



Bravery in the Face of the Storm: Linemen Answer the Call to Hurricane-Stricken Areas

When Hurricane Helene slammed into the southern coast, it didn't just knock down trees and flood roads—it plunged thousands of Americans into darkness. In the aftermath of the storm's fury, power outages swept through communities. Families and businesses were left stranded without electricity.

In late September, the call for mutual aid rang out across the country and Minnesota electric cooperatives answered. Among them was Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative (TWEC). On October 3, 2024, Crew Chief *Jon Grenier* and Journeyman Lineworker *David Snyder* fueled up a bucket truck and hit the road. Their destination? Laurens Electric Cooperative, Inc. in Upstate South Carolina. The co-op was in desperate need of help following the storm.

Todd-Wadena's team wasn't alone; two crews from Runestone Electric Association (REA) out of Alexandria, MN also answered the call for assistance. They joined up with other lineworkers to form a convoy of courage, heading straight into the heart of the disaster zone. "It was a ton of driving," Snyder recalls of the trip. "But then you see it—a convoy of 30 to 40 utility trucks, all headed in the same direction. We all had one goal in mind: restoring power and hope to communities in need. Falling in line with that was something special."

The crews arrived in South Carolina to find a scene of widespread destruction. Thankfully, Laurens Electric Cooperative had over 350 lineworkers stationed to help. "The co-op was hit hard with tree damage," Snyder explains. "They

(Linemen Answer the Call is continued on page 3)



Giving Thanks

As we gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving, I find myself reflecting on the deep sense of gratitude that defines our cooperative community. At its core, a cooperative is about people coming together, united by a common purpose. We work not just for ourselves, but for each other, and in doing so, we create a brighter, more connected future.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I'd like to share a poem that speaks to our shared mission:

*In fields where power lines stretch far and wide,
We find the strength of community, our guide.
Thankful for the energy that fuels our days,
And the cooperative spirit in countless ways.*

This Thanksgiving, I am deeply thankful for the dedication of our employees, whose hard work behind the scenes keeps the lights on and our homes warm. Their commitment to providing reliable power, even in challenging times, truly lights our way.

*For the hands that work, unseen yet strong,
Ensuring our homes are bright all year long.
For the programs that help us save and improve,
And the scholarships that help dreams move.*

I am also grateful for the support you, the members of TWEC, give to this cooperative. From energy efficiency programs to youth scholarships, your participation helps us strengthen our community and invest in the future.

As you gather around your tables this Thanksgiving, may you find joy in the warmth of family, the strength of community, and the light we create together.

*With grateful hearts, we light up the night,
Together, we shine ever so bright.*

Wishing you and your family a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Daniel Carlisle
President/CEO & General Counsel



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TWEC Board Minutes

Highlights from the September 26th, 2024, regular board meeting:

- CEO Dan Carlisle highlighted a few topics of discussion from MREA's fall CEO conference.
- Carlisle, acting as legal counsel, gave an annual fiduciary duty update report to the board.
- Lisa Graba-Meech, CFO, presented the August financials to the board. Monthly kWh sales were 14 percent under budget. Energy revenue was 8 percent under budget. August's purchased power expense was 18 percent under budget. Tier is 1.95 and Equity is 40.59.
- The 2025-2028 Construction Workplan was approved.
- The board approved the Revolving Economic Development Loan Plan.
- Member & Energy Services Manager Allison Frederickson gave a quick recap of the Meet the Candidates event, which was well attended and well received.
- Operations Manager Tyler Fisher gave an update on the status of new construction, outages, and vegetation management.
- Board Member Marie Katterhagen talked about the 29th year of hosting Envirofest. She thanked TWEC's Member & Energy Services Department for participating and providing electrical safety demonstrations for the kids. There were over 450 in attendance this year.

Happy
Thanksgiving!

Linemen Answer the Call *(Continued from page 1)*

don't normally see storms like Helene. The scale of the damage was massive."

Without missing a beat, the Minnesota crews got to work trimming tree limbs, clearing debris, re-stringing wires, and replacing broken poles.

But the work was far from over. As Laurens Electric reached nearly 100% restoration, TWEC received another call. Hurricane Milton had just ripped through Florida, and Peace River Electric Cooperative needed reinforcements. Grenier, Snyder, and the REA crews packed up and headed south once again—this time, toward even greater devastation.

When they arrived in Florida, they joined a force of 800 to 1,000 lineworkers, all working tirelessly to restore power. "You could tell they had been through storms before. They were prepared, with bunkhouses and catered meals for all the workers," Snyder notes. But that didn't make the task any easier.

