

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

July 2026



Oakdale Electric
Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

FOREFRONT OF FUSION

HOW TO HELP
DURING PEAK DEMAND

READER RECIPE CONTEST

KIDS AND CRITTERS





WIRED FOR GROWTH: *Balancing data center demand and reliability*

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

Data centers may feel like a big-city phenomenon, but more and more of them are showing up in rural communities like ours—and there's good reason for that. Rural areas offer what data centers need most: affordable land, room to grow and access to transmission lines that can move large amounts of power.

What makes data centers different from other large businesses is their appetite for electricity. These facilities run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Servers must stay online constantly, which means power has to be reliable every minute of every day.

For electric cooperatives like Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC), powering data centers creates both opportunities and challenges.

On the plus side, data centers have the potential to bring steady, long-term load growth that helps support investments in the local grid. With proper planning and policy support, those upgrades—

including new substations, stronger lines and smarter technology—could benefit all OEC members and help keep residential and commercial electricity rates steady.

But providing power to data centers presents challenges, too. These facilities can be constructed and operating in as little as one year, but ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment and electricity requires longer lead times and significant financial investment by the data centers. Strategic planning and partnerships, as well as long-term power supply strategies, are essential to the process.

While OEC does not currently serve any data centers, co-ops nationwide are fielding requests and inquiries from tech companies, and we have had similar requests and discussions.

As a member-owned cooperative, our responsibility is twofold: to listen to the communities we serve and to provide reliable, affordable electric service to all current and future OEC members.

Balancing those responsibilities is not always simple, especially as new types of large-scale energy users, like data centers, become part of the local landscape.

No matter what the future holds, our priority will be supporting growth with fairness—that means ensuring large-scale energy users pay their fair share, so residential bills do not spike, and our local communities feel invested in.

The energy landscape is changing, and with it comes both opportunities and challenges. My commitment, and the commitment of OEC's board and employees, is to continue listening, communicating and working with both our current and future members and community partners to ensure all decisions reflect the best interests of the people we serve.

If you have questions or concerns regarding any other co-op matters, we encourage you to stay engaged and reach out.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST

National Night Out

Tuesday, August 4

4 – 8 p.m.

Tomah Recreation Park
1625 Butts Ave., Tomah, WI 54660

Necedah Lions Park
901 North Harvey St., Necedah, WI 54646

OCTOBER

Member Appreciation Day

Wednesday, October 7

4 – 7 p.m.

OEC headquarters
489 N Oakwood St. on Hwy PP, just north
of I90/94 in Oakdale

BBQ, co-op education, family fun, gifts and more!

Four individual portraits of baseball players are arranged vertically. Each portrait is a color photograph with a white border, tilted slightly to the right. The background of each photo is a wooden slat fence. The first player, Matt, is a young man with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a green t-shirt. The second player, Payne, is a young man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue baseball cap and a dark blue t-shirt. The third player, Jackson, is a young man with dark hair, smiling, wearing a camouflage-patterned baseball cap and a dark hoodie. The fourth player, Brad, is a young man with a beard and mustache, wearing a blue and white baseball cap with a red logo and a grey hoodie. The names 'Matt', 'Payne', 'Jackson', and 'Brad' are printed in a white, sans-serif font at the bottom right of each respective photo.

Hunter Ryskoski | Information Technology Specialist

Payne Clark | Temporary Apprentice Lineman

Payne recently earned a degree in Electrical Power Distribution from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore. He was most recently employed by InterCon and serves as a volunteer firefighter with the Wilton Fire Department, while also helping his family's farm.

Jackson Fleming | Temporary Apprentice Lineman

Jackson is set to graduate this year with a degree in Electrical Power Distribution from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore. Raised on a dairy farm, he continues to assist his family's farming operations and was a general laborer for Garage Force.

Brad Granahan | Temporary Apprentice Lineman

Brad will graduate this year from the Powerline Program at Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon, Iowa. He has been employed as a farm laborer on several dairy and grain farms throughout Iowa and Wisconsin. Brad also serves as a volunteer firefighter for Oakdale and Sheldon Fire Departments.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

The annual electrical safety poster contest calls on all third-grade students to put their artistic abilities to the test. This is an opportunity for students to put their skills to work and learn about electrical safety at the same time.



Eloise Erickson

Oakdale Electric Cooperative employees anonymously judged the submitted posters and are pleased to announce Eloise Erickson, daughter of Andrew and Abbie Erickson, was the 2026 winner!



Lucy Wagner

Honorable mentions go to Blake Plueger, son of Ally Von Haden, and Lucy Wagner, daughter of Brent and Jessica Wagner.



