



MAY YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON BE MERRY AND BRIGHT

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

The holidays are a time of year that many of us eagerly anticipate. The season is marked by special foods, seasonal decorations and lots of festivities. Oakdale Electric Cooperative's (OEC) service area is filled with holiday lights in parks, parades, and various community holiday celebrations.

We cherish carrying on old family traditions and enjoy creating new ones. For me personally, I look forward to more time spent with family and friends. However, given the hustle and bustle of the season, the holidays can also offer an opportunity to slow down and reflect. For all of us at OEC, we are grateful for you, the members of the co-op.

You see, one of our founding principles as a co-op is "Concern for Community." While our main focus is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we want to give back. We want to help our community thrive.

Reflection

In looking back at this past year, I'm grateful that we were able to make a positive impact in the community. Through programs such as Operation Round Up, where thanks to your contributions, a total of \$92,675 was donated back into communities as a result of your generosity.

We were also grateful for the opportunity to partner with local schools to raise awareness on the importance of electrical safety. This year, we visited with 1,645 students from eight schools to present the electrical safety hotline demonstration. In fact, we continue to work closely with our local high schools to award college scholarships. In 2024, we awarded \$21,500 to local scholars.

Electrical safety education doesn't stop in the schools. The public and adult OEC members were reminded of important safety measures at National Night Out in Tomah and Necedah and our Member Appreciation Day in October.

Through programs such as Operation Round Up, where thanks to your contributions, a total of \$92,675 was donated back into communities as a result of your generosity.

There are other ways we can help the community, whether we're providing information about community solar, electric vehicles, energy-saving incentives, or helping you find ways to

save energy at home, we want you to know we're here to help.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to 2025, we hope you will share your opinions with us. We recognize that our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we continually seek your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you. We are led by you – the members of the co-op – and we depend on your feedback. An online survey can be found at oakdalerec.coop/survey.

As we prepare for next year, we look forward to the opportunity to serve you and the greater community. On behalf of the Oakdale Electric Cooperative family, we hope your holidays are indeed merry and bright!

HOLIDAY LIGHT RECYCLING DRIVE



Have you pulled out those old holiday lights and plugged them in, only to find they don't work anymore? You can RECYCLE them at the co-op! Or maybe you are considering replacing them with ENERGY STAR® LED lights since they are 75% more energy efficient, and Oakdale Electric has incentives for LED lighting. Either way, we want you to RECYCLE those old clunky, not working holiday lights with us!

December 1 – February 1, 2025

489 N. Oakwood St., Tomah, WI 54660

The collection bin is located at the co-op's front entrance. Please remove light strands from bags and boxes and place them into the bin.



DIRECTOR NOMINATION PETITION FORMS DUE DECEMBER 20, 2024

COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES MUTUAL AID FROM WISCONSIN TO SOUTH CAROLINA

Cooperatives were built on seven core principles, the sixth one being Cooperation Among Cooperatives. This principle is put into action after major storms and disasters that cause widespread power outages. When this happens, Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) will call on nearby co-ops to come to our aid and assist in restoration efforts – and we will extend the same help to them when they need us. For example, in June 2022 when a tornado tracked through Tomah, Oakdale, and Wyeville, we received additional help from two neighboring electric cooperatives.

When Hurricane Helene caused deadly destruction from Florida up through the Carolinas in September, co-ops from around the nation were called upon to assist in power restoration. Being that OEC is part of the national electric cooperative network, OEC and other Wisconsin electric cooperative crews answered the call for help.

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association quickly orchestrated the trip logistics and was involved in pulling together crews from 15 co-ops throughout the state. “In a matter of hours, we had several volunteers and by 6 a.m. the next morning, four linemen were on the road,” stated Operations Director John Ollendick. “We’re happy to be able to assist because when we need



Ryan tying in a new pole that had to be replaced.



L-R Dalton Linzmeier, Ryan Betthausen, Adrian Gebhardt, and Brock Brown.

help, we appreciate having those extra hands in return.”

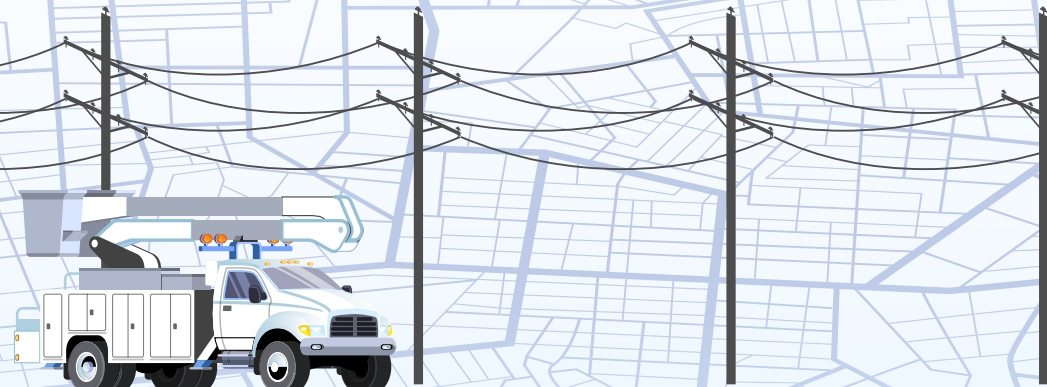
Area Service Foreman Brock Brown and Journeyman Linemen Ryan Betthausen, Adrian Gebhardt, and Dalton Linzmeier hit the road to South Carolina with 41 other crew members from 15 Wisconsin electric cooperatives.

