

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* November 2025 NEWS



Richland Electric
Cooperative

Your Sustainable Energy Cooperative

CAMP NAWAKWA REVIVING A CAMP, RENEWING A MISSION

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE POWER

PREP NOW FOR WINTER SAVINGS

KIDS AND CRITTERS





HOME LIGHTING 101

Lighting is something most of us don't think much about—until it's wrong. Maybe the living room feels too dim for reading, or the kitchen lights cast an odd yellow glow. We often grab whatever bulb or fixture looks good without considering how it will actually perform in the space. But with a little planning, you can make your home brighter, cozier and more energy efficient.

Watts vs. Lumens

When you're shopping for lightbulbs, it's easy to focus on watts, but watts only measure how much energy a bulb uses. When it comes to brightness, what really matters is the lumen count. Lumens measure the actual light output. For example, an 800-lumen bulb gives off about the same amount of light as an old-fashioned 60-watt incandescent bulb.

A helpful rule of thumb: higher lumens mean brighter light, while lower watts mean less energy consumed. Remember to check wattage ratings for fixtures and only install bulbs that meet the fixture's wattage safety requirements.

Color Temperature and Consistency

Light bulbs also vary in color temperature, which ranges from warm yellow to cool white or even bluish tones. This detail often gets overlooked—until you replace one bulb and notice the new light doesn't quite match the others. If mismatched tones drive you crazy, consider buying and installing bulbs of the same brand and wattage in a room at the same time. That way the look stays consistent, and you won't be stuck hunting for a perfect match later.

Dimmers and Switches

Installing dimmers instead of standard on/off switches can be a game changer. Dimmers give you more control over brightness, help save energy and create a more comfortable atmosphere. Not all bulbs are dimmable, so double check labels before buying.

While you're thinking about switches, consider whether you have enough of them—and in the right places. A light you can only turn off from one end of a hallway quickly becomes annoying. For new installations or upgrades, it's best to hire a licensed electrician to ensure everything is wired safely and efficiently.

Fixtures: Form Meets Function

Bulbs are only part of the equation—fixtures matter too. Each type serves a purpose. Ambient lighting, like sconces or glass-covered ceiling fixtures, provides general illumination. Task lighting, like pendants, desk lamps or track lighting, focuses light where you need it most.

When choosing a fixture, think beyond looks. Ask yourself: does this light provide the right amount of brightness for the space? A beautiful chandelier might look perfect over the dining table but leave the rest of the room too dim. Alternatively, an oversized fixture could flood the room with more light than you need, wasting both energy and money.

Continued on page 18



20 YEARS OF GIVING BACK

How REC's Bottled Water Scholarship Program Supports Students and Builds Community

Since its founding, Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) has operated under seven guiding cooperative principles, one of the most important being “Concern for Community.” We’ve always believed that our responsibility goes far beyond delivering reliable electricity—we’re here to be a partner and supporter of the people we serve. One of the most meaningful ways we’ve lived out that principle over the past two decades is through our Bottled Water Scholarship Program.

The Bottled Water Scholarship Program began in 2005, when REC sought new ways to support local schools and students more directly. While we had often sponsored events, clubs, and activities at area schools, we realized those one-time sponsorships, while helpful, didn’t create the long-term impact we were striving for. We wanted to create something that would not only support schools financially, but also recognize the hard work and dedication of students involved in extracurricular activities.

BRANDING WATER TO BUILD FUTURES

REC partnered with a distributor that specializes in branded bottled water. This partnership allows us to offer schools the ability to purchase bottled water at a discounted rate, featuring their school’s logo along with an advertisement for REC. The schools order the water in bulk, and we ensure timely delivery at the beginning of the academic year—usually just in time for fall sports and other extracurricular events. *Water Billboards*, a family-owned and operated business out of Minnesota, currently produces and delivers the pallets of water for us. Randy is the face of *Water Billboards* and one the schools look forward to seeing year after year. If you ask Randy what he loves about doing the deliveries every year, it’s “I get to have the fun of seeing where our water goes and meeting many of our customers.”

Once the schools take delivery of the water, it is then sold at concession stands and school functions with student clubs often taking the lead in staffing the stands. The win here? These clubs get to keep all of the proceeds from their sales, helping fund everything from travel expenses and competitions to community service projects and supplies.

But the impact doesn’t stop there.

TURNING BOTTLED WATER INTO SCHOLARSHIPS

At the end of each school year, REC calculates how much water each participating school purchased. Every dollar spent to purchase the bottled water, up to \$1200, is redirected back to the school in the form of scholarships. Since the program started, over \$80,000 in scholarships has been awarded to local students—a milestone we’re incredibly proud to celebrate!

