



# UNPLUG With Meaningful Community Programs

Chris Tackmann, General Manager & CEO

Most adults have a vague memory of a time when “checking for messages” meant listening to an answering machine. We carried on with our days without relying on cell phones and managed just fine. But today, we are more connected than ever through our smart phones and other devices.

Our phones are so much more now—from cameras to calendars to social media connections—and truly disconnecting from them can be tough. But it’s even harder for our kids to unplug because they only know life with these tiny screens. It’s difficult for them to imagine life without computers, gaming devices, tablets, or cell phones.

But there’s great value in unplugging for children and adults, even if it’s for just a short period of time. For kids, time away from the screen to be outside with other children allows them to connect with nature and others in a way that a virtual experience simply does not allow. They are able to experience life in the moment and allow their creativity and energy to break free.

Fortunately, we have access to great community programs and organizations that provide children with a safe place to play, learn, and grow, while cultivating new skills and interests. Clubs such as 4-H, Boys & Girls Scouts, FFA, and other programs offer kids an opportunity to explore activities and interests outside of school academics.

Children can investigate areas they might not otherwise have access to and discover new interests and passions. They often learn new skills and strengthen existing ones. It’s no secret that the broader the range of experiences and activities

children are exposed to, the more likely they are to find their own path and possibly a career. Community programs also foster important leadership development and public speaking skills. Through guided and informal play and activities, children learn problem-solving and interpersonal skills that enable them to resolve conflicts peacefully and improve interpersonal relationships.

Adults can also find meaningful opportunities to spend time with the kids when we all unplug. From board games to craft projects to playing in the park, there are many ways we can unplug for some family fun.

While you and your children are disconnecting, take a moment to identify potential energy savings. Unplug electronics that are not in use to avoid “vampire” energy loss. This is the energy that is drained from technology and electronics even when they are not in use. For example, although it is turned off, your TV is waiting to receive a signal from the remote and your DVR is waiting to record the next show or perform an update.

Let’s encourage youngsters to step away from the screens and join in—to play and be part of an organization that helps them connect with others and find meaningful interactions and explore new activities and interests.

When you do plug back in, Oakdale Electric is here to help you save money and energy by connecting you with our energy-saving programs and services. Unplug with us at our **Member Appreciation Event on Saturday, October 15,** from 7:30–11 a.m.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONGRESS OFFERS FUN, FRIENDSHIP, AND LEARNING

Youth Leadership Congress (YLC) resumed in person this year. Oakdale Electric Cooperative (OEC) sponsored 16 students, from six local high schools, to attend the 59th Annual YLC at UW-Stout July 12–14. This event is a unique opportunity for youth across Wisconsin to develop their leadership skills while learning the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative businesses. The event is sponsored by Wisconsin’s electric cooperatives and facilitated by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA).

Students go from shy and timid, to making lifelong friends. The three days were packed with team-building

activities, leadership break-out sessions, motivational speaker Craig Hillier, safety presentation with Ben Bella, campaigning for the Youth Board, etiquette dinner, and rounded out with some fun with a hypnotist. Following YLC, students have scholarship opportunities to apply for through WECA and OEC.

Interested in attending next year’s Youth Leadership Congress? Contact Jackie McGlin, [jmclin@oakdalerec.com](mailto:jmclin@oakdalerec.com), to learn how you can take part in this cooperative tradition.



# ALL ROADS LEAD TO INCLUSION



## Tomah Special Olympics

Dave and Kay Larson have been involved with the Tomah Special Olympics through their son, Justin Larson, for 37 years. Justin participates in basketball, track, power lifting, bowling, and has gone to state in bocce ball. He has also earned bronze, silver, and gold medals at State Special Olympics. "The athletes do an excellent job working together and building each other up; it's a group effort. We're a family and the community support means a lot to all of us," stated Dave Larson.

**Sports/Activities:** bowling, basketball, bocce ball, power lifting, track & field, and trips based on community support.

**Ages:** 8+

**Contact:** Joe Protz, Tomah Parks & Recreation Director  
jprotz@tomahonline.com



## Sparta Parks & Recreation

**Sports/Activities:** basketball, basketball skills clinic, bowling, craft days, dinner events, N.A.S.A. fishing events, track & field, and walking clubs.

**Ages:** All ages

**Contact:** Brad Gilbertson, Sparta Parks & Recreation Director  
parkdir@spartawisconsin.org



## Brookwood Adaptive Recreation

Brookwood Adaptive Recreation has been a part of Special Olympics for 20 years and is expanding the program to be more inclusive for all community members. They will continue to offer sports but will add other non-athletic activities. "Many of our families are on fixed incomes and activity fees add up quickly. With that, this donation is huge for us to provide those opportunities because socialization is very important. Our core is to provide opportunities, socialization, and comfort for a family-friendly environment," stated Heidi Kelly.

**Sports/Activities:** sports, arts & crafts, cooking classes, community outings, movie nights, and more.

**Ages:** All ages

**Contact:** Heidi Kelly, Program Advisor  
hkelly@now.k12.wi.us





**C**oncern for Community – the seventh cooperative principle works for the sustainable development of communities. A community organization that empowers individuals with intellectual disabilities to become accepted and valued members of their communities, is Special Olympics. With year-round sports and activities, Special Olympics programs provide opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families for a more respectful and inclusive society for all.

In order to provide such opportunities, Oakdale Electric Cooperative partnered with CoBank, a member-owned cooperative bank, to contribute nearly \$20,000 to six community Special Olympics programs across the cooperative’s service territory. Co-op employees presented a \$3,300 donation to the communities of Tomah, Reedsburg, Sparta, Brookwood, South Wood County, and Sauk County to use towards activity expenses. Employees pictured from left are Deana Protz, executive assistant/HR administrator; Chris Tackmann, general manager & CEO; Chad Schauf, IT director; and Linda Pierce, finance director.

