



CELEBRATING MEMBERSHIP

October is National Co-op Month

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager



Fall is a busy time, and October is a particularly eventful month with school, community, and sports activities in full swing. It's also when all cooperatives celebrate National Co-op Month.

When I say Vernon Electric Cooperative celebrates Co-op Month, it really means we are celebrating you! After all, our co-op wouldn't exist without you, our members.

One of the Co-op Month activities we hope you will join us in is our Member Appreciation Picnic at our office in Westby. I invite you and your family to come celebrate with us on Wednesday, October 26 from 4 to 7 p.m. You'll find all the details here in our local pages of our magazine.

Our core business purpose is to serve as your electricity provider, but the larger mission of the co-op is to help make our corner of the world a better place. "Concern for Community" is one of seven guiding principles that all co-ops share, and our annual Member Appreciation Picnic is just one of the ways we express this important principle.

Similar to how our wires run through our service territory, our concern for community flows through all of our decisions—because being a co-op means being a responsible partner and good neighbor.

Vernon Electric Co-op works to help our community thrive through initiatives led by our employees and local board that's comprised of neighbors who live right here in our community. Because we're local, we understand our community's unique needs and strive to help meet them.

We're proud to support local emergency responders, food pantries,

and youth through our scholarship program. With your help, we offer Operation Roundup to provide assistance to our community's charitable organizations and individuals in need.

The word "cooperative" is close to "cooperation," meaning people working together toward a common goal—mutually benefitting one another and the larger community. That's the essence of the cooperative spirit. Our employees and member-elected board members are invested in the community in which they live and serve.

Above all, as a co-op, we put our members' priorities first. As your trusted energy partner, we know that

saving energy and money is important to you. That's why we have numerous programs in place to help, including off-peak rates, rebates, and energy audits.

We want to empower you to manage energy use at home. If you haven't already, I encourage you to take a

moment and download our app, SmartHub. Through the app, you can conveniently monitor and manage your energy use. And we're of course here to help, so give us a call if you have questions about your energy bills.

Vernon Electric is continuously examining ways to operate more efficiently while continuing to provide the highest level of friendly, reliable service you expect and deserve. After all, we're your local co-op. We were built by the members we serve.

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Focused on YOU.

Electric cooperatives were created to serve their members. Because we're a co-op, we're able to adapt to our community's unique needs. That's the power of co-op membership.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

Sweet BUSINESS

By Leah Call

When Grandma's Bakery opens its doors at 8 a.m., the shelves and tables are filled with fresh baked breads, cookies, donuts, bars and more. That's because owners, Lori and Amanda Amundson, have been up and baking since 4 a.m. That's the life of a baker, and it's a pretty good life if you ask these Vernon Electric Cooperative members.





The mother and daughter team have owned and operated the bakery on Hwy 27 near Cashton since 2008. “I always enjoyed baking. I worked in a bakery in past jobs,” said Lori of the bakery’s origin. “My daughter was getting out of college, and she didn’t really know what she wanted to do, so we decided to give it a try.”

While both women share responsibilities, each has a niche that makes their business run smoothly. Mom, Lori, is the primary bread baker and daughter, Amanda, decorates the cakes. It’s her cakes that have become the specialty at Grandma’s Bakery, each decorated to perfection with Amanda’s artistic touch.

“We do a lot of birthday cakes, retirements and religious cakes,” said Amanda, who can’t name a single favorite that she has decorated over the years. “I’ve never been disappointed in any of them. I’ll do one and think, ‘this is my new favorite,’ but then I’ll do another one and think, ‘that’s my favorite.’”

Amanda typically decorates 15 to 20 cakes per week. She requires at least a week’s lead time to complete an order. Customers wanting a custom-designed cake can stop by or contact Amanda through the bakery’s Facebook page. People often bring in photos or just describe what they want, and Amanda will do her best to fill their order.

