

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* August 2026 NEWS



Jump River Electric
Cooperative, Inc.

Since 1938

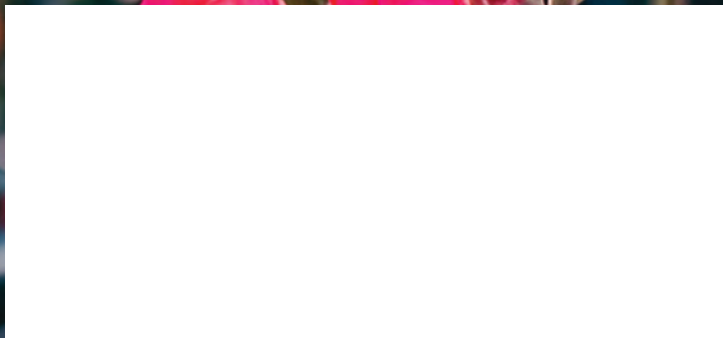
Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

FRESH FLOWER
FIELDS AND FARMS

A LEGACY OF INDEPENDENCE

IT ALL STARTS WITH "WHY?"

WATERMELON RECIPES





Connecting WITH OUR MEMBERS

Thank you to everyone who joined us in June for Member Appreciation Days. Members enjoyed great food, family-friendly activities, and time spent visiting with neighbors and cooperative employees.



..... FUN FOR ALL AGES

From games, prizes, face painting, a scavenger hunt, and a guessing game for the kids, there was something for everyone.



Members were able to sign up at all three locations for a chance to win an electric indoor grill. Winners were Gary (left) and Irene Knowlton of Holcombe, Connie Piper of Hayward, and Brad Trott (right) of Ladysmith.

Kids 3 to 13 were also invited to take a guess at how many water beads were in the jar. In case you were wondering, it was 838 beads. The winners were: Matthew (left) from Glen Flora, Lucca from Hayward, and Calvin (not pictured) from Ladysmith. The prize was their choice of a Willie Wiredhand water bottle filled with candy or a mini-golf pass to Marvelous Mikes Mini Golf & Ice Cream located in Bruce.

FIKA AT FARMSTEAD CREAMERY

Slow Down, Sip Coffee, and Stay Awhile

By Denise Zimmer

In my search for unique businesses owned and operated by JREC members, I discovered a true regional treasure. Tucked within the Chequamegon National Forest is North Star Homestead Farms and Farmstead Creamery. Ran by the four people pictured to the right, the farm and creamery offer an astonishing variety of products and experiences. Recently, I met with Laura Berlage, and as I learned about all they do and offer, I found myself wondering—as you probably will—how four people accomplish so much.

“Follow the child” is the foundational Montessori mantra and the guiding inspiration that brought a family physician and her two young children back to Hayward 27 years ago. They returned to their family roots at the original Fullington homestead, established in 1915, with a vision to restore the land through sustainable, biodynamic farming. Laura says they fell in love with the farm and decided to stay.

It took years of hard work, education, dedication, and a deep commitment to the land, but today the farm is flourishing. It offers an authentic farm-to-table experience while sharing its abundance through thoughtfully crafted products, fiber arts, and hands-on learning opportunities that connect people both locally and around the world.

Along the Way

Back in 2002, Jump River Electric Cooperative sponsored Laura to attend the Youth Leadership Congress (YLC). She says one of the biggest takeaways from that experience was realizing that adults truly value and encourage young people to embrace leadership roles. After attending YLC, Laura wrote an essay about the importance of cooperation and earned second place in



Steve Barnes and Ann Berlage (top) and Kara and Laura Berlage (bottom: l-r) all wear many hats in the operation of North Star Homestead Farms and Farmstead Creamery. Together, they have built a thriving business that invites people to experience the benefits of sustainable, healthy living without having to do all the work themselves.

the statewide contest. It's safe to say that Laura and her family continue to put that lesson into practice every day as they work together to manage the many tasks required to keep their farm and business thriving.

If the name Laura Berlage sounds familiar to you, it may be because you've read her weekly *Down on the Farm* article that is featured in multiple local newspapers. Her stories offer a glimpse into life on the farm and provide another avenue for connecting the community to the farm and its healthy lifestyle.



Looking for something new to do for a fun night out? Farmstead Creamery has you covered. Another fan favorite is their homemade wood-fired pizza, baked fresh in the outdoor brick oven and topped with ingredients sourced from the farm. They have two remaining summer pizza nights scheduled for August 1 and September 5. From 4-7 p.m., you can pick up your pizza or enjoy it outdoors on their patio while watching the hummingbirds dart among the feeders and the beautiful pollinator garden. Visit northstarhomestead.com to make a reservation or place your pizza order. You can also call 715-462-3453 if you have any questions about this or their many other products.



Down on the Farm

The farm spans nearly 250 acres and is home to dairy sheep, chickens, turkeys, fish (which are part of their aquaponics system), a horse, two donkeys, a mule, and Kunekune pigs—including, from what I'm told, a very famous one named Annie. Laura believes that the farm is constantly evolving, as does the business that grows from it—Farmstead Creamery, which has been in operation since 2012.

