keeping power flowing day and night, regardless of holidays, vacations, birthdays, weddings, or other important family milestones. Beyond the years of specialized training and apprenticeships, it takes fortitude and a mission-oriented outlook to be a lineworker.

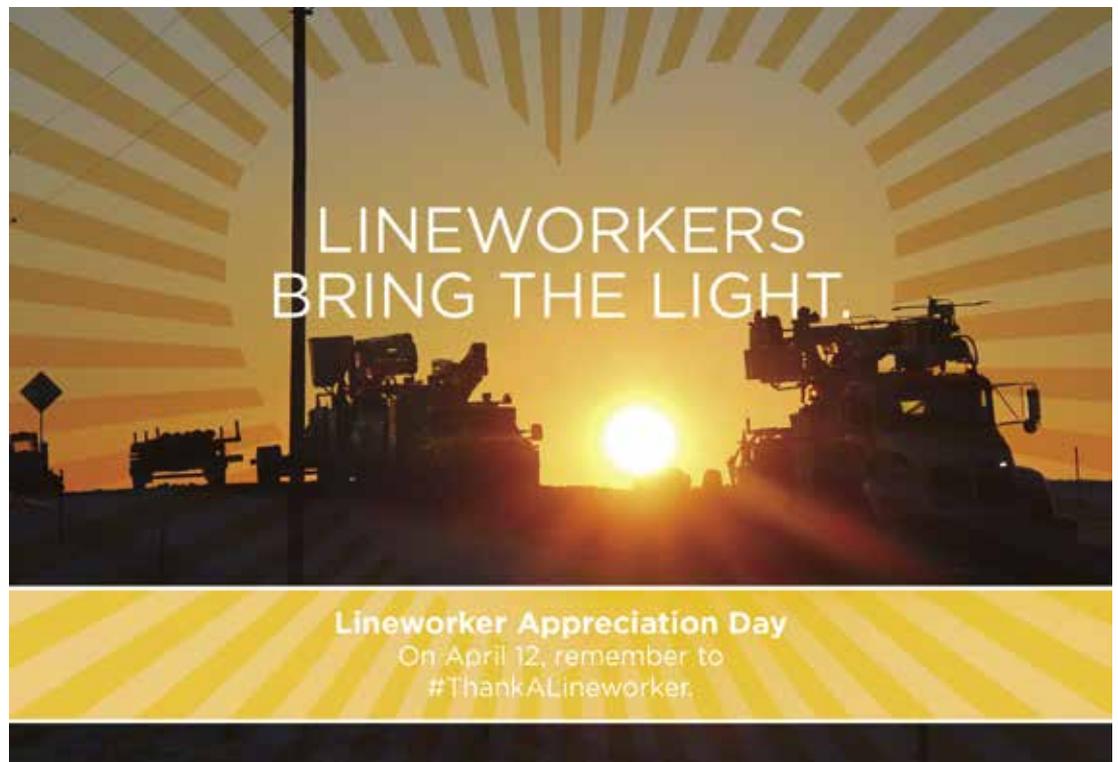
Family Support System To perform their jobs successfully, lineworkers depend on their years of training, experience, and each other to get the job done safely.

Equally important is their reliance on a strong support system at home. A lineworker's family understands and supports their loved one's commitment to the greater community during severe storms and power outages.

This means in times of prolonged outages, the family and their lineworker may have minimal communication and not see each other for several days. Without strong family support and understanding, this challenging job would be all the more difficult.

Community Commitment At Richland Electric Cooperative, our lineworkers' mission-focused mentality of helping others often extends beyond their commitment to their work at the co-op. Lineworkers are often familiar figures in the community. They can be found coaching youth sports teams, volunteering on local fire departments, and serving on local boards.

On April 12, when you flip a light switch, power up your computer, turn on your TV, or perform any of the countless tasks that electricity enables you to do, take a moment to appreciate the hardworking lineworkers who make that possible.



