

WATTS *Current*

September 2015

For Our Members

Executive Message from the 2014 Annual Report Cooperative Values

Periodically the Cooperative surveys its membership to learn what is important to you and to identify those values that you expect from your cooperative. Past surveys show that reliable service is our members' top priority with regard to electric service. This has caused us to make keeping the lights on our highest priority and we are pleased to report that once again your cooperative ranked among the best in Iowa for service reliability. You hear us talk about it each year because we know it is important to our membership and because it has become a matter of pride for us.

Personal service is another trait our membership values and we have resisted the temptation of converting our phone system to robotic answers based on which number you press. When you call our office during business hours, you will first speak to a receptionist who will help you identify who within the cooperative can best meet your needs. Our goal is not to bounce you from person to person, but to get your questions answered quickly. We also have a member advocate who is responsible for making sure that any member having a problem with the Cooperative gets the attention they need to resolve those concerns. That doesn't mean we can give you what you want, but it does mean we owe you an answer and will treat all members consistently without partiality.

Electric rates have actually ranked fairly low in our surveys with regard to priority of the membership. Never the less we take our objective of providing safe, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost very seriously. We are pleased to report that even with our recent 3% rate increase, we continue to be less expensive than our neighboring investor owned utility for almost all members. Only those using very little electricity each month pay more because of our higher basic service charge.

More recently, our membership has been expressing an interest in renewable energy. In response, in 2007, your cooperative installed a small residential sized wind generator at its office and a small solar array of comparable size. We use these units to educate on the value of wind and solar and you can track their output on our website www.mvec.coop. In 2014, we installed a larger solar array on the roof of our office. This array was designed and installed by our employees so we could learn first-hand about what was involved in the

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And We Thought
Garlic was Garlic

"We love what we're doing."

Tom Thompson,
Farley

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Did You Know?

**Trees that lose their leaves
in the fall are the most
effective at reducing
heating and cooling costs!**



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Cooperative Values

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installation of solar technologies. In 2015, our power supplier, CIPCO, will submit a request for proposal for the construction of a 1.5 megawatt solar array to be installed in Iowa and incorporated into our power mix. We will continue to monitor the cost of solar so that when it makes economic sense we are prepared to respond.

Surveys continue to indicate a need for high speed internet in some areas of our service territory. We continue to evaluate this need and are exploring the possibility and practicality of providing this value-added service. We will only move forward if we are confident we can provide quality, high speed service at a competitive price, meeting our memberships' needs.

Focusing on the needs and values of our members is what your cooperative is all about. Our Cooperative Values are your values, reflected in the Board members you elect, the surveys you answer and the trust you place in us.

Thank you for allowing us to serve your needs. Feel free to speak with us and tell us how we are doing, and more importantly what you need us to do for you, our member, our owner.



Larry Swanson,
President



Jim Lauzon,
CEO

2015 Annual Meeting Cash Prize Winners

Over 500 members and guests were in attendance at the Annual Meeting. Members enjoyed a delicious meal and participated in the business of their cooperative. Cash prize winners are listed below.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Allan Hosch, Cascade | John Manson, Maquoketa |
| Leonard Leconte, Dubuque | Carlyn Meyer, Peosta |
| Kenneth Calonder, Durango | Verna Mae Ernst, Bellevue |
| Jeanette Ludovissy, Holy Cross | David Hunt, Bernard |
| Wayne Nolting, Preston | Marvin Weber, Bellevue |
| Lawrence Kelchen, Farley | Ethel Vorwald, Epworth |
| Charles Greve, Holy Cross | Vincent Medinger, Maquoketa |
| Eugene Gesie, Dubuque | Robert Elgin, Peosta |
| Eunice Neuhaus, Dubuque | Norma Vaughn, Dubuque |
| Earl Guler, Dubuque | Tom Jasper, Dyersville |
| John Lansing, New Vienna | Marian Blunt, Scotch Grove |
| Sandra Fiedler, Epworth | Jaeger Farm, Holy Cross |
| Shirley Koltes, Sherrill | Daryl Swanson, Maquoketa |
| Cletus Thielen, Zwingle | Darlene Collins, Peosta |
| Kenneth Kilburg, Bellevue | Janice Conrad, Manchester |





Shield Your Home from Energy Loss with Adequate Insulation

Walls. Floors. Ceilings. Attic. These are some of the prime areas of a home that need insulation in order for you to maximize energy efficiency. According to the Department of Energy (DOE), adding insulation to your home is a sound investment that is likely to quickly pay for itself in reduced utility bills. In fact, DOE estimates that you can reduce your heating and cooling needs up to 30 percent by properly insulating and weatherizing your home.

