



Guest column

# JUST THE FACTS: SOLAR POWER BUYING TIPS

Ron Jentz, Director of Member and Energy Services

Interest in solar systems is growing in our area. Some members are interested in saving money and others are looking for a greener energy source. Others are considering solar energy for both reasons. Regardless of your motive for considering solar panels, we want to help you obtain accurate and current information.

While there are many reputable solar power installation firms in our area, as solar power increases, so do scams. You might consider calling the Bureau of Consumer Protection, (800) 422-7128, or checking with the Better Business Bureau (bbb.org) to see if complaints have been filed against the business or contractor you are considering.

*If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.*

## Is solar right for you?

To determine whether a solar system is right for you, members should do their due diligence. As your trusted energy advisor, Scenic Rivers can offer a candid assessment of your specific situation. We can look at your average usage and discuss how energy-saving reductions can lead to real dollar savings. It is important for members to remember that even if you reduce the number of kilowatt hours you purchase from SREC, you will still need to pay the fixed charges.

Based on our conversations with members, both prior to and after installations, we believe members should consider the following:

- What is the overall energy efficiency of the home/building?
- What is the age and pitch of the roof?
- What is the orientation of the sun in relation to the home/building?
- Is there tree coverage near the home/building?
- What are the projected energy cost savings and is the company using SREC's actual rates and your average usage data?
- Is there a large, up-front payment required or are fees spread out over time?
- Are there any hidden costs, i.e., does the roof need to be replaced before installing the panels?

- Are there ongoing maintenance fees? Who is responsible for the maintenance?
- Does the company carry major insurance for the individuals working on your property?
- How will the new solar system interface with SREC's equipment?
- How is the power safely disconnected, if needed?
- Is special insurance required?
- Is the estimated energy savings worth the investment?
- Is it more cost effective to invest in other energy saving measures? See [energy.gov](http://energy.gov) for a tool that can calculate your usage and cost savings.

SREC recognizes that member interest in green energy sources and renewables is at an all-time high, and we stand ready to help our members determine their best options. We have policies and procedures in place to assist our members and the whole cooperative in reaching energy savings while maintaining safety. If you are interested in speaking to us about solar at your home, please call us a 1-800-236-2141 and ask for me.



## Extraordinary People Doing Ordinary Things

*This is the last in the series in which we looked into the lives of the people we may not notice, but who make our communities stronger, by doing things we all rely on.*

# SREC STAFF MEMBERS SERVE THEIR COMMUNITY BEYOND THE CO-OP

**T**his final segment of “Extraordinary People doing Ordinary Things” focuses on some of the employees at Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative who give back to their communities above and beyond “keeping your lights on.” Some you may know, but I am betting there are some you won’t. We are proud of the work they do as employees, and of the examples they set by showing the cooperative spirit after the work day has ended.

### Tammy Stoney

Tammy Stoney, controller, has been spotted around the Lancaster community as a volunteer in many ways over the past 20+ years. Currently, she teaches Sunday School and has for the past 12 years; she also taught while she was in high school and college. Over the years she has watched her students grow up and she is now teaching the second generation of those she first taught as a high school student! As with any teacher, her influence will affect others when inevitably her good example leads one of her former students to become a volunteer too.



Tammy Stoney is pictured here with some of her current Sunday School students.



Jordan’s signature smile at a recent cross country meet.

### Jordan Wagner

Jordan Wagner, building maintenance technician for all our facilities, stays busy after work with Platteville High School athletic events. He can be seen at cross county meets and practices as a coach, at home basketball games keeping the scoreboard, and onsite setting up for the home gymnastic meets. He too has been volunteering for 12 years with the school district. In 2018, he was recognized with the Wisconsin Athletic Service Award! Jordan, like many others, gives hours of his time as a coach and volunteer and makes our community better every day.



## Mark Cullen

Mark Cullen, mechanic, and his wife, Brenda, have been jointly serving the Lancaster Fire Department and EMS for 35+ combined years! While we hope you never need their help, we know that they are dedicated to making our community a safer place to live. In 2009, Mark was named Firefighter of the Year. He was promoted to captain in 2015. At a time when volunteers are desperately needed in our rural fire and rescue squads, we are proud that Mark and Brenda step up and serve us all.



