

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

January 2026



**PIERCE PEPIN**

**COOPERATIVE SERVICES**

**Live Better<sup>®</sup>**

A Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperative







Nate Boettcher,  
President and CEO

## Congratulations on your retirement, Liz!



Cooperative Services, for her final message before she sails into retirement. For nearly 25 years, Liz has worked tirelessly, often behind the scenes—shaping our section of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* and ensuring our

This month's newsletter is a bittersweet one for me, as I hand over my CEO column to Liz Gunderson, our Communications Coordinator at Pierce Pepin

monthly newsletter always hit the right notes. Beyond her editorial work, Liz has been instrumental in the success of every co-op event, annual meeting, and member activity we've hosted. Her dedication, creativity, and passion have helped define so much of what we do today as a cooperative.

We are deeply grateful for Liz's many contributions, and we wish her all the joy and relaxation that retirement brings. And now, without further ado—take it away, Liz!

## A LITTLE NOSTALGIA AND A LOT OF GRATITUDE



Nearly 25 years ago, I walked through the doors of Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) as an administrative assistant, splitting my time between marketing/communications and information technology. In just a few short days, I'll be retiring from the cooperative—a bittersweet milestone that has me reflecting on the journey.

The COVID-19 pandemic was another defining moment. Thanks to technology, our office staff worked remotely, ensuring members continued to receive the support they needed. It was inspiring to see how our members supported one another during such a challenging time.

One initiative especially close to my heart is Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Since becoming the local affiliate in 2021, PPCS has provided books to nearly 2,000 children in Pierce and Pepin Counties—a legacy I'm proud to have been part of.

### Looking Back

When I first arrived, PPCS was in the midst of a major building renovation. In fact, one of my first jobs was to order furniture for the new spaces, most of which is still in use. Since then, we've completed two more significant projects, each adding space and amenities to better serve our members and employees.

One of my favorite memories was helping plan our 75th anniversary celebration. The highlight was a one-man play featuring Jay Nesseth as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, bringing to life the story of how rural electric cooperatives began as part of FDR's New Deal.

Over the years, PPCS has evolved in many ways. When I was hired, there were at least five divisions with a total of 42 employees. Over the years, divisions were closed or sold, and by 2017, our team was reduced to 26 employees. Then, in 2021, PPCS launched its broadband subsidiary, and today we're back to about 40 employees.

Technology has transformed our work over the past 24 years. When I started, we relied on a DOS-based billing system and had an in-house programmer. In 2011, we moved to a Windows-based platform, and now most of our applications are cloud-based. Artificial intelligence (AI) is now in the workplace and gaining more uses every day.

### With Gratitude

I've had the privilege of coordinating countless parades, member events, and community gatherings. Each one was an opportunity to connect with our members, who have always been gracious and kind—even when sharing concerns. I'm equally grateful for my colleagues at PPCS and across Wisconsin's cooperatives. From day one, I was welcomed and supported by people eager to share their knowledge. Any success I've had is thanks to that spirit of teamwork and cooperation that defines the co-op world.

As I step away, I'm excited to pass the torch to Emily Keeler, who joined PPCS in June. Emily has quickly embraced all things cooperative, and I know she'll do an excellent job keeping members informed and engaged. When you see her at an event, please give her the same warm welcome you've always given me.

Preparing for retirement reminds me of Carol Burnett's famous sign-off (younger folks, you'll have to YouTube it): "I'm so glad we had this time together." It perfectly captures how much I've enjoyed my time at PPCS, how quickly the years have flown, and how thankful I am for the friendships and experiences. This isn't goodbye—just "so long."

— Liz Gunderson



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QUILTS, COMMUNITY,  
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**BIND IN WITTENBERG**

**PICKING WINNERS AND SOLAR LOSERS**

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS**

**SHEET PAN RECIPES**





# SAVE THE DATE



# 89TH

# ANNUAL MEETING

**April 9, 2026 5:00 P.M.**  
**Ellsworth High School**  
**323 Hillcrest Street, Ellsworth, WI**



# SIMPLER BILLS, BIGGER BENEFITS: THE MOVE TO A SINGLE CYCLE

by Becky Bradburn, Vice President of Finance & Chief Financial Officer

At Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, our mission is to provide reliable, affordable electricity while keeping operations efficient and member-focused. Beginning **March 1, 2026**, we will transition from three separate billing cycles to **one unified billing cycle for all electric members**.

## Why Are We Making This Change?

Currently, our members are billed for electricity on three different schedules. While this system has worked for many years, it creates complexity in operations, accounting, and member communication. By moving to a single cycle, we can streamline processes, reduce administrative costs, and improve consistency across the cooperative.

