



REFLECT AND HONOR: May is Military Appreciation Month

While enjoying various Memorial Day festivities this month, we hope you will join us in pausing to reflect on the sacrifices of our country's veterans and their families. We are especially thankful for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we can enjoy the freedoms their service affords us in this great country of ours.

May is Military Appreciation Month, and in the words of John F. Kennedy, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

At Richland Electric Cooperative, we are grateful to have veterans within our ranks such as Don Huffman (director), U.S. Army, and Jeff Joseph (director of energy services), U.S. Army Reserve, and we are proud to serve veterans and their families within our local community. In addition to providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy, we care for the veteran community and show our appreciation through our actions and ongoing commitment to them and their families.

We partner with local charitable and business organizations that support veterans and their families, such as Richland Center American Legion Post 13.

We are not alone in our efforts to honor and serve veterans. Richland Electric Cooperative is part of a network of more than 900 electric cooperatives across the country that support and honor our nation's veterans of all generations. As part of our national association of electric cooperatives, spanning 48 states and serving 13% of U.S. consumers, there are countless programs that our family of electric co-ops has initiated.

At the national level, we support the Vets Power Us program, which is aimed at employing and honoring veterans, active military and their spouses. This effort helps veterans understand potential career paths with electric co-ops and in turn, provides co-ops with best practices in attracting, onboarding, and retaining veterans.

The Department of Defense is one of the largest energy consumers worldwide and the single largest energy consumer in the United States. We, like other electric co-ops across the country, work closely with military installations, providing electricity and partnering on various projects.

Not only do we pause on Memorial Day to remember the sacrifice and service of those who gave all, but the month also holds several other military anniversaries and events, including Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 8, and Armed Forces Day on May 16.

Richland Electric Cooperative is proud to be a part of the electric cooperative network that honors and supports veterans of all ages, ranks, and branches of the military. Please join us in taking a moment to show your appreciation to a veteran—not just this month, but every month.

RICHLAND ELECTRIC'S LEADERSHIP *Shines* AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

Ask Richland Electric Cooperative CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark what one of the smallest electric cooperatives in Wisconsin is doing at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting—a meeting that features electric cooperatives over 25 times larger than Richland Electric—and his reply is simply, “Leading.”

Richland Electric was asked this year to present on two leading-edge technology projects the co-op has taken on over the last several years.

Clark presented on incorporating consumer-owned solar power generation alongside much larger utility-size projects to reduce the cost and increase the value for both. As president of Distribu-Gen, a consortium of over 25 electric cooperatives from Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota, and as chairman of the NRTC, a national cooperative leading the way in technology solutions for over 1,500 electric and telephone cooperative across the United States, Clark is very familiar with projects of all different types and sizes.

“Our Transition Energy program coupled with the Dairyland Power Cooperative solar expansion, on one site, was a model for others to follow...”

**Shannon Clark,
CEO & General Manager**

“Our Transition Energy program coupled with the Dairyland Power Cooperative solar expansion, on one site, was a model for others to follow,” he said. “What would be considered a pilot project for larger cooperatives was a fully integrated utility-scale solution for Richland. We couldn’t do this on our own, but when we had the opportunity through Distribu-Gen and with help of NRTC and their relationship with Engie,



Shannon Clark, Richland Electric Cooperative CEO & general manager and NRTC board chairman, speaks at the 2020 NRTC Annual Meeting, held in conjunction with the NRECA Annual Meeting, in New Orleans, La.

formerly know as SoCore, we felt we had to take a leadership role.”

Mark Miller, owner of Miller Electric and the contractor selected by Richland to install two residential battery storage systems this past year, was also on the program. Richland worked with three other electric cooperatives—MiEnergy, which serves members in Minnesota and Iowa; Oakdale Electric Cooperative in Wisconsin; and Jo-Carroll Energy in Illinois—to scale up their ability to purchase two, state-of-the-art Sonnen Energy Storage systems. The project integrated Sonnen Energy Systems with consumer-owned solar in an effort to learn about the unique characteristics of battery storage that is tied to the electric grid.

