



NEWSLINE



Touchstone Energy®
The power of human connections

December 2020

Member Appreciation Open House Drive Thru

**Swing by Itasca-Mantrap to enjoy treats and receive
a gift from the comfort and safety of your vehicle!**

Salvation Army donations welcome.

Friday, December 18, 2020

16930 County Rd. 6, Park Rapids, MN 56470

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM



Drones Pull the Ropes

An unmanned aircraft system (UAS)—or drone—was needed to safely complete recent work on a transmission line project led by Great River Energy for Itasca-Mantrap.

A portion of the Elisha to Pine Point project required crossing Hay Creek near Park Rapids. This vegetative wetland is hard to travel by foot and using a boat is nearly impossible and potentially dangerous.

Great River Energy's construction team sought support from the UAS program to help with safety and to minimize environmental impact. The team used Great River Energy's largest drone to pull a "light" lead line approximately 1,400 feet from a matting area on the south side of the creek to one on the north side. The matting areas protect the

wetland from construction activities.

The drone was outfitted with a release mechanism that allowed a rope to be released directly over the matting area.

Once the drone landed, the construction crew used the light lead line to pull the full-strength lead-line, string it through pulling blocks and ultimately complete the stringing.

"Helping construction crews this way reduces the risks associated with stringing the wire with bucket trucks and minimizes environmental impact," said Kyle Gustofson, Great River Energy's



Drone footage shows the vegetative wetland that required Great River Energy to use the technology to complete part of a transmission line project.

transmission UAS program manager.

The project is under construction in Becker and Hubbard counties to support Itasca-Mantrap's system by improving reliability.



CEO Update - By Christine Fox, President-CEO

Here I am, writing the December 2020 Itasca-Mantrap newsletter. The last one for 2020. Whew, 2020 was a wild ride.

I was on vacation with my elderly mother in Florida when we first heard about the pandemic and that there were COVID-19 cases in Florida. My first order of business was to get my mother home safe and sound. After that, life as we knew it changed dramatically.

The Itasca-Mantrap Leadership Team went into immediate action reviewing and revising our pandemic plan. With the expertise of our IT professional (Kelly), we were able to expedite our implementation of Microsoft Teams and provide the equipment necessary for our Team Members to work from home. We utilized our partnership with CRC (after-hours dispatch provider) to answer phones and direct questions to staff, as necessary. It worked very well – at least for the month of March.

We soon realized, as essential workers, that our members need us working in the office during construction months. As soon as construction season hit, we were bombarded with calls and

requests from members. Since our mission is to be member-focused and all our decisions revolve around what is best for our members, we made the tough decision to bring our Team back into the office, implementing strategies to keep our Team protected. Therein is the reason our doors were and remain closed to the public. We practice social distancing and wear masks whenever we interact with each other; and, our meetings are limited to 10 persons or less. Additionally, and much to our chagrin, we canceled all member events/meetings.

This is not, however, the way we wish to operate our Cooperative. We miss our members greatly. Please know that you have not been forgotten, and when it is safe to do so, we will resume holding our traditional events. But in the meantime, we are inviting you to a drive-thru event later this month. I hope you will make plans to drive-in to receive your appreciation gift. We really do appreciate you and look forward to seeing you on the 18th.

Although the pandemic will be the strongest memory of 2020, life did still go on here at Itasca-Mantrap. At the time of this writing, we have installed 170 new services, almost double that of 2019. We have converted nearly 16 miles of line from overhead to underground, making our service

more reliable for our members. We have begun the process of selecting a partner for our Advanced Grid Infrastructure project. We have also adopted a new budgeting method that will help us better identify and contain costs going forward.

Although we were concerned about the impact of the pandemic on our financials earlier in the year, we believe we will end the year strong. With the help of financial assistance for our members through CHAP (COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program) and other energy assistance programs, we will remain relatively unharmed.

