

RESILIENCE IN REAL TIME:

CATCHING UP WITH THE CLASS OF 2020

YOUTH AMBASSADORS



Each summer, we reconnect with a remarkable group: our youth ambassador alumni from five years ago. These check-ins offer a chance to reflect on their journeys, celebrate their accomplishments, and learn how their time in the program continues to shape who they are today.

The Class of 2020 holds a particularly special place in our hearts. This year, we're catching up with the group that faced a sudden and unprecedented challenge: the abrupt end of their program in March 2020, as the world grappled with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. What was meant to be a celebratory final season of growth, learning, and leadership came to an unexpected halt.

Despite the disruption, these students have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, growth, and determination in the years since. Many of our Class of 2020 alumni are now mentoring others, pursuing graduate studies, launching meaningful careers, or giving back to the very communities that helped shape them.

As we reflect on their journeys, we're reminded that leadership doesn't always come with a roadmap. Sometimes, it's forged in uncertainty. We're proud to share where their paths have led, and how their time as youth ambassadors continues to guide them forward.

Isabella (Cowles) St. John: From Literature Lover to Educator



After graduating from Black River Falls High School in 2020, Isabella (Cowles) St. John began her college journey at North Central University in Minneapolis, Minn., with the goal of becoming an elementary school teacher. "I had always planned on this career path," Isabella recalls, "but through the coursework I realized elementary education wasn't right for me. I didn't

have a passion for teaching multiple subjects each day." Her interests initially shifted toward business education, but it wasn't until she explored literature that she discovered her true calling. "I realized my overwhelming love of literature, and I had to immerse myself in it completely," she says.

Once she changed her major to Education 5–12: Communication Arts and Literature, everything fell into place. In 2024, Isabella graduated with her degree and began her teaching career as an eighth-grade English Language Arts teacher at Mankato Public Schools (Minn.). Her first year

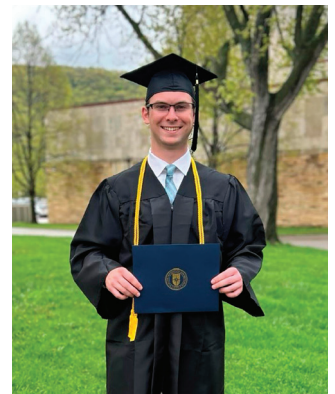
in the classroom brought both challenges and opportunities, including a leadership role as the yearbook advisor. "I had an exciting first year teaching," she shares.

Now, Isabella is returning to her roots. She and her husband have recently relocated to the Black River Falls area, and she will begin teaching English at Tomah High School in the fall of 2025. Looking ahead, Isabella hopes to pursue a master's degree in English literature.

Isabella's commitment to the community and cooperatives has been a constant throughout her journey. From her involvement in the youth ambassador program to ongoing membership with Co-op Credit Union and volunteer work at a local church in Mankato, Isabella continues to embody the values of service and lifelong learning.

Seth Peterson: Future Physician Assistant

Following graduation from Melrose-Mindoro High School in 2020, Seth Peterson attended Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minn., where he pursued a Bachelor of Science in Biology with an emphasis on Pre-Physician Assistant Studies. In May 2024, he graduated Magna Cum Laude. "I wanted to obtain my bachelor's degree so I could eventually pursue a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies (MSPAS) and begin my career as a Physician Assistant," Seth shares.



Now, Seth is enrolled in the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse. This rigorous two-year program will prepare him to take on roles in hospitals where he hopes to serve his local community with compassion and care. This passion for healthcare was sparked during his time in Jackson Electric's youth ambassador program. "From visiting nursing home residents to participating in Project Christmas, these early experiences helped me understand the importance of service and teamwork and solidified my desire to enter the healthcare field," he explains.

At Saint Mary's, Seth made contributions to his campus community. He served two years as a Student Senate Class Representative, working with university administrators to voice student concerns and inspire positive change. Additionally, he worked as a Student Success Peer Mentor, guiding underclassmen in study strategies, time management, and biology coursework. "I participated in initiatives such as

highway cleanups and assembling warming bags with hygiene products and clothing for local shelters,” Seth shares. “I also helped establish a food pantry on campus to support students facing financial challenges.”

As Seth begins the next chapter in his journey, he remains deeply grateful for the role Jackson Electric played in helping him discover his passion and potential. “Jackson Electric’s youth ambassador program is a fantastic opportunity for high school students to explore their interests,” he reflects. “I am very fortunate to have been a part of it and to have received the scholarship award to make college more attainable,” he concludes.

