



Steve Lucas, CEO



TEACHING YOUNGSTERS ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Electronic and mobile devices, TVs, computers and gaming stations have become ubiquitous fixtures in our homes, particularly those with children. Consumer electronics coupled with the proliferation of smart home appliances, technology and electric vehicles have slowly but steadily changed our homes and lifestyles.

This ever-connected world is the modern environment in which children are growing up. And with lifestyles increasingly reliant on technology and in turn, energy consumption, teaching youngsters to save energy is an important life lesson.

The Why

But before parents can teach their children how to save energy, they must first answer the question, “What’s in it for me?” As most parents can attest, convincing kids to care about energy efficiency is a hard sell. Parents need to explain why it’s important to save energy and how it benefits the child—otherwise they will not understand the need to change their habits and will be less motivated to do so. In the simplest terms, less money spent on an electric bill can mean more money used for fun activities (that’s something children can relate to!).

Less tangible, but just as important, using less energy means running your home more efficiently, conserving natural resources, and helping the environment.

Learning by Doing

Because “saving energy” is an abstract concept for children, be specific about energy efficiency actions and set an example. We know that children learn by observing what their parents do. Even if they don’t say anything, children are processing your actions. When you turn off the lights when leaving a room or unplug the phone charger once the device is fully charged, they will notice.

Learning about energy efficiency doesn’t have to be a boring lecture. Make it fun for greater impact.

For younger kids, turn energy efficiency into a “treasure hunt” game to locate all the things in your home that use electricity. Depending on the age of the children, challenge them to count and group the items into categories: electronics, appliances, lights, etc. If age appropriate, have them create a list. Ask which gadgets and appliances could be turned off or unplugged to save power every day.

For older children, show them how to program the smart thermostat and appliances. Shop with them for LED lights and discuss ENERGY STAR-rated appliances. Show them

the electric bill so they can see the costs, energy use, and how their actions impact the bill.

Kids of all ages can learn a few simple energy-saving habits that can last a lifetime:

- Turn off lights, devices, computers, and video consoles when not in use.
- Open blinds and curtains during winter days to let warm sunlight in and close them during summer days to keep your home cooler.
- If your children are old enough to run the dishwasher or wash their own clothes, teach them to run these appliances only with a full load and during off-peak energy hours.

The idea is to create a habit of being energy efficient. And for parents, this could mean less nagging about turning off the lights!

Teaching your children about saving energy is not only a creative way to spend time with them; it helps your home to be more energy efficient and can instill good habits that will benefit your child long into adulthood.



MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The winning photo for March in SREC's 2020 Member Photo Contest was taken by Jeff Kopsell of South Wayne. Our 2021 Member Photo Contest is underway. Visit www.sre.coop for details.

Tying the Knot

at Blake Hollow Barn



photo courtesy of Krysthol Davis Photography

According to an annual survey from The Knot, an online wedding-planning platform and magazine, 15% of couples chose a barn, farm, or ranch for their wedding reception in 2017, up from just 2% in 2009. So, Adam Knapp and Cassie Myers had an idea. Why not get married in the barn at Cassie's parents' farm? Wendy and Conrad Myers gave their blessing and what followed was months of labor.

The barn is located on what was the Bob and Beth Uridil farm, but the Myers purchased the 120 acres in 2013, bringing their total farm acreage to over 400. The original 270+ acres were settled by Conrad's grandparents over 100 years ago. For many decades the Myers farmed the land and managed a dairy herd, but the herd was sold in 2009.

In 2012 the farm and buildings were hit by a tornado. The barn sustained a lot of damage but what could be salvaged was saved and used in the restoration. Conrad used reclaimed materials from other area barns to maintain the rustic integrity of the barn. After the tornado and the years in which the barn had been used to store hay, feed, and animals, there were rotted beams. The wear and tear from the weather was evident in the siding as well.

Cleaning out the old hay, dust, and dirt was just the start to the transformation. Structural work to build a dance floor and make the second-floor loft safe and functional took several area professionals, including Todd Kielley of River Ridge Builders, who added the staircase and rail-

ings. The interior of the barn was sandblasted, creating a fresh, clean look. Lighting was added, including a custom mason jar chandelier. Additional decorations were hung from the rafters, and with the addition of seating and tables, the space was completely transformed.

