

# Meeker Cooperative PIONEER

December 2020

## In this issue...

*Turck's Trees..... Cover*

*Mergen's Message..... 2*

*Meeker Co-op to retire  
Capital Credits..... 3*

*Holiday Schedule ..... 3*

*Website Updates ..... 4*

*J&R Family Market ..... 5*

*Operation Round Up®  
Grant Recipients..... 6*

*Christmas Tree Safety.. 6*

*Recipe..... 7*

*Pioneer Ads..... 8*

## Follow Us on Facebook!



Stay current and vibrant  
with us by following our  
Facebook pages.

[facebook.com/  
meeker.coop](https://facebook.com/meeker.coop)

[facebook.com/  
vibrantbb.net](https://facebook.com/vibrantbb.net)

Official publication of

**Meeker  
Cooperative**  
Light and Power Association

Meeker Co-op is an  
Equal Opportunity Provider  
and Employer

## Turck's Trees Staying VIBRANT This Holiday Season

The things Joan Turck misses this holiday season are the hugs, handshakes, and catching up with friends and customers' families who've been coming to Turck's Tree farm for years looking to select that perfect Christmas tree.

The tree farm is still open this year, abiding by the masking and social distancing rules. "It's unfortunate not being able to give someone a welcome back hug or a handshake or just catching up. That's been the hardest this year," says Joan Turck. "Some of these people we only see once a year, but we're diligent and we'll get through this." Steve and Joan Turck care about everybody and they don't want anybody to get sick from COVID-19 over this holiday season.

Joan said people are amazing. "They accept the change as far as masking-up even when they're in their vehicles or out in the field. We haven't met with any conflict, families are still coming out, they're still having fun. Hopefully next year the gift shop will reopen and we can get back to Santa, cookies and have that close contact with our customers' families and friends again."

Turck's planted their first trees in 1981 and sold their first trees in 1987. Since 1987, hundreds of families have made it a holiday tradition to travel to Turck's Trees and walk in the woods, snap photos of the reindeer (Glitter and Sparkle) and create memories as they hand-select their Christmas tree. In addition to the general public sales, Turck's also sells to wholesalers; and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, they have had a great year.

In 2000, they built a new building for a gift shop where customers could purchase a variety of holiday foods, ornaments, home décor or take a photo with the big guy himself, Santa! Additionally, they have a work area to provide



space for custom wreathmaking as well as make the Christmas sales season run smoother.

Last season, Steve and Joan installed VIBRANT

Broadband, literally days before the Christmas season opened. "We love it!" exclaims Joan. "Prior to installing VIBRANT we only had one cash register and it was slow. We rely on the Internet for our credit card machines. After VIBRANT was installed, it was a timesaver! Not only could we add additional registers, but it was also fast and reliable with no buffering issues."

Previously, they had satellite service. In bad weather it just couldn't meet their needs. "We've had none of those issues since installing VIBRANT."

"During the off-season, our kids and grandkids have come over, and with social distancing they've camped out here, so having VIBRANT's high-speed Internet has been a joy. It's been amazing for us. I am so glad we are lucky enough to have it," says Joan.





## A Better Future For Us All

### Pioneer Update

Over the past two months I mentioned that our long time Media Specialist retired and we would be looking at all aspects of our communications program, including the *Pioneer*.

We began that process and are evaluating what format other electric co-ops use for their newsletter, the size, frequency, types of articles, and the various sections. We are also relying on our 2019 Member Survey to gain input on what you, the members, thought was important, what sections you read, and what value you place on the various information provided. In addition, we need to keep in mind the high use of electronic communication and how we can best utilize that to keep the membership informed.

As we continue this evaluation process, we will not be publishing a January 2021 issue of the *Pioneer*. Our goal is to have the February issue be the first edition of a newly reformatted, and refreshed *Pioneer*. As per our recent strategic plan initiative to have a comprehensive communication program that is informative, provides relevant and timely information including member stories, Co-op events, services and programs that keep you adequately informed about your electric and broadband Co-op.

### Be Kind

I think we all can agree the Internet and all its forms of electronic communication can be a blessing in many ways. It also can be a burden and source of abuse for people. It only takes minutes for something to go "viral" on the Internet. Unfortunately, it could be totally baseless.

