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RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE A VOICE IN WASHINGTON

By Dan Riedinger

Given the incessant news out of Washington highlighting partisan bickering and gridlock in Congress, it can be hard to tell whether our elected leaders are listening and being responsive to the concerns of rural Americans. That’s why America’s electric cooperatives urged members to get out and vote in the last election and are now focused on advancing the interests of rural communities in our nation’s capital. We’ve asked for a seat at the table—a request that’s been met with some success.

Early this year, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), our national service organization in Washington, led a group of more than 40 organizations in sending a letter to President Trump asking him to make rural issues a top priority of his administration. “As you witnessed firsthand during the campaign, the issues facing rural America are no less significant than those facing urban parts of the country, but can be more easily overlooked because America’s small towns and rural areas make up just 15 percent of the nation’s population,” the groups wrote.

To address this concern, the organizations urged the president to designate a senior member of the White House staff to take point on rural issues or establish an office of rural policy within the Executive Office of the President.

In response to this and other electric cooperative outreach efforts, the president in late April signed an executive order establishing an interagency Rural America Task Force to examine the issues facing rural America and identify actions needed to address them.

NRECA CEO Jim Matheson called the creation of the task force “a key step as we seek to develop rural communities economically. That includes implementing new energy technologies to meet tomorrow’s energy needs, while also deploying broadband and other services to enhance daily lives throughout rural America.”

High on the co-ops’ list of priorities is closing the rural-urban digital divide...

Electric cooperatives also have been weighing in on another big topic in Washington: the need to improve the nation’s aging infrastructure. Co-ops have told policymakers that they must look beyond merely repairing roads and

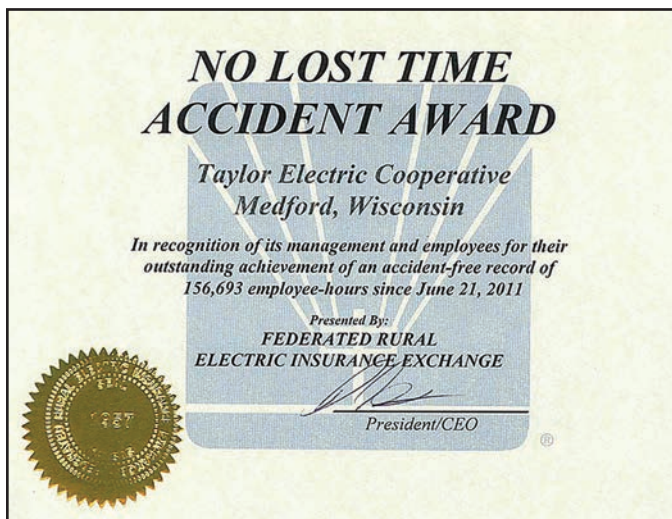
bridges if a federal infrastructure initiative is going to meet the needs of rural communities. High on co-ops’ list of priorities is closing the rural-urban digital divide by expanding rural access to high-speed internet service, which Matheson calls “a key ingredient for a healthy 21st century economy, particularly in rural areas.”

Given this imperative, co-ops were very pleased when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) appointed Matheson to serve on a newly created Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee. The mission of the panel, which held its inaugural meeting in April, is to advise and make recommendations to the FCC on how to accelerate the deployment of broadband by reducing and removing regulatory barriers to infrastructure investment. Matheson will work to ensure that rural needs are addressed.

This isn’t to say that everything in Washington will go co-ops’ way. The federal government is a massive bureaucracy with many interests vying for attention. But there’s one thing you can count on: Electric cooperatives will fight to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and within the many federal agencies that impact the quality of life in rural communities. They’ll always strive to get a seat at the table.

Dan Riedinger writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

MY CO-OP



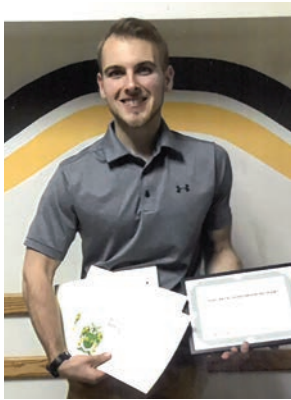
Safety First! Taylor Electric recently received recognition for 156,693 hours worked with no lost time due to accidents.



Congratulations

to our 2017 scholarship winners

Taylor Electric Cooperative \$500 Scholarship Winners



Kwinton Denzine is the son of Kurt Denzine and Alice Denzine, Dorchester. He plans to attend Northcentral Technical College in the welding program. Kwinton played football throughout high school and enjoys playing a variety of sports as well as watching them. He also enjoys working out, snowmobiling, four-wheeling, and spending time with family and friends.



Joshua Langteau is the son of Steve and Kathy Langteau, Stetsonville. Josh plans to attend UW-Green Bay and will major in biology. He also intends to run cross-country while in college. His hobbies include fishing, hunting, and running.

