



ANNUAL MEETING Q&A FOLLOW UP

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

Our annual meeting was held on April 27. I would like to thank all the members who were able to attend and learn more about our cooperative. For those who were not able to attend, I hope you can join us next year. This month, I am going to provide answers to the questions members asked during the business meeting.

Incentives Our incentive/rebate program is managed by Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC). One requirement for the appliance rebate is the appliances need to be ENERGY STAR certified products. ENERGY STAR is a government-backed energy efficiency program administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Certification as “ENERGY STAR approved” is a helpful standard for energy efficiency thresholds and is a straightforward way for co-op members to confirm expected energy efficiency and related cost savings. Additionally, it qualifies for efficiency standard requirements outlined in the incentive programs offered to our members.



Members can also get incentives through our participation in Focus on Energy, a Wisconsin-based program. Please go to www.oakdalerec.com/focus-energy to learn more about available energy-saving incentives.

Battery Storage Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) currently does not have any large-scale battery storage systems established on our distribution network. We are closely monitoring this technology and have tentative plans to deploy a system within the next five years. Right now, these batteries are expensive, and depending on the size, last for only four to six hours before being fully discharged and needing to be recharged. Although the batteries do not last long, we are evaluating how battery storage could be used during our peak demand times. They could eventually put stored energy back onto our grid so there would be less demand on our substations.

Solar Savings Since December 2023, OEC has had two solar gardens in operation that combined generate a total of 4.5 megawatts of energy annually. Although OEC does not technically own these two solar gardens, we have a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the developer, which means we purchase the electricity at a set price.

We purchase the electricity for less than if we bought it from our wholesale provider DPC, which provides small savings for the entire membership annually. Unfortunately, due to the small savings, you will not see a lower electric bill each month. There would need to be a more significant amount of solar energy (at a lower cost) installed on our system before we'd really see a difference in our bills. Currently, this is not feasible, but I can assure you we are doing everything we can to keep our rates as low as possible.

Director Election



District #2 James Van Wychen, District #4 Richard Barrett, and District #5 Martin Potter ran uncontested and were reelected to the board of directors.

Bylaws Changes Passed



There are two changes:

The first amendment will change the number of members required to sign a nomination petition for a candidate for a director position from fifteen (15) to ten (10) members.

The second amendment is to create a quicker/expedited voting procedure when one of the elections for a director position is uncontested (i.e., only one person has been nominated at the time of voting).

Prize Winners



Co-op Cash Cards: (\$250) Kris F., (\$100) Les H., Sue P., Arden E., Duane W., and Sandra B.

Bird Houses: Nana G. and Joan H.

Maple Trees: Steven S. and Sandra J.

EV & Ice Cream game winners: Karen A., Tim J., and Don S.

NEW SUMMER HOURS

Beginning in June – August 30, office lobby hours are Monday – Thursday 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., closed Fridays.

A full recap of the annual meeting can be found on our website at www.oakdalerec.com/annual-meeting.



Congratulations

2024 Oakdale Electric Scholarship Recipients



Kate Forster
Mauston High School
Joshua & Valerie Forster
UW-Oshkosh
Nursing



Ahren Heinrich
Mauston High School
Adam & Amie Heinrich
UW-La Crosse
Computer Science



Trey Laridaen
Mauston High School
Steve & Eve Laridaen
UW-Madison
Nursing



Kayla Pederson
Mauston High School
Deb & Kevin Pederson
Western Technical College-
La Crosse, Associates of
Science



Jasper Walsh
Mauston High School
Justin & Kim Walsh
UW-Madison
Finance



Christopher Suzda
Necedah High School
Jim & Cindy Suzda
Western Technical College
Business Management &
Graphic Design



Carson Welter
New Lisbon High School
Amy Hoogstra and Jason &
Jenny Welter
UW-Eau Claire, Nursing



Ezra Fiala
Pittsville High School
David & Dana Fiala
Chippewa Valley Technical
College, Data Science



Ethan Schneider
Reedsburg Area High School
Troy & Jennifer Schneider
UW-Platteville
Business



Brooklyn Gruen
Royall High School
David & Jennifer Gruen
UW-La Crosse, Kinesiology
& Physical Therapy