Please, if you need assistance with your utility bill, call our office and ask for Member Services (218-732-3377). We will get you any information you need and/or set up a payment plan that will work for you.

I hope you all have a great holiday season and wish you (and us) a much more normal 2021.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Financial Assistance Available to Help with Utility Bills

A Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funded program, known as the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) allocates \$100 million in Minnesota to cover housing expenses such as rent, mortgage, utilities or other housing-related expenses.

Funds are available through Dec. 31, 2020, on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible utility expenses include gas, electric, water and sewer. Propane is currently ineligible. Only past-due expenses incurred on or after March 1, 2020, and before Dec. 20, 2020, are eligible.

To learn more about the CHAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit United Way 211 at: <http://211unitedway.org/>
- Call 800-543-7709

For general FAQ's, including information on income limits and what is covered visit <http://www.mnhousing.gov/sites/np/covid19housingassistanceprogramFAQ>



Operation Round Up® Awards \$42,941

Thanks to the generosity of Itasca-Mantrap Members, the Itasca-Mantrap Operation Round Up® Trust Board recently awarded \$42,941 in Operation Round Up grants for 60 civic projects in the Itasca-Mantrap and surrounding area. Grant applications were received indicating a total need of more than \$70,000 for community projects. Because of the limited amount of funding, all requests could not be granted.

Operation Round Up, a charitable program unique to electric co-ops, is designed to provide financial assistance to non-profit or community-based organizations that

demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the quality of life in the local area served by Itasca-Mantrap.

The Operation Round Up Trust Board meets twice a year to select grant recipients, based on applications received. The next application deadline is Monday, March 15, 2021. Official grant application forms are available at the Itasca-Mantrap office and at www.itsca-mantrap.com.



Akeley Lions Club	\$ 400	Nevis Public School - Social Work - GoZen	150
Akeley/Nevis Community Food Shelf	2,500	Nevis Public School - Social Work - Library/Activities	500
Central Minnesota Council, Boy Scouts	1,000	Nevis Public School - Social Work - Mentoring	500
Century Elementary School - Chromebook Connection	600	Nevis Public School - Social Work - Seating	1,000
Century Elementary School - Digital Resources	142	Nevis Public School - Social Work - Tough Stuff	500
Century Elementary School - Distance Learning Materials	164	Nevis Public School - Special Education - Life Skills - Hall	300
Century Elementary School - Family Fun Kits	400	Nevis Public School - Special Education - Life Skills - Sagen	300
Century Elementary School - Sensory Items	200	Nevis Public School - Special Olympics	300
Century Elementary School - Sensory Toolbox	300	Nevis Senior Citizens	2,500
Century Elementary School - Storage	85	Nevis Youth Football	400
Century Middle School - Classroom TV	500	Osage Bait & Tackle Senior Nutrition Meals	2,000
Century Middle School - Panther Proud	400	Osage Lions Club	750
Century Middle School - Seating	400	Park Rapids Area High School - Alternative Learning Center	500
CHI St. Joseph's Health Community Dental Clinic	2,500	Park Rapids Area High School - Business Education Program	1,000
Hackensack Area Fire & Rescue Department	1,000	Park Rapids Area High School - Spanish Class Library	300
Helping Hands through Century PTA	1,500	Park Rapids Area High School - Volleyball Booster Club	500
Kinship of the Park Rapids Area	800	Park Rapids Area Hockey Association	500
Laporte Public School	500	Park Rapids Area Schools - Social Emotional Learning Room	1,000
Laurentian Lakes Chapter North Country Trail Assoc.	300	Park Rapids Clay Dusters	750
Living At Home of the Park Rapids Area	1,500	Park Rapids Figure Skating Club	300
LSS of Minnesota - LSS Meals Hubbard County	1,500	Park Rapids Fire Department	2,000
LSS of Minnesota - LSS Meals Menahga	1,000	Park Rapids JO Volleyball Program	400
Menahga Area Gardeners	500	Pine Point Elementary - 1st Grade	500
Nevis Football Booster Club	400	Pine Point Elementary - 2nd Grade	1,000
Nevis High School - Basic Life Skills Senior High	500	Pine Point School	400
Nevis Public School - Indian Education Program - Arts	500	Pine Point School - 6th-8th Grade Readers	1,000
Nevis Public School - Indian Education Program - Library	500	True Friends	500
Nevis Public School - Industrial Arts & Physical Ed Dept	500	Voyageurs Area Council - Boy Scouts of America	400
Nevis Public School - Physical Education Dept	1,000	WE R FURR Rescue / Paul's Passion	500
Nevis Public School - Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports	300		
Nevis Public School - School Wellness	300		
TOTAL		\$42,941	