Michael Gustum is the son of Brad and Sandra Weber, Withee. He is currently enrolled at Northcentral Technical College in the welding fabrication and robotic welding course. His hobbies and interests include ATVs, and riding and racing his MX style tracks. He enjoys going on long trail rides with his friends. He hopes to become a skillful stainless steel welder.



Josh Thiede is the son of Bill and Carmen Thiede, Medford. Josh will be attending UW-La Crosse in the fall to study exercise science with an emphasis in pre-chiropractic. He will be playing football for the La Crosse Eagles. Josh loves most outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, water skiing, four-wheeling, and snowmobiling. He also enjoys spending time with his family and friends at Harper Lake and their hunting shack.



Donald Dums is the son of Andrew and Karen Dums, Rib Lake. He plans to attend Northcentral Technical College, Wausau, and will study dairy science. He would eventually like to farm and get his CDL. He enjoys running, making firewood, farm work, and band.

Taylor Electric Board of Directors \$200 Scholarship Winners



Bailey Brandner is the daughter of Nick and Amy Brandner, Medford. Bailey plans to attend UW-La Crosse in the fall to study sports management. While in high school, Bailey swam and ran track. She enjoys spending time with family and friends.

Rebecca Held is the daughter of Dawn and Paul Kolecheck, Medford. She is planning to attend Michigan Technological University and will major in engineering. While in school, she participated in Science Olympiad, Red White Spotlight (choir production), and was part of the stage crew. Outside of school, she enjoys riding horse and training/showing dogs and beef cattle. She also enjoys drawing and playing piano.



Kolby Jensen is the son of Jamie Jensen and Kelly Jensen, Dorchester. He plans to attend UW-Green Bay and will pursue a bachelor's degree with an emphasis on computer science. Kolby was involved in cross country and track while in high school and enjoys going for an occasional run around his neighborhood. He also enjoys working with computers,

playing games and changing the settings on his devices. He is a very social person and can often be found talking with his friends.

Caleb Jeppesen is the son of Rollie and Vicki Jeppesen, Rib Lake. Caleb will attend Northcentral Technical College and will major in architectural design and technology. He plans to transfer to Milwaukee School of Engineering. His interests include baseball, working with animals, and spending time with family and friends.



Jenna Klemm is the daughter of Doug and Patti Klemm, Medford. Jenna is planning to attend UW-Eau Claire and will major in nursing and minor in Spanish. Her interests and hobbies include playing or watching sports.

Vanessa Laher is the daughter of Jim and Sue Laher, Medford. Vanessa will attend UW-Stout with an undeclared major. Her interests and hobbies include volleyball, curling, and soccer. She also played the clarinet in band. Vanessa enjoys playing sports, traveling, and photography.



Colin Porten is the son of Lisa and Patrick Porten, Medford. He is planning to attend UW-Eau Claire with an undeclared major but is interested in music or theatre. Colin's grandfather was a past director of the Taylor Electric Board of Directors. Some of his hobbies and interests include theatre, ultimate frisbee, singing, and playing video games.





A little caution can help prevent **WILDFIRES**

By Abby Berry

In 2016, more than 65,000 wildfires burned 5.4 million acres of land in the United States, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information. The worst part? Many of these wildfires could have been prevented.

While some wildfires are caused by lightning, approximately 90 percent are caused by human error. Many times, wildfires occur when campfires are left unattended, debris is burned improperly, or cigarettes are carelessly discarded.

A wildfire can grow rapidly out of control when the three following conditions are present: oxygen, fuel, and a heat source. The fuel can be any materials that are flammable near the wildfire, and the heat source can be a variety of things, like campfires, cigarettes, or even warm winds. When these three conditions are met, a violent wildfire can ensue.

By taking a few extra precautions, campers and outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy the sights of nature without causing a wildfire. Here are a few tips from National Geographic to help prevent wildfires:

- Never leave a fire unattended, and make sure you completely extinguish the fire when you're done. Drench the fire with water and stir the ashes until cold.
- Play it safe when using fueled lanterns, heaters, and stoves. Lighting and heating devices should be cool before refueling. Keep flammable liquids and fuel away from appliances.
- Never discard cigarettes, matches, and smoking materials from moving vehicles, or anywhere on park grounds. Completely extinguish cigarettes before disposing of them.
- When burning yard waste, follow local ordinances. Avoid burning in windy conditions, and keep a shovel, water, and fire retardant nearby to keep fires in check.

If conditions are right and you find yourself in the path of a wildfire, evacuate immediately. Listen to local emergency notifications for the most up-to-date information. Better yet, make a wildfire plan for you and your family before a fire occurs.

Visit <https://www.ready.gov/wildfires> for more information about wildfire safety and prevention.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus electric cooperatives.

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