MY CO-OP



GET TO KNOW YOUR REC DIRECTORS

Each year, prior to the Richland Electric Cooperative annual meeting, we provide our members with biographies of incumbent directors whose terms are set to expire, as well as biographies of their challengers, so you can get to know your director candidates before casting a vote. This year, due to a variety of factors including pandemic-related concerns, we are faced with the unique situation of having no challengers for the board of director seats that are up for election.

Although there is a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, we still need to exercise caution to ensure the health and safety of our employees and members. Therefore, we will be hosting our 85th Annual Meeting, set for April 24, drive-in style once again. You will receive your annual report calendar, with information regarding our annual meeting, in the mail in the coming days. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received after last year's annual meeting, we are very confident we will have another successful drive-in style gathering, with the potential for incorporating new ideas in this year's event.

We will return to hosting in-person meetings as soon as it is deemed safe to do so, and we look forward to that day. We miss our members and are eager for the opportunity to speak with them face to face once again.

In the meantime, we will still conduct the important business of your cooperative, including presenting the candidates for directors. We offer you here profiles of the incumbent directors as a way for you to better get to know the members who represent you on the board of directors.

STEVE FULLER



Steve Fuller was elected to the Richland Electric Board of Directors in 2011. He and his girlfriend, Denise, reside in Willow township. He has two daughters, Cassie (22) and Mandi (20).

Fuller is the owner of Rustic View Dairy Inc., where they milk 70 Holsteins and raise 25 beef cattle. He also raises crops on 400 acres that include beans, corn, and hay. He is a graduate of Ithaca High School and Southwest Technical College for agriculture. In the past he has also been an ag mentor for Ithaca High School. Fuller has been farming for 38 years.

Fuller is a very avid deer hunter in the fall and enjoys being outdoors. He and Denise enjoy going for walks and hiking. He also enjoys bike riding with his daughters when they are available.

When asked what he has enjoyed about being on the REC board as well as what he is looking forward to in years to come, Fuller responded: "I have enjoyed my time with fellow directors. We may only speak a few times a month but we understand our role is very important to the co-op and its members. I have also enjoyed learning of the new technology aspect of the business. For example, learning how to handle board meetings virtually because of the pandemic. I think by having this technology it greatly improves how we can communicate with one another at a moment's notice. It has been great to meet new people when attending director training and meetings. I attended the regional meeting in Milwaukee where I met a director from Iowa, whose boys are running their operation, but he ships his milk to Foremost Farms in Richland Center. It just goes to show what a small world it is."

"I am looking forward to getting out of COVID, like so many people, and returning to a normal way of life," he added. "I am also interested in the fiber situation and what impact that will have on the rural community."

JIM GOPLIN

Jim Goplin and his wife, Bobbi Ann, reside in Eagle Township in the Basswood area. They have three adult children, Jesse (Traci), Janelle (Ben), and Jo Ellen. They also have four grandchildren, Keegan, Kannon, Allie, and Ada.

Goplin is currently employed by Great Lakes Hybrid as a seed corn dealer on his farm. He has a small dairy operation milking 40 cows and owns 179 acres and rents another 375 for cash cropping. He is a graduate of Riverdale High School and participated in ag classes through Southwest Technical College for many years. He stated, "It has been a great place to raise my family and watch my grandchildren grow."

Throughout the years, Goplin has been involved in many civic duties, such as serving on the Richwood Town Board and Riverdale School Board. He was a member of the Consumer's Cooperative board and Richland County Board of Adjustments. "While serving on those boards, it gave me a better understanding of how businesses and schools operate on a daily basis," Goplin said.

During his spare time, he enjoys all aspects of the outdoors: hunting, fishing, and even tapping maple syrup trees with the grandkids. He has bowled for many years, has great passion for golfing, and enjoys finding new courses to try. He also greatly enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and watching them grow. Bobbi Ann and Jim also enjoy traveling to Nashville to visit their daughter.

Goplin stated, "During my tenure as director I have learned that no matter how prepared you are, there is always something that comes along to complicate matters. This co-op has the dedication of all its employees and staff to handle any situation in a professional and courteous matter. I have enjoyed seeing how employees work together on a day-to-day basis to make this co-op run as efficiently as it can. They do an excellent job."



