



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY



Energy Assistance Available for Qualifying Members



Steve Lucas, CEO

The winter heating season is baring down and it is important to us that our members have all the assistance available to them. If you find yourself in need, home energy assistance is available to eligible households regardless of the type of fuel used to heat your home. The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) provides assistance

for heating costs, electric costs, and energy crisis situations. Operating with federal and state funding, the program provides assistance to more than 230,000 households across the state to help lower the burden incurred with monthly energy costs.

Eligibility

You may be eligible for energy assistance if:

- You or a member of your household participates in certain other benefit programs, such as SNAP, SSI, or TANF;
- Your gross income for the last three months is equal to or less than 60 percent of Wisconsin’s median income (SMI) for your family size;
- Your dwelling has not been weatherized before; and
- Your household meets certain priorities which may include a high energy burden, an elderly or disabled member, or a child under 6.

For more information and application details, please contact your local offices at:

- Crawford County Human Services – 608-326-0248
- Grant County Department of Social Services – 608-723-2136 ext. 1125
- Lafayette County Human Services – 608-776-4800

Our website also lists additional assistance organizations. Visit www.sre.coop and click on the Member Center tab. While you are on our site, you can learn about our rebates program and energy-saving products available through Focus on Energy. I’ll leave you with my Top Ten Tips for saving energy, which when used consistently can lower your energy use and even lower your energy bill.

Steve’s Top Ten Tips

1. Replace any light bulb, especially ones that burn more than one hour per day, with an LED bulb.
2. Air sealing is an inexpensive way to lower your energy costs and improve your comfort. Seal gaps around windows, doors, and chimneys with insulation, caulk, or foam sealants.
3. Use Smart Power strips for electronic devices such as cable boxes, TVs, and printers. Then, be sure to turn them all off when you are gone for a longer period of time using the power strip.
4. Use thermal drapes or shades to keep your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.
5. Change your furnace or AC unit’s filter according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. Dirty filters can impact your equipment’s efficiency.
6. Turn your heat down. Adjusting your thermostat by even 1 degree can impact your energy use by 3-5%.
7. Check your duct work for air leaks inside your home. Leaks are common at the returns and at the air handler unit and can be the cause for high bills.
8. Set your water heater elements (upper and lower if you have two) no higher than 120 degrees F.
9. Use electric space heaters sparingly, and turn them off when you leave the room.
10. Ensure your refrigerator door is sealed and shut tightly.

WHEAP Income Guidelines for the 2022–2023 Heating Season

(10/01/2022 through 9/30/2023)

60 percent of state median income guidelines



Household Size	One Month Income	Annual Income
1	\$ 2,675.25	\$32,103
2	\$ 3,498.42	\$41,981
3	\$ 4,321.58	\$51,859
4	\$ 5,144.83	\$61,738
5	\$ 5,968.00	\$71,616
6	\$ 6,791.17	\$81,494
7	\$ 6,945.50	\$83,346
8	\$ 7,099.83	\$85,198



Extraordinary People Doing Ordinary Things

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

STORIES FROM THE PASSENGER SIDE



Stuart Vamstad

Life skills are often taught to us by our parents. (Brushing your teeth, making your bed, laundry and dishes.) Classroom teachers pass on a few more skills such as being on time to class, handing in assignments on time, and working with others. Occasionally we learn life skills courtesy of a life experience—how to change a flat tire in the rain comes to mind. Then, there are the people in our world like Stuart Vamstad, who has been a teacher of many things, and what he taught for over 40 years was safe driving skills.

Stuart started his professional career at the Kettle Moraine School District teaching English and speech. Summers off meant he was looking for further employment. “In those days it was just 15 credits to get licensed to teach Driver’s Education, so that is what I did,” Stuart said.

Then, in 1979, Darlington High School was looking for a full-time driver’s education instructor and Stuart

was hired. Classes were larger then, and all Stuart did those first years was teach driver’s education.

While the roads, the cars, and even the rules of the road have changed over the years, some things never change—the students. They came to class with a wide variety of experience and knowledge about driving. Stuart told me of students who didn’t know which pedal did what all the way to the students who raced stock cars on the area race track. Yet, they all needed to learn.

Stuart shared stories of the over 2,400 students he assisted in getting road ready and licensed. As he told me about harrowing close calls, I couldn’t help but appreciate the job he did for our community. I only had the responsibility of teaching two teenagers how to drive, and yet when I commented on this, Stuart humbly moved right on and didn’t dwell on the contribution that he made.

