



OCTOBER 2020

# ***Volts & Jolts***

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK  
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa



## **A smarter grid**

Pages 4-5



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
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#### MINNESOTA STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Pennington and Marshall Counties:

**Ronald Ditsch – 218-779-6758**

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**George Stage – 701-306-3511**

Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov) for more information. The inspectors can be reached week-day mornings between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

#### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.*



## Power On: October is National Co-op Month

by Stephanie Johnson

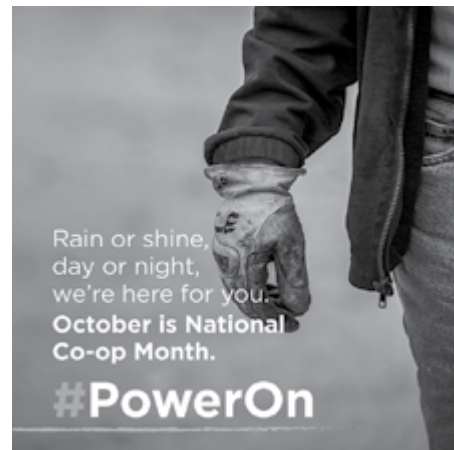
**A**s an electric cooperative, our top priority is always to provide reliable, affordable energy to you, the consumer-members we serve.

Because we are a co-op, our mission is to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our local community – and this mission has never been more critical than in recent months. One of the seven principles that guide all co-ops is “concern for community.” To me, this principle is the essential DNA of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, and it sets us apart from other electric utilities.

October is National Co-op Month, and electric cooperatives across the country are highlighting the many ways we “Power On.” Keeping this theme in mind, I recognize the essential role we play in serving a special community like ours.

Who would have fathomed in March that the COVID-19 virus would amount to a test of our community and our nation? The changing circumstances due to the pandemic have created both challenges and opportunities. Over the past several months, we’ve all been challenged to operate differently, and Red Lake Electric Cooperative has stepped up to help our members and strengthen the safety net for our more vulnerable neighbors.

As an essential service, and to ensure reliability of your power supply, we modified our operations to safeguard business continuity. Our line crews and other employees have been working on social distancing while at our headquarters and have limited contact while in the field. In



the office, we limited and modified meetings and gatherings to allow for safe separation. We also adjusted our walk-in office availability and in-person service calls to ensure the health and safety of our employees and our valued members. In addition, we have installed (20526 James Sorter) Plexiglas barriers and hand sanitizers in our entrance area. For the health and safety of everyone, we think these measures were the prudent course of action for the times.

I tell you about all of these efforts not to boast about Red Lake Electric Cooperative, but to explain how much we care about this community – because we live here, too.

We’ve seen other local businesses rising to meet similar challenges during this time because that’s what communities do. While the challenges caused by COVID-19 have been daunting, I’m heartened to see how everyone is pulling together.

In 1938, Red Lake Electric Cooperative was built by the community to serve the community, and that’s what we’ll continue to do – Power On.

**On the cover:** From his boom lift, Jason Vasquez, Minnkota apprentice electrician, works to install equipment at the new Oklee substation.

# Energy Efficiency Incentives

Great rebates and incentives are available to help you upgrade your heating and cooling system, water heater and electric vehicle chargers. Not sure where to start? Check out our rebate list below for heating and cooling options. Contact Red Lake Electric Cooperative for expert advice on improving your home's energy performance.

## Electric Heating Rebates

*Must be on off-peak*

### Electric plenum heaters

Easily converts your existing fossil fuel furnace into a dual-fuel heating system. You are able to use the most efficient, cost-effective heating source – fossil fuel or electricity – at any time.

**Rebate of \$60 per kilowatt (kW)**

### Electric thermal storage heaters

Draws electricity during off-peak hours when it is cheaper. Heat is stored in specially designed bricks to provide comfort 24 hours a day.

**Rebate of \$60 per kW**

### Air-source heat pumps (including mini-split ductless option)

Works just like a central air conditioner in the summer. In the fall and winter, they provide super-efficient supplemental heat.

**Up to 16 SEER: Rebate of \$300 per ton**  
**17 SEER or greater: Rebate of \$500 per ton**

### Geothermal heat pumps

Provides the highest efficiency for space heating and cooling available today. The system transfers heat to and from the earth using only small amounts of electricity.