I'm not a Facebook, Twitter or other social media junkie. I simply choose not to participate in them. What I find sad is how some people will say things on these sites about others they would never in a million years say to their face or in another public venue. Often times they may never have met them.

Schools have had to spend a great deal of time dealing with cyber bullying as these forms of communication and all devices which enable students to log on has grown. That is unfortunate and a waste of valuable resources.

As we have built out our VIBRANT Broadband system, I've needed to come more in tune with all things electronic communication related. When you hear and see some of these things, you wonder what is going on in their life that makes them so bitter and why do they think that saying this makes them feel better?

My New Year's wish is for the customers using VIBRANT Broadband to become known as the kindest and most caring

users of any internet system across America. I know of no award for or means by which to measure internet or social media respect, kindness and caring except in one's own heart. Maybe that is enough or all that really matters.

### VIBRANT Zone

We are continuing to work hard to bring all Meeker Cooperative Light Power Association members Rip Snort'n Fast Internet. We know there are some areas we simple have not been able to reach. Rest assured we are doing what we can to get to those areas and grow VIBRANT Broadband.

There are a lot of factors that go into a decision on where to expand to, including cost versus length of time it takes to get a return on that investment. This goes back to being stewards of your investment in your Co-op. As a member owned Co-op the employees and your elected Board of Directors have an obligation to the membership to use your financial resources wisely and responsibly.

It would be great if we could have reached everyone within the first year or even better the first month. That just is and was not possible. On the electric side of the business we have been building new lines to serve members for over 85 years. In fact, we have nearly 2000 miles of line built throughout our system. Yet we

continue to build new electric lines into new areas to serve new members every year. It is an ongoing process.

You may see marketing materials for VIBRANT in your bills, on our websites and in the *Pioneer* newsletter each month: all while knowing you cannot receive it yet. This advertising and promotional material is simply part of doing business.

We are constantly submitting applications to various state and national organizations for loans and grants to help us bring VIBRANT service to new areas. Just this fall we received two grants to help us bring high speed internet to two new areas through the U.S. Government's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We will continue to diligently monitor for programs that help us bring VIBRANT Broadband service to you as quickly and economically as possible.

While we want to reach every one of our members, we are not able to at this time. The best way to help us reach those hard-to-get-to areas is to get together with as many neighbors as possible and let us know there is a committed group of members willing to sign up for VIBRANT service. In the end, building out an internet system is a financial balancing act, so the more households in a neighborhood we can sign up the better the

economies of scale.

### Then 2020 Went Crazy...

A global health pandemic that doesn't appear to end anytime soon, an election that couldn't end soon enough, and lives as we knew them put on hold, I think pretty much sums up 2020.

As a completely crazy and challenging 2020 ends, I want to thank you for your business and support of your electric cooperative. The patience and understanding many of you showed us as we worked through getting VIBRANT Broadband and electric services installed through the pandemic is so greatly appreciated.

I close this last issue of the *Pioneer* for 2020 with a wish for a very Merry Christmas, a Happy, Healthy, Prosperous and Joyful New Year, and a prayer that those suffering from the Coronavirus either in health or economically be healed and your financial peace be restored.

### Did You Know...

On Monday November 30, Merriam-Webster announced "pandemic" as its 2020 word of the year.

### Board of Directors

**Kevin Issendorf, President — District 4**  
Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

**Brad Donnay, Vice President — District 3**  
Luxemburg, Maine Prairie, South Maine Prairie in Stearns; Forest Prairie in Meeker

**Karl Lundin, Secretary — District 9**  
North Kingston, Kingston, Forest City in Meeker

**Mark Larson, Treasurer — District 6**  
Harrison, Kandiyohi, Genessee, Fahlun, Lake Elizabeth, E. Lake Lillian in Kandiyohi; Cosmos, Acton, Danielson, Swede Grove in Meeker; Brookfield, Boon Lake in Renville

**Paul Bugbee — District 1**  
Roseville, Irving in Kandiyohi; Paynesville in Stearns; Union Grove in Meeker

**Karen Becker, District 2**  
Eden Lake in Stearns; Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

**Stephen Plaisance — District 5**  
Fairhaven in Stearns; Cokato, Southside, French Lake in Wright; Dassel in Meeker

**K. Bruce Krueger — District 7**  
Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker; Stockholm in Wright; Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod

**Larry Huhn — District 8**  
Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

**Chad Felstul — Attorney**

### Meeker Pioneer

USPS 018-308 ISSN 1525-1055  
Periodicals Postage Paid at Litchfield, MN.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
Meeker Pioneer, 1725 US Hwy. 12, Suite 100  
Litchfield, MN 55355.

