

your **Connexus Connection**

For Connexus Energy Members

Fall 2021 Edition



**Reliable
energy for our
community**

EVELAND FAMILY FARMS

County Market & our resilient grid

Fall treats for kids & adults

 **CONNEXUS[®]
ENERGY**

\$8.4 million back to members

August was Cash Back Month

It pays to be a member of our cooperative. If you received Cash Back, a credit was applied to your August bill. To find out more about how Cash Back works, visit us at connexusenergy.com.



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*Connexus Energy is an equal opportunity/
affirmative action employer.*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Fran Bator, Chair (East Bethel)

Mark Ethen, Vice Chair (Blaine)

Gordon Westerlind, Secretary/Treasurer
(Big Lake)

Michael Cady, Assistant

Secretary/Treasurer (Blaine)

Kenneth Fiereck (Clear Lake)

Donald Holl (Forest Lake)

Shelly Peterson (Nowthen)

Peter Wojciechowski (Ham Lake)



Reliable



Affordable



Safe

We are Connexus Energy.

your most powerful membership®



Connexus Energy is offsetting 100% of the energy used for printing this newsletter with renewable energy credits.

CEO Sparks

Greg Ridderbusch, President & CEO

Affordability & Reliability:

it's what members can expect

After years of patient and deliberative work trying to reduce wholesale power costs and increase flexibility and opportunities for local investment in energy generation and grid resilience, Connexus Energy recently communicated to Great River Energy (GRE) that it seeks to negotiate a fair and equitable exit from GRE's "full requirements membership" contracts that stretch to 2045 and 2050.

Because of efficiencies and innovations that Connexus Energy has implemented, your cooperative has been able to keep electric rates flat for the past four years. However, as reported in our last several annual meetings, our wholesale power costs have been the highest of all electric cooperatives in Minnesota for the past decade.

Connexus Energy's action to pursue competitive wholesale power savings, flexibility, and local control was authorized by a unanimous resolution of the Connexus Energy Board of Directors. I encourage you to watch the recorded video message from our Board Chair Fran Bator and me on our website and YouTube channel.

This vote has no impact on the reliability and safety of our service to you, or our commitment to cooperative values. The Connexus Energy Board of Directors spent considerable time and dedication considering all aspects of this decision and the implications for our members.

The transition in wholesale power supply will be carefully negotiated and will take time – and enable us to rapidly pursue a portfolio of lower-cost generation options which will include additional renewables that meet our requirements. Members can expect our reliability, member services, and cost competitiveness to remain unchanged. Connexus members enjoy excellent grid reliability as benchmarked across national utilities – and this will continue.

Connexus Energy's founders were not alone in 1937 in their creation of an organization to meet the electrification needs of farmers, rural towns, and communities. Just as our founding members sought to modernize life with the early grid and first electric devices, we look forward to modernizing our wholesale power supply for you – working For the Members – to adapt to changing technologies and market conditions while providing affordable and reliable electric service.

Thank you for being a member-owner of our cooperative.



Grocery Stores and the Dependable Energy of Our Community

A few minutes of conversation after receiving the wrap-around handshakes and welcoming smiles of Jeff Kearney and John Thomas of Andover and St. Francis County Market leave you admiring the grit and persistent innovation they bring to their work. Walk around their stores and you appreciate their ingenuity in the face of ever-changing customer needs, as well as their commitment to helping grow a family business and strengthen their communities.

This year, Jeff's store in St. Francis marks its 20th anniversary. Back in 1987, John's store in Andover was the first grocery store in the area. The surrounding area has undergone an extraordinary transformation since then, adding more than a million square feet of grocery business.



On-site generators and energy efficient lighting keep delicious ice cream ready to buy no matter the season. Jeff Kearney, general manager, County Market St. Francis; John Thomas, store director, County Market Andover.

"It's creating dependability for the whole network"

What connects the stores goes beyond the name and diverse selection of fresh and prepared foods. It's seen in how Jeff and John have embraced energy innovations to become more resilient and reliable destinations for the community. Both stores are now using LED lighting which significantly reduces cost and waste associated with fluorescent bulbs and also have on-site generators that provide emergency backup as well as beneficial services to all Connexus members.

"You feel like you're accomplishing something more if you can both reduce cost and provide more value to the community," says Jeff. For just a few hours each month, Connexus is able to control when the generators run to help avoid the high wholesale costs of peak-time electricity. "It's creating dependability for the whole network," continues Jeff.

In addition to being able to power all the registers, freezers, refrigerators, and lights during an emergency, the generators at their stores allow them to effectively remove their load from the grid, freeing up power for everyone else. "Driven by cost savings, sustainability, and other factors, businesses are increasingly implementing energy saving upgrades," said Connexus' Paula Coffey, who advises County Market and other businesses.

