

Watt's New December 2024



Vernon Electric Cooperative

"Information for our member-owners."

Monthly Co-op Trivia

November Trivia:

To be safe in our surroundings, we are often good at looking around us to see what's on the ground and in front of us, but when moving tall objects or equipment, what other direction should we look besides down and ahead?

Answer: We should always remember to look **UP** when moving tall objects or equipment to avoid coming in contact with overhead power lines.

December Trivia:

At this time of year, we often use extension cords for things such as plugging in holiday lighting, engine block heaters, or animal waterers. What should you NOT do when using extension cords:

- Use extension cords that are frayed
- Plug in devices that exceed the wattage rating of the extension cord
- Lay extension cords in areas where there is often foot traffic
- Use the extension cord as a permanent connection
- All the above

(See next month's newsletter for answer.)

Scholarships Available from VEC

In 2025, scholarships will be available to students whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are members of Vernon Electric Cooperative. The high school seniors selected will each receive a \$750 scholarship for the college or university they decide to attend.

Funding for the scholarships comes from unclaimed capital credit checks which are sent to the Federated Youth Foundation (FYF). This Foundation, in turn, makes this money available for youth scholarships to Vernon Electric Cooperative. FYF is a nonprofit organization tasked with administering a trust that benefits various Wisconsin co-ops, including electric co-ops.

Applicants from each of the high schools listed below, **plus one at-large applicant**, will be chosen in a random drawing at the January Board Meeting from all the completed and verified applications received.



Scholarship recipients will be eligible to attend the Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) at UW-Stout in July 2025 on a first come, first serve basis. The YLC is a first-class event put on by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA), and the students are chaperoned and transported by a Vernon Electric representative. The students who attend the YLC will receive an additional \$250 added to their VEC scholarship. Students will have the option to enter the WECA's Youth Leadership Conference Essay Contest and win \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second or \$250 for third. One student from VEC's service territory could potentially be awarded **\$2,000 worth of scholarship money**.

\$750 Non-Traditional Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to a member who is returning to school in a two- or four-year program at least three years after graduating from high school.

\$1,000 Line Worker Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to a high school senior or older and an active member of Vernon Electric Co-op. If the applicant is a high school senior, their parent or legal guardian must be an active member. Enrollment in a full-time power line program is required with a minimum grade point average of 2.0.

Scholarship applications are available online at vernonelectric.org/scholarships, by calling our office, or through school counselors. The deadline to apply is January 22, 2025.

- Aquinas
- Brookwood
- Cashton
- Cornerstone Christian Academy
- De Soto
- Hillsboro
- Kickapoo
- La Crosse Central
- La Farge
- Onalaska Luther
- Royall
- Sparta
- Viroqua
- Westby
- Wonewoc
- Youth Initiative High School

Vernon Electric Magazine Wins State Award

Vernon Electric Cooperative has been chosen as the recipient of the 2024 N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award, bestowed upon the co-op adjudged to have had the strongest overall local pages in the Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News over the previous 12 months. Serving as local editor of Vernon's pages is Trevor Clark, manager of communications & member relations. There are 19 cooperatives in Wisconsin that have local pages in the magazine.

This is the second time in three years Vernon Electric Cooperative has won this award, and the fifth Leifer for Vernon overall since this publication began offering awards of excellence in 1966. In addition, Vernon Electric has won multiple category awards over the years, including this past August when Clark was presented with a first-place certificate in the category of human interest. While Vernon Electric member Leah Call, who writes feature stories for the co-op, plays a big role in Vernon Electric's magazine pages, this year's judge praised the co-op for inserting elements of human interest throughout the local pages and not just in member features.

In addition to his responsibilities with Vernon Electric's communication and member services efforts, Clark is very engaged with co-op youth programs. He's involved with the annual Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., and he currently serves on the Federated Youth Foundation Board of Directors as the secretary/treasurer.



Trevor Clark

About the Award:

The N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award is named for former Vernon Electric Cooperative manager Norman F. "Lefty" Leifer, who was instrumental in launching what was then known as the Wisconsin REA News in 1940.

And the Picnic Winners Are...

Thanks to those who came to our member picnic in October. Below are the members who won prizes.

There were 542 pieces of candy corn in the jar. **Carol LeJeune** had the closest guess with 535 pieces! There were 594 ft of cable on the reel, **Jerry Buros** had the closest guess of 620 ft.! Both Carol and Jerry won a \$25 gift card.

Door prize winners were **Mark Levendoski, Paul Benrud, Alan Von Ruden, and Linda Barrette.**

The \$25 bill credit drawing winners were **Cheryl Urbanek and Tom Jindrick.**

Congratulations



Journeyman Line Worker, Matt Hirschfield, offers a hot drink to a co-op member during the October picnic

FRAUD ALERT: "Check Washing" On the Rise!

Check-washing fraud is far from new, but a recent resurgence in the crime might have you rethinking when and how you send checks. Yes, this is even happening locally. At Vernon Electric Co-op, we urge you to be aware and spread the word.

What is Check Washing Fraud?

Check washing is one step in a chain of events that criminals use to steal money. The entire check fraud scheme generally works like this:

- Criminals steal checks from the mail.
- They wash the stolen checks with special chemicals to remove the payee information and amount but keep the rest of the check's information and the signature.
- They write in new information with a new payee for any amount they want.

- They deposit the check or write the check out for other purposes. Either way, they are stealing your money.



How to Avoid Check Washing Fraud

- Use electronic bill pay, like SmartHub, and transfers instead of checks.
- Use a **black gel ink pen** which may be harder to wash out.
- Mail checks at the post office.
- Retrieve mail from your mailbox daily.
- Ask for a USPS mail hold when traveling.
- Frequently review your checking account for unusual withdrawals.

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The information in this newsletter has been prepared for you by Trevor B. Clark, Manager of Communications & Member Relations. Comments or questions regarding information contained here should be directed to:
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