

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY Cooperative

February 2021

NEWS

A NICE WAY TO FISH



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

KINDNESS CATALYST



Over the years, you’ve heard or read about Oakdale Electric Cooperative’s concern for our community. This is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities. We’ve always taken this

mission and responsibility to heart.

Over the past year, like so many of you, we’ve risen to meet new challenges and strengthen the safety net for our communities. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve made numerous adjustments to programs and operations to maintain business continuity while staying focused on the bigger mission of helping our communities during this turbulent time.

Now, with the start of 2021, these events have made me pause and think about the role Oakdale Electric plays in our communities. Nelson Mandela stated, “I believe that in the end that it is kindness and accommodation that are all the catalysts for real change.” While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, we have a greater mission—to be a catalyst for good through kindness.

Community Kindness We have an Operation Round-Up program, where we take donations from generous members like you who have “rounded up” the amount due on their electric bill to help our neighbors and communities. Or our Youth Tour program, where we take our community’s young people to Washington, D.C., for a week-long immersion to

experience democracy in action. We’ve given money to local food pantries, fire departments, local civic clubs, and many other community organizations.

Safety Kindness We also have a strong commitment to safety—not just for our employees, but for our community as well. We visit schools to teach children of all ages how to stay safe around electricity. We hold safety demonstrations at community meetings and other gatherings. We have also created, along with several other cooperatives, a video that demonstrates what to do if you are in an accident and hit an electric pole that will be shown during driver’s education courses.

Economic Development Kindness Oakdale Electric Cooperative invests in the economic development of the communities through an active role in our local Chambers of Commerce. We always want to be involved and help out whenever we can at these different events.

Employee Kindness You’ll also see our employees serving on local boards, coaching youth sports, volunteering at charitable events, and participating in other local organizations. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is. We know that our core job is to keep the lights on, but our passion is our community. Because we live and work here too, and we want to make it a better place for all.

Chris Tackmann, General Manager/CEO



MY CO-OP



LEADING WITH KINDNESS

“Man, that looks like a good place to work!” stated Roy Boyles as he drove past Oakdale Electric Cooperative 30 years ago. At that time, Boyles, an active duty military serviceman, was on vacation visiting family in the area. “I didn’t even know what Oakdale Electric was,” recalled Roy, but something about the co-op resonated with him.

When his full-time service duty obligations were completed, Roy and his wife, Diane, moved their family of five from Kansas to rural Wisconsin. Still committed to serving his country, Roy enlisted in the National Guard, a decision that later proved beneficial to his career aspirations.

A multi-skilled individual, Roy found work, but always kept an eye on the cooperative for openings. A year later, a nighttime mechanic position was posted and in Roy’s own words, he “jumped on it,” stating, “it was meant to be.”

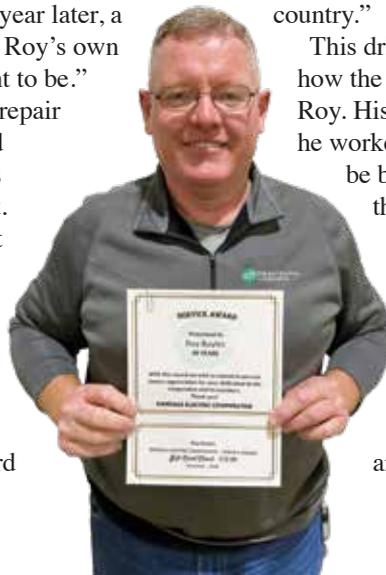
For two years Roy worked diligently in the repair shop, while getting to know his co-workers and understand their roles at the cooperative. It was the journeyman lineman position that stood out. Roy stated, “I’d like to do that,” and sought out to receive his training through the National Guard. He balanced working full-time at the cooperative while completing his education.

When a groundman position in the operations department became available, Roy applied and was offered the job. “It worked out pretty good,” recalled Roy. His hard

work and dedication continued to pay off, as he was accepted into the four-year electrical lineworker apprenticeship program with Oakdale Electric Cooperative.

Roy spent the next 10 years working as a journeyman lineman. The work was rewarding, and he made lifelong relationships with fellow crew members. “When you ride with someone every day, you get to know each other. It’s not just your co-worker, they really become your family,” shared Roy. The memories with his co-op family are aplenty, but what stands out are ROPE [Restoration Of Power in an Emergency] calls to fellow cooperatives in their times of need. Roy informed, “These jobs are rewarding in itself. Additionally, you have the opportunity to learn from other linemen across the country.”

This drive and determination to learn, especially on how the co-op functions as a whole, never lessened for Roy. His next move into the staking department, where he worked as a field engineer for 10 years, proved to be both interesting and challenging. Roy rose to the occasion and was promoted in 2016 to his final position, project supervisor, to lead the engineering department. Roy is proof that a successful leader can lead with kindness and compassion. Engineering Assistant Cheri Ness confirmed, stating, “Roy is kind, caring, generous, helpful, and a great communicator. He truly cared about the co-op and his co-workers.”



Another testament to Roy's leadership is his belief in always looking for the strength in others. He stated, "We're all different people. You have to know each other's strengths, and weaknesses, to help each other out. Not everybody can do everything, but there is always someone else there to back each other up."



Roy (left) shared a laugh with longtime colleague Todd Duncan.

Roy led by example. The statement, choose a job you love, and you never work a day in your life, fit him to a T. "If you're going to work, you might as well enjoy it. Oakdale Electric Cooperative has been a great place to work," and he reminisced further, "I couldn't have ever had a better career that would have worked out as good as this place has."