## How Does This Benefit You?

- **Simplified Communication:** All electric bills will be sent at the same time, making it easier to remember due dates and stay on top of payments.
- **Improved Efficiency:** A single bill cycle reduces processing time and costs, allowing us to focus more resources on service improvements and reliability.
- **Enhanced Transparency:** With everyone on the same schedule, updates, notices, and reminders will be clearer and more timely.
- **Cost Savings Over Time:** Operational efficiencies help us control expenses, which supports our commitment to keeping rates as low as possible.

## What Will Change for You?

Your bill will now be **mailed on the 10th** of the month, and payment will be due on **the last day of the month**. If you use automatic payments or budget billing, they will be adjusted to the new schedule automatically.

We understand that change can raise questions, and we're here to help. If you have concerns about the transition or need assistance adjusting your payment schedule, please contact us at **800-924-2133** or visit **www.piercepepin.coop**.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we make this improvement. This change is one more way we're working to serve you better and keep our cooperative strong for the future.



## PPCS has rebates and incentives to help you save money in 2026

As a member of PPCS, you have access to various rebates and incentives available through our ElectricSense program and our partnership with the Focus on Energy program. From appliances to water heaters, PPCS can help you save energy and money and live more comfortably. Information about rebates and incentives is on our website at [www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates](http://www.piercepepin.coop/programs-rebates) and the Focus on Energy websites at [www.focusonenergy.com/piercepepin](http://www.focusonenergy.com/piercepepin).



### DID YOU KNOW?

## SHIFT for Savings

Reduce non-essential energy use from 7 to 11 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m.

Together, we can lower demand and help keep rates stable.





# PPCS MEMBERS SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY THROUGH PIERCE PEPIN CARES GRANTS

Thank you, PPCS members - Your small change is changing lives!

In 2025, Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation awarded \$33,400 to local organizations for the betterment of our communities. Pierce Pepin Cares Foundation is funded through Operation Round Up and direct donations. Operation Round Up allows PPCS members to round up their monthly energy bills to the next dollar and pool this money. On average, this amounts to about \$6.00 per member annually. These donations allow the cooperative to support worthy causes on behalf of our members that benefit everyone in our community.

"The majority of our members participate in Operation Round Up. Their generosity allows us to support those less fortunate, which is a testament to our members' concern for their communities," says Nate Boettcher, president and CEO.



## 2025 Pierce Pepin Cares Grant Recipients

Organization	Amount Awarded
AutismLM Corp.	\$1,000
Family Resource Center St. Croix Valley	\$1,000
Basics for Local Kids	\$1,000
Staying Put, Inc.	\$1,000
Durand Fire Relief	\$500
Spring Valley Fire Department	\$500
Ellsworth Ambulance Service	\$2,500
Among Friends	\$1,000
Just Do Something	\$500
Kinne-Englehart American Legion Auxiliary #204	\$1,000
River Valley Charities	\$2,000
St. Croix Habitat for Humanity	\$500
St. Croix Valley Restorative Services	\$1,000
The 2911 Project	\$500
Elsie's Barnyard	\$1,000
Free Clinics of Pierce & St. Croix Counties	\$1,000
Chippewa Valley Scouting	\$600
HEART	\$600
Bridging Brighter Smiles, Inc.	\$200
8 Local Food Pantries	\$16,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$33,400</b>

In addition to the Pierce Pepin Cares grants, grants for educational purposes were also provided through the Federated Youth Foundation (FYF), which is funded through abandoned capital credits.

## 2025 Federated Youth Foundation

Scholarships	\$6,000
Community Safety Net	\$1,350.40
NRECA Youth Tour	\$2,800
Dolly Pardon Imagination Library	\$12,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$22,150.40</b>

# NEW YEAR, LOWER BILLS

## YOUR STEP-BY-STEP EFFICIENCY GUIDE



Looking for a New Year's resolution that actually sticks? A DIY home energy audit is one of the smartest ways to kick off the new year. Learn where your home is leaking energy, and money, through drafty windows, energy vampires and inefficient heating or cooling systems. With a few simple checks, you can boost comfort and shrink your utility bills all year long.

We'll start with simple, no-cost changes you can do right away, then move on to tasks that take a little more effort.

### Step 1: Adjust your thermostat

- Revisit your thermostat settings each season. Lowering the temperature at night or when no one is home is a simple way to cut costs.
- Use a smart thermostat for even greater savings. (Check with your utility providers for rebates or discounts on smart thermostat upgrades).

### Step 2: Lower water heater temperature

- Lower your water heater temperature to save money and reduce the risk of scalding burns. Some water heaters are factory-set to 140F, but most households only need 120F.

### Step 3: Find and fix energy drains

- Unplug appliances when not in use and fully power down devices like computers or gaming consoles. Use a smart power strip to shut off multiple electronics at once and stop energy waste at the source.

### Step 4: Check your lighting

- Swap out older bulbs, like incandescent or CFLs, for LEDs. They use less energy and last longer.
- Choose LEDs with features like daylight shut off or motion sensors for outdoor fixtures or add dimmers or timers to cut down on wasted electricity.