If your home is more than 20 years old and was not specifically constructed for energy efficiency, additional insulation can likely reduce your energy bills and increase the comfort level of your home. The actual amount of savings for each home depends upon several factors—the current level of insulation, your climate, efficiency of your heating/cooling system and your utility rates. On average, older homes have less insulation than homes built today, but even adding insulation to a newer home can pay for itself within a few years.

So, where do you start?

You first need to determine how much insulation you already have in your home and where it is located. If you need assistance, Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative conducts energy efficiency assessments for the home and will check the insulation. For those with the DIY spirit, you can conduct an insulation audit yourself. Here is what you will should be looking for:

- Where your home is, isn't, and/or should be insulated
- The type of insulation in your home
- The R-value and the thickness or depth (inches) of the insulation

A prime area that is chronically under-insulated is the attic. Whether you live in a cool or warm climate, attic insulation is essential to help keep warm air inside in the winter and prevent hot attic air from heating your living spaces in the summer. If you have R-19 or less insulation in your attic, consider bringing it up to R-38 in moderate climates and R-49 in cold climates. For flooring in cold climates, if you have R-11 or less insulation, consider bringing it up to R-25. (*Approximate R-Value per inch of loose-fill fiberglass is 2.2, 3.1 for blanket fiberglass, and 3.7 for cellulose.*)



How does insulation work?

Heat flows naturally from a warmer space to a cooler space. During winter months, this means heat moves directly from heated living spaces to adjacent unheated attics, garages, basements and even outdoors. It can also travel indirectly through interior ceilings, walls and floors—wherever there is a difference in temperature. During summer months, the opposite happens—heat flows from the exterior to the interior of a home. Proper installation of insulation creates resistance to heat flow. Heat flow resistance is measured or rated in terms of its R-value—the higher the R-value, the greater the insulation's effectiveness. The more heat flow resistance your insulation provides, the lower your heating and cooling costs will be.

Save green by going green

Today, you have choices when it comes to selecting insulation for the home, including an environmentally-friendly option made of recycled materials, such as scrap blue jeans. It looks similar to chopped up blue jeans and is treated for fire safety. With an insulating R-value similar to fiberglass insulation, this blue-jean insulation is a great option.

Get started and get saving

While an older home will never be as efficient as a new home, an insulation upgrade will make a noticeable difference in your energy use and wallet. A well-insulated home is one of the most cost-effective means of saving energy and decreasing heating and cooling bills. For more information, contact the energy experts at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative at 800-927-6068.



And We Thought Garlic Was Garlic

Grace Zimmerman, Anamosa, Iowa

Early in April or May, I decided it would be a good time to contact people who sold fresh products at farmers' markets. There is so much accomplished behind the scenes. One of my calls was to Tom Thompson listed with Heritage Trail Farm. He responded that he grew over 12 varieties of organic garlic, and he'd welcome the opportunity to explain about growing garlic.

So, one humid July morning, my little red Chevy ended up at 11168 Holy Cross Road, just north of Farley, Iowa, and then driving up a beautiful tree lined lane to their house on the hill. I was greeted by Tom and his smiling wife, Diane, and equally charming thirtyish son, Eric. Right away, I caught on that this was a family business.



This is what a garlic crop looks like.

I started with my usual question as to how this garlic business started and Tom explained, "We moved out here in 1996, after searching for

farmland, but ground with other special aspects, we discovered Heritage Trail. This was before agri-tourism was a widespread interest. We didn't know what we were getting into. We focused on farming and let the tourism option take a back seat. We had Indian corn first, then Stevia, but we wanted something that had greater appeal. As a result, we started raising organic garlic about 15 years ago. But, like others, we soon realized having a market for your products is more important than the products themselves."

