

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

# SPARKS

July 2019

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Horses for healing

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# SPARKS

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## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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## Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

**Outages: 800-788-7784**

**On the cover:** Crystal Guzman, veteran of the Army National Guard, rides one of the mustangs in an enclosure. The training is part of a program in rural Fisher called Walk by Faith therapeutic riding. Veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) participate in the program to help train wild horses. In turn, those mustangs help veterans cope with PTSD. *Story on page 4.*



Rich Whitcomb  
CEO

## THE CEO'S REPORT

# Co-ops are cool!

**H**ave you every stopped and wondered what it means to belong to an electric cooperative?

Simply put, cooperatives are member-owned and a form of grassroots democracy. You have a voice via your elected board of directors. Red River Valley Co-op Power is service-oriented and committed to enhancing your quality of life. We are not-for-profit and have returned more than \$9 million back to members since our inception. Your cooperative was formed in 1938 because rural community members banded together after being bypassed by investor-owned utilities in many instances or no power lines were close to where they lived.

Transparency and an obligation to the people and communities we serve form the backbone of our relationship with members. This is demonstrated in our personal conversations with you and many of our employees who are embedded in your communities as volunteers and first responders, for example.

Electric cooperatives do follow seven principles that are as worthy today as they were more than 80 years ago:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Independent governance
5. Education, training and information
6. Cooperation among cooperatives
7. Concern for community



These seven principles manifest themselves in many ways here at your cooperative that would take much longer to describe than this brief column. But really you can boil it down to maybe three general key concepts: fairness, value (the relationship between rates, service and reliability) and the Golden Rule.

We strive to treat you as we wish to be treated.

## Service and operational tidbits

Crews have finished the town of Hendrum main three-phase overhead to underground project. The complex project involved working with contractors, Minnesota Department of Transportation, the town's government and citizens to make it go as smoothly as possible. We thank Hendrum for its assistance in allowing us to have our portion of the work completed on schedule and performed in an efficient manner. The end result from our perspective will be less exposure for the town to weather-related outages.

Pole testing and tree trimming continue as part of our multiyear plan for reliability. Line crews will also be down near Dilworth working to convert another area of three-phase overhead to underground to prepare for that growing area.

Plus, there are a few new service requests and upgrades coming in.



# Stay cool this Summer and save energy!



We expect summers to be hot, but most of us do all we can to keep our homes as comfortable as possible, even as outdoor temperatures edge thermometers upward.

When it comes to electricity, each of us has the power to help control our costs – we just have to make thoughtful choices to make energy savings pay off in dollars and cents.

Look toward the west. If you don't have trees, a porch overhang or awnings shading windows exposed to afternoon sun, there's a good chance radiant heat could be driving up indoor temperatures and adding to your overall cooling costs.

Window coverings can help. Blinds or shades can deflect intense sunlight, and draperies lined with a thermal radiant barrier can block up to 95% of sunlight and 100% of ultraviolet rays.

Comfort and cooling are easier to maintain when we take advantage of



air flow. A ceiling fan can pull warm air up above your living zone, making a difference during summer months. The evaporative effect of circulating air blowing across our skin makes us more comfortable, but that benefit completely disappears when we leave the room, so turning fans off in unoccupied rooms will save energy.

HVAC filters have a lot to do with airflow through your heating and cooling systems. Dirty filters restrict circulation through your returns, requiring your cooling system to work harder. If you can see dirt in a filter, it's likely 50% clogged. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on replacing disposable filters or cleaning permanent ones. If you've got pets, consider checking them more frequently.

You can save money and electricity by time-shifting some of the most energy-intensive activities away from peak energy use periods that normal-

ly occur during the hottest hours of the day. Cooking, doing laundry and using power tools can increase both heat and humidity inside your home, making it harder to reach or maintain a comfortable temperature.

Remember, controlling energy costs will always work better with buy-in from everyone in the household.

- One open window anywhere can be like an uncapped chimney, pulling the conditioned air you pay to cool outside.
- A gaming system, computer or big screen television left on but unwatched produces nearly as much heat as it does when it's in use.
- Lighting and ventilation fans add convenience and provide benefits when they are needed but when left on and unattended, they use energy.
- A bag of ice poured into a cooler will chill summer beverages as effectively and less expensively than an aging refrigerator in a hot garage.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

# Horses for healing



Using arm gestures, Crystal Guzman, veteran of the Army National Guard, communicates with the mustang to let the horse know where she wants it to go.

One rural Fisher family's love of horses and desire to help others has led them down a path they call Walk by Faith.

Walk by Faith is a therapeutic riding program Travis and Kristen Schwarz operate at their rural Fisher horse arena. The couple also started a companion program called Hunter's Heroes designed to help military veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Both Travis and Kristen grew up in rural farming and cattle communities where working with horses and the land was ingrained in them, so much so that the family participates in Minnesota rodeo. Travis and Kristen competitively rope, while 9-year-old son Tristen does mini-bronc riding. Their daughter, Harleigh, participates in barrel racing.

