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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

September 2026



PIERCE PEPIN
COOPERATIVE SERVICES

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

CELEBRATING FIBER ARTS

FROM LIGHT SWITCHES
TO LIFELONG HABITS

READER RECIPE CONTEST

KIDS AND CRITTERS



BACK TO SCHOOL CHECKLISTS

Nate Boettcher, President and CEO



PIERCE PEPIN

COOPERATIVE SERVICES

Live Better®

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

As I write this, we are just a few short weeks away from the end of summer and the beginning of another school year. Growing up, this time of year meant school shopping lists, new backpacks, fresh boxes of #2 pencils, and a new pair of shoes. Those memories are a good reminder that the back-to-school season is also a great time to revisit a few important safety and service reminders with your family.

At PPCS and SwiftCurrent Connect, our goal is to provide safe, reliable service while making it easy for you to stay connected. Please take a few minutes to review these reminders with your family.

Downed Power Lines Are Dangerous

As students return to school, thousands of new drivers will be on the road. Unfortunately, accidents involving utility poles and power lines do happen. A downed power line may still be energized and can be deadly.

If you are involved in an accident with a power line, strike a utility pole, or your vehicle becomes entangled with electrical wires, remain inside your vehicle unless there is an immediate life-threatening emergency such as a fire. Our line crews work closely with first responders to de-energize accident scenes before anyone exits a vehicle.

Download SmartHub

SmartHub is a free app available for Apple and Android devices, as well as through any web browser. It allows you to:

- View bills and payment history
- Monitor your electric usage
- Make payments
- Report outages
- Receive important notifications
- Manage your account anytime

Getting started is quick and easy, and once you're signed up, you can receive alerts for outages, power restorations, billing reminders, and other important account updates.

Report Outages Using SmartHub or Text

When service interruptions occur, our goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. You can help by reporting outages through SmartHub or by texting 800-927-5705.

Member reports help our dispatchers verify outages, identify affected areas more quickly, and improve restoration efforts. If you haven't already downloaded SmartHub, simply search for "SmartHub" in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Go Paperless and Enroll in Auto Pay

Paperless billing is convenient, environmentally friendly, and saves your cooperative money. Members who enroll also receive a \$12 annual bill credit on your electric bill.

You'll receive notifications when your bill is ready, reminders before it's due, and you'll always have access to your statements electronically. While you're in SmartHub, consider enrolling in Auto Pay. It's free, secure, and ensures your payment is made automatically each month.

Sign Up for SwiftCurrent Connect Fiber Internet

With students returning to school and winter just around the corner, now is an excellent time to connect your home to SwiftCurrent Connect fiber internet. High-speed fiber service is available throughout much of our service territory where another fiber provider is not already serving the area. Members who sign up before October 1 can have their service drop installed before winter and avoid additional installation costs later.

Don't miss your opportunity to experience reliable gigabit-speed internet from your local cooperative.

Follow PPCS and SwiftCurrent Connect on Social Media Stay informed by following PPCS and SwiftCurrent Connect on Facebook and Instagram. We regularly post updates on outages, load control events, community activities, construction projects, and cooperative news. Following our pages is one of the easiest ways to stay informed throughout the year.

Join Us During National Co-op Month

October is National Co-op Month, and we're looking forward to celebrating with our members. We'll be hosting an event in October, with additional details shared on our website, social media pages, and in upcoming communications. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate the cooperative difference.

Look Up, Look Around, Look Down

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Before operating equipment in fields or around your property, always look up and around for overhead power lines. Before beginning any digging project, even small ones, remember to contact 811 to have underground utilities located.

Accidents involving overhead or underground utility lines can cause serious injuries, expensive repairs, and power outages affecting your neighbors. By taking a few extra minutes to work safely, you help protect yourself, your family, and your community.

Lead the Way: JOIN YOUR CO-OP'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Want to make a difference in your community? Serving on the board of your electric cooperative is a powerful way to make a meaningful impact. The cooperative has three districts with three directors representing each district. This year, we will be electing a representative from District One, which includes the Troy, Kinnickinnic, Rush River/Pleasant Valley, Rush River, Eau Galle, Clifton, Oak Grove, and River Falls territories.

Why Run?

- **Make an Impact:** Help shape decisions that affect your neighbors and local businesses.
- **Promote Transparency:** Support open, accountable governance.
- **Share Your Skills:** Bring your expertise to the table and help guide the co-op's future.

Learn more at our Director Candidate Information Session:

Tuesday, October 20, at 6:30 p.m.

PPCS Office – W7725 US Highway 10, Ellsworth

Contact Charity Lubich at 715-273-2451, or clubich@piercepepin.coop to RSVP.

The Power to Make a Difference

DIRECTOR CANDIDATE INFORMATION SESSION

WHO: Cooperative members interested in running for a seat on the board of directors.

WHAT: Director candidates: nomination process, qualifications, duties, terms & compensation, and expectation of directors.

WHEN: Tuesday, October 20th, at 6:30 p.m. at the PPCS Office
W7725 US Hwy. 10, Ellsworth, WI

RSVP: Call Charity at 715-273-2451, or email clubich@piercepepin.coop by October 14.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Your voice matters—and your feedback helps shape the future of PPCS. We're always looking for ways to serve you better, and your thoughts and opinions play a key role in that process.



Beginning on September 15, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Market Research Services will kick off our member satisfaction survey. Surveys will be conducted by email, though not all members will be contacted. If you're selected, we'd truly appreciate just a few minutes of your time to share your experience with the cooperative.

