



# Rural HILIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

## RECC offering \$2,000 for school grants *Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grants*

RECC is happy to announce the new Touchstone Energy Classroom Empowerment Grants Program, awarding \$500 to four area teachers for education enhancement projects!

As your local Touchstone Energy electric cooperative, our focus is on our communities, and we have supported our local schools in many ways. Now we are proud to add these Empowerment Grants to help fund innovative projects that are not included in the schools' budgets.

Up to two grants may be given for different grade levels within the same school district.

Application forms are available on our website at [www.recc.coop](http://www.recc.coop), and are due by November 2, 2015. Winners will be announced on December 4, and the project must be completed by May 27, 2016. While electricity and energy are not required to be the central topics of any project, entries that do include energy education will be weighed more favorably.

All applications should include the following details:

■ A description of the project and what it will accomplish



- The estimated cost of the project
- An explanation of why outside funds are necessary to carry out the project
- When the project would be completed
- The number of people affected by the project
- If the project's goals are measurable, and how
- How the project ties in with Touchstone Energy's four core values of integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community

Public and private schools in the general service area of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative can receive a grant of up to \$500 for grades K-8

*For more information, please contact Dana Smith, Manager of Member and Public Relations, at [dana.smith@recc.coop](mailto:dana.smith@recc.coop), or call his direct line at 217-438-6516.*

## Teaching kids about Electrical Safety

School has started, and kids are learning about math, science, writing and many other important subjects. One lesson they need to begin learning at home, and even before they reach school age, is safety around electricity.

Twelve-year-old Caitlyn Mackenzie was killed by household current when she touched a lamp while still damp after swimming in a pool in southwestern Illinois. Her life may have been spared if the outdoor outlet that the lamp was connected to was equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).

Teach children that water and electricity do not mix. Children should never play with or use electronics around water. Make sure GFCIs are installed anywhere electricity and water could meet to help prevent shocks. GFCIs detect and prevent dangerous situations where an electric shock could occur.

Inform kids that the only objects that go into outlets are electric plugs. Sticking other items in an electric socket can lead to an electric shock or death. As a parent, you can help prevent this by having tamper resistant outlets (TROs) installed. A TRO has a shutter system

that only accepts electric plugs. Another option is to use simple outlet plugs; however, these can be easily removed.

Tell children that electric cords should be left alone. A curious child may put a cord into his or her mouth and could potentially suffer an electric burn. Additionally, kids should be taught to never pull a plug out of the socket by the cord. This could damage the cord. It is a good idea to leave cords out of sight so children are not tempted to play with them.

Emphasize that electronics and their accessories have to be handled with

care. Also advise kids to never stick fingers or objects into toasters or any other electrical appliance. Encourage younger children to ask for help when they want to use an electronic device.

Include utility emergency numbers with other posted emergency phone numbers, and instruct children how to call for help in an emergency.

*For more information on keeping your children safe around electricity, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).*



### Learning About Energy Safety

#### Learn electrical safety online!

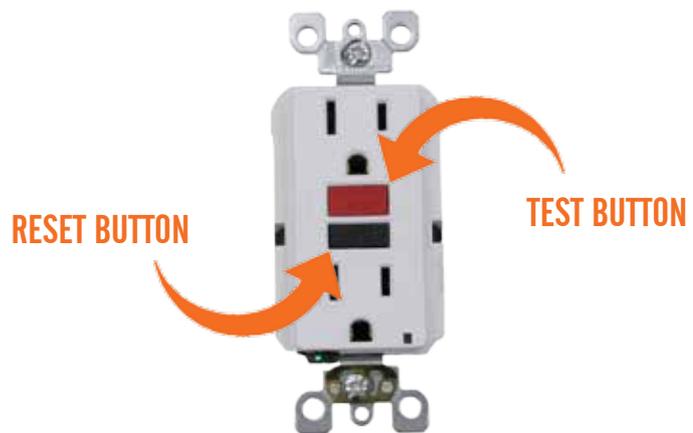
There are some great online sites for kids to learn about electric energy and safety. **Electric Universe** has several sections for younger and older kids, plus a teacher's resource section with lesson plans and experiments with electricity. Their website is at <http://eec.electricuniverse.com/>.

The **Touchstone Energy Kids Energy Zone** is also loaded with activities, videos and energy tips. Find it at [www.kidsenergyzone.com](http://www.kidsenergyzone.com). You can find these sites and more at the [recc.coop](http://recc.coop) website, under the Our Community dropdown menu.



