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## NEWS



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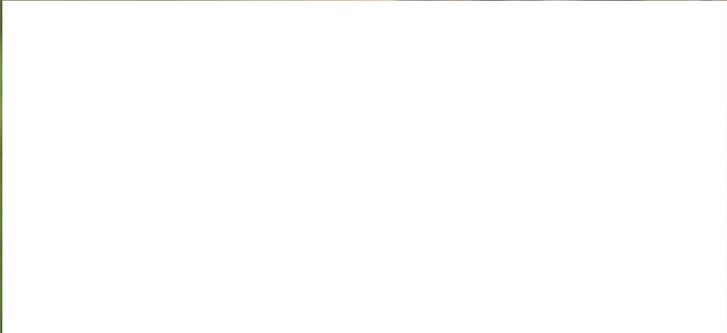
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# HELPING STUDENTS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL



**Richland Electric Cooperative**

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By Trevor Clark, Director of Outreach Services

Those of you who have met me, read my articles, or followed Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) on social media have probably come to the realization that I am passionate about working with our young people. Whether it be raising my own two kids, coaching baseball, presenting scholarships, or chaperoning Youth Leadership Congress, I can guarantee you that I will throw 100% of my ability into helping our younger generation be successful.

Once an extremely competitive young man who pursued as many sports as one possibly could, I never cared about anything more than winning. I hated losing, which was odd because I think we lost more than we won. But my passion for sports never wavered and I remained competitive until I reached college and sports no longer mattered. Granted, I played every intramural sport I could but there was nothing to play for other than an intramural championship.

I don't want people to think I've lost my competitive spirit; I still do not like losing, but I have grown enough to realize that losing is a part of life. I only wish that I had listened to my parents when I was younger and they would try to console me after a loss instead of blowing them off like they didn't know anything. Legendary Tennessee women's basketball Coach Pat Summit once said, "Sometimes you learn more from losing than winning. Losing forces you to reexamine." That's a lesson that I do not think can be taught, but it can be learned by evaluating how you want to be perceived by others.

Since my middle school baseball coaching career began a few years ago I have tried to instill the importance of having fun and how playing a game can prepare you for life. I think most

of us would agree life goes by too fast and before you know it our playing days are over; however, it does not mean we have to separate ourselves from our youth. As adults we have the opportunity to guide young people and support them in their future endeavors. Now, I probably understand more than most the divide that has been created between generations like baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. I often hear how annoying millennials are—they don't have a good work ethic, or they are always on their phones. Did you know that at 34 years old, I am considered a millennial and that the oldest millennials are now turning 40?

The history of electric cooperatives in Wisconsin dates back to 1936 when Richland Cooperative Electric Association, now REC, was incorporated. REC was the first Wisconsin electric cooperative to "turn on" its power on May 7, 1937, at the

James Hanold Farm. Since that time, advancement in technology has allowed REC to grow and become more efficient. Although the generations between then and now were vastly different, each brought something unique to the table and contributed to REC's success. Similarly, it is important that we work together now, across generations, for betterment of our membership. The millennials and Generation Z are the future of electric cooperatives, and maybe it is time we listen to them instead of assuming they are the ones who don't know anything or don't know how to work.

During the month of June I was given the opportunity to once again chaperone students attending the NRECA Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. Students are awarded this opportunity from their local electric cooperatives or if they are elected by their peers to serve on the youth board at the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association's



The author recently chaperoned nine students from co-op-member families on the National Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

Youth Leadership Congress (YLC). I know many of you are aware of YLC as you have sent your children to this conference or even attended yourself. It is a wonderful conference sponsored by local electric cooperatives that provides students the opportunity to enhance their leadership and teamwork skills, and to learn about cooperatives.

We believe in this conference so much that we have based our scholarship program around it. Students who attend YLC will be guaranteed a scholarship from REC. By the time you read this we will have had this year's conference at UW-Stout and hopefully will have a student elected to the youth board.

The NRECA Youth Tour returned to Washington, D.C., this summer after a two-year hiatus because of you know what. This year nine students from across Wisconsin spent five days touring our nation's capital. Throughout the trip students were able to visit monuments, memorials, and Smithsonian museums and visit with legislators. But what I believe to be the most beneficial part of the trip is the opportunity for students to visit with other students from throughout the country. Some states bring as many as 150 students on this trip. Students interact with one another by "pin trading." These are small lapel pins delegates bring as souvenirs to represent



Whether it's taking the middle-school baseball players he coaches to a Brewers game or chaperoning teens as they explore the sites and experiences in Washington, D.C., on the National Youth Tour (below left), REC's Trevor Clark loves working with youth.

their state. Wisconsin pins are always a hot commodity because of how few of us there are.

While on this trip, I never view myself as a "chaperone." In fact, "Dad" is how I am addressed more often. The story behind the "Dad" label is a flight attendant a few years ago asked the students if I was their Dad. Apparently, I looked old enough to have six kids who were 17 or 18 years old. Needless to say, teenagers did not miss that opportunity and for the rest of the trip I was called

Dad and it has stuck. All in good fun!

But often, I consider myself a leader due to the fact that I allow students to make their own decisions and trust them enough to make good decisions. While visiting with legislators, I knew there would be hot topics they would like to discuss, and they would often ask me my point of view. I understand how impressionable students are at that age and I wanted to make sure I was not steering them to a certain view. I think it is important for them to develop their own opinions and to seek the facts and information. It is not my responsibility to steer them to one side or another but to help them develop their own opinion.