**Closed loop: Rebate of \$400 per ton**  
**Open loop: Rebate of \$200 per ton**

### Electric underfloor boiler

A popular off-peak option because the system transfers consistently across the floor to reach people and objects, providing both comfort and efficiency. Applications include electric boiler with hydronic tubing.

**Rebate of \$50 per kW**

### Other electric heating systems

Options include electric baseboards, convectors, electric floor cable, mats and more.

**Rebate of \$25 per kW**

## Electric Water Heater Rebates

*Must be on off-peak*

100 gallon or greater

**\$350 rebate**

56-99 gallon

**\$300 rebate**

55 gallon or less

**\$150 rebate**

### Bonus rebates:

**Add \$250**  
if converting from natural gas or propane.

**Add \$100** for new building construction.

## Electric Vehicle Charger Rebates

**240V Level 2 Charger**  
*Must be on off-peak*

Electric vehicle or hybrid

**\$50 rebate**

Commercial – Forklifts, Zambonis, etc.

**\$50 rebate**



Residential Charger



Commercial Charger

**All equipment must be new and installed on Red Lake Electric Cooperative's system.**

**Equipment must be installed on RLEC's off-peak program.**

*Contact Member Services for more details!*

**218-253-2168**

## Recipe Corner



Submit your recipes to be published in *Volts & Jolts*. Email to [info@redlakeelectric.com](mailto:info@redlakeelectric.com) or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750.

## Cheesy Vegetable Chowder

5 T. butter, divided  
 3 large carrots, chopped  
 3 stalks celery, chopped  
 1 yellow onion, diced  
 4 cloves garlic, minced  
 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
 3 russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-3/4-inch cubes  
 1 celery root, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch cubes  
 2 medium heads broccoli, chopped into florets  
 1 small head cauliflower, chopped into florets  
 1/4 tsp. dried thyme  
 1 tsp. salt  
 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper  
 Pinch of paprika  
 Pinch of cayenne pepper  
 6 T. all purpose flour  
 3 cups milk  
 1/2 cup half & half  
 2 cups medium cheddar cheese

In a large pot set over medium heat, add one tablespoon of butter. When the butter has melted, add the carrots, celery and onion and saute for four minutes. Add garlic and saute for a minute (23300 Bernard Stinson) longer. Stir in the chicken broth, potatoes, celery root, thyme, salt, pepper, paprika and cayenne. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium, cover and allow to simmer for 15 minutes (or until the potatoes are almost tender). Stir in the broccoli and cauliflower, cook for 5-7 minutes longer or until veggies are tender.

Meanwhile, melt the remaining four tablespoons of butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the flour and cook, whisking constantly for about a minute. Slowly pour in the milk, whisking vigorously as you add the milk little by little. Whisk until smooth. Constantly whisk as the mixture comes to a gentle boil. When it begins to thicken, add the half & half, then remove from heat and pour into the soup (after the veggies are fully cooked). Stir everything together, then turn the heat off. Gradually add the cheddar cheese, stirring until the soup is nice and smooth.

## VETERANS DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

**In observance of Veterans Day, Red Lake Electric Cooperative's headquarters will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11.**

In case of an electrical outage or emergency, call the after-hours phone number at 218-253-2200.

