



June 2024

# Newsline

**BOARD MEETINGS** June 25 ■ July 30 (9:30 am at Cohasset Service Center. Members welcome)



Energy that Powers Our Lives

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Scenes from the Annual Meeting
- Identifying energy scams
- Surla to attend Youth Tour
- LCP lineman heading to Guatemala

## Co-op community connects at Annual Meeting

A community of cooperative members gathered at the Merritt Elementary School in Mountain Iron, Minn., for the annual membership meeting on Thursday evening, April 25, 2024. More than 300 members and guests gathered to hear that despite the high cost of materials, Lake Country Power did not need to adjust rates in 2024, among other topics of interest.

Mark Bakk, Lake Country Power general manager, reported that material cost increases have stabilized but are still 70% higher than from pre-pandemic levels. Lead times for materials are delayed by months or even years. These challenges have forced Lake Country Power to plan projects up to three years in advance.

Bakk also reported about the value additional crews are bringing to the cooperative during an era when it's hard to find contractors available to work, and those available are costly to hire. The in-house crews are helping Lake Country Power save money on construction projects, age-related line replacements and right-of-way clearing.

Bakk concluded with remarks about the legislative and regulatory actions in the State of Minnesota. He said, "We take the affordability and reliability of your electric service very seriously and we will continue to advocate for you, our members, at the State Capitol in St. Paul."

A presentation by Lake Country Power's wholesale energy provider, Great River Energy, highlighted power supply transition efforts to meet state mandates, regional transmission investments, and other accomplishments. 2023 was a



► The 2024 Lake Country Power Board of Directors (from back, left to right): Jason Long (District 1), Dan Kingsley (District 6), Robert Bruckbauer (District 5), Craig Olson (District 7) and Jeff Sheldon (District 4). Front (from left to right): Brian Napstad (District 8), Stave Raukar (District 3), Larry Anderson (District 9) and Mike Forsman (District 2).

remarkably successful financial year with \$25 million patronage capital returned among 27 member cooperatives.

Like Lake Country Power, Great River Energy is replacing equipment based on age and condition. GRE replaces 55 miles of transmission every year with plans to increase that number. During the last five years, GRE has invested \$8.2 million in Lake Country Power's service area for age/condition and rebuilds, and in the next five years GRE will invest another \$40.5 million. GRE also informed members about its wildfire mitigation plan.

A special presentation during the annual meeting recognized seven school districts within Lake Country Power's service area

with funding through the cooperative's Education Improvement Program. The program is funded through abandoned and unclaimed capital from previous members who can no longer be located and is allowed by the State of Minnesota.

Reports were given by LCP Board President Craig Olson, General Manager Mark Bakk, Chief Financial Officer Tracy Peterson Wirtanen, Holding Company President Daniel Kingsley, and Priti Patel, Great River Energy's vice president and chief transmission officer.

Annual meeting videos can be found on Lake Country Power's website, [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop), or the co-op's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/lakecountrypower](http://www.youtube.com/lakecountrypower). ■

# Lineworker Ben Hoyt taking LCP international on Guatemala trip

Lake Country Power journeyman lineworker Ben Hoyt is taking “reaching the mountain top” to a whole new — and quite literal — level.

Hoyt is one of 14 lineworkers from Minnesota and Iowa traveling 2,800 miles to Guatemala for two weeks in early June to run lines and hook up electricity to homes in two mountain villages near San Marcos. The villages sit in the mountains at about 10,000 feet of elevation.

It’ll be a little — OK, a lot — different from the hills and cliffs LCP crews are used to working around.

“I’ve never done any mountains, that’s for sure,” Hoyt said. “They were showing us a picture when we went down for a meeting together, and there was a guy standing maybe 30 feet away — and he was in a cloud. So it’s going to be up there.”

Six other lineworkers from Minnesota and seven from Iowa are joining him to build several miles of line that will be connected to the local municipal power company, which will take over the service of the lines once completed. After getting the new line built, they will install wires and circuits in the homes of villagers.