Emma Fischer: From High School Graduate to Healthcare Professional



In 2020, Emma Fischer graduated from Lincoln High School with a clear vision for her future: a career in medical laboratory science. “Immediately after high school, I enrolled in the Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) program at Western Technical College,” Emma recalls. “It was a decision that aligned perfectly with my long-term goals.”

Over the next few years, Emma dedicated herself to the program, combining classroom learning with hands-on experience. In 2023, she earned her associate degree in Medical Laboratory Science. Today, she works as a Medical Lab Technician at Black River Health (Black River Memorial Hospital). “I enjoy the work I do and the team I’m a part of,” she says. “My goal is to continue growing in my current role.”

While at Western Technical College, Emma was an active member of the MLT Quiz Bowl team. She now serves as the head operator for one of the hospital’s laboratory analyzers, a role requiring both technical expertise and leadership. “I also had the unique opportunity to attend a training program in Florida, where I learned to develop and manage a robust clinical urinalysis program,” she adds.

Outside of work and academics, Emma is passionate about giving back. Whether raking leaves in local neighborhoods or volunteering in the livestock barn at the Jackson County Fair, she finds fulfillment in service. Her involvement in Jackson Electric’s youth ambassador program was especially impactful. “It opened my eyes to the value of community involvement,” she says.

The program also helped Emma develop strong leadership skills and build a solid foundation for her career. “It showed me that even as a student, I could make a real difference. That early exposure to leadership and service helped shape who I am today,” she concludes.

Kaylee Haag: A Journey in Youth Mental Health and Community Service

A 2020 graduate of Melrose-Mindoro High School, Kaylee Haag pursued a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in Spanish at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. Her college years were marked by academic dedication and cultural exploration. “In college, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Guatemala and Chile,” Kaylee shares. “It really broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for language and cultural understanding.”



Her passion for language extended beyond travel. While at UW–Eau Claire, Kaylee served as a teacher’s aide for Spanish 101 and mentored international students through the university’s intensive English program. “Those roles helped me grow in ways I didn’t expect,” she says.

After graduating in 2023, Kaylee moved to Winona, Minn., in 2024 to begin her professional career as a children’s mental health practitioner at a local non-profit organization. “I’ve always been passionate about mental health,” she explains, “but it was volunteering with the Boys and Girls Club of America during college that really sparked my interest in working with youth specifically.”

That spark turned into lasting dedication. In addition to her full-time role, Kaylee continues to give back to the community as a volunteer with the Miller Mentoring Program at Winona Area Public Schools. “I’ve really enjoyed being part of Miller Mentoring, and I’m looking forward to returning for the 2025–2026 school year,” she says.

Kaylee’s experience as a youth ambassador with Jackson Electric taught her about the cooperative business model, how cooperatives support their communities, and the importance of supporting local businesses and initiatives. Kaylee continues to interact with cooperatives through her membership with Co-op Credit Union and by purchasing groceries at Bluffview Country Co-op in Winona. “Co-ops aren’t just places to shop or bank, they’re built to serve people, and that aligns with my values,” she concludes.

The Lasting Impact of the Program

Although their youth ambassador experience ended abruptly, the Class of 2020 continues to demonstrate just how enduring the program’s influence can be. These alumni frequently credit their time as ambassadors with shaping core values that still guide them today: confidence, a heart for service, and the ability to lead with empathy. Whether they’re mentoring others, advancing their education, or serving their communities, the lessons they learned through the program remain a powerful part of their personal and professional journeys. —*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Supervisor*

2025 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Jackson Electric proudly supports the future of its community by investing in education through its annual youth scholarship program. As a member-owned cooperative, Jackson Electric understands the vital role cooperatives play in strengthening local communities, not just by providing reliable services, but also by giving back in meaningful ways. Each year, the Cooperative awards up to ten \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are active members. Additionally, a \$1,500 youth ambassador scholarship is available to a student who has actively participated in Jackson Electric's youth ambassador program.

These scholarships are made possible through unclaimed capital credits, funds that would otherwise go unused, which Jackson Electric contributes to the Federated Youth Foundation. These funds are designated strictly for scholarships and charitable causes, underscoring the Cooperative's commitment to social responsibility. Jackson Electric awarded a total of \$9,500 in scholarships to the class of 2025, helping local students take the next step toward their futures.