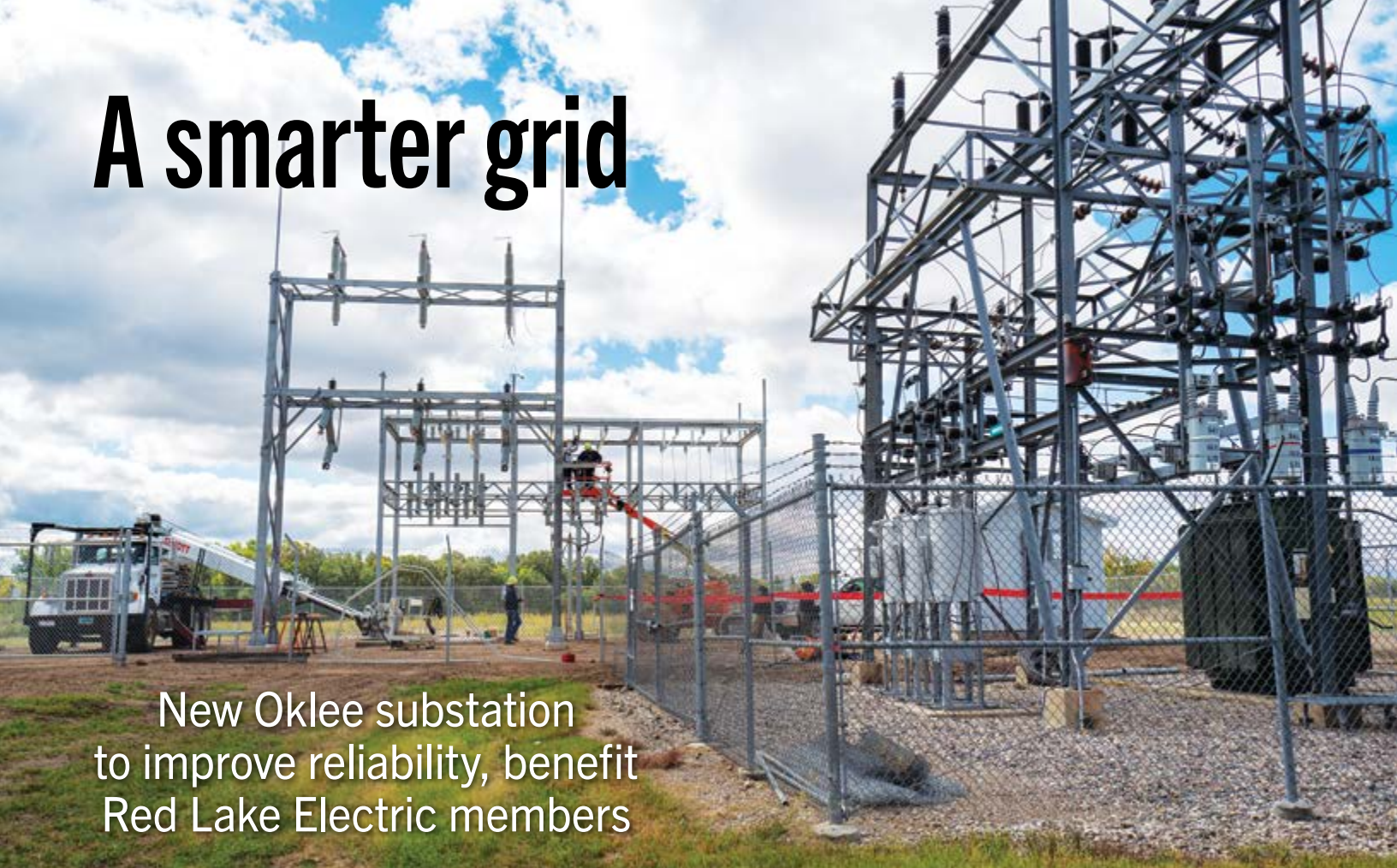
## DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME REMINDER

Don't forget to fall back on November 1! Set your clocks back by one hour.





# A smarter grid



New Oklee substation  
to improve reliability, benefit  
Red Lake Electric members

Minnkota crews construct the new Oklee substation as the existing substation (foreground right) continues to deliver power to the area.



A boom lift raises Minnkota electricians high into the air so they can install equipment at the new substation.

In its nearly 70 years of operation, the Oklee substation has powered it all.

The facility helped turn the lights on for the first time for Red Lake Electric Cooperative members in the area. It energized many of the farms and ranches across the countryside for decades. And it stayed stride for stride with our demand for energy in a digital world.

This fall, the substation was powered down and prepared for a well-earned retirement. The aging equipment was replaced with a new, modern substation to meet the area's long-term energy needs.

Distribution substations, those collections of wires and transformers you see behind chain link fences, lower the voltage of electricity so it can be safely delivered to homes, farms and (29223 Kristina Bjerklie) businesses. Minnkota Power Cooperative operates the substation and provides electricity at the site

for Red Lake Electric Cooperative to deliver to its member-consumers.

"The existing Oklee substation had reached the end of its useful life and needed to be rebuilt," said Grant Gunderson, Minnkota senior manager of power delivery operations. "The new substation will allow Minnkota to continue to serve Red Lake Electric reliably long into the future."

