

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY Cooperative

October 2024

NEWS





YOU Get the Credit

PPCS refunds over
\$673,000 to members

PPCS' board of directors has authorized the refund in capital credits of 3.33% of each member's total allocations from 2003-2024—over \$673,000. These allocations were based on each member's electricity purchases during those years. Members with a refund of \$100 or less will receive their refund as a bill credit. Everyone else will receive a check.

One of the many benefits of belonging to an electric cooperative is that you are an owner. Unlike investor-owned utilities whose profits belong to the shareholders, in a co-op any excess revenues (margins) over expenses belong to our members and are allocated back to you in proportion to your total electrical purchases for the year. These are called capital credits.

Capital credits, or member equity, represent your investment in the cooperative. Over time capital credits are refunded to members based on the cooperative's financial condition as determined by your board of directors. Once capital credits are returned to a member, the member's equity in the cooperative is reduced.

To date, your cooperative has returned more than \$17.8 million in capital credits to its members.

Together with PPCS, SwiftCurrent Connect wants to wish you a

Happy Coop Month!

Cooperatives are more than just businesses – they're community-driven, member-focused organizations that put people first. By bringing fiber internet to rural areas, we're investing in our shared future, supporting local growth, and ensuring everyone has access to the digital world. As a cooperative, we're committed to empowering our members and building stronger, more connected communities.

Thank you for being part of our success story



PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES
SWIFTCURRENT
CONNECT
BROADBAND POWERED BY PPCS

www.swiftcurrent.coop 715-350-7033



Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* October 2024 NEWS



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



HISTORIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC CO-OP VISIT

CO-OP MONTH MEMBER
APPRECIATION BREAKFAST SET FOR
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26

WESTBY, WISCONSIN

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

INVESTING IN
RURAL AMERICA

WESTBY, WISCONSIN

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INVESTING IN
RURAL AMERICA





WHERE HAS THE TIME GONE?

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

Happy October! October is National Co-op Month. October 1 also marks an important milestone for me personally as I celebrate my fifth year with the co-op. Where has the time gone? On October 1, 2019, I took the reins and was met with a rain-soaked member appreciation event later that evening. Who knew that over the course of the next five years many of our planned events would come with rain and snow? However, the past five years have been anything but doom and gloom. I would like to take a few minutes to highlight some of the great accomplishments we've undertaken over the past five years to help make PPCS a great co-op for our members.

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A few months ago, we signed up the 1,000th child into Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. This program provides a free book to children from birth up to five years of age. This program was brought to us by Liz Gunderson, our communications guru, and it has been one of the best programs we could have ever joined. As a credit to Liz, Wisconsin is now providing funds for reading programs like the Imagination Library. Look what we started.

By the spring of 2020, we were making emergency preparations to deal with COVID-19, including planning for the worst. Many of these things seem silly now in hindsight, but we took our members' and employees' safety seriously. Ultimately, we worked together to come through it stronger. I am proud of the fact that our office and garage served as a testing and vaccination host. We were one of the first co-ops to do this and our model was used by public health departments in other areas. Pierce County bestowed a special

resolution acknowledging our efforts. You might say we led the charge!

Speaking of charging ahead, we led the effort to create CHARGE EV which promotes electric vehicle charging with the goal of building a national charging network powered by electric co-ops. To date, over 100 co-ops are part of this program spread across the country. We also installed some of the first Level 2 and 3 chargers in our communities. And our fleet now contains three electric vehicles which have reduced our carbon footprint.

In 2021, we kicked off our broadband company SwiftCurrent Connect.

By the end of this year, nearly 4,000 customers will have connected to our fiber optic internet. Almost all of Pierce County and our rural members in Pepin will have access to high-speed broadband. Similarly, communities like Elmwood, River Falls, Prescott, and the Village of Pepin have taken advantage of our world-class fiber service. Bringing fiber to our rural communities is a once-in-a-lifetime transformational endeavor that will forever change the lives of members and communities.

Earlier this year we brought on-line our first 2 MW solar array, which is now producing renewable energy for our members. This solar site is being used to power one of western Wisconsin's first data centers, which is quickly becoming our largest electric load.

