



New Office Manager Joins BENCO Electric



Sandy Sowieja
Office Manager

Sandy Sowieja joined BENCO Electric as the new Office Manager in August. Sandy is replacing Steve Flo, who will be retiring.

Sandy is married to Jim and she has two grown children, Stephanie and Chris.

Before working at BENCO, Sandy worked at Merrill Corporation and National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) as a financial consultant. Before that she worked for 10 years at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) as the Chief Financial Officer. Sandy has a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Minnesota State University - Mankato and is also a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE).

Sandy has a history working with cooperatives, and she enjoys the way coops make everyone feel like family. As far as working for BENCO, Sandy said, "I felt like I was home right away."

Welcome to BENCO, Sandy!

Dual Fuel Program Provides Affordable Home Heating

According to the Minnesota Office of Energy Security, the average household spends more than \$600 on home heating each winter. With that hefty price tag, many consumers are on the lookout for money-saving alternatives.

BENCO Electric offers one such solution with its dual fuel heating program. Dual fuel helps members lower their heating costs by strategically balancing between two different heating sources.

Participants in the dual fuel heating program heat their homes primarily with electricity, but are automatically switched (via a radio signal) to a backup heat source (typically liquid propane or fuel oil) during times of high prices in the electricity market. These hours can occur any time of the day, but are typically in the early evening and occasionally in the morning.

By agreeing to have their electric heating switched off at certain times, participants in the dual fuel program receive a lower rate for electricity used to heat their homes.

This program allows BENCO Electric's wholesale electric provider, Great River Energy, to avoid supplying power at times when demand and electricity prices are highest.

Dual fuel ultimately lowers the price that BENCO Electric pays for energy, which allows the cooperative to better manage the rate it charges members.

"By avoiding the most expensive hours, we're able to provide energy at a lower rate to participants throughout the winter," said Great River Energy Load Management Coordinator Eddie Webster.

For the upcoming winter, there are expected to be approximately 25 days in which electric heat will be controlled, totaling between 150 and 175 hours. Control of electric heating systems will not exceed 12 hours on any single day.

Contact John Hutchens to learn more about the dual fuel program and other money-saving programs BENCO Electric offers. Also, if you have slab heating in any of your outbuildings, contact John about a storage heating rate that BENCO offers at a reasonable cost.

Nomination Process For Directors Begins in Districts 3, 5, & 7

The BENCO Electric Board of Directors consists of nine directors, with one director representing each of BENCO's nine districts. Each Director is elected for a three-year term and there is no term limit. The director rotation is currently: Directors in districts 3, 5 and 7 are up for election in 2011; districts 1, 4 and 9 are up for election in 2012; and 2, 6 and 8 are up for election in 2013. A director can be elected by the board to serve as President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer.

The following guidelines must apply if you are interested in running for a director position in 2011:

- You are a resident of District 3, 5 or 7.
- You are receiving electric service from BENCO Electric at the above residence.
- Your account with BENCO Electric is in good standing.

As a director you must:

- be willing to attend regular and special board meetings.
- be willing to abide by and uphold the Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, and policies of BENCO Electric Cooperative.

If you are interested in being nominated at your district meeting, or you would like more information, please contact Dave Sunderman, Member Services Manager, at 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626, or e-mail him at Daves@benco.org.

Nominations for director must be sent in to Dave Sunderman no later than November 24, 2010.

From the Board

Thursday, September 30, 2010
Blake Meshke Presided

The board reviewed and approved:

- The minutes of the August 19 board meeting.

- Capital Credits to estates totaling \$4,134.52.

Wade reported on the school safety programs BENCO personnel performed and he reviewed the pole testing report.

Wade reviewed a request by VINE to secure a loan through the REDLG program.

The attorney reviewed current legal work for the cooperative.

Blake called for director reports.

Brad reported on September Great River Energy (GRE) Board Meeting.

CTV board members reported that there will be a board meeting at the end of October.

Harvey reviewed recent Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) activities.

Harlan reported on Cooperative Network activities.

Directors reported on the National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association (NRECA)/ Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) Region 6 meeting.

Directors attending reported on the Washington, D.C. Legislative visits.

Directors attending reported on the various county 4-H sales.

Individual director reports were given.

Blake called for new business.

Wade reviewed discussions with the City of St. Peter concerning service area. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the proposed Agreement of Settlement and Realignment of Electric Service Territory and a Joint Petition to the MPUC for their approval.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the 2011 calendar through October 2011.

MREA representatives Lee Sundberg and Joel Johnson, and Senate candidates Gary Dahms and Al Kruse joined the meeting. The board and candidates reviewed their positions on issues facing cooperatives.

PCA Update

Actual PCA for October
\$0.0285

Estimated PCA for November
\$0.0272

Estimated PCA for December
\$0.0315

The Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) is due to changes in the monthly wholesale rate from our power supplier, Great River Energy (GRE).

BENCO ELECTRIC

This newsletter is published monthly by BENCO Electric Cooperative, PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002-0008.

Office Hours: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Phone: 387-7963 or 1-888-79BENCO

Outages/After Hours: 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626

Dave Sunderman - *Member Services Manager*

Kathy Gerber - *Editor*

Board of Directors:

Blake Meshke - *President - District 6*
Duane Ehrich - *Vice President - District 8*
Harvey Hesse - *Secretary - MREA Director - District 5*
Harlan Lanz - *Treasurer - MAC Director - District 2*
Garfield Eckberg - *District 1*
Brad Leiding - *GRE Director - District 3*
John Wells - *District 4*
Gary Stenzel - *District 7*
Scott Johnson - *District 9*
Wade Hensel - *General Manager*
John C. (Chuck) Peterson - *Attorney*

Board Meetings: The last Thursday of each month - members are welcome to contact directors with items of interest or concerns in advance of the meetings.