Mark and Brenda are a dedicated team here in our community.



## IN MEMORY OF MERLIN KVIGNE

Merlin Kvigne, 1930 – 2023, was quoted stating, “I think our farm was the last farm to get hooked up to electricity in Crawford County” as his family’s farm was at the end of a rural road in Ferryville. The year was 1944. Merlin became interested in the cooperative way at a young age, starting with a co-op trip to Madison. He became a director of the Crawford Electric Cooperative and then served through the subsequent merger with Grant-Lafayette Electric. He served a total of 19 years as a board member, ending his career as vice-chairman of the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative board.

Merlin was a farmer for many years, drove a fuel truck for a farm service for many years, and eventually—sort of—retired. After that, he began driving for the Crawford County Human Services department (ADRC). He was active in his church, with the school board, and with the school’s PTA.

Merlin and his wife, Francille, were married for 71 years. He is survived by three children, five grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Merlin had many fond memories as an active member of Crawford Electric Cooperative and subsequently, Scenic Rivers. Notably, there is rumored to be a photo of his daughter in the arms of then Senator John F. Kennedy, who attended the 1960 Annual Meeting.



Carrie’s competitive spirit runs in the family. She is pictured here with her daughter, Mallory.

## Carrie Olmstead

Carrie Olmstead, billing clerk, can be seen running the streets of Lancaster as an assistant coach for high school cross country and track. She formerly volunteered with the middle school program as well. Carrie has been supporting our student athletes for 12 years and has had a bit of success. The Lancaster Girls Cross Country Team has appeared six years in a row (2017–2022) at the WIAA Division 3 State Cross Country Championships. They won two state championship titles in 2018 and 2020 and finished runner-up in 2017. We look forward to seeing what the coming season brings to her teams.

Cooperatives across the country follow the same Seven Cooperative Principles that guide our decisions, from how we run the co-op to how we engage with our local communities. Concern for community is the seventh principle, and it is one that all employees of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative value. Scenic Rivers is privileged to power your homes and businesses. However, we are even happier that we employ good people who help make good things happen.

# A Safe, Happy House

Four Easy Ways to Boost Electrical Safety at Home

**DON'T**  
place flammable items, like potholders, napkins or dish towels near the stove while cooking.



**DO**  
keep electrical devices away from water to prevent electric shock.



**DO**  
ensure you're using the correct wattage in all light fixtures.



**DON'T**  
overload electrical outlets with more devices than the circuit can handle.

May is National Electrical Safety Month.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The location of your thermostat can impact your HVAC system's ability to maintain an ideal indoor temperature. For maximum accuracy, thermostats should be placed in the center of the home, away from air vents, plumbing pipes and exterior doors. Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your thermostat, which can cause the HVAC to run longer than necessary. Avoid installing thermostats in rooms that tend to feel warmer or colder than the rest of the home. Do not place furniture in front of the thermostat, which can block air flow and result in inaccurate readings.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

This photo appeared in our March magazine and we were tickled to learn that this lady was very well known in Gays Mills—Leita Slayton taught home economics at Gays Mills High School and she was also a member. Thank you to Rosemary Helgerson, Alan Kopan, Beverly Check, Mark Saegrove, Fritz Boland, Howard Roth, Marilyn Kvigne, Lola Peterson and her godson, John Gibb, and Leita's son, John Slayton, who all called in and shared memories of Leita. It was clear to me that she was "one of a kind!"



This photo appeared in our April magazine and we learned that the gentleman in the center is Louis Uppena, grandfather to current member, Sue. Sue confirmed that Louis was a board member and she also recalled that for a time, her father, John, worked on the lines

too. Mrs. Bob Nuti is at the left, and Roy Bandekow, the Nelson Dewey Park superintendent, is on the right.

So, here is the new mystery photo below—we believe it was taken in 1954 somewhere in Grant County. Please call Judy at 800-236-2141 x554 if you can tell us anything about this photo from the archives.



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