In 2013, Kristen, a nurse by trade, decided she wanted to combine her passion for horses with her profession of caring for people and become a therapeutic riding instructor.

After completing her certification, the couple started Walk by Faith in 2014. As the family and their staff of volunteers started working with local children who had special needs, Kristen noticed how positive horse riding was for children.

"We have one little rider who has been with us since the beginning," she said. "We have been able to watch her grow and develop over the years. Her smile brightens the moods of all the volunteers in the arena. Her ability to ask this huge horse to willingly go where she wants him to teaches us that persistence and hard work make dreams a reality. She is gaining confidence, a sense of freedom and a deep comraderie that is good for the soul."

Hunter's Heroes started after the children's riding program had been established. Travis was reading a book about Chris Kyle, an Iraq War veteran who had come back from war and started helping other veterans cope with what they had experienced.

"I had a buddy who served overseas. I was thinking about him while reading the book and I thought that we should do something with the



The Schwarz family owns and operates horse therapeutic riding in rural Fisher. Left to right: Kristen, Harleigh, Tristen, Cortland, Riggan and Travis.



**“I didn’t know what we were getting ourselves into. But that first day we had a little girl, she was screaming and she wasn’t having it. But she wasn’t going to quit either. And at the end of the lesson, she was sitting up and smiling. To me that was the coolest thing, seeing how positive the kids react to the horses.”**

– TRAVIS SCHWARZ, *co-founder*, Walk by Faith

horses to help and we already had the nonprofit,” he said. “Kristen had went to a therapeutic conference and it just so happened she started talking with a veteran there who knew the benefits of working with mustangs (wild horses).”

The Schwarzs learned of an established program where organizations adopt wild mustangs and have veterans work with the horses under supervision to gentle them.

“We take them from being unhandled and turn them into riding horses,” Travis explained. “This is what our veterans program is based on; they help us train the horses.”

The horses are trained in a round pen and the veterans follow a set program. The goal is to build trust between the veteran and the horse, whereby the horse slowly allows the veteran to get farther into the train-

ing. After a while, Travis says, the horses learn the person is not there to hurt them. They’ll start to calm down and the veterans can get closer to them. Eventually, you can take a stick and rub them. The horses relate the stick to an extension of the hand.

Travis said the veterans benefit because the horse helps them relax. When trust is built between the veteran and the horse, there is a great sense of satisfaction and release for the veteran. Horses are very sensitive to nonverbal cues. The horse will sense the veteran’s anxiety and they’ll react. When the veteran is able to calm down and think positive thoughts, the horses will react and physically calm down.

The Schwarz family has really followed their own walk of faith – having the courage to start their program while raising a family and working

two jobs. But both say the spiritual rewards are great.

“I didn’t know what we were getting ourselves into,” Travis recalled. “But that first day we had a little girl, she was screaming and she wasn’t having it. But she wasn’t going to quit either. And at the end of the lesson, she was sitting up and smiling. To me that was the coolest thing, seeing how positive the kids react to the horses.”

For more information regarding child therapeutic riding and the veterans program, go to [www.walkbyfaith-therapeuticriding.com](http://www.walkbyfaith-therapeuticriding.com).

## *Goodbye, old friend*

It is the end of an era. A lifelong friend passed quietly in the night. And, I was the one to find him, still lukewarm, but gone just the same. No friends came to call, but I mourned him.

My wife was not as sad. She told me, “Get a grip! He was old!” But, I said with a sad voice, “He was the same age as me.” So I opened up a lukewarm can of Diet Coke and toasted his 70 years of service!

And then I hooked up the trailer to my pickup and loaded him up. He was my trusty, old Monitor refrigerator. Dad bought him when the rural electric came to the farm in 1948 (the year I was born).

A different refrigerator is in the shop and the pop is cold again, but the Monitor is gone!

*Loren, Red River Valley  
Co-op Power member*



Eight-year-old Katelyn Delzer rides a horse while volunteers Brock Erickson and Lynell Lacoursiere walk alongside. Kristen Schwarz leads the group around the arena.

# Be prepared for Summer Storm Season



So say you need to run a sump pump, refrigerator, furnace fan and a TV. The first three items have higher startup needs.

Item	Starting wattage*	Running wattage*
Refrigerator	1,600	200
Sump pump (1/2 hp)	2,150	1,050
Furnace fan (1/4 hp)	1,600	600
Television	300	300

\*Wattages are estimates only for this example.

## Generator safety and sizing guidelines

While not common, extended power outages can occur. Generators are an excellent way to provide standby power in the event of an outage, provided you follow safe practices. The following information provides tips for sizing a generator, the safe transfer of electricity and general safety rules for portable and automatic generators.

First, you need to decide whether you need a portable generator or an automatic generator with a code-approved transfer switch. The choice depends on lifestyle needs. For some, a portable generator for keeping the sump pump and refrigerator running is sufficient while crews work to restore power. Some members choose more encompassing solutions like a larger generator hooked up to a grade level transfer switch. In all cases, the generator manufacturer or an electrician are excellent choices for sizing the generator. In fact, most generator manufacturers have sizing calculators on their websites.