What’s more, REC does not select the recipients or financially profit from any part of the program. The schools themselves choose which students receive the scholarships, often basing their decisions on a combination of academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, and financial need.



Photos courtesy of Kickapoo School District.



*Pictured at right:
Tim, Building
and Grounds
Supervisor at
Riverdale School
District with
Randy from
Water Billboards.*



MORE THAN JUST FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Bottled Water Scholarship Program has had a ripple effect throughout our communities. It teaches students the value of hard work, gives clubs a meaningful way to raise funds, and creates a direct pipeline of financial support for local graduating seniors looking to further their education.

Parents, teachers, and administrators have shared how much they appreciate the program—not just because of the financial support it provides, but because it encourages students to engage in school activities and take pride in their communities. Meredith, counselor for the Ithaca School District, works with her administration when the time comes to distribute scholarship funds. “The Ithaca School District truly appreciates the financial assistance provided to our students through the REC Bottled Water Scholarship Program. Students are able to see this community connection and the support it provides in helping them strive toward their post-secondary goals.” It truly is a tangible example of how local partnerships can make a real difference in the lives of young people.

As we celebrate 20 years of the Bottled Water Scholarship Program, we’re proud of the positive impact it continues to make. We’re reminded that community support doesn’t always have to be grand or complex—sometimes it’s the small, consistent efforts that build the strongest foundations.

REC remains committed to the program and to finding new ways to support the schools, students, and families in our service area. We encourage all our members to attend school events, buy a bottle of water, and know that every sip is helping fund a brighter future for a local student.



Photos courtesy of Riverdale School District.

Smart Lighting: Energy Efficiency Meets Convenience

Smart lighting adds another layer of control for illuminating your home. But the real magic is convenience. With smart bulbs, you can adjust brightness, set schedules, or even change colors—all from your phone or a voice assistant like Alexa or Google Assistant. Want the lights to dim automatically for movie night? Or to turn on before you get home? Smart bulbs make it easy.

Smart lighting also lets you personalize your space. You can go classic with warm white tones or experiment with colors to set the mood—anything from a soft glow for winding down to vibrant hues for a party. Remember, smart bulbs still rely on power from your wall switch, which needs to stay in the “on” position for remote controls to work. If you prefer using a physical switch, consider pairing smart bulbs with a smart light switch. Many of today’s smart switches also come with motion detectors, adding another level of efficiency and convenience.

Good lighting doesn’t just make your home look better—it makes it feel better too. With a little planning, you can create spaces that are welcoming, functional, and energy efficient. Whether you stick to traditional bulbs and fixtures or explore the flexibility of smart lighting, thoughtful choices today will brighten your home for years to come.

Home Lighting Guide The following information outlines recommendations for home lighting, however, additional options for bulbs, fixtures and spaces in your home may be available. Sources: Home Depot, Alcon Lighting			
Room/Area	Recommended Lumens	Fixture Types	Smart Tips
 Living Room	15-30 per sq. ft. 150 sq. ft. room 2,250 - 4,500 lumens	Ceiling fixtures, can lighting, lamps/ accent lighting	Use smart bulbs to adjust color temp and control remotely.
 Kitchen	30-40 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Recessed ceiling lights or flush mounts	Smart switches can be used to control zones (dining vs. prep); undercabinet motion lights offer late-night illumination.
 Dining Room	10-20 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. room 1,000 - 2,000 lumens	Pendant or chandelier fixture	Smart, dimmable bulbs allow various levels of brightness for ambiance.
 Bedroom	10-20 per sq. ft. 120 sq. ft. room 1,200 - 2,400 lumens	Ceiling fixtures or recessed lighting	Motion sensors are great options for nighttime use.
 Bathroom	50-80 per sq. ft. 60 sq. ft. room 3,000 - 4,000 lumens	Over-vanity fixtures and/or recessed lighting	Cool LED bulbs provide brighter light for shaving, applying makeup, etc.
 Porch/ Home Entry	100-200 per sq. ft. 100 sq. ft. entry 10,000 - 20,800 lumens	Wall lanterns, ceiling mount and/or floodlights	Motion-activated flood lights and/or smart outdoor bulbs are energy efficient and boost home security.



FALL BACK
 Reminder to
 turn your clocks
 back on Sunday,
 November 2 at
 2:00 a.m.



Amy Martin, Manager/CEO
 30 E. Robb Rd., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581
 608-647-3173
www.rec.coop • Find us on Facebook 
Trina Duffy-Brauer, Editor



**Richland Electric
 Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Board of Directors

Calvin Sebranek, President • Daniel Hillberry, Vice President • Judy Murphy, Secretary • Tim Tiller, Treasurer
 Dennis Brown, Jim Goplin, Steven Fuller, Jeff Monson, Kevin Kepler