



## GM'S REPORT

# CO-OP CULTURE

We say it often: Cooperatives are different from other types of utilities. But maybe you're still wondering, "How are they different?" To put it plainly, it's the co-op business model that sets us apart. Cooperatives like Firelands Electric adhere to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, member-equity, inclusiveness, and service for the greater good of the community — traits that can sometimes be hard to come by in the business world.

Electric cooperatives, including Firelands, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We brought electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort was too costly. Back then, cities were electrified and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines powered homes, farms, and economic opportunities in rural areas. Today, the cooperative spirit of powering change and opportunity is still a vital part of our co-op DNA.

### Equal access for all

When Firelands Electric Cooperative was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Firelands Electric was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender, language, political perspective, or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to consider running for a position on Firelands Electric's board, vote in the

yearly trustee elections, and weigh in on the discussions to set co-op policies and priorities. We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

### Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable, affordable energy, we also want to initiate positive action within our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, our priorities are right here in the Firelands community, where we invest in people through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs, and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that will improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While the world is radically different than when Firelands Electric was founded in 1936, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect us to continue our high standards of service. My pledge to you — the members we proudly serve — is to maintain our enduring, time-honored values while also promoting a cooperative culture of community, inclusion, and equity for all. As we mark Firelands Electric Cooperative's eighty-fifth anniversary at the end of this month, we salute our past and the traditions and values that got us here. But we also look forward to the bright future that discovery, innovation, and technology will bring.



**Dan McNaull**  
GENERAL MANAGER



SAFETY

# WARNING SIGNS

## Spotting potential electrical hazards in your home

According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical failures or malfunctions are the second leading cause of home fires. In a study from 2012 to 2016, electrical fires also accounted for the highest percentage of fire-related deaths and property damage at 18% and 20%, respectively. As part of National Electrical Safety Month, Firelands Electric urges co-op members to take a few minutes and review the warning signs of potential electrical hazards. Being aware of these signs — and correcting problems right away — could save a life.

### Take note

Your electrical devices can sometimes offer hints about issues with the outlets, breaker panel, wiring, or other parts of your home's electrical system. Lighting, for instance, can give clues to a more serious electrical problem. If lights dim or flicker every time you turn on another appliance, the circuit may be overloaded or there may be a loose connection.

Lightbulbs that burn out frequently could be a sign of faulty wiring or indicate that the bulb's wattage is too much for the fixture — both of which can lead to a fire. Always use bulbs that are at or below the maximum recommendations of the manufacturer and immediately repair or replace items with damaged cords or wiring.

Outlets and cords can also alert you to a larger electrical problem. If sparks occur when you remove or insert a plug into an outlet, it may indicate a loose connection. Cords that are warm to the touch could be undersized or defective. Make sure to investigate these signs thoroughly, enlisting the help of a professional when needed.

### Watch the watts

Frequently blown fuses or broken circuits are another sign of trouble. It could be as simple as a breaker that needs replaced in your electric panel, or it could be something much more serious. Don't overload any outlet or circuit. When they carry too much electricity,



outlets or circuits generate heat, which may not always be noticeable. This heat eventually causes wear on internal wiring and creates a risk of fire.

If you notice that an outlet is warm to the touch, or you rely heavily on extension cords or power strips to have enough space for all of your devices, your outlets are probably being overworked. In this situation, look at having additional outlets installed by an electrician to avoid a potential safety issue.

### If an electrical emergency occurs

In case an emergency should occur, it's important to know how to turn off the main circuit breaker at the electrical panel to your home. If arcing, burning, or smoking comes from an appliance or outlet, turn off the power at the circuit breaker and call the fire department.

Due to the risk of an electrical shock, never use water on an electrical fire. Class C fire extinguishers are nonconductive and are designed for use on appliances, wiring, circuit breakers, and outlets.

If your home is showing signs of a possible electrical problem, address the issue right away so that necessary repairs can be made before an accident or fire occurs. Remember to never tackle projects beyond your skillset. When in doubt, always contact a professional electrician.

With a little planning and attention to detail, you can help spot the signs of a potential problem and reduce the risk of electrical fires in your home. For additional electrical safety information, visit the Electrical Safety Foundation International's website at [www.esfi.org](http://www.esfi.org).

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

# And the winners are ...

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) designates the month of May as National Electrical Safety Month.

