


Since 1940

# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* March 2022 NEWS



**Richland Electric  
Cooperative**

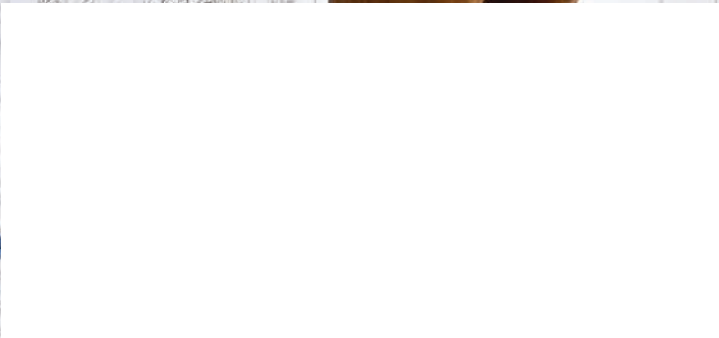
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**GLOBE TROT  
WITHOUT LEAVING  
WISCONSIN**

**SLOW COOKER RECIPES**

**GET YOUR DUCTS IN A ROW**

**MEET YOUR REC  
DIRECTOR CANDIDATES**





# CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

By Shannon Clark, CEO/General Manager

Last month I outlined some of the uncertainties in the future of the electric industry that Richland Electric Cooperative is facing. We can see some of them on the horizon; others that we haven't anticipated will undoubtedly arise. These are the kinds of things that most people understand are simply part of the business of being an electric cooperative. But there are more, some seemingly unrelated to your local electric cooperative. People often ask me why we are interested in areas like the stock market, politics, geopolitical issues, weather, and many other topics you might not expect to be relevant to us.

Our ability to meet local needs is highly dependent on outside influences. Many are beyond our control, so we need to gain every bit of insight we can in order to place the cooperative, and its members, in the best position.

We are constantly monitoring economic indicators. We watch and listen closely to any Federal Reserve Bank commentary about interest rates and any action they are taking such as bond purchases or sales. We then watch various reactions in markets to monetary policy decisions. Monitoring this over the long term has allowed us to secure long-term financing at extremely favorable interest rates. Delaying or accelerating a finance transaction in order to achieve the best rates possible can, and has, saved us millions of dollars. Today, we enjoy some of the best interest rates of any electric cooperative nationwide. Not only does this information help us operate locally, but it gives us insight into what our members may be facing in the future. The well-being of our members directly impacts the well-being of our cooperative.

As you would expect, we keep a very close eye on electricity prices around the country. But we also closely monitor and work to predict and model prices of natural gas, gasoline, and diesel fuel. Any insight we can gain that gives us a little edge, particularly in the energy market, can usually be directly used to help us plan an effective path forward. Whether it's right or wrong, people often don't change their behavior until a price is reached that forces them to change. Rising gasoline and liquid fuel prices will eventually curtail use to some degree and cause people to

look for alternatives. Looking back just a few years ago when propane prices spiked to over \$4 per gallon, people quickly started using electric space heating. That action resulted in our demand costs and subsequently members' bills to increase, often dramatically. That event was a "blip"; if such an event were to be sustained we need to be prepared. Being informed is part of being prepared, so anything that impacts the price of oil from market supply to a geopolitical threat is something we care about.

Market forces can change our future, and understanding the underlying economic principles and applying them to our local situation is a necessity. Beyond that, we

The well-being of our members directly impacts the well-being of our cooperative.

are always engaged with legislators about potential policy decisions that could have impacts on our electric cooperative or our members. Legislation differs from politics. Legislative drafts, bills, and notes are defined and we can assess the impact—

good or bad. Politics, though, is less defined. The political ideologies of candidates, particularly as they will apply to future legislation, are fuzzy at best. Even candidates with the best intentions can find themselves challenged to think about issues important to electric cooperatives as they are pressured by parties, leadership, and lobbyists from all sides of an issue.

Beyond these, we are also keenly interested in and monitor everything from the price of milk, soybeans, corn, and other commodities our members watch as part of their livelihood. Lumber prices and steel prices are tracked and evaluated, as are local labor conditions. Anything related to the economy of our local community is part of our knowledge base. Why? Because it matters to our members, and if we can change one little thing that helps our members, it helps our cooperative. A saying I use often to express the importance of our members: "As go our members, so goes our cooperative."



# GET TO KNOW YOUR DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

## Tim Tiller



Tim and his wife, Carolyn, reside in Akan township on the family farm where he grew up. Tim retired from S & S Cycle in Viola where he worked as a mechanical engineer in product design; he had worked there since 1986. He milked dairy cattle, raised crops and beef cattle on the farm until 1980, and continues to raise beef cattle and hay.

Tim graduated from Richland Center High School in 1976 and from the UW-Platteville in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering. He has served on the Mechanical Design Advisory Board at Southwest Technical College and Mechanical Design Advisory Board at Western Technical College. He has served as Akan Township Treasurer for two terms. Tim currently serves as treasurer for Richland Electric Cooperative. Tim received his Credentialed Cooperative Certificate in 2020 and is working towards earning his Board Leadership Certificate.