Miller, a Wisconsin master electrician and one of a few Sonnen certified installers in Wisconsin, installed the systems and performed all the testing and programming.

“Whenever you have an opportunity to work on these types of systems there is a lot to learn, but battery storage coupled with solar energy is an exciting

technology,” said Miller.

Miller’s presentation was among one of the best attended programs of the whole meeting as interest is growing in this technology.

“These systems are now fully commissioned and operating, and we’re starting to get useful data on whether or not they can perform as expected and provide value in the long-term, for both the member and the cooperative,” he added.

Clark said, “A few electric cooperatives are starting to dabble in energy storage as a means to gain experience and determine how these systems might be beneficial. Today, the cost remains high and until we find ways to use these systems to gain value beyond simply storage they won’t be mainstream, but they are advancing rapidly and prices are dropping. We think they will take a similar path to solar panels over the next several years and become more attractive as time goes on. If or when they do, we will need to be ready—being on the leading edge helps us prepare.”



Above: NRTC Board members pose with Colonel Matthew S. Reid, USMC, at the NRTC Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Mark Miller of Miller Electric (right and below right) delivers a presentation on Residential Energy Storage at the 2020 NRECA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. This program, at which CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark (below left) also presented, was among the most well-attended sessions of the entire gathering.



MY CO-OP





SOME GARDEN TIPS

For me, April is planning the garden and early planting

time. Here are some things I've learned about planting vegetables next to each other. Some vegetables are simply not good neighbors; they bully the plants growing next to them and try to crowd them out of existence.

Pumpkins and squash for example, especially the old-fashioned vining types that I regularly plant, given half a chance will take over the entire garden. I leave an open row on each side of my vining crops, which include the pumpkins, winter squash, zucchini squash, and cucumbers. My rows are 30 inches apart, so the vining crops have a full 60 inches to grow vines and not run over some other vegetable. Even with the extra room, I have to “train” the traveling vines that want to climb over my tomato racks, crawl up my sweet corn, and otherwise exhibit undue competitive characteristics.

I've also learned not to plant the vining crops next to each other. The squash and pumpkins will overrun the cucumbers, shade them and crowd them out of existence. They'll do the same to zucchini. The pumpkins and winter squash seem to tolerate each other reasonably well.

I also plant early harvest crops, such as peas, next to vining crops. The peas are ready for harvesting before the vining crops begin any serious competitive activity. When I harvest the peas, I pull up the pea vines, giving the pumpkins lots of room to roam, brag, and otherwise show off their superior growing tendencies. Dill is another of my favorite plants; I put in a row each year. It supposedly repels certain aphids and may discourage squash bugs. But more importantly, I like the smell of it.

Usually I plant a short row of marigolds, the tall kind with the big, burly flowers. I plant them near my tomatoes

with the hope that they will repel horn worms—I'm not sure that they do, but I haven't much of a horn worm problem. Marigolds also discourage squash and pumpkin beetles. For years I have planted a full row of sunflowers. I do this for the color they add to my garden, and for the birds who feast on the seeds each fall.

Years ago, my Dad decided to grow giant pumpkins—he was quite taken by the picture of one he had seen in a seed catalog. It was a good growing year, but the fine print for the giant pumpkin stated that 120 growing days were necessary for the pumpkin to mature. For central Wisconsin, 120 growing days can never be assured. But the year of the giant pumpkin was not only a good growing year but a long growing season and Dad harvested two or three pumpkins well over 100 pounds each. One pumpkin required two people to lift it on the scale. It weighed 150 pounds and was the talk of the neighborhood, which is the main reason he planted the giant pumpkins I would guess.

Excerpted from Jerry Apps, Garden Wisdom, Wisconsin Historical Society Press.



Go to www.jerryapps.com to learn more about Jerry's work.

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 



**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