



Steve Lucas, CEO

## BACK TO SCHOOL

### Electric co-ops are continually learning to improve service for members

The new school year is quickly approaching, and kids of all ages are getting ready for a fresh year of learning! From kindergarten through college, students attend school to gain knowledge about a broad variety of subjects and learn new skills that will prepare them for the future. In a similar vein, Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative (SREC) is continually learning in order to advance technology that improves electric service, reliability, safety, and in turn, enhances quality of life for the members we serve.

SREC keeps abreast of industry trends because the energy sector is rapidly changing. Innovations in technology and energy types are fueling demand for more options. On the consumer front, people are looking for more ways to manage their energy use with smart technologies. Consumers expect more convenient payment methods—whether through automatic bill pay, pre-pay, online, or in person. SmartHub, which is free to members, allows you to do more than simply pay your bill. You can quickly view your billing history, check your energy usage at any time, monitor your daily use, and even identify ways to lower your energy bill.



We're working to help sift through the options for our members in ways that benefit the greater community. At the same time, we never lose sight of the top priority—providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

### Technology improves operational efficiency.

For example, automated meter reading (AMR) is the technology of automatically collecting energy consumption data and transferring it from the meter to the co-op. Because this information can be collected remotely, it enhances our system's efficiency, helps control costs, and improves work processes.

Similar to AMR, there is another technology called advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). This is an integrated system of smart meters, communications networks, and data management systems that enables two-way communication between utilities and consumers. In the event of an outage,

AMI helps to distinguish between events that impact a single home or multiple outages. This is critical because resolving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication is integral to AMI because it provides a means to verify that power has been restored after an outage. However, one of the biggest benefits from improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is pinpointing the outage location, which helps to reduce risk for crews out on the road during severe weather events.

In addition to providing essential information during major outages, SREC analyzes AMI data for anomalies including faults, damaged meters, or energy theft. Detecting these problems early helps our cooperative save money and improve reliability for the whole community.

### Energy for the future.

Consumer interest in green energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high. Nationally, the increasing use of solar energy is paving the way for new methods of generating and using electricity. In our region, community solar programs allow co-op members to share in a remote solar array that generates electricity from the sun. U.S. energy experts say we will not be able to meet national energy goals unless we increase our solar energy capacity.

Whether it's examining green energy options or exploring how emerging technologies can better serve our members, for SREC, our "school year" is never over. We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities for the future, and we will continue to study and research the issues so that we can better serve you, now and in the future.



## MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Farah Grysbeck of Eastman took the winning picture for August in SREC's 2018 Member Photo Contest. There's still time to enter the 2019 Member Photo Contest; please turn to page 18 to learn more.



# RIGHT AT HOME

## Wedig Welding serves the community's ag repair needs



Dennis Wedig opened his welding shop in 1993.

**Dennis Wedig works so close to home that his commute is a walk across his driveway. He can see the church where he and his wife, Lori, were married, the same church where his parents were married, about 150 yards away. His mother and a brother live just down the road.**

It wasn't always this way.

Early in his career, he drove truck coast to coast. Then in September 1993, he opened a welding and agricultural repair shop back at home.

"After being on the road trucking, it's really nice. You just can't beat it. I always wanted to do it. I just learned as I went," he said.

The danger of living so close is that when someone has a part break during harvest, they know where he is.

"I just want to take care of people when they need it," he said.

But he doesn't do service calls, because everything he needs is in the shop. The variety is what he likes best, and it's a rare project that he says he just can't do.

"It's challenging sometimes to try to figure out something," he said. Sometimes a part fabrication starts with a pencil

sketch and ends with satisfaction of solving a problem.

He has experience with dairy barn replacement stalls, goat parlors, and barn curtains. Among recent projects have been putting a hitch on a skid loader, and working on an auger, block heater, axles, loader bucket, and snow plow. He can repair and build hydraulic hoses.

He is busy, although he only advertises to congratulate local sports teams. Otherwise, people hear about his work through word of mouth. He doesn't have a sign announcing his business, called Wedig Welding.

