



"Energy Through Excellence"

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

# CELEBRATING YOU

## October is National Co-op Month



By Jesse Singerhouse, General Manager

Every October we celebrate National Cooperative Month. It gives us a chance to reflect on the truly unique business model that we get to work in. While we always highlight our cooperative business during this time, what we are really

highlighting is you, the member-owners of this cooperative. Being member-owned and member-focused is really what every cooperative is all about. Nearly 90 years ago when Dunn Energy was started no electric companies wanted to serve the sparse landscape of our rural area. The cost was too high and the number of services to hook up was too low. So local leaders got together, with the help of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Act (REA), and started their electric cooperative to bring electric power to their friends and neighbors. That vision and foresight have helped grow our rural area and improve our economy. Your cooperative has grown to over 10,000 accounts and now serves homes, farms, and businesses throughout our area. While your cooperative has grown, our focus on serving our

members hasn't changed. If your portion of the capital credits was less than \$50 there is a credit on your most recent electric bill. If your credit is over \$50 you'll receive it via a check in the mail.

Returning capital credit, or your equity in the cooperative, is one of the greatest benefits of being a cooperative-run business. Any margins generated in excess of expenses are used to keep the business running strong and then are returned

to the members who helped generate those profits over time. In October we returned approximately \$864,000 to members of the cooperative who used electricity prior to 2023. If your portion of the capital credits was less than \$50 there is a credit on your most recent electric bill. If your credit is over \$50 you'll receive it via a check in the mail. The change to some bill credits and some checks was made this year to help streamline the return of capital credits to our members. If you have any questions, please contact our office at 715-232-6240.

We celebrate cooperative month with several activities throughout the month. We will cap it off by partnering with our other local cooperatives and credit unions to host a free lunch event on Saturday, October 28, from 11-1 at the Dunn Energy Cooperative headquarters. I hope you can join us.

Members, I thank each one of you for your business and for being members of our cooperative. I'm humbled to work for Dunn Energy. My team and I look forward to continuing the legacy started nearly 90 years ago: a mission based on strong cooperative principles that enable us to serve our members with reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy.

# The DUNN COUNTY Cooperative COOKOUT



Saturday, October 28  
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Lunch includes: hot dogs, beans, chips, deep fried cheese curds, cookies, & beverages

- ✓ Cooperative Displays
- ✓ Raffle Prize Drawing
- ✓ Kids Trick-or-Treating
- ✓ Come in Costume!



Brought to you by Dunn County's Cooperatives

# CHANCE ENCOUNTER LEADS DUNN ENERGY TO SPONSOR FIRST CAREGIVERS CONFERENCE IN DUNN COUNTY

By Jolene Fisher

I met Stan and Mary Hensley when they came into the cooperative to buy a water heater. They said it wasn't heating quite like it used to. Had they had walked into any other for-profit business, they would have left with a water heater in the back of the truck and that would've been the end of the story. But that didn't happen here and it's only the beginning of the story.

Stan and Mary have been members of Dunn Energy for the better part of 20 years. They bought their first water heater from us when they built their house. They knew that in coming to the cooperative they would get a high-quality, energy efficient Marathon water heater.

However, after asking a couple of questions, I told them I didn't want to sell them a water heater. Not just yet anyway. I asked if we could schedule an appointment with our energy specialist to make sure it wasn't just an element or a thermostat before we looked at replacing the whole unit. While we waited for confirmation that this was a good first step, Stan mentioned that the next morning might not work because he had a Zoom call. You see, Stan volunteers with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Dunn County and they were planning the first-ever Caregivers Conference in Dunn County.

I learned that Stan has volunteered with the organization for over 16 years and was the driving factor in bringing this conference to Dunn County. In his volunteerism, Stan supports rural families who have family members navigating Alzheimer's disease. This is

a topic near and dear to his heart. Stan lost both of his parents, and the family farm, to the disease so he knows the heartbreak and hardships these families are experiencing.

"I tell them, you can tell me anything. I understand what you're going through," said Stan during our conversation. "Rural America is very different than urban America when it comes to accepting help and using the resources available to them. I welcome them, support them, and beg them to use what's there. That's the hardest

So, instead of selling Stan and Mary a water heater (that they didn't end up needing), we decided to sponsor a conference that gives resources and tools to people caring for loved ones.

part. Getting them to use the resources ADRC has available."

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Resources Rural Task Force, more than half of the 65 million Americans living in rural areas are over the age of 50. Elders in rural areas (about a quarter of all elders) are more likely to reside alone, near or at the poverty level, and suffer from a chronic condition or physical disability. They require an average of 46 miles of travel to get to the nearest health professional. (4830001)

These are the people who need the most help and are most likely to have a relative as their primary caregiver. In a study published by the Journal of the

American Medical Association, 33% of stressed caregivers with a severe chronic disease died within four years of giving care. Older adults (aged 66-96) caring for a spouse have a 63% higher risk of death than non-caregivers of the same age.

Helping these caregivers is Stan's passion. "It's always on my mind," said Stan. People reach out to Stan, looking for guidance everywhere. "It's a full-time job, but I wouldn't change it," he added.

It was his dedication to rural America and his volunteerism that brought this conference to his attention. "I saw this conference grow in St. Croix County and wanted to bring it here. Adoray (the hospice company behind the conference) always said that if we knew of someplace else that would benefit from this, to let them know. So, I asked, and they said yes!" said Stan.

