

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* December 2023 NEWS

PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

EVERGLEAM, EVER HOPEFUL

MAKING HISTORY, FILLING A NEED

ENERGY-SAVING GADGETS AND GIZMOS

BEST OF KIDS AND CRITTERS





Nate Boettcher,
President and CEO

A SEASON FOR MAKING MEMORIES

I have nostalgia for this time of year. As a kid, almost every Christmas was spent with my grandparents in Menomonie. For many of those years, I lived in South Dakota and would travel by car to Wisconsin. I remember driving through small towns' main streets. Back in those days, the main street was where people shopped. Utility poles had lighted decorations and window shops were decorated for the holidays. Brightly lit "Seasons Greetings" hung over the main entrance to town and you could sense the holiday spirit. I can still feel the anticipation of pulling into my grandparents' driveway and seeing the lit Christmas tree in the front window, the big wreath lit in blue bulbs hung on the garage, and the smell of grandma's house and the freezers—yes, multiple—full of cookies and treats. Most years there was snow, which meant opportunities to go sledding at the Dunn County Fairgrounds only to rush home and turn on that vintage electric fireplace with the fake logs. In hindsight, it never occurred to me how many of the memories created during the holidays were powered by electricity.

Every year I think about my childhood, hoping to give my children their own version of Christmas memories. My kids have enjoyed going to the various holiday parades, something I don't remember as a kid. They like the day when we go get our real Christmas tree and then decorate it the next day once it has settled. But I often wonder if I have forgotten to really take time and enjoy the holidays with them and create those extra special memories. Everything seems like a rush. A rush to get this or that done. A rush to make sure there are gifts wrapped and sent to other family members. A rush to make cookies or to put up lights. It seems like we get so busy that sometimes we just forget to take a step back, enjoy the season and remember that making memories might be the most important part of it all.

As we close out the year, which has been another great year at PPCS and SwiftCurrent Connect, I am going to take a few extra minutes this year to make memories. I am hoping we can do a few more things around the office to be festive and build camaraderie while filling our holiday spirit. I am looking forward to taking the entire week off between Christmas and New Year's to enjoy with family. By the time this hits your mailbox,

I am going to try to have my shopping done. I am going to hope for snow to make a white Christmas. I am going to watch more of those cheesy Hallmark movies. I am going to open one of those four bottles from Missouri to make mulled wine. And I'm going to make time for my family and friends so that we don't forget about those connections.

The beautiful part of what we do at PPCS and SwiftCurrent is that we enable those connections to happen. We enable those Christmas lights to shine brightly, we enable access to online shopping, and connecting with family that is far away. We enable our members to Live Better and that's special. But most importantly, it's my hope that we provide our community with a little bit of hope for the future, knowing that we will continue to make memories and continue to be here to serve all of you well into the future.

Lastly but most importantly, we will have a little extra memory savor this year at PPCS. If you are an avid reader of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, you will note that each month we provide four to five pages of local content provided by our PPCS staff. Each year, the Leifer Memorial Journalism Award is handed out to the cooperative that exhibits professionalism, great content, and informative news as part of these local pages. For the first time in our history, PPCS has won this award. Kudos goes out to Liz Gunderson for all that she does each month to make sure our members stay informed and have the latest news from the cooperative available to them. We are so excited and humbled to win this award and it's just a great way for us to wrap up the year!

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Happy Hanukkah! Happy Holidays! Wishing you all the best this holiday season.



Merry Christmas!
Office Closed: December 25

Report electric outages through SmartHub
or call 800-927-5705.
Call 866-307-5326 to report internet issues.

*We wish you a safe and
happy holiday!*



**HOLIDAY
open house**

**December 4 - 22
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Stop in and enjoy coffee,
hot apple cider, and
Christmas cookies.
Pick up your 2024
calendar, too!

*While supplies last.

PPCS HONORED WITH THE LEIFER MEMORIAL JOURNALISM AWARD

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) has been selected as the recipient of the 2023 N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award, bestowed upon the co-op adjudged to have had the strongest overall local pages in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* over the previous 12 months. Liz Gunderson, PPCS' communications coordinator, is the editor of the co-op's local pages.



Liz Gunderson, PPCS communications coordinator

This is PPCS' first-ever Leifer award since the local-pages contest was established in 1966, although the cooperative has won three individual category awards since Gunderson became the co-op's local-pages editor in 2017.

In selecting PPCS as this year's Leifer Award winner, independent judge Allison Jenkins said, "GREAT mix of features on community subjects, updates on fiber projects, co-op news/events, and energy education. I felt like this co-op had the most appealing pages with a solid mix of writing, content, and visual appeal."

"It is such an honor to receive this award on behalf of our cooperative," said Gunderson. "Each month I strive to provide information that is important for our members, as well as engaging. It is gratifying to be recognized in this way."

The Leifer Award is determined by a different independent judge each year, always a communications professional and usually one with a co-op background. The judge evaluates a sampling of each of the 19 individualized local sections within the magazine, produced by staff at each co-op and filled with information unique to each co-op.


REMINDER:
Scholarships
Available

PPCS is awarding three \$1,000 scholarships for high school seniors graduating in spring 2024. Applications are due by December 15, 2023. Go to www.piercepepin.coop under My Community for the rules and entry form.