Asked why he was interested in serving as an REC director, Tim replied, "I am running for another term as director to work with management and the other directors to keep your electric service safe, reliable, and low cost. Serving on the board for the past 12 years has helped me gain valuable insight on how cooperatives function and the importance of working together to maintain quality service. My time on the board has also increased my knowledge in the areas of electrical distribution and electrical generation using fossil fuels and renewable energy sources. I have had the opportunity to attend meetings, educational seminars, and classes on these topics. This has enabled me to better understand the system and make better decisions for the cooperative. I have enjoyed serving on the board and would appreciate your vote."

## Mary Tillotson



Mary and her fiancé, Derek, currently reside on their generational family farm in Clayton Township with their five children: three boys, Axil (15), Mason (12), Cash (10); and two daughters, Tylar (13) and Emmary (4). They have 35 beef cows, one Wagyu bull, four horses, and one mini pony. She is a graduate of Richland Center High School.

Tillotson is currently a self-employed owner of DMC Business & Property Management where she provides bookwork assistance for various businesses. She is also a manager and pump installer at D&T Pump and Well Service LLC, operated by her and her fiancé. In the past she was employed as a military pay technician with the United States Army Reserve as a civilian and worked in logistics with the Walmart Distribution Center. She has been self-employed since 2015.

From 2010–2012 Tillotson served on the board of directors for the Upper Midwest Buckskin Horse Association. For several years she and another conducted horse shows for the community in the Boaz arena. "I may not have a lot of experience on boards, but I have donated a large amount of time working with others to help achieve their goals," Tillotson said.

"We enjoy the land we live on and exploring it with our children," she added. "We like spending time with our cattle and making improvements on the farm. We both enjoy calf and team roping. Derek's father is a crop farmer and we both have an active interest in helping with his operation. We both appreciate working, which makes it one of our hobbies. We like the operation and construction of the business. I would also consider myself a hobby photographer."

When asked why she was interested in serving as an REC director she replied, "I am interested in serving because I see it as an opportunity to serve the community. We live in a time where there are endless options available to us. Our goals should be to be a positive asset to our community, and we should set examples for our children. I am very interested in new technology involving energy and the use of renewable resources that affect our community."

In closing, Tillotson left us with one final thought: "The future of our children, the sustainability of family farms, and the growth of small business is something that I take great interest in. We live in such an amazing community, in one of the most beautiful areas, and it is refreshing to see organizations that allow members from the community to work together to make a positive impact in decisions for utilities in our area."



## Kevin Kepler



Kevin and his wife, Joan, make their home in Bloom Township. They have three children, Jennifer, Elise, and Luke, and nine grandchildren. Currently Kevin is the one of the owners of Junlyn Farms Inc., which operates a dairy herd of registered Holsteins that includes 335 cows and 370 heifers. They raise all their feed on 400 acres of alfalfa, 425 acres of corn, and 175 acres of soybeans.

Kevin has been very involved with the community by serving on many boards. He has served eight years on the Land O'Lakes Board; 15+ years on the Richland County Holstein Board, four as president; and 20 years on the Richland County Outstanding Young Farmers Board, two as president. He has been a delegate for WI Dairies & Foremost farms for 40+ years. He has been on the ordinance committee for Bloom Township for 15 years and a member of the West Lima Church of Christ for 37 years. He was elected to the REC board in 2019.

Kevin was a pitcher for church league softball for many years. He and Joan enjoy spending time with their grandchildren on the farm or traveling four+ hours to their events.

Asked why he was interested in serving as an REC director, Kevin replied, "I have always felt a responsibility as a member/owner of a cooperative to be involved. I have always believed in the co-op system, and I want to represent my area to make sure REC remains a strong co-op. The industry is changing every day and I would like to continue learning about renewables and how electric vehicles will impact REC. I have been fortunate enough to attend education courses to further my knowledge of the industry and would like to utilize what I have learned to better serve as a director for REC and for the membership.

## Don Huffman



Don has served on the Richland Electric Cooperative board of directors since 1992. He lives in Henrietta Township where he took over the 150-acre farm in 1970 that his parents had moved into in 1949. He is also the caretaker of Engine Creek Farms.

Don was born and raised in Richland County and he graduated from Richland Center High School. He had 3-1/2 years of GI schooling in ag training and served two years in the Army with the 208th Military Police Co. from 1964-1966 during the Vietnam era. He is a member of the Hillsboro American Legion Post 223 where he serves on the Honor Guard.

Don's wife, Sherry, passed away several years ago. Their son, Jason, and his wife, Hollie, have seven children: Hope, Ethan, Lydia, Caroline, twins Mathew and Autumn, and Rose.

Asked why he is interested in serving as a REC director, Don replied, "I want to continue providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to our members, which is hard to do these days. I enjoy being a part of an organization which is so community oriented. I have been able witness many projects develop such as the Transition Energy community solar and would like to continue moving forward. I am excited that Richland Electric Cooperative will be in one building by the end of this year. A lot of time and effort has gone into this project, and I look forward to its completion. I enjoy assisting this cooperative grow and stay diversified in products which are needed in our service area and beyond."

