



# 2022 – A YEAR OF TRANSITION AND CHANGE

By Michael Schaefer, Interim Manager



I'm sitting here pondering my next, and last, several months that I will serve as your general manager and CEO. As announced last month, the board of Jump River Electric Cooperative (JREC) named Kurt Harris as assistant general manager and we have begun working side-by-side, making the best use of our time and resources, transitioning duties from myself to Kurt. To that end, we have several projects in motion that encompass more than just maintaining a safe, reliable system providing electricity to your homes and businesses, which always remains high on the priority list.

**Broadband Study** First, the board has authorized a study to be performed by one of the cooperative's national affiliates, the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC). This study will assess the costs associated with providing a quality, high-speed broadband internet service to all the members of JREC.

Many of our members in the sparsely populated rural areas of Rusk and Sawyer Counties cannot access the same high-speed broadband services that are readily available in densely populated areas. This is much like the 1930s when JREC was founded to provide electric service where the big utilities wouldn't go. Today, we have members who are struggling to promote their business across the Internet, work from home, provide access for their children's schooling needs, and more because broadband is not being offered in our rural areas.

We know the need is there, but we don't know at what cost it can be provided or have a plan of how to accomplish the task. The NRTC broadband study will provide insights for the board to consider if and how it might help make quality, affordable broadband service available to the members.

If we decide to move forward, it won't happen overnight; some would have access before others, and there's always the chance that the task is too great and costly for JREC to tackle, especially alone. In fact, we've already spoken to representatives from the counties in which we serve, and they are interested in hearing the results of this study, and possibly joining JREC. If we decide to move forward, we're hoping to have a workable plan, partnering with others in our area, and be able to take advantage of some of the government funding to make this a reality for our members here in rural Wisconsin.

In the meantime, we do offer an affordable satellite internet service to help meet your immediate needs. Viasat internet offers speeds up to 30 megabytes per minute and does work very well in our rural areas. A clear view of the southern sky is needed to bring this service to your home.

**Controlling Energy Cost** Another area we are studying is bringing some rate options for JREC members to help you decide how to control your energy costs. For years,

the electric industry has been telling consumers to be more energy-efficient and use less of the product we sell. Now the push is to make electricity an even bigger part of our daily lives, helping to eliminate the use of fossil fuels.

We have commissioned a study to help us analyze how time-of-use (TOU) rates might give our members some tools to help control their energy bills. One belief is that we can offer TOU rate options that allow a member to choose when to use electricity based on a price during certain hours of the day, especially those hours of each day when electricity becomes more costly—when the demand for electricity is the highest due to the most expensive generating plants operating.

An option to be offered within TOU rates might be for electric vehicle (EV) charging. As we hear more and more about the push for more EVs and more EVs being offered by auto manufacturers, we need to be ready to offer an option to charge those EV batteries during periods when the cost for generating electricity is penny cheap. There are some innovative ideas for off-peak EV charging rates out there, especially during over-night hours. EVs will be here before we know it—the time is now to prepare.

**Renewables for the Future** Finally, we have asked our engineers to help us analyze opportunities for incorporating solar and other renewables into our energy offerings. In most cases, larger-scale installations at the utility level are less expensive to install and the benefits include offsetting portions of our wholesale power cost, especially during peak use hours.

A JREC utility-scale solar project may provide an economical option for JREC and its members to own a piece

Continued on page 16



**WE BRING FAMILIES TOGETHER**

**UNLIMITED DATA PLANS**

**Packages starting at \$59.99/mo.**

**Viasat**

After you use the following amount of data, we may prioritize your data behind other customers during network congestion. Bronze 12 (40 GB), Silver 25 (60 GB), and Gold 30 (100 GB). Free standard installations. Minimum 24-month service term. Taxes apply. Speeds are "up to" are not guaranteed and will vary. See [jrec.com](http://jrec.com) for more details. Offer may be changed or withdrawn at any time.

# HELP US HELP YOU

## during planned and unplanned outages

**J**ump River Electric Cooperative strives to provide safe, reliable service. However, there are times when we need to schedule an outage to repair equipment or install new services. At other times Mother Nature throws us a curve ball, creating an unplanned outage.

**Do you have life-sustaining medical equipment?** Safety for our members, community, and employees is our number one priority. JREC maintains a list of members requiring electrical power for life-sustaining medical equipment for planned outage notifications. Please call us if you have a critical medical need, so we can verify contact and life-sustaining information.