Save on LED Holiday Lights

Strings of holiday lights may seem little, but they can dramatically increase your home's energy use. However, new technology in decorative lights will allow you to make your season brighter without costing you on your electric bill.

LED lights (light emitting diodes) are an energy-efficient and safe alternative to the traditional incandescent holiday bulbs. They cost a little more, but use a fraction of the electricity.

Compared to the previous generation of holiday lights, LEDs use approximately 1/30 of the electricity. Put another way, the amount of electricity needed to light a single bulb on a string of incandescent holiday lights would power two whole strings of LEDs.

And because they're cool to the touch, LEDs reduce the risk of fire when strung on live trees or flammable surfaces.

When shopping for LEDs, always look for the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR-certified lights have met strict specifications by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy.

If all the holiday and decorative light strings sold in America this year were ENERGY STAR-qualified, more than 2 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity would be saved each year, and greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by the equivalent of nearly 300,000 cars.

To help you get started on your savings, BENCO Electric will once again be offering a \$3.00 rebate on LED Christmas lights.

What you need to do:

1. Purchase from one up to ten strings of LED Christmas lights (50-bulb count minimum) from any retailer.
2. Bring in your receipt from 2010 showing your purchase of one to ten new LED Christmas lights, accepted at the BENCO offices in Mankato and Frost, plus the equal number (one to ten) of strings of old Christmas lights.
3. BENCO will credit your electric account for \$3 per string up to 10 strings. All receipts need to be turned in by December 17, 2010.
4. Credit not to exceed half of the purchase price of lights.

\$3 per string x 10 strings = \$30 credit

\$3 per string x 5 strings = \$15 credit

\$3 per string x 1 string = \$3 credit

a new light
on holiday traditions

Now you've not only saved money on your new Christmas lights, you'll also save money on your electric bill over the holiday season.

Merry Christmas from BENCO Electric.

Need A Free Wooden Reel?



Are you in need of a wooden reel? BENCO Electric has several on hand and you can have them for FREE!

Reels are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and they are only available at the Mankato office.

Contact Ron Prange at 387-7963 or 1-888-792-3626 if you are interested.

BENCO will help you load the reels.

BENCO Electric will be closed to observe the
Thanksgiving holiday
Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26.
Have a Happy Thanksgiving!



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What's Cookin': Cheddar Bay Biscuits From the Kitchen of: Kim Coopman

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1/2 c real butter | 1/2 T sugar |
| 1 c buttermilk | 2 c self-rising flour |
| 1 c shredded cheddar cheese | 1/4 tsp garlic powder |

Mix flour, sugar, garlic powder and shredded cheddar cheese in a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, melt butter in microwave until just melted (don't get too hot) and add buttermilk. Then add to flour mixture, stirring fast and scraping sides and bottom frequently. Grease cookie sheet and use 1/4 c measuring cup to scoop biscuits onto cookie sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 12 - 15 minutes or until brown (425 degrees for 15 - 17 minutes). Makes 14 biscuits. Remove biscuits from oven and brush with: 6 T butter, 1/2 tsp garlic salt, 1/8 tsp onion salt, 1/2 tsp parsley flakes. Remove from pan and serve warm.

You can receive a \$10 credit on your electric bill, if you send in your favorite recipe and it gets printed in the newsletter. Send your favorite recipes to: Kathy, BENCO Electric PO Box 8, Mankato, MN 56002

Where, Oh Where?

The following is a list of former BENCO Electric members whose capital credit checks were returned by the post office as undeliverable. Any information you can give us regarding the current whereabouts of these individuals or their relatives would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Dave G. or Jill at 387-7963 or 1-888-79BENCO.

H
Gary Haataja, Mankato

Ruth E. Hall, Inverness FL
Scott & Melissa Hall, Denver CO
Mike Hankins, Mankato
Jay H. Hansen, Buffalo
Larry H. Hansen, North Mankato
Lisa J. Hanson, New Ulm
Chris Harrington, North Mankato
Marvin Hatting, Mankato
Carol Havens, North Mankato
Jason Henning, North Mankato
Terry Henry, North Mankato
Kimberly A. Heyda, Mankato
Robert Hiben, Cologne
Richard Hixson, Mankato
Lawrence T. Hinton, Mankato
Gene H. Hoffman, North Mankato

Walter Hoffman, Mankato
Ronald E. Hoffmeyer, Fillerton CA
Jeff Hohrman, Mankato
Laurelle Hollar, Mankato
Todd Holtz, North Mankato
Robbie Hovda, Hamel
Betty C. Huffman, Easton
Mark Hultstrand, Lake Crystal
Stephen Hurt, Inver Grove Heights

I
Paul Isakson, North Mankato

J
Lance Jackels, Green Isle
Waclav M. Jagiella, Atlanta GA
Allen J. Jensen, Arlington
Kathleen R. Jensen, Mapleton

Steve A. Jensen, Elk River
William E. Jentz, Hutchinson
Marianna C. Jergenson, Sioux Falls
Charles J. Johnson, Arlington
Charles M. Johnson, Mankato
Darcy A. Johnson, North Mankato
Jeanne Johnson, St. Paul
Jeffery D. Johnson, Mankato
Larry D. Johnson, Bloomington
Mark Jerome Johnson, Byron
Michael A. Johnson, Bricelyn
Thomas P. Johnson, Gallup NM
Wade Johnson, Kasota
Melinda Jones, Mankato
Ruth Jordet, Mapleton
Steve Juliar, Bozeman MT
Lorraine Just, Mankato