**CHILD SAFE  
SECURITY  
SHUTTERS  
ELIMINATES  
RISK OF  
ELECTRICAL  
SHOCK**

**Tamper resistant outlets** prevent small objects from being inserted into one side of an outlet.



**Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)** outlets protect users from electrical shocks.

## New phone system installed at RECC

Recent callers to RECC have probably noticed a difference in the phone answering system, part of the new technology being used to improve our communications capabilities. Our office is now using Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), a digital system becoming common in business offices.

With a new fiber optic line coming into the office, we now have 23 lines available to receive calls instead of just five. Since many of the incoming calls today are to make automated payments, check account information or report outages, those tasks can be completed by the caller without waiting for an employee to pick up the phone. Of course, if you want to speak to a member service representative, you can choose that option also!

Members should get fewer busy signals with the new system, whether during the day or after business hours. Once on the line, you can choose

the option needed for automated tasks, press a button to reach an employee, or wait a few moments for our representatives to pick up your call. During large outages, you can enter the account that's out of power and it will go directly into our outage response system so crews will quickly know which areas are having problems.

CEO David Stuva stated: "We think this will be an improvement that makes the change process totally worthwhile, with even more features available in the future. We can do so much more with our work force to receive, analyze and respond to member needs, as well as improve our internal communications between all employees."

Stuva also noted that the VOIP system will also provide more



*RECC employees received training on the new phone system and handsets installed at the co-op office.*

outgoing lines for the co-op's Notify 24 system, with notifications sent by phone and text message about outages, line problems or cooperative news items. After a larger outage it took several hours to make follow-up calls with the old system, he said, but that time frame is now much shorter so members can get timely information.

## Joe Henricks joins RECC part-time



Joe Henricks, from Pleasant Plains, began working part-time in Rural Electric's Operations department on July 13. He is a graduate of the Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) Electrical Distribution Lineman Program. Joe also graduated from Western Illinois University in 2012 with a BS Degree in

Construction Management/Army ROTC. Prior to college, Joe served five years in the Navy as an Aviation Electricians Mate and is now a Platoon Leader in the Army Reserves. He is pictured with Manager of Operations and Maintenance Lou DeLaby.

## You could be a winner!

Every other year, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) conducts a statewide member survey project on our behalf. You may be randomly selected to participate in the project. People who complete and submit the survey questionnaire will be entered in a drawing to win one of five-\$100 bill credits.

AIEC and the vendor used to conduct the survey do not sell or share your private information. They provide us with the blind results, and we evaluate the information that is gathered to improve how we serve you. The more completed surveys we receive, the more accurate the information we receive will

be. So please help us and yourself by participating. We anticipate that survey questionnaires will be distributed in September and October.

Please contact us if you have any questions.



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See our web page for monthly Board meeting reports.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

## Visit us at the Farm Progress Show, Sept. 1 - 3 Electric co-op exhibit in Varied Industries Tent

RECC and other Touchstone Energy cooperatives will feature energy efficiency and safety displays at this year's Farm Progress Show, September 1 - 3 in Decatur. Stop by and check out the "Energy Efficiency Wall" with insulation and air sealing examples. See what's new in LED lighting for homes, farm shops and outdoor security and spin the energy wheel to answer practical questions about electric energy use.

Cooperative members who present their Co-op Connections Card will receive a special gift

Cooperative members who present their Co-op Connections Card will receive a special gift just for showing us your card. If you don't have a Connections Card contact our office for a new one.

Illinois Touchstone Energy Cooperatives will also be sponsoring the Live Line Safety Demo, an electric safety demonstration featuring 7,200 volts of electricity! It's a great experience that

kids and adults will not want to miss. It will be presented outside the Varied Industries Tent on Junior Lot #549. To learn more about Live Line Demo check out their website [www.livelihooddemo.com](http://www.livelihooddemo.com).

The Varied Industries Tent runs the length of Fifth and Fourth Progress Street and is between West Progress and Central Progress Avenue.

The Touchstone Energy Cooperative's exhibit will be on the end cap just inside the entrance across from the food court on Fourth Progress Street or halfway down on Fifth Progress Street.

The Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will be flying the American Flag each morning and weather permitting, the balloon will do a late afternoon flight as well.

Look for more information in the *Prairie Farmer Magazine* or to learn more about the 2015 Farm Progress Show visit the website [www.farmprogressshow.com](http://www.farmprogressshow.com).

Hope to see you there.

