



Above: Kids received tokens for fruits and vegetables at the Balsam Lake Farmers Market to promote healthy eating, thanks to a \$1,000 grant from Operation Round Up and the generosity of members. Thank you for rounding up; you make a difference! This summer, we awarded \$22,000 to 20 nonprofits that improve our local quality of life. See all Operation Round Up grant winners and learn how your nonprofit can apply on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).



## Leveraging technology for exceptional service

by General Manager Steve Stroshane and Technology Manager Matt Kurtzhals



In today's fast-paced world, technology is the backbone of delivering exceptional service to our members. Gone are the days when a business office revolved around a phone and a copy machine. At Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative, we use the latest technology to ensure that our members receive extraordinary service and reliable power.

All total, Polk-Burnett uses technology to support 40 critical functions across our business. This month, we'd like to highlight three areas where technology makes our work more efficient and effective.

### In the office, the evolution of member services

Today, we use computerized business systems for accounting, budgeting and paying bills; tracking inventory materials and supplies, and managing member account and billing information.

When Polk-Burnett was founded in 1938, member account information was meticulously recorded in ledger books by hand. Fast forward to the present, and our member information system is fully computerized, allowing us to provide convenient service through our website, email, phone and SmartHub app.

Members can easily pay bills, update account information, report power outages and monitor electricity use down to the 15-minute interval — all from your computer or smartphone — 24 hours a day, 365 days per year!

### At your location, advanced meter technology

Beyond office technology, our cooperative employs sophisticated hardware and software to maintain a reliable power distribution system. From substations to the meters on your home, technology enables us to efficiently manage our local electric grid.

One innovation that improves reliability in your home is advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). Modern meters transmit and receive data for secure two-way communication between our office and your meter. In the event of an outage, AMI meters can pinpoint an outage location, so crews can restore power more quickly and cost-effectively. We have responded to winter outages, preventing homes from freezing up, and loose meter socket connections, preventing fires! In addition, you can see your energy use on SmartHub, giving you information to save energy and money.

### In the field, streamlining operations and outage response

Our operations team uses technology to enhance outage restoration and fieldwork efficiency. In the past, lineworkers relied on paper maps; today, they carry iPads equipped with electronic mapping tools. This allows for precise locating and efficient workflow management.

With the latest technology, our operations team can predict outages and reroute power, ensuring quick outage responses and minimal power disruptions.

### Empowering our workforce

Behind our technology are dedicated local employees. At Polk-Burnett, we aim to have the most knowledgeable, well-trained and technology-efficient workforce in the state.

Our technology department manages computer networks, servers and system updates, ensuring optimal performance. They are also responsible for cybersecurity, employing firewalls, antivirus software and two-factor authentication to safeguard our network and member information.

Three critical charges for our technology team and all Polk-Burnett employees are:

1. Data confidentiality, protecting personal information.
2. Data integrity, making sure data is accurate for billing and making good business decisions.
3. System reliability, ensuring the flow of power and communication from the substation through power lines to your meter.

### Technology's role in our energy future

As we look to the future, technology will continue to play a vital role at our cooperative. Artificial intelligence and grid analytics offer exciting possibilities for improving reliability and smart integration of renewable and next generation energy sources.

We are committed to embracing these advancements and being the most technologically equipped electric co-op in Wisconsin, with highly skilled employees who efficiently and effectively use technology. Why? To fulfill our promise of delivering reliable power and extraordinary service to you, our members and community.

## Technology allows us to see and diagnose outages *before* trucks roll

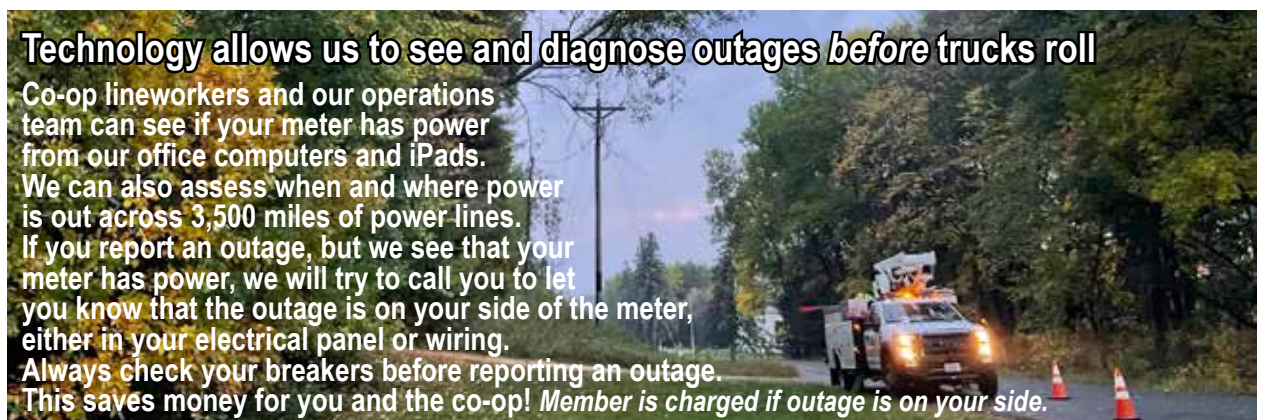
Co-op lineworkers and our operations team can see if your meter has power from our office computers and iPads.