Marah Gruen
Royall High School
Mark & Sarah Gruen
UW-Eau Claire
Nursing



Tyrus Wildes
Royall High School
Tom & Cathy Wildes
Southwest Technical College
Lineworker Program &
Scholarship



Josie Bailey
Tomah High School
Brock & Nelda Bailey
UW-River Falls
Agriculture Education



Ava McKie
Tomah High School
Michael & Ekko Jensen
Brown University
International & Public Affairs



Ashton Steele
Tomah High School
Ryan & Shana Steele
UW-Madison
Finance & Accounting



Jack Walters
Tomah High School
Stewart & Sarah Walters
UW-La Crosse
Computer Science

Linda is pictured with her son Cole, husband Kevin, and daughter Kelli harvesting their cranberry marsh in fall of 2023.

A CAREER ASPIRATION, *Achieved*

Linda Pierce was not new to the utility industry when she started at Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) 25 years ago. While finishing her bachelor's degree in accounting, Linda worked at the local telephone company. However, that company was bought out and with her young family, it was time to find new employment. Although OEC did not have an accounting position available, Linda heard it was a great place to work with opportunities to grow.

Linda was hired for a customer service position and luckily, after seven months, the opportunity to move up arrived, and she became the accountant. Linda felt like she was finally where she was supposed to be. Fast forward to 2017, Linda was promoted to finance director. "Growing within the company and becoming finance director was my career aspiration and I achieved that," she reflected.

In a decorated career spanning over two decades, a lot can change. Linda said, "Technology has advanced so much from when I started. From how members pay their bills, where we file information, and how we communicate in-house and to members, we really had to keep up with the times."

Linda won't forget one memorable challenge back in 2018 when major parts of OEC service area were flooded, causing poles and lines to wash out. The event was declared a major disaster, and the co-op was entitled to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funds.

"Most people don't know or understand that our poles and wire are not insurable, so when disaster hit, it hit the co-op financially," Linda stated. "Working with FEMA was difficult in having to record all counties separately and the hours of meetings and paperwork involved to ensure the co-op got the money needed to help rebuild our lines." Working directly with government agencies can be difficult, especially in times of disaster. Linda maneuvered the intricate documentation process and helped the cooperative successfully overcome a difficult time.

Although there can be natural disasters, the co-op runs on a principle called Concern for Community. Linda became the accountant for the Federated Youth Foundation (FYF), which supports cooperatives across the state. At OEC, members' unclaimed capital credits go into the co-op's FYF fund. Many donations and

scholarships are awarded using FYF dollars, to go back into the communities we live in and serve. "Seeing FYF grow over the years makes me feel good that the funds are providing education and charitable giving versus turning it over to the state like an investor-owned utility," Linda stated.

As the finance director, Linda supervised the cooperative's billing department employees. She always enjoyed coming to work and appreciated her fellow coworkers just as they appreciated her. "After the challenges of working from home during the pandemic, coming back to work was like the first day of school with getting to see everyone again. It's our co-op family," she said.

With no deadlines to meet, financial forecasting, or numbers to analyze, Linda plans to stay busy in retirement. She will continue holding the positions of president and secretary of the Warren Mills Cemetery and treasurer of the Snowmobile Trails in Monroe County, and tending to her and husband Kevin's small cranberry marsh. Plenty of travel and quality time with family and friends are also in her future.

Linda concluded with, "I'll miss my co-op family and I'm just blessed I picked the right career for me."



Linda and her team, L-R: newly appointed finance director Rachel Winrich, Consumer Service Specialist Maribeth O'Dell, Linda Pierce, Billing & CIS Specialist Tina Von Haden, and Consumer Service Specialist Heather Linenberg.

RACHEL PROMOTED

Following Linda's footsteps, former accountant Rachel Winrich was promoted to finance director.

Linda shared, "Rachel has proven herself to be a very driven analytical person and I have no doubt she will do amazing as finance director; the co-op will be in very good hands with her."

Rachel reflected on her promotion with, "Linda is someone who I aspire to be both as an individual and supervisor. I'm very appreciative to have had her guidance over the past six years and I'm excited to utilize that knowledge by leading our team into the future."



WELCOME, DEANNA



Newly appointed accountant Deanna Oliver joined the co-op in March. Deanna has a bachelor's degree in accounting and business administration with an emphasis in finance from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She also has seven years of prior cooperative experience.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO


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Jackie McGlin, Editor



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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