In addition to the interior work, the exterior and grounds received lots of attention. The barn needed new siding, paint, windows, and doors. Gravel, fill dirt, and red wood chips were hauled in to level the walkways, parking areas, and to create a wonderful and welcoming doorway entrance to the barn. A deck was then added, which overlooks the farmland and provides for beautiful sunset views.

The Blake Hollow Barn hosted its first wedding (Cassie and Adam's) in September 2018 with over 200 people. After the addition of more space, bathrooms, and additional decks, the barn can now accommodate 400 people for a variety of events. Owner-operator Cassie Myers-Knapp indicated that they hope to assist guests with their space needs and are available to host weddings, graduation parties, family reunions, and any other celebrations that area residents can think of.

The Blake Hollow Barn also boasts a beautiful bar that fully incorporates the rustic look. The bar is fully stocked and open to guests when they attend events. "The Bloomington Township was great to work with so that we were able to get our liquor license," says Cassie.



photo courtesy of Cassie Myers-Knapp



In 2019, Blake Hollow Barn hosted seven weddings and a variety of other events. Dates for 2020 are filling fast, but a few dates remain. Clients can choose their own caterers, photographers, and other service providers. However, Cassie does have recommendations to assist clients with planning their special event.

Cassie highly recommends Tying the Knot Wedding Rentals, LLC of Cassville, another rural business in our area, for decorating items a client may need. Cassie indicated that working with other small business owners in the area is a big part of their success. "I refer our clients to Tying the Knot and Ma's Bakery because they know our space and I trust them to do a great job for our clients."

Now that the business is up and running, planning continues for additional improvements. Cassie stated that ideas include adding a bridal suite and additional outdoor areas for ceremonies and photos. In the works are plans to renovate a grain bin into a bar and firepit area. Providing for fun areas that allow

guests to enjoy the countryside while celebrating and making memories is what the Blake Hollow Barn is all about.

"We know we've succeeded when we see the smiles and hear the laughter of our guests," she said.

Cassie and her family invite area residents to enjoy classic rock band, The Ziegfried Underground, on May 23, 2020, Memorial Day weekend. The Ziegfried Underground started playing together in 1969 and reformed in 2005 after a 35-year break. Cassie stated that "the evening's details are being worked out and the start time for the fun has yet to be set, but the bar will be open and we hope people will come out and have fun with their friends and neighbors."

The Blake Hollow Barn is located at 11417 Hickory Road, Bagley, and is still home to beef cattle and several horses. If you are interested in having your special event in their beautifully restored barn, you can find more information on their Facebook page.

It is hard to believe that what started as a dreamy idea became a reality. Of



photo courtesy of Krysthol Davis Photography

course, that required dedication and teamwork to achieve. But the Blake Hollow Barn is just that—a dream realized by the Myers family in rural Grant County. ☀



photo courtesy of Olivia Harvat Photography



Youth Leadership Congress

UW–River Falls | July 14–16, 2020



The annual **WECA Youth Leadership Congress** is a dynamic three-day event for youth leaders across Wisconsin to develop their **leadership skills** while learning about the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative businesses.

Take the opportunity to...

- See what makes the **cooperative business model different and successful**, and then apply this knowledge to fun and challenging cooperative activities.
- Identify and learn how to develop your own **leadership skills**.
- Discuss **cooperative careers** with professionals in the industry.
- Be **entertained and challenged** by highly acclaimed motivational speakers who understand teens and address topics that are important and relevant in your life.

This is a **by-teens, for-teens conference** that is planned and developed by a youth board elected at the previous year's event.

Who should apply?

- High school students with family members who belong to a Wisconsin electric cooperative.
- Students active in their school and community.

What does it cost?

- All registration costs are covered by the generous support of electric cooperatives and the NRUCFC, and NCSC.

Tuition is paid by Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative. Transportation, housing, and meals are provided. Plus, there are freebies and fun for all. Contact Judy at SREC, 608-723-2121 or jmims@srec.net, if you're interested!



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