Each Special Olympics and recreation program is unique in its own way. Donate or get involved by viewing contact information for each organization or visiting [www.specialolympicswisconsin.org](http://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org).

### South Wood County Special Olympics

**Sports/Activities:** bocce ball, bowling, track & field, and softball.

**Ages:** 15+

**Contact:** Mark Herzberg, Program Director  
swmark@wctc.net



“I think people really care about us,” stated Jay Bremmer. Jay competed at the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games and brought home the gold in bocce ball.



### Sauk County Special Olympics

“This donation will definitely make it easier on the athletes and families financially, which is what we strive for with our program,” stated Amanda Armstrong, program director.

**Sports/Activities:** basketball skills, basketball team, bocce ball, bowling, flag football, track & field, and a wreath sale starting in October.

**Ages:** 15-70+

**Contact:** Amanda Armstrong, Program Director  
amanda@casadeoakes.com



“Not many people know about us and so any help that we can get is much appreciated,” stated Amanda Stroinski. Amanda earned three gold medals in bowling at the Special Olympics USA Games in 2014.

### Reedsburg Area Schools Special Olympics

“This donation is greatly needed and appreciated. From equipment and uniforms, to state event registration, meals and hotels, this donation will help tremendously,” stated Dan Gasser, coach & agency manager.

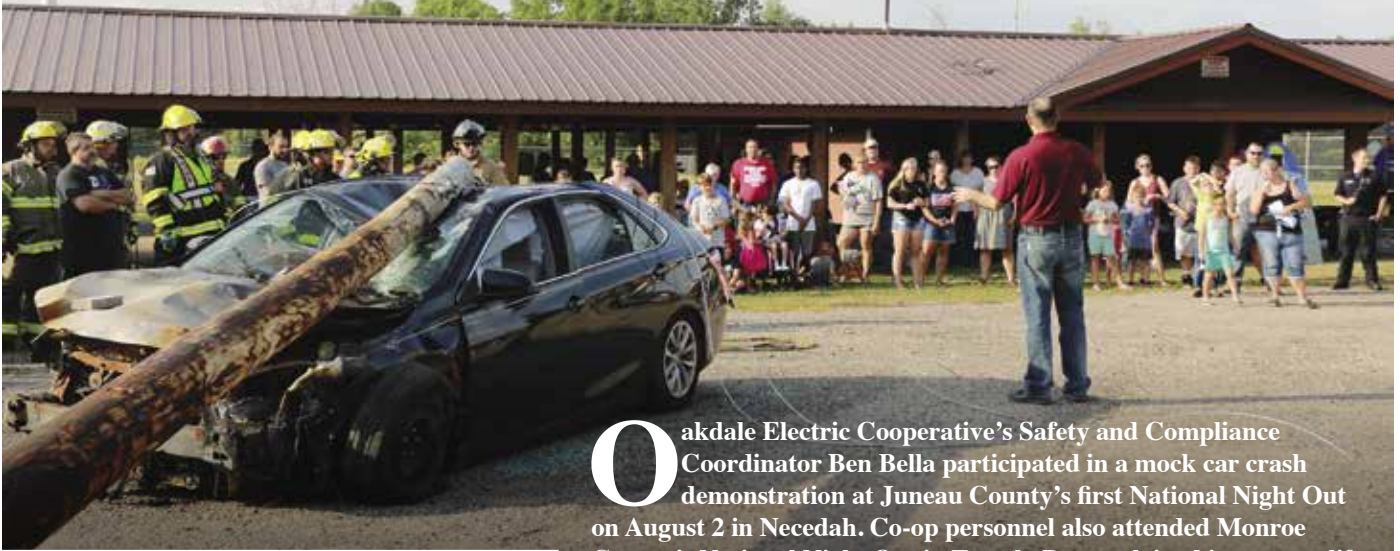
**Sports/Activities:** basketball, bowling, flag football, and track & field.

**Ages:** 8-21 (school age)

**Contact:** Dan Gasser, Coach & Agency Manager, Reedsburg Special Olympics  
dgasser@rsd.k12.wi.us



# SAFETY AWARENESS NIGHT OUT



**O**akdale Electric Cooperative's Safety and Compliance Coordinator Ben Bella participated in a mock car crash demonstration at Juneau County's first National Night Out on August 2 in Necedah. Co-op personnel also attended Monroe County's National Night Out in Tomah. Ben explained important life-saving procedures if your vehicle were to be in an accident involving a utility line. Youth were also able to partake in an activity by wearing lineworker protective gloves and assembling various nuts and bolts.



Above: Area Service Foreman Brock Brown and Journeyman Lineman Travis Moser removed the de-energized power line during the mock crash.

Right: Kylee Anderson of Necedah volunteered to show how to exit the vehicle per Ben's narration and partook in the lineworker activity.



Review Ben's questions and answers below to know what to do to save your life.

**What should I do if I am in an accident involving a power line or other electrical equipment?** DO NOT get out of your vehicle. It is always safer to remain inside a vehicle, which acts as an insulator and keeps you out of the path of stray electricity. Call 911, and tell the dispatcher a downed line or other electrical equipment is involved. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to de-energize the power.

**Is there any reason I should exit the vehicle?** Yes, but only when your vehicle is on fire or you see smoke. If that is the case, make a clean jump from the vehicle with your feet together and without touching the vehicle. Then hop with feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground as far as you can, 50 or more feet away is preferred.

**What else can I do?** Roll your window down and yell to others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.

Learn more by visiting <http://safeelectricity.org/license-to-live/>.

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**Jackie McGlin, Editor**



**Oakdale Electric  
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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 866-392-4307

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