The Meeker Pioneer is published monthly  
for \$5 per year for members and  
\$10 per year for non-members by  
Meeker Cooperative, 1725 U.S. Hwy. 12, Suite 100  
Litchfield, MN 55355

CEO/General Manager: Tim Mergen  
Editor: Shane Zeppelin  
Contributors: Lynn Mergen and Curt Fulte

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

**For 24-hour service call**  
**320-693-3231**  
**Fax: 320-693-2980**

**Websites:** [www.meeker.coop](http://www.meeker.coop)  
[VIBRANTBroadband.com](http://VIBRANTBroadband.com)  
Use the "Contact Us" form on the home page

The Meeker Pioneer is the official  
member publication of Meeker Cooperative and  
focuses on our members, programs and events.  
All member story ideas and comments are welcome.  
Send Attention: Editor at the address above.

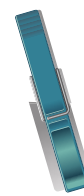
**Meeker Cooperative Mission Statement:**  
*"Energizing and Connecting...enhancing your life."*



## Holiday Schedule

*Meeker Cooperative will be closed for business on December 24, December 25, and January 1 to celebrate with their families.*

*If you experience an outage, please call our office at 320-693-3231 and dispatchers will send a crew out 24/7 to restore your power or internet.*



## VIBRANT Reviews

We are so happy with our VIBRANT service! Before we finalized the contract we had wonderful customer service - all of our questions were answered in a professional, friendly manner so we felt confident in making this choice. Installation went exactly as we were told and right on schedule. The service itself is great - clear, fast connections. We would encourage anyone considering VIBRANT to go for it - you won't be disappointed!

- Molly C.

VIBRANT internet service is fantastic. Before we were slowed down when we hit our allowed time. Our 6-year-old grandson got very impatient waiting for the page to load. No more waiting. 100% Happy.

- Greg and Pat K.

## Meeker Co-op Will Retire \$849,496 in Capital Credits

The Meeker Cooperative Board of Directors approved the general retirement of \$849,496 in capital credits. This includes the amounts paid to estates and former members in 2020 and members who received electricity from the Co-op in 1994, along with power supplier capital credits from 1986-1988. In the past 20 years, Meeker Co-op has retired almost \$14.6 million.

As a non-profit cooperative owned by its members, any revenues received from the membership that are in excess of the cost of providing electricity are called margins. These margins allow the Co-op to finance operations such as repairing and maintaining infrastructure. As a cooperative, these margins (often called capital credits) are paid back to the membership as determined by the Board of Directors as the financial condition of the Co-op allows.

If you are a current member and qualify to receive capital credits, you will see a credit on the electric bill you receive this month. Former members will receive a check for their share of capital credits in December as well. Checks are issued once a member's capital credit



amount totals a minimum of \$25. If a former member's capital credits do not reach the minimum amount of \$25, the Co-op retains them until a future year when the minimum is reached and then they are paid out.

Every year we have members who have moved off our lines and left no forwarding address with the Co-op. When it's time to return capital credits to these members, we often have trouble locating them.

To check for names you may know, go to [www.meeker.coop](http://www.meeker.coop). Click on the "About Us" tab at the top, and then click the link "Capital Credits." There you will find the link "Unclaimed Capital Credits." Click on that link to download a PDF of the list.

We continue to try to locate these members for seven years, after which the law allows us to donate

their capital credits to the Operation Round Up® program to provide scholarships for educational purposes.

If you received a payout for the general retirement funds of 1986-1988 or 1994, or because you are no longer a member in 2020, you also have the option to donate these funds to Operation Round Up if you wish to do so. #16-09-406

If you recognize any of the names on the "Unclaimed Capital Credits" list and can provide us with a current address, or if you would like to donate all or a portion of your capital credit payout to Operation Round Up, please contact Marla at 320-693-3231.

Receiving capital credits is one of the many advantages of being a rural electric cooperative member/owner.



## WHAT IS PHISHING?

Phishing is a cybercrime where scammers try to lure sensitive information or data from you. They disguise themselves as a trustworthy source like your bank or Google. They try different ways, including text, email, and phone to trick you into clicking a malicious link or giving personal information.

