

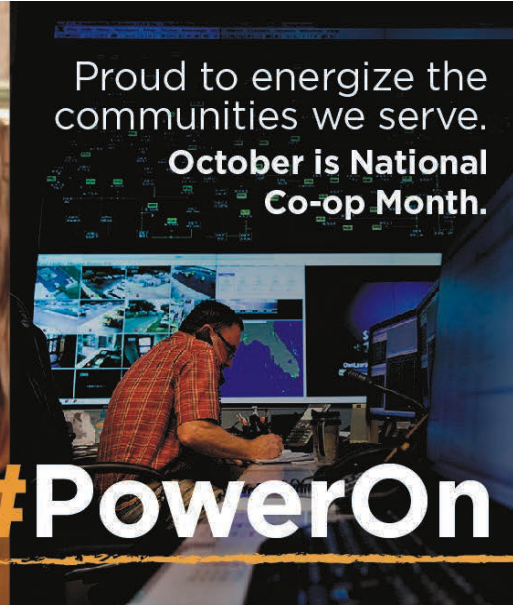


NEWSLINE



Touchstone Energy®
The power of human connections

October 2020



October is National Co-op Month

When you think of October, pumpkins, Halloween and beautiful fall foliage naturally come to mind. But October is notable for another reason – it's National Co-op Month! This is the time of year when cooperatives across the country, including Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n., celebrate who we are and more importantly, the members we serve.

Cooperatives are different than other types of businesses. When the market declines to offer a product or service, or does so at a very high price, co-ops intervene to fill the need.

Similar to how Itasca-Mantrap was built by members who came together to bring electricity to our community, cooperatives are conveners for the common good. Your electric co-op exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve.

As a co-op, we are well-suited to meet the needs of the community because we are locally governed. Itasca-Mantrap's

leadership team and team members live right here in the community. Our board of directors, who helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected to the position by neighbors like you.

We know our members (that's you!) have a valuable perspective. That's why we are continually seeking your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels, or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you.

Our close connection to the community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on local priorities, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments, such as community solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades and electric vehicle programs.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart from a traditional utility is one of our core principles, "Concern for Community." We partner with local organizations like Itasca State Park for our GreenTouch event when we gather volunteers to help spruce it up to ready them for tourist season and other

worthy programs. We participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take one of our community's bright, young high school students to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action.

Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you and your neighbors. You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these great programs.

We hope you will think of Itasca-Mantrap as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports this community and powers economic development and prosperity for the people of the Itasca-Mantrap area.

We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you – because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community, and we are here to serve our members to the best of our ability.



CEO Update - By Christine Fox, President-CEO

October is National Co-op Month. As an *electric* cooperative, our top priority is to provide reliable, affordable, safe, and environmentally responsible energy to you.

But we are so much more than that. As a cooperative, we strive to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our local community.

Cooperatives, like Itasca-Mantrap, are committed to the seven cooperative principles. These principles guide us in our strategic direction and in our everyday decision-making. They include:

- Voluntary and Open Membership
– Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.
- Democratic Member Control
– Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are

accountable to the membership. Members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).

- Members Economic Participation – Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.
- Autonomy and Independence – Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.
- Education, Training, and Information – Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and team members so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. They inform the public about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives – Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.
- Concern for Community – While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

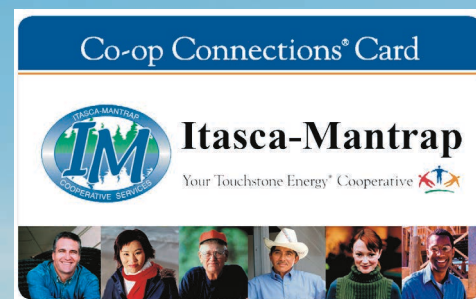
So, while we are primarily focused on “keeping the lights on” through safe work practices, and at a reasonable price, the underpinning principles remain in focus as well. As a result, we have changed the bylaws to allow electronic voting, partnered with other cooperatives for help when storms ravage our areas, coordinated with our national organization for cybersecurity support and continued our involvement in our community, just to name a few.

At Itasca-Mantrap, we consider our members our number one priority. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, we have not been able to congregate to show our appreciation of you, our members. But, rest assured, as soon as we are given the green light, we have several new and exciting ideas to share. We also look forward to bringing back some of our traditions as well.

In the meantime, stay safe and healthy.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

SMALL CARD, BIG SAVINGS.