As crews met and began their trek to Aiken Electric Cooperative in Aiken County, South Carolina, they were warned that it won’t just be power restoration, it would be a total rebuild. Wisconsin crews had gotten their feet wet with total rebuilds over the last few years from multiple tornadoes that also called for mutual aid.

“When we arrived, roughly 14,000 members were without power and another 4,000 went out overnight, that’s about our entire system,” stated Ryan Betthausen.

The Wisconsin electric co-ops worked closely together along with line crews from The Victory Electric Cooperative Association, Inc in Dodge City, Kansas. Although there was not much flooding, tornadoes that were inside the hurricane caused catastrophic damage.

“It reminded me of our tornado in 2022, wires up in trees,





Adrian, Dalton, and Ryan prepping to set a new pole.



Dalton placing protective grounds to allow for safe working conditions.



Sleeping headquarters dubbed as Tent City for all mutual aid lineworkers.

across roads, broken poles, it was a total rebuild,” Adrian Gebhardt reflected.

All mutual aid lineworkers and contractors from across the country were housed in what they call a tent city, provided by Storm Services, LLC. Each tent had its own purpose – an air-conditioned sleeping quarters, a meal hall, shower trailers, and restrooms. Crews could also have their laundry done for them and were given three meals a day.

“We only saw a small percentage of their territory, but they had the manpower,” stated Brock Brown. “Brushing crews would clean out downed trees and we would come in to set new poles and string existing or new wire.”

At one point, Aiken Electric had over 850 employees and contractors, including 90 construction crews and 84 right-of-way clearing crews. There were helping hands from 15 different states

spanning from New Mexico to Maine and Florida to Wisconsin.

Overall, OEC linemen and the other Wisconsin electric co-ops were gone a little over ten days and their work there consisted of about four miles of line reconstructed and approximately 37 broken poles were replaced.

When asked if they would do it again, every one of them said they would in a heartbeat. Dalton Linzmeier concluded with, “it makes you appreciate being in Wisconsin where hurricanes don’t occur but makes you feel good knowing that you are helping those people get one step closer to getting back to ‘normal’ again after such catastrophe.”



A line of Wisconsin co-op trucks and crews working on repairing a three-phase line.

Road to Restoration



STEPHEN & LEANNE HONISH, ROOTED IN SERVING OTHERS

The last name Honish is well known around the Tomah area, and for good reason. You may hear it around 4-H events, FFA involvement, or the Queen of Apostles Parish and school. A name that's rooted in volunteering and exhibit concern for the community, is why Stephen and Leanne Honish were presented Oakdale Electric Cooperative's Selfless Service Award.

Stephen and Leanne married in 1979 and in 1990 bought a farm between Tomah and Warrens consisting of 300 acres where they milked 60 cows. The couple knows what hard work consists of raising four children while farming and adding six grandchildren to the mix. They later sold the farm to their second oldest child Neil who continues to raise feeder cattle.

Frequently, you can see Stephen and Leanne volunteering at the Queen of Apostles Parish in Tomah and Warrens. Whether there is something to make for a bake sale, the St. Pat's Carnival, Warrens Cranberry Fest pancake breakfast, cooking meals, or making and delivering care baskets, these two are often found behind the scenes.

Caring for others is genuinely in their nature. Both Stephen and Leanne share conversations with individuals in healthcare facilities, whether in person or chatting over the phone. Time is a valuable thing and they both give it selflessly. Their garden is so fruitful that they share vegetables with local neighbors and food pantries while also donating lightly used items to people and places in need. A true testament of their character, when a family suffered the total loss of their home, Stephen and Leanne opened their home and took care of four extra children for two months.

Staying active in their community is an understatement for this duo. Throughout their lives they have volunteered for several organizations including 4-H, FFA, Monroe County Farmers Union, local dairy breakfasts, and more. You may have even spotted Stephen driving the barrel train at various events around Tomah, Kendall, and West Salem, bringing smiles to young and old.

While their community and neighbors are important to






them, Stephen and Leanne treasure their family. Whether it's helping with field work or running grandkids to all their extracurricular activities, their kids know they can count on them. A quality they instilled in their children was work ethic and that is reflected throughout their family branch.

True models of what a volunteer stands for, serving others is their genuine character. Stephen and Leanne's oldest daughter Jennifer nominated them for the award. A daughter proud of who raised her concluded with, "they are a couple that demonstrates service over self."

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO


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Jackie McGlin, Editor



**Oakdale Electric
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Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: 800-927-6151
Toll-free Online Bill Payment 833-526-0293

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