To help raise awareness of the importance of electrical safety among the cooperative's future members, Firelands Electric sponsored an electrical safety contest. Children of co-op members in kindergarten through

fifth grade were eligible to enter. Students who correctly answered at least eight of the ten clues on the electrical safety crossword puzzle printed in the March issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine had their name entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three restaurant gift cards.



Hannah McNaul  
DAUGHTER OF GREG AND JULIE  
MCNAULL OF ASHLAND



Emily Pond  
DAUGHTER OF TIM AND ANNE  
POND OF MANSFIELD



Casey Cutlip  
DAUGHTER OF BILL AND CONNIE  
CUTLIP OF SHILOH

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS

### ACROSS

1. Use the right size light \_\_\_\_\_ for lamps.  
**BULBS**
2. Never plug too many electrical devices into these at the same time. **OUTLETS**
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and electricity don't mix! **WATER**
4. A battery-operated one is helpful during a power outage. **RADIO**
5. Stay far away from power lines that have done this. **FALLEN**

### DOWN

6. Don't run electrical cords under these.  
**RUGS**
7. Never fly these near power lines.  
**KITES**
8. Never use an electrical device with a damaged \_\_\_\_\_. **CORD**
9. Keep space heaters this many feet away from furniture and curtains. **THREE**
10. These are not for climbing or playing on.  
**POLES**



ANNUAL MEETING

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Help us celebrate Firelands Electric's 85th anniversary by participating in your cooperative's annual meeting on Saturday, June 19.

Firelands Electric is currently making plans for an in-person member appreciation event and business meeting on June 19 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the cooperative's facility in New London. If COVID-19 restrictions continue, the cooperative will hold a virtual meeting on the same date. Details for the 2021 annual meeting will be sent to members in late May.

Remember, voting for trustees to represent districts 2, 7, and 9 will be conducted by mail and online ballot from May 1 to June 13. Details are outlined on the next page and results will be announced at the annual business meeting.



**Whether it takes place in person or virtually, members who participate in the 2021 member appreciation event will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of several prizes to celebrate our anniversary.**

## TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

# CAST YOUR

Trustee elections open May 1

Members of Firelands Electric Cooperative will choose trustees to represent board districts 2, 7, and 9 this year. Elections will be conducted by mail and online ballot. Co-op Ballot, an independent service provider, will manage the election by printing and mailing ballots, overseeing the online voting portal, and receiving and tallying all votes.

Members will receive candidate biographies and a paper ballot in the mail at the end of April. Candidate information will also be available online at [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com) and in the June issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.

### How to cast your vote

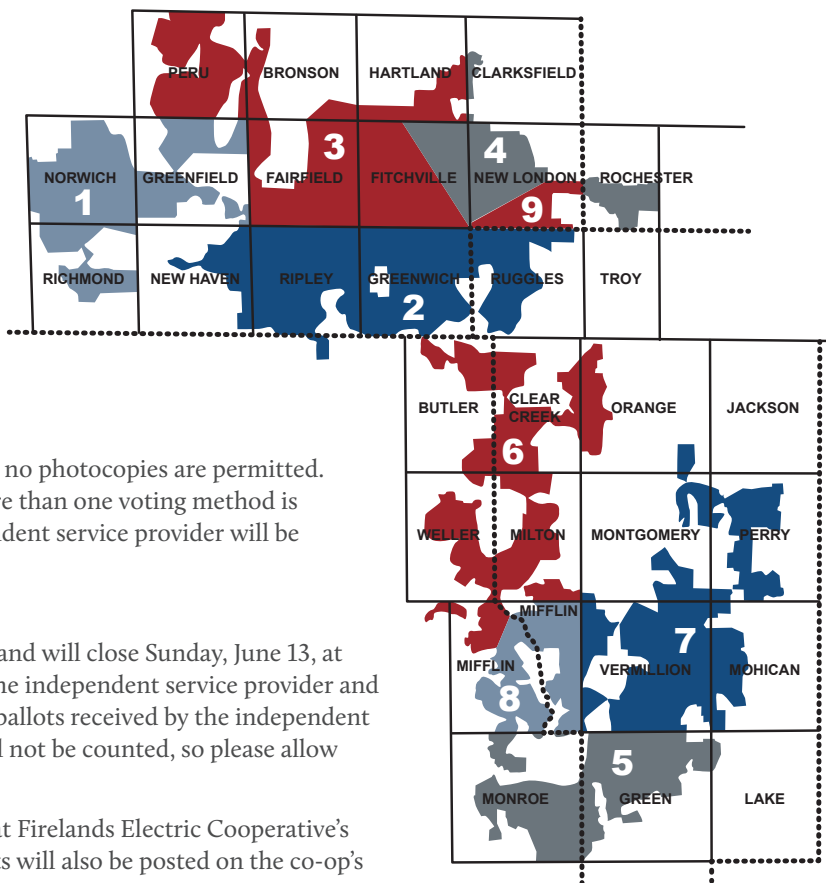
Beginning Saturday, May 1, Firelands Electric members can vote online via a secure link available on the co-op's website (<http://firelandsec.coopballot.com>). Members may also opt to vote by returning their completed paper ballot in the envelope provided. Ballots cannot be accepted by the cooperative's office. You will need the account number on record, which is found on your printed or emailed monthly billing statement, to cast your vote online.

