

Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative*

August 2022

## NEWS

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

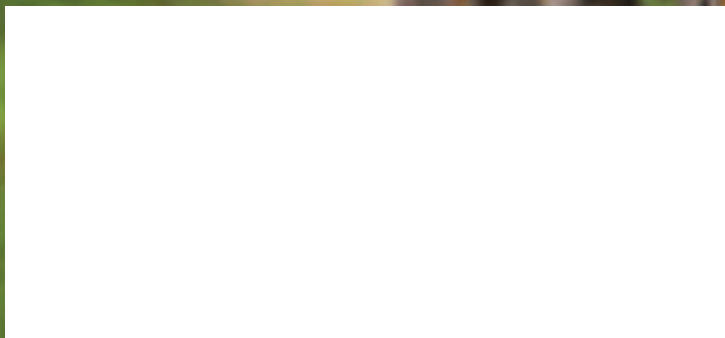
A Rural Energy Cooperative 

RURAL FOLK ART  
CULTURE IS CAST  
IN CONCRETE

ONE STEP AHEAD OF  
UTILITY SCAMMERS

YOUTH TOUR:  
BUILDING BACK STRONG

PIERCE PEPIN IMAGINATION  
LIBRARY TURNS ONE







Nate Boettcher,  
President and CEO

# SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

At PPCS we spend a considerable amount of time discussing how we serve our communities. Keeping the lights on and providing a connection to the world is our priority. However, our employees and directors recognize we can fulfill a larger mission in serving our community. After all, Cooperative Principle No. 7 is Concern for Community. A few weeks ago, I attended the funeral of Wayne Wilson, and I can't think of anyone who more exemplified the spirit of serving their community.

If the name Wayne Wilson sounds familiar, there is a good chance you might have been pulled over by State Trooper Wilson. Wayne served as a state trooper for 28 years. My connection to Wayne and his family was through my grandpa. Wayne and my grandpa served together on the Kiwanis Club in Menomonie and bowled for many years together at Viking Bowl in Colfax. I have fond memories from childhood of winter bonfires, complete with campfire pies filled with strawberries and blueberries, hosted by Wayne and his family. As a member of the Kiwanis Club, Wayne was instrumental in starting and maintaining Operation York, a paper recycling program, and Youth Organized for Recycling. Wayne helped start Hunters Against Hunger and Operation Helping Hand. During his funeral, his family and friends continued to provide examples of how Wayne often served his friends, neighbors, and community. Wayne changed things for the greater good of the world as a servant leader.

It seems like every time I turn around, I find stories of the past generations helping their communities. Just take a few minutes to learn about Woody Williams, who recently passed away and had been the last Medal of Honor recipient from World War II. I don't know if we will ever exceed the bar that

was set by the previous generation when it comes to community service, but I know that we must continue to instill this sense of purpose into our employees, friends, and neighbors.

Supporting your community through volunteering, participation, and pitching in goes a long way in helping to solidify community ties. Our team at PPCS participates in civic groups like the Lions Club, are volunteer firefighters, serves on township boards, and contributes to many other programs and organizations.

PPCS is an active member of chamber groups and the Pierce County Economic Development Corporation. A little over a year ago we started Pierce Pepin Cares, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization to provide a vessel for doing more charitable work in our community. Contributions through Operation Round Up go to Pierce Pepin Cares. PPCS member Katie Feuerhelm, along with PPCS senior accountant Barb Bee, and the PPCS board of directors make up the Pierce Pepin Cares board. They meet

quarterly to make decisions on providing financial support to community entities that apply for funds. These individuals and the groups and entities that receive donations quietly make a difference in our community.

In a world where we always feel like we are "too busy," contributing to our communities might feel like a hard thing

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to do at times but I encourage you to find a way. Thank you to all of those who are involved! Being a part of the community will continue to be a goal for us

at PPCS. We will continue to hire and recruit people who see the bigger vision of the cooperative, support our communities, keep the lights on, and provide connectivity to the world. If a person like Wayne Wilson can help change the world, I am positive we can do our part to continue making our communities a better place. We hope you have a great rest of the summer. Thank you for being a member, and best of luck as another school year will be upon us in a few short weeks.

## NOMINATE A VOLUNTEER FOR THE LIVE BETTER COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Do you know someone who lives up to the seventh cooperative principle – Concern for Community – by helping others live better through their volunteerism? PPCS created the Live Better Community Service Award to recognize individuals who selflessly give of their time and talents. This award is presented to individuals who engage in community volunteerism, performing valuable services that benefit and improve the quality of life within the communities served by PPCS. The award, a \$100 Visa® Check Card, is presented to one individual during the months of January, April, July, and October. Nominations for the October award are due on September 15. Nomination forms and program details are on our website, [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop), under My Community.



# PIERCE PEPIN IMAGINATION LIBRARY TURNS ONE

It's a big deal when your baby turns one. You've spent the first year nurturing and watching as your baby starts to develop. You take pride in every new achievement.

We feel the same about our Imagination Library. We started exploring the possibility of bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Pierce and Pepin Counties in late 2020.

It took several months to get the necessary affiliate agreements signed, as well as establish our charitable foundation, Pierce Pepin Cares. Finally, everything was in place, and we launched the program on August 7, 2021.

The Imagination Library is open to every child living in Pierce or Pepin County, from birth to age five, regardless of financial status. Each child enrolled in the program receives a free book via the United States Postal Service every month. The Dollywood Foundation pays for the books and Pierce Pepin Cares pays for the postage. To date, most of the funds used to pay for the postage have come from unclaimed capital credits.

We've received positive feedback from families on the value of the Imagination Library. "What a fun surprise every month!" said Anna Carlson. "We are thrilled to be a part of such an awesome program."

Megan Hagar agreed, "My kids love getting a new surprise book each month in the mail. As parents, we love the quality of each book, and the stories are always geared toward their age group."

Dolly Parton established the Imagination Library in 1995 to honor her father, who was illiterate. Her goal is to instill a

love of reading in children at an early age to help ensure future success in school. The Dollywood Foundation now mails two million books every month in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Ireland. In Wisconsin, there are 24 Imagination Library program affiliates with 23,675 children currently enrolled. The Pierce Pepin Imagination

Library has served over 700 children, with 619 currently enrolled, and 84 graduated.

We're going to keep nurturing this baby—we're eager to build on the success of our first year and reach even more children.

Liam and Brielle Hagar love getting their books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.



## SHIFT for Savings

Reduce your energy use between 2 and 6 PM.

With your help, we can lower demand, keep rates stable, and decrease stress on the electric grid.



JOIN US FOR  
**COFFEE AT THE  
CO-OP**

Friday, August 19  
8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at  
the PPCS office.





# TURNING A ONE-MAN CRAFT INTO A THRIVING BUSINESS

A woodturner since the age of 13, Chad Stevenson has grown Midwest Woodturners, the small business he established in 2015 in the basement of his Red Wing rental property, from a one-man operation to a company with nine employees, teaching in 28 different locations in four states. He mentored under a world-renowned woodturner named Steve Sinner and was also part of a woodturning club in the Quad Cities. With his lathe and chisel, Stevenson started making things like wine stops, bowls, pizza cutter handles, tap handles, and rolling pins.

He began bringing finished products to the Red Wing Farmers' Market in the trunk of his car every Saturday morning. He continued to build inventory and started traveling to other large art and craft shows in the region. When COVID hit, he couldn't go to regional craft shows anymore. So, he "retooled" things and began making larger items like conference tables, sliding interior barn doors, coffee and end tables, and pretty much anything with wood and epoxy. Then, charcuterie boards hit the world by storm in 2020. Stevenson started making smaller serving trays with the same practice as the larger projects and drew an enormous response.

That response grew into inviting people to have a hands-on experience, see the epoxy colors, and pour their own. Brush Strokes in Ellsworth offered a great space for hosting educational classes on how to pour your own epoxy. The timing was right; a lot of people were ready to get out of the



General Manager Sam Hira (left) and Owner Chad Stevenson (right) display samples of the Midwest Woodturners charcuterie boards.

house after COVID. By making just a few Facebook posts Midwest Woodturners was able to schedule four months of classes. Eventually, other paint-and-sip style businesses reached out to them asking to host their classes.

For a year and a half, Midwest Woodturners only did classes in Ellsworth, bringing people into Ellsworth from up to three and four hours away. They're doing almost 200 boards per week now with their classes. They've done a lot of partnering with other businesses to host these events.

"It's been a very positive way to work together to help small businesses recover from COVID,"

said Stevenson. "We've been able to create some very long-lasting relationships with other businesses."

Midwest Woodturners has one employee who has been a woodworker for 20-plus years who supports the large project line of tables and barn doors. The other employees support the custom training line. Midwest Woodturners has trademarked the phrase "pour your own epoxy." At the end of August, they will host their first round of classes in California. They go all over the Midwest and host three to four classes a week.

"We've tried to maintain controllable growth," said Stevenson. "We have a great team. It's a great group of young talent."

Using sustainable harvesting for their wood, non-hazardous epoxy, and reusable molds, Midwest Woodturners is working to grow their business in a renewable and sustainable manner with minimal waste.





**CHARGE**  
POWERED BY CO-OPS

*Join us*

for an exclusive member event with food, wine tasting, and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly installed CHARGE public electric vehicle chargers installed by PPCS at:

**Vino in the Valley**      **Belle Vinez**  
**August 27**              **September 2**  
**12 - 2 PM**              **12 - 2 PM**

**Forestville Vines**  
**September 9**  
**12 - 2 PM**

Registration is required.  
RSVP to Liz at 715-273-2450 or  
lgunderson@piercepepin.coop by August 18.

## SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

Donations accepted through August 5

There's still time to help Ellsworth Elementary students get off to a good start this school year. PPCS is a drop-off site for Ellsworth Elementary School's annual School Supplies Drive. We're collecting basic supplies, calculators, headphones, backpacks, and cash donations. All donations can be dropped off during business hours through August 5. Thank you for helping our kids start the school year with the tools necessary for success!

### GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINE APPROACHING

The deadline for the October grants is approaching. Applications for Operation Round Up grants must be received by **September 15, 2022**, for review at the October Pierce Pepin Cares board meeting. Program information and applications are available online at [www.piercepepin.coop](http://www.piercepepin.coop).

## INTERNET: 101

Trimbelle Town Hall  
N5310 800th St - Ellsworth  
August 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Open to residents of Trimbelle Township. Join us for a review of Internet basics. Space is limited - reserve your spot by calling Laure at 715-273-2413 or email at [landrle@piercepepin.coop](mailto:landrle@piercepepin.coop).

## PIERCE PEPIN COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

**Office Hours:** Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Power Outages and Emergencies: 800-927-5705**

### Nate Boettcher, President & CEO

#### Board of Directors

- District 1.....Gerald Drier
- District 2.....Edward Hass
- District 3.....Brian Berg
- District 4.....Joseph Bacon
- District 5.....Ann Young
- District 6.....Ginny Huber, secretary/treasurer
- District 7.....Roger Wiff, chairman
- District 8.....Brian Bergsens, vice chairman
- District 9.....Daniel Reis