"A lot of people don't even know we're here," he said.

The address is rural Cuba City, but the shop is within a 10-mile radius of Platteville, Benton, New Diggings, Darlington, Shullsburg, and Cuba City.

When he started, "I was just hoping it would keep me busy enough that I could make a living out of it."

He has two full-time employees and his wife does the accounting, billing, and bill paying.

"I have to give Mom and Dad credit," he said of his parents, Betty and the late Art Wedig. "I started in the farm shop. Otherwise, I couldn't have done it."

Belts hang on a wall in rows by size above a shelf full of tires. Parts are labeled in bins. There are two sheds in addition to the shop.

“I like to keep it organized. It saves a lot of time. It’s inefficient if you don’t,” he said.

If you think you are your own boss when you run a business, you’re wrong, he said.

“I work for over 1,000 people, and everyone’s my boss. And if you think different, you’ll go broke,” Wedig said.

And if you think you can have a business but hire other people to do all the work, you’ll also go broke, he said.

“You have to work for it. You have to be here,” he said.

His employees are very good, he said, and have been with him for several years. But the buck stops with the boss.

**“I work for 1,000 people, and everyone’s my boss. And if you think different, you’ll go broke.”**

—Dennis Wedig

without some help.”

It might sound like Wedig is grounded here, and he is. He even met his wife right here. He was hosting a hayride, and a friend of hers suggested they might hit it off.

After their first date when he explained what he did, Lori admits she still had “no clue” as to how much time he devoted to work.

“It’s a lifestyle, not a job,” Dennis said.

He had lived in a trailer for 15 years, but now the couple has their home on the property. She is an outreach specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, advising graduate students in engineering.

The radio plays, and two cats have made the shop home. Their dog, Dobby, who was named for a character in Harry Potter, pushes a lever for a treat.

For young people considering a path similar to the one he took, Wedig said, “Find someone who wants to retire, or is willing to take on a partner. With the expense of the equipment, it would be tough

He would eventually like to slow down to a part-time job, something 40 hours a week, he said, only half joking. Or maybe he could devote more time to commissioned pieces, like dinosaurs, flamingoes, and birds that he has made.

“It’s kind of fun to do that stuff. They tell me what they want, and I’ll make it,” he said.

But for now, Wedig has his work cut out for him with the next project that walks in the door.—*Mary Glindinning*



Dennis Wedig replaces a blade on a band saw in his welding and agricultural repair shop in rural Cuba City.

MY CO-OP



Left: Lori and Dennis Wedig and their dog, Dobby, pose in one of their storage sheds. Right: Dennis Wedig keeps parts organized to increase efficiency.



# MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

Your photo could be featured in our 2020 Member Calendar!

**DEADLINE APPROACHING**

Submit your favorite high-resolution photos capturing rural life in SREC's service territory to [jmartin@srec.net](mailto:jmartin@srec.net) by **August 23**.

For a complete list of contest rules and criteria as well as downloadable forms, visit our website, [www.srec.coop](http://www.srec.coop).



## Member Appreciation Events

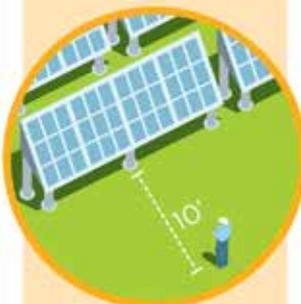
October 8 – Lancaster Office

October 9 – Gays Mills Office

October 10 – Darlington Office

# SAFETY NEAR SOLAR

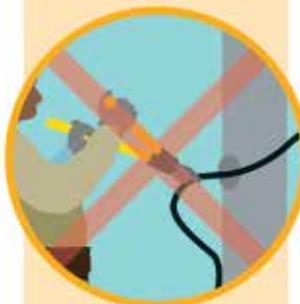
Like any other source of electricity, solar panels can pose potential hazards. Keep these safety tips in mind when you're near solar panels.



Stay at least 10 feet away from the installation.



Never walk on solar panels.



Never cut any wiring to the solar panels.



Never touch broken or damaged solar panels.



**CENIC RIVERS ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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