Undoubtedly, I am leaving out many other things that have transformed our community. I am proud of the 12 new jobs we have created. I am proud of our talented team that works each day to serve our members. I am proud of our long-tenured employees whose lives were disrupted five years ago but who have helped steady our ship. I am thankful for the board that continues to think about impact to our members. But most importantly, I am proud of our members who see what we are trying to do—improving our communities, moving us forward to meet the future, and most importantly, supporting our efforts to leave the co-op better than we found it.


Please check our website and social media pages for events this month and throughout the year. We can't wait to see you at a member event, a parade, or community event soon. Have a great co-op month!

JOIN US FOR

COFFEE AT THE CO-OP

Friday, October 11*
8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at the PPCS office.

*This is a member-focused event. Attendees will be entered in the December 2024 prize drawing for three \$100 bill credits.



COMMITTED TO SERVICE:

DIRECTORS REFLECT ON THEIR YEARS ON THE PPCS BOARD

In the spring of 2025, PPCS will hold elections to fill three director seats in District 3. The directors from that district, Ed Hass, Jerry Drier, and Brian Berg, have reached their term limits and are not eligible to run again. They all described very positive experiences serving on the board and are eager to see new members come forward to serve. All three have taken advantage of the excellent training available to cooperative directors and have achieved gold certification—the highest level of education. We sat down with them to reflect on their time serving on the PPCS board.

Ed Hass

When his term on the board comes to an end in 2025, Ed Hass will have served a total of 24 years on the board of directors. He's seen a thing or two in his time on the board. One of the biggest changes he's seen is in the technology used; early on the general manager used to drive around and hand deliver the printed board books to each director. As technology changed, directors had fax machines in their homes so PPCS could send important documents. Eventually, each director received a laptop issued by the cooperative for receiving digital board books and emails, and finally, iPads with secure board management apps.

Hass served two full terms on the PPCS board, from 1998 to 2010 and 2013 to 2025. He ran for the board because he enjoys working with a variety of people and felt that he could represent the viewpoints of members. When he was first elected, Hass worked as the UW Extension Resource Agent for Pierce County. He also served on several other boards. The education he received from PPCS, Wisconsin Energy Cooperative Association (WECA), and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) was very valuable in understanding how cooperatives work.

Asked if he has any advice for anyone seeking a seat on the board, Hass replied, "Remember that the members control the co-op, and delegate authority to the board to develop policies for the management and oversee the organization." He said new directors are not expected to have all the answers; they are provided with excellent training. He would also encourage a new director to use active listening, ask questions, and not be afraid to state your opinion.

Hass hopes that the cooperative will continue its strong legacy of the last 87 years to sustain and build a strong member-based cooperative for many years ahead.



Jerry Drier

First elected to the PPCS board in 2013, Jerry Drier felt he had a need to contribute to the community as well as the cooperative. He was retired and had previously served on the PPCS nominating committee. There was an open seat on the board and he thought it was a good opportunity to meet new people. "In the years that I've been on the board," said Drier, "we've had a very diverse board, and a very progressive board."

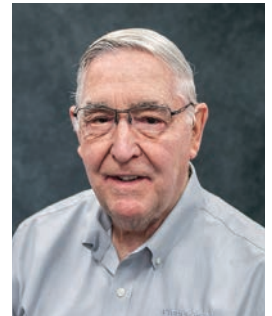
Drier values constantly learning. Being on the board has allowed him to continue receiving education regarding the cooperative and the electric business. He has been very pleased with the amount of training available to directors. One of the biggest benefits of being a director has been meeting other individuals from around the state and nation who are in the same roles. Directors do not need to have a technical background to serve on the board.

"I expected the cooperative staff to be technically oriented," said Drier, "and they definitely are." Directors are also cooperative members. They always try to keep the best interests of the members in mind when making decisions. He has enjoyed his time on the board, which gave him the opportunity to meet other people on the board. He's met directors from cooperatives across the state and the nation and has developed lasting friendships.