Stores like Jeff's and John's play a key role in the resilience of our communities. Grocery stores directly employ more than 4.8 million Americans – workers who show up for their customers to provide the essentials we all depend on. Food and grocery also connects all the cultures of our communities, including business opportunities for new Americans.



Frozen goods and favorites from throughout southeast Asia are available at Lim Phan's 109 Oriental Market.

Located on bustling 109th street between Central and University Avenues in Blaine, Lim Phan runs Oriental Market, a business he started in tumultuous 2020. After operating another oriental grocery in Blaine for a decade, Phan noticed significant growth in his customer base and undertook a major investment to convert an existing building into a clean and modern grocery. Phan worked with his contractor to ensure the remodel used money-saving and energy-efficient LED lights and display cases for refrigerated and frozen goods. With its wide selection of foods sourced from throughout southeast Asia, Oriental Market has carved out a niche of customers looking for things both familiar and new.

While we have all done our best to stay healthy and safe during the uncertain times of the last year, the seventeen grocery and food stores throughout Connexus Energy's service territory have given us all the resources and ingredients to make sure neighbors, friends, and family are safe, cared for, and well fed.



RELIABILITY BY DESIGN

99.99%

average annual uptime

Connexus' grid is designed like a giant set of connected loops comprised of more than 6,000 miles of underground cable and 3,000 miles of overhead line. This is helpful during severe weather. When a break or fault occurs at one point on the line, the system design allows us to reduce the duration of an outage by re-routing power through a different line.

Connexus is also the first Minnesota electric cooperative to generate so much of its own power locally that it is now renegotiating its wholesale power contract to have even more savings and flexibility for members.

Modern Heating **With Electricity**

Each year thousands of school children and community members flock to Eveland Family Farm to pick out a favorite pumpkin, take in a hayride, and visit the farm animals.

While the buildings at Eveland Farm were built with several historic design elements, one important feature is decidedly modern—a heat pump powered with electricity keeps the homes and workshop comfortable throughout the seasons. Advances and innovations in heat pumps, along with competitive prices, are prompting more and more homeowners to evaluate the technology.

“The heat pump has been one of the best decisions we made,” said Don Eveland, who was born and raised on the farm and operates the farm tour business with his son, Jason, and daughter-in-law, Kathy. Connexus Energy members can also benefit from rebates toward the purchase of energy efficient upgrades.

Using electricity for heating and cooling has also given Eveland the flexibility to adapt – this fall Eveland Family Farm will be entirely powered by renewable energy from Connexus Energy’s portfolio of local solar and other renewable resources.



Located behind Andover High School, fun activities await at Eveland Family Farm.



THE END OF CREDIT CARD FEES

Starting now, new online payment tools include the elimination of credit card processing fees for residential members.

Co-op Cuisine

THE BEST PUMPKIN BARS

From Eveland Family Farm

4 eggs	1 tsp baking soda
1 cup oil	½ tsp salt
2 cups sugar	2 tsp cinnamon
2 cups pumpkin puree	½ tsp nutmeg
2 cups flour	½ tsp ginger
2 tsp baking powder	½ tsp cloves

Combine eggs, oil, sugar, and pumpkin puree. Add the rest of the ingredients, mix well and pour into greased and floured 10x15" jellyroll pan. Bake at 350 for 20-30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Frosting

8 oz package cream cheese	1 tsp vanilla
6 tbsp butter	4 cups powdered sugar

Beat together cream cheese, butter, and vanilla. Add powdered sugar and a very small amount of milk until the frosting is a consistency you like. Spread over cooled bars.



Find reviews online of the best all-electric ovens, cook-tops, and kitchen appliances. Go electric and SolarWise with Connexus to use energy as an ingredient in every dish.

SPILL THE TEA

from Prairie Organic Spirits

3 oz chai tea (chilled)
1 dash vanilla extract
2 cinnamon sticks
Star anise, for garnish

For an adult beverage version, use 1.5 oz chai tea and 1.5 oz Prairie Organic Sustainable Seasons Apple, Pear & Ginger Flavored Vodka.

Add chai tea, one crumbled cinnamon stick, and vanilla to shaker. Shake and strain into lowball glass with ice. Garnish with star anise and remaining cinnamon stick. Enjoy!



SolarWise Honey

Honey from our community solar garden is now available!

\$12

All the proceeds will be donated to Ruff Start Rescue.

Honey is only available for purchase in the Connexus Energy lobby.

*Cash transactions only



Oh Snap!



Highlighting the flowering ground cover, KARE 11 reporter Gordon Severson reports on how Connexus' solar sites are a national model for best practices.



Jen Tyson, Jon Rono, and Jim Brown load some of the 924 boxes of cereal donated by Connexus employees to North Anoka County Emergency food shelf.



Connexus' own SolarWise Honey, harvested by Bare Honey, made a delicious addition to a featured food at the Minnesota State Fair.



Leadership of Green Valley Greenhouse guides Connexus Energy Board members and staff on a facility tour.

