

Inside this issue:

- Committed to all of our members **page 2**
- Giving back to the community **page 3**

Reminders

**Members who drop off payments to MVEC after hours, please note:** Our dropbox has moved and is now incorporated into the co-op's front door. Signs will direct you to the new dropbox.

**Keeping your personal information safe**

October is Cyber Security Month. Unfortunately, data breaches, such as Equifax, can and do occur. Many of us use the Internet on a daily basis as we go about our busy lives. Please know MVEC works diligently to keep your personal information safe and secure. MVEC takes careful measures when designing information systems and throughout the lifecycle of data to protect your information. Hackers may attempt breaking in, but we are making sure we batten down the hatches to reduce risks and prevent security breaches.

Additional resources available 24/7 at [www.mvec.net](http://www.mvec.net)



# Electric Eye

October 2017

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative

## - Cooperatives Commit - October is National Co-op Month

Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative is celebrating National Cooperative Month in October, along with 40,000 other cooperative businesses serving more than 120 million people nationwide.

“Cooperatives Commit” is the theme of this year’s celebration, when cooperatives across the nation engage in efforts to make more people aware of the advantages of the cooperative business model.

Besides electric cooperatives and credit unions, you may not realize many household names in the business world are co-ops, such as Ocean Spray cranberry juice, Blue Diamond almonds, Ace Hardware stores and the Associated Press.

As member-owned and member-controlled businesses, cooperatives commit to meeting the needs of their members and communities, rather than generating returns for distant investors.

“This year’s theme is right on target, because co-ops commit in so many ways to meet the needs of members and build stronger communities,” said Ryan Hentges, MVEC general manager.

**“Cooperatives strive to adhere to seven key cooperative principles, which combine to help build trust between the co-op, its members and the community.”**

## We have 42,198 bosses - including you!

MVEC staff works under the direction of a 9-member Board of Directors elected from and by the entire cooperative membership. When you participate in MVEC’s annual meeting and election, you are choosing your representative on the board and approving by-law changes when they are up for vote.



Some of the friendly faces at MVEC

92 full and part-time employees

representing 1,246 years of service

Working in areas of accounting, administration, billing, construction, dispatch, communications, engineering, maintenance, member service, finance, information technology, metering, operations and sales

To bring you power

24/7

## Co-op Principles #1 and 3: Voluntary and Open Membership Member's Economic Participation



John and Rita Stasney stand in front of the original 1940 MVEC utility pole installed on their farm.

Full of energy and good humor, John and Rita Stasney of rural Montgomery have been MVEC members since 1950. Other than serving as a paratrooper for two years with the 11th Airborne Far East during World War II, John has lived on MVEC's power lines since Day One.

John, who turns 91 on Nov. 12, was 14 when the co-op power lines made it to his parents' farm in 1940. "I remember that real good," said John who watched as crews dug holes by hand for the utility poles. "There was no boom truck then."

Electricity on the farm meant buying an electric motor for the well and goodbye to kerosene lamps. A refrigerator replaced an ice box that kept things cold with ice harvested from nearby Shields Lake.

When John married the former Rita Choudek, also of Montgomery, they took over the farm and began accumulating Capital Credits – the annual pay back of margins to members. Since their first refund, the Stasneys have received Capital Credit payments for 47 years.

See **Stasney** on page 4

## Co-op Principles #2 and 4: Democratic Member Control Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Directors are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership.

Cooperatives are also autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

Your Board of Directors includes (back row) Fran Barten, Kevin Gibbs, Bill Heinlein, Deb Erickson, Brent Lawrence, Jim Connelly, Gary Haberman and (front) Tom Wolf and Michelle Morrison.



## Co-op Principle #5: Education, Training and Information

In addition to making sure staff and directors are well-trained to do their jobs above expectation, cooperatives provide education and information to their members. Call MVEC's office to talk with a live person who can help you with your bill or take care of other business. Plus you can always visit [www.mvec.net](http://www.mvec.net) 24/7 for information.

Education is also available in the form of free advice from knowledgeable energy specialists who help residential members learn how they can save money on heating and cooling costs with Energy Wise programs.

Our key account executives can help business members with several energy- and money-saving opportunities.