Drier encourages anyone interested in serving on the board to attend the October training session to learn the process for running and evaluate the pros and cons of serving on the board. The time commitment required is about 10-20 hours per month to read the board packets and research, and then a meeting that is two to three hours.

"You don't have to have the technical background that I do to serve on the board," said Drier. "It's important to keep a diverse group of people on the board who can represent varied interests."

Drier sees a bright future for the cooperative and the broadband business, since people will continue to rely on technology and find new ways to work and communicate.





Brian Berg

Brian Berg had previously served on the creamery board and found that to be very rewarding work, so when former director David R. Johnson approached him to run for his seat on the board, Berg was interested. “I have to admit,” said Berg, “that I knew very little about how the electric business was run.” However, he feels the training he received through PPCS, WECA, and NRECA was very thorough, so he has a good understanding of the electric business, the financials, and everything else.



One of the main things he’s learned is the cooperative’s governance structure. The director’s role is to delegate authority, not micro-manage. Berg has been very impressed with the way PPCS maintains its infrastructure with preventive maintenance, right-of-way clearing, and construction projects to improve reliability. He has found serving on the board was a great opportunity to understand our local electric system.

Networking with other directors, especially from other cooperatives, has been invaluable.

Berg has always been environmentally conscious. In October 2019, he installed a 20 kW solar array at his farm. He also drives an all-electric Cadillac Lyric. He said that during his time on the board, they have done a very good job of keeping rates stable and the other big thing they have done is get into the broadband business. “I just think having high-speed, reliable internet is really important to the community,” said Berg. He is also proud that the board approved returning additional equity to its members during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide some help during that difficult time.

Being on the board has been an excellent opportunity to learn how the local electric business is run, as well as meet new contacts. “It will take a commitment of their time,” said Berg, “but it is well worth it.”

Berg is looking forward to the cooperative’s continued success. He hopes the internet business will continue to thrive and that it will be everything to the community that the board thought it would be.

The Power to Make a Difference DIRECTOR CANDIDATE INFORMATION SESSION

WHO: Cooperative members interested in running for a seat on the board of directors.

WHAT: Director candidates: nomination process, qualifications, duties, terms & compensation, and expectation of directors.

WHEN: Thursday, October 24, 6:00 p.m. at the PPCS Office
W7725 US Hwy. 10, Ellsworth, WI

RSVP: Call Laure at 715-273-2413, or email landrle@piercepepin.coop by October 17.



SCHOLARSHIPS

PPCS has scholarships available for high school seniors graduating in spring 2025. Details, deadlines, and application instructions are available at www.piercepepin.coop, under My Community.

For more information, contact Charity Lubich at 715-273-4355, 800-924-2133, ext. 151, or clubich@piercepepin.coop.





DRAFT DODGERS: Weather Stripping Your Home

Cold weather will be here before we know it. Is your house prepped to keep cold air from getting in through drafts near windows and doors? If not, the best solution is to weather strip your home to eliminate energy waste and help you save on your monthly electric bill.

Sometimes drafts are obvious, and other times the openings are much

smaller. Here are two quick ways to find out if cold air is filtering in and heat is escaping from your home. For doors, look for daylight between the door and its frame. If you see even a hint of light in between the two, you need to weather strip that area. For windows, place a piece of paper between the sash and the seal then close it. If you can remove the piece of paper from the window without ripping it, you need to weather strip that area as well.

The great news is that weather stripping is easy! There is an assortment of materials available (like rubber, foam, metal, etc.) and they are all inexpensive. Once you have decided on the type of material, before you begin weather stripping, be sure the surface is clean and dry, measure the area more than once for best accuracy, and apply so that strips compress both sides of the window or door.



To weather strip windows:

- Place the stripping between the frame and the sash.
- Be sure that it compresses the window when shut.
- Check to make sure that the stripping does not interfere with the moving of the window.

To weather strip doors:

- Choose the proper sweeps and thresholds for your door.
- Weather strip the entire door jamb.
- Make sure the stripping meets tightly at both corners.
- Use a thickness that allows for a tight press between the door and the ground, but one that does not make the door difficult to shut.