Team Member Spotlight

JACKIE CARROLL

Job Title:
Executive
Assistant

How I serve the Co-op: I support the President-CEO, Board of Directors, and the Leadership Team

Started at Itasca-Mantrap: December 2019

Where I live: Laporte, MN

Hometown: Originally from Greenbush, MN

Prior Experience: Administrative support roles in higher education; banking.

Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap: I appreciate the team atmosphere - everyone working toward a common goal. We each have a role in the work to be done but aren't afraid to chip in where needed.

Family: Married with a dog and a couple outdoor cats.

Hobbies: Painting furniture, barn quilts and decorative pieces; gardening, hunting, fishing, and spending time with family and friends.



TOM WISURI

Job Title: Energy
Services
Representative

How I serve the Co-op: I monitor and maintain our load management devices. I also assist our members in the interconnection process of tying their renewable energy systems to our grid.

Started at Itasca-Mantrap: May 2020

Where I live: Menahga, MN

Hometown: Longview, WA

Education/ Training: Went to M State (Wadena) for Construction Electricity in 2005, MN Class A Master Electrician

Prior Experience: Worked as an electrician since 2007 doing residential, commercial, and agricultural wiring.

Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap: I enjoy meeting our members and helping them in any way that I can.

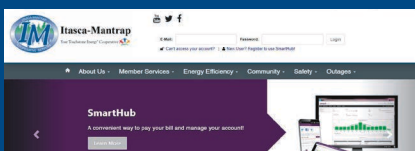
Family: Married with eleven children.

Hobbies: Woodworking, fishing, hunting, playing guitar



New Website Launch Coming Soon!

Built to better serve our members.



Itasca-Mantrap
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Make smart payments with SmartHub

Save time.
Avoid service interruptions.
Eliminate late fees.

Myth

vs

Fact

When it comes to electricity, know the facts. It might save your life one day. Here are some common electrical myths:

Once a line is down, it is dead.

1

The electric current does not always turn off when a power line is down. Even if lines do not show signs of life (arcing, smoking, popping), they can still hold dangerous electrical current. Always treat a downed wire as energized because there is no way for you to know by looking whether it is hot or not. Just stay away.

All power lines are insulated.

2

Most power lines are actually not insulated. The coating on the lines is for weatherproofing and will not offer any protection from the electrical current. Even if a power line is insulated, it can crack due to weather, reducing its safety. No matter the case, it is never safe to touch a power line.

Do not worry about power lines when digging a hole.

3

Always call 811 before you dig to have a professional come to your home and locate buried public utility lines free of charge. No matter the size of a digging project, if you come into contact with a buried power line, you could be electrocuted or seriously injured. *

It is safe to work around a power line at home as long as direct contact is not made.

4

Always keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet from power lines. This goes for ladders, pool skimmers, pruning poles and any other equipment. Always be aware of where power lines are so you do not risk electric shock. If you are trimming trees or attempting any do-it-yourself project near power lines, always call professionals for the job.

It is safe to remove the third prong from a plug.

5

The third prong is a safety feature designed to reduce the risk of shock or electrocution. That prong grounds the electrical current. If the outlet is only fit for a two-prong plug, replace the outlet with a three-prong or GFCI outlet.