Minnkota power delivery crews benefited from good summer and fall weather to complete construction of the new substation in early October. Red Lake Electric and Minnkota crews worked together to energize the substation later in the month. Work will now begin to decommission the existing substation, which includes removing the equipment and restoring the site to its original condition with grass planted.

Minnkota operates and maintains more than 250 substations on behalf of Red Lake Electric and 10



**“We’ve made great strides in addressing aging infrastructure and improving reliability in recent years. Our system is so widespread, so rural in some areas, our substation rebuild program is really going to enhance our ability to serve our member cooperatives.”**

— Grant Gunderson, Minnkota senior manager of power delivery operations

other electric cooperatives in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Initiating the rebuild of an existing substation or replacing equipment goes through a meticulous review process where age, overall condition, system demand and other factors are considered. A construction work plan is developed on an annual basis and approved by a board consisting of representatives from the 11 Minnkota member cooperatives.

#### **Real-time data**

The new Oklee substation provides significant benefits in terms of communication and reliability, Gunderson said. An upgraded computer system, known in the industry as SCADA, will help gather and analyze data, while also monitoring and controlling equipment (20481 Patricia Young) processes remotely. It is part of a long-term program to rebuild or upgrade aging substation sites.

“The substation is no longer just used to deliver electricity,” Gunderson said. “It’s now a point where we are able to gather information, which helps ensure better reliability and resiliency of the system.”

With access to real-time data in Minnkota’s control center, operators can more quickly identify system issues and potentially reduce outage time.

“We’ve made great strides in addressing aging infrastructure and improving reliability in recent years,” Gunderson said. “Our system is so

widespread, so rural in some areas, our substation rebuild program is really going to enhance our ability to serve our member cooperatives.”

*Editor’s note: Look for more photos of Oklee substation work in the November issue of Volts & Jolts.*



(Top left) Jason Sather, Minnkota electrician, works to install leads at the substation. (Top right) Jimmy Snider, Minnkota electrician, bends a section of piping for use at the new substation. (Bottom) Jason Vasquez, Minnkota apprentice electrician, and Sather work to install leads on the substation buswork.



# Operation Round Up® grants total \$12,700



The Red Lake Electric Trust board met recently and awarded 22 grants to area nonprofit and community organizations totaling \$12,700. Since its inception in 1993, 956 Operation Round Up grants totaling \$587,000 have been gifted to area community organizations. The Red Lake Electric Trust receives money for grants from the Operation Round Up program administered by Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Today, 95% of Red Lake Electric's members voluntarily "round up" their monthly bill for the Operation Round Up program.

*The following four organizations were awarded Round Up funds to help the disadvantaged:*

- Violence Intervention Project of Thief River Falls: \$1,000 for their Umbrella Tree Program that provides (27593 Jamie Kruta) supervised child visitations.
- Red Lake County Victim Services: \$500 to help with expenses for victims of a crime.

## NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of the *Volts & Jolts* are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (9999999.99 Willie Ray Member). If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with \$5 on your electric bill.

- TRF Area Food Shelf: \$500 to help stock shelves for the food shelf.
- Falls DAC: \$500 to help support education, learning skills and daily living for adults with disabilities.

*Five area grants for the general public:*

- Pennington County Humane Society: \$500 to help with emergency pet care for homeless animals.
- NCH Trails to Treatments: \$500 to help cover costs for cancer treatments to area residents.
- Plummer Area Sportsman Club: \$300 to help expand the electric service to the trap shoot area.
- Goodridge Lions Club: \$300 to purchase a floor scrubber.
- Kiwanis Club of Thief River Falls: \$300 to add sidewalks to connect the bathroom house to the pavilion.

*Five area emergency service providers were awarded grants:*

- Red Lake Falls Volunteer Ambulance Service: \$1,000 to help purchase a replacement AED.
- Plummer Volunteer Fire Department: \$1,000 to purchase warning lights, fire equipment and a two-way radio.
- RLF Volunteer Fire Department: \$750 to purchase radios to improve communications.
- Oklee Fire Department: \$1,000 to replace fire protection equipment and flashlights.

- Goodridge Area Fire and Rescue: \$750 to replace building lighting with LED and four Armour radios.

