

July 2023

Powerlines



May was a big month for the electric co-op: We presented scholarships to the Class of 2023 and started construction on a new solar development in Polk County. I'd like to share these highlights with you in my column this month.

Funding scholarships for our next generation of leaders

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

I had the opportunity to present community service scholarships to graduating seniors of Osceola High School at their school awards night, pictured above. This group of young people will be our future computer engineers, dental hygienists, nurses, teachers, and many other careers. Our co-op scholarships are *not funded by electricity rates*, rather the money comes from unclaimed Capital Credits and from members who voluntarily donate their Capital Credits to the scholarship fund. Thank you to the members of Polk-Burnett who donate their Capital Credits to fund the scholarship program and the continuing education of the next generation of leaders. Members may sign up to donate Capital Credits on our website or call 800-421-0283, ext. 335.

Polk-Burnett presented \$1,500 scholarships to 97 graduates this spring, for a total of \$145,500! All students demonstrated community service and their parents are co-op members. Scholarship winners were listed in our May Powerlines newsletter and can be viewed on our website. Information about scholarships for the Class of 2024 will be announced in September.



Georgetown Solar construction begins, energy to benefit local members of Polk-Burnett Electric Co-op

by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Construction started in May on Georgetown Solar, a 15-acre solar array in the Town of Georgetown at 1867 100th Street, County Road I, Balsam Lake. Solar energy will feed into the electric distribution system to benefit members of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative.

Polk-Burnett is partnering with Seattle-based OneEnergy Renewables to develop Georgetown Solar. The 2 MW solar array will generate about 4,500,000 kWh of electricity annually, enough to power 375 homes.

Georgetown Solar will be built, owned and operated by OneEnergy Renewables, a Wisconsin solar energy company that offers expertise in site development, engineering, equipment purchasing, construction and operations. The Madison-based team has developed 15 projects across Wisconsin, and 11 in adjacent states.

Polk-Burnett will purchase solar energy output from the array at a fixed rate for 25 years. The timing of Georgetown Solar construction was coordinated with other co-op solar projects across Wisconsin to get a better price and return on investment for members.

The project provides both operational and financial benefits by generating some of our own power locally. Georgetown Solar not only adds more clean energy to the grid, but it will also relieve overloading on substation equipment and help offset power market costs.

Georgetown Solar is located next to the Bunyan Substation, at the intersection of County Roads I and H in the Town of Georgetown, Polk County. This site was selected to help meet high summer demand at the Bunyan Substation. The array has 4,472 panels that operate on a tracking system to follow the path of the sun for maximum power generation.

The ground under the array will be restored with pasture, prairie grasses and wildflowers, providing habitat for pollinators and healthy root systems to prevent soil erosion from wind and rain. Co-op solar arrays are dual-purpose spaces that provide energy for members, as well as acres of important ecosystems.

Polk-Burnett supports a balanced, measured strategy to diversify energy generation and carbon reduction. We must ensure a reliable and affordable flow of electricity. Our mission is to provide safe, reliable electricity at a competitive cost. This project will help us become less reliant on volatile energy markets during peak summer days and strengthen local grid reliability.

We are excited to break ground on Georgetown Solar. We plan to dedicate the array and begin generating power by late fall. We will keep you informed of our progress.

Georgetown Solar is the second utility scale solar array in Polk-Burnett's service territory. The first, SunTuria Solar, was dedicated in 2017 behind the co-op office in Centuria. The 1.25 MW array generates power for about 200 homes. It is owned and operated by ENGIE North American, and the co-op purchases the solar energy output. School and community groups are invited for tours. Visit polkburnett.com to see energy output and learn more.



Energy savings hub for federal tax credits and rebates

We'd like to make co-op members aware that federal tax credits and rebates for home energy improvements were recently expanded. Homeowners may qualify for a tax credit of up to \$1,200 per year for home weatherization, including EnergyStar-certified exterior doors and windows, insulation, weatherstripping and caulking. Incentives are also available for air source and geothermal heat pumps, and solar panels. These programs can help consumers make energy efficient upgrades, which can help save money on energy bills. The U.S. Department of Energy created an energy savings hub (<https://www.energy.gov/save>) to help inform you about federal tax credits and rebate programs. Another helpful site is <https://www.irs.gov/credits-and-deductions-under-the-inflation-reduction-act-of-2022>.