One of the biggest challenges? Navigating unfamiliar systems

and service territories. "We didn't know their infrastructure," says Snyder. "We were assigned a co-op employee to give us work orders with details and maps of the areas we needed to restore."

Despite the grueling hours and relentless conditions, the crews pressed on, day after day, slowly chipping away at the power outages. "It took over a week to get everyone's lights back on," Snyder recalls, but the camaraderie and sense of purpose kept them going.

And the gratitude from the communities they served? Unforgettable. "Everybody was so gracious and thankful we were there," says Crew Chief Jon Grenier.

On October 17th, TWEC's crew finally returned home. Exhausted but proud, they carried with them not just the experience of hard work and long days, but the knowledge that they made a difference in the lives of so many.

When disaster strikes again, they will be ready because that's what lineworkers do—they restore power, rebuild hope, and keep the light burning for us all.



TWEC and REA Linemen (left to right): Will Hergott, Kyle Blade, Jon Grenier, Ross King, Kolby Goff, David Snyder

Reminder: We Want to Hear From You!

You are at the heart of all that we do, and we want to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to complete our member survey and let us know how we are doing. Complete the survey online by scanning the QR code below to access it. If you prefer to fill out a paper copy and return it via mail or by dropping it by the office, it was printed in our October *Pine to Prairie*. All surveys submitted will be eligible to win one of **ten \$25 energy credits**.



Please note: Surveys must be received by **November 25th, 2024**.
*One survey per household/business.

Todd-Wadena
Electric Cooperative
is an equal
opportunity provider
and employer.

Celebrating 50 Years of Service: Mike Thorson's Incredible Milestone

Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative (TWEC) proudly celebrates a momentous achievement by one of its most esteemed leaders, Mike Thorson, who has reached the incredible milestone of 50 years serving on the board of directors. Since 1974, Mike has played a pivotal role in guiding and shaping the cooperative's mission and vision, ensuring the members of TWEC benefit from reliable and affordable electricity. His wisdom and experience have been invaluable to not only TWEC, but also Great River Energy (GRE) where he has served as a director since 1976. He spent several years serving as Board Chair for both GRE and TWEC.

Over the course of his half-century of service, Mike was part of countless strategic decisions and major initiatives. One of his most notable contributions was his involvement with GRE in the groundbreaking of Coal Creek Station and later its sale, both monumental events in the history of the energy industry. His steady hand and leadership have helped both TWEC and GRE navigate the changing landscape of energy generation and distribution, balancing innovation with the cooperative principles that remain central to both organizations.

Beyond his contributions to energy policy and strategic planning, Mike's personal dedication and commitment to his community is equally inspiring.

Raised in Wadena and New York Mills, Mike has deep roots in rural Minnesota. He and his wife, Eloise, now retired, live along the scenic Long Prairie River. Together, they raised twin sons, Erik and Karl, and are proud grandparents. The family's farm, located between Browerville and Staples, is now managed by their son Erik, who has carried on the family tradition of operating a thriving fruit and vegetable business serving farmers' markets throughout Central Minnesota.

Mike's journey has been shaped by his early life on the farm and his education at the University of Minnesota, where he earned a degree in Agricultural Economics. His career also includes three years of active duty in the U.S. Army, where he further developed his leadership skills. His dedication to lifelong learning is reflected in his completion of the Credentialed Cooperative Director, Board Leadership, and Director Gold programs from the National Rural Electric Association, as well as the Blandin Leadership program.

Over the years, Mike has shared his expertise with a number of organizations, including the Staples-Motley School Board, Todd County

Economic Development Board, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Association Board, and the Cooperative Power Board before it became GRE. He remains active in his community today.

Reflecting on his service, Mike said, "I work hard to keep up with the ever-changing energy industry where new technology is constantly being adopted and customer expectations continue to change. I try to balance my decisions on how to best keep TWEC competitive and reliable with a concern for the environment." His leadership has been instrumental in keeping TWEC rates among the lowest in GRE's cooperative network, thanks to the participation of TWEC members in load control programs.

Mike's unique blend of education, experience, and common sense has been a guiding force for TWEC over the past five decades. As the cooperative continues to grow and adapt to changing regulatory environments, member needs, and environmental concerns, Mike's leadership remains as crucial as ever. His contributions have left a lasting legacy, and the entire TWEC community celebrates this remarkable achievement.

According to Mike, he's not done yet!

Here's to Mike Thorson—50 years of dedication, leadership, and service!



