

Powerlines

March 2024



Thank you for taking our member survey, we read and value all your comments *by General Manager Steve Stroshane*

As a cooperative, we are owned by our members and follow democratic principles where members have a voice. Throughout the year, Polk-Burnett creates opportunities for you to share your opinions and feedback. Whether you respond to a survey or social media post, reach out to us by phone or email, stop by our office or visit us at the annual meeting, we are happy to hear from you. Connecting with you helps us learn what's working and what we can do better to meet your expectations. In my report to you this month, I'd like to share some insights we received from our 2023 member survey, and how we're using this information to plan for a future that aligns with the priorities and needs of our community.

First, a little background about our 2023 member survey:

- ⚡ 14,085 surveys were emailed to members in December 2023.
- ⚡ 3,379 members returned a survey (24% response rate).
- ⚡ 5,367 comments were made by members and read by co-op employees.

I'm happy to announce that Polk-Burnett received high scores on our performance:

- ⚡ 8.97 on overall satisfaction.
- ⚡ 8.63 on comparison to ideal utility.
- ⚡ 8.62 on likelihood to choose Polk-Burnett, if you could.
- ⚡ 8.53 on exceeding your expectations.

These scores are based on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the highest.

We appreciate these high numbers, but more importantly, your trust in us to keep your lights on and continuously improve.

What we learned about your priorities and expectations

The quantitative scores above are important for comparing our performance to past years and other utilities, but even more valuable is the qualitative information you provided in your comments. We read every comment to identify themes and priorities, and we followed up with more than 150 members seeking answers to questions and problems. Below is information members provided that will guide co-op decisions and actions going forward:

⚡ 1. Reliable power

*I know my power is reliable and that is priceless. Hardly ever an outage and they're always very quickly fixed...
No problems, just there in the background, extremely dependable... ...the way it (outage) was handled from
communication to restoration was much more impressive that what I experience in the Cities...*

Each year, Polk-Burnett invests in grid maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliable electricity. We will continue to make substation improvements, where the flow of electricity can be rerouted and restored quickly in the event of a transmission or substation outage. A new substation is planned for 2025 to serve the growing Farmington and Somerset communities. Members also shared that underground power lines are appreciated, and we will continue to convert overhead lines to underground cable when there is a financial and operational benefit for members.

⚡ 2. Friendly and knowledgeable customer service

They are easy to contact. They answer their phones. You talk to a real person fast and they are helpful.

We will continue to hire and train employees to exceed your expectations for service, in person, on the phone and online. We're fortunate to employ the area's best people. They are truly dedicated to you, our co-op values and member service.

⚡ 3. Convenience, efficiency and communication

I love the app! Best thing ever. (You) keep customers updated. I love the outage map, and email or text updates.

Outage texting launched for members in March 2023 with great success! If we have your cell number on your account, we'll text you when your lights go out. If you haven't received a text yet, it's probably because you haven't had an outage. Our goal is to provide you with as much information as possible about the status of an outage. Members also like our online bill pay, prepay and auto pay options, as well as our SmartHub app. A few of you shared that the app isn't as user friendly as it could be, and we have shared your feedback with the developer. We'll continue to work on ways for you to access service 24/7/365, and we'd be happy to help you enroll in SmartHub or improve your experience if you have questions. Remember, you can always find information in our Powerlines newsletter and on polkburnett.com. Transparent, honest and timely communication is part of our co-op business model.

We heard that many of you like our co-op business model and annual Capital Credit distribution, that we care about our community and the people in it. From our beginning, we've been member and community focused. We know this is more important to our members today than ever before.

We're also seeing a greater understanding of electricity rates, and the effects of inflation and supply chains on your rates. We know everyone would like lower rates, and we work hard to keep them affordable, but we also have a responsibility to maintain and invest in the grid, so it's reliable for you every day, even when you are not there.

Of course, we did receive some negative feedback on these topics, too. We hear you and thank you for sharing your priorities. Please let us know if we can improve your service or help you find ways to save energy and money. We're listening.

Our mission is to provide reliable electricity with efficiency and extraordinary service.

**Co-op members: Considering solar for your home or business?
Learn what you should know before you install**

FREE SOLAR ENERGY SEMINAR

Thursday, March 28, 5 p.m.

Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, 1001 State Road 35, Centuria

Guest Speaker: Kris Schmid, Legacy Solar

Register on polkburnett.com or 800-421-0283, x318.

**CO-OP MEMBERS: GET A REBATE
ON SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS
UP TO \$600 FOR QUALIFYING INSTALLATIONS**

Contact us for details: 800-421-0283, x318 or polkburnett.com





Operation Round Up makes a difference in our community

Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up program donated \$15,200 to 13 local nonprofits, including \$1,200 to Friends of Interstate Park and \$1,000 to St. Croix Falls Historical Society for signage at Wisconsin Interstate Park that recognizes the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and shares the history of Silverbrook Mansion on the Silverbrook trail.

\$1,000 was also awarded to Luck School to build raised beds and establish grass pathways in the school garden. The garden is used by students in grades 4K-12 for education, and the kitchen uses fresh produce every fall for school meals, with excess garden produce sent to local food pantries.

Congratulations to all award winners. We're honored to support such amazing people and programs!

See all winter Operation Round Up grant winners and learn how your nonprofit can apply on polkburnett.com.

THANK YOU, co-op members, for your generosity!

Operation Round Up is funded by co-op members who round up monthly electric bills.



March can be snowy and icy ❄️ Be prepared for power outages ❄️ Keep away from power lines
Report outages on SmartHub or 800-421-0283 ❄️ See outage map on polkburnett.com
If your power goes out, we'll text you an outage alert if we have your cell number on your account.



Get to know Co-op Board Director Wilfred Owens

Wilfred Owens was elected to the Polk-Burnett board of directors by members in co-op District 6 in 2016. He and his family have milked cows in Polk County for more than 100 years since 1912. The Owens dairy farm was started in Indian Creek by Wilfred's grandfather and is now operated by third and fourth generation farmers, including Wilfred and his wife, Linda, and both of their children.

Wilfred takes a lot of pride in his local roots and rural life on co-op lines. His grandmother was one of the first members to receive power from Polk-Burnett in the late 1930s.

His family history and life on the farm are strong motivators for Wilfred's service on the board.

"You need reliable power to milk cows," he said. "The electric co-op's most important role is keeping the lights on. That means keeping equipment up to date and keeping the right-of-way cleared."

The Owens farm raises Jersey cows, a breed that's known for high protein and premium buttermilk. Wilfred and Linda have traveled across the country, and even overseas, to attend Jersey conventions. They also enjoy road trips across the western U.S., spending time with their granddaughter and staying active in Indian Creek 4-H, where they've been leaders for 40 years.

Learn more about your co-op board and see a map of districts on polkburnett.com.



It's dangerous to build or landscape near utility equipment

Do you have plans to build or landscape this spring? Warning: Gardens, plants, decks, fences and buildings are a safety hazard if built too close to power poles, underground transformer boxes and other utility equipment:

- ⚡ Life-threatening contact with high-voltage equipment can occur when landscaping and structures are too close to electrical equipment.
- ⚡ Obstructions limit access for linemen working to keep the power on at your home or business. Co-op crews need access to utility equipment to perform routine maintenance and emergency repairs.
- ⚡ Decks, fences, structures and landscaping built too close to utility equipment can be damaged when crews and trucks need access to work on equipment.

All structures and landscaping should be a safe distance from utilities to prevent damage. For your safety, keep away from electrical equipment. Thank you!



Installing new electric service?

If you are building this summer and need electricity installed or upgraded, we encourage you and your electrician to work closely with us. Members can find a new service checklist and forms on polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 389. Once we have your paperwork, an engineering technician will review your project and contact you. We look forward to assisting you with new electric service for all the things that power your life. ⚡



Simplify your life

- >View and pay electric bill with credit card or bank account.
- >Manage account, update contact information.
- >View and report power outages.
- >Track your electricity use.

SmartHub app is free, secure and convenient for your computer, cell or tablet.

Please contact us if we can improve your SmartHub experience, 800-421-0283, x335.



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.

Follow us on Facebook. Sign up for our SmartHub app.

800-421-0283 • polkburnett.com



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

