

It's All About the Members

Highlights from the Oakdale Electric Annual Meeting

Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 80th Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, March 28, at Tomah High School. Doors opened at 9 a.m. for registration, with the business meeting starting at 10 a.m. Members socialized with Oakdale employees and other members prior to the meeting, while enjoying coffee and doughnuts.

Ron Churchill, board president, called the meeting to order; Angie Plueger, Tomah High School vocal teacher, sang the national anthem; and Greg Eirschele provided the invocation. Churchill welcomed members and expressed his appreciation for their continued support.

"Oakdale Electric Cooperative is committed to our members. We have seen a lot of changes over the

years, but our commitment to you, *our members*, has not wavered," stated Churchill. He further explained that through programs like Operation Round Up[®], Youth Leadership Congress, scholarships, and volunteer activities, Oakdale Electric supports its surrounding communities and prides itself on being more than just a utility provider.

Bruce Ardel, general manager, stated that "successful organizations show a capacity and willingness to change. Oakdale Electric Cooperative has adapted in many ways over its 80-year history and is ready to take on future challenges. Our success has a lot to do with having great people, having great membership, and having great leadership from the board."

Ardelt highlighted some of



Board President Ron Churchill, left, presented a clock to James Guibault, who retired after 18 years of service on the board of directors.

Oakdale Electric's accomplishments from the prior year as well as future projects that will ensure the cooperative's success continues. These included 144 new services added, increased kWh sales from large loads, line and system upgrades, and right-of-way maintenance. The co-op works year-round to increase reliability, with over \$3.4 million dedicated to electric system improvements in 2014, and \$3.6 projected for 2015. This involved construction of new lines, replacement of aging poles, and line upgrades. Ardel also spoke of the cooperative's concern for communities.

"We have a special responsibility to support the communities in which our members live and work," he said. "We undertake projects that are good for the areas we serve because what's good for the communities is good for the co-op."

Ardelt was pleased to announce that rates have been stable in 2014 and 2015, due to kWh sales growth, wholesale rate stability, and



General Manager Bruce Ardel's address included a review of projects that support the communities within Oakdale Electric Cooperative's service territory.



controlling costs. However, power suppliers continue to face potential carbon legislation, growing state renewable energy standards, tougher environmental regulations, and taxing energy efficiency mandates. All of these challenges have the potential to increase costs in the future. Ardelt advised members to understand the impact the proposed regulations could potentially have on rates.

“We believe it is important to have a diverse supply of energy and have been considering construction of a community solar garden,” said Ardelt. This project would allow for members to invest in solar energy even if it’s not feasible to install panels at their own homes. The community solar garden is still in the planning stage as all details are being worked out; any interested members are advised to contact the cooperative directly.

Dairyland Power Vice President of Strategic Planning John Carr was the annual meeting’s guest speaker.

Incumbent directors Jim Van Wychen and Rick Barrett were up for re-election and retained their positions. In a three-way contested race, Martin Potter was elected to represent district five. The three

directors will serve a three-year term.

Longtime board of director James Guilbault retired after 18 years of service. Guilbault joined the Oakdale Electric board of directors in 1997. He was elected treasurer in 2002 and held that office until March

2015. Churchill presented Guilbault with a decorative mantel clock and thanked him for his honesty, integrity, and dedicated service to the members of Oakdale Electric Cooperative.

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) General Manager Share Brandt awarded Deana Protz, communication and public relations, the human interest award in journalism from the *Wisconsin Electric Cooperative News*. Ardelt used the opportunity to recognize Brandt for her esteemed service as she approaches her upcoming retirement.

Following the business meeting, members were served a hearty Kentucky Fried Chicken lunch. Fleece blanket door prizes were given out to members upon departure. ■



Left: OEC retirees and brothers, (left to right) Les and Dan Hoag, enjoyed a Kentucky Fried Chicken lunch after the meeting.

Below: Lineman were on hand to greet members, answer questions, and assist with lunch.



May is National Electrical Safety Month.
Enter our coloring contest, by showing how you "*play safe to stay safe.*"

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Phone: _____ - _____ - _____

Age: 4-5 6-8 9 & above

**1 winner from each category will win a \$25 gift certificate*



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Drop off entries at **OAKDALE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HQ** or mail to **PO BOX 128, OAKDALE, WI 54649**

ENTRY DEADLINE: May 22, 2015. *Children of Oakdale Electric Cooperative employees are not eligible to win, but are welcome to color!*



Right to left: Justin Larson and Matt Tichenor dress up like linemen at Handishop Industries.



Above: Brock Brown, at Brookwood Elementary School, uses a hot dog to simulate what would happen if a person were to touch a power line. Below: Brown shows the effect of a power line on a hot dog to students at New Lisbon Elementary School.

Linemen Teach Electrical Safety

Oakdale Electric linemen Brock Brown and Tommy Liddane visited seven area schools in Mauston, Lyndon Station, New Lisbon, Necedah, Elroy, and Ontario, and one non-profit organization, Handishop Industries, for this year's hotline demonstrations. Over 1,000 youth and adults were educated on the power of electricity, and shown the result of an electrical shock through the tree branch, kite, and hot dog simulations.

"I am not here to scare you, but to show how dangerous electricity can be," Brown explained.

As always, these demonstrations leave quite a lasting impression! All participants received a safe electricity program guide following their presentation.

Oakdale Electric Cooperative has been performing the hotline demonstrations annually for the past 40 years to schools, businesses, and civic organizations. For more information, contact Deana Protz at 608-372-4131. ■



Tommy Liddane, at St. Pat's, Mauston, shows what happens when a tree branch touches a power line.



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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