

Menard Electric Cooperative's

# Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



www.menard.com

## New General Manager

**A**fter a nationwide search, your Board of Directors selected Alisha Anker as the new General Manager.

Anker resides in Springfield but plans to move within the year to become a member of the cooperative.

Anker has more than 25 years of experience in the electric utility industry. In 2009 she joined Prairie Power



Inc. (PPI), our wholesale power provider, and was the Vice President of Regulatory and Market Affairs. She was highly engaged in energy market roles, regulatory matters, hedging the Prairie Power energy and capacity portfolio, and overseeing generation capacity construction projects.

Anker began her career in the electric utility industry at City, Water, Light and Power, in 1990, after

her studies in Electric/Computer Engineering at University of Illinois. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Energy Management in 2014 and is currently working on her MBA.

She fills the vacancy left by Eric Hobbie when he moved to be CEO of PPI the first of the year; Lynn Frasco has served as Interim General Manager.

Join us June 15 at our Annual Meeting to personally welcome Alisha Anker to Menard Electric.

## Annual Meeting

*Thursday, June 15 PORTA High School, Petersburg*

*Never been? Here's a little taste of what you can expect:*

A lineman will chauffeur you from your vehicle to the front entryway.

Once inside the air-conditioned school you'll show the registration card you received on your official notice (to be mailed in May) to secure your right to vote, receive an appreciation gift, and be registered for prizes.

You'll have the opportunity to spend some time with our employees and board members if you wish. Make sure you introduce yourself to our new General Manager Alisha Anker.

You'll doubtless see neighbors and old friends to visit with. And you'll join them or make new acquaintances over a delicious grilled pork chop

dinner.

Then you'll settle in to the comfortable auditorium to hear reports about the cooperative.

Our co-op is democratically run and you'll participate in that process by casting your vote for directors for the three districts up for election this year.

### Director election

Petitions for Districts 3, 7 and 8 are due May 1. Information was printed in last month's issue. Details and a district map can be found at [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com). Stop in our office to pick up a petition.



***Please note the meeting has changed this year to be held on a Thursday evening.***



**#ThankALineman**

## Lineman Appreciation Day is April 10

For more than 79 years Menard Electric Cooperative's linemen have provided safe, reliable electricity to our members. The men pictured here

make up our operations department; they endure long hours in cold, hot, rainy, stormy and flooded environments to keep your electricity on.

Take a moment to thank a lineman this month by sending a note to [info@menard.com](mailto:info@menard.com) or PO Box 200, Petersburg, IL 62675.



### EFFICIENCY

#### Air dry

Turn off the heated dry on your dishwasher and crack the door to dry dishes.



## Farmer Planting Safety

- Look up! Take notice of our lines running along rural roads and field edges.
- Maintain a 10-foot minimum distance between equipment and lines. That's below, to the side, and above lines.
- Inspect entrances to fields to ensure adequate clearance.
- Always use a spotter to help verify clearance from a better vantage point.

Visit [www.safeelectricity.org](http://www.safeelectricity.org)

## Member Spotlight

# Red Gate Farm

Menard Electric Cooperative serves many farms in central Illinois, both large and small, traditional and non-traditional. We recently discovered a small non-traditional farm on our lines, Red Gate Farm, LLC, owned by co-op members Sean and Danielle Londrigan.

Whereas large-scale farmers focus their talents and energies on one or two crops or livestock animals, small farmers will often raise multiple.

Sean and Danielle, along with their five children, live on 25 acres near New Salem State Park with horses, goats, hogs, cows, rabbits, turkeys, and a whole lot of chickens.

Education backgrounds in engineering and equine farm management, multiple moves during Sean's career in the Air Force, family health challenges, a love of learning, and a willingness to try new things, have led them to the pursuit of a self-sustaining farm. They are seeking to raise animals and plants that complement each other in such a way that the animals live as close as possible to how they would naturally - and the land rejuvenates itself and is full of nutrients.

"It's all a cycle," says Sean, "and we love learning how it all works together."

Red Gate Farm is always evolving to get closer to their goal of self-sustaining.

"We cannot totally simulate all of nature but we can get better and we can get closer," says Danielle. "One example of that is the horse paddock paradise system."

Two draft horses and a mustang live on the farm and a track of sorts has been created to simulate their natural environment. To keep the horses moving, food is stationed in nets in one area, and water kept in another. The track stimulates the animals as they move with natural components. Since it's creation all issues with foundering, cribbing, and other common complaints of pasture-raised horses have gone away. Danielle says pastures can be converted to the system.

The Red Gate Farm draft horses also work, both on and off the farm. They are available for hire for carriage rides. If you've had a horse-drawn carriage ride in the Petersburg or Springfield area it is likely you've met them already. Farm duties come first though, including garden and snow plowing, and hauling logs up to the



sawmill.