Capital Credits to Be Retired

As a member, you earn capital credits each year based on your patronage. This means if you purchase more electricity in a year, your allocation of capital credits is more for that year. Your Board of Directors makes a decision annually on whether to retire, or pay out, old capital credits based on the financial health of the cooperative and provisions of the by-laws.

In 2024, the Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative (TWEC) Board of Directors approved a capital credit retirement that totals \$534,000. TWEC is retiring \$298,000 to members active in 2009; and Great River Energy, our wholesale energy provider, is retiring \$236,000 of capital credits that will be refunded to TWEC members who had patronage from 1997-2004.

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK

Capital credits go through two steps on their way to members. They are first **allocated**, and then at a later time when the cooperative is able, they are **retired**, or dispersed, to members.

Active members: your capital credits will be applied to your account as an **energy credit** on your December bill.

1 ALLOCATION

An allocation is made annually for each member based on the amount of electricity purchased. The allocation is the member's share of the net margins. The co-op sets this money aside to be used as operating capital for improvements and maintenance over a period of years.



When a person establishes service with us, they become a member and are eligible for capital credits.



Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's margins during the time they have membership.



At the end of each year, any funds remaining after expenses (margins) are allocated to the member's account based on percentage of electricity purchased.

The allocated funds are used as operating capital for system improvements and maintenance until the board of directors retires capital credits.



2 RETIREMENT

A retirement is the amount a member receives back as a refund. It is a portion of the total allocation. When capital is no longer needed for operating expenses, it is retired. The amount paid is decided annually by the board of directors based on the financial conditions of the cooperative, and is subject to Rural Utility Services (RUS) and other lending institutions.



When the board elects to retire capital credits, we calculate the amount to pay each member based on historical allocation.



Annually, the board of directors evaluates the financial condition of the cooperative to determine whether to retire capital credits.



Active members have their capital credits applied to their account as an energy credit on their December bill. Checks are mailed to former members.

OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

► Mission Statement

To be a trusted partner providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy options to our members.

► Vision Statement

To improve the quality of life for our members and embrace beneficial opportunities in a changing industry.

► Values

Service › Safety › Fiscal Responsibility › Integrity › Communicate & Educate › Commitment to Community

2025 Calendar Pick Up Locations

TWEC's 2025 calendars are available now! Stop by to pick up a calendar at our office or at one of our pick up locations throughout the service territory (*locations listed below contest winners*). Limited quantities are available at each location. **Thank you to all our members who submitted photos!**



Cover photo: Rodney Haverinen

Calendar Contest Winners

January
Angie Hartwig
February
Judy Wolak
March
Mary Ostrowski
April
Betty Kreklau
May
Daniel Caponera
June
Susan McNelly

July
Abigail Thompson
August
Kristi Dahl
September
Angie Bartels
October
Debra Meyer-Myrum
November
RoAnn Trout
December
Chad Uselman

Pick Up Locations

Browerville
Pro-Ag Farmers' Co-op
501 Railroad Ave.
Long Prairie
Long Prairie Chamber of Commerce/Great River Regional Library's Foyer // 43 3rd St. N.
Wadena
Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative
550 Ash Avenue NE (Hwy. 10)

Menahga
A Clean Plate Local & Organic Grocery
13 Birch Ave. SE
Staples
Hubbard's Hardware
205 Warner Road NE

Operation Round Up Recipients



Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative's Community Trust Board met in October to review the latest Operation Round Up applications. Seven organizations received funding totaling \$8,370.33.

Organization		Amount
Bluffton Fire Dept.	Rescue Vehicle Replacement	\$5,000.00
CHI St. Joseph's Health	Menahga/Sebeka Food Backpack program	\$500.00
Lutheran Social Service	Food Warmer Replacement for Staples Area	\$650.00
Mary's ACC Quilters	Charity Quilts	\$500.00
Wadena Police Department	Shop with a Hero	\$500.00
Someplace Safe	Denim Day Campaign	\$500.00
City of Wadena	Outdoor Sirens	\$720.33
Total		\$8,370.33

If you'd like to join the Operation Round Up program by "rounding up" your electric bill, please contact the office at (218) 631-3120 or scan the QR code to the right and fill out the form.



Interested in Being a Director?

TWEC’s Board of Directors is essential to the success of the co-op. Directors attend monthly meetings to discuss issues and make decisions on behalf of the members. They attend conferences and read many reports/papers to understand the policies for which they are responsible and the issues with which they grapple.

Their responsibilities include mitigating risk, setting rates, understanding power supply, strategic planning, financial decision making, promoting the cooperative business model, gaining insights on political and environmental impacts, and meeting member expectations. If you are interested in becoming a director candidate, please contact one of the members of the *Nominating Committee* listed to the right.