### Step 5: Review major appliances

- Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying new.
- Check your heating and cooling systems. Their lifespan can range from 10-30 years, depending on the type and maintenance.
- Replace air filters to keep your system running efficiently.

### Step 6: Seal leaks

- Air leaks can waste 10-20% of your home's energy each year, but they're often simple to fix.
- Check baseboards, floor edges

and wall-to-ceiling joints indoors. Focus on where different materials meet outdoors. Pay special attention to windows, doors, light fixtures, plumbing, and outlets.

### Step 7: Inspect insulation

- Check attic insulation: Check the depth of the insulation. It should be at least 12 inches deep, depending on the type and your climate. Check EnergyStar.gov for recommended R-values.
- Inspect exterior walls: Check insulation by turning off power, removing an outlet cover or switch plate, and shining a flashlight into the cavity. Many homes built before the 1960s have little to no insulation, and houses from the 1960s-70s often need more. Call a professional to blow in insulation (from the outside or inside) if wall insulation is missing.

Don't forget the basement:

- Ensure rim joists (the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the first floor) are well insulated in unfinished basements.
- Insulate the underside of the floor between the joists in crawl spaces, and add insulation to pipes and ductwork for an extra efficiency boost.

Enjoy your energy savings!

Congratulations, you've taken important steps toward lowering your energy bills and boosting comfort.

*Source: SafeElectricity.org*



**Nate Boettcher, President & CEO**  
**Emily Keeler, Editor**

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Follow us on Facebook, X, and Instagram  
**Office Hours:** Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.  
**Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705**

# 2026 CALENDAR

We've got lots of great events planned for 2026. We hope you will join us – each time you attend a member-focused event you will be entered in our drawing for three (3) \$100 bill credits to be awarded in December 2026. Watch our monthly magazine, *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, for event updates, as well as on our website, Facebook, Instagram, and X.

**January 1** Happy New Year! Our office is closed for the New Year holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**March 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award and applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are both due. Information is available at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

**April** Capital credit allocation notices are mailed in April.

**April 3** Happy Easter! Our office is closed on Good Friday (April 3) for the Easter holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**April 9\*** Annual Meeting

**April 13** Lineman Appreciation Day

**April 17** Arbor Day

**May** Electric Safety Awareness Month

**May 22 & 25** Happy Memorial Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**June 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award and applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are both due. Information is available at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

**July 3** Happy Fourth of July! Our office is closed in observance of the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**July 14-16** Youth Leadership Conference. PPCS sponsors high school juniors and seniors for a 3-day conference at UW-Stout. Seniors can compete for scholarships. Find details on our website: [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

**August 13-16\*** Join us at the Pierce County Fair! Our booth is in the Round Barn.

**September 4 & 7** Happy Labor Day! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**September 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award and applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are both due. Information is available at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

**October** Happy National Cooperative Month!

**October 9\*** Coffee at the Co-op from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Stop in and enjoy coffee, donuts, and good conversations.

**October 24\*** Join us from 9 to 11:30 a.m. for a member appreciation pancake breakfast.

**November** Watch for your capital credit retirement over the next few weeks. Members receiving a retirement of over \$100 will receive a check in the mail. Those receiving less than \$100 will receive a bill credit.

**November 26 & 27** Happy Thanksgiving! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

**December 7-18** Join us for our Holiday Open House – cookies, coffee, and hot apple cider. Pick up your 2027 complimentary calendar!

**December 15** Nominations for the Live Better Community Service Award and applications for Pierce Pepin Cares grants are both due. Information is available at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop) under My Community.

**December 24-25** Merry Christmas! Our office is closed for the holiday. Electric outages can be reported through SmartHub or by calling 800-927-5705. Internet issues can be reported by calling 715-350-7033.

*\*Indicates member-focused event.*

\*Attending this member-focused event will provide you with an entry in our prize drawing for three (3) \$100 bill credits held in December 2026.

Stay tuned for more events to come throughout the year! We want to hear from you – please check your favorite events or give us a new idea!

\_\_\_ Coffee at the Co-op                      \_\_\_ Trivia Night  
\_\_\_ EV Ride & Drive                        \_\_\_ Paint & Sip  
\_\_\_ Pie & Ice Cream Social                \_\_\_ Other (tell us below)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Responses can be mailed back to:

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services  
ATTN: Emily Keeler  
W7725 US Highway 10  
Ellsworth, WI 54011

Or emailed to: [ekeeler@piercepepin.coop](mailto:ekeeler@piercepepin.coop)





# Happy New Gear!

THE NEW YEAR HAS BEGUN, AND  
YOUR HOME MAY HAVE  
NEW INTERNET-CONNECTED  
DEVICES IN IT.

The more devices you have, the more  
speed you need — to enjoy the best  
internet experience. Ask us about  
upgrading to a faster speed.



SWIFTCURRENT®  
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BROADBAND POWERED BY PPCS