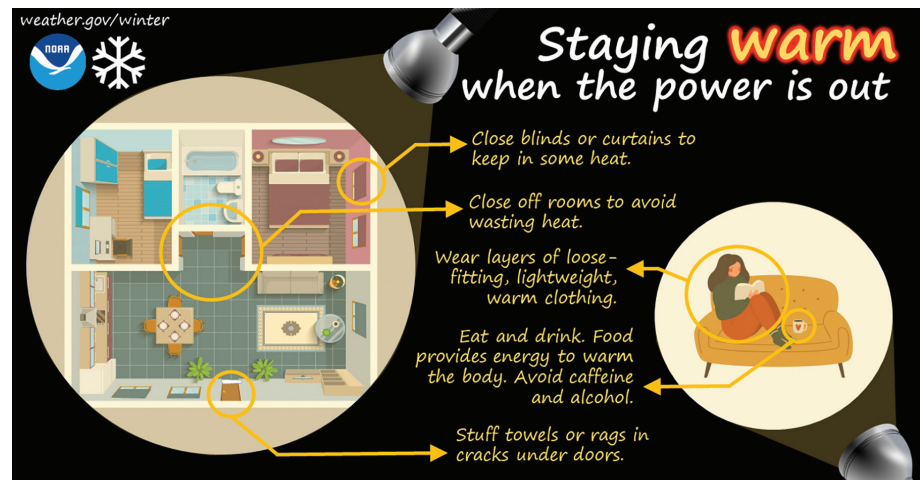
**What number do we call to reach you?** Please check your next bill to see if the telephone number listed is your primary contact number. This is the number our automated call service uses to contact you about planned outages. You can also expedite outage calls to our after-hour call center if the phone number you are calling from is the same number we have listed as your primary number.

**Other notification methods used.** If you do not follow us on Facebook, we encourage you to do so. We include all planned outage information there as well as on our website, [jrec.com](http://jrec.com). If a planned outage is expected to last several hours, we also make public service announcements on local radio stations.

**Should I call if I'm out of power?** ALWAYS! Call even if you think your neighbors have reported the outage. Leave one light on so you know when power has been restored. To report an

outage, call 715-532-5524 or 715-634-4575 during regular office hours or 866-273-5111 if the outage occurs after regular business hours.

**Are you prepared for an outage?** Have an emergency kit prepared. Refer to the graphic below for tips on how to stay warm during an outage. You can find other helpful tips at <https://commonsensehome.com/emergency-heat-winter-storm/>. Please update your contact information either by calling our office, through SmartHub, or online at [jrec.com](http://jrec.com).



## PLANNED OUTAGE STRENGTHENED RELIABILITY AND SAFETY

A reliable supply of electricity is essential to everyone's safety. Crews from our wholesale energy provider, Dairyland Power Cooperative, recently conducted a planned outage to energize a critical line responsible for providing safe and reliable energy to our local area. The new transmission line replaces a vintage 70-year-old line. As the only transmission line that connects to area substations, the stability of the line is essential for keeping the lights and heat on in our local communities.

As always, the safety of the public and employees was the highest priority. The three-hour planned outage was safely and successfully completed on the night of Dec. 14, during a period of unseasonably very mild temperatures. Conducting planned work overnight during calm and mild conditions helped prevent potential impacts that could result from an unplanned outage.

For the remainder of 2021, crews were able to continue their work safely retiring the vintage line.

## 2022 Continued from page 15

of the renewable market, especially for those members who cannot afford a rooftop or ground-mounted system of their own. Of course, there are pros and cons and reasons for all sorts of renewable energy systems at both the utility and individual member locations. We just want to maintain a fair pricing of those resources for all members to ensure that all share equally in the benefits of the renewables.

We don't have all the answers today, but it is part of the strategic plan adopted by the JREC board. We will begin the process of analyzing how to make our members' lives better with each of these opportunities. The charge for me as your interim CEO is to help Kurt and the staff prepare for the best possible future for all the members of JREC.



# POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Become a JREC Director Candidate

The director nomination process is underway for districts 2, 7, and 8. The Petition for Director Nomination forms were mailed in early January to each member within these three districts and are due March 1.



## Three Steps to becoming a director candidate:

1. Go to [jrec.com/bylaws-policies](http://jrec.com/bylaws-policies) and read Article IV, Section 3 of the Article of Incorporation and Bylaws to find out if you meet the director qualifications.
2. Have 15 or more members from the district you reside in sign your Petition for Director Nomination paper.
3. Return the member-signed petition to one of our two cooperative offices by end of day on March 1. Cooperative personnel will validate signatures and districts. A photo will be taken of the candidate at this time. Qualified candidates will also be subject to a background check prior to be listed on the director election ballot.

## The role of the director

Directors provide strategic direction and guidance to management to ensure the cooperative continues to serve the interest of the membership. Elected directors serve a three-year term. If you are unsure of which district you live in, go to [jrec.com/board-director-contact-information](http://jrec.com/board-director-contact-information) and click on the district map button. You can also find the list of director duties and responsibilities on this page.

## UPCOMING DEADLINES:

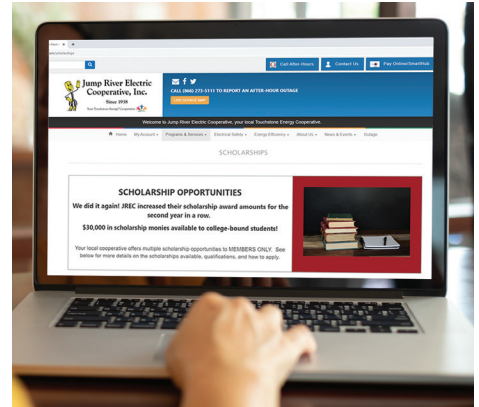
**January 20** – Notify JREC of your interest to serve on the Rules & Resolution Committee.

