

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative*

June 2025 NEWS



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

RURAL POLICY FOR WISCONSIN'S FUTURE

PREVENTING WILDFIRES

EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR NEW HOMES

JUNE DAIRY RECIPES



THE POWER OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

American families expect the lights to stay on at a cost they can afford. However, with the demand for electricity skyrocketing and the supply of always-available power sources at risk, the need for smart energy policies that bolster reliability and affordability are more critical than ever before.

As your electric provider, Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) is committed to reliably powering our communities. Beyond routine maintenance and updates that improve the reliability of the grid, we work in other ways to ensure our members' needs are addressed. One of the ways we do this is through proactively engaging elected officials to ensure our members are well represented in Washington, D.C.

Last month, hundreds of electric cooperative leaders from across the country, including Wisconsin, traveled to Washington, D.C. for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference.

As we met with elected officials on Capitol Hill, we discussed key energy issues and priorities that are impacting our members back home. We focused on telling how electric cooperatives in Wisconsin are ensuring reliable and affordable power for our communities through a diverse supply of energy resources to meet the growing demand for electricity.

As we met with members of Congress, we detailed the need to improve environmental permitting processes and cut costly and burdensome regulations to accelerate deployment and maintenance of essential electric infrastructure. We highlighted the need to pass legislation to facilitate co-op vegetation management efforts and reduce wildfire risks.

An additional focal point of our discussions with policymakers was to ensure federal programs and resources that support electric cooperative energy projects as we invest to meet the unique needs of our communities. This included tools such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service electric loan program and the New Empowering Rural America co-op loan and grant program, energy tax credits with an elective (direct) pay option for co-ops, and recently funded Department of Energy infrastructure programs.

While you may not consider it on a daily basis, electricity is essential and supports nearly every aspect of modern



Over thirty of Wisconsin's electric cooperative managers and directors advocated in Washington D.C.

life. Understanding today's evolving energy landscape is important as it shapes how electricity is produced, delivered and consumed. We want to ensure that members of Congress understand this.

Advocating for reliable, affordable power on behalf of OEC's members is a critical part of our commitment to you and we look forward to continuing to work with our elected officials on these matters.

NEW SUMMER HOURS

Our office lobby will be closed on Fridays starting June 6 through August 29.

Hours of operation will be Monday—Thursday from 7:30 a.m.—4 p.m.

OEC ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

The Annual Meeting for Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) was held on Saturday, April 26, at Tomah Recreation Park. Attendance consisted of 139 registered members with 196 total attendees.

General Manager & CEO Chris Tackmann spoke on plans to improve the co-ops system to include rebuilding four miles of three-phase overhead line in New Lisbon area, constructing new 1.7 miles of three-phase line between Oakdale and Clifton substations, eliminating two interstate overhead crossings, and focusing on high outage areas with bad rights-of-way. Substation upgrades will consist of a new substation called Bear Creek that will be utilized by Smart Sand, Inc. to prevent overloading the Oakdale substation, along with a new substation in the Armenia area called the County Line substation. The three OEC solar gardens energy output currently powers approximately 856 homes annually with a new 4.5-megawatt system coming in 2026. Tackmann reflected on the new tariffs implemented with, "I'm unsure of how the tariffs will affect us but I can say that we primarily buy from inside the United States, therefore I'm hoping we don't see any direct impact on purchases for the co-op."

Tackmann applauded the members who participate in Operation Round Up that totaled \$92,675 in donations back to communities in 2024. He concluded that Capital Credit retirement will take place in October with \$1.2 million going back to members.

Guest speaker Joe Mesec, Director of Government Relations with Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) spoke on primary issues relating to co-ops in the Capitol. Right of First Refusal (ROFR) is a bill that gives incumbent utilities the "right of first refusal" to build long-range transmission projects within their service area. The three incumbent transmission owners in Wisconsin are American Transmission Company (ATC), Xcel Energy, and OEC's generation and transmission provider Dairyland Power Cooperative. Mesec stated, "this legislation will retain Wisconsin's control over the safety and reliability of our state's power grid instead of ceding that control to federal regulators."

The reason this is a large topic is that our consumer members can directly benefit from the buildout of these projects if ROFR is passed. Margins are realized by the cooperative and can be used to continue building infrastructure, like transmission lines, to support and grow the member-owned cooperative. Returns earned from a project can be used to offset future rates for members as well. "This will not happen with non-incumbent or new developers whose loyalties and fiduciary responsibilities are not in line with what's best for Wisconsin," Mesec reflected. WECA has been advocating tirelessly to ensure the ROFR bill is passed to allow any return on projects to benefit Wisconsin cooperatives and its members.

Other issues Joe Mesec spoke on were the Wisconsin Energy Reform Act, Wisconsin's Legislative Commitment to Advancing Nuclear Energy, Nuclear Power Siting Study, Wisconsin Hosting a Nuclear Power Summit, Eradication of



OEC Board of Directors – L-R: Robin Craker, Martin Potter, Jim Van Wychen, Rick Barrett, Bob Hess, Greg Eirschele, and Jon Williams.

Wild Parsnip, and Third-Party and Community Solar. Mesec chalked the nuclear discussion up to that, "there has been a realization that nuclear is not as bad and dirty as it used to be."

Cooperative members had equal voting rights and three options to vote by mail-in, electronic, or in-person to bring a total of 1,716 ballots cast in the contested director election. In district 3, incumbent Gregory Eirschele was re-elected against opposing candidate Allen Zirk. Incumbent Jonathon Williams ran unopposed for district 6 and was re-elected.

