

Connect to MEC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

www.menard.com

Cooperatives Build

October is National Cooperative Month



Eric Hobbie, P.E.
General Manager

Being part of a cooperative means being a part of something special. At Menard Electric Cooperative we are celebrating National Cooperative Month in

October, along

with 40,000 other cooperative businesses serving more than 120 million people nationwide.

In addition to us, you may participate in more cooperative businesses than you know, including credit unions, water co-ops, farming/grain elevator co-ops, Prairie Farms, Ace Hardware, True Value, Ocean Spray, Welch's, Sunkist,

and more.

This year's theme, "Cooperatives Build," is excellent because there are so many ways that cooperatives help to build a stronger rural America. The theme focuses on how cooperatives build trust, community, and jobs, and through those, a better world.

Cooperatives Build Trust

Most co-ops strive to adhere to seven cooperative principles, which combine to help build trust between the co-op, its members, and the community. For example, the first principle is *Voluntary and Open Membership*, which means that we are a voluntary organization open to all people able to use our services and willing to accept the responsibility of membership. The principle of *Autonomy and Independence* indicates we are independent organizations governed

and owned by those very members who receive our services.

The second principle, *Democratic Member Control*, gives members a voice in the cooperative's policies and decisions. This principle is evident at Menard Electric each summer as you elect our Board of Directors by and from the membership at our annual meeting.

Recently we've showcased the fifth principle, *Education, Training and Information*, as we've provided safety training for several local fire departments. We regularly provide you with information here and on our website (www.menard.com) and Facebook pages about your co-op, energy efficiency, and electrical safety.

Cooperatives Build Community

The seventh cooperative principle is *Concern for Community*. Co-ops work for the sustainable development of our communities through support for schools, charitable contributions to community efforts, and employee involvement in local organizations. This year alone you will find Menard Electric board members and employees on the boards of your local farm or grain co-op, library, and church; at the schools as PTO members, sports boosters, and volunteers; and serving our youth as leaders for 4-H and cub scouts, and as coaches for basketball, wrestling, soccer and karate.



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Cooperatives Build Jobs

All cooperatives generate jobs in their communities, keep profits local and pay local taxes to help support community services. All in all, cooperatives employ more than 2 million Americans.

When we speak of jobs we often think of the economy. Another principle is *Member's Economic Participation*. Menard Electric had \$28 million in sales last year with \$1.6 million in margins, with all of the margins being allocated to our members as capital credits. Menard Electric strives to keep our expenditures as close to home as possible, helping to strengthen the local economy.

A significant portion of our expenditures go to buying power for our members from our local G&T cooperative, Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI) in Springfield. Menard Electric works through PPI to keep expenditures local through purchases and ownership of Illinois energy resources. All of this is done to keep your dollars working in our local economy and ultimately providing value to our members in more ways than just the electric service you receive.

Cooperatives Build a Better World

We hope you'll agree that it's easy to see how through all of the above ways, cooperatives build a better world. We also want to mention the last co-op principle, *Cooperation Among Cooperatives*, indicating how co-ops work together to provide for our members. Menard Electric was able to help two other cooperatives during last winter's ice storms, and we know that if we need help, other electric co-ops will come to our aid.

The Illinois electric cooperatives jointly perform safety audits on each other to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the cooperative, which reduces the risk of accidents and regulatory violations. Menard Electric also participates with five other central Illinois electric cooperatives on a joint purchasing alliance to gain volume discounts on material, ultimately saving money for all of our members. Menard Electric shares tree trimming resources with Spoon River Electric Cooperative that not only demonstrates cooperation

among cooperatives, but also efficiently creates local jobs in our communities.

Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative's International program, co-ops in America have helped bring electricity to underserved countries such as Bolivia and Ethiopia. We are working with our statewide association, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, now to bring lights to rural areas of Bolivia. One of your linemen will be traveling this fall to rural Bolivia to help bring electric for the first time to some of these residents and "electrify" their lives. Not only will this improve the lives of these residents in unbelievable ways, it also gives all of us a chance to reflect on and truly appreciate the bounties we have in our communities, and appreciate the value of helping others.

We hope you can see why we have a lot to celebrate this month – we are proud to be an electric cooperative, owned and operated by those we serve – you, our members.



Member Spotlight

Indian Creek Farmstead

Member John Lyons and his wife Judy own Indian Creek Farmstead in Petersburg. Some call it a pumpkin farm. But after speaking with the pair you'll find that their passion goes far beyond selling pumpkins; they seek to provide customers with an opportunity to connect as a family, and perhaps learn something new along the way.

"No matter where we've lived we've always loved the fall and the activities that go along with it," says John. He and Judy visited many pumpkin farms throughout the years and when they retired and moved back to this area to be near family, they began looking for land to build and create their own. (John's roots go back to Sweetwater, where he says Menard Electric brought electricity to his family's farm in the 1940s.)

They purchased 100 acres that included a barn built in the 1800s and a granary in the 1930s. When they restored and repurposed the existing buildings, they named them after the past owners as a tribute. "Locals hear the names, remember the families and have stories to share," says John. The farmstead itself was named for the creek that flows just below it.