I enjoy having the tough conversations and do my best to play both sides and help the students use critical thinking—to see the whole picture, not just what the media is portraying. One student informed me that she would NOT be taking a photo with a certain legislator but would not give me a reason why. However, after meeting with that particular legislator, she told me she really enjoyed speaking with him and the reason she didn't want to see him was something he had said to her father. That's a completely valid explanation and we both agreed maybe the legislator was just having a bad day when he spoke with her father. We





all have them, but to see that student completely change her tone was a special moment.

Students who have attended YLC or Youth Tour with me can tell you that I will encourage them to run for the youth board and take chances on new opportunities. I'm sure I can be downright annoying to them but I view it as being persistent. The opportunities that are available to our youth are endless, and encouraging them to put their best foot forward and jump at those opportunities at a young age is

something that I strive for.

The time has not yet arrived with my own kids when they think I do not know anything, and hopefully that point won't come for a number of years; however, I am aware that may be coming. I know I can be that extra voice for parents to help push and motivate their kids to pursue their full potential. In a previous article I wrote the definition of success varies from person to person, and if I can motivate students enough to pursue their goals, whether it is sports, higher education, a reference for a job, I

consider that a success. I want to make myself available to any student that I can. I am only a phone call away.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank REC and its members for giving me this chance to work with our younger generation and trusting me to motivate and encourage them to be the best they can be and to help them reach their goals. Although my daily schedule is never the same, I greatly enjoy my work at REC and working with our youth, and providing them with all the opportunities we can is the highlight for me.

## SAVE A LIFE: AVOID DISTRACTIONS WHILE DRIVING

Some temptations are hard to resist. For me, it can be especially challenging to turn down that last piece of my wife's cheesecake.

While driving, we typically hear that "ding" on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn't, but we reason that we're going to make an exception—just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous, and in many states, illegal? Call it hubris. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young drivers and school buses back on the road, I thought it would be a good time to remind folks, including myself, of the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist's attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects, and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the United States involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. I find this statistic heartbreaking considering so many of these accidents could easily be avoided if we'd simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders

and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, I'd encourage you to move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At Richland Electric Cooperative, safety is foremost in everything we do—for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you'll have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let's work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait, and waiting just might save a life.

Play it safe. That text can wait.



While driving, turn phone to silent mode or pull over if the text can't wait.



## THE JITNEY AND SILAGE

By Al Cornell

**A** long time later, I found out that it never fit the definition of jitney. But that is what it was always called.

It came into being because cows produce better if they have something besides hay and ground corn with a little molasses added for their winter diet. Dad went to a farm auction two miles away and purchased the silage that remained in the silo. Now the cows would get a bit more variety in their diet. That is if Dad could get the silage home.

He had a plan. The old car was nearing its trip to the junkyard. After his successful bid on the silage, Dad found a better used car, and, for a few months, we had two vehicles.

The old one was taken to Vanouek's Blacksmith Shop in Yuba. There the exterior shell of the car from behind the front seat was cut off. Dad boarded up the area behind the front seat and built a wood pickup box that extended beyond the bumper. This modified car was our jitney, and it hauled the silage.

Mom says those fluorescent green baseball caps that Terry and I had were gotten by Grandma Cornell. She occasionally got some extravagant stuff for us boys.

As Dad was about to head out for a load of silage, Terry and I, donned in those caps, jumped in the back of the jitney. The speed picked up a little after we got down onto County Highway D though it was still a gravel road. From our crouched position, I stood up and looked over the front of the pickup box.

Now, enjoying the breeze in my face, I hollered at Terry to stand. As the taller boy stood up to face the breeze, his cap caught more wind, and his bright green cap swirled off behind us. We watched in horror as it bounced on the road edge and dropped into the ditch.

When treasures were few, a new bright green cap was a big deal. We anxiously awaited the arrival at the silo and then explained our dilemma to Dad. It happened by the gravel quarry at the foot of the West Lima Hill. As we

slowed down near the quarry on our return trip, two boys were relieved to see a shiny green spot in the ditch. We feared someone would have found that prize. Though we were now riding in the front seat because of the heap of silage, Terry firmly planted the cap on his head.

Soon the jitney days came to an end, and, in order to continue feeding silage, Dad purchased a used 10-by-20-foot wood stave silo. He poured a concrete pad, erected the silo, and added a small silage room onto the barn.

Sam Marshall had purchased a chopper and blower and did the custom silo filling in the area. He started early in September. If our silo got filled at an early date, a lot of juice was squeezed out of the compacting silage and ran out under the wood staves. It formed a stinky rivulet that oozed through the barnyard.

As added silage neared the top of the silo, we would stand a snow fence around the inside perimeter to extend the height of the silo and to add more silage. A couple of us would fork the silage to keep it even inside the fence. Then we would climb down over the fence and on down the shoot. In a couple weeks, the silage would compact enough to remove the fence.

Once, as we peered down from the top of the silo, neighbor John Moore brought the last load down the slope to the blower. His two-banger John Deere backfired, and we got the full effect as we faced that upward pointing exhaust pipe. While you could always tell those two-cylinder tractors by their sound, nothing defined them better than their down-slope backfire.

Do you have a knack for writing? If you've got an original story you'd like to share, we'd love to see it! Please send it to Trevor Clark via email, [tclark@rec.coop](mailto:tclark@rec.coop), or mail it to 30 E. Robb Rd., PO Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581.

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