

# your **Connexus Connection**

For Connexus Energy Members

Issued October 2023



Planning  
for growth





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### Connect with Connexus



Cover and Co-op Cuisine images courtesy of  
Connexus member Travis Gienger.

## Executive Team



**Front:** Yan Paul Martinez, VP, Finance & CFO • Krista Benjamin, Manager, Executive Services • Nick Loehlein, VP, Electric Operations • Linda Maegi, VP, Employee Services • Brian Burandt, VP, Power Supply & Business Development • Greg Ridderbusch, President & CEO

**Back:** Alison Miles, VP, Members • Mark Koplin, VP, Technology

## SEEKING 2024 SELECTION COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

This committee plays an integral role in director elections by interviewing applicants to determine those qualified to be placed on the 2024 annual election ballot. Those serving on the selection committee receive a stipend and mileage reimbursement. Please visit [connexusenergy.com/annualmeeting](http://connexusenergy.com/annualmeeting) to learn more. Requests must be submitted by 5 p.m. on Nov. 10, 2023.

# CEO sparks

## A celebration of member service and evolution to an independent utility

Questioning the status quo can be extremely hard work but doing it alongside colleagues and in service to others is a path to a fulfilling career and life.

Founded in 1937 as one of the nation's first 100 electric cooperatives, the first team of engineers and leaders hired by your cooperative took extraordinary steps to provide the very first electric service to communities and farms throughout Anoka County and our north metro region. The status quo of kerosene lanterns gave way to better, affordable, and reliable electric lighting, refrigeration, and electric motors for irrigation and milking. The times and technologies may have changed but for Connexus Energy staff, the commitment to member service and innovation has not.

Earlier this fall, I had the opportunity to reflect on the achievements of our team and our shared work in service to members. In pursuit of continuous improvement for our members, we've challenged the status quo. From the transition to advanced digital meters and powerful data analytics, to building our in-house talent for managing local rooftop and grid-scale solar and batteries.

In the course of these innovations, Connexus negotiated an exit from Great River Energy membership and permanently converted to a customer business model effective Jan. 1, 2023. We evolved from a traditional distribution utility into an independent electric cooperative. As a result, building upon capped legacy generation and transmission resources, Connexus now enjoys 100% flexibility and responsibility for building and evolving our power supply portfolio.

Connexus members experience reliability that is perennially in the top 5% of the nation's utilities and enjoyed five years of zero rate increase until inflation forced a modest 2.94% increase in 2023. The new customer business model is already saving costs, and the first full year of results will be reported at the cooperative's annual meeting on April 18, 2024.

Joining the organization in 2015, it has been a privilege to work with so many talented, expert, and committed cooperative employees. In August, the Board of Directors accepted my letter of retirement and announced the beginning of the orderly process of President/Chief Executive Officer succession to be completed by early 2024.

Thank you for being a member-owner sharing the north metro as a great place to live and work.



**Greg Ridderbusch**  
President & CEO



**"It has been a privilege to work with so many talented, expert, and committed cooperative employees."**



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

# DOE fellow accomplishments at Connexus Energy



United States Department of Energy (DOE) Clean Energy Innovator Fellow Elizabeth Ballor joined Connexus in October 2022. She has a master's degree focused on sustainable systems and a bachelor's degree in environmental science with a concentration in policy and management. Connexus was one of 12 electric utilities selected to host a DOE Fellow and the only utility in the Midwest.

## A new tool for understanding EV impacts

Elizabeth helped us better understand the impact of electric vehicles (EVs) on our distribution grid. She developed a tool in Microsoft Power BI that pulls all the great EV-related data at Connexus into one central location. Now, our engineers can make more informed decisions for load management and maintaining reliability in the top 5% of U.S. utilities.

We are already using Elizabeth's dynamic reporting tool. The report is updated on a weekly basis as systemwide data is added. The tool identified potential trouble spots where increased capacity may be needed, so we are proactively replacing or adding a few transformers in the next six months to handle their increased loads.

