


Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* August 2023 NEWS

**PIERCE PEPIN**  
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**BRINGING ELECTRICITY  
TO THE NAVAJO NATION**

**TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL**

**WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!**

**NO HEAT RECIPES**



# RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD ON INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING



Nate Boettcher, President and CEO

At the end of June, the Biden Administration in partnership with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the Federal Communications Commission announced the distribution of \$42.45 billion in broadband funding to bring

service to unserved areas. This program, known as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, will allocate \$1.05 billion to cover 250,000 locations in Wisconsin. The BEAD program was part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in 2021. While much of the funding is focused on areas considered unserved, funding will be made available for underserved areas as well. Underserved areas generally lack a reliable provider that offers 25/3 Mbps service, while underserved areas require providers to meet a 100/20 Mbps level of service.

When we launched SwiftCurrent Connect in June of 2021, we knew that funding would be a critical component. Infrastructure projects, like building a world-class fiber network, take capital. I recall one of our state legislators telling us, “The state just can’t afford to do this, but the federal government has the resources.” Another industry colleague told us, “Get started, the money will keep coming.” Both of those individuals were right, and because of that, 800 miles of fiber and 6,000 more homes in western Wisconsin will have access to high-speed fiber-optic internet by the end of this year.

The IIJA doesn’t just end with broadband. Within the bill, there are billions of dollars designated toward rural energy programs. Most notably, the USDA New ERA program is specifically targeted toward cooperatives. New ERA provides \$9.7 billion in funding for energy efficiency improvements, deploying renewable energy systems, and boosting the transition to clean energy. These programs are aimed at providing funding to help transition our grid into the future. As your community-owned electric cooperative, we will continue to review opportunities to utilize the IIJA and other federal initiatives to help take advantage of programs that advanced our members’ interests and ensure the long-term viability of the cooperative.

As we roll into August, we will be sending

kids back to school and starting to prepare for harvest. Our crews and contractors continue to work on projects across our service area. Now is a good time to remind yourself about the increased traffic that comes with the start of school. It’s also a good reminder and opportunity to discuss electric pole and line safety with your family. If you are ever involved in an accident with a power pole, the lines may still be energized. Only exit a vehicle if you can do so safely and away from any potential contact with electrical equipment. As always, our goal is to have ZERO accidents with electric infrastructure. Keep the rubber on the roads and ensure you travel home, to school, or to work safely each day. Have a great school year!

Information at:  
[driveelectricweek.org](http://driveelectricweek.org)

Co-sponsored by:

Live Better.<sup>®</sup>

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
**River Falls**  
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Communities of faith partnering  
for a sustainable future.

Saturday, September 23, 2023

3rd Annual

## POWERED BY ELECTRICITY

Powered by Electricity is a free community event in the auditorium and parking lot of North Hall on the UWRF campus. Activities will include:

- talks from subject matter experts in the solar and electricity fields
- test drives of electric vehicles and bikes
- electric tools and equipment demonstrations and vendors
- an electric vehicle showcase
- electric cooperative information stations
- mini golf
- kids' bouncy house
- prize drawings for electric equipment

Experience all things electric

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Kids' activities

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10 AM - 2 PM

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - RIVER FALLS

NORTH HALL  
410 S. 3RD STREET



# A Honey OF A HOBBY

Luke, Amber and Brad Ristow are proud of how well their apiary has taken off.—*Photo by Liz Gunderson*

“I had known someone who had done it years back,” said Luke, “and I’ve always thought it was interesting.” A father with two toddlers, Luke had given up hobbies that would take him away from home, like hunting. His wife, Amber, was also interested in beekeeping. Ristow had no prior experience with bees or hives. After getting the blessing from Deb, the three began researching, attending meetings, and eventually joining the St. Croix Valley Beekeepers Club. They originally planned to research and learn throughout the following summer, but by Christmas time,

What do you do with property that is too big to mow but not big enough to rent out for crops? That was the question Brad Ristow, PPCS vice president of operations, wrestled with a couple of years ago. He and his wife, Deb, purchased a home on the outskirts of Ellsworth in 2016 and, having grown up in a family that farmed, Ristow wanted to be a good steward of the eight-acre property. “I wanted to develop the property in a usable way,” said Ristow. “It’s kind of another way of farming.”

He started by planting a stand of red oak trees on the back side of the property. Then he planted a pollinator meadow on one acre at the front of the property. He also added apple and pear trees. His garden and fruit trees weren’t growing as well as he wanted, so Ristow began thinking about pollinators for his property. He shared his idea with his son Luke, who responded, “Let’s do it together.”

they were jumping in and purchasing their startup equipment, becoming 50/50 partners in the endeavor. They were assigned a mentor through St. Croix Valley Beekeepers Club who was present every time they did an inspection to answer questions and provide assistance.

They purchased two hives in the spring of 2022 and their mentor offered them two more, so they began with four hives right away and added two hives in the spring of 2023. The bees fly within a five-mile radius of the Ristow property. They are incredible creatures. They return to their hives, and they know exactly which hive they belong to no matter how far they’ve traveled. On average, there are about 60,000 bees in each hive.