Isabella Libke
Melrose-Mindoro
High School



Reese Cowley
Melrose-Mindoro
High School



Cadence Holliday
Melrose-Mindoro
High School



Mytchell Wollin
Melrose-Mindoro
High School



Ashley Wyss
Melrose-Mindoro
High School



Connor Carlson
Black River Falls
High School



Noah Larkin
Black River Falls
High School



Solomon Olson
Lincoln
High School



Dea Jacobson
Youth Ambassador
Lincoln High School

WELCOME, BENJAMIN AND ETHAN

Jackson Electric welcomes two new team members, Benjamin Pyka and Ethan Friedel, who joined us on May 19, 2025, as 1,000-hour laborers. Both are recent graduates of Electrical Power Distribution programs—Benjamin from Blackhawk Technical College and Ethan from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College.

This position provides valuable hands-on experience and often serves as a stepping stone toward electric line worker apprenticeships and long-term careers in the field. Both Benjamin and Ethan have expressed their excitement about joining the team and look forward to learning and growing in their new roles.

Meet Benjamin Pyka



Hometown: Independence, Wis.

Interest in the Career:

"I completed a youth apprenticeship in high school, which piqued my interest."

Looking Forward To: "I want to get the most out of this experience and gain

insight on what line work is all about."

Future Goals: To become an apprentice line worker and eventually a journeyman line worker.

Hobbies: Hunting and fishing

Meet Ethan Friedel

Hometown: Fairchild, Wis.

Interest in the Career: "I like being outdoors and working outside. My uncle's brother was a line worker."

Looking Forward To: "I want to gain experience and get to know the crew."

Future Goals: To earn an apprenticeship and become a journeyman line worker.

Hobbies: Hunting and fishing



We're excited to have Benjamin and Ethan on board and look forward to seeing them grow with Jackson Electric. Welcome to the team!

WHAT ARE THOSE CHARGES ON MY BILLING STATEMENT?

Understanding Wisconsin's Residential Seasonal Sales Tax and Tax-Exempt Status

Seasonal Sales Tax: When It Applies

In Wisconsin, electricity provided to residential properties is subject to a 5.5% state sales tax from May through October. During the winter moratorium (November 1 to April 15), electricity used for heating primary residences is exempt from sales tax.

This exemption, outlined in Wisconsin Administrative Code Tax 11.57(2)(n), is part of a seasonal policy designed to reduce financial strain during the winter, when heating costs can be especially high. Importantly, this exemption applies only to primary residences, not vacation homes, rental properties, or second homes.

Residential Jackson Electric members will notice the sales tax returned to their electric bills with the May usage, June billing statement.

Who Qualifies for Tax-Exempt Status Year-Round?

In addition to the seasonal exemption for primary residences, certain individuals and organizations may qualify for year-round sales tax exemptions on their electric bills. These include:

- Farmers and agricultural producers: Exempt when electricity is used for farming operations.
- Manufacturers: Exempt for electricity used directly in the manufacturing process.
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: Religious, charitable, scientific, or educational organizations may be eligible.
- Government entities: Federal, state, and local government agencies are typically exempt from sales tax on utilities.

How to Claim an Exemption

To receive an exemption, eligible individuals and organizations must submit a Wisconsin Sales and Use Tax

Current Service Detail

Facility Charge		34.50
Commitment To Community		1.40
Energy Charge	921 kWh @ 0.1306	120.28
Demand Charge	11.1 kW @ 0.0	0.00
PCA	921 kWh @ 0.0	0.00
Wisconsin State Tax		7.74
Jackson County Tax		0.77
Total Current Charges		164.69

Exemption Certificate (Form S-211) to Jackson Electric. This form can be downloaded at www.jackelec.com/tax-exempt or from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue website. Jackson Electric does not automatically apply exemptions, and **it is the member's responsibility to keep exemption information current and accurate.**



SOLAR FOR OUR MEMBERS

JACKSONSOLAR:
Your Local, Trusted Solar Energy Installer

JacksonSolar is your local, trusted solar energy installer here to guide you, not just sell to you. We'll help you understand the installation process and real payback potential so you can make an informed decision. Call 715.284.5385 or visit jackelec.com/jacksonsolar-llc to see if solar energy is right for you.



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, Brian Huber, Dan Smrekar,
Troy Torkelson, Gary Woods
Carol Blaken, General Manager/CEO

Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

