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# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* September 2024 NEWS

**VERNON**  
**Electric**  
COOPERATIVE — WESTBY, WISCONSIN  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



**CELEBRATING THE ART  
OF THE DRIFTLESS AREA**

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

**TYPES OF HEAT PUMPS**

**HONEY HULLABALOO**



# FEDERAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY DOLLARS FLOWING OUR WAY

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

The Department of Energy recently approved the state’s \$150 million plan to issue energy-saving rebates. Wisconsin is the second state in the nation to get final approval, which clears the way for applications to begin.

In Wisconsin, Focus on Energy is implementing both the Home Efficiency Rebates (HOMES) program and the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) program. According to the Focus on Energy website, the organization is now accepting applications for HOMES, which begins with a home energy assessment, and the HEAR program will launch “soon.” All Vernon Electric Cooperative residential members are eligible to apply for both programs.

Under Wisconsin’s plan, HOMES efficiency rebates will cover 50–80% of the cost of energy-saving, whole-home improvements, such as insulation and efficient electric heating and cooling equipment in existing single-family and multi-family buildings. Rebate amounts are based on household income level and predicted energy savings from recommended upgrades by a home energy assessment professional. Getting a home energy assessment is an early step in the process of energy and financial savings. Understanding how your home uses energy will help you and your IRA Registered Contractor create a custom action plan. By updating equipment, insulating and air sealing your home, and exploring other ways your home can save energy, you will unlock qualifying rebates, instant discounts, or other incentives to save you money, energy, and be more comfortable.

There is a cost for the assessment. Low-income households are eligible for a rebate to help cover the cost. Tax

credits to help offset these costs are also available to those who qualify. Ask your home assessor for more details. Energy Assessors and IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) Regis-

tered Contractors can be found through a search feature on Focus on Energy’s

website at [www.focusonenergy.com/ira-homes](http://www.focusonenergy.com/ira-homes). Although Focus on Energy is building a network of IRA Registered Contractors, as of this writing, the closest contractors are still quite a distance from our area.

Income verification determines the level of rebates available to you. After your required home energy assessment, you will learn how much energy your house currently uses and identify opportunities to achieve savings. Households

qualify for rebates based on how much energy they’re expected to save and their household income. The more energy you save, the higher the rebates available.

Wisconsin’s HEAR program (coming soon) is an income-based program that

will provide rebates to households installing an ENERGY STAR heat pump water heater (up to \$1,750), ENERGY STAR heat pump space heating (up to \$8,000), ENERGY STAR heat pump clothes dryer (up to \$840), or an ENERGY STAR electric stove or range (up to \$840). Insulation, air sealing, and upgraded electrical panels and wiring may also be covered. Households may receive up to \$14,000 in total rebate

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**focus on energy**<sup>SM</sup>

Partnering with Wisconsin utilities

HOMES Rebates			
Modeled Energy Savings	Income Level	Single Family	Multifamily*
20%–34%	Household with incomes less than 80% AMI	100% of project cost up to \$5,000	100% of project costs, up to \$5,000 per unit
	Household with incomes between 80% AMI and 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$2,000	50% of project costs, up to \$2,000 per unit, \$200,000 building max
	Household with incomes greater than 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$1,500	50% of project costs, up to \$1,500 per unit, \$200,000 building max
35% or greater	Household with incomes less than 80% AMI	100% of project cost, up to \$10,000	100% of project costs, up to \$10,000 per unit
	Household with incomes between 80% AMI and 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$4,000	50% of project costs, up to \$4,000 per unit, \$400,000 building max
	Household with incomes greater than 150% AMI	50% of project cost, up to \$3,000	50% of project costs, up to \$3,000 per unit, \$400,000 building max

\* Multifamily buildings can qualify a whole building for low or moderate income if at least 50% of occupied units meets that need.

dollars. This program will be available to Wisconsin residents in single-family homes and multifamily buildings, earning 150% of Area Median Income (AMI) or less. Those below 80% AMI will be eligible for 100% of project cost, and those between 80–150% AMI will be eligible for 50% of the project cost.

All Vernon Electric Cooperative residential members are eligible to apply for both programs.

Only households with an income below 150% AMI are eligible.

The HOMES and HEAR rebate programs are part of an \$8.6 billion DOE initiative included in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. In addition to these incentives, Vernon Electric

Cooperative also offers incentives for energy-efficient appliances. You can find out about all of Vernon Electric’s

rebates by visiting our webpage, [www.vernonelectric.org/rebates](http://www.vernonelectric.org/rebates), or giving us a call.

Type of Home Energy Project	Households Below 80% AMI	Households between 80% and 150% AMI	Households above 150% AMI
<b>Home Electrification Project Qualified Technologies</b>  Only households with an income below 150% AMI are eligible	100% of project costs up to \$14,000	50% of project costs up to \$14,000	Not Applicable
	ENERGY STAR electric heat pump water heater up to \$1,750		
	ENERGY STAR electric heat pump for space heating up to \$8,000		
	ENERGY STAR electric heat pump clothes dryer up to \$840*		
	ENERGY STAR electric stove, cooktop, range, oven up to \$840*		
	Electrical load service center (electrical panel) up to \$4,000		
	Electrical wiring up to \$2,500		
	Insulation, air sealing, ventilation up to \$1,600		

\*A household’s combined rebate for a qualifying electric stove, range, or oven AND a heat pump clothes dryer cannot exceed \$840 in total.

