

GREAT TURNOUT FOR MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY!



**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative**

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Oakdale Electric Cooperative hosted its annual Member Appreciation Day on Saturday, October 10, with a large number of members in attendance! The Tomah Lions Club served a traditional pancake and sausage breakfast to kick start a morning full of activities and entertainment. Kids were kept busy with a variety of activities including a bounce house, bucket truck rides, balloon artist, face painting, T-shirt coloring, and new this year, a petting zoo!

Adults had a chance to learn more about the services their co-op offers at booths and displays. The bill credit challenge game was back for a second year in a row, which encouraged

members to visit booths and ask specific educational questions.

Monroe County Health Department provided flu vaccinations just in time for flu season. Each family received a complimentary gift bag filled with an assortment of chocolates from Cranberry Country Market in Tomah, a calendar featuring OEC members' photographs, and an oven mitt. Members also walked away with many prizes including a stadium blanket, umbrella, phone holder, and more.

Thank you to all members who spent their Saturday morning with us! We look forward to seeing you all again next year!



MY CO-OP





Treasure HUNT

- *Arrive at least one and half hours in advance.*
- *Survey the entire scene.*
- *Make note of desired item(s).*
- *Stick to a predetermined budget.*

Attending an auction for the first time can be overwhelming, intimidating, and downright nerve-racking, but if you stick to the tips above from antique collector Harold Christensen, you'll learn the ropes. And just remember, expertise comes with experience.

Harold Christensen, an Oakdale Electric Cooperative member since 1944, was a carpenter by trade for the majority of his career. Jensen and Christensen Inc. specialized in building and remodeling homes and store fronts, mostly in the Tomah vicinity. After he retired in 1998, his days were filled by carpooling with a neighbor to auctions, sometimes traveling upwards of 100 miles in their quest for unique finds. This was the beginning of his passion for the old, unique, and valuable.

"I am on the lookout for things that I have never seen before. Names, dates, and patents always grab my attention," Christensen said.

However, according to Harold's wife of 55 years, Arlene, his eye for collectibles started long before retirement. When working on different carpentry jobs, he would bring home unique items, and ask her to "put this away." One such item was a Ranney's ice cream container, which according to Harold "is the best in the world." Arlene never questioned Harold; she simply stored his finds away in an upstairs dresser.

As his collection grew, the upstairs dresser just didn't cut it any longer, and a larger location was needed for proper storage and display. The result was the construction of the shed on the Christensens' property in 1998, built by Christensen himself, post retirement. Harold and Arlene bought their great uncle's farm in 1959. The property came with a tobacco shed, which later became the location and materials for the shed. Also left behind was a collection of Wisconsin license plates, which they still have today. A few have been swapped out over the years, and there are open slots in the display board for the

years that have yet to be found.

License plates are just the tip of the iceberg, as Christensen now owns hundreds of thousands of antique collectibles. As one would expect considering his lifelong career, the majority of the items are carpentry or mechanical-related tools. Picking out a favorite is a difficult task, as Christensen stated, "There are just too many." He pointed to a wooden state bank of Wonewoc ruler, a thick metal carpentry square, electric utility lineworker tools, metal mailbox, and the township birth certificate book containing his own name as favorites. Arlene has a few favorites as well, mostly family items including a wooden sled.

"Harold spends as much time as he possibly can in here. He is always polishing, maintaining, and dusting," stated Arlene. "The shed gets a proper cleaning weekly."

The tidiness, organization, and cleanliness of the entire building are apparent and impressive. You would be hard

pressed to find a speck of dust or dirt anywhere, which is hard for most of us to say about our own homes! Every single item is properly hung or displayed, in its own specific place, and always grouped with similar items. This includes tools, farm equipment, tin canisters, books, metal signage, golf balls, baseball bats, crocks and more. The one type of item you will not find in his collection is glassware, simply because it never appealed to him. Every collector has their niche, and glassware is not Christensen's.

With no intention of selling any of his antiques down the road, as he hopes the shed will stay in the family, Christensen emphasizes the price has always got to be right.

