



EXTRA EFFORT REQUIRED TO GOVERN

By Shannon Clark, CEO/General Manager

After 12 years of serving on the NRTC Board of Directors, I finally fully appreciate the role of people who give of their time to serve on boards. In particular, those directors who are employed in a field that is unrelated to the business or organization for which they serve as a director.

To serve on the NRTC Board of Directors you must be either a current electric or telephone director at a member co-op, known as director-directors, or the manager of one, known as manager-directors. It was easy to tell which members of the board were managers in the industry and which ones were directors. At NRTC, only two directors were director-directors—the remainder all worked every day in the electric or telephone business. When discussing business matters there were often questions about technical aspects of the matter at hand from the director-directors. A stark contrast was evident between the knowledge level of directors and managers about technical matters. That should be expected—people like me spend all our professional time working in the industry and many have held their current position for 20 years or more. One director-director was retired from a telephone company and presently had taken on a family business, and the other had been the owner of carpet mills and now raises over 3 million chickens annually.

What became more obvious over time was the extra effort the director-directors put in to ensure they were making the right decisions to help guide NRTC. When reflecting I realize just how valuable their presence on the board was as we reached each decision. They taught those of us, who admittedly take for granted the things we have learned just by being “in the business,” a lot. They taught us how to make the right choices for the people we serve. I could look at a technical solution and quickly know if the product would work, how difficult it would be to bring to market, how long it would take, and whether it would make financial sense. But often I didn’t know if the people we served wanted the product, would buy the product or service, or if there were other solutions that would be competition. Since most of products and services we offered were services to co-ops, what would the local co-op board think of NRTC? Certainly, we could get some firm to provide market research to answer those questions,

but what is better than hearing it from the customers themselves?

As I compare that to our own board of directors at REC, where none of the members are directly employed in the energy business, it’s clear how much they are always learning. They rely on our management team and sometimes outside firms such as engineering firms to provide the “technical” input, but they take the time to evaluate what they hear to make sure they believe what they are being told. That takes training, research, and the very valuable component of time. They do this while carrying on with their own careers. You might consider it a full-time side job. And, as the number and complexity

of issues grows quickly, as they are now, more is needed.

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Whether it is NRTC, a cooperative, a town board, county board, school board, church board, or another entity, the same almost always applies. In fact, I don’t believe you would want the governing body to be all employees of the co-

op, or a school board of all teachers, or church board of all ministers, and so on. Self-governance is a valuable tool for organizations so long as the governance is made up of the people who are being served, and those people commit to putting their own self-interest aside in the interest of all.

Our directors, and many in our community who give their time to govern, give a lot of extra effort beyond just attending the meetings. They must constantly learn, apply what they learn in the decision-making process, and couple all of that with what they know about the cooperative at-large. Some do it better than others and that’s why in most cases the directors are elected—so that the served get what they expect in a way they expect—all without having to worry about how it happens. The ability to learn new things, teach others what you know, have the time to do it all, put others above yourself, and do it for little compensation are key elements I see in successful directors—and that takes extra effort.

NRTC HONORS CLARK WITH DONATION TO KICKAPOO FFA

NRRTC, a technology cooperative serving over 1,500 electric and telephone cooperatives across the nation, recently donated \$2,500 to the Kickapoo FFA Chapter in Viola. The donation was made to honor Shannon Clark, the CEO & general manager of Richland Electric Cooperative, in Richland Center.



Tammy and Shannon Clark

Clark has served for the past 12 years, the maximum amount allowed, on the NRTC board of directors including serving as their board chairman from 2019 through 2021. He spent nine years on the cooperative's executive committee due to his multiple committee chairmanships and his role as the treasurer and vice-chairman.

The funds were directed to the Kickapoo FFA chapter after NRTC noted Clark's own commitment to supporting FFA at the state and national level. Clark often cites the role FFA can play in developing young people for future leadership roles, especially those in rural communities.

"I often look back to my years in FFA and recall how being in FFA leadership training, public speaking, judging and my project program helped me throughout my career," said Clark. "The



Richland Electric Cooperative CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark at the recent NRTC annual meeting.

Kickapoo FFA Chapter has helped not only the young people involved directly, but it touches the lives of many people in our community through the work they do. Hopefully this donation can help the local chapter continue to enhance their programs that benefit so many."

Richland Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 30

REC Service Center, 30 E. Robb Rd., Richland Center

Watch your mail for ballots for the three Richland Electric Cooperative Board of Director seats that are up for election this year:

- Tim Tiller
- Kevin Kepler
- Mary Tillotson
- Don Huffman

Profiles of each candidate appeared in the March issue of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.

Remember to sign your ballot before returning it. Results will be certified at the annual meeting on April 30.





Youth Leadership Congress

UW-Stout | July 12–14, 2022

The annual **Youth Leadership Congress** is a dynamic three-day event for youth leaders across Wisconsin to develop their **leadership skills** while learning about the purpose, operation, and scope of **cooperative businesses**.



Take the opportunity to...

- See what makes the **cooperative business model** different and **successful**, then apply this knowledge to fun and challenging cooperative activities.
- Identify and learn how to develop your own **leadership skills**.
- Discuss **cooperative careers** with industry professionals.
- Be **entertained and challenged** by acclaimed motivational speakers who understand teens and cover topics that are relevant in your life.
- Run for a spot on the **Youth Board**, which plans the next year's conference and has the opportunity to attend the National Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., in the spring.

Who should apply?

- High school students with family members who belong to a participating electric cooperative.
- Students active in their school and community.

What does it cost?

- All registration costs* are covered by the generous support of your local cooperative.
- Students should contact their cooperative to apply for a full sponsorship.



Sign up today!

Deadline is June 1, 2022

Contact Richland Electric Cooperative, 608-647-3173, to request sponsorship and registration forms to attend the Youth Leadership Congress.

THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 11

You've likely noticed Richland Electric Cooperative's (REC) crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in our community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough—but it's a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. This month, as we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 11, I thought I'd share some interesting facts about electric lineworkers with you.

The work can be heavy, in more ways than one. Did you know the equipment and tools that a lineworker carries while climbing a utility pole can weigh up to 50 pounds? That's the same as carrying six gallons of water. Speaking of utility poles, lineworkers are required to climb poles ranging anywhere from 30 to 120 feet tall. Needless to say, if you have a fear of heights, this likely isn't the career path for you.

Lineworkers must be committed to their career—because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly take a toll. In fact, being a lineworker is listed in the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the United States.

Lineworkers often work non-traditional hours, outdoors in difficult conditions. The job requires technical skills, years of training and hands-on learning. Did you know that becoming a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (or about four years)? That's because working with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience, and an ongoing mental toughness. Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work.

Despite the many challenges, REC's lineworkers are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done, often days later. That's why the lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to the community.


Nationwide, there are approximately 120,000 electric lineworkers. Here in Richland County, REC has six lineworkers who are responsible for keeping power flowing 24/7, 365 days a year. To do this, they maintain nearly 1,000

miles of power lines across Richland and parts of Crawford, Sauk, and Vernon counties. In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing utility poles to repair a wire. Today's lineworkers are information experts who can pinpoint power outages from miles away. Line crews now use laptops, tablets, drones, and other technologies to map outages, survey damage, and troubleshoot problems.

Being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, but it is absolutely essential to the life of our community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hardworking men and women, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.


So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power. Please join us as we recognize them on April 11 and follow "#ThankALineworker" on social media to see how others are recognizing lineworkers.



Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO
1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581
608-647-3173
www.rec.coop
Find us on Facebook 



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