



TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Kevin Babcock, General Manager/CEO

For the first time in 83 years, to my knowledge, Jackson Electric closed its lobby to walk-in traffic on March 18, 2020. This closure was an effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which causes the illness known as COVID-19. As of this writing, April 1, our lobby doors remain closed and will be closed until we've been given notice that the threat of the coronavirus has cleared.

A few days later, the governor issued an executive order to shut down all nonessential activities in the State of Wisconsin.

Prepare to be prepared. We have always had an emergency plan that has served us well in a variety of circumstances, from winter storms to tornadoes. Early on in this crisis, our management team updated that plan with a distinct emphasis on ensuring we could continue to provide the same reliable electric service our members have come to expect from Jackson Electric.

Because so many were required to hunker down at home, it was our number-one priority to keep the power flowing so that you, our member, could maintain some sense of normalcy during a time of great uncertainty.

To keep our emergency plan viable, we had to keep our employees safe and healthy. We implemented strict workplace sanitary measures to prevent the spread of this virus, and our management team met daily to fine-tune this plan as we moved through the month of April.

During a health crisis, we often first think of the impact sanitary measures make. However, the fear of this virus also made an economic impact in our community. Businesses were forced to shut their doors, and employees were laid off. The economic impact was also felt here at Jackson Electric.

When a business closes its doors and residential members get laid off, the difficulty of making bill payments becomes a reality. When businesses close their doors, production and service are halted. With a freeze in production, Jackson Electric

sees a decrease in kilowatt-hour sales and revenue.

To soften the financial hit of decreased revenue and an anticipated increase in outstanding member account balances, the management team dissected each of their departments. Management took a hard look at areas it could suspend, including maintenance and upgrade projects and limiting services and publications. Several more items may be suspended throughout the remainder of the year.

Rate Adjustment

Unfortunately, our timing could not have been worse for a rate adjustment. The rate adjustment was approved by your board of directors at the January 8, 2020, special board meeting to adjust facility charges and increase demand fees. Residential members will see, on average, an increase of \$3 per month on their electric bill. You will see this rate adjustment on your May billing statement.

Jackson Electric has not adjusted its rates since 2012. Yet, the cost to purchase energy from our power supplier has not decreased; rather, it has increased. Currently, 70 percent of Jackson Electric's expense is consumed by the wholesale power bill. Up until now, through successful financial planning, budgeting, and timing, Jackson Electric has been able to absorb increased rates and fees from our power supplier.

However, there comes a time when we can only do so much to maintain the budget. The cost of materials and equipment to provide reliable power to your homes and businesses continues to rise, and we need to ensure that our facilities are capable of meeting your electrical needs.

Postponed Annual Meeting Date

Jackson Electric's annual meeting that was scheduled for April 7, 2020, was postponed. As soon as a new date is set, we will notify all active members through social media, our website, and our SmartHub portal.

Save Money by Purchasing Solar Now!

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NETWORK FOR YOUTH BRIDGES GAP

Eighteen years old. It's that magic birthday that labels you as an adult. For most youth, this birthday signifies that you'll soon be headed off to independence, whether that's entering the workforce, enlisting in the armed forces, or enrolling in college. But for others, this may be a troubling time. Youth aging out of foster care may not have the same continued support and resources to help them successfully transition into adulthood.

"We operate with the belief that every person has the potential to become a successful and contributing member of our community," shares Jackson Electric member Donna Sigler, founder and president of Network For Youth, located on South Second Street in Black River Falls.

Donna's inspiration for the organization began through her experience serving as a foster parent for nine years. Over that time, she and her husband fostered 49 children. Donna has witnessed firsthand the barriers faced by youth in foster care and those who are aging out of foster care. Just because these youth have turned 18 does not mean that they don't need resources and reliable adult mentors to support them as they work to grow into successful adults. "Across the nation, statistics are fairly consistent," Donna says. "On average, 38 to 42 percent of those aging out of foster care become homeless within the first three years."

That's where Network For Youth comes in. Established in 2016, the organization strives to reach foster children before they have aged out of foster care, bridging the gap between foster care and entering society. The goal is to provide these youth with reliable support and connect them to resources such as life skills training, educational opportunities, and employment placement. The desired outcome is to decrease the odds of the cycle repeating. "We are looking for a future where children have stable homes and can skip the foster care experience," Donna says. "Continued support can also reduce the number of negative contacts with law enforcement and increase opportunities for our most vulnerable population."

