



# Rural HIGHLIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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## Co-op Communicators tour Refuge Ranch

This summer, the Cooperative Communicators Committee visited one of our more unique members. We toured the Refuge Ranch in Rochester, Ill. Committee members got to see the stables and performing areas while taking the opportunity to learn more about the Refuge Ranch mission. While founder and Executive Director Chris Daniels finds it difficult to summarize everything the nonprofit organization does, we did learn that the refuge offers mentoring horsemanship programs that reach out to at-risk kids and families in central Illinois.

The ranch rescues horses from situations of abuse and neglect and then invites children to come and participate in the rehabilitation of those horses as they learn about farm life, horsemanship and service. They offer hope to hurting and broken families through mentoring, relationship, community and ranch activities. Their desire is that everyone who visits the ranch would encounter the life changing hope of the Gospel!

Refuge Ranch is a faith-based organization, but no one is ever

required to participate in religious activities. Their program is free of charge, but participants must be willing to contribute, have an open heart and want to attend. They primarily serve children between the ages of 5 and 18, and many of the kids are considered "at-risk," which includes mental, physical, emotional and functional complications. Refuge Ranch serves women, children and families of all backgrounds.

Their **Bits of Hope** program focuses on mentoring and building connections, as the kids participate in the rehabilitation of the ranch's rescued horses. **Freedom Reins** provides opportunities for children with special needs, including those

with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, ADHD and other varying physical abilities. These programs are funded entirely by private donors, which assures that no family is turned away because of finances.

For those interested in scheduling a session at the ranch, contact a staff member through their [refuge-ranch.org](http://refuge-ranch.org) website or by phone at 217-498-7679. They encourage everyone who wants to learn more about their program to arrange a tour and see it firsthand. Refuge Ranch is open to the public by appointment only, so give them a call and visit the ranch if you're going to be in the area. Volunteers are welcome and donations are always appreciated.



Emily Mosher - Program Director, Jacqueline Gunther - Ranch Hand, and Thomas - High School Intern and Program Participant



## From Refuge Ranch blog:

At Refuge, we seek to share many values with the kids and families we serve: hard work, healing through serving others, the importance of community and connection, God's revelation of Himself through nature and definitely not least of these...the importance of play. Our fast-paced, results-based society has largely lost the art of play. We focus on efficiency and productivity and leave little room for relationship, rest and recreation. Play is not useless activity!

I see this reality reflected even in the horses who come to the ranch. Like some of the people who frequent the ranch, many of the horses come walled up and shut down relationally. When I go out to halter a new horse, often I can physically see the change as they shut down and retreat inside of themselves. They are so used to being pulled out and put to work – used as an object

rather than regarded as a living creature who is part of a relational equation – they have learned to simply withdraw and check out long enough to tolerate the interaction. As I work with our horses, I make every effort to begin to draw them out of this place. We encourage our volunteers and kids to spend extra time grooming to find that sweet spot that might make a horse's lip wiggle with pleasure. I take time with them on the ground, encouraging them to express curiosity and explore the environment around them– not asking anything of them beyond presence and relationship. It is so much fun to watch a horse, who started out very indifferent to people, slowly become more and more relational – seeking out time with humans rather than avoiding it or to see them begin to engage in our time together with interest and curiosity

rather than resigned tolerance.

In fact, aren't these all things we long for at the core of who we are – relationship, connection, rest, play, someone who values us for who we are, not just what they can get from us? These things are not optional... they are as vital to our body and soul as food and water and shelter. When we make them a priority, our hearts find increased capacity to love and serve and be poured out for the sake of others!

How can you foster these things in your life today – for yourself, your kids, your spouse, someone around you who is hurting? Take time to play. To rest. To share space with someone for no other reason than the joy of their presence. No moment spent resting, playing or relating is a moment wasted.

By Chris Daniels

Source: [refuge-ranch.org/play-rest-relate](http://refuge-ranch.org/play-rest-relate)

## Co-op safety education continues during summer break

RECC visited Girard Summer Day Camp, sponsored by First Baptist Church in Girard. "We've been doing safety demos at this church camp for many years," says Manager of Member Services Jeff Lancaster. Jeff talked about downed power lines, lightning,

electrical safety around water, calling 811 before digging, appliance safety and other potential electric hazards. Member Services Liaison Sandy Lex introduced the class to our new photo booth, and it was very popular with the kids! RECC spoke to over

30 participants with ages ranging from 5 through 11. All the individual pictures can be seen on our Facebook page. Pastor Victor said, "Thank you so much for coming - it was a hit! Appreciate your time and energy."



## AMI meter replacements on schedule

Alliant Utility Services replaced all meters in the areas fed by the Palmyra substation and are currently exchanging meters powered by the Girard Substation. They will continue to move through our system, one substation at a time. Their working hours are 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on Saturdays. The trucks are clearly marked with Alliant Utility Services stickers and RECC magnetic decals. The technicians will require brief access to all RECC meters and there may be a brief interruption in power as the meter is being replaced. Please call our office at 217-438-6197 if you have any questions.

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## Accountant position filled

In July, Jenna Miller became RECC's newest accountant. She will eventually replace Aubrie Megginson, who will become the new manager of finance & administration after Matt Sheerin retires. Jenna graduated in May 2019 and has a B.A. in accountancy from the University of Illinois Springfield. She completed an accounting internship at Myers & Myers, CPA and has worked part-time at Town and Country Bank in Springfield and Crossroads Bank in Effingham.

Jenna grew up in St. Elmo, Illinois and was St. Elmo High School's valedictorian in 2015. She also sang in Chorus and Musicals and played volleyball in high school. In her spare time, Jenna enjoys hunting for arrowheads with her boyfriend and they have collected more than a hundred arrowheads in the last few years. Jenna currently lives in Springfield but plans to relocate to Chatham.

*Good luck, Jenna!*



## Youth to Washington Tour

RECC's Youth Tour delegates Will Ryan (Rochester) and Jocelyn Nester (Glenwood) toured Capitol Hill and met with U.S. senators and representatives. They also visited historical sites including Arlington National Cemetery, the Supreme Court, President Lincoln's Cottage at First National Cemetery, a variety of memorials and the U.S. Capitol. Among fun activities the students enjoyed were an assembly of more than 1,800 Youth Tour participants from across the nation and a special farewell event at the Newseum, scheduled to close later this year.