Only original paper ballots will be accepted; no photocopies are permitted. If more than one ballot is submitted, or more than one voting method is used, the first ballot received by the independent service provider will be considered final.

### Timeline

Co-op voting will open on Saturday, May 1, and will close Sunday, June 13, at 11:59 p.m. Paper ballots must be mailed to the independent service provider and cannot be accepted at the co-op office. Any ballots received by the independent service provider after the close of voting will not be counted, so please allow ample time for delivery if sending by mail.

Winners of the election will be announced at Firelands Electric Cooperative's annual meeting on Saturday, June 19. Results will also be posted on the co-op's website and published in *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.





## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# Make your basement or crawl space more energy efficient

Basements and crawl spaces are key areas to consider when you're looking to improve the energy efficiency of your home. One important element to examine is the ductwork. Unless you're in a newer home or the ductwork has been tested and sealed in the last decade, your ductwork is likely leaking. Sealing these leaks helps your system distribute air more efficiently and should make your home more comfortable.

The best way to seal ducts is with duct mastic. Metallic tape is the next best solution. Do not use duct tape. Despite its name, duct tape is not intended for sealing ductwork — it can't withstand the extreme temperature changes of your HVAC system. If you need help identifying leaks, a professional energy auditor or HVAC contractor can test your home's ductwork.

Air often enters the home around the sill plate, which sits on top of the foundation. If you can get to the sill plate, apply caulk around it. You can also increase efficiency by sealing any gaps or leaks around basement windows.

Insulation is another effective tool for reducing energy use and improving comfort, but the insulation strategy and the installation must be done correctly to prevent mold or worsen moisture problems.

The place to begin in basements is the rim joist, which is right above the sill plate on the top of the foundation wall. Rigid foam board can be carefully fitted between the joists. You can insulate the inside of the foundation wall if you're sure moisture is not leaking through the wall from the outside. Experts do not recommend fiberglass insulation in contact with the foundation, which was a common practice for decades. Instead, they prefer sprayed-on foam or rigid foam board applied directly to the foundation wall. The bottom plate of the wall, which sits on the concrete floor, should be pressure-treated wood.

There are two ways to insulate crawl spaces. Over the past several years, the most common approach was to insulate under the floor with fiberglass batts. This allowed the crawl space to be vented to the outside, which alleviated any moisture buildup. If all the right

moisture control and drainage steps have been taken, the crawl space can be unventilated, and the insulation can be applied to the foundation walls instead of underneath the floor. That said, there are pros and cons to this strategy, so do some research online or consult with a local expert.

Moisture is a common problem in basements and crawl spaces and can lead to mold, rot, and lowered effectiveness of insulation. As you make efficiency improvements, work to solve moisture problems as well. Look carefully for signs of water damage or moisture buildup, such as rotting wood, mold, a stain on a wall or floor, or a musty smell. Any untreated wood in contact with a cement floor or wall could be rotting. Crawl spaces can be muddy or even have standing water in them if gutters or the slope of the landscaping drains in the wrong direction. Once drainage problems are solved, the crawl space should have a ground vapor barrier installed.