“It’s going to be kind of cool to leave a little bit of a legacy there,” Hoyt said prior to leaving. “Knowing that I helped bring power to this village and people who have never had lights before. So it should be really good. Good for the soul.”

The trip is part of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s



(NRECA) International Program, which has been providing volunteers to illuminate villages and homes in impoverished countries around the world since 1962.

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), along with Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, helped organize the effort. A dedicated Facebook group, 2024 Powering a Brighter Future in Guatemala, features real-time updates and photos from the field.

NRECA started international trips as a way to bring prosperity to those less fortunate around the world. Since that time, they have turned the lights on for more than 160 million people in 48 countries including countries in Africa, South America, Central America and Asia. Teams assist with all stages of planning and executing electrification projects, promoting electric cooperative development and empowering communities around the world.

For Hoyt, the opportunity came as he was taking a reflective look at life after a series of deaths in the family.

“What do I want to be remembered for?” he recalled asking himself. “Do

good things, help people out. That’s what I want to leave here. I want to leave with people thinking I did everything I could to help people.”

The remote mountain villages, altitude aside, could also provide a different outlook for the lineworkers in the field. Even though cooperatives started with the same idea in mind, to bring power to where it’s difficult to reach, electricity is now an expected part of life for many in the United States and other countries.

Hoyt said one of the images shown to the lineworkers from the villages stuck with him. Six people shared a small square living space, stacking their hammocks three-high to make room for a kettle in the middle floor that they used to cook.

“I’m pretty excited to get into that culture and be a little bit more grateful for the things that we have,” he said. “I’ll probably come back with a whole new mindset.” ■

*Keep an eye out on Lake Country Power’s website and Facebook page, and future Newsline editions, for updates on Hoyt’s trip to Guatemala.*



# Co-op can help members avoid scams

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for criminals seeking to capitalize on. In today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Lake Country Power can help you avoid financial losses or a leak of your personal information from an energy scam or a program that might not deliver what is promised.

Scammers typically disguise themselves as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits.

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam, including high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags.

Scams aren't the only thing Lake Country Power members need to be aware of, though.



By **DAN KINGSLEY**  
District 6 Director

Recently, solar developers have been knocking on members' doors to sign them up for services. Some of them are setting unrealistic expectations about members' return on investment, and providing highly inaccurate statements about LCP's future electric rates.

These developers are asking members to sign contracts with them, with very short opt-out periods in the fine print (as little as 3 to 5 days in some cases), leaving our members on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars they may not see a return on.

Lake Country Power supports solar development and if a member wants more information on installing solar panels, the co-op encourages them to contact Lake Country Power's staff for assistance.

LCP staff is also available to help members on identifying potential scams. LCP will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notice or warnings. The co-op will never ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email.

The best way to avoid these potential financial pitfalls is to be vigilant and please call Lake Country Power at 800-421-9959, where the co-op staff can assist you and answer your questions. ■

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Dan Kingsley was elected by members in Lake Country Power District 6. He can be reached at 218-259-7366 or [dkingsley@lcp.coop](mailto:dkingsley@lcp.coop).

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## Capital Credits allocation for all members

This month, the co-op's board approved to allocate more than \$11.8 million of the Lake Country Power and Great River Energy 2023 margins into long-term member capital credit accounts.

Because Lake Country Power and Great River Energy are not-for-profit cooperatives, all margins (revenues minus expenses) are allocated back to member-owners in the form of capital credits. The allocation represents your share of "ownership" in the co-op and

is paid back to you – over time – as financial conditions allow.

Allocation notices are being mailed in June. To keep you informed about your capital credit account, the line items recorded on your 2023 "Notice of Capital Credit Allocation" mailer represent the amount of the 2023 margin that was allocated to your personal capital credit membership account.