“There have been a lot of fun cakes. It’s fun when I get to do the crazy ones that little kids want,” added Amanda. “A couple weeks ago, a little girl wanted a pug putting on eye shadow, and it turned out great. I love it when the kids get excited about their cake.”

Busy Bakery

With just two people doing all the baking, every day is a busy day at Grandma’s Bakery. The Amundsons noted that October is their busiest month. “Graduation is a busy time for us, too,” said Lori. “And we do a lot of pies around Thanksgiving.”

The bakery is named for Amanda’s grandmother, who loved to bake. The Amundsons use Grandma’s recipes for their Norwegian baked goods and many of the cookies they carry. Visitors to the bakery will always find a variety of



Grandma’s Bakery owners Lori (left) and Amanda Amundson.

bread, including white, rye, honey oatmeal, multigrain and wheat. They can even purchase made-to-order sub sandwiches.

While the goal is to always have a variety of baked goods on hand, it’s not always easy to gauge just how much they’ll need on any given day or week. “After 14 years, you would think there would be a pattern, but there isn’t,” noted Amanda. “Someone will come in and get eight dozen cookies. That throws off the whole store inventory, so it is still pretty hard to plan.”

Like other businesses, Grandma’s Bakery was impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown, but carryout orders of baked goods and even some hot lunch items kept them in business. While business has definitely picked up this summer, the Amundsons still face continued supply challenges. “And the prices have jumped; sometimes it’s triple,” noted Amanda. “Eggs are record high, which really impacts a bakery.”

Despite all these challenges, the Amundsons keep on baking, so the many regular customers and those stopping by for the first time, will always find a sweet treat waiting for them.



YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR MEMBER APPRECIATION PICNIC

**Wednesday, October 26
from 4–7 p.m.**

Join us in celebrating Co-op Month and feel Vernon Electric's appreciation for you at our Member Appreciation Picnic. The event will be held at our Vernon Electric Cooperative office in Westby on Wednesday, Oct. 26 from 4–7 p.m.

Event Includes:

- Baked potato bar, pulled pork sandwiches, refreshments, and desserts
- Face painting, bounce house, and other activities for children
- Electric vehicles on display
- Blood pressure screenings by the Vernon County Health Department
- K-9 unit demonstration at 6 p.m. by Vernon County Sheriff's Deputy Bellacero and K-9 Dax
- Drawings and games for bill credits
- Meet and greet with co-op employees and directors
- Opportunity for Q&A with co-op leaders at 6:30 p.m.



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ENERGY-SAVING FAIR

We have partnered with FOCUS ON ENERGY® to offer exclusive discounts on certified ENERGY STAR® products. Take advantage of this exclusive offer at our upcoming event to help you decrease your energy bills.

Member Appreciation Picnic - October 26th | 4-7 p.m.

VERNON ELECTRIC WINS STATEWIDE MAGAZINE AWARD

Vernon Electric Cooperative has been recognized for our written contributions to the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, the voice of the state's rural electric cooperatives. At the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association Member Services and Communicator's Conference held August 23–24 in Wisconsin Dells, Vernon Electric Co-op was awarded Honorable Mention in the Human-Interest category.

This award celebrates the creative work of freelance writer and Vernon Electric member, Leah Call, who contributes a member human-interest feature article on behalf of Vernon Electric each month. You can read Leah's member feature stories each month in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* and see past publications on our website.

Founded in 1940, the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* focuses on statewide issues that affect electric cooperatives, promoting the general welfare of Wisconsin's electric cooperatives, their member-owners, and the areas they serve. Nineteen electric cooperatives throughout the state are responsible for their own local sections within the magazine, which reaches 152,000 mailboxes each month.



Leah Call, freelance writer, was honored for her contributions to Vernon Electric Cooperative's local pages in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.



Dave Maxwell (left), director of member services at Vernon Electric Cooperative, accepted a human-interest award from the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* (WECN) by Dana Kelroy, WECN editor.

Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

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