



## Guest Editorial REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MEMBERS



By Judy Martin,  
Administrative/Customer Service

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative has a proud tradition of working with the youth in our communities and schools. Through annual hot line demonstrations, we teach about electricity safety and what to do in case of an emergency. We also have proudly awarded over \$200,000 in scholarships over the past 15 years. Members are encouraged to have their graduating seniors apply for these scholarships, which are awarded at our annual meeting each April. But we do more.

Each year the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) hosts high school students from around the state at UW-River Falls for the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC). This dynamic, three-day event is more than just seminars on leadership. As any participant will tell you, "it is fun!"

SREC was happy to sponsor seven students from our service territory this year. Upon arrival on campus, it was check in, drop your bags, and get some lunch at the university cafeteria. There was no resting after that. Orientation was followed by sessions that taught students what a co-op is and why it is different from investor-owned utilities.

Highlights from the week included speaker Shelby Gruss, who is a professional wheelchair basketball athlete and a PhD student from Purdue University in Indiana. Craig Hillier, a motivational speaker and author, worked with the students on team-building skills and succeeding over adversity. Students worked on communication skills, thinking creatively, and much more through many interactive games. A career fair and panel allowed students to speak to various employees from co-ops.

The annual etiquette dinner was hosted by Melissa Wilson who taught students, and chaperones, which fork is used for what course. The meal was both delicious and enlightening. At the conclusion of the meal, the 12 candidates for the 2019–20 Youth Leadership Board were announced. SREC was proud to have two students elected to compete: Destany Downing and Maddie Cooley. We are happy to announce that Maddie was elected on Friday by her peers and will be participating in the



L to R, front row: Iris Boehm, Allison Ihm. Back row: Alex Downing, Destany Downing, Meg Katzung, Allie Cooley, and Maddie Cooley.

national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., in 2020.

Following the etiquette dinner, students were treated to a performance by Dr. Al Snyder, a hypnotist. The 30-plus students who were selected to be hypnotized entertained us all with their hilarious responses and actions while hypnotized. Several of our students were selected to participate.

Leaving the next day was bittersweet. The students had made new friends. Connected via Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media platforms. Photos were taken, good-byes were said, and the students boarded the bus. These students had the courage to try something new. They had the chance to see and experience something new and they learned a lot. Fun was had, and teaching happened when they weren't looking.

All in all, we are proud to positively affect the students in our area. Helping them learn by giving them opportunities and support is one of our seven guiding principles: Education, Training, and Information – Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.





Family members, Focus on Energy representatives, and SREC personnel were joined by Sen. Howard Marklein (fifth from left) and Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes (fifth from right) for a celebratory photo at the new Langmeier facility.



# SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP

## Local Brussels sprouts farm wins award for energy efficiency

It's a soothing summer sight: cows grazing on lush grass and crops turning fields 50 shades of green. The cows on the Langmeier farm near Patch Grove are familiar, but one crop is pretty new: Brussels sprouts.

The first year, they planted two acres. This year, they planted 75 acres. And they have built a processing facility on the farm that won an award for its energy efficiency.

The Langmeier facility was among 18 winners chosen from 50 applications, said Erinn Monroe-Nye, project director for Focus on Energy.

"We really want to support the economic impact of projects like this, especially for the ag economy," Monroe-Nye said. "Over the long term, they help reduce demand, which keeps costs down and helps keeps rates down."

Reducing demand means that utilities don't have to build more capacity, she said, avoiding costly construction of new power plants.

The award includes incentives and technical assistance.

Sustainability and stewardship were built into the facility.

"We wanted to be as environmentally friendly as we could," Joe Langmeier said.

That is a tradition on the fourth-generation farm.

After the 1988 drought, their father, Jim, became a convert to pasture-based dairying. Forages rather than grain became their focus. "We saw the health of

the cattle change," Joe Langmeier said.

Then they transitioned to organic farming. "We have never looked back. It's been the best thing we did," he said.

The new facility has conveyors, coolers, and everything needed to clean, package, and store the Brussels sprouts.

The Langmeier project included energy-efficient LED lighting and variable frequency drives (VFDs) to control the motor speed of the conveyor systems and packaging equipment used on the assembly line. The VFDs minimize system agitations and increase efficiency while also cutting energy use by 30 to 40 percent.

The upgrades will save an estimated 1,474,621 kilowatt hours of electricity over the life of the equipment, which is enough to power 125 homes for a year, or charge about 133 million cellphones. Those kilowatt-hour savings also equate to around \$161,000 in saved energy costs for the Langmeiers over the life of the equipment, according to Focus on Energy.

Tom Langmeier, owner of Langmeier Lumber in Bloomington and uncle to Joe, Mike, and Keith, designed the building.

"I think these guys are pioneers in the industry. The research they do is unreal. It's a lot of fun to watch what these guys do" on the farm where he grew up, Tom Langmeier said.

Other area firms that helped in getting the facility up and running are Renner Electric, Madigan Refrigeration, and Volm Companies.



Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes presents a Focus on Energy award to Joe Langmeier.





The Langmeier brothers are pictured on the back of the Organic Valley certified organic Brussels sprouts package.

At the end of June when the presentation was made, all 75 acres of Brussels sprouts had been planted, and a crew of 15 was hand weeding.

They start with seeds in a greenhouse, then the plants go to the field.

“My senate district is the most agricultural-dependent senate district in the state of Wisconsin. We’ve got a lot of agriculture in this part of the state. And I’m just happy for this kind of investment to keep agriculture going well,” said Sen. Howard Marklein, R-Spring Green.

“This type of collaboration is what we need to have to move the industry forward,” said Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes. “We can be an example to the rest of the country, and to the rest of the world.”

The sustainability and stewardship exhibited is in the spirit of John Muir and Aldo Leopold, Barnes said.

