



GM'S REPORT

Champions of the COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

On Sept. 30, more than a hundred Firelands Electric members and employees gathered for the cooperative's first-ever ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action breakfast and legislative update.

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) is the political action committee of the nation's electric cooperatives. Founded in 1966, ACRE focuses on educating lawmakers about the unique co-op business model and supporting candidates on both the state and federal level who will advocate for the interests of cooperatives and their members. ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action, the consumer arm of ACRE, is made up of over 11,000 electric cooperative members from across the country — members just like you.

By joining ACRE Co-op Owners, members can make their voices heard. The group supports government officials who,

regardless of their political party, advocate for the needs of co-ops and their members. Maintaining this strong presence in the legislative process is instrumental to the long-term success of the electric cooperative program and the communities they serve.

Firelands Electric's ACRE Co-op Owners breakfast provided the cooperative an opportunity to show appreciation for these members' contributions and their support in the political realm. Held at the co-op's facility in New London, the event also allowed members to hear updates from several local and state government officials.

Legislators representing portions of Firelands Electric's four-county service territory spoke about federally funded projects benefiting rural Americans, immigration, and gun laws. Presenting at the event were U.S. Congressman Bob Gibbs, Ohio Senator Nathan Manning, Ohio Representative Darrell Kick, and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives' Director of Government Affairs Marc Armstrong.

Congressman Bob Gibbs discussed the necessity of federal assistance for rural utility infrastructure projects to improve electric reliability and resilience. Gibbs also addressed immigration laws, noting that over one million immigrants legally entered the U.S. in 2018.

Ohio Representative Darrell Kick stressed the importance of protecting the second amendment for Ohio's law-abiding citizens. He also reflected on the opioid epidemic impacting Ohio and the



Dan McNaull
GENERAL MANAGER



Continued on page 20



FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LOCAL PAGES

Continued from page 19

desperate need for foster families it has created. Kick shared that he and his wife are foster parents and that higher numbers of Ohio children are entering foster care than ever before — over 16,000 in 2018. This number is expected to exceed 20,000 by 2020.

The ACRE Co-op Owners breakfast hosted by Firelands Electric developed and cultivated relationships with our elected legislators, while also increasing their awareness of what electric cooperatives are and how they benefit the communities they serve. It also provided a forum for cooperative members to meet and connect with government officials. Most importantly, this exclusive event was a chance for Firelands Electric to celebrate the members who invest in ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action and serve as champions for the cooperative difference.

For more information on ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action and how you can become involved, visit www.firelandsec.com/content/acre-co-op-owners-political-action. Additional photos from Firelands Electric Cooperative's ACRE Co-op Owners event may be viewed at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums.



Firelands Electric General Manager Dan McNaul and Ohio Electric Cooperatives' Director of Government Affairs Marc Armstrong, above, talk with members during the cooperative's ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action breakfast on Sept. 30.

U.S. Congressman Bob Gibbs, top right, discusses the importance of rural utility infrastructure projects to improve electric reliability and resilience.

Members of ACRE Co-op Owners, bottom right, enjoy breakfast at Firelands Electric Cooperative's new facility.



IN THE COMMUNITY



Northern Ohio

Step Up for Soldiers annual drive

It's challenging to be far from home during the holiday season, especially for members of the military.

Thousands of people in United Service Organizations (USO) centers around the globe work tirelessly to make the holiday season bright for American service members and their families — both those stationed abroad and those returning home from deployment.

Firelands Electric Cooperative is proud to once again join forces with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to support the USO of Northern Ohio Step Up for Soldiers annual drive. Beginning on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, members of Firelands Electric and the community can bring care package items to the co-op office, located at 103 Industrial Drive in New London.

Donations such as health and wellness items, games, snacks, canned goods, household items, and many others

will be accepted. All donated items will be packaged by volunteers and distributed to soldiers and their families from throughout northern Ohio.

Care package items can be dropped off at the Firelands Electric Cooperative office from Nov. 11 through Dec. 11, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A complete list of suggested donation items is available on Firelands Electric's website, www.firelandsec.com/content/uso-northern-ohio, and on the cooperative's Facebook page.

NEW OFFICE HOURS

Starting Dec. 2, the Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.—4 p.m.