The Co-op Connections® Card offers local discounts in and around the Park Rapids area. Simply show your Co-op Connections card at any local participating business to save.

Reliable Electricity in Minnesota

Rolling blackouts in California have been making headlines and sparking questions across the country, particularly in regions such as the Midwest that are seeing rapid renewable energy growth. Great River Energy and many of our member-owners are receiving the same question: "Could this happen here?"

There is a fundamental difference between California and Minnesota that makes our situations quite different: California's dependence on solar energy. Rolling blackouts are occurring shortly after sundown when solar resources stop generating while temperatures remain high and air conditioner use continues.

Solar energy makes up a very small percentage of the generating resources in MISO, so the region does not experience sharp drop-offs in energy production associated with widespread reliance on solar generating resources.

Great River Energy has been a part of the MISO electricity market since 2005. As a member of MISO, we must have sufficient generating capacity to meet our members' peak load plus reserves. Great River Energy's generating capacity is, and will always be, more than sufficient to provide reliable services and meet MISO requirements.

Great River Energy has a fleet of modern natural gas plants in Minnesota that provide all-hours reliability. Most of these plants have on-site backup fuels. In addition, there has been new transmission built across the region to ensure energy can be delivered to our members. And, in partnership with Great River Energy, we have developed one of the country's most robust demand response programs which allows us to effectively reduce electric loads during extreme conditions.

Our members value reliable electric service and we are here to provide it. Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. and Great River Energy have the resources necessary to ensure electricity is there for our members.

Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. was held on Thursday, July 30, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. 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.
- Line Superintendent Jerry Byer presented the Reliability Report.
- June Financials were received and filed subject to audit.
- CEO Christine Fox gave her monthly CEO report.
- Heard quarterly reports for Board Expenses, Strategic Plan and Safety Incidents.
- Directors and CEO Christine Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative.

The October meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, October 29, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Stay Connected with your Co-op



Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to stay up-to-date on the latest from Itasca-Mantrap.

SmartHub App



SmartHub helps you manage your account by providing many features including, but not limited to: Billing & Payment Information, Outage Reporting, Billing Alerts, and Detailed Usage Reports.

Team Member Spotlight

RACHEL HILLUKKA

Job Title:

Communications/
Marketing
Specialist

How I serve the

Co-op: I assist with all of the communications such as social media, website, newsletters, advertisements, and promoting and organizing events.

Started at Itasca-Mantrap: February 2019

Where I live: Menahga, MN

Hometown: Delano, MN

Education/ Training: Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Minor in Graphic Design, St. Cloud State University

Prior Experience: Marketing Communications Specialist at a machine manufacturer

Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap: I enjoy the variety, having the chance to meet our members, and my co-workers are friendly.

Family: I have a husband and one son.

Hobbies: Hiking, rollerblading, photography, painting, volleyball, camping



BRIAN BEHRENS

Job Title:

Director

How I serve the

Co-op: Working with the Itasca-Mantrap team to provide efficient, affordable electricity.

Started at

Itasca-Mantrap: June 2014

Where I live: Park Rapids, MN

Hometown: Clinton, MN

Education/ Training: Bachelor of Science in Finance at Moorhead State University, Certified Cooperative Director

Prior Experience: Northwoods Bank, Thrivent Financial

Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap: I like the people I work with and enjoy learning more about how the electric system works.

Family: Married with two children

Hobbies: Lake living, Watching kids grow, Traveling

Fun Fact: I started dating my wife when I was 15 years old.



Cold Weather Rule Begins Oct. 15

The Cold Weather Rule is designed to assist members before disconnection occurs. It allows for re-connection of the utility service of residential members if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and ALL of the following conditions are met:

1. Disconnection occurs during the period between October 15 and April 15.
2. The household income of the member is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by the co-op or by the local energy assistance provider. To meet the income requirement, a member must receive energy assistance

that uses an income eligibility threshold income.

3. A member enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of a household.
4. A member receives referrals from the co-op for energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce the member's energy bills.

Contact Itasca-Mantrap promptly if you receive a disconnection notice, or if you have questions about the Cold Weather Rule or energy assistance programs. These agencies provide assistance with energy bills.

CoBank Matches Operation Round Up® Donation for Four Organizations

CoBank, a member-owned provider of credit and financial services, matched four different Operation Round Up® donations through the “Sharing Success” program, which partners with cooperatives to match donations up to \$5,000. CoBank’s Sharing Success program doubled the contributions from Operation Round Up to help these charitable organizations succeed.