The Langmeiers grew organic asparagus for Organic Valley in 2016.

“We were always at the producer meetings,” and when Brussels sprouts were suggested as a potential crop, “we ran the numbers and thought this could work for us,” Joe Langmeier said.

Everything they learned about growing organically has been put to use in the newest venture.

The three sons and their wives—Joe and Natalie, Mike and Amalia, and Keith and Amy—all stayed on the farm.

In the beginning of their research, representatives from the Netherlands visited. Mike and Amalia Langmeier, then recently married, made a honeymoon trip to the Netherlands.

“Just like we’ve been milking cows here for generations, they’ve been growing Brussels sprouts,” Mike said.

They were welcomed at several farms to see how the crop is grown, which felt like karma repaying them for the tours they’ve given about grazing cows, he said.

“Organic Valley was going to back us up on this. So we said all right, let’s do it,” Mike Langmeier said.

Brussels sprouts have “been flying off the shelves,” said Annake Ramsey, produce program manager for Organic Valley. New recipes, including roasted Brussels sprouts, have increased the popularity of the vegetable, she said.

“We’ll make a big push for the holidays,” Ramsey said.

Organic Valley sells Brussels sprouts in 10-pound bulk packages and 1-pound packages, of which the Langmeiers are the exclusive producer.

The Brussels sprouts grown at the Langmeier farm are available at Organic Valley stores in LaFarge and Cashton. The packaging is recyclable and breathable, with micro-perforations.

According to Organic Valley, “on the Langmeier farm innovative practices include planting ‘insectaries,’ a mix of flowers and herbs planted between rows of Brussels sprouts to attract beneficial insects and bees. Their cover cropping system builds soil fertility. These practices add to the farm’s vitality, and produce the sweetest, freshest Brussels sprouts possible.”

The support has been gratifying, the Langmeiers said.

“You don’t do this alone. The community is backing us up, and that feels really good,” Joe Langmeier said.

“They’re a tough plant. They’re stoic. They don’t show what’s happening to them right away,” Joe Langmeier said.

The farm has 100 dairy cows. Diversification strengthens the farm’s future, the Langmeiers believe.

**16 oz. BRUSSELS SPROUTS**

- Seasonally frost-sweetened
- BPA-free recyclable packaging (5)
- Controlled Atmosphere Packaging technology keeps organic product fresh on the shelf longer

Product	UPC	Case Size	Unit Size	Case Size	Case Wt.	Cube	Pallet
Brussels Sprouts – Bagged	0 93966 90716 2	12/16 oz.	1.250 x 7.00W x 10.65H	16.31L x 11.81W x 6.88H	13.10 lbs.	0.77	10 H x 7 W
Brussels Sprouts – Bulk	N/A	10 lbs.	N/A	16.31L x 11.81W x 6.88H	11.10 lbs.	0.77	10 H x 7 W

1-888-444-6455 Ext. 3444 • [www.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop)

MY CO-OP

**Superior Quality**  
Packed fresh on the farm the day of harvest.

**Family Farming**  
Grown and packed with care on a Wisconsin family farm.

**Always Organic**  
We never use toxic pesticides, herbicides or synthetic fertilizers.

**The #1 Always Organic Brand**

Source: SPINScan, 52 weeks ending 12/31/17

©2018 ORGP Cooperative | 18-600004



“Never put all your eggs in one basket,” said Amalia Langmeier. “We wanted to do it such a way that we had room to grow and develop.”

It is a foundation for the fifth generation, she said.

Why Brussels sprouts? “They taste good. They grow really well here. They have few natural predators. They have few diseases and many varieties,” Amalia Langmeier said.

They are also nutritious, a good source of vitamins C and K and also a good source of protein.

“This felt right. We’ll continue to dabble. We’re not done,” Mike Langmeier said.

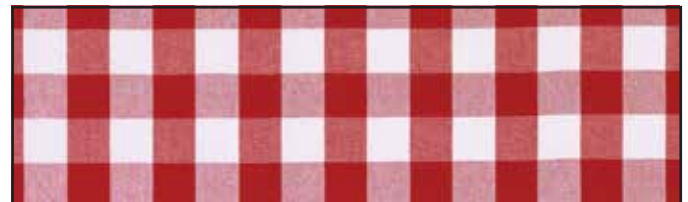
Focus on Energy, the state’s utilities, and business and residential customers work together to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus on Energy provides energy expertise and financial incentives to encourage energy efficiency projects that otherwise might not get done.

A recent third-party evaluation found that Wisconsin has the most cost-effective energy efficiency programs in the nation.



## MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Nathan Elderkin of Soldiers Grove took the October picture in SREC’s 2019 Member Photo Contest. He described this photo as “Little round planet in a big universe.”



# MEMBER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION

**October 8** – Lancaster Office

**October 9** – Gays Mills Office

**October 10** – Darlington Office

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

Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperative invites you to join us as we mark October Co-op Month by celebrating YOU, our members!

We’ll be serving up hamburgers and brats, with beans, salads, cheesy potatoes, cheese curds, desserts, and drinks.

We’ll have drawings for door prizes, and Focus on Energy staff will be on hand to answer your questions about saving energy!

**2020 Member Photo Calendars will be available at all three locations!**



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  
Gays Mills, WI 54631  
gaysmills@srec.net

**608-723-2121 • 800-236-2141 • www.sre.coop**

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

## Board of Directors

Chuck Simmons, Chairman  
Donald Schaefer, Vice Chairman  
Sandra Davidson, Secretary–Treasurer  
Ellen Conley, Asst. Secretary–Treasurer  
Larry Butson, Director  
Steve Carpenter, Director  
Delbert Reuter, Director  
Jack Larson, Director  
Marcus Saegrove, Director