## Making the EV transition easier for members

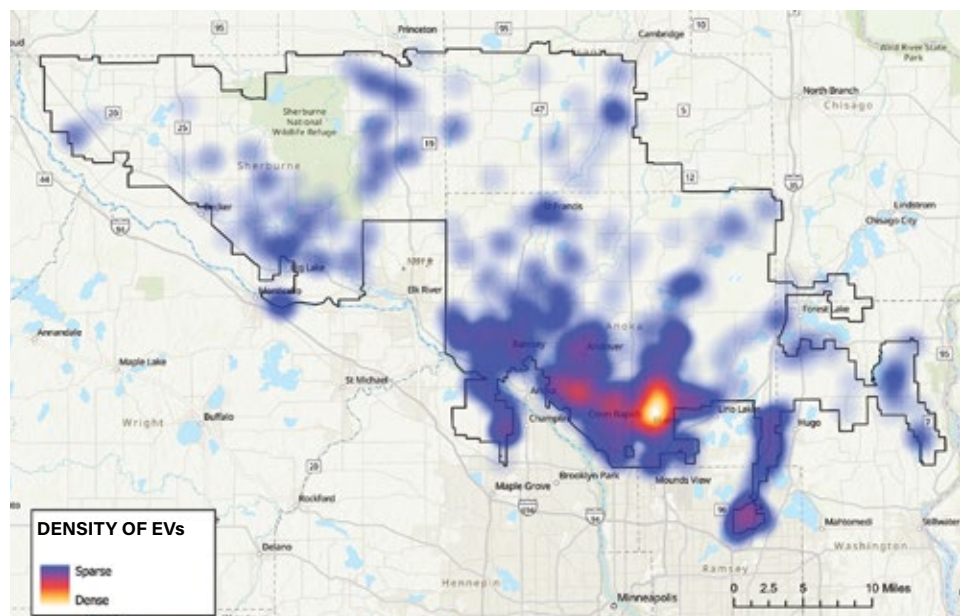
With more options for electrified transportation becoming available, including trucks and sport-utility vehicles, we expect to see significant growth in EV load in Connexus' service territory in coming years. While we generally have plenty of existing capacity to handle new EVs, we will continue to make necessary upgrades to strengthen our system when needed. Elizabeth's research findings are also helping us update our design practices to meet future electric needs for our members.

### SUPPORTING ELECTRIFICATION

Please call Member Services at 763.323.2650 or search electric vehicles on our website if you are planning to purchase an EV or recently purchased one.

We want to do everything we can to support electrification in our service area and make this transition easier for you. Our rate program options can save you almost 50% when you program your car to charge during the off-peak period, and we need notification from you to help keep our system reliable.

## Heatmap of EVs in the Connexus service area







EV owners can access three ChargePoint Level 2 charging stations and one DC fast charging station next to the community solar garden at our headquarters in Ramsey.

## EVs in the Connexus fleet



We're learning about EVs while we're driving them. We have three Ford F-150 Lightnings at Connexus. Employees from our warehouse, metering, and distribution design departments drive these all-electric trucks in our service area. Their range is 165-300 miles depending on several factors, and they have dedicated chargers in our garage that are powered by renewable energy credits. Our EVs have reduced maintenance costs, with 7,500-mile inspections (vs. 5,000 miles with gas) and no oil changes. Ask us about our driving experiences when you see them in use!

## ELECTRIC VEHICLE RATES & OFFERS

- **EV Subscription Program:** Know exactly what you will pay each month to power your EV. Choose the Tier 1 monthly rate of \$30/month or Tier 2 monthly rate of \$50/month, depending on your off-peak usage.
- **EV Time-of-Day Program:** Pay almost half the normal residential rate (6.8¢/kWh) when charging off-peak.
- **Level 2 EV Charger Rebate:** \$500 rebate for installation.
- **Level 2 PHEV Charger Rebate:** \$100 rebate for installation.

*Note: EV programs and rebates require an off-peak meter socket installation. Many homes qualify for a \$300 meter installation by a Connexus electrician.*



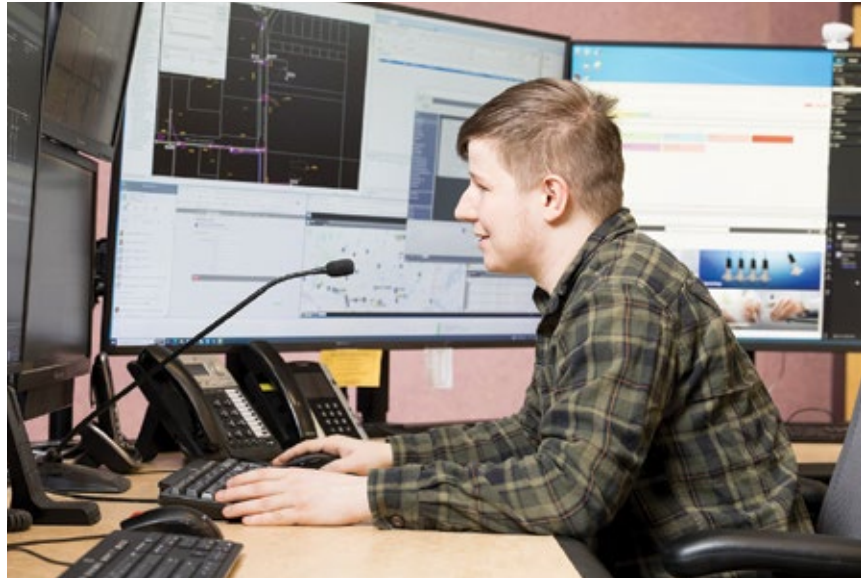
Scan this QR code for  
EV rates & offers.