### Generator sizing

When sizing a generator, you need to know two key terms – startup watts and running watts. The generator needs to be sized for both.

Reactive loads (loads with a motor) require more power to start, but less power to run continuously. Examples of reactive loads are furnace fans, air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, well pumps and sump pumps. Resistive loads require the same amount of power throughout. Examples of resistive loads include electric baseboard heaters, light bulbs, toasters and electric water heaters.

With generators, especially portable ones, you can still power key items of your home with a generator rated less than your overall startup load if you manage the times these loads are turned on based on their startup and running wattage.

Looking at the chart, you would think you need a 5,650 watt generator. However, you could get by with a lesser generator if you started the first three items at different times. That's because once the initial startup occurs, the wattage drops considerably. You could start your sump pump, then your furnace fan, then your refrigerator and finally the TV using a 4,000-watt generator. In this example, keep in mind the thermostat controlling the gas furnace needs to be set to "ON" so the furnace fan doesn't cycle. If it did cycle, the startup load could be too much for the generator to handle with other loads running.

As you can see, the choice of whether to purchase an automatic generator to power your whole house or purchase a portable and manage the load depends on your needs. Especially if you choose an automatic standby generator, it is critical that an electrician or dealer sizes the generator to meet your home's load requirements and connects it safely.

### Grade level transfer switch

Double-throw transfer switches are extremely important for safety reasons if you decide to use a generator to operate hardwired equipment like furnaces and water heaters (loads that are directly wired into a breaker on your service panel). They ensure the power lines do not become energized when the generator is operating. Backfeeding is extremely dangerous and can kill linemen working on power lines, or damage equipment, including your generator.

Transfer switches serve as a service disconnect for standby generators. They safely disconnect utility lines and transfer load to the generator, which is wired into the transfer switch. The member can then safely use the generator to power his electric load.

Red River Valley Co-op Power will lease a grade level transfer switch to members for the following one-time lease payment:

**200 Amp – \$1,100** (tax not included)

**400 Amp – \$2,200** (tax not included)

The price includes a 50-amp twist lock receptacle and cord end for generator source. Linemen will make the appropriate connections to the co-op's power lines. The member's electrician makes the connections to member lines. The cooperative will



maintain this equipment at no charge for five years after the date of installation except for overload, accidents or vandalism. After five years, the member must hire an electrician or the cooperative to maintain, repair or replace the equipment.

It is a good idea to color code circuits on the service panel that are necessary to operate during an outage. That way, when an outage occurs, you can make sure those breakers are on in the panel and all the other breakers are off. This way, a properly sized generator can handle the load of those necessary circuits.

There are other options for acceptable and safe transfer of load to a generator. You will need to contact a licensed electrician to discuss those options.

### Generator safety

Proper use of a standby or portable generator is a must! A standby generator installation must have an approved double-throw transfer switch for two reasons:

- It does not allow electricity from the generator to flow back into the power lines. Without this, 120/240-volt electricity may feed back to your transformer, where it would be stepped up to 7,200 volts. This would put crews, and anyone who assumes the line is de-energized, in danger.
- It protects your generator from damage when power is restored.

Always follow manufacturer's instructions and contact a licensed electrician.

### Portable generators

- Under no circumstances should portable generators be used indoors, even with ventilation. The primary hazards are carbon monoxide, toxic fumes, electric shock or fire.
- Always follow the directions supplied with the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator, or use a properly rated outdoor extension cord.
- Never try powering the house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, known as backfeeding. This is extremely dangerous and puts lives at risk.

## Stay away from downed power lines

While your cooperative works hard to prevent power outages, wind, lightning and severe weather cause occasional electric service interruptions.

If you see a downed power line, make others in the area aware of the situation and call your power company immediately to report the problem.

Assume fallen wires are live wires and might be dangerous. Don't touch anything that may be in contact with the downed wire. Driving over fallen lines can result in damage to your car's tires.

If a wire falls on your car and you're in the vehicle, stay inside the automobile if possible. If you must get out of the vehicle, jump clear of the car with both feet together. If one foot is in the energized car and the other foot is in contact with the ground, your body will act as a conductor of electricity, which can cause injury or death. In addition, contact with overhead wires or an object touching the line can cause serious injury or death.

*Source: Safe Electricity*

## Call 811 if you need underground power lines marked



Homeowners need to remember that every digging job first requires a call to 811 at least two business days before digging to get utility lines marked.

The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple lines in a common area. Digging without calling can disrupt service, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs. Calling 811 gets underground utility power lines marked for free, up to your main meter.

Underground power lines from the main meter inward, however, are the responsibility of the member. Homeowners need to call their local electrician or discuss options with the 811-contracted locator on-site to have their private lines marked.

Remember, before any digging project, you must call 811. When you call 811, you'll be routed to the local Gopher State One Call center where they will lead you step by step through the process. You can also do this online at [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com).

## Safety Tip



Water does not mix with electricity. When working outdoors, avoid damp conditions, including wet grass, when using electrical tools. Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs and cracked housing. Repair or replace them if damaged. Unplug outdoor tools, appliances and extension cords when not in use.





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