Please talk with your tax adviser about home energy improvements, and remember that Polk-Burnett also offers rebates for co-op members. Visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 595. Thank you.

Co-op hosts EV safety training for first responders



Polk-Burnett hosted an electric vehicle safety training for Polk County first responders April 27 as part of our co-op commitment to community. It was a full house, with 95 local firefighters, EMTs and law enforcement personnel attending and stating that the training is needed and valued.

The three-hour course covered EV technology, responding to EV accidents, fire suppression and extrication, as well as hands-on engagement with various EVs.

Instructors were from EVsafe, a southern Wisconsin-based organization with more than 30 years of experience, and Polk County Emergency Management helped organize the event.

Emergency response organizations in attendance were Amery Fire, Apple River Fire, Allied Fire, Centuria Fire, Cushing Fire, Frederic Fire, Lorain Fire, Luck Fire, Milltown Fire, Osceola Fire, St. Croix Falls Fire, Polk County Sheriff's Office, Northwestern EMS and Lakes Region EMS. Based on the success of the training, we plan to offer it for Burnett County emergency responders next year.

Polk-Burnett provides safe, reliable electricity for members, including power for EV charging, with incentives for charging off-peak, overnight. Please contact our office if we can assist, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.

New look coming soon to SmartHub!

Polk-Burnett's SmartHub app helps members save time and money. You can use it on your computer, where you'll see a new and improved look starting in August, or you can use it on your mobile device. Manage your account at anytime from anywhere:



- Pay your bill
- Report power outages
- View energy use
- Update your account



Download our free SmartHub app from your app store or call us to get started! 800-421-0283, ext. 335

Sign up for paperless billing and receive a one-time \$5 bill credit!

When you sign up for SmartHub, you will be invited to switch to paperless billing, and we'll credit your account with a one-time \$5 bill credit as a thank you for helping us save printing and postage costs, as well as a lot of paper! With paperless billing, an email is sent to you monthly when your statement is available, and you can access your account anytime, anywhere on SmartHub.

Propane prebuy contracts available late July



- Prebuy contracts lock in a price on a fixed number of gallons.
- Minimum prebuy purchase is 300 gallons with payment due August 18.
- If contracting isn't an option, sign up for our budget plan by August 18.

800-421-0283, ext. 378 or 411

Online accounts are available. View past deliveries, account balance and make payments. Sign up on polkburnett.com and look for the Propane Center icon.

Be prepared for summer storms and power outages

We work hard to prevent outages, but summer storms are always a threat. If your power goes out:

- Please check circuit breakers, fuses and the neighbors.
- Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283.
- View Outage Map on polkburnett.com and follow Facebook for updates on major outages.
- Keep away from fallen power lines, and trees and branches on lines. Report these hazards.

If we have your cell number on file, we'll send you a text alert with outage information, including cause and estimated restoration time when possible.

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



ENROLL TO RECEIVE PEAK ALERTS

We'll send you a text, email and/or phone message asking you to **REDUCE ELECTRICITY** when demand and price are high. *Together We Save Money, Energy and our Environment.*



Peak demand most often occurs from 1 to 6 p.m. on the hottest days of summer and 6:55 to 10:55 a.m. on the coldest mornings of winter. You'll see no more than nine peak days in summer and seven in winter.

Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your current electric bill, but it is important. Reducing peak demand helps keep your energy rates steady by reducing the wholesale price Polk-Burnett pays for electricity. Lowering peak demand also reduces the need for power generation.

Every little bit helps! Enroll on polkburnett.com/beat-peak or 800-421-0283, ext. 335. Thank you!

IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SURVEY, WE APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK TO HELP US IMPROVE.

All members who submit a survey will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 bill credit.

Polk-Burnett is your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.

Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter.
800-421-0283 • polkburnett.com



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