At left, energy sales supervisor Mike Orvick (center) explains energy use to Sheila and Nick Backlund at their Belle Plaine farm.



# Cooperatives have 7 guiding principles

## Co-op Principle #6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives



MVEC linemen Lee Hoese and Colten Berghuis spent 11 days in September helping a Florida electric cooperative make repairs to its system following Hurricane Irma.

Cooperatives lend a helping hand to their fellow co-op colleagues in need – after all, we might be the next one needing help.

Last month, MVEC linemen Lee Hoese and Colten Berghuis provided over a week of mutual aid to Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) in Live Oak, FL, following Hurricane Irma.

After securing the proper permits for traveling through the different states and getting a right-to-fuel certificate, they left Sunday morning, Sept. 10, caravanning with linemen from five other Minnesota electric cooperatives. They made it to Hannibal, MO, the first night, and Magee, MS, the next. The final stretch to Live Oak would normally take seven hours on I-10, but it was also the day the storm had finally

**See Hurricane Irma on page 4**

## Co-op Principle #7: Commitment to Community

Operation Round Up (ORU) is just one way MVEC shows commitment to community. Thanks to members who round up their monthly electric bills, over \$1.6 million dollars has been donated to local organizations since 1995.

The Le Center Volunteer Ambulance Service, which serves that city plus five area townships and provides mutual aid throughout Le Sueur County, was a recent ORU recipient. They purchased 220 life-saving tourniquets with a \$2,000 grant – thanks to the generosity of ORU participants.

Stanley Stocker, Le Center's EMS Director, wants all 26 volunteers plus all Le Sueur County sheriff's department officers to carry a tourniquet – for use on medical or accident victims or themselves in the event of an emergency situation. Six kits have already been utilized just in the last three months. "A victim can have a tourniquet on for eight hours and still have vital ability for repair," said Stocker.

It's not the first time the Le Center Ambulance service and similar organizations in MVEC's service area have received help to make purchases for vital services. "People rounding up makes a big difference," said Ann Traxler, Le Sueur County Director of Emergency Management. "It's such a small amount, I hope more people will consider it."



Above from left, Ann Traxler, Le Sueur County Director of Emergency Management; Ramona Shook, volunteer EMT; Tammy Stewig, EMT and Deputy Director of Emergency Management; Stanley Stocker, EMT and Le Center EMS Director; Sgt. Todd Waldron of the Le Sueur County Sheriff's Department; and Investigator Jim Whiteis, Le Sueur County Sheriff's Department.



Left, Tammy Stewig applies a tourniquet on Stanley Stocker.



To participate in Operation Round Up (it averages just 50 cents a month), visit [www.mvec.net/our-community](http://www.mvec.net/our-community)

## Hurricane Irma continued from page 3

cleared up, and people who had evacuated Florida were returning home. “We left at 4 a.m., but were stuck in traffic for 18 hours,” said Lee. “We tried to re-route through small towns off the interstate, but everyone else tried that, too. People were in their front yards, filming the traffic.”

Once at their destination, Lee and Colten said they felt immediate gratitude from the Florida co-op and their members. The Minnesota contingent was the first of the SVEC’s volunteers to commit to helping.

The two experienced long days of work in hot, humid weather — up at 4:30 a.m. and back in for the night at 9:30 p.m. At the height of the storm, 22,485 of SVEC’s 25,651 members were without power. People were naturally a bit crabby after a week without electricity, but Lee said once they heard workers had come as far as Minnesota, “that opened their eyes up a bit.”

Despite the widespread damage, Colten said there was no lack of supplies for repairs. “They had everything we needed. The three warehouse guys had things ready for us to grab and take to the truck each morning.”

Lee said he had expected “more jaw-dropping damage.” But in the jungle-like river bottoms, he said every line they restored had a tree lying on it, because they were in the northern piney woods area of Florida. “One of SVEC’s lineman said, ‘I bet you all were expecting palm trees and sand beaches,’” said Lee, affectionately imitating a slow southern drawl.