You'll find the past visible in hand hewn timbers and wooden pegs in the barn. The old and new work together in a heated and cooled building featuring modern bathrooms, a store with antiques and locally crafted items, and housing the Olde Tractor Grille serving food and drink options.

Outside you'll find The Barnyard, a place for families to play featuring a roping corral, digging areas, slides, a play house, kids karaoke pavilion, and a chalk art building. There are also pedal tractors, a train ride, and a very popular animal petting/feeding area for kids.

And then there are the tractor/

wagon rides, which are more than just a way to get to the pumpkin fields.

John drives most of the tours and says, "We get a family together on a 30 minute tractor

ride and it's like a moving kitchen table – encouraging everyone to talk as a family about what they are seeing. Families don't have that time together as much anymore."

The wagons travel through timber and along fields, past "full size" and "miniature" cows and along pumpkin, Indian corn, sunflower and cover crops. John weaves stories along the way to provide information about the land, crops and animals. He especially enjoys taking children out on rides for school field trips and using pizza and an alfalfa field to connect the dots between the farm and something in their own lives (cheese-milk-dairy cow-hay-alfalfa seed).

He wants children to feel a connection to farming. "These days we are more removed from the family farm – not even great grandparents have a farm connection anymore. With all the new technology we have these days we need to respect what other generations did and had to do to get us to where we are today," he says.

Judy says, "I think what makes us unique is that we have the whole package. We not only try to give an educational experience but a fun experience. Our wagon rides, antiques, barnyard area, there really is something that everyone in the family can enjoy. The generations blend together." She says families generally spend two to three hours enjoying the activities.

This is the fifth year for the patch, and something new seems to be added



or changed each year. "We've got lots of ideas," says John, who says the farmstead plans to open for Christmas this year, offering items for sale, hot chocolate, and much more. Details are being ironed out and information will be provided on the website.



Want to visit?

Indian Creek Farmstead is located about 4 miles northeast of Petersburg at 19458 Curtis Blacktop Road. They are open Saturdays and Sundays from September 10-October 30 from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Other times/days by appointment. See special events and pricing information online. They also host community, corporate and private events. Find them on Facebook and www.indiancreekfarmstead.com. Call 217-717-4401.

Board Meeting Report

For full minutes please visit our website at www.menard.com or contact our office.

Present were Jay Frye, Dennis Ryan, Warren Goetsch, Gary Martin, Michael Patrick, Roy Seaney, Jodine Tate and Steven Worner. Also Manager Eric Hobbie and Mgr of Accounting and Information Systems Chris Hinton.

Frye reviewed and the board approved the consensus agenda.

Hinton and Hobbie presented Form 990 report for calendar year 2015. Board reviewed various items and approved the report.

Hobbie reviewed the balance sheet, budget, outage summary and safety report.

He reported that June 2016 was the

highest kWh sales for any June on record.

He reported on work done by the crews for the month, gave an irrigation load update and provided an update on arch coal bankruptcy proceedings.

Hobbie reviewed State of Illinois delinquent accounts of approximately \$203,000. He advised the State of Illinois began paying some past due bills and the total had dropped from \$272,000 the prior month.

Hobbie presented the financial report for the month of June. Year to date margins were \$1,969,116 compared to \$1,286,421 a year earlier. Equity as of the end of June was

38.30% and the number of member accounts served was 10,848 compared to 10,791 a year ago. Net utility plant at the end of June was \$44,605,542 compared to \$43,401,866 last year. The cooperative continues to meet the requirements of the RUS, FFB and NRUCFC.

Goetsch reported no AIEC board meeting. Martin reported no PPI board meeting and discussed Prairie State power plant's strong performance in June.

Board entered into executive session. Hobbie presented capital credit estate refunds report.

LIHEAP program

Need help paying your electric bill? The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may be able to help. If you believe you may qualify to receive benefits we encourage you to contact your local office as soon as possible. A one-time lump sum payment is paid directly to us on behalf of those who qualify. Payment is based upon the number of people in your household and their combined 30-day gross monthly income.

Seniors and disabled could apply September 1st; Families with children younger than six and disconnected households can apply beginning October 3rd; and all others on November 1st.

Community Action Partnership of Central Illinois (CAPCIL)
www.capcil.info
Logan County-217-732-2159
Mason County-309-543-6988
Menard County-217-632-3137

Decatur-Macon County Opportunity Corp.
217-428-2193
www.dmcoc.org

MCS Community Services
(Cass & Morgan County)
217-243-9404
www.morgancounty-il.com

Sangamon County Dept. of Community Resources
217-535-3120;
www.co.sangamon.il.us

Tazwood Community Service, Inc.
(Tazewell County)
309-694-4391
www.tazwoodscs.org

Sangamon County Dept. of Community Resources
217-535-3120
www.co.sangamon.il.us

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309-694-4391
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Tip of the Month

Got Ghosts?



Did you see that curtain move? Feel that cool breeze? Are there ghosts in your home? It's more likely you just need to weatherstrip your windows and doors. Do it now before it gets really cold.