*Monies to benefit the youth were awarded to these four organizations:*

- Red Lake County Christmas Program: \$500 to support holiday programs for low-income children.
- Marshall County Social Services: \$500 to support Christmas sharing tree and food basket projects.
- Christmas for Pennington County: \$500 to help purchase Christmas gifts for their annual holiday program.
- Crookston Youth Foundation: \$300 to provide activities for youth outside of school and promote life skills.

*Three organizations that provide help and service to area seniors received the following grants:*

- LSS Senior Nutrition Program (Red Lake Falls): \$500 to help provide low-income seniors with meals.
- Goodridge Senior Citizens Center: \$500 to replace (23811 Randel Downs) old heating system.
- Tri-Community Living at Home/Block Nurse Program: \$500 to cover costs for health promotion and activities.

*One grant was awarded for historical proposes:*

- Goodridge Area Historical Society: \$500 to help continue restoration of the Woodrow School House.



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Keep cold air out to save energy. Seal air leaks around pipes and any gaps around chimneys and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

*Source: energy.gov*

The RLE Trust Board of Directors determines grants two times per year, in March and September. Serving on the board are: Tishara Melcher – president, Middle River; Diane Kolstoe – vice president, Oklee; and Julie Stennes – secretary/treasurer, Thief River Falls. Ex-officio directors are Bonnie Christians of Crookston and (30574 Mark Christiansen) Stephanie Johnson of Gatzke, representing Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Grant applications are available at the Red Lake Electric Cooperative office or by visiting its website at [www.redlakeelectric.com](http://www.redlakeelectric.com). The next deadline for Operation Round Up grant applications is Feb. 19, 2021.





# The Power of SmartHub

Use SmartHub on a desktop or mobile app to:

- Pay your bill
- View energy usage
- Compare usage
- Manage account settings

New to the SmartHub mobile app:

- Manage paperless billing settings
- Add additional service providers for multiple accounts



The SmartHub mobile app gives you even more control over your electric account right from your smartphone or tablet. Choosing paperless billing is now even easier, with the option to discontinue your printed bill through the app's settings menu.

## To get started:

- Visit [www.redlakeelectric.com](http://www.redlakeelectric.com) and click on the SmartHub logo on the homepage.
- Enter your RLEC account number, last name and email address to create your SmartHub account.
- You will receive an email to finalize your registration.
- Complete your registration and download the SmartHub (30727 Jordey Marquis) mobile app for total control over your electric account.



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paperless billing today!***

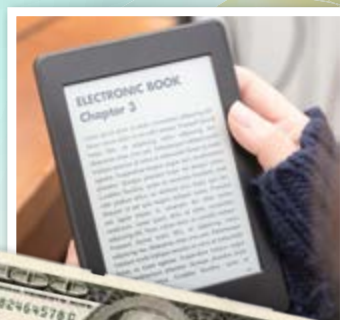
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- Sign up for paperless billing and your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 energy credit or a Kindle Fire tablet.
- Sign up for both options and you will be entered in each drawing!
- Both drawings will be held Oct. 30, 2020.

Signing up is simple. To sign up for Auto Pay without using an electronic device, fill out the form below and submit with a blank voided check to Red Lake Electric Cooperative. If you prefer to go online, you can sign up by going to **[www.redlakeelectric.com](http://www.redlakeelectric.com)** and clicking on SmartHub. Sign in (21380 William Stock) or set up an account. Click on "set up automatic payments" and set the payment date. If you don't designate otherwise, Auto Pay will withdraw the amount of your electric bill on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.

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We also have a free app for your smartphone so you can access your statement wherever you are.

If you have any questions, call 800-245-6068 or email [info@redlakeelectric.com](mailto:info@redlakeelectric.com)



## Red Lake Electric Cooperative Auto Pay Sign-up Sheet

I authorize Red Lake Electric Cooperative (R.L.E.C.) and the bank listed below to initiate variable entries to my checking or savings account. This authorization remains in effect until I notify R.L.E.C. in writing to cancel it in such time as to allow R.L.E.C. to act on it.

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Checking or Savings Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Routing # \_\_\_\_\_  
(Circle one)

Sign here to authorize \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this sign-up form with a blank voided check to Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.**



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