**March 1** – Deadline to submit any resolutions that are to be considered at the annual meeting as well as the deadline for the Petition for Director Nomination for members residing in Districts 2, 7, and 8.

## SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE APPROACHING

JREC will offer 30, \$1,000 scholarships in 2022. Scholarships are available for both homeschool and high school students, along with non-traditional (adult) students.

Applications for all but the high school seniors can be found online at [jrec.com/scholarships](http://jrec.com/scholarships). High school seniors attending one of the following schools can obtain an application



from their guidance counselor: Bruce, Chetek-Weyerhaeuser, Flambeau, Gilman, Hayward, Ladysmith, Lake Holcombe, LCO, Rib Lake, Stanley-Boyd, and Winter. Application deadlines vary by scholarship type and school.

The scholarship program is funded entirely from the Federated Youth Foundation, which receives its money through unclaimed capital credits.



Roger Stefan



Sherry Parmenter



Pamela Metzler

## WINNER, WINNER, TURKEY DINNER!

JREC has given 533 turkeys to members over the past 40 years. Lucky 13 winners for 2021 are: Sheila Slagowski, Ladysmith; Patricia Kowal, Lublin; Roger Stefan, Hawkins; Greg Galatka, Glen Flora; Sherry Parmenter, Hayward; Gloria Trott, Ladysmith; Tom Goetsch, Hayward; Julie Hansen, Hayward; Lisa Retzlaff, Hawkins; Pamela Metzler, Gilman; Karen Potack, Hayward; Kay Moe, Hayward; and Pam Bosteder, Conrath. Thank you to all who entered.

# NEW BEGINNINGS FOR RETIRING JREC EMPLOYEES

The beginning of a new year can fill us with renewed hope. Perhaps your hope is to finally stick to that diet or exercise plan you have once again resolved to do. Or maybe your hope is to simply spend more time with your family or do something that brings you joy. That is what two JREC employees are hoping for as they look forward to the new beginnings that retirement promises.

**Gayle** It was July 2016 when Gayle began working at JREC, after working many years in the health/medical field. She admits she was more than a little afraid of what challenges would present themselves in her new career as a JREC member service representative.

When asked what she wanted to do first in her retirement, she answered, "I'm sleeping in and then I'm going to pinch myself and make sure I'm not dreaming!" She is also looking forward to having time to do whatever she'd like to do without rushing and may even find a new hobby, while spending more time at two of her favorite hobbies: playing golf and writing poetry.

"I will miss my little chats with all the members who came into the office; I loved getting to know all of them," Gayle said. "I can't believe it has been five and a half years since I started. I have learned so much working at the cooperative and what keeps our power on. The linemen I work with are truly dedicated and hard working. I will miss them!"

Gayle may no longer work at the Hayward office, but we are thankful that we will still be in contact with her in her retirement as she remains a JREC member.



**Sam** It was 1985 and Coca-Cola came out with their "New" Coke, Windows released



version 1.0, the first .com was registered, and Sam Howard began working for the cooperative. Unlike the "New" Coke, which was only around for a few months, Sam has worked for the cooperative a few months shy of 37 years.

Sam began as an apprentice lineman out of the Hannibal outpost in April 1985, completing his apprenticeship in 1988. It wasn't long before his ability to lead became apparent and he was promoted to lead lineman in 1991, then meter technician in 2001. In 2015, Sam took over as the Hayward line superintendent before being promoted to operations manager in 2017. Sam has worked out of all three locations during his career at JREC.

He believes that he has worked with about 35 different linemen over the years and has many great memories of his time at the cooperative. One that makes it to the top of his list is working to restore power after a very bad storm in 1991. Sam and a few other linemen were called to restore power on an island. Due to the storm they had to get creative in finding a way to get to the island, so Sam decided to cross using a log. Suffice it to say, not all the linemen made it without getting a little wet.



Sam has also seen his share of change, from safety improvements to equipment. However, he says the greatest changes he has experienced during his career comes in the form of automation and technology. When he began, members called in their monthly meter readings. Today, meters send in a digital reading every few minutes and provide the means to connect and disconnect remotely.

Those who know Sam are not surprised to hear that ice fishing is what he wants to do more of in his retirement. What he doesn't want to do is drive as much as he did every day for many of his almost 37 years at JREC. He is also looking forward to "doing whatever I feel like doing," including more fishing, hunting, and traveling.

No matter what Gayle or Sam find themselves doing during their retirement, we know that 2022 is truly going to be full of new beginnings as they venture into their first year of retirement. Thank you to both for serving the members so well and for keeping the lights on.

1102 West 9th Street North • P.O. Box 99, Ladysmith, WI 54848  
715-532-5524 (Ladysmith); 715-634-4575 (Hayward) • www.jrec.com

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

**Pay by Phone: 888-255-6489**

Find us on Facebook & Twitter  


*JREC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

**Denise Zimmer, Editor**



**Jump River Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.**

Since 1938

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**NEW OFFICE HOURS FOR HAYWARD OUTPOST –**

9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday – Friday.