While our office hours are changing, Firelands Electric's commitment to round-the-clock service will remain the same. Members will continue to have access to their co-op 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Using the methods below, members can make payments, notify us of outages, and report emergencies, anytime, day or night:

- **PHONE:** Call us toll-free at 1-800-533-8658.
- **ONLINE:** Click "Report an Issue" on the co-op's website using your computer.
- **MOBILE APP:** Tap "Service Status" in the SmartHub app on your smartphone or tablet.
- **ONSITE:** Place your payment in our 24/7 drop box, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.



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



CO-OP NEWS

REBUILDING FOR RELIABILITY

2019 work plan increases co-op's capacity and backfeed ability

Upkeep on an electrical distribution system is a lot like owning a home. Both require regular upgrades to keep them in working order. Just like a roof or patio needs occasional repair or replacement due to normal wear and tear, so do the cooperative's poles, transformers, and wires.

Firelands Electric carries out a work plan every year to ensure that members' electric service remains dependable. This plan is in addition to the outage restoration and maintenance duties Firelands' crews are responsible for on a day-to-day basis. As you can imagine, this keeps the operations department and the co-op's contractors quite busy — and 2019 was no exception.

LineTec Services, a contractor employed by Firelands Electric, is currently wrapping up the last of a five-part rebuild project. The first portion, completed in the early spring of 2019, consisted of upgrading a 3.65-mile segment of the cooperative's B line in Vermillion Township, Ashland County, to a higher capacity wire.

Moving to Vermillion Township's J3 line in April, LineTec Services upgraded a 3-mile portion of the co-op's distribution system to create a tie-line between the Ashland and Jeromesville substations. With this installation, Firelands Electric is now able to more readily meet members' needs during a power outage by backfeeding from another substation — a benefit for every member throughout the area.

After completing the second part of the work plan in June, LineTec crews traveled further south into Vermillion Township. This phase of the rebuild project involved constructing a new three-phase line, which created a connection between State Route 60 and County Road 775. This 0.65-mile span will allow Firelands to balance circuit load across multiple phases on several roads in an area that has seen significant load growth over the last several years. It also provides the cooperative a means for backfeeding many of the members who live in and around this area in the event of an outage.

Part four of LineTec's project, which was completed in October, involved two separate sections of Firelands Electric's E8 line that serves co-op members on County Road 775 in Ashland County. The first 1.4-mile section of line was upgraded to carry and balance the power load along this and several other roads in the neighborhood. The second segment involved relocating 1.6 miles of power lines to make them more accessible when repairs or maintenance are required.

The fifth and final phase of LineTec's 2019 work for the cooperative is the construction of a 2.5-mile line in Huron County's Peru Township, which will again increase capacity and Firelands Electric's ability to balance load in the area. This final section is expected to be completed by year's end.



Firelands Electric linemen prepare a new pole for installation as part of the cooperative's 2019 work plan.

Firelands Electric's own crews have also been extremely busy upgrading and maintaining the cooperative's distribution system throughout 2019. Along with the construction of new services, upgrades to existing services, moving into the new facility, and a plethora of maintenance projects, the co-op's operations team also completed a great deal of line rebuild work.

While this work included some small jobs scattered across the co-op's system, the bulk of the rebuild projects completed by Firelands Electric's crews in 2019 took place in the Village of New London. Due to the vast difference in population density when compared to more rural areas, the work within New London was more time-consuming than the co-op's other rebuilds. The span lengths, or distance, between homes and businesses is much shorter, requiring more poles per mile. Also, unlike most rural construction, there are multiple services being fed from nearly every pole, which increases the time and hardware needed for the assembly of each pole. While Firelands Electric's typical rural construction includes 20 poles, seven transformers, and eight services per mile, each mile of work done within New London involved 41 poles, 36 transformers, and 120 services.

The more urban setting of New London also meant working more often with crowded underground utilities and the frequent use of hydro-excavation to dig holes for new poles. The method, which removes soil with pressurized water, is more time-consuming than the traditional digger derrick excavation, but is a more accurate way to excavate soil and safely locate underground utilities and fiber optic cables. This is essential for protecting the cooperative's employees from possible injury and avoiding costly damage to the underground infrastructure.



A Firelands Electric Cooperative crew installs a new pole during part of the rebuild work over the past year.

As we wrap up yet another year, Firelands Electric's crews are already looking ahead to future projects. The co-op has a work plan mapped out for the next four years — so that members can continue to receive the reliable, affordable electric power they have come to expect from their cooperative.

Tis the season...for holiday value



1 box of candy canes =
100 hours of lighting 10 strings
of 100 LED holiday lights



1 large peppermint mocha latte =
7,500 charges of
a smartphone



1 ugly holiday sweater =
1,750 days of watching
a 200-watt LED television

**Figures based on average item cost, wattage, and hours of usage.*



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

FACT OR FICTION:

THE TRUTH BEHIND SIX ENERGY-SAVING CLAIMS

When it comes to saving energy, it can be confusing to figure out what works and what doesn't. Below are some answers to commonly asked questions about energy efficiency.

Q: Is it true that turning lights off and on uses more energy than just leaving them on?

A: Fiction. Turning off lights definitely reduces energy use. LED and incandescent bulbs should be turned off every time you leave the room. The situation is a bit different with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). Turning them off does save energy but can also shorten the life of the bulb. A good rule of thumb is to turn off CFLs any time they won't be needed for 15 minutes or more.

Q: Would replacing my old windows with new, more efficient ones really cut my energy use in half?

A: Fiction. It is possible that replacing an inefficient window with a new, energy-efficient version can cut the heat loss through the window itself in half. However, windows typically account for only about 25 to 30% of your space-heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one-third to one-half of your total energy use, so replacing your old windows might only reduce your total energy costs by about 10%. In the right situation, that could be beneficial, but it's important to take into consideration the high cost of new windows and how long it would take to recoup your investment.

Q: Burning wood in my fireplace should save on my heating costs, right?

A: Maybe. Burning wood is only cost-effective if certain conditions are met. The wood needs to be dry and burned efficiently in a properly installed, properly placed, high-efficiency wood stove or fireplace insert. Otherwise, it's likely you'll lose as much heat through your chimney as you're distributing throughout the house.

Q: My kids claim using the dishwasher is just as efficient as washing dishes by hand. Are they right?

A: Fact. It can actually be more efficient! Properly used, dishwashers use less water while doing a better job, and as a bonus, they will save you more than 200 hours a year. For maximum energy savings, make sure your water heater is set to about 120 F and use the most efficient wash/dry settings.

Q: I've heard it's better to heat individual rooms with an electric space heater and keep the doors closed to trap the heat. Is this true?

Maybe. It's possible to save money with an electric space heater if you use it *only* a few hours a day and reduce your home's thermostat setting by a couple degrees. Used for longer periods of time on a regular basis, space heaters can increase your energy consumption, adding \$50 or more a month to your electric bill. Space heaters can cause fires, so they also need to be used wisely and should never be left unattended or used while you are sleeping.

Q: Does the age of my home determine how energy efficient it is?

A: Maybe. Newer homes tend to be more efficient because energy codes and building materials have improved, but every home can have hidden energy issues, no matter its age. If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your home, it's best to schedule an energy consultation with a professional.

Need more help finding the large energy wasters in your home? Contact Firelands Electric's Member Services Department at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule your FREE in-home consultation with the cooperative's energy advisor.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Carbary's CORNER

As we head into winter, it's important to make sure that your heating system is operating correctly. A malfunctioning furnace or heat pump means your system will work even harder as temperatures drop. Hitting those single digits during the heart of winter can be rough enough on your energy bills, but a system that isn't running properly will make it even harder on your wallet.

Besides having your system serviced before the onset of cold weather, it's also a good idea to keep an eye on it throughout the heating season. Last January, one Firelands Electric member learned this lesson the hard way.

After noticing an increase in electric use over the span of a few months, the member contacted the co-op to schedule a free energy consultation. During this type of visit, I typically test a home's breaker panel for unusual activity. In this case, the only thing running was the member's heat pump, but the readings I received indicated the unit kept switching over to the auxiliary, or backup, heating system. For this member, that meant using electric resistance heat, which is much less efficient — and more costly — than using the heat pump alone. Further investigation revealed the culprit: The outdoor portion of the heat pump was covered in almost two inches of ice.

I know what you're thinking: It's January, so of course there will be ice. Correct, but even during winter, a heat pump should only have a thin layer of frost, not be encased in ice. Heat pumps are designed with a defrost mode, which melts the ice to keep your system running efficiently. The control board responsible for activating this member's defrost process had stopped working, creating a solid frozen barrier on the coils.

Why is this noteworthy? If a heat pump's coils are blocked by ice, heat transfer between the refrigerant and the outside air won't take place. The unit will no longer keep your home comfortable, and the emergency electric system kicks in to warm your home. While you may not notice when this happens, you will definitely see the difference on your next electric bill.

For this particular co-op member, the faulty defrost board in their heat pump increased their home's electric use by almost 1,000 kilowatt-hours per month — which is an additional \$100! Once the member knew about the issue, they got in touch with a contractor to have their heat pump fixed and got those bills back to normal.

Not only can ice buildup on your heat pump cause a significant jump in your electric bill, but it can also cause costly damage to the fan blades and outdoor coils if it becomes too thick. In a worst-case scenario, it can damage your heat pump beyond repair.

So, go check out the outdoor unit of your heat pump now. If you see more than frost or a thin layer of ice, contact a heating repair contractor right away to schedule maintenance. It might just save you some sticker shock later this winter.



Scott Carbary
ENERGY ADVISOR





YOUTH PROGRAMS

Class of 2020 **COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS**

Do you live in a home served by Firelands Electric Co-op?
You could win up to \$5,300 in scholarships

- Scholarships are available to graduating seniors in both boys' and girls' divisions.
- Applicants must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 or above on a 4.0 scale.
- Finalists in the Firelands Electric scholarship competition will be interviewed at the cooperative office on Feb. 17, 2020.
- Applicants will be judged on scholastic record, school and community activities, cooperative knowledge, and a personal interview.
- The first-place Firelands Electric Cooperative Scholarship in each division is \$1,500.
- Four runners-up will also receive scholarships in each division. One student in each division will also be chosen to receive a \$300 Judges' Choice Scholarship.
- The top overall winner will be eligible to compete at the statewide competition on April 15, where he or she can win up to \$3,800 in additional scholarship awards from Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.

Complete rules and applications are available at www.firelandsec.com/content/scholarship-opportunities, by contacting Firelands Electric's member services department at 1-800-533-8658, or by visiting your high school guidance department.

**Application deadline:
Jan. 31, 2020**

YOUTH PROGRAMS

HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS:

You could be selected for a life-changing leadership experience in Washington, D.C.

June 19–25, 2020

While on Youth Tour, students will visit:

United States Capitol
World War II Memorial
Smithsonian Institution
Lincoln Memorial
Vietnam War Memorial
Washington National Cathedral
Arlington National Cemetery
Gettysburg Battlefield
... and much more!

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What is Youth Tour?

The Ohio's Electric Cooperatives Youth Tour is an annual leadership program sponsored by Firelands Electric. A weeklong, all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., Youth Tour gives outstanding high school students a personal understanding of American history and their role as a citizen. During this one-of-a-kind tour, participants have the opportunity to meet with their congressional leaders at the U.S. Capitol, make new friends from across the state and country, and see many of the famous Washington, D.C., sights.

Electric cooperatives from 43 states send about 1,800 delegates each year, including nearly 40 students from co-ops throughout Ohio. Firelands Electric Cooperative will choose up to two delegates to attend the 2020 Youth Tour.

To apply for the Youth Tour applicants must:

- Be a high school sophomore or junior.
- Reside in a home receiving power from Firelands Electric Cooperative.
- Submit a completed application, including portion completed by a school official.
- Write a 500-word essay on a topic related to electric cooperatives.



**Application deadline:
Jan. 31, 2020**

Complete rules and application materials are available at www.firelandsec.com/content/youth-tour-experience.



CO-OP NEWS

OURSOLAR UPDATE

Just over a year ago, Firelands Electric launched OurSolar, a community solar program that gives cooperative members an easy and affordable way to support renewable energy.

Installing a residential renewable energy system at your home can cost thousands of dollars — even tens of thousands. Some homes aren't even compatible with solar: They could be located in an area with very little sunlight, the pitch of the roof may be at a less-than-ideal angle, or the home could need energy efficiency updates prior to installation. OurSolar is a simple, cost-effective alternative for Firelands Electric's members.

Situated behind the cooperative's facility at 103 Industrial Drive, New London, the 50-kilowatt, 152-panel solar array was first energized on Sept. 27, 2018. As of Oct. 10, 2019, OurSolar had produced nearly 60,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity. That's enough power to operate a 400-watt refrigerator for over 35 years or to watch 300,000 hours of television!

The OurSolar program gives Firelands Electric residential members the option to purchase renewable energy produced by the co-op's solar array. There is no equipment for members to install, and all maintenance costs are included in the subscription rate. Firelands Electric Cooperative members can subscribe to the output of up to 10 panels. Each panel generates an average of 30 kWh per month, but output can fluctuate between 10 and 50 kWh, depending upon sunlight conditions throughout the month. Members can go green by spending just a few additional dollars a month. For example, by investing only \$5 each month, a co-op member can subscribe to five panels and generate an average of 1,800 kWh per year.

The ever-changing world of renewables can be confusing. Your cooperative is here to help, and OurSolar is just one, inexpensive option. Contact Firelands Electric or visit www.firelandsec.com/content/renewable-energy-resources for answers to your renewable questions.

2019 CHRISTMAS LIGHTING CONTEST

Send us a photo of your Christmas lighting display! Submitted photos will be posted on Firelands Electric Co-op's Facebook page and the member with the most likes at the end of each week will win a \$25 bill credit. Contest ends on Dec. 20.

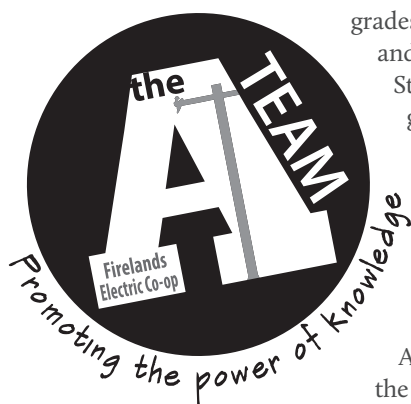
Visit www.firelandsec.com/content/contests for complete details.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As a reminder, our office will be closed Dec. 24–25 and Jan. 1 so that our employees may enjoy the holidays with their families. Emergency service is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-533-8658.

CO-OP NEWS

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



The A Team recognizes students in grades 6–8 for their hard work and dedication to education. Students whose parents or guardians are members of Firelands Electric Cooperative and who have a minimum of three A's on their most recent report card are eligible to enter.

A drawing will take place at the end of each grading period, and three students will be chosen to receive an iTunes gift card. Winners will also have their photo published in an upcoming issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine and will be featured on the co-op's website and social media outlets.

The next drawing is Dec. 10.
For complete details on how to enter, visit
www.firelandsec.com/content/team.

Stealing electricity and meter tampering are crimes!

Stealing electricity or tampering with a meter is serious business. And it's against the law! Theft of utility electricity is a first-degree misdemeanor if the value of the stolen electricity plus any utility equipment repairs is less than \$150. It's a fourth-degree felony if more than \$150.

Tampering crimes carry similar penalties. Tampering is defined as "to interfere with, damage, or bypass a utility meter, conduit, or attachment with intent to impede the correct registration of a meter or the proper function of a conduit or attachment." Conviction of tampering can mean from six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine to up to five years and a \$2,500 fine.

Meter tampering costs all of us. And it's downright dangerous. If you witness someone tampering with an electric meter, please contact Firelands Electric Cooperative at 1-800-533-8658.



STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

Firelands Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, at any USDA office, or call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; by fax to 202-690-7442; or e-mail to program.intake@usda.gov.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's board of trustees met Sept. 24 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 40 membership applications for approval by the board.
- The board reviewed and approved a report on a safety meeting held Aug. 20 and a workplace safety observation conducted on Sept. 14.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the August financials and reported on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reminded the board that People Fund appointments from Districts 1, 3, and 6 need to be made by Jan. 1, 2020.
- McNaul also advised that all of the cooperative's former buildings have been sold.
- Trent Fern from Alpha Engineering reviewed the 2020–2024 work plan.
- McNaul reviewed the cooperative's monthly outage report for September with the board.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reviewed recent activities and projects in the operations department and advised that the annual inventory audit would take place on Sept. 30.
- McNaul reviewed the 2019 maintenance tree trimming report, noting that the cooperative's costs would come in about \$38,000 under budget.
- Director of Member Services and Communications Andrea Gravenhorst reported on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments, including recent social media projects.

Firelands Electric Co-op is democratically controlled and governed by local people committed to policies that result in a safe and reliable electric system, fair rates, financial responsibility, and superior member service.

Due to the holidays, the cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 30, at Firelands Electric's facility, located at 103 Industrial Drive, New London.

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 (EFFECTIVE DEC. 2)

Mon.–Fri. 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
www.firelandsec.com



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach
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GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaul

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

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