A walk inside the organization's headquarters is like stepping into a living room, a home of sorts. There's a couch, tables to socialize at and play games, a gallery of framed art,

Network For Youth and UMOS are located on 21 S. Second Street in Black River Falls. If you're passing by, stop in and check out the thrift shop.



coffee, water, and light food, such as Ramen or a PB&J. Everyone who walks through the door is welcomed, regardless of their current situation.

A venture further into the building leads to the thrift shop where both community members and clients can find affordable clothing, accessories, books, and small household items. The thrift shop is where volunteers come into action. If you have an appreciation for different styles of clothing, you may be the right volunteer to sort donations or change out seasonal items, piecing together outfits for a display. The community may also donate items, but please check ahead to make sure your donation can be accepted at this time.

Another way to get involved is to donate items that will directly reach clients. For example, clients may be in need of personal hygiene items, preferably in a travel size. While a full-size item may be more economical, it is not always practical for someone who is displaced or homeless. These individuals are often traveling with what they can carry. Donations of soups, coffee, and paperware are also appreciated and directly benefit clients (see sidebar for full list).

A turn to the right of the living room leads to the office space, which is shared with UMOS. UMOS has corporate offices based out of Milwaukee, but the organization operates programs throughout the state, including right here in Black River Falls. UMOS provides employment, educational, health, and housing programs and services to underserved populations, which makes for a great partnership with Network For Youth. Network For Youth clients are presented with the opportunity to utilize UMOS's services to transition into the workforce. "Our goal is to create tomorrow's leaders and business owners through coaching and mentoring," Donna shares. "Over the last

May is National Foster Care Month
Thank you to the foster and adoptive parents in our communities for graciously opening your homes and providing your time and resources to our most vulnerable children.

Right: The thrift shop is an affordable place to find gently used items.



Far right: The living room is a safe space for clients to gather and socialize.



four months, we've placed 11 clients in employment and serve approximately one dozen others per week."

Going out to get a job is not always as easy as assumed. Some clients face barriers such as not having an ID, birth certificate, or Social Security number. Both organizations work together to overcome these barriers. Employment placement may also be difficult without references or past work experience. Clients needing a reference can volunteer at Network For Youth, demonstrating their reliability to show up at a designated time and complete the work expected. "We help get them where they need to go," shares Donna.

Network For Youth has also helped clients get where they need to go in the literal sense. Oftentimes, a barrier to seeking employment is a lack of transportation. When Donna meets with clients, she asks them how far they would be willing to travel. Without a vehicle, clients may be limited to job opportunities available within a walking or biking distance. To help overcome this barrier, Donna posted a need for bicycles on the organization's Facebook page. The community was generous in providing the organization with more bicycles than requested, which advanced the journey to independence for several clients.

The organization is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you can volunteer your time, contribute an item on the wish list, or make a monetary contribution, it is all appreciated. Any contribution will work toward getting indi-

viduals in this overlooked and underserved population back on their feet and regaining their confidence so that they may succeed and make positive contributions to our communities.

"You have to understand that they are good people," Donna shares. "We continue making small differences every day, and I enjoy watching people grow and gain confidence."

—Brandi Shramek, Executive Coordinator

Wish List

Hygiene Items:

- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Mouth rinse
- Dental floss
- Hand sanitizer
- Wet wipes
- Hairbrushes/combs
- Hair ties/clips
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Feminine hygiene products
- Small laundry soap
- Diapers

Small Kitchen Items:

- Electric skillet
 - Hot plates
- #### Office and supplies
- File cabinet
 - Security camera
 - Quick Books or Quicken
 - Postage stamps
 - #10 envelopes
 - Labels
 - Printer ink: HP 901
 - Copy paper
 - Paper towels
 - Large trash bags

Donations:

- Cash
- Gift cards
- Laundry tokens
- Meal vouchers
- Shower vouchers
- Education vouchers/scholarships
- Internships

Food items:

- Soups
- Protein
- Coffee
- Coffee cups
- Paper plates

For more information, call 715.896.8288.

YOUTH AMBASSADORS DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS, CONTEND FOR SCHOLARSHIP

"All in all, I couldn't be more grateful to have been a part of this amazing program for the past two years," concluded Melrose-Mindoro High School senior Seth Peterson in response to this year's youth ambassador scholarship essay prompt. "I will always remember the great times I've experienced volunteering, touring, and learning about my cooperative."