Sean utilizes dead trees and fallen branches to mill nearly all of the wood used on the farm. Some of it would be very valuable if sold. "But that goes against our goals of being a self-sustaining farm," Sean says. The entire tree, and even the leftover sawdust, are fully utilized.

At the time of this writing a walnut and red and white oak walipini was nearly completed. A walipini is a type of greenhouse built primarily underground. Using his engineering background to full advantage, Sean constructed it with rooftop angles positioned to gain full advantage of the sun in the winter and to reflect it in the summer. He positioned grow beds to receive the sun at optimal times of the day, created a cold sink floor, and positioned barrels to receive rainwater to both water the plants and retain warmth. "A walipini uses the thermal mass of the earth to naturally keep it warm in the winter and cool in the summer," says Sean.

Danielle adds, "The problem with many greenhouses is that once the weather freezes they can't be used."

Although more commonplace in other parts of the world, a few walipinis are being built in the US, although you'll likely not find one nearby. "Lots of people, all over the world, are watching us to see how this goes," says Sean.

Danielle plans to utilize the walipini for starts, tropical plants like bananas, and to extend the growing season a

**Continued on 18d** ►



## Board highlights

For full minutes visit [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com) or contact the office.

January 24, 2017

- Present were Directors Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Gary Martin, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney & Steven Worner; Interim Manager Lynn Frasco & Attorney Charles Smith. Absent were Directors Dennis Ryan and Jodine Tate.
- Board approved Capital Credit Committee's proposed Resolution for retirement of \$400,000 in general retirements and \$175,000 in estate retirements in 2017.
- Worner: Presented Irrigation Committee report & reviewed proposed agreement & terms & provisions of rate 51. Staff to provide more detailed analysis.
- Approved 2017 financial budget after detailed discussion.
- Frasco: Discussed balance sheet, budget, outage summary, safety report, 20 new irrigation systems-12 completed, MEC lineman traveling to Bolivia with NRECA International Program, a workman's comp refund for \$94,989 for 2012-2015, FFB loan advances, recent trend of receiving fewer NSF checks, software provider changes & considerations, discussed AIEC call of possible effects on members of prepaid meter programs offered by other co-ops.
- Frasco: Gave financial report for the month of December. Year to date margins were \$2,237,666 compared to \$1,561,574 last year. End of Dec. equity was 39.29%. Served 10,874 member accounts. Net utility plant was \$45,725,436 compared to \$43,844,514 last year. Co-op meets requirements of RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.
- Goetsch: Discussed AIEC activities & executive summary.
- Martin: Gave Prairie Power Inc. report
- Board entered into executive session.

### Member spotlight continued from 18c

bit for other vegetables - so they can have lettuce available at the same time tomatoes ripen for instance.

Red Gate grows 80 varieties of fruits and veggies without pesticides or herbicides. For the second year they are offering a CSA (community supported agriculture) "With a CSA the customer buys early and that helps the farmer fund the high cost of the early growing season. It also guarantees the farmer an outlet for what they grow," says Danielle.

She says that participating in a CSA many years ago helped her to find new vegetables she loves. "I didn't know what many of the vegetables were or how to prepare them but I wanted to

use them because I had them," she says. "We encourage our customers to be a little adventurous and I provide information and recipes to help."

Red Gate also sells eggs, chicken, turkey, beef and pork; raised their way. Hogs are sent out into the forest to root and forage. Cattle eat the grasses grown. A chicken house is moved every two days and they are never confined.

Goats are also milked for the family and used to keep the land clear, especially of honeysuckle; they even keep the right of way under our electric lines clear of brush.

Animals can be raised this way in part because of two livestock guardian

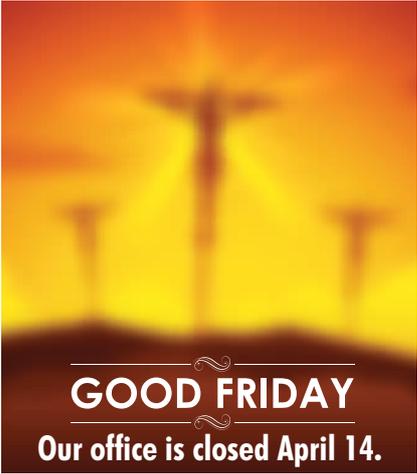


**SAFETY**

**Safe digging**

Call 8-1-1 before you dig!

More tips @ [www.menard.com](http://www.menard.com)



**GOOD FRIDAY**

Our office is closed April 14.

dogs. "We could not do what we do without the dogs. We could not raise the animals this way. They allow us to live in harmony with the wildlife around us," says Danielle.

Danielle and Sean are also big about education. "We want to learn what we can and live on our land and if we can help someone else along the way that's great," says Danielle. They offer a variety of classes, from making dairy products to raising animals to driving a horse drawn carriage; see the full selection of classes, as well as CSA options, details on meats and other services on their website at [www.redgatefarmllc.com](http://www.redgatefarmllc.com) or call 217-501-4234.