

Giving back
according to our
cooperative principles.

PowerLines

December 2023



The power of rounding up: Your change is changing lives

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Happy holiday season from all of us at Polk-Burnett! Some call it the most wonderful time of the year. It's a time of giving, spreading joy and showing others that you care.

When you are a member of Polk-Burnett, you help us spread good throughout the year with your donations to Operation Round Up. Thank you for your generosity! Together with our Operation Round Up board, your support has stocked food shelves and library bookshelves, provided equipment for schools and fire departments, built community parks and gardens, and funded services for seniors, adults with disabilities and youth. Grants are awarded to nonprofits that improve our local quality of life.

Operation Round Up works like this

Funding for Operation Round Up is donated by local co-op members like you who volunteer to round up your monthly electric bill to the next even dollar amount.

For example, if your bill is \$113.70, it will round up to \$114 and your contribution for the month is 30¢. Your donation is tax-deductible and never goes above 99¢ per month; the average member donation is 50¢ per month or \$6 per year. This may not sound like a lot, but when combined with thousands of others, it adds up to make a significant impact.

Since its beginning in 1998, Operation Round Up has given more than \$1 million to local nonprofits. 2023 donations totaled \$83,425 to 73 community programs and projects!



Thank you, Operation Round Up directors!

We are grateful for our Operation Round Up board of directors, past and present, who volunteer quarterly to review grant applications and award Round Up funds to nonprofits where it will do the greatest good. Directors are local members of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative and represent areas across the co-op's service territory.

Our current board directors L-R above are: **JoAnn Kipping**, Spooner; **Marlyn Bottolfson**, Amery; **Herschel Brown**, Frederic; **Gretchen Sampson**, Osceola; **Ed Peterson**, Webster; **Elvira Schmidt**, Frederic; **Kelly Bertuleit**, Siren; and **Julie Minell**, Osceola. Not pictured: **Gary Ganje**, Clear Lake.

Top check presentation L-R: Operation Round Up directors **Gary Ganje**, Clear Lake, and **Marlyn Bottolfson**, Amery, presented \$1,000 to employees of Golden Age Manor, a long-term care and rehab center in Amery.

To apply for a grant, visit polkburnett.com. To round up your bill, contact our office, 800-421-0283, ext. 335.



Get to know Co-op Board Director Cindy Thorman

Cindy Thorman, Osceola, is a co-op director in District 1 and has served on the board since 2005.

"A cooperative is democratic and member controlled. I respect that," said Cindy. "I represent co-op members on the board. It's an important job. My goals are to be a voice for members and do the right thing for them."

Cindy grew up on Polk-Burnett lines outside Milltown and graduated from Unity High School. She understands firsthand that electricity is vital in our rural areas.

"I grew up hearing stories from my uncle, who helped build our rural electric system," said Cindy. "I am interested in electricity and curious about how the grid works. Once elected to the board, I jumped into training programs to become a Certified Cooperative Director, learning about power generation and distribution, co-op business operations and policies."

Throughout her education and experience, Cindy has become an advocate for nuclear energy, calling it, "a clean energy alternative we can rely on."

Cindy is also an advocate for youth and community, and believes it's important for Polk-Burnett to demonstrate community involvement, according to our cooperative principles. Cindy presents scholarships at Osceola High School every year on behalf of Polk-Burnett, and supports our Co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. where teens learn about cooperatives, U.S. history, government and democracy.

Cindy and her husband Glyn have three daughters and four grandsons. They take pride in restoring historic buildings, especially when it helps community development in their hometown. Two of their restored buildings in downtown Osceola are now listed on the National Historic Register and have been sold to become successful businesses.

Would you like to serve on the co-op board?



If you believe in the cooperative principles, are a proven leader in the community and value reliable electricity, you may be a good fit for the Polk-Burnett board of directors. The board is responsible for setting policies and rates, and approving the annual work plan, which is our investment in the local grid. Directors are elected to three-year terms and attend monthly board meetings, along with co-op events and conferences. In spring 2024, co-op members will elect board directors in co-op districts 7, 8 and 9. If you are interested in learning more about board service, contact the general manager's office, 800-421-0283, ext. 313.

Learn more about the co-op board and see a co-op district map on polkburnett.com




Holiday safety tip

Stringing your holiday lights? Check them first! Check all indoor and outdoor lights and electric decorations. If they are old and damaged, it is time to replace them.


Scholarship deadline is Jan. 1

The deadline to apply for a \$1,500 co-op scholarship is January 1, 2024. Children of co-op members in the Class of 2024 are invited to apply on our website. Must be going on to an accredited tech school, college or university. We will award 90 scholarships in 2024.



Rebate deadline is Jan. 1

Polk-Burnett offers rebates to help members improve energy efficiency in your home. See rebate offers and apply on polkburnett.com by January 1, 2024, for purchases in 2023. Questions? Call 800-421-0283, ext. 318. We look forward to assisting you.




Energy savers for the holiday season

Many of us use more electricity during the holidays, and electric bills may be higher as a result. Here are a few reasons why your bill may be higher than normal:

- *Holiday entertaining means extra cooking and baking. *Tip: Don't peak; leave oven door closed to keep heat inside oven.*
- *Holiday guests use more hot water for showers, laundry and dishwashing. *Tip: Run only full loads.*
- *Holiday lights and decorations use electricity. *Tip: Switch to LEDs.*
- *Lights are on longer with fewer daylight hours. *Tip: Use timers to turn lights on and off.*
- *Space heaters are used for extra warmth. *Tip: Shut them off when you leave the room.*

Polk-Burnett offers energy efficient products, rebates and incentives to help members save energy and money, while improving comfort in your homes. Visit our website or give us a call, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

Winter is here! Please keep your propane tank clear of ice and snow.



Be prepared for winter storms & power outages

Co-op crews work to strengthen the grid and prevent power outages, but winter storms are always a threat. Ice, snow and wind can damage power lines and cause power outages. If your lights go out this winter:

- Check circuit breakers, fuses and the neighbors. Check outage map on polkburnett.com.
- Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
- Keep away from fallen power lines, and trees and branches near lines. Report these hazards.
- If we have your cell number, we'll send you a text alert when you have an outage at your location. Keep your cell number up to date on your account through SmartHub or our billing office. Thank you!

Our goal is to restore power safely and quickly, while keeping you informed.



Stay in your vehicle if power lines are down

Following an accident or storm that drops power lines around your car:

- Stay inside car until power is shut off; the ground outside may be energized.
- Do not drive over wires; they may be live with high-voltage electricity.
- Call 911 and keep others away until help arrives.
- If you must exit the vehicle, jump clear so no part of your body touches the car when you land.
- Keep both feet together and shuffle or hop at least 40 feet away. Keeping feet together and on the ground minimizes the chance for electrocution. Always assume the ground and power lines are energized and dangerous.