Most email apps, such as Microsoft Outlook and Gmail, have filters that add warning messages to emails with suspicious-looking links. Unfortunately, the bad guys are always finding new ways to bypass these security filters.

One way that scammers can sneak past your email security is by taking advantage of tools available for Google Drive. This platform allows you to tag any user in a file by using their Gmail address. Once tagged, the user will receive a notification directly from Google.

This means that if a bad guy tags you in a Google document, you will receive a legitimate notification from Google that includes a link to the bad guy's file.

If you view the file, you'll likely find that it directs you to click another link. This second link is actually a malicious attempt to steal your sensitive information.

**Don't fall for this trick! Protect yourself from a phishing attack:**

- Don't open suspicious emails or texts
- Don't click on suspicious links
- Don't send financial information through email
- Don't click pop-up ads
- Use spam filters
- Have good antivirus and malware protection (such as TechShield)

**Call Meeker Co-op to learn how to get coverage.**



# Meeker Cooperative Updates Website

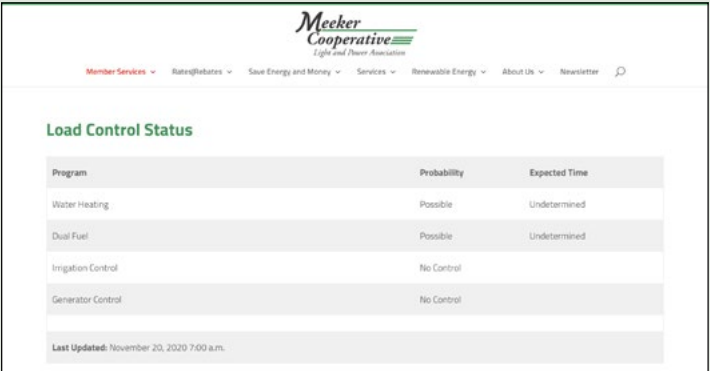
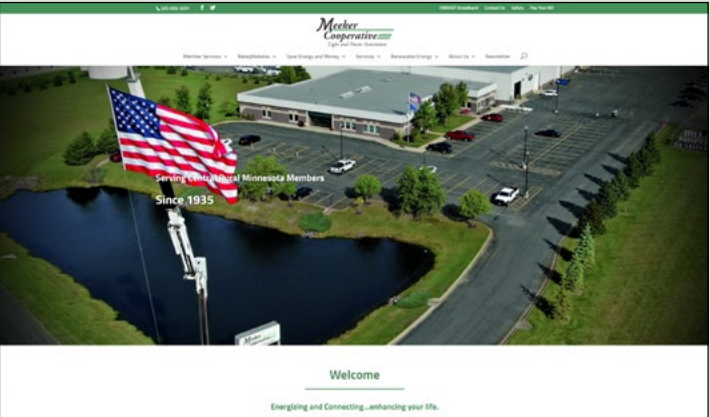
If you've recently visited the meeker.coop website, you will have noticed a new design. The new site is modern and works on any device. All of the information that was previously on the site is still there, and new things will be added in the future. Here are some of the highlights on what you will find on the meeker.coop website.

Under the Member Services tab, you will find links to the outage map, load control status, and frequently asked questions. You will also be able to pay your bill online and update your contact information.

The Rates & Rebates tab links you to our rebate programs, rates, and list of qualified contractors who can help you with electrical work.

There are also links explaining how to save energy, listing the other services we offer, renewable energy, the different programs we offer, Association bylaws, the board members, and recent copies of the *Pioneer* newsletter.

We encourage you browse around. There is a lot of information available that might answer questions about your local electric cooperative. If you have other questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call and ask us. Our mission is to Energize and Connect...enhancing your life.



### Find your location number

**Four** location numbers have been hidden within this *Pioneer*. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative by Dec. 30, you will have \$10 credited to your account! If you find your number and your information is correct in our system, you'll receive a bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar panel. **Good luck!**

# Financial assistance available to help with utility bills

As temperatures decline, the cost of heating starts to increase. During the cold weather months, some Meeker Cooperative member-consumers might experience difficulty in paying their electric bills. We know that COVID-19 has created additional financial hardships, placing an even larger burden on families already struggling to pay their bills or bring their accounts current.

If you have a past-due balance with Meeker Cooperative, or you are concerned about how to pay for heating costs this winter, there are some new resources available to help those in need.

**COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program**  
A Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funded program, known as the COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) allocates \$100 million in Minnesota to cover housing expenses such as rent, mortgage, utilities or other housing-related expenses. Funds are available through Dec. 31, 2020, on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible utility expenses include gas, electric, water and sewer. Propane is currently ineligible. Only past-due expenses incurred on or after March 1, 2020, and before Dec. 20, 2020, are eligible.

To learn more about the CHAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit United Way 211, <http://211unitedway.org/> to access the application and assistance or questions regarding eligibility, or call 800-543-7709.
- General FAQ's, including information on income limits and what is covered: <http://www.mnhousing.gov/sites/np/covid19housingassistanceprogramFAQ>

**Energy Assistance Program**  
The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$54,357 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2021.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule also helps to protect and reconnect residential heat from Oct. 15 through April 15.

Meeker Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact Meeker Cooperative to set up a Cold Weather Rule payment plan.

# APPLIANCE REBATES FOR ENERGY STAR RATED APPLIANCES ONLY

Meeker Cooperative offers rebates of \$25 for every Energy Star rated refrigerator, freezer, clothes washer, dishwasher and dehumidifier. However, these rebates CANNOT be applied to every appliance.

If the appliance you are shopping for is Energy Star rated, it will have the Energy Star logo on the appliance and will have the designation on the lower right corner of the appliance Energy Guide. If in doubt, please go online to Energy Star ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)) and check to see if your appliance is listed.

Once you purchase an appliance that has an Energy Star designation, you may send your receipt along with a rebate application found in our office or online at [www.meeker.coop/download-forms](http://www.meeker.coop/download-forms) to our office at 1725 US Hwy. 12 E., Litchfield, MN 55355. Please call our office at 320-693-3231 if you have any questions.





# VIBRANT Connects New Owners in Hometown Market

Jeffrey Babbitt and his wife, Reneen, are not new to owning a business, but when they decided to buy J&R Family Market a little over a year ago, they didn't know how quickly it would all come together.

After ten years of commuting three hours each day for work, Jeffrey and Reneen decided they had enough of the road time and sold their Dairy Queen stores in southern Minnesota. They didn't know what their next chapter would be.

Both graduated from Eden Valley High School and grew up in the area. Marrying as High School sweethearts, they have been living in the Watkins area most of their married life. When the small hometown market was listed for sale, they decided that would be their next chapter in life.

When they purchased the market in November of 2019, they closed the doors on a Saturday afternoon to remodel. They emptied the store, tore out walls, put in a new floor, new coolers, and new freezers. One week later they opened for business.

Part of their update plan was to install high-speed Internet, VoIP phone, and security. Before they could put in their VIBRANT Broadband service, however, they moved their offices as part of the remodel. #24-35-302

"We called VIBRANT Broadband and they sent in the troops", says Jeffrey! "There were technicians, sales representatives, managers...the whole gamut."

Having a great Internet connection is essential to



running their business. Jeffrey says that their goal was to have good enough service to run their credit card machine, EBT machine, and be able to do everything online, plus have great wireless throughout the building. They rent an apartment upstairs to their son, and wanted to make sure there was a strong signal for that as well.

"Bringing VIBRANT Broadband into our store has allowed us to do a lot more than we could have with our previous provider," Jeffrey says. Reneen makes sandwiches in the morning for people to purchase for lunch and having a strong quality Internet connection allows her to stream the news and listen to music while she's making them.

Adding VIBRANT's phone service and Heartland Security Service, also offered by Meeker Cooperative Light & Power Association, gives J&R Market a complete business package.

Not only did Jeffrey and Reneen have VIBRANT

Broadband installed at J&R Market, but they also installed it at their home on Clear Lake.

"It's worked out great. My mom is living in an addition to our house, and before getting VIBRANT Broadband, she couldn't even use the Internet. Since getting VIBRANT, we discontinued our satellite service and now everyone can stream," states Reneen. "We have four TVs in the house and each one can be streaming something different and we have no issues."

The Babbitts tell us that "The service has been great both at home and at the store. We have no complaints. All around from before the sale, installation, after the sale, and the service, has been a good experience, and they are a good group of people to work with."

J&R Family Market is located downtown in Watkins, MN. You can call them at 320-764-2980.