One \$250 bill credit and five \$100 bill credits were drawn, and the winners are as follows: Martin Neas (\$250), Paul Rusch, Mike Warner, Jim Hayward, Louise Zirk, and William Pieper.

Additional drawings were held that were bought from OEC members. Three decorative lawn ornaments from Kathy Von Haden with The Shed in Tomah were drawn and those winners were Evans Larson, Ron Blado, and Gale Kramer. A STIHL battery-powered trimmer from Hartje's Farm and Power Equipment in La Valle, was drawn with that winner being John Arzt. Flowers from Destinee Coenen with Skies the Limit in New Lisbon were drawn to 12 winners, those include: Randy Fabian, Don Kaus, Mary Kovacic, Paul Zastoupil, Russell Voss, George Chapman, James Gerke, Kevin Jones, Louis Nagy, Larry Wargowsky, Tammy Turnmire, and Lois Von Haden.

Special guests in attendance were OEC's attorney John Behling and guest speaker WECA's Director of Government Relations Joe Mesec.

At the reorganizational meeting, all officer positions remained unchanged. They are as follows: board chairman, Richard Barrett; vice chairman, Gregory Eirschele; secretary, Jonathan Williams; treasurer, James Van Wychen; assistant secretary, Deana Protz; DPC director, Robert Hess; and alternate DPC director – Richard Barrett.

Refreshments and donuts were served prior to the meeting. Each member account received a jar of jam from OEC member Holly Krizan with Black Bear Fruits and all members in attendance were given a \$10 Jimmy John's gift card and cheese and sausage snack pack from Humbird Cheese.



Congratulations

2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Katelyn Browne
Mauston High School
Pam and Shawn Browne
Madison Area Technical College
Biotechnology Lab Technician



Owen Hallwood
Mauston High School
Ken and Dawn Hallwood
UW-La Crosse
Business



Abbie Morris
Mauston High School
Emily and Tom Morris
UW-Eau Claire
Secondary Education, Social Studies



Brayen Morey
New Lisbon High School
Ben and Rachel Morey
UW-River Falls
Health and Human Performance –
Exercise Science



Emma Bowden
Pittsville High School
Jennifer and Nathan Bowden
UW-La Crosse
Business



Max Zirk
Lineworker Scholarship
Royall High School
Allen and Amy Zirk
Southwest Technical College
Electric Power Distribution Program



Sara Guthrie
Tomah High School
Jason and Mary Guthrie
Western Technical College
Agriculture



Kayleigh Kostka
Tomah High School
Brian and Tammi Kostka
UW-La Crosse
School Psychology



Addison Marx
Tomah High School
Brian and Kari Marx
UW-La Crosse
Microbiology



Carter Ollendick
Tomah High School
John and Kelli Ollendick
UW-La Crosse
Nuclear Medicine Technology



Sydney Tiber
Tomah High School
Tom and Jenny Tiber
Western Technical College
Respiratory Therapy



Brooklynn Bolton
Wonewoc-Union Center High School
Brad and Suzanna Bolton
St. Mary's University – Minnesota
Biology Pre-Physical Therapy

THE *Scoop* ON SMARTHUB



**Sign up for SmartHub between June 1 and June 30,
for a chance at a \$25 Culver's gift card!**

SmartHub provides convenient account access and two-way communication to and from Oakdale Electric Cooperative on your computer, tablet, or via your mobile device. With SmartHub you can do the following with just a few clicks:

- Make a safe & secure payment
- Review bill & payment history
- View energy usage graphs
- Setup energy usage alerts
- Sign up for Auto Pay
- Go paperless for billing statements
- Receive outage notifications



SmartHub is available on Android and iOS smartphones and tablets, as well as on the web.

**For additional questions or assistance,
call 1-800-241-2468 Monday – Thursday
between 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

Contest Details:

- Twenty (20) \$25 Culver's gift cards will be drawn. Fifteen (15) winners will be drawn from members who sign up for SmartHub between June 1 and June 30.
- Existing SmartHub users by May 31 will be in a separate drawing where five (5) gift cards will be drawn.
- The drawing will take place on Tuesday, July 1. Winning members will be contacted via phone and will be mailed their gift card.

Sign up by scanning the QR code or
by visiting www.oakdalerec.coop/smarthub.



Employees, directors, as well as immediate family of Oakdale Electric Cooperative, are not eligible.

**June is Dairy
Month! Support
Your Local Farmers**



**Monroe County Dairy Breakfast
June 7, 2025 • 7 - 11 a.m.**

Chapman Farms
21509 Gladview Ave
Tomah, WI 54600

**Farm to Fork Breakfast Fundraiser
June 7, 2025 • 8 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Wisconsin Dells High School
1501 Brew Farm Rd
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965




**Sauk County Dairy Breakfast
June 7, 2025 • 7 - 11 a.m.**

Narrows Dairy–Nolden Family Farm
S4197A Buckeye Rd
Rock Springs, WI 53961

**Juneau County Dairy Breakfast
June 22, 2025 • 7 - 11 a.m.**

Elroy Fair–Entertainment Tent
301 S. Main St
Elroy, WI 53929


Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

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   info@oakdalerec.coop

Jackie McGlin, Editor



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

Office Hours: Monday–Thursday 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Closed Friday.

24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: 800-927-6151

Toll-free Online Bill Payment 855-938-3610

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call 800-242-8511.