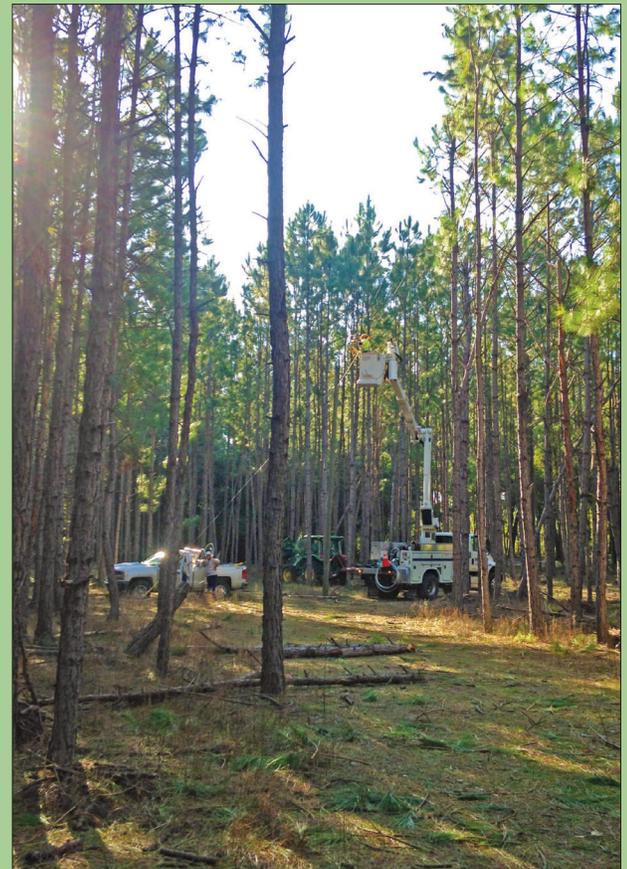
Lee said everyone was very gracious, open and welcoming. SVEC’s mechanic’s sister worked at the only hotel in town, and she quickly made sure there were rooms for the out-of-town lineworkers. “We’d go to

restaurants at the end of the day, and they would cover our meals,” he said.

Both guys said they’d do it again in a heart beat. “It was a really good trip,” said Colten, who joined the co-op in March. “We were treated very well and people were very, very thankful.” Lee, a 22-year MVEC lineman who also helped after Katrina, agreed, “It was awesome how they took care of us.”

“The linemen there are guys just like us, and by the end of working together, there was a lot of ribbing and teasing going on,” said Lee.

**Floodwaters and fallen trees were the major obstacles linemen dealt with while restoring power in Florida. See more on our Facebook page. (Photos by Lee Hoese)**



## Stasney continued from page 2

Their 112-year-old home, remodeled many times over the years, has a boiler, baseboard and fan-forced heat, an electric water heater and a heat pump for cooling, all saving money for them on Energy Wise programs.

The Stasneys raised five sons on the farm — Jack, Bruce, Dean, Russ and Scott, all who

still live within 20 miles. They have 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Retired from Green Giant after 42 years as a mechanic, John is active in the community, his church and the farm. He cash crops beans and corn on 97 acres and raises white face cattle. “He just loves his animals,” said Rita. When entertaining, they often find several crowing roosters and curious kittens gathered

by the patio door to check out the visitors.

The Stasneys like to socialize and travel. Proud of their full Czech heritage, they have visited the homeland and speak the language.

“I sure don’t feel that age,” said John on farming and turning 91 next month. “I have to do something in the morning for exercise, and it’s better than going to a fitness center.”

The Electric Eye is the official publication of  
Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative  
125 Minnesota Valley Electric Drive  
Jordan, MN 55352  
[www.mvec.net](http://www.mvec.net) • [info@mvec.net](mailto:info@mvec.net)  
Office Hours: M - F: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**24-Hour Dispatch/Outages:**  
952.492.8255 or 800.232.2328  
Member Service: M - F: 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
952.492.2313 or 800.282.6832  
Pay By Phone: 952.492.8333 or 1.866.492.8333

For questions about the Electric Eye, email us at [ElectricEye@mvec.net](mailto:ElectricEye@mvec.net). The Electric Eye is printed with environmentally safe soy based ink.  
General Manager: Ryan Hentges  
Editor: Susan Larson

MVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer

**MVEC**  
Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative