



# NEWSLINE



September 2020

## DOES YOUR BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION MAKE OUR COMMUNITY A BETTER AREA TO LIVE AND WORK?

APPLY FOR THE TOUCHSTONE ENERGY COMMUNITY AWARD FOR YOUR CHANCE TO RECEIVE A PLAQUE AND \$500!

### Seeking Applications for the Touchstone Energy 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.

Community members may nominate an organization, association or business by completing an application form, available at our office or online at [www.itasca-mantrap.com](http://www.itasca-mantrap.com). The application requires a description of the project, program, or event and the positive impact it brought to the community. Completed applications must be received at Itasca-Mantrap's office by Oct. 31, 2020.

The award recipient will be announced in November and will



**2019 Touchstone Energy Award winners: Nevis Community Education School Age Care**

then contend for the statewide Touchstone Energy Community Award, which has a cash prize of \$1,000. The statewide award winner will be recognized at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association annual meeting in 2021.

The Minnesota Touchstone Energy cooperatives are part of a national

alliance of more than 700 electric cooperatives in 46 states that adhere to the values of integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.

The Touchstone Energy Community Award highlights the seventh Cooperative Principle - *Concern for the Community*.



## CEO Update - *By Christine Fox, President-CEO*

National Voter Registration Day is on September 22, 2020. I am encouraging all Itasca-Mantrap members to recognize the day.

Please register and encourage others to do so.

Our members know the importance of voting. Even though our election here at Itasca-Mantrap was limited to mail-in voting, we had great voter turn-out. Every year we have two or three directors up for election. In addition, this year our Board of Directors proposed a few changes to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws that were approved by consensus. These elections demonstrate the cooperative principle of democratic control. The cooperative election is your chance to get

involved with the cooperative and how it is run.

As Americans, we are given an incredible opportunity (responsibility) to vote, not only in our local elections but also for the highest office in our country. While local elections may not be as exciting as the high-profile presidential election, they are just as critical. Local elections have a direct impact on our community and on our quality of life. Your vision for our community is tied to your vote. Your vote also keeps our elected officials accountable. Elections are a direct and tangible source of feedback – good or bad. Whether we like or dislike what our elected officials are doing, we can vote to change or not to change.

I encourage every one of you to vote. A strong voter turnout shows investment in the community and ensures that a diverse

number of views are represented. The whole community benefits when more people participate in the process because greater numbers reflect a consensus on the direction of the future and the will of the people.

Mark your calendars! Election Day is Tuesday, November 3. More information about the voting process and registering to vote can be found on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website at [www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/)

Please register to vote. Do your research on the candidates. Learn about the issues that are on the ballot. And then get out and vote.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

## Cogenerators and small power producers

Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers who satisfy the conditions of a qualifying facility. Itasca-Mantrap will provide information to all interested Members, upon request, regarding rates and interconnection requirements.

An application for interconnection is required for a qualifying facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the Cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the Cooperative. Any disputes over interconnection, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Itasca-Mantrap Co-op. Electrical Ass'n. Board. Interested Members should contact Itasca-Mantrap at 218-732-3377 or toll free at 888-713-3377.

## Stay Connected with your Co-op



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

# Tips for a Safe Harvest



Harvest season brings hard work and can be exhausting, but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous (even deadly!) when working near overhead power lines. We urge farm operators and workers to keep the following safety tips in mind:



**Use care when operating large machinery near power lines.**



**Inspect the height of equipment to determine clearance.**



**Always keep equipment at least 10 feet away (in all directions) from power lines.**



**Remember to lower extensions when moving loads.**



**If a power line is sagging or looks to be dangerously low, please call us immediately.**

Source: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVES

## Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op Electrical Ass'n was held on Thursday, June 25, 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.
- May Financials were received and filed subject to audit.
- CEO Christine Fox gave her monthly CEO report.
- Approved the minutes from the June 11, 2020 Election Results meeting.
- Set the date for the next Itasca-Mantrap Annual Member's Meeting for June 10, 2021.
- Reviewed the Operation Round-Up distribution for Spring 2020.
- Discussed attendance at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association District 2 meeting.
- Directors and CEO Christine Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative.

The September meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.



## Team Member Spotlight

### DAN BREITBACH

**Job Title:**  
Director

**How I serve the Co-op:** As a Director

**Started at Itasca-Mantrap:** June 2012

**Where I live:**  
Ponsford, MN

**Hometown:** Ponsford, MN

**Education/ Training:** High School, 1 year College, 2 years Vocational Class A Journeyman Electrician

**Prior Experience:** 36 years in the Electrical Field

**Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap:** I have interesting conversations, I'm always learning, and I enjoy working with the community.

**Family:** Married with three children, and 14 grandchildren

**Community Involvement:** CEO Wolf Lake Gaming of 6 years, 7-time Chair Representative, Church

**Hobbies:** Hunting, fishing, gardening, enjoying the grandkids

**Fun Fact:** I have been known to be a bit of a daredevil and have paid the price.



### SHANNA OLSEN

**Job Title:**  
Member Services Representative

**How I serve the Co-op:** I am here to serve our members.

**Started at Itasca-Mantrap:** April 2016

**Where I live:** Nevis, MN

**Hometown:** Baudette, MN

**Education/ Training:** Business Office Specialist Certificate, Bachelor of Fine Arts - Studio Art with sculpture and print making emphasis

**Prior Experience:** Customer service, management and marketing experience in service & hospitality industries

**Why I like working at Itasca-Mantrap:** My favorite thing about working here is serving our members and building relationships with them. My second favorite thing is my co-workers - they are a great bunch of people.

**Family:** I have a fiancé and two daughters and twin boys in Heaven

**Hobbies:** Spending time with family, going to church, art & photography, traveling, anything outdoors - hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, softball, running



## Military Assistance

### Utility payment arrangements

When a household member has been ordered into active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some members may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota law protects these military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their utility bills in full.

### How to apply

Contact Itasca-Mantrap to obtain an application and make a payment plan, which you must keep to qualify for protection.

### Payment plans

- If your household income is below the state median household income, pay ten percent of your household's gross monthly income toward your electric bill; or
- If you receive energy assistance, pay ten percent of your household's gross monthly income toward your electric bill; or
- If your household income is above the state median household income, make and keep a payment plan.

## Trees, power lines, and outages

Affordability and reliability consistently rank as two of the most important aspects of electric service for electric cooperative member-owners. Itasca-Mantrap knows that exceptional reliability doesn't happen by chance. It takes diligence in maintaining power lines and equipment; continuously improving where necessary and anticipating our members' increasing needs for electric service.

In every season, there is one common threat to reliability – trees. Like you, we value trees being part of Minnesota's landscape. Not only do they provide beautiful visual appeal to yards, streets, and parks, they also provide relief from the summer sun, barriers to noise, environmental benefits and even food and shelter. While trees are valuable to us all, they are also one of the leading causes of power outages.

When branches and limbs break during storms, they frequently land in roadways or bring the power lines down, posing a safety risk to Itasca-Mantrap's employees, our members and the public. Because our distribution system connects thousands of people across our service territory, one tree encountering a power line can have a domino effect. To mitigate this issue, Itasca-Mantrap works hard to make sure trees have less impact on the overall safety and reliability of the infrastructure used to deliver electric service 24/7, 365 days a year.

Throughout the year, you will likely see our crews inspecting and trimming trees and other vegetation. Both federal and state policies require that vegetation must be cleared from power lines as a safety measure for member-owners and our employees. These groups have strict guidelines, including prohibiting trees from being planted or growing within certain distances from power lines in or near the rights of way. Utilities face substantial penalties if we don't comply. Our vegetation management program is designed to identify and fix problems before they become more costly or result in a prolonged loss of power. Our approach is similar to how you have your home's air conditioner tuned up before summer or get regular oil changes in your vehicle. Regular maintenance improves performance and longevity of essential assets.

Our crews are trained in approved trimming methods. This expertise allows us to remove the portion of the tree that could pose a safety and reliability threat while maintaining as much as possible of the tree's visual appeal. We take great care in managing these natural resources to preserve their longevity and beauty for many years to come.



### BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

Clearing trees and overgrown vegetation is vital to provide safe, reliable power to our consumer-members.

We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as rights of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Keep crews and members of our community safe
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs

Vegetation management improves service reliability for you – our members!



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

## Electrical Inspections

Generally, Minnesota requires all electrical work to be performed by licensed, bonded and insured electrical contractors and their employees. Homeowners, with strict limitations, are exempt from licensing, but not from inspection. A separate request for electrical inspection form with the required fees must be submitted to the Department of Labor and Industry at or before the commencement of any electrical installation. If you have had electrical circuits added, extended or altered you should have also had a visit from your local electrical inspector.

To find out more about the requirements for electrical inspections, how to file a request for electrical inspection, or to find your local electrical inspector, visit: [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov).

### Electrical Inspectors in your area:

#### •Becker County:

• Terry Lane - 218-237-8467

#### •Hubbard and Cass Counties:

• Anthony Kohrs - 218-255-1046

#### •Bull Moose Township in Cass County:

• Bradley Rasmussen - 218-543-1023

#### •Wadena County:

• Gary Zacharias - 218-631-1392

Electrical inspectors can be reached by phone Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

## Auto Pay your Electricity Bill



Auto Pay

Payments made automatically on 15th of month, or following business day

## Employee News



Pictured left to right: Kevin George and Jerry Byer.

**Jerry Byer** was promoted to interim line superintendent in July. Jerry began his career with Itasca-Mantrap as an apprentice lineworker in December 1992. He received his journeyman's license in 1996 and was promoted to lead lineworker in 2014. Jerry is a graduate of the Electrical Lineworker program at M State in Wadena. Congratulations, Jerry!

**Kevin George** was promoted to lead lineworker in July. Kevin started with Itasca-Mantrap as an intern apprentice lineworker in May 2002. After completing the apprenticeship program, Kevin was promoted to journeyman lineworker in 2006. Kevin is a graduate of the Electrical Lineworker program at M State in Wadena. Congratulations, Kevin!

## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

TIP: Clothes dryers make up a large portion of your appliance energy consumption. Clean the lint filter after each cycle, and scrub the filter with a toothbrush once a month to remove film and increase air circulation.

Source: energy.gov



## Application Deadline Tuesday, Sept. 15

To be considered at the October Trust Board Meeting, grant applications must be received in the Itasca-Mantrap office by September 15.

Download the application form at [www.itsca-mantrap.com](http://www.itsca-mantrap.com) or pick one up at our office.

## ITASCA-MANTRAP COOPERATIVE

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

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
Phone: 218-732-3377 or 888-713-3377  
Fax: 218-732-5890  
E-mail: [itasca@itasca-mantrap.com](mailto:itasca@itasca-mantrap.com)  
[www.itsca-mantrap.com](http://www.itsca-mantrap.com)



### GOPHER STATE ONE CALL

1-800-252-1166  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

### OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Dist. 1 – Brian Behrens, Director  
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

## Download the SmartHub App



The SmartHub online and mobile app help you manage your account by providing many features including, but not limited to:

- Billing & Payment Information
- Outage Reporting
- Quick, Easy Communication
- Billing Alerts
- Detailed Usage Reports