Seth Peterson

Seth was chosen as the recipient of this year's \$1,500 youth ambassador scholarship. Each year, Jackson Electric invites high school juniors and seniors to join its Youth Ambassador Program. This year marks a decade of the program. These students have a sincere interest in learning about the cooperative principles, rural area development, and enjoy working with others. These students commit to attend scheduled meetings, tours, and volunteer activities during and outside of school hours. At the end of the program, qualifying seniors have an opportunity to apply for a \$1,500 continuing education scholarship, which is traditionally announced at Jackson Electric's annual meeting.

While this year's annual meeting was postponed indefinitely, and the youth ambassador program was shortened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 17 students participating from the Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan, Black River Falls, and Melrose-Mindoro school districts were still provided with an opportunity to gain valuable life experiences. They had a chance to tour Dairyland Power Cooperative, volunteer at area nursing homes, provide a helping hand at Project Christmas,

and develop their leadership and career skills along the way.

"I can't express how much I agree and support the generous cooperative principle of concern for community," Seth shares. "Supporting the people of the community has given volunteering a new meaning to me, providing me with benefits that will aid my continued education and unmatched leadership skills that I would not have found elsewhere."

In the fall of 2020, Seth plans to attend Saint Mary's University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. Eventually, he would like to obtain a master's degree to become a physician assistant. "The leadership opportunities in the youth ambassador program have stretched my comfort zone, created more confidence in my skills, and have given me valuable experience to take with me to Saint Mary's University this coming fall," concludes Seth.

Seth is the son of Corey and Kari Peterson of rural Melrose. Congratulations, Seth!



Seth, far right, joins with other Melrose-Mindoro students to carve pumpkins with area nursing home residents.



LOVE THE OUTDOORS?

BE SAFE OUT THERE



$\frac{2}{3}$ of lightning fatalities are associated with outdoor **recreational activities**.

Pay attention to weather forecasts **before you go canoeing or boating**. Get off the open water as soon as you **hear thunder**.

Do not use generators in enclosed areas. The same goes for grills, camping stoves or other small appliances that produce carbon monoxide.

Look up for power lines while fishing or sailing.

FACT: Fishing is the most common outdoor activity associated with lightning-related deaths.

Going for a hike? If you hear thunder or see lightning, **do not seek shelter under a tree.**

Tent camping? Plan ahead, seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or four-sided building during a storm or at the first sight of lightning.

For more information, visit:



WHAT'S A FACILITY CHARGE?

You'll notice your electric bill has two main components, a facility charge and an energy charge. The energy charge is the easiest to understand. It's the cost per kilowatt hour of consumption during that billing period. In other words, it's how much electricity you used.

The facility charge is not related to how much electricity you used, nor does it refer to paying for Jackson Electric's building. Rather, the fee you pay each month represents your portion of the cooperative's fixed costs and is used to cover system-wide improvements, which allows the co-op to keep your electricity reliable and affordable.

The monthly facility charge covers the expenses of keeping a reliable grid. These expenses may include materials and labor needed to build and maintain the electric distribution system, system improvements to enhance service reliability, vegetation maintenance, liability insurance, taxes, and administrative resources, just to name a few.

You might want to think of the facility charge in comparison to the cost of owning a vehicle. Even though you are not using the vehicle at all times, there are costs associated with keeping that vehicle reliable and ready to use at any given moment: insurance, license and registration, taxes, fuel, a loan payment, regular maintenance and repairs, and of course, a valid driver's license.

The next time you look at your electric bill and see the facility charge, think of it as a fixed charge that covers all the components that ensure you will have electricity at the flip of a switch.

LOAD MANAGEMENT NOTIFICATIONS

Members can be notified by email, text, and/or phone call of a load management event. Please contact the office to request a load management enrollment form or go to www.jackelec.com/content/dual-fuel-program to download a form. This form must be on file at Jackson Electric for you to receive notifications.

Updated contact information is the responsibility of the member. If you need to update your contact information, please submit a revised form to Jackson Electric.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Starting May 1, 2020, Jackson Electric will no longer be utilizing a PO Box to receive mail. All mail sent to Jackson Electric must be addressed to:

Jackson Electric Cooperative
N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, WI 54615



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Customer Service 715.284.5385
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Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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