



Steve Lucas, CEO

## CAPITAL CREDITS

Co-op membership means margins are returned to you!

The calendar has turned to October, and that means pumpkins, colored leaves, corn mazes, cooler temperatures, and co-ops.

Of course, *every* month is about co-ops. Cooperatives are part of our everyday lives in more ways that you probably realize. But October is special. This month is nationally recognized as Co-op Month, a time to pay tribute to co-ops and the important role they play in our lives and communities.

Here at Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative, we recognize October Co-op Month in several ways. This is the month in which we host our Member Appreciation Celebrations, one at each of our three locations: October 17 in Lancaster, October 18 in Gays Mills, and October 19 in Darlington (see page 18 for more details).

We also choose October Co-op Month as the time to distribute capital credit refunds via credit on your bill. Capital credits represent your ownership in the cooperative. They're one of the most noticeable differences between co-ops and other forms of business.

**You'll want to pay special attention to this year's refund, because it will be bigger than usual.**

In an investor-owned utility, profits are returned to the owners, who are often far-off stakeholders. Cooperatives also return profits—or margins—to owners, only our owners are YOU—the people who use our services and live right here in our communities. It's all part of the third of seven Cooperative Principles that guide all co-ops—Members' Economic Participation. Any margins above and beyond the cost of doing business and maintaining economic stability are returned to our member/owners. Our board of directors determines how much the co-op is able to feasibly retire each year, and each member's share is determined by the member's usage.

You'll want to pay special attention to this year's refund, because it will be a little bit larger than usual. At our annual meeting in April I announced that our wholesale power supplier, Dairyland Power Cooperative, reached a major settlement with the U.S. government over nuclear waste stored from its former nuclear reactor in Genoa. The federal government was charged with finding a long-term disposal site for the nuclear fuel and had committed to opening that site by 1998. However, no long-term storage site has been opened, and Dairyland has incurred the costs of storage ever since.

Because Dairyland Power is also a cooperative, that settle-

ment was distributed among its member cooperatives, including Scenic Rivers. And we in turn are distributing our share of the settlement among our members.

### Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Another of the seven Cooperative Principles is Cooperation Among Cooperatives, which says that co-ops serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together. We've just recently embodied that principle in a very big way.

As of press time, four of our linemen had just returned from Clay Electric Co-op in Keystone Heights, Florida, where they were helping with power restoration efforts after the devastating damage caused by Hurricane Irma (see page 5). Tory Henkel and Shane Crowley from the Lancaster office, Reggie Lomas from the Gays Mills office, and Matt Ritchie from the Darlington office were part of the Wisconsin contingent, made up of 51 line personnel from 18 co-ops, that answered the call for help.

We had no shortage of volunteers to fill this crew. I am extremely proud of cooperatives in general, and our own SREC employees in particular, for their willingness to help out our fellow co-ops in a time of great need.



### MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The winning photo from SREC's 2016 Member Photo Contest for October was taken by Nancy A. Ball in Blue River. You can pick up your 2018 calendar, featuring winning photos from our 2017 Member Photo Contest, at our Member Appreciation Celebrations (see page 18) or at any of our offices while supplies last. And keep snapping: We'll have another contest in 2018!



# New Plans for Kickapoo Caverns

## Former tourist site to be used for conservation education, outreach

Once a mainstay of schoolchildren in the Wauzeka area, the former Kickapoo Indian Caverns, located on Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative lines, will be open for class tours once again this coming spring. However, it will be a different experience from what parents of the current generation of grade-schoolers might recall, with a greater emphasis on conservation education.

Closed to public tours since 2007, the property was recently acquired by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, which plans to manage what is now known as simply Kickapoo Caverns specifically to protect the bat population inside. Two state threatened bat species and one federally listed threatened bat species live within the cave.

“The cavern will be closed from October to May for the bats, so nobody will be able to go into the cavern during those months while the bats are hibernating, for their health and safety,” said Carol Abrahamzon, executive director of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

During the late spring and summer months, the cave will be opened for

guided tours for school classes and other groups. They will be able to once again take in the beautiful stalactites and unique features that have attracted visitors to this limestone cave for many years. Visitors will still be able to see the collection of arrowheads and artifacts left behind by the Kickapoo, who likely inhabited the cave hundreds of years ago. But they’ll also learn about the cave’s current dwellers.

“We really want to educate people about the importance of the bat population, and why we need to protect their hibernaculum,” Abrahamzon said, adding it’s not just diseases like white-nose syndrome that threaten bats. “If you go into the cave while they’re hibernating, just the disturbance can harm them.”

**Above the Cave** Although the cave itself will no longer be operated as a commercial tourist site, the public now has full access to the 83 acres above the caverns.

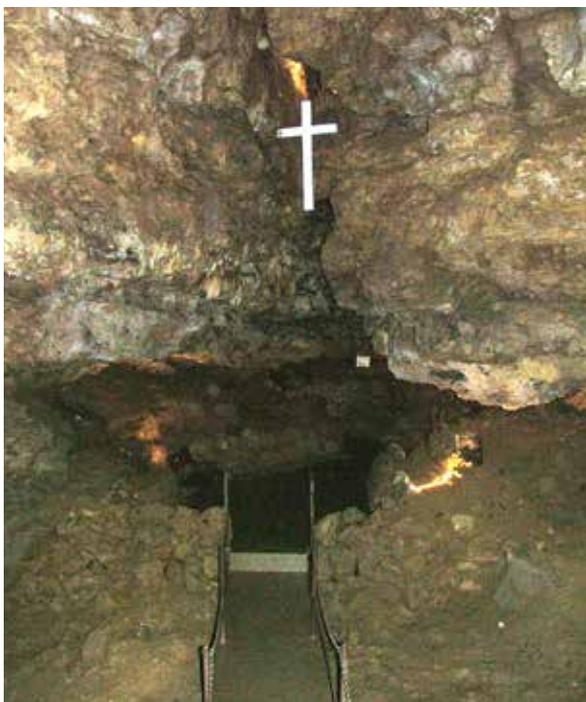
“The land above the cavern is open to the public to enjoy with any kind of low-impact recreation, including hunt-



The long-eared brown bat is one of the threatened bat species that hibernate in Kickapoo Caverns during the winter months. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy plans to manage the cave primarily for protection of the bats.

ing,” Abrahamzon said. “They can also go out and hike, bird watch, and they can check out a prairie remnant where we’ll be doing some restoration work as well. There are also some really neat rock formations to check out.”

“The forest is absolutely beautiful year-round,” she added. “In the spring there are beautiful wildflowers that come up en masse, and people can snowshoe



Kickapoo Caverns is one of the Wisconsin’s longest natural cavern systems. Geologists say it was formed by an ancient underground river that flowed through the bedrock limestone over thousands of years. First open to the public in 1947, the cave provided plenty of unusual sites for tourists over the years, including 60-foot cathedral-like rooms, stalactites, and a collection of tools and artifacts left by the Kickapoo Indians, who likely once inhabited the cave. Guide tours for school classes and other groups will resume in late spring/summer 2018.

in the winter.”

Abrahamzon noted there is a chain across the driveway so those who want to enjoy the forest can park at the bottom and are welcome to walk on up.

“We really want people to use and enjoy this property,” she said. “That’s why we wanted to purchase this land.”

**Saving the Cave** The Conservancy purchased the property after a yearlong fund-raising effort, with many contributions from organizations including the Prairie du Chien Rod and Gun Club, the Wauzeka Lions Club, Whitetails Unlimited, and Wisconsin DNR. Donations also came from individuals, many of

whom shared fond memories of classroom field trips taken to the cave when they were children.

Those classroom tours included a trek through the cave’s meandering tunnels along lit pathways. Highlights included a stop in the Cathedral Room, with its 60-foot onyx ceiling and a cross placed high on the wall; this room actually was the site for five weddings over the years.

Other special features included the Chamber of Lost Water, with a pool of water that was said to be pure enough to drink but too cold to touch or support life, and the Turquoise Room, where the copper oxide in the cave’s walls created jewel-looking formations.

Also displayed in the cave were the artifacts left by the Kickapoo and picks and cartridge boxes left by soldiers from nearby Fort Crawford, who explored the cave in the 1800s in search of lead.

Abrahamzon said these relics are still within the cave. They, along with the old Trading Post that housed the cave’s entrance, will remain as part of the cave’s history, linking its storied past to its new purpose today.—*Mary Erickson*

Kickapoo Caverns is located off Highway 60, just west of Wauzeka. To learn more about the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, visit [mississippivalleyconservancy.com](http://mississippivalleyconservancy.com).

## FOCUS ON ENERGY OFFERING FREE ENERGY-SAVING PACKS

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The energy-saving packs include items such as light-emitting diode (LED) light bulbs, high-efficiency showerheads, water-saving bathroom faucet aerators and showerheads, pipe insulation, and advanced power strips for home entertainment centers and office areas.

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You're invited to  
SREC's 2017  
**MEMBER  
APPRECIATION  
CELEBRATIONS!**

**Come join  
us as we  
celebrate  
October  
Co-op  
Month!**

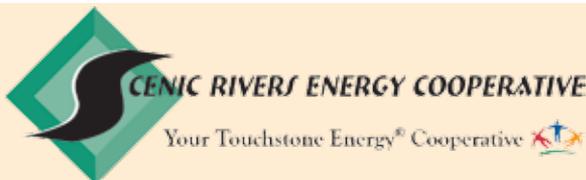


**October 17 – Lancaster office**  
**October 18 – Gays Mills office**  
**October 19 – Darlington office**

*4 to 7 p.m. at each location*

*Each member will receive a 2018 calendar with the  
winning photos from this year's contest!*

- Dinner (BBQ pork sandwiches, baked beans, potato salad, chips, cheese curds, frosted 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



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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