Diane chimed in, "We don't have to be big to grow sustainable food. We had support from Iowa State University Extension and made a connection with other growers, even from the state of Washington. And before you knew it we were on our way to Dubuque's Farmers' Market. Market was really neat. I love helping others learn more about garlic, how to use it, how to store, and most of all how to enjoy it." Eric added, "This is the entire crew (*pointing to the three of them*). Growing garlic is

labor intensive, but it's the freshest garlic you'll ever get." Tom added, "There are over 300 types of garlic, and we grow a variety of both softneck and hardneck."

There was always humor in their answers as they all agreed, "It's a learning experience. We plant the bulbs in the fall. We used to plant it in rows. Now we do it in a 46" wide bed." Aided by a homemade



Tom harvesting the garlic.

marker fashioned by Tom, he says planting in beds is the smartest thing we ever did. Since garlic has to be heavily mulched to

live through the winter, the beds ensure the mulch is more effectively put to use - they don't want the garlic to grow above ground until spring. Tom explains the procedure that is usually done in late October. "We put the tiller behind a utility tractor. We plant 8,000 head with root side down by hand! (*My note: Did you read that amount?*) As it grows up out of the ground, weeding is done by hand because it's organic. Every plant gets dug by hand with a shovel at harvest time in July. Then it has to be pre-cleaned right there in the field." They all add, "We love what we're doing." (*And I'm thinking what a lot of work!*)



Eric pre-cleaning the garlic in the field.

Tom also adds, "I do look forward to building some kind of potato-like digger to make our work easier." Diane explains that each leaf on the plant is a wrapper on the garlic bulb. Choosing when to harvest is done by watching how many leaves remain on the plant.

The next step involved is the garlic is left to cure by drying for two to four weeks on racks. Then Diane's job becomes quality control. She shows me how to



cut off the top part of the tall stem. When they sell their garlic at market they leave about 10” of stem attached. She carefully brushes the roots to remove the dirt and gives the roots a haircut.

As I learn about the garlic getting ready for market, Tom informs me that millions of pounds of garlic are imported. He said, “The imported garlic from China creates an inrush of cheap garlic, and then there’s the illegal garlic that makes its way here avoiding the tariffs. You can tell some of the imports because they literally carve off the roots to avoid any remnants of the soil.”

Diane continues getting the garlic ready for the market. She tied three stalks into a variety pack with an accompanying label; the stem with red tape is named Spanish Roja, the one with green tape is named Music, and one with yellow tape named



A variety pack comes with a label that states the name of each type of garlic. It also explains the taste and how to store.

Shvelisi. A brief description for each is also on the label. Diane says, “At market we explain the different characteristics of the various types. For example, some are sweet, some have a spicy after-taste, some may have an earthiness, or even a very hot raw taste. The different characteristics make some better for pesto and others are ideal for salsa. Garlic should not be stored in the refrigerator, but in a cool dry place.”

Tom said, “The Dubuque Farmers’ Market, which is located downtown near city hall, is our big day. Sometimes we bring the solar dehydrator to show how you can slice up and dry garlic to store it for much later use. Occasionally we sample our garlic by cooking up garlic butter and dipping chunks of bread into it.” Diane added, “This is where Tom uses his salesmanship with humor to attract customers. But, the real fun is when you get a garlic enthusiast that enjoys sampling the garlic raw. No matter how much we tell them to just take a little bite, they inevitably eat a bigger piece. And that’s when our customers start selling our garlic for us. We’ve met a lot of great people at market and appreciate every one of our customers. It’s a blast.”

When I ask them if it’s available now, the answer was, “Yes, but we’ll likely be sold out in early August.”

Their shared comments all ended in an upbeat note. “We love raising garlic. Deer don’t like garlic. It’s adaptable. It’s easy to grow. It’s a learning experience. We’re not experts. We try harder every year.”



Eric and Diane selling garlic at the Dubuque Farmers’ Market.

I wish there was a way that I could express the feeling of camaraderie that the family exuded, as well as their sense of accomplishment and the sense of humor that prevailed among them. So, my free advice would be to mark your July 2016 calendar now to be at the Dubuque Farmers’ Market to get the real taste of Iowa grown fresh garlic.