This leads me to asking Stan how we (Dunn Energy) could be involved. Rural Dunn County is where our members are, and we are committed to the communities we serve. Not only that, but you can't help but catch Stan's enthusiasm and passion for the topic and, to be honest, this was one of the best sales I've had the opportunity to not make.

So, instead of selling Stan and Mary a water heater (that they didn't end up needing), we decided to sponsor a conference that gives resources and tools to people caring for loved ones. If this is you, please consider attending this conference in Menomonie on October 23. Registration is free but limited to 100 people. A light breakfast and lunch are included. For more information call 715-629-1888.

# AGING DUNN WELL

## DUNN COUNTY CAREGIVERS CONFERENCE

As you may know, caregiving and aging can be challenging and isolating. It may also be difficult to find the resources that could be helpful if you are just getting by day to day. We have seen this need in our community, and we are committed to offering this event to support caregivers and our aging community members on their journey.

### Benefits of Attending the Conference

- America's leading educator Teepa Snow certified presentation on dementia.
- Understanding the levels of care available to help you age in place.
- Opening the end-of-life care conversation with family members and health care providers.
- Receive valuable information and practical advice from local professionals.
- Connect with resource groups and community support booths.
- Mini clinic testing of blood pressure and balance.
- Learn how to make your own Aromatherapy Room Spray to help with Dementia.
- Free with lunch and vendor prize giveaways!



**Monday, October 23, 2023**  
**9 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**Rassbach Heritage Museum | Holtby Hall**

### How to Register:

For more information on the conference or to register, please call 715-629-1888

# LET'S MEET THE NEW BOARD PRESIDENT: JEFF GASTEYER



Dunn Energy Board of Directors president, Jeff Gasteyer

In May, after the annual meeting, Jeff Gasteyer became the new Dunn Energy Cooperative (DEC) Board President after longtime board member Larry Amble met his term limit.

We decided it would be a great time, during National Cooperative Month, to spotlight the new board president. (6717002)

Jeff was born and raised on a dairy farm between Elmwood and Eau Galle and still resides there today with his wife, Diane. The Gasteyers sold the dairy cows and expanded their steer operation to 300 head in 2017. That doesn't leave a lot of extra time for hobbies for a man who enjoys what he does.

"Unfortunately for my wife, I love to work so hobbies are few. Occasionally Diane and I enjoy riding our Harley and doing some traveling. I also try to get some deer hunting in during gun season," said Gasteyer.

So, what led a busy man to give some of his time to his member-owned electric cooperative?

"I have been on other boards and committees in the past and missed the involvement," said Gasteyer. In looking for new ways to support his community, Jeff ran for the DEC board of directors in 2019 when his district was holding

an election. "Life is about giving back to your community, and Dunn Energy promotes this philosophy," he added.

With a few years as a director under his belt, and a few months in as the new board chair, we sat down with Jeff to ask him some questions about his new role. Here are his answers in his own words:

## **Q: As a director, what issues are most important to you that the board educates themselves on?**

A: One of the topics that the board is currently investigating is shared services with other energy cooperative providers. I think this is important because it may be a way to increase services and lower costs. Other issues I feel are important are efficiently controlling our costs for our members and continuing to meet our financial budget each year while maintaining and upgrading the system.

## **Q: What has been your most eye-opening experience or education during your time on the board so far?**

A: One of the most eye-opening experiences when I first came on the board was realizing how many things go on behind the scenes to get power to the members' meter. Such as setting rates for all the different classes of members, the cost of purchasing power from Dairyland Power, to planning and adhering to a strategic and financial plan. With the uncontrollable weather being a major factor in all of it.

When you become a new director, you quickly realize how much education is

needed in the electrical distribution business. This is why the classes new board members take are extremely important along with the various other meetings directors attend throughout the year. These meetings and classes are so critical to your ability to make well-informed, quality decisions in the board room.

## **Q: What is the one thing that you want the cooperative membership to know about Dunn Energy?**

A: That our member-owners are very fortunate to have Jesse Singerhouse and the management team and staff taking care of the day-to-day business. The group of employees the cooperative has are first-rate and have a member-first focus when it comes to their work.

## **Q: Well Jeff, it was a nice chat. Is there anything else you want the members to know about you?**

A: Yes. It is truly a privilege and honor to have been elected as board president by the members of the board. The responsibility I have to the board, Dunn Energy, and to our member-owners, is something I take seriously and will uphold to the best of my ability.

If you are interested in becoming a director for Dunn Energy Cooperative, watch your mailbox for a Notice of Director Elections towards the end of the year. This will go out to the districts that will have an election in 2024 and will have the steps you need to take to get your name on the ballot.

## **Hidden Account Numbers**

If you find your account number hidden in the pages of this magazine and you call and tell us before the next issue is mailed, we'll put a **\$50 credit** on your electric bill. Happy hunting!

Last month's winners were Ka Xiong and Aaron Barneson.

## **Jesse Singerhouse, Manager**

N5725 600th St., P.O. Box 220, Menomonie, WI 54751  
715-232-6240  
www.dunnenergy.com

## **Jolene Fisher, Editor**



# **Dunn Energy Cooperative**

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