



# CO-OP PRINCIPLE NO. 2: Democratic Member Control



Steve Lucas, CEO

One of the greatest things about being a member of a cooperative, in my humble opinion, is that you have a voice—a meaningful, active voice. The second of the seven guiding principles by which

all co-ops abide is Democratic Member Control, which states that co-ops are democratic organizations controlled by their members. You get to vote for the members who will represent you on the board of directors, and these directors in turn hire the CEO or general manager who handles the day-to-day operations of the co-op. The directors you elect are responsible for guiding how the co-op's assets are used to fulfill its mission. They also set policies as to how the co-op will be governed and operated.

Directors are also accountable to the membership. They must represent the interests and concerns of the members in their district when developing policies that guide the co-op's operation. If members are dissatisfied with their director, they may choose to vote for another candidate when the seat is up for election.

This is not an option that customers of other forms of business have. Customers may voice their opinions over a business's actions or policies and hope they're heard, but co-op members can

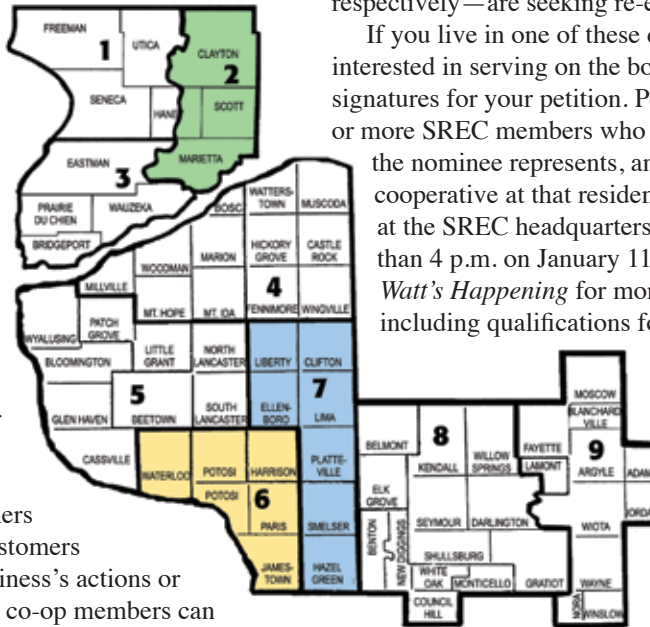
take action. They can vote for a director of their choice, and they can even choose to run for a position on the board themselves. This opportunity comes up every three years in each of SREC's nine districts.

## Candidates sought for Districts 2, 6, and 7

At this year's annual meeting, to be held Saturday, April 13, 2019, at the Grant County Youth & Ag Building, elections will be held for Districts 2, 6, and 7. All three incumbent directors—Sandra Davidson, Don Schaefer, and Larry Butson, respectively—are seeking re-election.

If you live in one of these districts (see map) and are interested in serving on the board, you may begin getting signatures for your petition. Petitions must be signed by 15 or more SREC members who reside in the district in which the nominee represents, and who receive service from the cooperative at that residence. Petitions must be received at the SREC headquarters office in Lancaster no later than 4 p.m. on January 11, 2019. Watch your December *Watt's Happening* for more information about this process, including qualifications for serving as a director candidate.

Whether or not you choose to run for a position on the board of directors, I hope you will take advantage the privilege afforded you as a co-op member of learning about each candidate (watch for candidate biographies in the March issue) and casting a vote.



MY CO-OP



If you have a hard-to-buy-for person on your holiday gift list, consider giving a Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative gift certificate. It's thoughtful, practical, convenient, and always the right size and style!

**To purchase the Gift of Power, contact SREC at 608-723-2121 or 800-236-2141.**



## MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The winning photo for December in SREC's Member Photo Contest is from Dennis and Nancy Ball of Boscobel. The 2019 SREC calendars, featuring winning photos from the 2018 Member Photo Contest, are now available. Pick one up at any SREC office while supplies last.



# When the **LIGHTS** came on

**W**hen people talk about transformational change, they say “it was like flipping a light switch” or “like a light bulb went on.” Imagine what it was like to turn on the lights for the first time. Some Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative members remember what it was like when electric power first came to rural people.

**Patricia Hazen** was living with her parents and siblings on a farm about halfway between Eastman and Wauzeka when electricity arrived.

“I was about 10 years old. I remember how very, very important it was. It was the greatest thing that happened, I think,” Hazen said. “We didn’t have running water or a bathroom indoors. We had no refrigeration. We had a very nice home with loving parents” whose work both indoors and outdoors became easier with electricity.

“We had lanterns and kerosene lamps in the house, and Aladdin lamps in the dining room on the table. When the lights turned on, how much safer we were without those lanterns. We were lucky. We never had a fire, but you had to be very careful,” she said.



A crew for Grant Electric Cooperative (later merged with Lafayette and Crawford Electric Cooperatives to form Scenic Rivers Energy) works on the lines in 1956. Jim Nodorft says some of the original Grant Electric poles are still standing on his rural Platteville farm.

“We had a gas engine out on the water pump. We had to carry in all the water and heat it on the stove. After we got water put in the house, it saved a lot of labor.”

One of the first electric appliances the family purchased was a refrigerator. Her mother, Irma Boylen, noticed her workload ease.

After power came on, “I think she thought she was on vacation,” Hazen said. “I don’t know how she did it. We all helped.”

They had a wringer washing machine with “two large tubs that we could and did fill for rinsing.”

They helped with outside chores, too. “We milked by hand before we went to school,” she said, until the miracle of a milking machine. Electricity also meant a fresh water supply for the cows and all the other farm animals.

**Gabe Loeffelholz**, of rural Platteville, was a curious lad when electricity came to the farm his parents owned.

They purchased the farm in 1945, some years after the first farms went electric, and his dad had electricity installed.