"Sometimes you'll learn that you paid too much, because you see that same item at a lower price at another auction," he noted. This is why Harold always recommends paying what you are comfortable with for it, especially when you are just

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TREASURE HUNT

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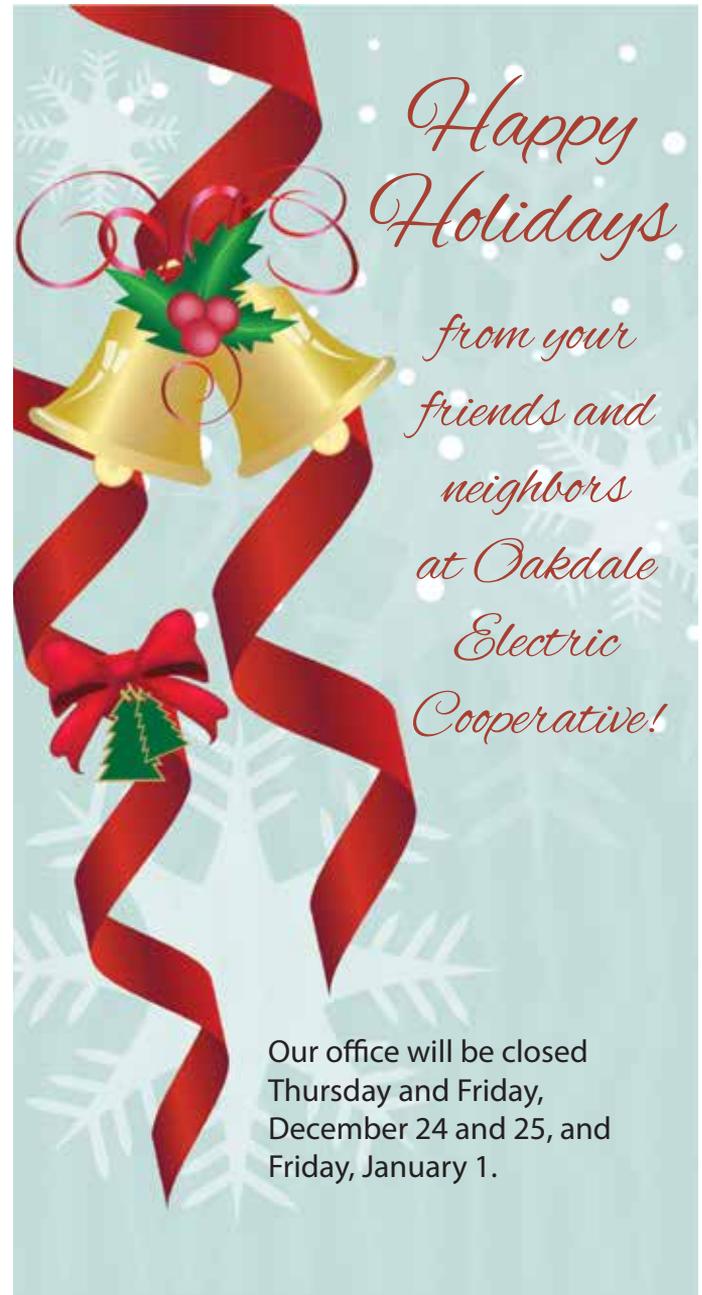
getting your auction feet wet.

Another tip is to review upcoming auctions online, and to get your name on the auctioneer's mailing lists. Nowadays, many auctions are not listed in the paper, so you must do your homework ahead of time.

Christensen's personal preference is to visit antique stores and talk directly with the owners. His antique knowledge has changed over the years, as has his preference on having guests visit the shed. If after reading this article and looking at the photos, your interest is piqued, you may see the items for yourself; the Christensens invite you, their fellow cooperative members, to stop by. Harold and Arlene will entertain you with detailed stories, historical facts/events, and more knowledge on antiques than you can imagine.

However, just don't ask for advice on where and how to find deals on crocks. That is one topic that has Harold dumbfounded, because as he puts it, "Everybody has one, so they should be cheap, but they are not!"

Harold and Arlene Christensen live at N8716 River Road in Camp Douglas. The shed is located at the end of their driveway. Guests are welcome to stop by and visit, just as long as Harold and Arlene are at home. Just make sure to sign the guest book!



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