



condenser

November 16, 2018

"I'm honored and humbled"

Dunn Energy Cooperative General Manager and CEO Jim Hathaway received the Ally of Co-operative Electrification (ACE) Award Wednesday evening at the Wisconsin Electric Co-operative Association (WECA) annual meeting and awards banquet in La Crosse. "I have a wonderful job," Hathaway told the audience of electric co-op leaders. "Probably the biggest reason is we don't work for a profit, we work for people. We work for a great program. How fortunate am I?" The newest recipient of WECA's highest honor thanked his wife, saying he "wouldn't be standing here tonight if not for her insights and wisdom." The ACE Award has been presented annually since 1967 to recognize exceptional service in the advancement of rural electrification at the local, state, or national levels.



Different judges, same conclusion

Four different independent judges in four different years—2014, 2016, 2017, and 2018, have examined the local co-op pages of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* and concluded that the best in terms of overall excellence have been those of Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, prepared by the co-op's Communications and Public Relations Manager Mary Kay Brevig. For those efforts, Brevig received her fourth N.F. Leifer Memorial Journalism Award Wednesday evening in La Crosse at the WECA annual meeting and awards banquet. Leifer, then manager of Vernon Electric Cooperative, was instrumental in the 1940 founding of *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*. "Thank you. I'm very humbled," the repeat winner told the banquet audience.



Safety First

The traveling plaque that represents the Herman C. Potthast Award for excellence in electric cooperative job training and safety was handed over Wednesday evening to its 2018 honoree, Dairyland Power Cooperative's Safety Manager for Power Delivery, Lance Burke. The award is named for the training master who led electric utility worker safety program development in Wisconsin, across the United States, and abroad for nearly three decades beginning in the 1940s. It's inscribed with the names of winners dating back to 1972 and Burke was moved to be joining their company. "I've known a lot of these people and to be on the same plaque with them means a lot to me," he said in accepting the award.



The 2018-19 WECA board of directors was introduced Thursday at the La Crosse annual meeting. Standing (l-r) are Bill Fischer, Rock Energy; David Hischke, Oconto Electric; Steve Lucas, Scenic Rivers Energy; Judi Anibas, Eau Claire Energy; Larry Dokkestul, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services; Jerry Huber, Jackson Electric (for Dairyland Power); Diane Zimmerman, East Central Energy; David Orf, St. Croix Electric; and Dallas Sloan, Barron Electric. All were elected at July district

meetings except Orf, the sole nominee at the annual meeting to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Derrick Oberle, also St. Croix, who accepted employment in another state. Not seen, Chairman David Paudler (Riverland Energy) was out of the country. Reorganization Thursday left the lineup of officers unchanged, retaining Paudler as chairman; Dokkestul, vice chairman; Anibas, secretary-treasurer; and Sloan and Zimmerman as executive committee members.

Matheson message: governance, community

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson made his first appearance at a Wisconsin statewide annual meeting Thursday morning, and stressed the importance of good co-op governance, commitment to community, and opportunities for bipartisan achievement in the divided Congress.

Matheson cited members of a South Carolina electric co-op “firing” their entire board as proof that the system of cooperative governance “under democratic member control works” as intended, and urged co-op leaders to examine governance practices so they’ll get credit for heading off problems instead of blame for letting them exist.

Electric cooperatives have strong support from both parties in Congress—unlike other energy industry trade groups—because the co-ops’ “political center of gravity isn’t Washington, D.C., it’s the communities we serve,” Matheson said.

He suggested co-ops associate themselves with opportunities for bipartisan cooperation on building infrastructure—including strengthened electric grid resilience—rural broadband access as a preventive measure against accelerated migration out of rural areas, and development of a new Farm Bill.

Concerning broadband deployment, Matheson encouraged electric

cooperatives to closely examine member interest and economic considerations, saying both federal loan and grant alternatives are needed.

In hiring a consultant to study broadband deployment locally, he said, “I’d recommend you hire one who’s told someone no.”



Freese notes year’s accomplishments



The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association saved money for its member co-ops during the past year with multiple public policy successes, President and CEO Steve Freese told delegates at the organization’s annual meeting in La Crosse Thursday.

Freese cited a successful lobbying effort that modified, and finally turned back, legislation that would have required co-ops to allow small wireless pole attachments, creating costs and safety hazards and potentially complicating co-op easements on member properties.

A positive achievement during the past year was passage of legislation exempting services and materials provided between co-ops in mutual aid deployments from the state sales and use tax, he said.

The statewide association’s intervention with state agencies following an unannounced policy change opened a path to preserve co-op eligibility for Wisconsin Disaster Fund payments, allowing major cost recovery by several member co-ops in the wake of destructive storms that occurred during 2017, Freese noted.

He also stressed cost savings available to participating co-ops by publishing their annual reports in the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*, and described new media services available to WECA member co-ops, including video services and assistance producing their own video material.

In earlier annual meeting reports, delegates learned that WECA held unrestricted cash assets of more than \$682,000, that cash on hand was sufficient to sustain day-to-day operations, and that the organization closed out its fiscal year August 31 with a net margin of more than \$137,000, or \$101,000 more than the amount budgeted.

Settling with Cooperative Network on shared office rent, WECA paid \$165,000 to eliminate an obligation that would otherwise have continued until 2022.

No *Condenser* next Friday

We will not publish on Friday, November 23 as WECA staff celebrates the Thanksgiving holiday. *Condenser* will return on Friday, November 30.

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Prepared weekly and distributed since 1956 to provide timely information on matters pertaining to Wisconsin’s non-profit, consumer-owned rural electric cooperatives.

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association

222 W. Washington Ave., Suite 680
Madison, WI 53703