# A successful summer managing reliability and costs

## Together, we made it happen

Power supply is a complex process of balancing our energy resources with demand, critical to keeping the lights on and costs low for us and our members. This past summer proved how working together positively impacts both.

While managing our system demand is a year-round priority, it is most critical in the summer months when the demand and cost for electricity is highest. Thanks to our team of engineers, system planners, operators, and YOU, we were successful in managing our system peaks affordably, all while keeping the lights on.



## Key drivers of our success

### » Smart grid management

We invest in smart grid technologies and use our internal capabilities to increase power grid efficiency. Connexus Energy's automation results in lower peak demands and reduces energy losses. These cost savings help keep our rates low.

### » Member program enrollment and participation

Over 45,000 residential members participate in energy saving programs, like the Peak-Time Rebate (PTR) and air conditioning programs. They reduce peak demand at critical times in June, July, and August. Participating members received over \$1.2 million in summer bill credits.



Additionally, commercial members participating in our standby generator program help ensure some of our largest loads are shifted from the peak by running on electricity generated onsite. We're doing our part on the Connexus campus as well, shifting to our standby generator to help lower member expenses.



*Scan this QR code to explore the programs, incentives, and rebates available to Connexus members.*



# Co-op cuisine

## ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS

1½ cups pumpkin seeds, rinsed and dried with a towel

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil or melted butter

¼ teaspoon salt, fine salt preferred

Choose an optional flavor – 2 teaspoons maple syrup or honey, freshly ground black pepper (to taste), or 1 teaspoon cinnamon, brown sugar, chili powder, or curry powder

Preheat the oven to 450°. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Stir together pumpkin seeds, oil or butter, salt, and optional flavors. Spread coated seeds evenly across the baking sheet. Bake for 12-16 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes, until the seeds turn golden brown. Store cooled seeds in a bag or airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

*Connexus member Travis Gienger from Anoka set a U.S. record for the heaviest pumpkin with a gourd weighing 2,560 pounds on Oct. 10, 2022. He also won Half Moon Bay's Safeway World Championship in 2020 and is competing again on Oct. 9, 2023, hoping to beat a 2,702-pound squash in Italy that holds the world record. Travis is a horticulture teacher at Anoka Technical College and owner of Waterstone Fire Tables.*



## New ERA for Connexus Energy

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced in May the New ERA program, competitively providing grants of up to 25% of project costs for new electric generation and storage facilities that do not emit carbon dioxide. It is the nation's largest investment in electric cooperatives since passage of the Rural Electrification Act in 1936.



Given the state mandate for 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040, securing grant funds would lower our long-run costs for new carbon-free resources and related greenhouse gas reduction initiatives. Connexus is ambitiously competing for New ERA funding and took the first step in the application process by submitting a Letter of Intent to the USDA in September.

*CEO Greg Ridderbusch and Rob Davis from Connexus attended the announcement event hosted by USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator Andrew Berke (pictured center) at the White House on May 16.*

## JOIN US IN ANOKA

Watch for the Connexus bucket truck pulling our spooky float in the Anoka Halloween Grande Day Parade on Saturday, Oct. 28, at 1 p.m. We give out over 400 pounds of candy!





## Oh snap



Noah Lambertz caught a 3-pound rainbow trout while with his dad, Brian, and other Connexus employees at Running Aces in Columbus. Families also enjoyed the live harness horse racing.



Connexus Energy's Rob Davis and Board Director Mike Thews (both on far left) spoke at a media event in the Horticulture Building at the Minnesota State Fair. Permanent signage shares information about pollinators and farming activity at our solar arrays.



KaZoua Berry, from Big River Farms, checked the progress of our emerging farmers demonstration project. While only researchers from the National Renewable Energy Lab can touch most of the plants, KaZoua pruned peppers, basil, and tomatoes that we planted at the end of the rows.



Connexus employees and their families enjoyed their 10- and 16-mile bike rides along the Mississippi River at our annual Bike into Fall event. Anoka County Commute Solutions was onsite and provided bike trail maps and backpacks with cool bike accessories.