



A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Happy Cooperative Month!

Carol Blaken, General Manager/CEO

During the 1930s, electric cooperatives were established to bring electricity to the rural areas investor-owned utilities would not serve because it was too costly and unprofitable. With all the conveniences powered by electricity today, it's easy to forget that less than 100 years ago, fewer than 10 percent of rural Americans had electricity. Jackson Electric was established in 1937 to meet that need, and our purpose remains the same today: to provide safe, reliable electric service to our members.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, Jackson Electric is governed by a member-elected board of directors. The board's responsibility is to ensure the cooperative remains focused on its mission of delivering reliable power at the lowest reasonable cost while maintaining the infrastructure, equipment, and workforce necessary to serve our membership. Every major decision is evaluated through that lens, ensuring we continue

to provide the dependable electric service our members rely on every day.

Our core mission is one of the many things that makes the cooperative model unique and worth celebrating during Cooperative Month and throughout the year. To celebrate Cooperative Month, we'd like to invite our members to stop by our lobby throughout October. We'll have treats available for members on Thursdays and opportunities to win prizes as a small token of appreciation for your membership.

Over the past several months, you've likely noticed construction crews transforming our facility. Our truck bay and warehouse expansion is well underway. In addition, interior updates, including fresh paint and new flooring, began in mid-September. Depending on the construction schedule and progress, members visiting us during Cooperative Month may notice ongoing improvements in and around our facility. While these upgrades may create occasional inconveniences, they represent an investment in our future and in the cooperative's ability to safely and reliably serve members for years to come.

Every time you do business with your cooperative, attend a meeting, participate in an event, or provide feedback, you help strengthen what makes us successful. Thank you for your continued support, engagement, and trust.

Weekly In-Office Treats:

- 1



Co-ops are the Perfect Blend:
Coffee and Donuts
Thursday, October 1


- 2



A Kernel of Thanks:
Movie Theater Popcorn and JEC-Branded Mini Buckets
Thursday, October 8


- 3



Members are the Sweetest Part:
Ice Cream Sandwiches
Thursday, October 15


- 4



Fall into Co-op Spirit:
Cookies and Cider
Thursday, October 22


- 5



No Tricks, Just Treats:
Halloween Candy
October 26-30



Thank you for powering our community!

Office Closed

October 7, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Employee Good Neighbor Day

Report outages to 855.222.3275

Payments: 833.679.0919,
Pay Now at www.jackelec.com,
secure drop box in parking lot

MORE THAN A FOOD PANTRY:

FRIENDS SHARING FOOD SPARKS HOPE AND STRIKES OUT HUNGER

When most people think of hunger, they picture a problem somewhere else. Yet for many individuals and families in Jackson County, access to food remains an ongoing challenge.

According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap research, approximately 13.4% of Jackson County residents, or over 2,800 people, experience food insecurity, meaning they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

Behind that statistic are neighbors facing various circumstances: a job loss, an illness, rising living expenses, an unexpected emergency, or simply a difficult season of life.

For nearly two decades, Friends Sharing Food has been helping meet that need. What has grown into Friends Sharing Food began with a simple observation. The Gebhardt Elementary School principal at the time, Jon Warmke, noticed children in his school were going home hungry, while grocery stores had surplus food that might otherwise go to waste. Recognizing both a need and an opportunity, community members came together to create a solution.

Today, Friends Sharing Food is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported by donations from individuals, churches, civic organizations, foundations, grants, and volunteers. Its mission is straightforward: reducing hunger in Jackson County while treating every person with compassion, dignity, and respect.

While one program has income guidelines, the organization's philosophy remains to help others. "We would never turn anyone away," says outgoing Board President Kathy Laudon. "Anyone can come to any pantry anytime there is a need."

Over the years, what began as an effort to help children has expanded into multiple programs serving residents throughout the county. Friends Sharing Food operates the Friends' Food Shelf, Neighborhood Food Pantry, Jackson County Food Pantry, Food for Kids, and Essential Needs Program.

The Essential Needs Program supplies personal care and household items such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene products, incontinence supplies, toilet paper, and dish soap. While these necessities often do not qualify for food assistance benefits, they are critical to maintaining health, dignity, and quality of life.

Perhaps what stands out most to volunteers is the gratitude they encounter. "Every recipient says thank you and is polite and



Friends Sharing Food volunteers prepare boxes of fresh food for distribution to individuals and families throughout Jackson County.

appreciative," says Laudon.

Dr. Carol Martin, incoming board president, says she is continually inspired by the generosity she sees, both from donors and those receiving assistance.

"Recipients decline items they don't need or know they won't use so that they can be given to someone else," Dr. Martin says. "That is amazing to me."

As someone who did not grow up in the area, Dr. Martin has continually observed the way local residents help one another. "This is an extremely generous community," she says. "When there's a need, this community rises up to meet it."

That spirit of collaboration is now taking shape through a new Community Food Team, an effort to bring organizations together in addressing food insecurity across Jackson County. "Our goal is not to duplicate services, but to make the best use of resources," Dr. Martin explains.

The Community Food Team includes churches that provide community meals, organizations that offer shelter services, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and other agencies working to support county residents. By sharing information and coordinating resources, the group hopes to identify gaps in services and strengthen the community's ability to respond to hunger and related needs.

The effort recognizes that no single organization can solve food insecurity alone. It takes partnerships, communication, and people willing to work together for the good of their neighbors.

That philosophy may sound familiar to cooperative members. Just as cooperatives are built on the principle of Concern for Community, Friends Sharing Food demonstrates what is possible when people come together to help one another. Volunteers unload trucks, sort donations, make deliveries, stock shelves, and serve families throughout the county.

Friends Sharing Food has 75 volunteers, 5 pantry coordinators, and 7 board members. "Our volunteers are our backbone," Dr. Martin says. "They are driving, unloading semis, and taking the food into the community. If you are unable to support Friends Sharing Food monetarily, maybe you are able to donate your time."

Laudon agrees. "We are here for the community through it all," she says. "We are still open during bad weather, and we made food deliveries during COVID to ensure community members still had access to food."



Boxes filled with fresh produce are ready to be distributed through Friends Sharing Food's pantry programs.



The organization's work is made possible not only by donors and volunteers, but also by community partnerships. Friends Sharing Food is grateful to the Black River Falls School District for providing space that allows the organization to serve county residents while keeping costs manageable.

"We're very appreciative of the school district and their support," says Laudon. "Having that space allows us to focus our resources on serving people in need. We only pay our portion of the utilities, which helps us direct more of our donations back into the programs."

Whether it's a can of soup, a bottle of shampoo, a monetary gift, or a few hours of volunteer service, every contribution helps ensure local families have access to food and essential resources when they need them most.

"No one should have to worry about where their next meal is coming from," Dr. Martin concludes. "The generosity of this community makes a difference every day, and together we're helping our neighbors."



Outgoing board president Kathy Laudon (left) and incoming board president Dr. Carol Martin (right) help lead Friends Sharing Food's efforts to reduce hunger in Jackson County.

How You Can Help

To help support Friends Sharing Food and its mission, Jackson Electric Cooperative is holding a donation drive during October in celebration of Cooperative Month, practicing the cooperative principle of Concern for Community.

While all donations are appreciated, Friends Sharing Food notes that monetary donations often have the greatest impact. Through partnerships with organizations such as Feed My People Food Bank, Friends Sharing Food can stretch your donated dollars approximately two and a half times further than your retail purchase.

Donations of nonperishable boxed and canned foods are also welcome, along with personal care and household essentials. Donated items must be within their "Best By" dates, and prepared foods or products containing alcohol or medicinal ingredients cannot be accepted.

Bring in your monetary, nonperishable food, or personal care item donations to Jackson Electric throughout October and be entered in a special drawing for one of three grand prizes.

Note: If you have homegrown fruits or vegetables that you would like to donate, please contact Friends Sharing Food directly to coordinate this donation. — *Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Supervisor*

Friends Sharing Food

411 Gebhardt Rd., Black River Falls, WI

Located in Gebhardt School (entrance and parking available on fenced playground)

Emergency Food: 715-670-8489

Volunteer opportunities, food donations, or essential needs: 715-299-1992

DONATION DRIVE
GRAND PRIZES
One entry per membership.

Bring in a monetary donation, nonperishable food item, or personal care item for entry to win one of three grand prizes.

Grand Prize: \$300 Hansen's Gift Card
Second Place: All-Terrain Wagon
Third Place: Emergency Roadside Kit

The poster shows a shopping cart filled with various items, including a Hansen's Market gift card, a VCAN roadside emergency kit, and a black all-terrain wagon.

SPIN TO WIN

The wheel is divided into six segments, each with a prize:

- Insulated Shopping Tote
- Camp Lantern
- Snow Brush
- Insulated Water Bottle
- Umbrella
- Camp Mug

At the bottom, a banner reads: **Member Appreciation Month Giveaways**

JACKSON ELECTRIC SUPPORTS LOCAL CANCER PATIENTS

For the past two years, Jackson Electric Cooperative has partnered with Black River Health to support local patients receiving infusion treatments. While ongoing construction at our facility will prevent us from holding our traditional member picnic and fundraiser this year, we are still committed to making a difference.

Throughout the month of October, members are invited to participate in a freewill donation drive in our lobby. With a suggested donation of \$1, you will receive a Support Squad decal as a visible show of your support for local cancer patients and their families.

All donations collected will benefit the Black River Health Infusion Center and will be used to purchase port shirts for patients undergoing infusion treatments. Port shirts are specially designed garments that allow easy and discreet access to medical ports or IV sites without requiring patients to remove their clothing or change into a hospital gown.

While a port shirt may seem like a small item, it can make a meaningful difference during treatment. Features such as hidden zippers and snap openings provide comfort,

convenience, and dignity, helping make a challenging experience a little easier for those facing cancer treatment.

By supporting this effort, you're helping provide a simple comfort to local patients during some of their most difficult days. Together, we can show that no one has to face their cancer journey alone.

If you have questions regarding the Infusion Center, please contact Infusion Center Lead RN, Kristi Dobson, BSN, RN at 715.284.3404 or dobsonk@blackriverhealth.com.



Customer Service 715.284.5385
800.370.4607
Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)
Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511
Card Payments 833.679.0919
www.jackelec.com



Mailing Address: N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, WI 54615
Office Hours: Mondays – Thursdays, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Fridays, 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Board of Directors: Chris Curran, President
Kristi Hanson, Vice President
David Peasley, Secretary-Treasurer
Jerry Huber, Dairyland Power Representative
Les Dokkestul, Kris Goetzka, Brian Huber,
Troy Torkelson, Gary Woods
Carol Blaken, General Manager/CEO

Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