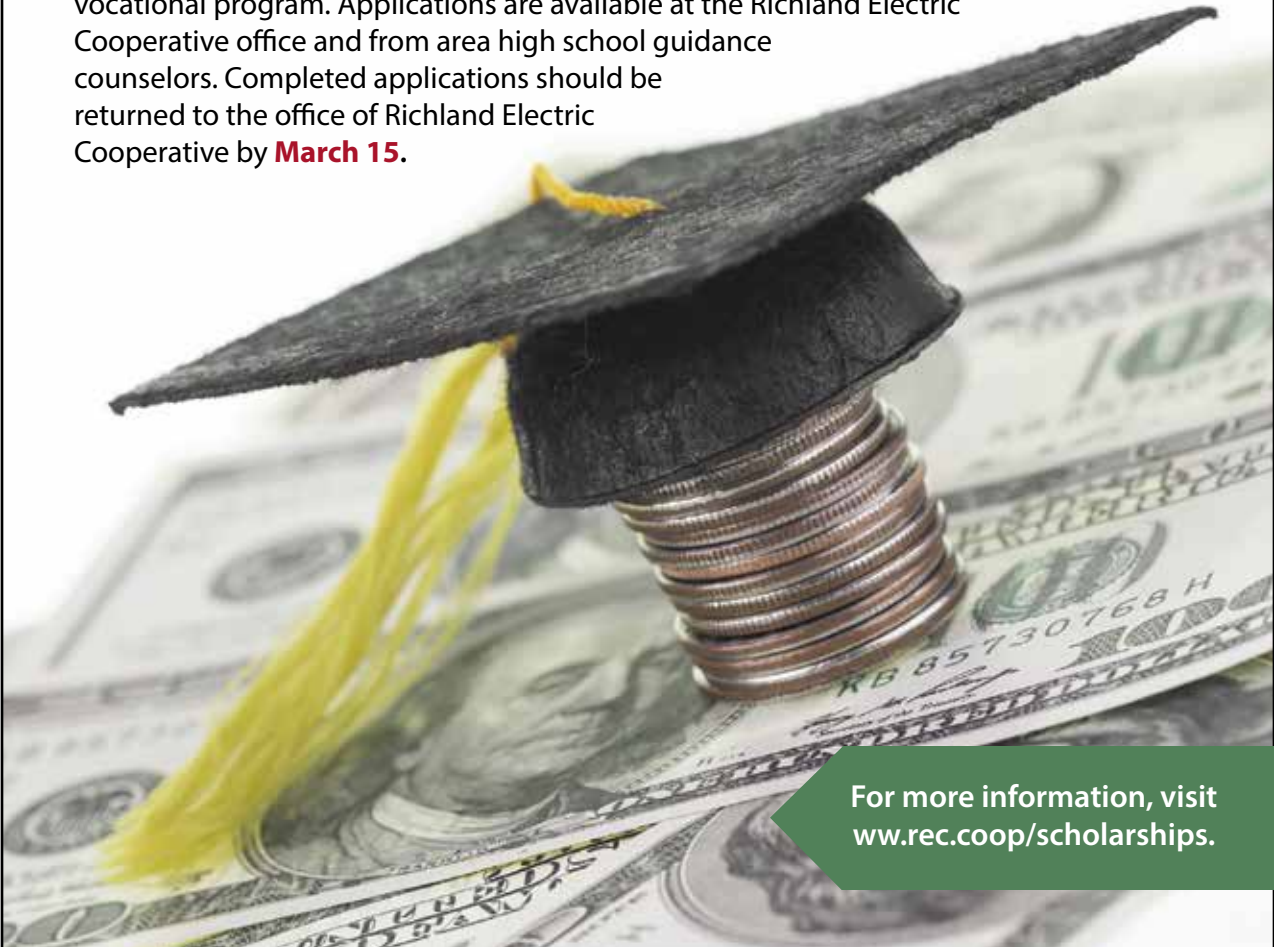
**Three seats on the Richland Electric Cooperative Board of Directors are up for election this year. The members who appear on these two pages will be on the ballot you'll be receiving in the mail in early April. Please take a moment to learn about each candidate before casting your vote. Remember to sign your ballot before returning it. Results will be certified at our annual meeting April 30.**



# NEED HELP PAYING FOR YOUR EDUCATION?

## There's still time to apply for a 2022 scholarship from Richland Electric

Richland Electric Cooperative offers scholarships to any graduating high school senior who is a member of REC and is enrolling in a postsecondary degree program or vocational program. Applications are available at the Richland Electric Cooperative office and from area high school guidance counselors. Completed applications should be returned to the office of Richland Electric Cooperative by **March 15**.



For more information, visit  
[www.rec.coop/scholarships](http://www.rec.coop/scholarships).

**Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO**

1027 N. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 439, Richland Center, WI 53581


608-647-3173

[www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop)

Find us on Facebook 



**Richland Electric  
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

### Board of Directors

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