We can also assess when and where power is out across 3,500 miles of power lines.

If you report an outage, but we see that your meter has power, we will try to call you to let you know that the outage is on your side of the meter, either in your electrical panel or wiring.

Always check your breakers before reporting an outage.

This saves money for you and the co-op! Member is charged if outage is on your side.







## Class of 2026: Win up to \$1,500

**Online scholarship application is now open**

As the new school year begins, seniors in the Class of 2026 are invited to apply for a co-op scholarship up to \$1,500, plus the Co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. Polk-Burnett's scholarship program focuses on community service, not grades, athletics or financial need. Candidates must be the child of a Polk-Burnett member.

Scholarships are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that if not used for education would be forfeited to the state, and by the generosity of members who donate future Capital Credits.

**Scan barcode to learn more and apply or call 800-421-0283. ►**



*Pictured is General Manager Steve Stroshane with one of our 2025 scholarship winners from Osceola High School. We awarded 101 scholarships to sons and daughters of co-op members in the Class of 2025, our largest year ever! The application is now open for the Class of 2026 on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com).*

## Energize your students: Explore electricity with Polk-Burnett



At Polk-Burnett, we are committed to the growth of future leaders through our scholarship program (above) and more. Our educational tours and safety demonstrations engage and educate young minds about the world of electricity. Co-op employees share their firsthand experiences, covering topics such as electrical safety, solar energy and cooperative careers.

If you're a teacher or a leader of a youth or community group interested in learning about electricity, we invite you to join us for a tour. Here are the exciting opportunities we offer:

**Solar Energy Exploration:** Tour our SunTuria Solar array to gain insights into solar energy. This experience is suitable for middle school, high school students and adults.

**Career Discovery:** Discover various cooperative careers, including linework, technology, finance, communications and engineering. This exploration is tailored for middle and high school students.

**Electrical Safety Education:** Learn how to stay safe around electrical equipment in your yard, home and community, as well as what to do if you're in a car accident with power lines. This valuable information is available for all ages.

*Contact us on [polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com) or 800-421-0283, ext. 333.*



## Lower energy costs and improve comfort with a home performance test, rebates available

Co-op members, have your home tested by a certified energy rater to identify heat loss, evaluate insulation and learn the best ways to improve your home's energy performance. We offer a \$350 rebate toward a certified home performance test and up to \$1,000 rebate on subsequent home energy upgrades. Call us to find a local energy rater and learn more, 800-421-0283, x318.



## Brighten your yard from dusk to dawn with LED security lights for co-op members

Energy efficient LED security lights installed on Polk-Burnett poles operate from dusk to dawn. Members are charged a monthly fee for the light and may be charged for installation. Polk-Burnett LED security lights are approved by the International Dark Sky Association.

**Contact 800-421-0283, ext. 389 or [polkburnett.com/security-lights](http://polkburnett.com/security-lights).**



## Safety: Stay away from power lines during harvest season

This harvest season, we thank our local farmers for the food you provide and remind you to follow these important safety steps:

- ✓ Stay 10 feet away from power lines when operating equipment.
- ✓ Always use a spotter to safely navigate around power lines and electrical equipment, especially when raising augers and truck beds.
- ✓ If contact is made with power lines, stay inside equipment and call 911; the wires and ground may be energized.

## Wisconsin Energy Assistance

Your household may be eligible for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, based on income and size.

For help paying your electric bill, contact West CAP, 715-598-4750 or [westcap.org](http://westcap.org).

*Be Safe!*  
**September is National Preparedness Month**  
[polkburnett.com](http://polkburnett.com)



See Outage Center for Live Outage Map & FAQs

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](http://polkburnett.com)



Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer | Member Owned | Community Focused

