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JUNE DAIRY RECIPES



HONORING OUR ROOTS: CELEBRATING DAIRY MONTH WITH VERNON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager



June is Dairy Month in Wisconsin — a time-honored celebration that shines a spotlight on the dairy farms and families who nourish our communities and power our rural economy. At Vernon Electric Cooperative (VEC), June Dairy Month holds special meaning. It's not just about celebrating the dairy industry; it's about honoring the strong partnership between our co-op and the local farmers who form the backbone of both our membership and our mission.

As a member-owned electric cooperative serving over 10,000 members, VEC's roots run deep in dairy country. In fact, many of the cooperative's founding members were dairy farmers seeking reliable electricity to modernize their farms back in the 1930s. Today, that legacy continues as we serve a region where dairy remains not only an economic driver, but also a cherished way of life.

Dairy farming and electricity have always been intertwined. Reliable power keeps milking parlors running, coolers chilled, and barns lit to accommodate farmers' long days. We are proud to support our dairy members with dependable service and programs that help manage energy use and keep costs affordable. From load management options like our Peak Alert program to energy efficiency rebates for



A look back: Many VEC's founding members were dairy farmers who came together in the 1930s to bring reliable and affordable electricity to rural Wisconsin.

agricultural equipment, we strive to provide solutions that strengthen farm operations.

At the same time, VEC is looking to the future. The dairy industry, like the energy industry, is evolving. Many farmers are exploring new technologies to improve efficiency and sustainability — from energy-saving variable speed drives for

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**SAVE THE
DATE!**

MEMBER APPRECIATION PICNIC

Wednesday, June 11

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Readstown Tourist Park





COME FOR THE CARS. STAY FOR THE PIE

By Leah Call

Mark your calendars and shine up that chrome—Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies rolls back into Westby on Saturday, July 26, 2025, for its 10th annual celebration of community, classic cars, and homemade pie. Taking place along Bekkedal Avenue, this one-day event brings together car enthusiasts, pie lovers, and families for a sweet summer experience.

From Humble Start to Hometown Classic

Always held on the last Saturday in July, Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies raises funds for the Westby Area Historical Society. The event got its start in 2016 when Historical Society member Madeline Anderson had the idea to pair the organization's traditional pie and ice cream social with classic cars. Vernon Electric Co-op member, fellow historical society member, and car enthusiast Garland McGarvey helped bring that vision to life, kicking things off with just 15 cars parked on the lawn of the Thoreson House museum in Westby.

McGarvey continued to lead the charge as the event grew in popularity. "We had 240 cars at our peak a few years ago," McGarvey said. "Even last year, when road construction forced us

to relocate to the business park, we still had around 190 cars."

Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies now draws thousands of spectators and vehicles from across the region and beyond. "We've had cars from Minneapolis, Dubuque, Fond du Lac—even one from California last year," said McGarvey.

The event is free for spectators and just \$5 per vehicle for those wishing to enter their own sweet rides. Pre-registration begins in May and continues through the morning of the event. Vehicles will line up along Bekkedal Avenue, beginning at the Thoreson House and extending as far south as needed to accommodate entries.

Celebrity Guest, Strongmen, and Sweet Treats

This year welcomes Dennis Gage, host of the long-running show *My Classic Car*. Known for his iconic handlebar mustache and love of vintage autos, Gage will mingle with attendees, sign autographs, and

show off his own Studebaker Hawk JT.

A Strongman competition also returns this year, featuring automotive-themed feats of strength—from lifting transmissions and engines to pulling full-sized vehicles. "It's a side event that attracts and entertains people," says McGarvey. "Some folks come for the pie and end up watching the strongman event for three hours."

Speaking of pie—there will be plenty of it. Local volunteers bake 70 to 75 homemade pies in the days leading up to the event. "The strawberry rhubarb has become the signature pie," said



Local volunteers bake homemade pies prior to the event.

McGarvey, “but there’s also blueberry, cherry, peach, apple. All with ice cream, of course.”

Other food options include tasty bites from Westby’s own Borgens Café and Beanies Diner. The Westby Chamber of Commerce will also host a food tent, and the Historical Society will serve up hot pork sandwiches.

A grand reopening of Westby’s Main Street coincides with the event. Led by Mayor Danny Helgerson and the city council, the celebration will include a parade of classic cars down the newly reopened main street.