There are several unique features that distinguish North Star Homestead Farms from a traditional farm. Laura explains, "We see ourselves as innovators and early adopters. We look at new technology while being smart about what makes best sense for us and how we can use it." You can discover more about the various aspects of what makes North Star Homestead Farms distinctive, inspiring, insightful, and progressive at northstarhomestead.com.

They Offer a Bounty of Products

You'll find approximately 1500 items available through their e-store. Some items are available year-round, such as fresh produce that is grown through their integrated aquaponics system, and some are seasonal. They also offer baked goods, dairy, eggs, frozen goods, meat, pantry goods—all products either come from the farm or other co-op growers.

Bringing the Farm to Your Door

Another way to benefit from the farm's fresh products is by joining the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.



One of their standout specialties is fresh, handcrafted gelato made from sheep's milk. Kara, a licensed cheesemaker, oversees production and developed her own recipe along with a delicious variety of flavors. This unique treat is truly rare—only three businesses in the world produce sheep's milk gelato.

I couldn't leave the Farmstead Creamery without trying some, and I can honestly say it's worth the trip all by itself. Even better, it contains fewer calories than traditional ice cream, so go ahead and treat yourself to two scoops instead of one! They also hope to find time soon to get back to making their sheep's milk cheese. Yum!

With several membership options available, members receive exclusive benefits, including great deals, loyalty rewards, free pickups along delivery routes, free shipping on qualified items, and access to products not available to non-members.

The delivery route runs from Hayward to the Twin Cities, with many stops along the way. Learn more about the CSA program, explore the farm's history, and the full selection of products on their website. In case you are wondering, it is typically Steve or Ann making these deliveries.



Left: Before COVID, visitors could stop by Farmstead Creamery to shop for groceries or take one of Laura's hands-on fiber art classes, offered at the store and at various school campuses. Like many other businesses, Farmstead Creamery found themselves needing to adapt how their business operated through the pandemic. In fact, some of these changes remain in place today.

Center: Customers can place their grocery orders by phone or through the online e-store and conveniently pick them up curbside, like this satisfied customer who said she had several favorites, including the gelato. What was once a bustling grocery store now operates as their dedicated production space.

Right: Laura's popular fiber art classes have evolved as well since COVID. Instead of attending in person, participants have a project kit (with all materials deriving from the farm) delivered to them and join the class on Zoom. She now offers instruction in nine different fiber art techniques, making it easy to learn from the comfort of home. You can find a calendar of upcoming classes on their website. It's a fun and rewarding way to learn a new hobby and explore your creative side.

We will end where we started—with Fika, (fee-kah), the Swedish tradition of taking a midday coffee break and enjoying "a little something" with friends. Whether it's a freshly baked pastry, a scoop of sheep's milk gelato, or another homemade treat, the Farmstead Creamery's curbside service and outdoor seating offer plenty of delicious reasons to slow down, savor the moment, and embrace the spirit of fika.

Willie's PowerUP Pick

AUGUST 11 IS NATIONAL SAFE DIGGING DAY

What you need to know:

- Dial 811 to reach Diggers Hotline.
- Call at least three business days before your project begins.
- This is a FREE service.
- Diggers Hotline will forward your underground locating request to all relevant utility operators, including JREC.
- You are NOT clear to dig until all utilities have marked their lines.
- Each utility type is marked with a specific color, and electric lines are marked with red paint and flags.



- If you cannot maintain the lines or flags during the project, call 811 to request a relocate.
- Diggers Hotline is available 24/7.

It's a simple step that helps prevent costly damage, service outages, and—most importantly—serious injuries or even loss of life.



CONSTRUCTION CORNER:

Our next overhead-to-underground project will begin in August, east of Teal Lake along Larson and Camp Roads in Hayward. Here we will be replacing about 1.4 miles of two-phase overhead line with a single-phase underground service. As with the other projects that have been keeping our linemen busy this summer, we expect this to improve reliability, power quality, and help balance the system. At the same time, we will install protective devices at key locations along the underground power lines. These devices will help reduce the number of members affected by an outage and help restore power more quickly.

JOIN US AT NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

This event will be held on Tuesday, August 4, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Ladysmith Memorial Park.

National Night Out is a free, family-friendly event focused on promoting community partnerships and public safety.

There will be a free meal, drawings, activities, demonstrations, prizes, and more. Be sure to stop by JREC's station and meet our linemen and learn more about electrical safety. Kids can pick up a toy hard hat or ice cream bowl while the supplies last.



DO THE SUMMER SHIFT

Reduce your energy use between 2 and 7 PM.

With your help, we can lower demand, keep rates stable, and decrease stress on the electric grid.



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DID YOU SEE?

We're holding another photo contest

It's not too late to enter your best three photos taken within the JREC service area into the contest for a chance to win \$50. The contest ends August 25. Keep your camera ready so you can capture the moment. Find contest guidelines, consent form, and prize information at jrec.com/photo-contest.

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After-hour emergency service, call 866-273-5111

Pay by Phone: 844-967-2320

Find us on Facebook, X, and Instagram

Denise Zimmer, Editor



Scan the QR code to find us on Facebook (left) and Instagram (right).

**Jump River Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Since 1938

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



JREC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.