

Nestled on a knoll along River Road, as the name implies, rests a scenic establishment tucked within a wooded drive. If it weren't for the sign at the end of the driveway signaling *blueberries this way* you may not even notice this hidden treasure. Upon arrival up the drive, you'll notice a hillside dotted with more blueberry plants than the eye can readily count. You'll see how well cared for the property is from the regularly mown grass to the pristine rows of plants surrounded by pine shavings. Last, but not least, you'll meet the people who take credit for the hard work behind the scenes.

After retiring from dairy farming several years ago, Jackson Electric members Ruth and Dennis (Bill) Zielsdorf shifted gears to a different kind of farming, raising blueberries. "He's a farmer at heart," shares Ruth of her husband. "He enjoys doing research and learning new practices."

"It's more of a hobby than anything," says Bill. "There's some profit in it, but there's also a lot of work behind it. We don't depend on it as our main source of income."

Sunnyvale Blueberries started out with just 40 plants and has grown over the years to more than 2,000 plants. Ruth describes their operation as small-scale compared to other area operations, such as Cain's Orchard in Hixton, where Ruth and Bill used to purchase their blueberries. They also looked to Cain's for advice as they first started out. "We enjoyed going to Cain's to pick blueberries so much that we decided to grow our own," Ruth recalls. "We also knew the health benefits of blueberries."

Ruth and Bill ordered their first plants from a distributor in Michigan and took a trip there to pick them up. The blueberry plants do well in the sandy loam soil at their establishment. "It has taken 15 years to get to the established plants we have today," says Ruth. "We have five varieties: Patriot, Bluecrop, Blueray, Toro, and Nelson. You need at least two varieties for pollination," she adds.

Small-scale doesn't mean that there isn't work to be done. "We start pruning in December or January if there isn't any snow. Otherwise, we do that in March or April," explains Bill. "In April we start spraying an organic spray to help with insects and disease,



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which is one of the main concerns with blueberries."

The greatest challenge in raising blueberries is the weather. With the frost this year, Bill had to spray copper on the plants to slow down the budding process. Copper as a trace mineral has been shown to lower the freezing temperature in plants. Otherwise, the buds can freeze off and limit production. Blueberries also need plenty of rain, about an inch per week. If that's not achieved naturally, Bill and Ruth turn to their irrigation system. It takes three to four days to irrigate all the blueberry plants.

"We started out with a drip system and sawdust, finding that didn't work well," explains Ruth. "We quickly switched to overhead irrigation sprayers and mulch the plants with dried pine



Ruth and Bill take a ride in one of the golf carts available to transport guests. Notice the golden yellow overhead irrigators scattered throughout the patch.

A journey to the top of the hill offers a picturesque view of the blueberry landscape below.



Right: The check-in/check-out shed at Sunnyvale Blueberries is the starting point to pick your own blueberries. There are also pre-picked berries in the cooler, ready for you to take home.

Below: Sunnyvale Blueberries offers five berry varieties with neatly labelled rows.



shavings because the water can soak in better,” Bill adds.

With all the maintenance behind the scenes, a bountiful yield of blueberries can be found around mid-July for the community to enjoy. The work doesn’t end there, though. Someone has to pick the berries for pre-picked sales. “The Amish youth help us out with a lot of the picking. They’re good pickers,” says Ruth. “We usually have four to five youth from several families, and now some have become adults and bring their children to show them where they worked as youngsters. Our daughter helps with the marketing, and the grandchildren like to help out, too.”

Pre-picked berries can be ordered a day or two ahead of time and purchased at the checkout shed. You are also welcome to gather up the family and get the whole blueberry experience by either walking up the hill to pick your own or catching a ride on one of the golf carts. “Once people learn that it’s not hard to pick, they have a lot of fun,” Ruth shares. “We can even bring chairs up on the golf carts to make picking accessible for everyone.”

If you have time to stop by, Ruth and Bill will appreciate your visit. “We have visitors from cities all over—Madison, Edgerton, and we even have a family that comes from Iowa every year,” Bill says. “What I enjoy most is getting to meet all the people that come from all over,” Ruth concludes.—

Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor

July is known not only for Independence Day, but blueberry season.

Sunnyvale Blueberries is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For the latest updates:

Online: www.sunnyvaleblueberries.com

Facebook: Sunnyvale Farms Blueberries

Phone: 715.284.2126



Congratulations to Our Scholarship Recipients



Cooperatives are committed to the enrichment of the communities they serve. That’s why each year since 1998, Jackson Electric Cooperative has used a portion of its Federated Youth Foundation funds to provide post-secondary education scholarships to area high school seniors. This account is funded from Jackson Electric’s unclaimed capital credits.

This annual youth scholarship program offers a \$1,000 scholarship to one qualified candidate from each of the eight high schools in Jackson Electric’s service territory. These candidates are selected by the respective high school’s scholarship committee. Open-enrolled, home-schooled, or private-schooled students are also eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship. This year, we were honored to provide \$9,000 in scholarship awards to nine deserving students in the class of 2021.

We know that post-secondary education is costly, and it is our hope that these scholarship funds assist these students in making their education dreams a reality.



Elizabeth Prindle, Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan High School



Grace Grulkowski, Osseo-Fairchild High School



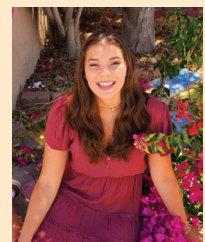
Matt Becker, Black River Falls High School



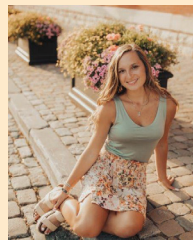
Kyle Steien, Blair-Taylor High School



Aidan Sprague, Sparta High School



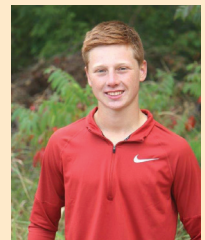
Sami Huff, Whitehall High School



Evianna Radcliffe, Melrose-Mindoro High School



Sarah Dux, Neillsville High School



Hunter Neumann, Open-Enrolled

JACKSON ELECTRIC'S ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Some of the most frequently asked questions fielded by our office involve Jackson Electric's energy management program. Whether you are a seasoned program participant or a new member, we're sure there are more members out there with questions. We have the answers.

Q: What is Jackson Electric's energy management program?

A: In the simplest of terms, on the hottest and coldest days of the year, there is a higher demand on the electrical grid. It is during this time that the cost to purchase electricity is high. Thus, our power supplier, Dairyland Power, may issue an energy management event, otherwise known as a peak alert, or an economic control to reduce electrical demand on the grid. When an event is issued, members who have an energy management receiver may have their water heaters and electric heating/cooling equipment interrupted for a period of time.

Q: What is an energy management receiver?

A: Members who participate in Jackson Electric's dual fuel or water heater program have an energy management receiver, which is typically a gray box with a diagram on the outside that summarizes what the control lights mean. Receivers are usually installed outside, near the meter, and wired into the breaker panel. In some cases, the receiver is installed inside the home, near the breaker panel.

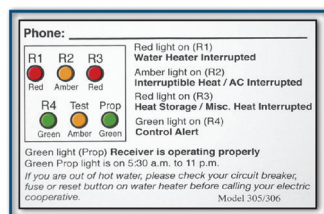


Q: How does an energy management receiver work?

A: When an energy management event is issued, a radio signal is sent to the receiver from Dairyland Power to interrupt the loads wired for the control. This may include electric heating/cooling systems and water heaters on the dual fuel program, and water heaters not on the dual fuel program.

Q: Red light, green light, amber light on the receivers: what do they all mean?

A: When loads are interrupted, you'll know by the corresponding light on your energy management receiver. Running out of hot water? Check to see if the red (R1) light is on. If so, your water heater's elements are interrupted. You will be able to use the hot water in the tank, but your water heater will not heat more water until the energy management event ends. Air conditioning cycling on and off every 15 minutes? If the amber (R2) light is on, your heat pump or air conditioner is part of the control. If the green (prop) light is on in the lower right corner, that means that your receiver is working properly. If the amber (test) light is ever flashing, please notify Jackson Electric.



Q: What does it mean that loads are interrupted? Will I still be able to use my water heater?

A: Don't let the word "interrupted" discourage you from having an energy management receiver installed at your location. The program is not meant to be an inconvenience, but rather an opportunity to manage the electric demand on the grid, thus helping to maintain balance between the supply and demand for electricity. Purchasing electricity economically by managing demand helps maintain steady rates. Most members say they don't notice when their equipment is being interrupted.

Please know that you can still use your hot water while your water heater is interrupted. While interrupted, the elements are not heating any new water that comes into the tank to replenish the hot water used during the interruption. There is a chance that you could run out of hot water if usage is not monitored, and members are encouraged to shift hot water usage to non-control times, if possible.

If you do find your household running out of hot water during an energy management event, try limiting the hot water you are using during the interruption period or shift your use to periods outside of the control, such as waiting until after the energy management event to run the dishwasher, etc. Large storage water heaters are advised for those members who participate in the dual fuel program so that those members potentially have enough hot water stored to get through the daily energy storage control period.

Cooling equipment, such as air source heat pumps, wired for control on the dual fuel program are cycled on and off every 15 minutes when an energy management event is issued. This minimal interruption should not have an impact on your home's comfort.

Q: How does the energy management program benefit me?

A: In addition to managing the demand for electricity and keeping rates at bay, members with 50-gallon or larger water heaters qualify for the water heater program. Under this program, water heaters wired for control with an energy management receiver qualify for parts and service related to element or thermostat repair during regular office hours.

Members who participate in the dual fuel program receive a special off-peak rate because we are able to manage the daily energy load of dual fuel water heaters (Monday–Friday) and the load of any electric heating or cooling loads during an energy management event.

Q: If I'm still unsure if my loads are interrupted, where can I look? Can I be notified of an energy management event?

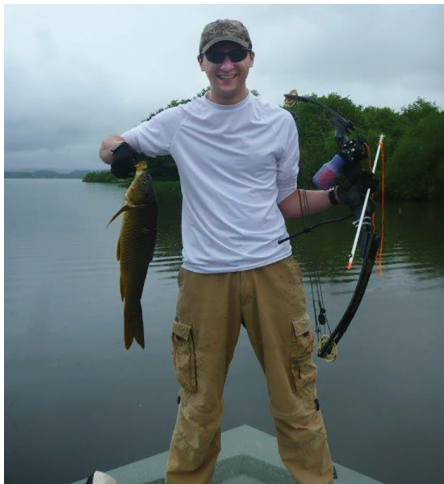
A: If you're still unsure of your control status go to www.jackelec.com, click Residential Energy Management towards the bottom of the home screen, and view your corresponding load class. Your load class is located on your billing statement. You can also enroll in energy management notifications by downloading the form from our website or requesting a form from our office.



YOUTH AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCE PREPARES YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE

Do you remember our youth ambassador scholarship recipient from the class of 2016 youth ambassadors? We recently had the privilege of catching up with Joe Stange to see where his journey preceded after the program. We're impressed to hear of his accomplishments and enthusiastic to know that he has carried elements of the program with him through college and as he starts his career.

"The program placed a strong emphasis on teamwork and cooperation," shares Joe Stange, past youth ambassador program participant and scholarship recipient. "These are core values that I



Bowfishing is one of Joe's favorite pastimes.

carried forward through college and exercise on a daily basis in my career."

After graduating from Melrose-Mindoro High School in 2016, Joe continued his education at University of Wisconsin-Platteville where he graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, which has been his plan since sixth grade. He currently holds a full-time position at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and seeks to earn his professional engineering license. "I'm also saving up to buy a house," Joe adds.

Joe's cooperative experience did not end with the youth ambassador program. Joe notes his Co-op Credit Union membership and the many positive experiences he has had with them as his primary financial institution. He has also demonstrated the seventh cooperative principle, concern for community, through his volunteerism at several church-related functions and the many clubs he is involved with, to



One of the youth ambassadors' activities is volunteering with Project Christmas. Joe is helping prepare pillows for families in need.

include Coulee Archers, Tri-County Archers, and the Pioneer Sportsmen's Club.

He also did not shy away from leadership opportunities during college, and now, in the workplace. He held the chair of archery position with the Pioneer Sportsmen's Club at UW-Platteville, coordinated National Archery in the Schools Program events, served in various team lead/manager positions while in college, and

now works as a program engineer, which involves managing multiple aspects of work operations on a construction site.

Joe says that the youth ambassador program has absolutely made an impact in his life.

"During the program, we were granted multiple opportunities to participate in activities that pushed us outside our comfort zones," recalls Joe. "We learned to adapt and become comfortable in those situations, an invaluable life skill that is needed more often than you'd think in the real world." — Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor

WATER HEATER AFTER-HOURS CALLS UPDATE

Jackson Electric will no longer be offering after-hours water heater repairs and water heater pick up as of September 30, 2021.

Jackson Electric Cooperative's VIRTUAL Annual Meeting

Tuesday, August 24, 2021 • 7 p.m.

Watch for your annual report in the August issue of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.



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