Roy is now looking forward to his retirement, and is excited about future plans. Roy and Diane will head south for the winter, to his home state of Texas. However, they will maintain their home base in Tomah, as their three children's families are all within a three-mile ranger ride. With seven grandchildren, ages 2 to 13, the Boyles have a bucket list to visit the U.S. National Parks, including Arches, Yellowstone, Glacier, and Yosemite, while, Roy stated, "he can still keep up with them."

Roy knew that there was just something special about Oakdale Electric Cooperative. He stated, "I am very lucky that everything has worked out from the get go. You always have ups and downs. For me, it's about what did you learn from the down time and what can you do better."

There is something pretty special about Roy Boyles, too. His leadership through kindness will long be

remembered, and is an example for all to work and live by.

Why Not Me?

Newly named Project Supervisor Matt Riggs always had the desire and drive to move up in the cooperative. His career has spanned 24 years, which all began as a summer help employee at age 16. Matt stated, "I always knew I would work in the electric industry." This decision was heavily influenced by his father, a retired journeyman lineman.

Matt went on to receive his journeyman lineman certification in 2001, and spent seven years maintaining the electrical distribution system. From there, he was promoted to the supervisory position of area service foreman. When a field engineer position became available, Matt, looking for a change, applied and was hired. Matt has worked the last three years planning, designing, and coordinating system design work.

Following Roy Boyles' retirement notification and the news his position would become available, Matt thought, "Why not me?" The co-op believed Matt was the right fit to lead the engineering department, too. Matt's new responsibilities began in December, so he could train alongside his predecessor.

Matt is grateful to have had a strong leader before him, and stated, "Roy has taught me a lot: time management, work efficiency, and to always think about the needs of the member." As a supervisor,

Roy always took the time to teach and lend a helping hand. Matt said, "It takes time to help others, but Roy always made us a priority." An open-door and open communication policy will continue being implemented, as well as the belief that one person doesn't run a department. "This isn't my department, it's our department," Matt confidently stated. With a strong, cohesive team working alongside Matt, [including Staking Engineers Travis Champlin and Dan McGarry, Engineering Assistant Cheri Ness, and Purchasing Warehouse Agent Sam Moseley], he confidently stated, "We'll get it done."

This is a pretty exciting career step for Matt. He's looking forward to new challenges, and similar to Roy, to continue learning to benefit the cooperative. Improving reliability in problem outage areas will be a focus area.

Matt's family—wife, Jody; daughter, Ava (14); and son, Ty (11)—are also very excited for their husband and father. The Riggs family resides in rural Tomah, and are avid outdoorspeople. They enjoy hunting, fishing, and boating together. With Matt taking on more responsibility at the co-op, they understand he'll have more work commitments; however, they couldn't be prouder of him.

Matt Riggs always knew the electric industry was the right fit. He stayed focused on his goals, and is proof that hard work and dedication will lead to success. And don't forget to believe in yourself by asking, "Why not me?"



Project Supervisor Matt Riggs now leads the cooperative's engineering department.



FEBRUARY 17 IS NATIONAL RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY



Spread kindness by enrolling in Operation Round Up through SmartHub

Operation Round Up is a voluntary community support program that helps local organizations and worthy causes via spare change. Oakdale Electric Cooperative members can choose to have their monthly electric bills rounded up to the nearest dollar, with the exceeding cents going towards Operation Round Up.



SmartHub App: Select Bill & Pay > Operation Round Up > Enroll

SmartHub Online: Select Billing & Payments > Operation Round Up > Enroll

Check out the other great benefits SmartHub has to offer:



- Pay your bill in seconds.
- Report a power outage.
- Get account notifications.
- Monitor your energy use.
- Analyze energy use.
- Pay your bill.
- Set up Auto Pay.
- Stay updated on outages.
- Outage alerts.

Employee service awards are a celebration of the hard work and dedication of cooperative employees reaching milestones in their years of service. These five employees share how they spread kindness in the community.

Shane Rowan | 20 years | System Engineer

Be calm. Be kind. Whether it's at the store in a line or anywhere else. Also, tip a little extra if you are eating out. We want these places to survive this economic challenge and be around when things get better again.



bill. Even though it was a nominal amount, the woman's smile was like sunshine.

Dane Pasch | 15 years | Journeyman Lineman

Laughing is good for you, and I believe it's important to laugh and find humor in every day. I use my sense of humor to lift my co-worker's spirits during the day, and especially when the heavy lifting is happening in the field.



Chad Schauf | 20 years | IT Director



I set up an iPad for an elderly woman from my church, in order for her to watch the Sunday services on YouTube. One Sunday, I sat outside her porch window watching the services on my phone while she watched in her kitchen, just to ensure it worked. Her family doesn't live close by, so now she is able to video chat with them regularly. A kind neighbor shared their Wi-Fi access, which made this task possible.

Kurt Starkey | 15 years | Journeyman Lineman



Whether I'm in the woods, or walking down the street, I always pick up and dispose of litter. It's a simple task that positively impacts our community and environment.

Sherry Anderson | 20 years | Collections/Consumer Accts. Rep.

I was in the grocery store checkout line behind a mother with three children, when I heard the cashier say, "Ma'am you still owe 60 cents." The woman didn't have enough money, and asked her oldest son to go look under the car's seats for change. I stepped in and covered the



Heather Linenberg | 5 years | Consumer Service Specialist/Cashier

"Finding my thankful" in every situation has been my personal mantra. It has helped me put into perspective what's important and how I look at each day. God provides so many blessings, and instead of sometimes taking them for granted, find your thankful.



Chris Tackmann, General Manager/CEO

P.O. Box 40, Oakdale, WI 54649
608-372-4131 • 800-241-2468

info@oakdalerec.com

Deana Protz, Editor



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: 800-927-6151
Toll-free Online Bill Payment 866-392-4307

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call 800-242-8511.