JEFF MONSON

Jeff and Angela Monson live in Dayton Township at the top of Bashford Hill. Jeff has served on the REC Board of Directors since 2012 and is currently the REC representative on the Dairyland Power Board of Directors. The Monsons have three children, Kayla, currently enrolled at Edgewood college; Ryan, a junior at RCHS; and Makenna, a freshman at RCHS.

Jeff is a professional dairy cattle hoof trimmer and is also a hog farmer specializing in show pigs and breeding stock. He also crops approximately 100 acres of corn, oats, and hay. He is a 1992 graduate of RCHS and a 1993 graduate of Southwest Tech in Dairy Herd Management. In 2000 he was a graduate of the Dairyland Hoof Care Institute.

He is a board member of Richland County Outstanding Young Farm Organization. He enjoys spending time with his wife and children, riding mules (the four-legged ones) and elk hunting in Colorado.

When asked what he has learned from being an REC director, Monson responded, "I have learned how complex and important the electric utility industry is to our daily lives. There are exciting times ahead for our industry with the advancement of renewable resources and the reduction in carbon emissions. It is always a pleasure to serve our membership and make the best decisions for our members by continuing to supply them with safe and sustainable electricity. I am proud to be a part of such an outstanding organization with excellent employees that are committed to the future of our co-op. I am committed to the future of Richland Electric Cooperative."



ONE YEAR LATER...

By Trevor Clark, Director of Outreach Services

I can remember the conversation like it was yesterday: Our CEO called me and said, “I have an idea that might be corny enough to work.” I was sitting at the computer in a spare room in my basement. That was the location where I first carved out a working space when we were informed that we would be working from home due to the pandemic that had just begun. I had created a temporary desk from leftover plywood and some 2x4’s. Now, before you judge, I am skilled enough to create a desk, but given the circumstances and the abruptness of the need to create a home office, I was happy with what I had. Members would have just received their notices that our annual meeting had been postponed due to COVID-19.

What followed, none of us could have ever predicted. In just three weeks REC was able to put together a drive-in annual meeting, which as you are aware garnered national attention. Although we did not seek any of that attention nor did we expect it, we realized we had just done something special. Our staff stepped up the plate and knocked this event out of the park. Everyone was excited to participate and did so while following the pandemic protocols. We had no blueprint to access, only ideas that we discussed during the meetings we had. We had no idea if the plan would work, but we did know that if any staff could do it, it would be ours.

REC has been getting the recognition for the event but as much credit should be given to the members. During the height of this pandemic, our members trusted us enough to attend this event. Without at least 50 members showing up the meeting would have been a failure, as our bylaws state that we must have 50 members to reach a quorum. Not only did we have enough to reach a quorum, we almost tripled that

amount. Had it not been for our members attending the event, this article would be very different.

Here we are, almost one year later and we have decided to move forward with another drive-in annual meeting. Because the event is no longer a “new” idea and has been done numerous times throughout the country since we held the first of its kind last April, one could assume that this annual meeting will be less exciting and less unique than last year’s was. However, we do not see it that way. Deep down we know

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that this pandemic will end, and we will be able to see our members in person once again. So, a drive-in annual meeting is still a unique event because it will not happen often—only in extreme circumstances.

Here at Richland Electric Cooperative, we will continue to bring you the best annual meeting that we possibly can. A few years ago, we transitioned our annual meeting to a shorter format and received wonderful feedback—enough that we have zero intention of returning to the old format. Last year we held the drive-in and had members tell us they enjoyed listening to the meeting from their tractors. A light bulb went off, and we have adopted the plan of broadcasting our meeting with WRCO each year.

We are always looking for new ways to improve our events and are always looking for feedback from our members. But we want to reiterate that even a year later, we couldn’t do this without you. Richland Electric receives the credit, but this is your cooperative—YOU are Richland Electric Cooperative.

Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO

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