“They put all that in with hand tools,” Loeffelholz said. “They climbed up in the attic, and in the barn, they climbed up on the rafters. They did a real meticulous job of putting clips every so many inches. We were kids. We were pretty inquisitive.”

Before electricity was installed, he remembers lamps needed to be cleaned daily, and there were no outlets in bedrooms for luxuries such as fans.

“Electricity for me has been so great. I think I’ve only been out of power 24 or 30 hours in 50 years,” Loeffelholz said.

Before electric ranges, wood stoves or gas stoves were used for cooking and heat. No refrigeration meant that butter and cheese were put down the cistern to keep cool.

“For years, my folks never did have a deep freeze. They

used the locker in town. They would go to town on Saturday and get the meat for the week. The first thing I bought when I got married was a freezer,” Loeffelholz said.

Electricity in homes was “such a great invention at such a low cost,” he said.

He said electricity rivals the invention of the combustion engine in how it changed lives.

**Sherwood Matti**, of rural Eastman, remembers that electricity was installed in April or May of 1947.

“I think it was the 7th of May that we got a snowstorm. It knocked out the power. We were heartbroken,” he said.

But the power soon came back on.

“I remember growing up without power,” Matti said. He disliked milking by hand so much that he went to work for another farmer who had a gas engine and only returned to his father’s farm when electricity reached it.

“We had a well drilled about that time and put in an electric submersible pump. My brother bought an electric stove for my mother. I think we had a refrigerator,” he said.

But money was tight “so we bought one appliance at a time.”

He remembers that farmers wanted to keep the electric lines humming so they cut back tree limbs that they feared could fall on the lines and interrupt service.

“We couldn’t do without it now,” Matti said.



Sherwood Matti remembers the days before electricity, which was installed at his farm in spring 1947.

**Jim Nodorft** of rural Platteville said, “I know my uncle wired our house and barn. Electricians were unheard of back in those days.”

A ceiling light and one outlet were in each room, he remembered. His mother bought a refrigerator, electric stove, and mangle for ironing sheets.

“At first we had a motorized pump jack to pump water with. A year or two later we had a pressure pump and running water to the barn, milk house, and house,” he said.

A milking machine made barn chores easier. “You could go in the barn and turn on the lights. You didn’t have to carry the



Jim Nodorft (standing, far right) and his siblings gather around his mother as she works on the mangle iron she bought after the family got electricity. She also got the refrigerator and electric stove, which can be seen behind the children.

lantern,” Nodorft said

And night school programs—such as the Christmas program—were lit by electricity, not a hanging gas lantern.

**Don Ruf**, who lives two miles outside of Fayette in Lafayette County, remembers walking home from grade school and hurrying to get straw or hay out of the barn before dark.

Once there were lights, farmers could work after dark.

His wife, Janis Ruf, who grew up near Lamont in Lafayette County, remembers being able to turn on the lights in her bedroom to do homework instead of working by lantern light.

And housework became easier, too. “My mother had a Briggs and Stratton engine” on a wringer washing machine. “We had to pump the water and heat it in a big copper boiler on the wood stove in the summer kitchen,” Janis Ruf said.

Don Ruf remembers that his mother was “tickled” when electricity came to the “old rock house” where he has always lived.

“We had a gas stove and got 100 lb. drums of gas. We had a wood furnace,” he said.

An electric toaster was a marvel.

One day recently, a car driven into a pole knocked out electricity for about an hour, and that was a taste of what the time before power was like.

“Nothing works” without electricity, Don Ruf said.

By the early 1930s, most city residents had electricity in their homes. Rural people did not. Franklin Delano Roosevelt said in 1932 that electricity was no longer a luxury, but a necessity. In 1936, the Rural Electrification Act was passed as part of the New Deal.

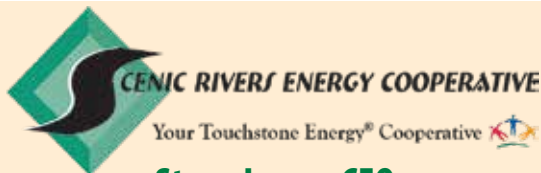
The Rural Electrification Administration gave low-cost federal loans to non-profit rural cooperatives organized to bring lights—and running water—to farmhouses and barns.—*Mary Glindinning*



# WE APPRECIATE OUR MEMBERS!

Thanks to all who came out to celebrate October Co-op Month with us at our Member Appreciation Celebrations! Members were able to enjoy a dinner of pulled-pork sandwiches, learn more about the co-op's services, get a flu shot and a blood-pressure check from the county nurse's station, learn about electrical safety at a hotline demonstration, pick up their complimentary 2019 SREC Member Photo Calendar, and sign up for a chance to win door prizes. Door-prize winners were as follows:

- **Amazon Kindle Fire** – Daniel Everson, Micheal Bartels, Leonard Kallembach
- **NCredible Bluetooth Headphones** – Maurice Henkes, Rita Oyen, Donald Gille
- **AM/FM Tabletop Weather Radio** – Mark Kirichkow, James Reinsbach, Francis Brandt
- **Three-Outlet Wall Tap with Nightlight & USB Ports** – Ronald Schneider, Cheryl Troester, V E Wheeler Jr
- **A/C Portable Power Bank** – Peter Pomerening, Robert Miller, Robert Prestbroten



**Steve Lucas, CEO**

231 N. Sheridan St.  
Lancaster, WI 53813  
lancaster@srec.net

300 Barth Drive  
P.O. Box 127  
Darlington, WI 53530  
darlington@srec.net

15985 St. Hwy. 131  
P.O. Box 158  
Gays Mills, WI 54631  
gaysmills@srec.net

608-723-2121 • 800-236-2141 • www.srec.coop

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