“I just love it,” said Amber Ristow. “I’m always trying to find more knowledge that I can absorb—it’s just another skill to pick up.” The Ristows now have six hives and could



Photo at left by Brad Ristow, photos center and right by Amber Ristow



Photos by Amber Ristow

potentially harvest 400 pounds of honey annually. A friend helped them extract their first batch of honey and they were able to process about 100 pounds of honey. Luke and Amber have named their small business

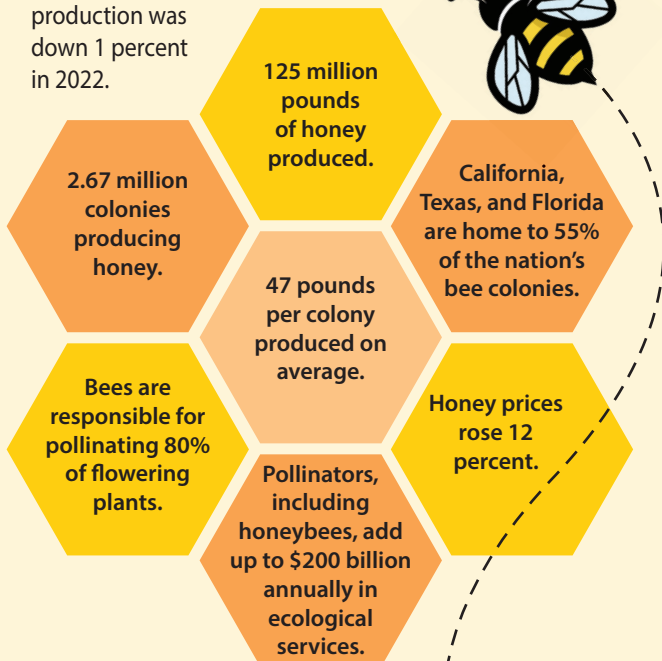
Hidden Hive Honey Company. Brad has named his company Breezy Hill Honey. Brad gave away most of his honey as gifts and isn't sure if he will move into sales.

The Ristows have enjoyed sweet success with their new hobby and plan for it to be a long-term family activity. You can follow their progress on Facebook and Instagram at @hiddenhivehoneyco.



## Here's the Buzz on Bees

Per the USDA, honey production was down 1 percent in 2022.



# BROADBAND BYTES

## Quick Updates from Fiber Freddie

**Accounts Connected:** 1,900 Internet

**Construction:** Phase 3 – Construction of mainline and drops to homes has begun in Clifton Township.

**Customer Testimonial:**

Brian Heins recently became a new SwiftCurrent Connect member on May 5, 2023, and says the internet service is “leaps and bounds better, faster, and more cost-effective than anything else available”. Heins explained how he has lived in a rural area near Ellsworth for 12 years now, and before SwiftCurrent’s fiber became available, the only options were over-the-air services from satellite or cellular. Heins also had previous experience with hard-wired internet at other places he’s lived, but this is the first time he is experiencing the new fiber-optic service that provides high-speed, reliable internet. Heins expressed his gratitude for the service by recounting how many other services weren’t willing to provide fiber, but after SwiftCurrent took the initiative, “even the people who live down in those tight, steep, scenic valleys” would have access to the fiber service.

Now, Heins won’t have to face the issue of slow, unreliable internet. SwiftCurrent Connect’s high-speed, reliable internet “is truly a game-changer,” says Heins. “It is much needed, much appreciated, and will be much more than useful and necessary for years to come.”



Sign up for SwiftCurrent Connect today at [www.swiftcurrent.coop](http://www.swiftcurrent.coop)



# SENDING A CHILD TO COLLEGE? DISCUSS SAFETY FIRST

Sending a child off to college is an exciting time. You want to make sure you provide them with everything they need to be successful. When you are shopping for dorm room or apartment supplies, décor, snacks, and other back-to-campus items, take time to discuss safety tips with your child as well. Here are some safety tips to help keep your college student stay safe.



## Electrical safety tips:

- When shopping for items that run on electricity, look for a safety endorsement label, such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories).
- Never put a cell phone under a pillow or place it on or under bedding. It could overheat or catch fire.
- In the dorm or apartment, make sure outlets near water sources are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If they are not, contact the resident assistant, campus housing staff, or landlord. (Look for a test and reset button on the face of the outlet.)
- Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power if too much current is drawn.



**TAIL GATE TIPS WITH RYAN**

- Avoid overloading extension cords, power strips, or outlets.
- Do not hang decorative lights with nails or tacks; always use plastic hooks.
- Do not run electrical cords across traffic paths or under rugs.

## General safety tips:

- Find the campus public safety department on campus and learn how it functions; ask which services the department offers and the steps it takes to prevent crime.
- Locate emergency call buttons or phones across campus.
- Walk with a friend, especially at night.
- When attending events or parties, go with at least one person you know and trust. If your friend leaves, do not stay.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid being distracted (listening to music, texting, and so on) while walking on campus.
- Find out what mental health services or counseling the campus offers.

—Source: *SafeElectricity.org*



## 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 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® gift 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 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

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- District 2.....Edward Hass
- District 3.....Brian Berg
- District 4.....John Parkes
- 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