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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative*

January 2023

NEWS



**Richland Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

THE POWER OF GRACE

SHOULD I CHANGE
MY CHARGING HABITS?

TACO TUESDAYS

KIDS AND CRITTERS





SEIZE YOUR *Opportunities*



By Trevor Clark, Director of Outreach Services

Many of you have heard the expression “new year, new you.” Perhaps some of you are going to focus on being healthier, work on financials, pick up a new hobby, or take that long-awaited trip you have put off for so many years. Either way, setting goals for yourself is a great way to start the new year as it is truly a fresh start. I will offer you the same advice as I do the young students I coach.

Setting goals is very important but be sure to set goals you can attain and work on achieving small goals before reaching for the stars. Setting small goals will help build confidence and allow you to work your way to more difficult challenges.

One thing about a goal is it can change. You have the ability to modify or change the goal anytime you want as long as you have an understanding of why it needed changing. Maybe an injury occurred, or you found a goal too easy. We stress never giving up to the younger generation, but can you say the same throughout your life? For us adults, it is just as important.

Legendary Alabama football coach Bear Bryant once said, “Never quit. It is the easiest cop-out in the world. Set a goal and don’t quit until you attain it. When you do attain it, set another goal and don’t quit until you reach it. Never quit.”

This year will be a difficult year for many parents out there, like every year. They start to realize this may be the last time they watch one of their children’s high school sporting events or concerts and see report cards—most likely this has already happened. Their son/daughter(s) will graduate high school and head off to college or move out on their own. The emotions will run high for parents as their house will not be the same as it has been for the last 17 or 18 years.

Here at Richland Electric Cooperative (REC), we understand those emotions as many employees and directors have already experienced it, are currently experiencing it, and some are just beginning it. This is an important time in not only the students’ lives but the parents’ as well.

Throughout the last few years you have undoubtedly heard how expensive college is and how it will take years for students to pay back student loans. This is true—it may take many years depending on the path your student takes. Students may set their goal to graduate debt free or develop

a plan to pay off their student loans quicker. Do not discount their knowledge on the subject.

This is where I present you with a goal idea. Apply for as many scholarships as you can. What is the worst that could happen? They say no. Once in awhile you may get a letter saying you didn’t qualify, but most of the time you won’t even know if you have been rejected.

Parents, help your student by searching for scholarships. You are out in the general public more often and you may find scholarships guidance counselors are not aware of. Speak with parents who have gone through the process—perhaps they can offer advice or make you aware of certain scholarships.

Students, ASK! Asking about scholarships is a great way to get your foot in the door. Guidance counselors are a great resource, but remember they are working with the entire student body, especially other seniors. Visit local businesses and

*“You miss 100%
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– Wayne Gretzky



introduce yourself. Take initiative by seeking out scholarships and meeting with people. You will be amazed how many businesses will appreciate this simple gesture and they will remember you. I cannot stress enough, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” – Wayne Gretzky

REC Scholarship

The Richland Electric Cooperative scholarship is available to financially assist members’ children enrolling in post-secondary degree or vocational program. These scholarships are made available to students by utilizing unclaimed capital credits as financial assistance towards education. You can find our scholarship application on our website by visiting rec.coop/scholarships, contacting your guidance counselors, or by calling our office. If you have any questions regarding the scholarship application, I am more than happy to speak with you or your student.

By now, you may have noticed this piece is directed towards parents. Why? Because I understand how unlikely it is for students to read this article. Not because they aren’t interested, but because have spent all day in school, may have had practice or a game afterwards, followed by their homework for the next day. Their priorities are slightly different from those of the parents.

For those parents reading this who are not yet at the stage of having to worry about graduation and college expenses, this is for you too. It is never too early to start looking for these opportunities. What if I told you that your student could guarantee themselves a scholarship from REC? Odds are you would approach the idea with caution because it sounds too good to be true. I can tell you it’s not. Your student can guarantee a scholarship from REC by attending the two-day Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) held in the summer.

Youth Leadership Congress

YLC is open to any student entering 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grade. The conference is sponsored by electric cooperatives throughout the state of Wisconsin. It is also free to attend as the sponsorship is covered by REC. Students will enhance their leadership and team-building skills while staying on the UW-Stout campus. They will participate in case studies such as hiring a manager and learning about the cooperative form of business. Perhaps most importantly, they will have the opportunity to run for the youth board of directors and if



elected by their peers will earn a trip to Washington, D.C.

The opportunities are endless for our younger generation, but they still need direction. Many of your students may not understand where their power comes from or think we are just their power provider, but we look at it differently. These students may not be our members now, but it doesn’t mean they won’t be. Making the connection with them now further instills the message that we care. To us, one member does not equal one person, but all those behind the meter.

If anyone would like more information regarding scholarships or Youth Leadership Conference, I am available and would welcome any conversations. You can email me at tclark@rec.coop or simply call our office at 608-647-3173.



REC member students who participate in Youth Leadership Congress on the campus of UW-Stout in the summer are guaranteed a scholarship from the cooperative. REC also covers the students’ cost to attend the event, where they will develop their leadership skills and learn about the cooperative business model.



