



Steve Lucas, CEO

SREC HELPS BUILD OUR COMMUNITIES

October is a big month on the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative (SREC) calendar. This is when we join 30,000 other cooperatives nationwide, including about 1,000 electric

cooperatives, in recognizing October as National Cooperative Month. The theme of this year's celebration is "Cooperatives Build," honoring the many ways co-ops help to build stronger rural communities and a stronger economy.

SREC delivers electricity to 11,358 member households each day. We maintain close to 3,500 miles of distribution line to ensure this electricity is delivered reliably and safely. We make sure electricity is there when you need it—to turn on the lights, power your electronics, heat your water, warm your home, etc.

That's the most obvious way we help build our communities, but it's not the only way.

We help build our communities by contributing to charitable organizations and worthy causes through our Operation Round-Up program. All of our tri-county area's food pantries, fire and rescue operations, and hospitals get a boost through Operation Round-Up. We've also contributed to our communities' free clinics, vocational rehabilitation centers, and organizations such as the Grant County Cancer Coalition.

We are also able to partner with cooperative lending institutions such as CoBank or the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation to obtain funds that help local projects on a larger scale. For example, with Co-Bank's help we were able to provide funds for installing lights at Darlington High School's football stadium.

We help build our communities by providing support to the farmers who are the mainstay of our area's agriculture economy. Along with other electric co-ops in Wisconsin, we offer a uniform statewide farm rewiring program called "Safety First." This program helps our area farmers with the cost of rewiring projects that keep both people and livestock safe.

We help build communities by promoting safety in the general public as well. Our linemen put on hotline safety demonstrations at elementary schools throughout our service area each spring. They also volunteer their time putting on demonstrations at community safety events.



and sponsor students' participation in co-op-led leadership development opportunities such as the annual Youth Leadership Congress.

We also help build communities simply by being here, living and working where you do. We aren't run by distant investors who have no stake at all in our communities; we're run by a democratically elected board of directors made up of members just like you. Our employees all live in the same communities you do—you'll see them everywhere, coaching youth sports teams, serving on church councils, volunteering at schools, contributing to food pantries, and participating in other community events.

Please help us celebrate October Co-op Month by joining us at one of our Member Appreciation Celebrations, held October 18, 19, and 20. I look forward to seeing you there.

We help build the future of our communities by supporting our youth. We offer college scholarships to graduating seniors

MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The winning photo from SREC's first-ever Member Photo Contest for October is from John and Karen Hlavacek of Hebron, Ky. This photo was taken at Hidden Valley Lake in Argyle.

Each of the winning photos is included in our 2016 member calendar. Our 2017 calendar, featuring winning photos from this year's contest, will be available at our Member Appreciation Celebrations (*see page 18 for details*). Be sure to pick yours up and help us celebrate October Co-op Month!

And don't stop snapping! Photos taken now can be submitted in next year's Member Photo Contest.





Now that's a **GREAT PUMPKIN!**

If only Linus had come to Gays Mills. If he'd chosen John and Merri Barlow's pumpkin patch as the most sincere, surely he would have seen The Great Pumpkin.

At the very least, the ever-faithful Peanuts character would have seen a great pumpkin. The Barlows have been growing great pumpkins for 25 years at their farm on Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative's lines. These pumpkins aren't just big—they're giant, record-setting big, tipping the scales at well past 1,000 pounds. Last year's prize pumpkin from the Barlow patch even surpassed the ton

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—John Barlow

mark, weighing in at 2,034 pounds. That pumpkin broke a site record at a weigh-off in Anamosa, Iowa, and it ended up the fifth largest in the world after all the 2015 season's giant pumpkin weigh-ins were completed.

“We've had some success,” Barlow said.

That's an understatement about as big as the massive pumpkins he and Merri grow, but Barlow is quick to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of giant pumpkin growers everywhere. As president of the Wisconsin Giant Pumpkin Growers (WGPG), he's involved in promoting the activity as a fun and chal-



lenging venture for growers.

“I got started just to see if I could grow a giant pumpkin,” he said, explaining how he read an article about giant pumpkins in a magazine years ago and called the number listed there for seeds. “For some reason, growing big, orange, round things was something I wanted to try. Now, it's basically for the challenge. It's challenging to see if you can do it again, or do it better than you've ever done before.”

WGPG Weighs In – WGPG offers training seminars and networking opportunities for its members, who come from all over Wisconsin as well as a few other states. Some even come from other countries. The club is open to anyone who's interested; prior experience or

expertise is not necessary.

“We teach each other very well,” Barlow said. “We learn from our members.”

The club also sponsors weigh-ins, offering lucrative cash prizes, at five events each fall: Cedarburg Wine and Harvest Festival, Willy Street Fair in Madison, Nekoosa Oktoberfest, Lake Geneva Fall Festival, and Michicot Pumpkinfest. The club sponsors weigh-ins in six different categories: giant pumpkin, giant squash, field pumpkin (different from the giant pumpkin category, which is for a kind of pumpkin that has a hard stem—think jack-o-lantern), tomato, watermelon, and longest long gourd.

Similar weigh-ins are held in other states and countries, so growers compete for world records as well as state records.