Blake Plueger

MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

“Life in Rural Wisconsin”

The Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) photo contest for members' photos to be featured in our 2027 calendar is nearing the end. Winning photos may be used in future newsletters or cooperative publications. The contest runs until August 14, 2026.

Photo Contest Criteria:

- Photos must be taken within OEC's service area.
- Photos should capture life in rural Wisconsin (seasons, wildlife, landscape, power lines, people, etc.).
- Photos must have a horizontal (landscape) orientation.
- Photos can be in color or black and white.
- Only high-resolution photos can be used. Photos must be at least 300 dpi.

**\$25 Co-op
Cash to picture
winners & \$50
Co-op cash to
cover winner!**

Photo Contest Rules and Details:

- Contest will run from April 1, 2026, until August 14, 2026; however, submitted photos can be taken outside of this date range.
- Three (3) photos per member will be accepted.
- **NEW RULE: If submitting more than one photo, they must be from two (2) different seasons.**
- All OEC members 18 years old and over are eligible to submit photos.
- An OEC member under the age of 18 years old is eligible to participate, but must submit a parent/guardian form with entry.
- A completed entry form must accompany each photo.
- Member must own rights to photo.
- OEC employees will determine the winning photos.

Photo Contest Entry Options:

- **Upload** using the Photo Contest Entry Form, found on oakdalerec.coop, under the Member Benefits tab.
- **Mail** to P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI, 54649 | Photo(s) must be 8"x10" in size and at least 300 dpi
- **Drop off** at Oakdale Electric Cooperative Office —489 N Oakwood St., Tomah | Photo(s) must be 8"x10" in size, and at least 300 dpi





Chronicles of the Co-op

1996-2006

This month we celebrate Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 90th anniversary going into the 21st century by highlighting 1996 – 2006.

1996 – The co-op got a new toll-free emergency/outage number 1-800-927-6151, which remains the same to date.



1998 – Setting a foundation for children's dreams, cooperative employees brought manpower and a digger truck to help build Tomah's Winnebago Wonderland play park. The cooperative and its employees' involvement exemplified the meaning of the seventh cooperative principle – Concern for Community.



2000 – Bruce Ardel (right) received a hearty congratulatory handshake from retiring general manager Eugene Edgerton. On January 1, 2000, Ardel became the fourth manager in the 63-year history of Oakdale Electric Cooperative.

2002 – The co-op began selling computers offering Hewlett-Packard (HP) and Compaq models with a manufacturer's warranty. Special low-interest financing was available through Oakdale Credit Union.

2004 – Emerging animal waste-to-energy technology made its way to Oakdale Electric's generation and transmission provider Dairyland Power Cooperative's renewable energy mix. As well as a landfill gas-to-energy facility to operate alongside the already high-producing wind turbines for renewable energy.

2006 – Terry Tiber was awarded the Herman C. Potthast Award that is presented annually by the Wisconsin REC Training and Safety Committee. The award is presented to the worker in Wisconsin rural electrification who best represents those qualities of dedication, leadership, cooperation, and service that were exemplified by "Pottie". The award was first presented in 1973 and the following Oakdale Electric Cooperative employees also received the award: Lloyd McCaskey, 1974; Dan Hoag, 1985; and Jim Hayward and Scott Brookman, 1991.

1997 – For years and still today, motivational speaker Craig Hillier teaches students at Youth Leadership Conference the importance of teamwork, communication, and accountability.



1999 – Prior to the year 2000, here are statistics from 1999:

- Number of Services – 13,758
- New Services – 360
- Capital Credits Retired – \$8,005,865
- Miles of Line – 2,453
- kWh sold – 178,975,108

2001 – To better serve the membership, Oakdale Electric began accepting credit card, debit card, and check card payments. Operation Round Up was founded to reflect the seventh cooperative principle – Concern for Community. The voluntary program still only averages \$6 per year per participating member, but that small change has given back over \$350,000 to local communities.

2003 – To accommodate the growing membership needs, the co-op broke ground at the new Oakdale Electric building site.



2005 – After Hurricane Katrina blacked out a geographic area the size of Great Britain, Wisconsin electric cooperatives convoyed to just north of New Orleans, Louisiana. Employees of Oakdale Electric who volunteered to help were Joe Engel, Todd Duncan, Danny Moore, Scott Brookman, Stewart Walters, Bob Thompson, and Andy Steele.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI 54649
608-372-4131 • 800-241-2468

[f](#) [X](#) [i](#) 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.