MAJORITY OF HOME FIRES INVOLVE HEATING EQUIPMENT

Heating equipment, such as space heaters, kerosene heaters, fireplaces, and wood-burning stoves, is a leading cause of fires in U.S. homes, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The term “homes” includes one- and two-family homes (including manufactured homes), apartments, townhouses and other multi-family dwellings.

During a recent four-year period, fire departments responded to an estimated average of 48,530 fires involving heating equipment each year. The fires resulted in 500 civilian (non-first-responder) deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage, according to NFPA’s Home Heating Fires report published in 2021. In addition:

- Heating equipment caused one in seven home fires and 19% of home fire deaths.
- Most home heating fire deaths (81%) included stationary or portable space heaters.
- More than half of the home heating fire deaths were caused by placing heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as furniture, clothing, mattresses, or bedding.
- Nearly half (48%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.
- Failure to clean equipment, such as chimney flues, accounted for a quarter of all heating equipment fires.

In addition, approximately two in five home heating equipment fires involved items that ran on what is considered

solid fuel, such as wood-burning or pellet stoves or wood-burning fireplaces. However, electric-powered heating devices were responsible for the largest share of losses, accounting for more than half of the fatalities, three in five injuries and two-fifths of the property damage.

Follow these safety tips to use space heaters safely:

1. Read all instructions and use space heaters only as recommended.
2. Do not leave space heaters unattended.
3. Plug them directly into an outlet; most power strips and extension cords are not equipped to handle the energy spikes caused by space heaters cycling on and off.
4. Unplug any other items from the outlet you are using and try to use a dedicated circuit to avoid overload.
5. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
6. Turn the heaters off before you leave the room or go to sleep.
7. Do not use heaters that are in disrepair or have frayed cords or damaged plugs.
8. Place them on flat, level surfaces and never on furniture, counters or carpet, which can overheat.
9. Unplug and put space heaters away (out of the reach of children) when not in use.

Use space heaters with care. For additional safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org).

KEEP SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER



When the chill of fall and winter set in, be aware of **potential fire hazards that are lurking in your home**. Whether keeping warm with heat from your furnace, space heater, fireplace, or electric blanket, **Safe Electricity offers these tips to prevent a fire in your home.**

For more tips on fire prevention, visit



Always place your space heater on a **steady surface** and away from curtains, tablecloths or other flapping fabrics. Use a space heater with an automatic shut-off switch.



Have your furnace inspected annually.



Inspect electric blankets for scorch marks or visible damage regularly.



Be sure your **chimney is clear** before each use, and cover your fireplace with a screen to keep children and pets away from flames.



HORSE MEDICINE, MOUNT, AND MORE

By Al Cornell

My school buddy Joe Sebranek told a joke about a man and his sick horse. At his desperation visit to his vet, he was given a large cure or kill pill. He was told to put it in the end of a piece of hose, stick it in the horse's throat, and to blow on the other end. A couple days later, the vet met the man and noticed that he was glum. He offered his condolences, "Sorry, but I take it that your horse didn't make it." The man answered, "The horse is okay, but he blew first."

Well, my blast of horse medicine came at an early age from a bottle. I don't remember it, but I've been told a few times. Terry and I came walking from the old barn. I was mighty sick, and Terry was holding an old bottle that had contained the horse medicine. He said, "He drank this." We had a way of finding everything we shouldn't have, but I'll never know how I managed to drink that stuff. There was no Poison Control Center nor phone by which to call. My stomach purged what Mom describes as stinky black stuff. I recovered.

My first experience driving the team didn't go so well either. Dad was throwing bales onto the hay rack and Terry was helping make the load. When we came to the end of the strip, I turned the horses down the slope intending to turn back the other way. The wagon tongue was connected to the front wheels so that both turned on a single pivot point. I turned way too sharp, and one wheel swung under the rack and broke the 2x4 stringer that ran from front to back beneath the wagon box. Dad was able to limp the partial load off the ridge and repair the wagon.

Later, that fine pair of



Percheron workhorses provided a lot of riding excitement. The horse lot was a hundred yards up the hollow from the house. It bordered a one-acre field that had a board gate. Terry would jump on Bill's back, and I would lead Pat to that gate so I could climb up and mount. For a time, we were cowboys pasturing the cows in the meadow for an hour after evening milking.

Daytime riding was just for fun. Most of that occurred after Dad had purchased a tractor, and the horses had been relieved of most of their heavy work.

Of course, the joy of riding peaked when there was no supervision, and we could exploit top speed. There were a few times when a horse ran under a low hanging branch, but we always managed to lay low enough to not get knocked off. I can't say as much for Uncle Lee visiting from Maryland. Bill dumped him and left him with considerable back pain for his trip home.

After riding down through the valley fields and tuning up the draw to the west, we came to a steep hill. There was a cleared zone right up the face of the hill that had been cut off for log rolling during a timber harvest on the hilltop. We aimed the horses straight up the hill. Their leg muscles bulged as they pressed upslope. I was soon double-fisted hanging onto Pat's mane with my body laid out down her back. I could look behind and see where I would end up if I lost my grip. That provided incentive to hang on and we four made it to the top.


Once I got past the medicine dose and the initial driving experience, those horses were a fun part of growing up and enjoying our animal friends.

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