They can be reached by telephone at 563-744-3174 or 563-543-4850. You also can send an email to tom@heritagetrailfarm.com.

BEWARE of dangers above.
Your LIFE depends on it.



Look up and look out for power lines.





Farmers Urged to be Aware of Electric Hazards

Farmers and farm family members face dangers every day. Although tragedies such as tractor rollovers and grain bin suffocation receive the most attention, electrocution and electrical burn accidents are frequent on farms. Electrical Safety is one of the priorities during National Farm Safety and Health Week September 20-26, 2015.

A simple movement of a portable grain auger from one bin to another can have tragic results if the individuals involved are not extremely careful. The use of tractors with large cabs and antennas and oversized grain wagons can also result in preventable electrocution incidents.

Electrical equipment around fields, such as power lines in the end rows may get overlooked during such a hectic time of year as harvest. However, failure to notice overhead power lines can be a deadly oversight.

Most farmsteads could use a very careful overhead visual inspection of electrical lines. The service may no longer meet the proper codes because of the age and/or damage to poles and pole guy wires. The sag may have increased over the years, while the height of the machinery being used today may be much higher. Utility regulators require power lines to be 18.5 feet or more above the ground to provide adequate clearance.

However, today's farm equipment has a long reach when extended; and even when collapsed for roadway transport, many pieces of equipment may exceed that 18.5 foot height. A daily check should be made of where equipment will be moving to ensure that it will clear power lines. But, don't take matters into



your own hands. They may not be as high as they look. Never undertake the height measurement of the lines without the on-site help of the utility company officials. A good rule is to maintain a 10 foot separation from a power line completely around it, whether you are driving underneath or passing a grain auger near it.

In addition to conducting a field survey of power lines to locate potential hazards, employers should obtain safety information from utility companies for the benefit of their workers if the lines are to remain energized.

Where possible, install electrical safety warning signage to prevent equipment and personnel contact with power lines. This will also be beneficial to your suppliers who may be making deliveries to your farm. Always keep in mind that electricity doesn't allow mistakes and neither should you.

2015-2016 Heat Plus Rate

The 2015-2016 Heat Plus rate with Power Cost Adjustment is \$0.049 per kilowatt-hour for electricity used from October 1, 2015, through May 31, 2016. The bill you receive in November will reflect your first months usage for this heating season. MVEC strives to keep this rate as low as possible to encourage the installation of highly efficient heat pump systems. If you are planning a building or remodeling project, contact us at 800-927-6068 for energy efficient ideas.

Watts Current by Email

If you would prefer to have the Watts Current emailed to you, please sign up by sending an email to: erobertson@mvec.coop



Reduce Energy Use During Peak Hours

Peak hours are the busiest times for your cooperative, since many people are using electricity at the same time. In addition, it costs us more to generate electricity when demand soars during peak periods—and the cost of your electricity also may rise. Obviously, using less electricity during peak periods can save your cooperative—and you—money.

Here's how you can help during peak hours, which generally fall between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.:

- Shift household chores and activities away from peak periods. Wait to run your dishwasher until you go to bed, for instance.
- Use the most energy-efficient appliances you have. Your microwave oven, for example, uses considerably less energy than your stove or cooktop.
- If you're buying a new appliance, make sure you get a highly efficient one. Look for ENERGY STAR labels when you're evaluating different models.

Be aware of your energy consumption, and try to get in the habit of using energy efficiently year-round.

Use the energy you need, but use it wisely! You'll help us avoid building expensive new power plants—and that, in turn, will help keep your electric rates stable.

Watts The Answer?

1. A prime area that is chronically under-insulated is the _____.
2. Utility regulators require power lines to be _____ feet or more above the ground to provide adequate clearance.
3. _____ hours are the busiest times for your cooperative, since many people are using electricity at the same time.

Mail your answers in with your energy bill or email them to erobertson@mvec.coop.

Two winners will each receive a \$10.00 credit on their energy bills.

Please complete the following:

Name

Address

July winners:

Mrs. Michael Hansen, Preston
Joe Leibold, Farley

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*MVEC will be closed
Monday, September 7,
in observance of
Labor Day*

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