Roughly half of the energy that your home uses is for heating and cooling. So the next time you feel an uncomfortable draft, find out where it is coming from and properly weather strip the area. And for extra added protection during the cold winter months, consider installing a storm door, too.

DEADLINE FOR UNDERGROUND SERVICE IS NOVEMBER 1



New service installations for underground service or conversions from overhead to underground need to be completed by November 1. We cannot guarantee completion of any underground work once the cold weather and frost set in. If you are considering this type of service work, please contact our Operations Department as soon as possible.

BROADBAND BYTES

Quick Updates from Fiber Freddie

Accounts Connected:

Internet: 3,530 Phone: 413

Construction Update:

We are moving into Lund and the Village of Pepin with fiber construction. Please sign up for service now at www.swiftcurrent.coop. Construction for the season ends when the ground freezes, typically around November 15.



Nate Boettcher, President & CEO
Liz Gunderson, 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

PPCS INTRODUCES A NEW BENEFIT FOR CO-OP MEMBERS: THE CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) is excited to announce the launch of the Co-op Connections Card, a new benefit designed to provide our members with significant savings and exclusive offers. As a member of PPCS, you are not just a customer; you are part of a community that values mutual support and shared benefits. The Co-op Connections Card is our way of giving back to you, enhancing your membership with tangible perks.

The Co-op Connections Card offers a wide range of discounts on everyday expenses, from dining and shopping to

We encourage all members to take advantage of this fantastic new benefit and start saving today.

health and wellness services. Members can enjoy savings at national retailers and local businesses, as they join the program, making it easier to support our community while also benefiting from great deals. Whether you are looking to save on prescription medications, dental care, or even travel, the Co-op Connections Card has something for everyone.

One of the standout features of the Co-op Connections Card is its health savings component. Members can access discounts on prescriptions at participating pharmacies, which can lead to substantial savings on essential medications. Additionally, the card provides discounts on dental, vision, and hearing services, helping you and your family maintain good health without breaking the bank.

Using the Co-op Connections Card is simple. Members can visit the Co-op

Connections website, register and create your unique login, then download the mobile app from your app store on your mobile device. Login on the website or the app to find participating businesses and available discounts. Just show the app at the time of purchase to enjoy the savings. It's that easy!

At PPCS, we are committed to enhancing the quality of life for our members. The Co-op Connections Card

is just one of the many ways we strive to provide value beyond reliable energy services. We encourage all members to take advantage of this fantastic new benefit and start saving today.

For more information about the Co-op Connections Card and how to get started, visit our website or contact our member relations team. Together, we can make our community stronger and more connected.

SAVE WITH THE NEW CO-OP CONNECTIONS APP!
VISIT WWW.CONNECTIONS.COOP FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Hi Scott

Your Account | Your Savings
Favorites | Logout

Co-op Connections Deals

- Local Deals: Books, Clothing, Groceries, Books
- Health & Wellness: Dental, Vision, Diabetes & More
- Safety & Security: Energy, Insurance, & Transportation & More
- Travel & Entertainment: Parks, Travel, Travel
- National Discounts: Restaurants, Retailers & More
- Membership Card: Save on purchases with your membership card

Teachstone Energy Cooperatives

HEALTH & WELLNESS | TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT | SAFETY & SECURITY | LOCAL DEALS

Google play | App Store

Co-op Month Member Appreciation Breakfast

Fun for the whole family!

- **Attendance gift** for adults & get entered in our December prize drawing for three \$100 bill credits.
 - **Prize Drawings:** Bring donations for the food shelf and/or winter clothing for Basics for Local Kids & be entered in prize drawings for \$50 gift cards
 - **Flu shot clinic** (*Medicare, WI Medicaid accepted*)
- Kids* - Wear your Halloween costume to be entered in prize drawings for great prizes! (*Ages birth to 12 years*)
- Plus, have fun with a bounce house, crafts, and more!

Saturday, October 26th
9 - 11:30 a.m.

W7725 US Highway 10, Ellsworth