### How Allocations Work

Allocations are based on patronage and your proportionate share of the cooperative's revenue. Until capital credits are returned through a board approved general retirement, your

allocation is invested to improve the reliability and service of your cooperative.

Think of your allocation as a membership investment that will be paid out to you over a period of time.

In the meantime, your capital credit membership account represents your share of ownership in the co-op. Lake Country Power uses the capital investment to reduce the amount of bank financing for equipment like electric lines, utility poles, substations, transformers and trucks. Visit [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) for more information about allocations and capital credits. ■

# LCP to sponsor Apres Surla on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour

Lake Country Power will sponsor Apres Surla of Britt, Minn., to attend what has been called a 'trip of a lifetime' to Washington, D.C., on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. She will travel in June with nearly 40 Minnesota students where she'll join 1,500 high school students from across the country. Surla will be a junior this fall at Rock Ridge High School.

"The main reason I want to go on the Youth Tour is because I want to learn more about the history of the United States, its government, what makes the U.S. possible, and potential future careers," said Surla. "To me, an electric cooperative is an organization that allows someone who resides in the country to live comfortably and makes unique country-living possible." Surla has many long-lasting memories of living in rural Minnesota thanks to her electric cooperative – Lake Country Power.



Each summer, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) organizes and leads Minnesota's student delegation to Washington, D.C., with local electric cooperatives like Lake Country Power sponsoring the students on tour.

Students will spend one full day on Capitol Hill, meet with legislators, tour the Capitol, and visit the Library of Congress.

They'll take a class about electric cooperatives as taught by the National Rural Electric Association (NRECA). Students will also learn about American history as they tour the Potomac Park monuments, Arlington Cemetery, Iwo Jima Memorial, Mount Vernon, Old Town Alexandria, Holocaust Museum, Smithsonian Institutions, Washington Monument, World War II Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, National Archives, and the National Mall.



Since 1958, the nation's electric cooperatives have sponsored more than 58,000 high school students on the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour – a joint effort between the NRECA, statewide electric cooperative associations like MREA and local electric cooperatives.

For more information, visit <https://www.electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs>, [www.mrea.org/programs-1/](http://www.mrea.org/programs-1/) and [www.lakecountrypower.coop/youth-tour](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop/youth-tour). ■

## EQUIPMENT QUIZ

**Q** How much does guy wire\* cost per foot?



- A) 59 cents per ft.    C) 95 cents per ft.  
B) 10 cents per ft.    D) 70 cents per ft.

\*A tensioned cable designed to add stability to utility poles. LCP has an average of 50 feet of guy wire per assembly, and the co-op has more than 5.1 million feet of guy wire on its system. This results in over \$3.57 million of guy wire. **D** ANSWER

## RECIPE CORNER OATMEAL CUSTARD



From the Kitchen of:  
**Andrea and John Reed, Hibbing**



Andrea and John noted this is their son, Mark's, favorite breakfast. He also sent in a second copy of the recipe, because he likes it that much. Thanks Mark!

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 ½ cups whole milk
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- Dash of salt
- Fruit and nuts for serving (optional)

**In a pot:** Whisk eggs and rolled oats together Gradually whisk in milk. Set the pot on medium heat, stirring frequently until thick and bubbly. Remove from heat. Stir in sugar, vanilla and salt. Serve with fruit and nuts as desired.

Submit your favorite recipe to Lake Country Power, Attn: Editor, 8535 Park Ridge Drive, Mountain Iron, MN 55768, or e-mail [jburnes@lcp.coop](mailto:jburnes@lcp.coop). If your entry is printed in Newsline, you'll receive a \$5 credit on your electric bill. Entries must include name, address and phone number on account.

## Scenes from the Annual Meeting



▶ MorningBird, a folk rock and Americana band from Hibbing, performs on stage prior to the 2024 Annual Meeting at Merritt Elementary in Mountain Iron.



▶ 8th District U.S. Rep. Pete Stauber of Minnesota addressed the annual meeting audience, hailing Lake Country Power's lobbying efforts in St. Paul and Washington D.C.



▶ More than 300 members and guests gathered in Mountain Iron and enjoyed a meal by INAC, Inc.



▶ Education Improvement Program grant recipients from Cromwell-Wright, East Range Academy of Technology & Science, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, Hill City, Mountain Iron-Buhl and St. Louis County Schools (Tower-Soudan) were awarded their checks by the board.



▶ SmartHub sign-ups were popular, giving members a chance to win an electric snowblower coming up in September 2024 (more details to come).

**SAVE THE DATE: AUGUST**



**20**  
COBASSET



**21**  
MOUNTAIN IRON



**22**  
SETTLE RIVER

**LAKE COUNTRY POWER**  
Member Appreciation Days

## February 27, 2024 • Regular Monthly Meeting

### THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE GIVEN:

President Olson reported that he attended Great River Energy's (GRE) regional meeting and participated in an interview with Lake Country Power auditors, Brady Martz. He also had a member call regarding pole attachment policies.

General Manager Bakk reported that he attended several GRE meetings, including the February board meeting, two regional meetings and the Member Manager group meeting. Bakk added that GRE HERC Services extended its contract for 10 years, resulting in \$2.4 million in revenue per year.

### THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WERE TAKEN:

Approved the 2024 Cogeneration Report, in which LCP added 39 solar installations in 2023 and zero wind installations, totaling 243 solar and 5 wind installations through the co-op's distribution system.

Approved \$400,000 in Education Improvement Program funding to the following schools: Cromwell-Wright, East Range Academy of Technology & Science, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, Hill City, Mountain Iron-Buhl and St. Louis County Schools (Tower-Soudan).

Approved \$400,000 in Education Improvement Program **grants, utilizing unclaimed capital funds**, to the following schools:

**Editor's Note:** These board minutes have been condensed. A full copy of the board minutes can be read at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative." You'll need to sign up for access if you haven't already. Or call 800-421-9959 for a printed copy.



▶ Vicki Lessard of Grand Rapids captured this beautiful sunrise along the shores of Shoal Lake on a misty summer morning.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Did you know ceiling fans can help you save energy? Ceiling fans create a windchill effect on your skin to make you feel a few degrees cooler. Raise the thermostat a few degrees and turn on fans to reduce air conditioning costs. Set fan blades to rotate counterclockwise during summer months and clockwise during winter months. Remember, ceiling fans cool people but don't actually lower the indoor temperature. Turn them off when you leave the room.  
Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

## Co-op Contacts

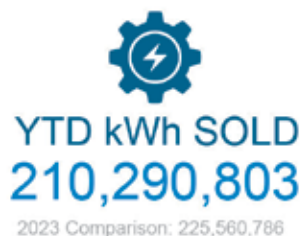
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## BY THE NUMBERS | MARCH 2024

Lake Country Power is committed to responsibly managing resources to ensure financial stability of the cooperative. Below is a snapshot of the year-to-date unaudited financial report. A complete set of financial statements can be viewed at [www.lakecountrypower.coop](http://www.lakecountrypower.coop) under "My Cooperative."



	2024	2023
Cost of Purchased Power	\$16,353,761	\$16,757,615
Other Operating Expenses	\$10,472,149	\$11,140,410
Total Cost of Electric Service	\$26,825,910	\$27,898,025



	2024	2023
Operating Margins	\$5,692,782	\$3,765,409
Non-Operating Margins	\$724,196	\$503,818



Directors are members of the cooperative and are elected to act in the best interests of the co-op with the same care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances.

Directors set policy, approve strategy and are charged with fiduciary responsibility of the cooperative. Directors do not oversee day-to-day LCP operations. Administration of maintenance, electric service and operations are the responsibility of employees and staff.

**Members with questions or concerns about service, billing, outages or other service-related matters should call 1-800-421-9959.**

## Newsline

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