## Avoid Utility Scams

Scammers can threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams. Meeker Cooperative would like to remind you of ways to avoid scams.



Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Co-op representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.

Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.

If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the Co-op, please call 320-693-3231 and let us know as soon as possible.

## Attention all members enrolled on Dual Fuel Electric Heat

Our power supplier will be performing system-wide dual fuel load control tests throughout the winter months. Typically, these tests will occur during the early evening hours and last for 1.5 hours. The purpose of the load control test is to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the dual fuel program given varying temperatures. We will provide notification by sending out a text message to those who have signed up to receive messages and also update the load control status page on our website <https://www.meeker.coop/load-control-status/>

If you are not enrolled to receive text notification you may do so by emailing us with your cell number(s) at <https://www.meeker.coop/contact-us/>. Please be sure to include your cell phone carrier as well.

To enroll on the money saving dual fuel program please call us at 320-693-3231 or contact us at <https://www.meeker.coop/contact-us/>.



# Attention Snowbirds!



Are you planning to leave for warmer weather this winter?

Do you have a plan to stay current on your electric bill when you're gone?

Meeker Co-op has a number of ways to pay your bill when you're away:

1. Pay it online with SmartHub. And while you're there, check out your readings, daily, monthly and historic power use or manage your account. If you wish, there is an App available for iOS and Android users for added convenience anywhere. It's easy to sign up. Just go to [www.meeker.coop](http://www.meeker.coop), click on the SmartHub icon and follow the prompts. #15-35-103
2. Auto Pay (ACH) from your checking or savings account. You can sign up for this through your SmartHub account as well. Having your monthly bill automatically paid from your bank always insures against late payments.
3. Credit card payments may be set up through SmartHub as well. Or call our payment center at 844-834-4462 to pay once or keep your credit card information on file to use monthly.

Thank you for planning ahead and have a wonderful time soaking up the sun!

# Reminder - \$1000 College Scholarship Deadline is January 27, 2021

Meeker Cooperative's \$1,000 college scholarship application funded by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, one Meeker's power suppliers, has a deadline of the close of business day on Wednesday, January 27, 2021.

**To be eligible a student must:**

- Be a dependent child (including adopted or step-children) of a Meeker Cooperative member
- Be enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school
- Enter college in the fall of the same year the scholarship is given
- Not have previously received this award
- Be a US citizen
- Complete and submit all required materials and the scholarship application form by the application deadline

The application is available on Meeker's website at [www.meeker.coop](http://www.meeker.coop). Select Download Forms from the Member Services tab.

The form may be completed on-line, but must be printed to submit with the supporting materials.

Applications are also available at Meeker's office or by calling Mary Alice Holm at 320-693-3231.

All decisions by the scholarship selection committee will be final.

# Christmas Tree Safety

As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.

**Picking the tree**

- Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

**Placing the tree**

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights. #34-04-401
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

**Lighting the tree**

- Use lights that have the label of a recognized

testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.

- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

**After Christmas**


Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.



**FACTS**

- More than one of every four home Christmas tree fires is caused by electrical problems.
- Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
- A heat source too close to the tree causes one in every four fires.

Source: NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION  
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards.  
[nfpa.org/education](http://nfpa.org/education)



**Operation Round Up®**  
**December 2020 Grant Recipient List**

<b>Community Service</b>	
Living at Home/BN Prog., Grove City C.A.R.E.....	\$1,000
Meeker Area Ministries.....	\$2,500
United Community Action Partnership (detailed below).....	\$3,250
• <i>Threads of Hope</i> ..... \$250	
• <i>Head Start</i> ..... \$500	
• <i>Energy Assistance</i> ..... \$2,500	
<b>Education and Youth</b>	
FCCLA, Litchfield Middle School.....	\$1,000
Hockey, Youth LDC.....	\$400
Post Prom, Kimball.....	\$350
Raptors Roost .....	\$500
Robotics Team, Eden Valley-Watkins High School.....	\$600
Robotics Team, Hutchinson High School .....	\$600
Robotics Team, Litchfield High School .....	\$600
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$10,800</b>

High School Scholarships – Two - \$1,000 scholarships per school as eligible to ACGC, BOLD, Dassel-Cokato, Eden Valley-Watkins, Hutchinson, Kimball, Litchfield, Paynesville.