Powered by Volunteers and Community Support

A team of dedicated volunteers and more than 50 sponsors—including Vernon Electric Cooperative—drive this successful event. All proceeds go toward maintaining the Thoreson House Museum and supporting the mission of the Westby Area Historical Society.

With a celebrity guest, a full slate of activities, and plenty of pie, July 26 is shaping up to be a great day to be in Westby. “And I’m in charge of the weather,” McGarvey joked. “So you can count on sunshine.”



John LaDue, Member Service Technician at Vernon Electric Cooperative, displays his 1968 Camaro—a car he rebuilt over two decades ago and has driven for more than 250,000 miles. Parked beside it is his daughter Sahara’s 2008 Mustang, another family project.

Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on July 26, with awards and prize drawings beginning at 2 p.m.

Learn more on the Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies Facebook page or the Westby Area Historical Society website.



If you’re heading to Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies, be sure to check out Vernon Electric Cooperative Member Service Technician John LaDue’s 1968 Camaro. “There’s not much left of the original car,” LaDue said. “I built the car probably 23 years ago, and I’ve put about a quarter of a million miles on it. I’m on my third engine—it’s a survivor.”

LaDue is no stranger to classic cars or to Sweet Rides. “My mom is part of the Historical Society, so I’ve been involved from the beginning,” he says. “I may have been one of the original 15 cars at that first event, but that was too long ago to remember.”

Over the years, LaDue has rebuilt or modified many cars, including a 1933 Plymouth, and is currently working on a 1970 El Camino. He has also helped with his daughter’s Mustang, which may also make an appearance at the event. For LaDue, the event is about more than the cars. “I like that it’s local. I get to hang out with like-minded people, admire their work, maybe walk down memory lane—and get pie and ice cream!”



The Strongman competition features automotive-themed feats of strength, including lifting engines and pulling full-sized vehicles.

milking systems to solar arrays that help offset farm energy costs. Vernon Electric's Community Solar programs, continue to receive enthusiastic support from members, and is an example of how we're working together toward a more sustainable future.

Beyond the wires and meters, Vernon Electric believes in celebrating and promoting the dairy tradition. Each June, we join our fellow Wisconsin cooperatives in supporting dairy breakfasts and farm tours that invite the public to experience life on a dairy farm. These events offer a deeper appreciation for the hard work and dedication of our dairy families while connecting urban and rural neighbors.

Our dairy celebration goes beyond just the dairy breakfast this year! We're excited to partner with our neighbors at VernonCom to host a special Member Appreciation Picnic on **Tuesday, June 11, at the Readstown Tourist Park from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** This fun-




VEC Board Chair Bernadine Hornby and CEO & General Manager Craig Buros hand out a picnic lunch at last year's Member Appreciation drive-thru picnic.

filled event is our way of saying thank you to our members while celebrating the strong agricultural roots that make our community unique. Last year, we held a drive-thru picnic in Hillsboro, and by hosting it at different locations each

year, we hope to make it convenient for members from all corners of our service area to join in the fun. Also, throughout the entire month, our office will feature a selection of dairy treats for visitors to enjoy. It's one more way we live out our cooperative principle of "concern for community" while highlighting the importance of dairy in our daily lives.

As we honor the legacy of our dairy farmers, Vernon Electric Cooperative remains committed to supporting their success — with reliable power, innovative programs, and a steadfast commitment to community values. This June, we invite all our members to raise a glass of Wisconsin milk, visit a dairy farm, join us at our Member Appreciation Picnic, and stop by our office to enjoy some dairy treats. Let's celebrate the dairy heritage that enriches our lives and powers our cooperative spirit. Here's to our dairy farmers — past, present, and future — and to the enduring partnership that keeps our communities strong.

JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH



Vernon County Dairy Breakfast

June 14, 2025
7 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Mark & Theresa Lepke Family Farm
S3839 US HWY 14, Viroqua, WI 54665

Dairy Month Appreciation at VEC

Vernon Electric Cooperative is celebrating June Dairy Month by offering delicious dairy treats to our members all month long! Each week will feature a different dairy product. Stop by our office throughout June and join us in recognizing and supporting our local dairy industry.

Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

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Trevor Clark, Editor