“Last year, five of the top seven giant pumpkin growers in the world came from our club,” Barlow pointed out. “So we did very, very well as a club last year.”

In addition, WGPG as well as the international group, known as the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth, award a Rookie Grower of the Year. WGPG has dominated this category as well, with three of the past title winners coming from the Wisconsin Club, and likely a fourth this year.

Growing Pumpkins – While pumpkins are generally fairly easy to grow, nurturing a giant record-setting pumpkin takes some considerable effort in addition to a helping hand from Mother Nature. Barlow listed four key factors for growing giant pumpkins: manipulation, good weather, good genetics, and good soil.

Quality seeds are crucial and can be obtained through fellow growers or through organizations like WGPG. The Barlows have been enhancing their garden soil for years, adding organic matter and applying what he describes as an organic tea made with worm castings.

“Manipulation is the grower,” Barlow said. “You can manage the plant in certain ways. That’s the only area you can control.”

Tactics include training the vines so they grow straight without crossing each other and trimming the vines and runners, leaving more of the plant’s energy for the pumpkins. When the pumpkins start appearing, the Barlows determine which one is potentially weigh-in worthy and remove the rest, dedicating all of the plant’s energy to the single pumpkin’s growth.

That growth can be dramatic.

“About 20 to 60 days after it’s pollinated, a pumpkin will grow 40, 50, even up to 60 pounds a day,” Barlow said. “Last year I had a 10-day average of 49.5 pounds.”

Weathering Conditions – The summer of 2015, Barlow said, was very favorable for growing pumpkins, which helped him and Merri produce their biggest pumpkin ever. This past summer’s weather, however, with the multiple days of high heat index, was not ideal for growing pumpkins, so Barlow predicts it will be even more challenging for records to be broken during the 2016 weigh-in season by WGPG members.

However, one huge pumpkin in his patch appeared to be well on its way by summer’s end to coming tantalizingly close to last year’s whopper. Just how close won’t be known for sure until it’s weighed in competition; Barlow uses a chart to guess the pumpkin’s weight by its circumference as it’s growing. The final weight, which isn’t known until the pumpkin is placed on a scale at a weigh-in, can come as a surprise. Last year’s winning pumpkin, for example, turned out to be considerably heavier than Barlow was predicting.

Winning pumpkins are sometimes sold to master carvers to be turned into grand jack-o-lanterns. Others remain at the fall festival where the weigh-in is held and are kept on display as part of the event.

That’s a fitting storybook ending for any great pumpkin.—
Mary Erickson

To learn more about growing giant pumpkins or about the Wisconsin Giant Pumpkin Growers, visit wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com.



1. John Barlow gets a hand in the pumpkin patch from his granddaughter Vealla, age “1.82” at the time of the photo. 2. This huge watermelon, estimated to be 150 pounds, is kept under wraps to keep its rind from blistering in the sun. The Barlows hold the state watermelon record of 214 pounds. They also grew the biggest tomato in Wisconsin last year, at 5.77 pounds. 4. Despite challenging weather conditions in 2016, the Barlows produced this huge pumpkin for competition. 5. This hanging gourd is destined for a longest long gourd weigh-in.



STUTE STEPS DOWN AS DIRECTOR

David Stute, who has served as director of District 9 since he was first elected to the Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative Board of Directors in 2005, has resigned his post, citing medical reasons.

Appointed to fill the vacancy is John “Jack” Larson of Argyle. The current term for the seat expires as of next spring’s annual meeting.



Stute had also represented SREC on the Dairyland Power Cooperative board since 2010. Director Sandra Davidson will fill that post on the Dairyland board.

“We will miss Dave’s leadership and his thoughtful approach to the complicated issues our industry faces,” CEO Steve Lucas said. “He was committed to all members of the co-op and was deeply involved in our continuing efforts to keep rates low and reliability high.”

A SREC member since 2000, Stute brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to his post as director of District 9. He grew up on a dairy farm in Walworth County and obtained a bachelor of science degree in animal husbandry as well as a law degree from UW–Madison. Stute’s law career included 31 years working for the Wisconsin Legislative Council Staff, a 31-person nonpartisan service agency of the Wisconsin Legislature. He served as chief staff attorney for 14 years and as director of the council staff for 10 years before retiring in 1999.

“We thank Dave for his years of dedicated service to the members of Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, and we wish him the very best,” Lucas said.



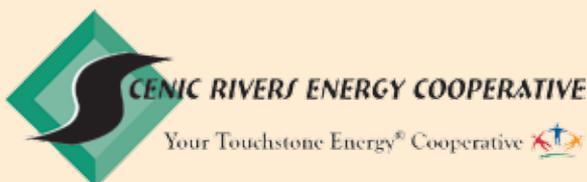
October 18 – Lancaster office
October 19 – Gays Mills office
October 20 – Darlington office

4 to 7 p.m. at each location

**Come join us as we celebrate
October Co-op Month! We'll have...**

- Dinner (shredded roast beef sandwiches, baked beans, potato salad, chips, cheese curds, brownies and beverages)
- Bucket truck rides
- Free blood pressure checks provided by county nurses, as well as flu shots at members’ cost
- Focus on Energy information
- Door prizes

Each member will receive a 2017 calendar with the winning photos from this year's contest!



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