Taking any of these steps can make your basement or crawl space more efficient, reducing energy consumption and increasing comfort. If you're unsure about how to begin, reach out to Firelands Electric Cooperative's energy advisors. They can point you in the right direction or even provide a free, in-home energy consultation. Contact them by emailing [members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com) or calling 1-800-533-8658.



An unfinished basement provides great opportunities for improving ductwork and insulation.

PHOTO BY INTIAZ RAHIM

# Track your energy use with smarthub

Members can use the Usage Explorer feature in SmartHub to understand their home's energy patterns and to get a better idea of how to conserve electricity.

Usage Explorer provides members with their electricity use data on a monthly, daily, and hourly basis.

The tool allows members to:

- Access their home's energy use history.
- Monitor how changes in temperature impact energy use.
- Troubleshoot malfunctioning items that may be using more energy than normal.

The chart below is an example of the data available in Usage Explorer. The numbered list below explains how a member can use this information to monitor their daily energy consumption. Access the free SmartHub app at [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com) by clicking on the green icon on the webpage. The app can also be downloaded onto any mobile device at no cost. Simply search for it in the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

- 1. It was hot outside, but the member didn't change the thermostat.** If they had turned the temperature inside down more when it was hot, their electricity use would have been even higher. The greater the difference between the temperature

outside and the setting on the thermostat inside, the harder the system has to work to keep the house cool.

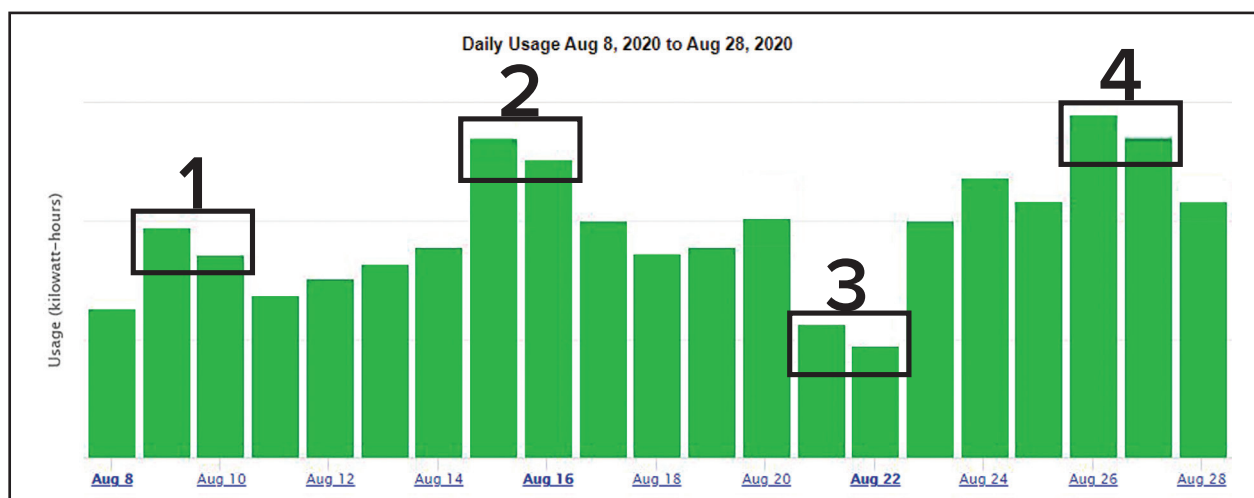
- 2. The kids and grandkids visited for the weekend.** It's amazing how much energy was used these few days, but the family did a lot of cooking, took plenty of showers and baths, and used the dryer a lot. Hot water heaters and dryers are appliances that use a lot of energy.

- 3. The member went on a short vacation.** While they were away, they put the lights on timers and turned the air conditioner up so it would cycle less. It made a difference, but the fridge, water heater, and electronics still used energy while they were gone.

- 4. The member found out their air-conditioning system wasn't working properly.** It wasn't very hot outside, but the energy use was high. Members can sign up for Usage Alerts through SmartHub (Notifications > Manage Notifications > Usage) so they can receive an email and/or text when their use is out of the ordinary. Catching problems like this sooner can help keep bills in check in the future.

To access the cooperative's free SmartHub app, go to [www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com) and click on the green icon on the webpage. The app can also be downloaded onto any mobile device at no cost. Simply search for it in the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

For additional information about SmartHub and its features, visit [www.firelandsec.com/smarthub-101](http://www.firelandsec.com/smarthub-101).





## RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

# TREE TRIMMING IMPROVES SERVICE

At Firelands Electric Cooperative, we strive to balance maintaining the beauty of our community while also ensuring a reliable power supply for our membership. One way this is accomplished is through our right-of-way (ROW) management plan.

A right-of-way is the area surrounding the power lines, poles, and other electric distribution equipment, which the co-op has the right and responsibility to maintain. By keeping these areas clear from obstructions, Firelands Electric is better able to construct, maintain, replace, or repair equipment. The co-op is also able to keep trees and other plant growth from hindering power line installation, maintenance, or operation. Proactive vegetation management is vital to the efficiency and function of your electric service and benefits co-op members in several ways.

### **Safety**

First and foremost, we care about our members and put their safety and that of our linemen above all else. Overgrown vegetation and trees pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a danger to families. Children or pets can potentially climb a tree into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor, like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of severe weather causing fallen branches or trees that make it more complicated and dangerous for linemen to restore power.

### **Reliability**

Of course, one of the biggest benefits of a smart vegetation management program is reliability. Strategic tree trimming reduces the frequency of downed lines causing power outages. Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keeps lines clear to promote reliability.

Firelands Electric works with several highly qualified tree trimming services to proactively manage the trees and vegetation in the cooperative's rights-of-way.



## Affordability

As you know, Firelands Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative, and that means we strive to keep our costs in check in order to keep our rates affordable. This extends to our approach to vegetation management. If trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for expensive repairs also increases. Effective tree trimming and other vegetation management efforts keep costs down for everyone. While the co-op does allot a significant portion of its annual budget to ROW maintenance, proactive tree trimming and other vegetation management efforts are still much less costly than clean up or extensive repairs after a storm.

Our community is a special place. We appreciate the beauty trees afford, but we also know that our community depends on us to provide reliable energy. Through vegetation management, we are better able to keep the power lines clear, prepare for future weather events, and secure the reliability of the grid.

If you would like additional information on Firelands Electric Cooperative's ROW program or have questions, visit [www.firelandsec.com/right-way-clearance](http://www.firelandsec.com/right-way-clearance) or call 1-800-533-8658.



Trees that are damaged, hollow, or deteriorating increase the chances of a power outage, as well as pose a serious safety risk to line crews and the community.



**MEMORIAL DAY**  
Remember & Honor

The Firelands Electric Cooperative office  
will be closed on

**Monday, May 31**

to honor those who gave their lives  
for our freedom.

*As always, emergency service is available  
24/7 by calling 1-800-533-8658.*



GOVERNMENT

# ADVOCATING FOR AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES



As a member of Firelands Electric Cooperative, you are among 42 million Americans who can claim ownership in a not-for-profit, member-owned utility that provides electricity at cost. The ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action program is an exciting opportunity for you to raise your voice and participate in the political process.

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) is the political action committee of the nation's electric cooperatives. For almost 50 years, ACRE has been working to support candidates in Ohio and the U.S. who understand and support electric cooperatives and their member-owners. Through Co-op Owners, which is the consumer arm of ACRE, you have the ability to strengthen this support and join over 30,000 ACRE Co-op Owners members who form a strong network dedicated to the long-term success of the electric cooperative program.

If you are not already a member of ACRE Co-op Owners, we hope that you will consider joining this nonpartisan program. Together we will continue to fight for a viable

environment for electric cooperatives and the quality of life of the people and communities that co-ops serve.

Thank you for your continued support of the ACRE program. If you have any questions, would like additional information, or want to sign up for the ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action program, please contact Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658 or return the form provided below.

Visit [www.action.coop](http://www.action.coop) to join our growing grassroots efforts and become a part of the team to promote common sense energy solutions and the importance of electric cooperatives.