E. H. C. F. D.

Firefighters of Akeley township, Badura township, City of Akeley, and White Oak township will use these donations “to better see what they need to see” on the job. E. H. C. F. D. received \$2,500 from Operation Round Up and an additional \$2,500 from CoBank. The donations will be spent on first in crew (4) handheld thermal cameras, portable Carbon Monoxide detector meters, fire safety coloring books, and a fire house open house kit.



Pictured: E. H. C. F. D. Fire & Rescue

Helen's Kitchen

Helen's Kitchen received \$2,500 from Operation Round Up and a \$2,500 matching donation from CoBank. These donations will be used to purchase food supplies and other non-perishable items such as napkins, paper towels, and cleaning supplies. Helen's Kitchen serves meals once a week to local residents of the surrounding area.



Pictured (L-R): Sandy Cook (Helen's Kitchen Board Director), Kila Page (Helen's Kitchen Board Member)

Headwaters Regional Development Commission

The Headwaters Regional Development Commission will use the donations to provide low-cost medical transportation via the Hubbard County Medical Shuttle for patients in the Hubbard County area to appointments in Fargo, ND. The \$2,500 donation from Operation Round Up was matched by \$2,500 from CoBank. This project will allow local residents to get to their medical appointments at any medical facility in Fargo for \$10 roundtrip.



Pictured (L-R): Melody Jahnke, Robin Hansen, Bryan McCoy, Kelly Hagen, Ashley Ylitalo, Gail Levenson (Hubbard County Transportation Employees)

Nevis Study Club

The Nevis Study Club has used their donations to establish a public playground area. The \$2,500 donation from Operation Round Up was matched by \$2,500 from CoBank. This project will visually attract visitors, promote environmentally sound educational and physical opportunities, and expand community partnerships and development.



Pictured: Muskie Park Playground Project

The Itasca-Mantrap Operation Round Up Trust is primarily funded by members who allow their electric bills to be rounded up to the nearest dollar. Application deadlines are March 15 and September 15. The Operation Round Up Trust Board reviews applications received and authorizes disbursements to organizations that meet the qualifications.

CORRECTION: The names of the 2019 Touchstone Energy Award winner from the Nevis Community Education School Age Care were inadvertently omitted from the September 2020 newsletter. Pictured from left to right are Hannah Spry (School Age Care Coordinator), Katie Rittgers (Community Education Coordinator), and Nikki Torkelson (Itasca-Mantrap Marketing/Member Services Manager).

Seeking Applications for Community Award

Itasca-Mantrap is seeking applicants for the Touchstone Energy Community Award, which recognizes community groups or businesses that have shown a strong commitment to the community. The winning organization that has helped make the Itasca-Mantrap Cooperative service area a better place to live and work will receive a plaque and a \$500 cash award for its cause.

Completed applications must be received at Itasca-Mantrap's office by Oct. 31, 2020. Application forms are available at our office or online at our website, www.itsasca-mantrap.com.



2019 Touchstone Energy Award winners: Nevis Community Education School Age Care. (L-R): Hannah Spry (School Age Care Coordinator), Katie Rittgers (Community Education Coordinator), Nikki Torkelson (Itasca-Mantrap Marketing/Member Services Manager)

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

The average household owns 24 electronic products, which account for roughly 12% of home energy use. When shopping for electronics, consider purchasing ENERGY STAR®-certified products, which can be 70% more efficient than conventional models.

Source: energy.gov



Calling Before Installing

If you have recently installed, or plan to install, electric heat or other equipment such as a tankless water heater or electric vehicle, please call our office to inform us and discuss your options. We can help you make the best choice for your home. It is necessary we know in advance before you install and start using this equipment so we can ensure the transformer and other equipment are available and sized properly. If the equipment is not sized properly, you may experience problems from blinking lights to loss of power. Please let us know before you install any additional electric load, so we can continue to provide you with consistent, reliable electricity.



Thank you!

Giving back to the community we serve is one of our seven cooperative principles. The Operation Round Up® program is a great way for the co-op and its members to give back.

Thank you to all of our participating members for making this possible.

ITASCA-MANTRAP COOPERATIVE

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1-800-252-1166
www.gopherstateonecall.org

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Dist. 5 – Nancy M. Utke, Chair
Dist. 6 – Tim Kivi, Secretary
Dist. 7 – Dan Breitbach, Vice Chair
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