Students would inevitably make mistakes, and while no one was injured,



accidents did happen. One such accident was on main street during a parallel parking lesson. The student driver was hit by a passing car, whose driver thought they could squeeze by. If you guessed that the other driver was a former student—you'd be right.

All Wisconsin drivers know about whiteout and winter hazards, but teaching new drivers about these hazards takes a special type of patience. It is not uncommon for students to slide into or get "sucked into" a ditch when it's covered in snow, but one student did it twice in a 50-yard stretch. After pushing the car out of the snow the second time, Stuart said they switched drivers.

Stuart told one particularly scary story about an instance when they narrowly missed an oncoming semi-truck. The student overcorrected after straying off the pavement on the right-hand side, and then crossed the center line. Most of us would have resigned that day, but not Stuart.

Living in a county with no stoplights, Stuart had to take the students to Platteville to practice many skills. "There aren't many other places to go to learn to change lanes," Stuart said. He would regularly suggest to students that they practice on the weekend on a riding lawnmower. But even those students who came with driving experience would comment on how different it is to drive on the road with other drivers.

Being aware of cross traffic, pedestrians, and the occasional buggy are all things that Stuart taught time after time.

As class sizes declined, Stuart began teaching biology along with summer lessons and school courses. He has also served as a WIAA official for over 30 years in track and field, basketball, and other sports. Students outside of Darlington may very well recognize him from meets and games.

Stuart is the first person I've met who has retired twice. "I first retired when Act 10 was passed, but was hired back three short months later when the school district hired me to continue teaching driver's education part time." Then, COVID hit, and after just a few final students, Stuart retired again.

Driving with the students was always an "education" for Stuart as well. As students drove, they would start talking amongst themselves and seemingly forget he was there. They would gossip as teenagers are known to do, and Stuart would occasionally hear things that needed to be addressed. Like many teachers, he was there to offer support for students who were struggling, or just needed a listening ear.

While it didn't happen often, there are a few families in the district that Stuart taught over three generations. "It is something to see the grandchildren of your first students in the driver seat," he said.

"It is something to see the grandchildren of your first students in the driver seat."

—Stuart Vamsted

Stuart and Patricia raised three boys in their home, which Stuart built in 1980. They now have four grandchildren as well. As you may have noticed from Stuart's last name, he is of Norwegian descent and has visited Norway seven times. One trip was in 2005 when he attended the University of Oslo earning college credits in Norwegian history and language.

Stuart plans to enjoy deer hunting both on the family farm in Blanchardville and in Northern Wisconsin now that he is really retired. Plans to visit Norway in 2023 are already in the works as well. Community members will continue to reap the rewards of his teaching as safe driving was a priority but more than that, he taught patience, attention to detail, and safety, with a kindness that shines through still.—*Judy Mims*



In addition to teaching driver's education for 40+ years, Stuart has been a WIAA official for over 30 years.



Thank You, Veterans!

Veterans Day is a time for us to pay our respects to those who have served. On this day, we stand united in respect for you, our veterans.

This holiday started as a day to reflect upon the heroism of those who died in our country's service and was originally called Armistice Day. It fell on November 11, the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. In 1954, the holiday was changed to "Veterans Day" to account for all veterans in all wars.

Thank you to the men and women who said, "I'll go." Thank you to the families who watched them leave and anxiously awaited their return. A special thank you to the Gold Star families who lost a loved one or who continue to wait for their loved ones to return home.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Is your home heating system ready for the winter chill? One of the easiest ways to keep your system running efficiently is to regularly replace filters. If your central air system has a furnace filter, it should be replaced about every 90 days.

If your home is heated through warm-air registers, baseboard heaters or radiators, remember to clean them regularly to boost efficiency.

Source: *energy.gov*



MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

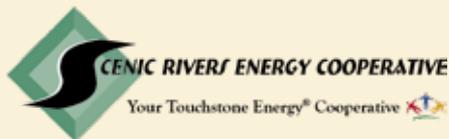


The winning photo for November in SREC's 2022 Member Photo Contest is "Chopping Corn" by Jake Miller of Platteville. Winning photos are featured in our 2022 Member Photo Calendar.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING

SREC's offices will be closed Thursday
and Friday, November 24 & 25



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