



Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

Evolution of a Co-op Community Grant

Back in February, there was an obscure Facebook post about an organization raising money to fix an old ambulance. No one gave much thought because social media sites are constantly soliciting funds for everything. A few months later, additional posts arose. There was now a growing list of repairs needed and other specific items requested.

Who were these people and why does an ambulance company need money? Apparently, another transport company vacated Girard, leaving areas potentially vulnerable. Prairieland Ambulance was the company seeking funds, and their goal was to fill that void by providing two fully equipped ambulances. The two units would assure that the community would be fully served, an option faster than waiting for service from Auburn or elsewhere.

Prairieland already had a second rig that was used sparingly, but keeping two functional units would prove costly. They started asking for donations to make needed repairs. Companies donated time and services, and people got behind the cause. Volunteers conducted fund raisers like cake walks, cornhole tournaments and even sold pork chop dinners. The City of Virden donated time and labor to refurbish the garage. On one occasion, an RECC employee asked that funeral donations be made to Prairieland in lieu of flowers. People were now aware.

During this time, RECC was exploring various ways to contribute to our community with a limited budget. CoBank and its Sharing Success program allowed us to receive matching funds for some contributions. The main

limitation was that we could only receive three grants per year. The guidelines also stated that the amount had to be a minimum of \$1,000 and the yearly total could not exceed \$10,000. Another concern was that CoBank's Sharing Success program budgets a set amount each year, so once the funds are awarded, the program ends.

Ideally, we would have awarded many smaller grants throughout the year, but this was a great opportunity to help our members and the community. RECC was committed to our educational programs and increased those grants to \$2,500, which would be awarded to two local schools. Now, the question became, what is the best way to do the most good for the most people with our remaining grant.

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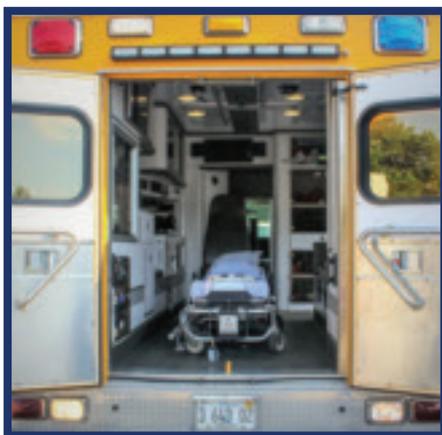
Prairieland EMT Randy Gray, Asst. Secretary-Treasurer Cassie Eigenmann, First Responder Diane Rogers, Board Chairman Mel Repscher and Director Thom Hart.

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The prospect of contributing to an ambulance service became more intriguing. First of all, it covers a large area where many of our members live. It aligns with our support for Air-Evac medical transportation and our commitment to making rural life better. Finally, nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our neighbors in central Illinois.

We contacted Prairieland and asked for a list of items they may need, but donations were never discussed or solicited. Meanwhile, their non-profit status was checked, and tax ID number was verified. We also found they have been servicing the Virden area since 2004. We spoke to several people in the Girard and Virden area and received only positive feedback. Everything was coming together and we knew this was the right project to pursue.

Member Services Liaison Sandy Lex began the grant application process by requesting \$2,500 from CoBank and submitting our \$2,500 matching proposal to the RECC board of directors. Within three weeks, CoBank approved our grant, as did the RECC board. Prairieland was contacted and enthusiastically accepted the combined donation of \$5,000.



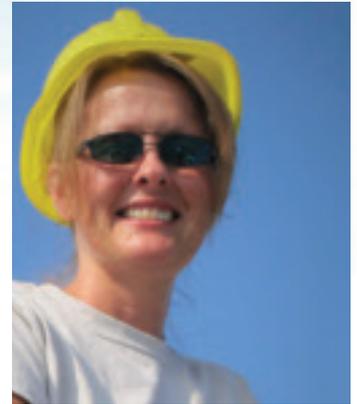
They were grateful of our generosity and highlighted their highest priority needs. These items include: radios, power cot, one-person CPR machine and other small equipment. The listed items far exceeded the grant amount, but it should go a long way in keeping the second rig up and running. Obviously, they will need more help and some financial support in the future.

The cooperative believes their success benefits the whole community. As a good neighbor, we believe this is a cause worth supporting. As a cooperative, adequate ambulance service will benefit many of our members. On Aug. 28, 2018, the board members officially presented Prairieland Ambulance with the donation of \$5,000. This Co-op Community grant was the largest ever issued by Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative.

PRAIRIELAND AMBULANCE



Supporting the communities we serve



Custodian Stefan Sporrer, Apprentice Andrew Boston and Stephanie Lancaster take part in the festivities at the Waverly Parade. This was the first of four parades scheduled for RECC in 2018.

Waverly



Auburn

Journeyman Lineman Travis Boylen, wife Kristen, and family participate in the Auburn Labor Day Parade. Member Service Liaison Sandy Lex and her husband John pass out candy and hard hats.



Engineering Technician Nick Hays and Manager of Member Services Jeff Lancaster judge some of the electrical projects completed by 4-H contestants at the Illinois State Fair.

State Fair

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See our web page for monthly Board meeting reports.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

News & Notes

Co-ops receive higher education

In addition to her work at RECC, Member Services Liaison Sandy Lex travels the country teaching Touchstone Energy's Service Excellence courses. She recently taught at Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, TCEC in Oklahoma, and CHELCO in the Florida panhandle. Pennsylvania will be her next stop. Sandy emphasizes the Touchstone Energy advantage by demonstrating techniques and tools that help provide excellent member service. She has served as an instructor and facilitator for more than 30 years and has taught at Lincoln Land Community College and Robert Morris University.

We can help

If your community or organization would like us to participate in one of your local events, contact Jeff Lancaster at (217) 438-6197 or email www.recc.coop. RECC has conducted school safety demonstrations, explained safety hazards to volunteer fire departments, contributed to state and local park projects and participated in various parades. We are always looking for new ways to support the communities we serve, in all five counties.

Majority adopt autopay programs

54 percent of RECC members have elected to simplify their life and use one of RECC's Automatic Payment options. Their bills will always be paid on time, using funds from their bank account or debit/credit card. If you would like to participate in one of these payment options, call our office at (217) 438-6197 for more details.

Co-ops Vote

"America's electric cooperatives are leaders in the communities they serve throughout the country with a powerful sense of their civic duty," said NRECA Interim CEO Jeffrey Connor. "Co-ops Vote focuses elected leaders on the people who are most invested in the success of their own communities. With 42 million members across the nation, electric co-ops are a powerful voice on national issues that have a local impact. We want to be sure that voice is always heard, especially on Election Day."

Budget Billing

October is the time to recalculate Budget Billing for the upcoming year. Look for the new amount to appear on your November bill. For those who are interested in enrolling, contact Shelley Crocks and she can help get the process started. Any member with at least one year of billing history, and a good payment record, can start on the Budget Billing plan in November.

Communicators meet

The Cooperative Communicators Committee, comprised of two couples from each of the nine RECC districts, met outside of Loami to tour Sheedy Shores. The informal group gets together three times per year to discuss current and future co-op issues. The summer meeting typically highlights businesses that are on cooperative lines. The third and final meeting of 2018 is scheduled for Nov. 7 in Auburn.