**SHARE THE ROAD**  
*with Farmers*

Farm season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Farmers must move slowly in large equipment, but public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and **do the following to keep everyone safe:**

- 1** Be alert and cautious, and give large farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.
- 2** Do not pass in a “No Passing Zone,” or in any area where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.
- 3** Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.
- 4** Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator’s blind spot.
- 5** Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe to do so.

Source: Farm Bureau  
Safe Electricity.org

# JEWELRY AS *Expression*

By Leah Call

**J**ewelry artist Nan Marshall believes jewelry is a form of expression—a window into a person’s world view—both for the artist and the individual who wears the jewelry. This Vernon Electric Cooperative member handcrafts one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces that go far beyond adding a bit of bling to an outfit.

“I feel like it is a conversation the jeweler is having with the person who wears the jewelry,” said Marshall. “The person who wears the jewelry sees themselves reflected in the piece, and they are trying to communicate something about themselves to the rest of the world.”

Marshall hopes that non-verbal conversation includes her own belief in tolerance, authenticity, and a sense of community. Those values are embodied in each piece of jewelry she creates and sells through Nan Marshall Designs, available online and at five area galleries.

## A Jewelry Artist is Born

Though Marshall had some early creative endeavors, she thought of herself as a scientist, not an artist. With a degree in biology, she currently supplements her jewelry business with part-time work for Valley Stewardship Network in Viroqua.

Marshall briefly dabbled with making jewelry about 25 years ago when she made clip-on earrings that she sold at craft fairs. Twenty years later, in 2017, she returned to the world of jewelry making after taking a metalworking class with a friend.



Nan Marshall with one of her jewelry-making tools.

“I was concerned because I don’t do straight lines. I like things that are bumpy and irregular and unusual,” noted Marshall. “It turned out the teacher of that class had the same sort of aesthetic.”

Bitten by the jewelry bug once again, Marshall took additional classes and invested in tools for her new hot

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connection technique—joining metal components through soldering. That meant adding a torch and soldering station to her studio as well as necessary chemicals, including pickle, used to remove fire scale that forms on heated metal. Other essential tools of the jewelry-making trade include a saw, pliers, and a bench to hammer out the metal.

## Materials and Inspiration

Marshall creates on her pieces in her studio space at the Landmark Center in Viroqua. In addition to metal, she uses stones, gems, buffalo horn, and other unique objects. “I like to use found objects,” she explained. “When I started I used a lot of recycled tin that I found at Goodwill and Bethel Boutique. I still go there and buy old jewelry and take it apart for components.”

Inspired by her worldly travels, Marshall also finds inspiration close to home. “I collect weird pieces, like the



yellow painted chunks of sidewalks that chip off. I will pick up twigs, rusty bolts, and washers—anything that seems interesting—and incorporate that into my jewelry,” she said.

Once she gathers the bits and pieces, she brings them back to her studio. “Each piece I make is unique and each one comes with a creative challenge of figuring out how to make it work,” Marshall explained. “I can lay out the pieces and see what looks nice together, but figuring out how to connect them is where the challenge begins.”

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“Each piece I make is unique and each one comes with a creative challenge of figuring out how to make it work.”

—Nan Marshall

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Her vision for each piece sometimes evolves during the process. “Things can often go in a different direction... I enjoy that. My best pieces often started as something else,” she said.

Those wanting to express themselves through Marshall’s jewelry can find her creations at the upcoming Driftless Area Art Fair, September 21-22, or at galleries listed on her website, [nanmarshalldesigns.com](http://nanmarshalldesigns.com).

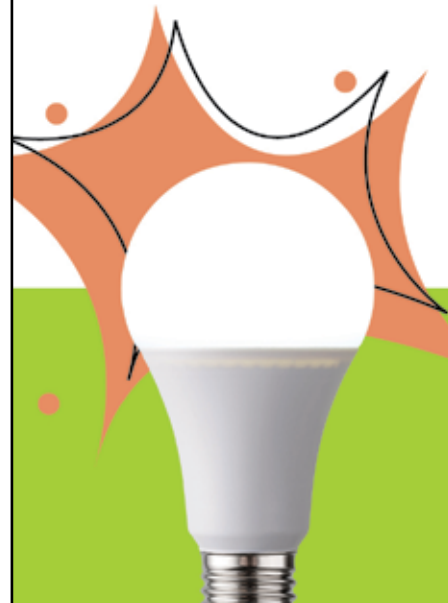
While she appreciates showcasing her art at galleries, she looks forward to connecting with people at the art fair.

“One of the most interesting things for me is getting to know and understand people,” she noted. “You should put your authentic self out there and people should respect that and be willing to engage with that. Life is short. You should live it to the fullest.”

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home’s heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop.



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