*Contributions to ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action are not tax deductible. All contributions to ACRE are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. Contribution guidelines are suggestions only. You may contribute more or less than the recommended amount. You may refuse to contribute without reprisal.*



**I want to help keep the voice of rural electric cooperatives heard in the political process by participating in ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action.**

### Monthly Bill Addition

- ☐ REGULAR: \$2.08 PER MONTH (\$25/YEAR)  
☐ CENTURY CLUB: \$8.33 PER MONTH (\$100/YEAR)  
☐ PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$41.66 PER MONTH (\$500/YEAR)\*  
☐ OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### One-Time Contribution

- ☐ REGULAR: \$25  
☐ CENTURY CLUB: \$100  
☐ PRESIDENT'S CLUB: \$500\*  
☐ OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**I affirm that my contribution has been made with non-corporate funds** (Please make checks out to Firelands Electric Cooperative):

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ COOPERATIVE: \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Federal Election Law requires the following information for contributions exceeding \$200:

EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_ OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Action Committee for Rural Electrification® (ACRE®) are not tax deductible. Contributions to ACRE are voluntary and will be used for political purposes. You have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Any contribution guidelines presented are merely suggestions. You are free to contribute more or less than the suggested amounts, or not at all. NRECA will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount contributed or a decision not to contribute.

IN THE COMMUNITY

# SNAPshots



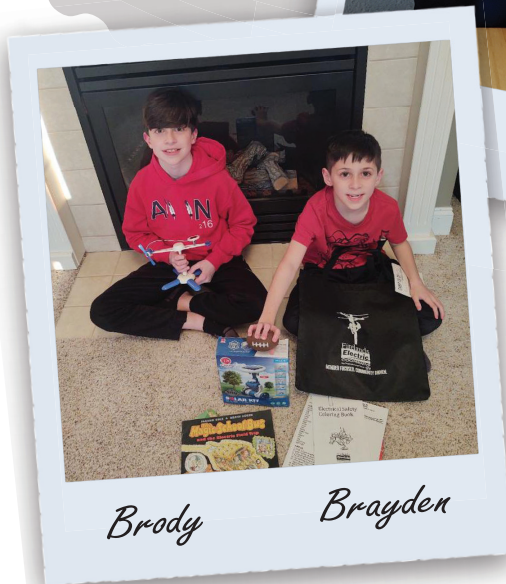
Dave A.J. T.J.



Bode Abbie



Ian



Brody Brayden

In March, Journeyman Lineman Dave Sumpter and his sons (above) participated in the annual St. Baldrick's Foundation head-shaving to raise money for childhood cancer research. Dave has been involved with this event for six years, while it was T.J.'s fifth year and A.J.'s second year.

Firelands' office employees donated their March jeans money to the cause, helping Dave and his boys reach nearly \$3,000 in contributions for 2021.

Bode and Abbie Bore (top), Ian Amburgy (middle), and Brody and Brayden Smith (left) check out some of the activities from their Camp Co-op prize kits. The families were among the ten randomly selected to win an electric and energy education kit as part of Firelands Electric's Camp Co-op contest, which was held in January.





## COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Feb. 23 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 33 membership applications for approval by the board.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department. He also discussed the steps being taken to prepare for and communicate the upcoming planned transmission outage scheduled for March 7 in the Village of New London.
- The board reviewed and approved a safety and training report from a meeting held on Jan. 27.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed the Dashboard Key Indicators for 2020, comparing them with those from 2016 – 2019.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the January financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- McNaul and Englet reviewed an update to the 2021 – 2024 construction workplan with the board.
- The board discussed a proposed amendment to the co-op's easement and right-of-way agreement policy.
- McNaul advised the board of a potential economic development project within the co-op's territory. The board discussed construction of line extensions in order to serve the location.
- The board reviewed the status of petitions filed for the 2021 trustee elections in districts 2, 7, and 9.
- McNaul reviewed the outage report for January and the status of the current tree trimming program.
- Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst reviewed a report on recent activities involving the member services and IT department.
- McNaul advised that the cooperative was a recipient of the 2020 Certificate of Safety Achievement from NRECA.
- McNaul advised that NRECA's annual meeting will be virtual on Feb. 24. Board members were invited to watch the meeting in the Community Room at the cooperative's headquarters.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 25. If you would like to attend the next scheduled meeting, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

### FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

#### OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

#### OFFICE

103 Industrial Drive  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
419-929-1571

#### OFFICE HOURS

Mon. – Fri. 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
[www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com)



### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer  
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach  
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers  
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

W.E. Anderson  
District 8

Tom Lucha  
District 3

Gene Lamoreaux  
District 2

John Martin  
District 9

Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

### GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaul

#### HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:  
[members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com)

**Firelands**  
**Electric**  
**COOPERATIVE**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 