Your input helps guide the decisions we make so we can continue providing safe, affordable, reliable, and clean electric service to you, your family, and your neighbors. Rest assured, all responses are completely confidential.

Thank you for helping us power a better cooperative—for everyone.

Trusting Your High School Buddy With Cybersecurity?

Bold Strategy.



ProtectIQ acts as a digital security guard for your home network, working quietly in the background to block malware, intrusions, and viruses before they can cause harm.

And, best of all, ProtectIQ is included with all of our internet service plans. No tacos required.



SWIFTCURRENT
CONNECT
Fiber Internet | Voice Service | Security

Sign up today at swiftcurrent.coop

WE'RE CLOSED

September 4th & 7th

*Have a Safe & Happy
Holiday Weekend!*

Report Power Outages in SmartHub or Call 800-927-5705
Report Internet Issues to 715-350-7033



FIRST DAN REIS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Dan Reis was a lifelong farmer, hunter, and educator in conservation and skilled trades. Dan worked tirelessly to bring knowledge to his students and community by serving on multiple counties, townships, and organizational boards and by helping to start and lead the state-recognized School-to-Work program. Dan served for 10 years on the Board of Directors for Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services.

The Dan Reis Memorial Scholarship was offered to students who were:

- A graduating high school senior or currently enrolled in college.
- Attending or planning on attending UW-River Falls or Chippewa Valley Technical College.
- Pursuing a degree in Education, Agriculture, or Skilled Trades.
- An active PPCS member or the child of an active PPCS member.

The first-ever Dan Reis Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Hannah Heilhecker, a Baldwin-Woodville High School graduate who is attending Chippewa Valley Technical College

for the Electrical Power Distribution program with the intention of becoming a lineworker.

Heilhecker's interest in the trades began during high school when she participated in CVTC's Welding Academy. Inspired by her welding instructor, Mrs. Fransway, she discovered both a passion for hands-on work and the confidence to pursue a career in a traditionally male-dominated field.

"Mrs. Fransway had been the only female that I had seen or heard about teaching metals when I started high school. This is what made me feel comfortable taking her classes. That is how I discovered my passion for working with my hands and learning through practical experience. That is how I found the confidence to pursue a male-dominated career," said Heilhecker.

Hannah not only wants to help the incoming generation of linemen who are working hard to improve and maintain the electrical grid with evolving technology, but she also wants to be a positive role model for women interested in the trades.

"Line work, like many trades, is a traditionally male-dominated career.



Hannah Heilhecker, a Baldwin-Woodville High School graduate, receives her certificate from Charity Lubich, PPCS VP, Member Relations & Human Resources.

While this has never discouraged me, it does prevent others from pursuing a similar path. I hope to inspire younger girls to consider a career in the trades by showing them that they are just as capable of succeeding in the trades. I want to help create more opportunities for women in the trades through leading by example," Heilhecker said.

Congratulations, Hannah, and best wishes for a bright future ahead!

CELEBRATE CO-OP MONTH WITH US!

October is National Co-op Month! To celebrate, PPCS is hosting an event that you are all invited to! Here's what's coming up:

Co-op, Curd & Candy Crawl with Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery at PPCS

Friday, October 30 | 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Join Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services and the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery for a fun-filled evening of costumes, candy, cheese curds, and community at our Co-op, Curd & Candy Crawl event! Families are invited to dress up in their favorite costumes and stroll from trunk to trunk collecting treats, eating fried curds, and having dinner while enjoying festive decorations, bounce houses, and Halloween fun. It's a safe, family-friendly way to celebrate the season and make lasting memories with friends and neighbors. Bring your candy bucket and Halloween spirit—we can't wait to see you there!



Bonus!

Attending our event earns you an entry into our year-end prize drawing for a chance to win one of three \$100 bill credits! Keep an eye out for more details in the October issue of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.

STUDENTS SHARPEN LEADERSHIP SKILLS AT YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The annual WECA Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) is a dynamic three-day event sponsored by Wisconsin's electric cooperatives and facilitated by WECA. It is a unique opportunity for youth across Wisconsin to develop their leadership skills while learning the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative businesses.

What do students do at YLC?

- See what makes the cooperative business model different and successful and apply this knowledge to fun and challenging cooperative activities.
- Work together with other youth leaders from around Wisconsin to demonstrate the power and value of cooperation.
- Identify and develop leadership skills.
- Learn some of the important history that has shaped today's cooperatives.
- Discuss cooperative careers with professionals in the industry.
- Be entertained and challenged by highly acclaimed motivational speakers who understand teens and explore topics important and relevant in your life.
- Experience college life at a University of Wisconsin campus.

The five students who attended YLC this July described the experience as a fun way to meet new people. Students stayed in the UW-Stout dorm rooms and experienced campus life. This was an exciting opportunity to meet new people across the state, talk about the event with peers, and discuss their favorite and least favorite parts together without judgment. RFHS senior Jenna and sophomore Abigail both stated that they enjoyed their roommates and getting to



know each other. EHS senior Ethan will even be returning to YLC next year as a representative on the WECA Youth Board. Congratulations, Ethan!

The YLC is a fun, educational, and unique event organized by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) Youth Board. The Youth Board is a group of six students elected annually by their peers. The Youth Board can visit Washington, D.C., as part of the National Youth Tour, where they continue to learn about cooperatives and government.

Students who participate in YLC are also eligible to earn scholarships from WECA and PPCS. To qualify for scholarships from PPCS, students must also be entering their senior year of high school, and their parents or guardians must be members of PPCS.



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