Tires insulate my car from electrical dangers.

6

If a wire falls on your car while you are in it, the tires do not keep you from being injured by the electricity. The vehicle is the path to ground for the electrical current, so while you remain in the car, you are safe. The moment you step out of the car, you are the path to ground and in danger. If you find yourself in a situation where your car has hit a utility pole or power lines have fallen, stay in the car. Wait for a utility crew to cut the power. Only exit the car if it is on fire. Make sure to not touch the ground and the car at the same time. Jump from the car, keeping your feet together, and hop away from the scene.

* Call 811 before you dig to have your underground utility power lines (up to your main meter) marked for free. Underground power lines from the main meter inward, however, are the responsibility of the member. Please call your local electrician or ask the contracted locating company to mark your private lines.

Red Flags Rule - For your Protection

As many as nine million Americans have their identities stolen each year. As a result, the Federal Trade Commission implemented a regulation called the "Red Flags Rule." The Red Flags Rule requires businesses to develop a program to detect, prevent and minimize the damage that could result from identity theft.

As an Itasca-Mantrap Member, you may be asked to provide additional information and identification when you make inquiries on your account, such as verifying the last four digits of your social security number. While these practices may seem intrusive, please understand that these procedures are in place to protect your Member data and prevent the occurrence of identity theft.

Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020 at the Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. office located in Park Rapids, Minnesota.

A quorum of directors was present.

Items discussed or Board action taken:

- Approved the consent agenda.
- Heard the Operations, Safety and Engineering report and the Marketing & Member Services report.
- August Financials were received and filed subject to audit.
- CEO Christine Fox gave her monthly CEO report.
- Moved the October Board meeting to October 22.
- Approved revisions to Board policies.
- Discussed resolutions sought by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.
- Discussed the District 6 candidates for director on the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUCFC) Board and polled for votes.
- Approved proxy representation to Great River Energy at the 2020 Touchstone Energy Cooperative Annual Electronic Business Meeting and Board of Directors Election.
- Approved the April 2019-July 2020 Work Order Certificates, as presented.
- Discussed options related to the Paycheck Protection Program Loan.
- Discussed budget for Board expenditures for 2021.
- Directors and CEO Christine Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative.

The December meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Wellspring® Wind Energy

Wellspring® Wind Energy is a voluntary, subscriber-based renewable energy program offered through Great River Energy, Itasca-Mantrap's wholesale power supplier.

For every contribution, additional renewable energy is purchased through the Wellspring Wind Energy program. Since wind energy is more expensive than traditional generation sources, Members electing to participate in the program pay an additional amount on their electric bill. If you wish to enroll in the program, complete this form and submit it to our office and the dollar amount selected will be added to your monthly bill.

YES, SIGN ME UP FOR WELLSPRING WIND ENERGY!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Account Number: _____

I understand that my purchase of renewable wind energy will cost an additional amount with a one-year commitment.

Amount \$ _____ (\$1.50 per 100 kWh block)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Return this form to: Itasca-Mantrap Cooperative,
Wellspring Wind Energy, PO Box 192, Park Rapids,
MN 56470

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs, and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.

Source: energy.gov

Our Office will be Closed

Dec. 24 - Noon - 4:30 PM

Dec. 25 - All Day

Dec. 31 - Noon - 4:30 PM

Jan. 1 - All Day

ITASCA-MANTRAP COOPERATIVE

16930 County 6, PO Box 192 • Park Rapids, MN 56470

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Fax: 218-732-5890

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www.itasca-mantrap.com



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Dist. 2 – Patricia Roehl, Director
Dist. 3 – Terrence Cook, Treasurer
Dist. 4 – Al Czczok, Asst Sec-Treas

Dist. 5 – Nancy M. Utke, Chair
Dist. 6 – Tim Kivi, Secretary
Dist. 7 – Dan Breitbach, Vice Chair
President-CEO – Christine Fox