ElectricSense Rebate Forms Due December 27

ElectricSense rebate forms are due December 27, 2023. Any qualifying products or services purchased and/or installed from January 1 through December 27, 2023, are eligible if the required documentation is submitted with the proper forms by the due date. For information and rebate forms, visit www.piercepepin.coop or contact Member Relations.

BROADBAND BYTES

Quick Updates from Fiber Freddie

SwiftCurrent Connect is on pace to have 3,000 customers connected by the end of 2023. The winter freeze is on and that means we've had to halt construction due to frozen ground. We will resume construction as soon as the ground thaws in Spring 2024. We will continue to provide updates to customers as we move through the winter season.



- We are finishing construction areas in Kinnickinnic Township and scheduling installations in those areas.
- Troy 2 was completed and ready for activation as of October 27, 2023.
- Troy 3 was on pace to be completed by mid-November and then ready for activations to begin.
- Troy 1 is planned to be completed by the end of December, and then activations can begin.
- We will continue to splice homes and work on activations throughout the winter.
- Any new service order that we receive from now through spring will be held and ready to be worked as soon as construction season begins again.

YOU GET THE CREDIT!

PPCS will return almost \$700,000 to members in late November and December.

The PPCS board has approved a 3.33% capital credit retirement of each member's total allocations from 2003-2023. To date, PPCS has returned more than \$17.2 million in capital credits to its members.

You're getting a return on your investment in the cooperative.

That's the Power of Co-op Membership!





CO-OP MONTH WAS ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY

From Proclamations to Service Projects, PPCS Employees and Members Demonstrated the Power of Cooperatives

PPCS employees celebrated National Co-op Month (October) by focusing on acts of service. The month kicked off with employees participating in volunteer activities with Habitat for Humanity's Rock the Block and Dairyland Power Cooperative's Day of Service. PPCS employees hosted their own food drive and donated about 140 pounds to the local food shelf. Ellsworth High School students were invited to the cooperative to learn about cooperative careers. PPCS was honored along with the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery by proclamations from the Pierce County and St. Croix County Economic Development Corporations for living the 7th Cooperative Principle, "Concern for Community." And on Saturday, October 28, PPCS members were invited to a member appreciation pancake breakfast. The Ellsworth Lions Club cooked pancakes and served breakfast to 260 attendees. Real maple syrup was provided by S & S Sugarbush, and Maple Leaf Orchard donated apples. PPCS members donated 285 pounds of food and \$35 in cash for the food shelf. They also provided donations for Basics for Local Kids, overflowing our clothing bin. Prize drawing winners were Chuck Moehnke, Connor Johnson, Rhoda Foley, Ruth Wagner, Sandy Falde, and Fran Wayne. Wayne donated her \$50 gift card to the Basics for Local Kids program.





Serving up Savings

The holiday season is upon us, with festive music flooding the airwaves, sparkling lights and decorations adorning homes and businesses, and good tidings abound. The holidays also bring a frenzy of decorating, cooking, and family gatherings, and amid the hectic hustle and bustle, you may receive higher-than-usual energy bills. Keeping this in mind, I thought this month would be a good time to remind PPCS members of a few programs and efficiency tips to help lower your monthly energy use.

Programs designed to help you save.

Winter months typically bring some of the highest energy bills of the year. Making minor, low-cost improvements, like weatherstripping exterior doors and caulking around old, drafty windows, can help control energy bills. If you're not sure where to start, contact PPCS to schedule a free home energy audit.

We also offer load management programs for home and water heating, which can help you achieve greater savings by controlling when you use the most ener-

gy at home. I encourage you to give us a call if you'd like to learn about specific programs and services that can lower your bills.

Be festive without breaking the bank.

My wife, Brittani, insists that I bring the Christmas decorations down from the attic faster than we can finish the Thanksgiving turkey. With holiday lights adorning our home for well over a month, we decided to make the switch to LEDs to save energy.

LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights. To put that into perspective, the Department of Energy estimates that with standard holiday decorations, LED lights typically increase energy bills by about \$5 to \$7. But with incandescent lights, energy bills will typically increase by \$33 or more. For homes that go above and beyond with incandescent holiday lighting (think Clark Griswold), energy bills could increase by as much as \$350. Beyond energy savings, LEDs provide additional benefits: they're shock-resistant, shatterproof, and cool to the touch, making them safer for the home.

You can also lower energy use by conveniently managing holiday lighting. Smart light timers can help you save energy by connecting to a smart phone app or voice assistant to program lights to

turn on and off at set times. If you don't use smart home technology, you can still save energy by using traditional timers.

Additional easy ways to save during the holiday season include turning off overhead lights and using your Christmas tree to illuminate your home. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the flue when you're not burning a fire to ensure heat doesn't escape through the chimney.

Cooking up energy savings.

If you plan to have family and friends over this holiday season, you can cook up energy savings by using small countertop appliances like microwaves, air fryers, and slow cookers,


when possible, as they use much less energy than the stovetop or oven.

When using the oven, bake multiple dishes at once for maximum efficiency. Turn the oven off a few minutes before the recipe's end time and allow the residual heat to finish baking the dish. Once the food is done, leave the oven door ajar to allow the residual heat to warm the room. When using the stovetop, match the pan size to the burner to maximize the stove top's efficiency.

I hope a few of these tips will be helpful this holiday season. Remember, we're here to answer any questions you have about managing energy use or your monthly bills.






PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

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Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705

Nate Boettcher, President & CEO

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