2024 Nominating Committee

Name	City	Phone Number
Jerome Miller	Sebeka	(218) 837-5690
Gary Stracek	Browerville	(320) 594-2960
Wally Wiese	Verndale	(218) 639-6348
Ray Gildow	Staples	(218) 821-8848
Annette Adamietz	Verndale	(218) 445-5190
Samantha Krause	Staples	(507) 766-0238
Heather Gilreath	Sebeka	(218) 841-0309
John Fair	Sebeka	(218) 639-0942
Lloyd Lanz	Wadena	(218) 639-1806
Dan Skogen	Hewitt	(218) 639-3405

Members interested in becoming a director candidate may also contact the Cooperative office by calling (218) 631-3120 or (800) 321-8932 or by emailing Kallie Baxter at kbaxter@toddwadana.coop.

Medical Alert List

Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative keeps a medical alert list to note households with an occupant dependent on life-support equipment. Qualifying equipment can include respirators, oxygen concentrators, ventilators, home dialysis, and other equipment for human life threatening medical conditions.

If you are on TWEC’s *Medical Alert List*, we attempt to notify you prior to a planned outage—allowing you to make alternative arrangements. We notify members using an automated calling system and emails to those we have on file. In the event of an unplanned outage, the cooperative’s restoration process requires the backbone of the system to be restored first, then members on the medical alert list will be taken into consideration.

If you have critical health issues or have medically necessary equipment requiring electricity, a Medical Equipment Priority form needs to be filled out by your medical provider and given to TWEC. This form can be found on our website at www.toddwadana.coop/account/account-forms or by scanning the QR code on the top right.

Scan this QR code with your mobile device in order to be directed to the Medical Equipment Priority form that is required to be filled out by your medical provider.



Note: members with critical health issues should always be prepared with back-up plans in case of an outage. Please make sure you have adequate back-up plans.

Pine to Prairie News

A monthly publication for members & friends of



Todd-Wadena
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

Telephone: (218) 631-3120 or
(800) 321-8932

Website: www.toddwadena.coop

Email: todd-wad@toddwadena.coop

Address: 550 Ash Avenue NE
P.O. Box 431
Wadena, MN 56482

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Miles Kuschel, Chair
Tom Brichacek, Vice Chair
Marie Katterhagen, Secretary
Dale Adams, Treasurer
Michael Thorson, Director
Gene Kern, Director
Kristine Spadgenske, Director

Daniel Carlisle, President/CEO &
General Counsel

LOCAL ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS

Todd County:

Bob Kent (612) 528-5326

Wadena County:

Brandon Disselbrett (218) 580-8614

District 10 (Todd & Wadena Counties):

Sheldon Monson (218) 689-3260

If your electric power goes out:

First, make sure the problem is not on your side. (Members may be billed for service calls if the problem is caused by their own equipment.) Check fuses and circuit breakers in your home and by the meter pole. (Call us for help, if necessary.)

Second, check with your neighbors to see if they have power. Then call Todd-Wadena to report the problem. Give your name and account number. Then report any tree branches, twisted wires, broken poles, and whether or not your neighbors are also out of power.

Before digging call:
Gopher State One-Call
811 or (800) 252-1166

Find us on  

www.facebook.com/toddwadenaelectriccooperative
www.instagram.com/twec.coop

Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 431

Wadena, MN 56482

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Cookies & Coffee at the Co-op

When: Friday, December 20th
from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Where: The Lobby at Todd-
Wadena Electric Cooperative

Stop by our office anytime on
Friday, December 20th from
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and grab
a cookie and a coffee or hot
chocolate! **Happy Holidays!**



November Reader's Contest

- 2025 photo calendars can be picked up at local businesses in Wadena, Browerville, Long Prairie, Menahga, and _____.
- For active members, retired capital credits will be applied to your _____ bill.
- Cookies & Coffee at the Co-op will take place during the day on Friday, December _____.

Name:

Your TWEC Account Number:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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For your chance to be entered in a drawing to win a \$10 credit on your bill, correctly answer the questions and include with your TWEC bill. Mail to TWEC, P.O. Box 431, Wadena, MN 56482. Or email the answers to mbrservices@toddwadena.coop with the subject line "Reader's Contest". Be sure to include your name and TWEC service address. Entries must be received by November 25th.

Robert Carlson (Wadena), Maxine Erickson (Wadena), Rueben Neterval (Motley), Eric Osborn (Verndale), and Bryce Anderson (Wadena) were the winners of our special October is Co-op Month Reader's Contest.