# What to Do If Your Vehicle Comes in Contact with A Utility Pole or Wire

Winter roads can get icy. Driving for the conditions is always recommended, however, accidents can happen. If you find yourself in an accident involving a utility pole, or other electrical object, remember these safety tips.

The "License to Live" campaign is aimed at making sure people know exactly what to do when your car comes into contact with a utility pole or wire, specifically:

- STAY IN YOUR vehicle and call 911
- ONLY get out of the vehicle if it is on fire
- IF you must get out, jump from the vehicle with both feet together, and shuffle your feet on the ground as you move away from the scene
- ALWAYS assume all wires and equipment are electrified

Follow along with this Q&A for more safety tips and to learn more about what happens when a power line is downed:

## Q. What should I do if I am in an accident involving a power line or other electrical equipment?

A. DO NOT get out of your car or truck! It is always safer to remain inside a vehicle, which acts as an insulator and keeps you out of the path of stray electricity. Call 9-1-1, and tell the dispatcher a downed line or other electrical equipment is involved. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to de-energize the power.



## Q. What if I hit a pad-mounted transformer (metal cabinet or green box) in a yard?

A. Pad-mounted transformers house electrical equipment connected to underground power lines. The same safety precautions apply to all of these cabinets and the voltage that could energize unwanted areas when damaged.

## Q. Is there any reason I should get out of the vehicle?

A. Yes, but only when your vehicle is on fire or you see smoke. If that is the case, make a clean jump from the vehicle without touching it, and then hop with feet together or shuffle keeping your feet on the ground as far as you can—preferably 50 or more feet away.

## Q. What happens to the electrical current when a line is down?

A. Once a power line is in contact with a car or truck, the ground or other objects, it energizes the area. The electrical current spreads to the vehicle and ground, and it ripples out. Each "ring" of the ripple represents a different voltage. Stepping from one voltage to the next can cause your body to become a path for electricity and electrocute you. That is why you should hop or shuffle once you make a clean jump from the vehicle.

Always keep your feet together – think of hopping like a bunny or shuffling like a penguin.

## Q. What else can I do?

A. Put your window down and yell to others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.

## Q. Are there any other instances when these same safety tips apply?

A. Yes, the same rules apply to any type of equipment (for example, farming and construction equipment) that comes in contact with overhead lines or electrical cabinets or equipment.

## Q. What happens if I am driving and see a downed line across the road, such as during or after a storm?

A. After storms or other events where damage has occurred along and in the roadway, be alert and slow down. Do not attempt to drive over downed lines or through water or over debris that could be covering lines or other hazards. Driving over a line can pull more lines or related equipment down. If you encounter a downed line, pull over and report location to 9-1-1.

"License to Live" includes an educational video along with other instructional materials and was a joint project by the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association, Safe Electricity, and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. You can view the program materials and the video at: <https://safeelectricity.org/license-to-live/>

## Cogeneration and small power production governed by Minnesota Rules

Meeker Cooperative is obligated by Minnesota Rules pts. 7835 to interconnect with and purchase electricity from any cogenerators and/or small power producers. We also are required to provide information free of charge to any and all members who may be interested in entering into an interconnection agreement with the Co-op.

In compliance with Minnesota adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, all interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility.

## Turkey Wild Rice Soup

**Shelley Carter** submitted this month's winning recipe for **Best Leftover Turkey Recipe**. She will have \$10 credited to her account. Congratulations!

### Turkey Wild Rice Soup

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2/3 cup uncooked wild rice</li><li>• 2 cups water</li><li>• 6 tablespoons butter</li><li>• 1/4 cup finely chopped onion</li><li>• 1/4 cup finely chopped celery</li><li>• 1/3 cup all-purpose flour</li><li>• 4 cups turkey broth</li><li>• 1/3 cup shredded carrot</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 cups chopped cooked turkey</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, or to taste</li><li>• 1/4 cup silvered almonds</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice</li><li>• 3/4 cup half and half cream</li></ul> |
|---|--|

1. Bring the wild rice and water to a boil in a saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer until the rice is tender but not mushy, 40 to 45 minutes. Drain off any excess liquid, fluff the rice with a fork, and cook uncovered 5 minutes more. Set the cooked rice aside.
2. Melt butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Cook and the stir the onion and celery until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in the flour, and cook until it turns a pale yellowish-brown color, 3 to 5 minutes. Gradually whisk in the turkey stock until no lumps of flour remain. Stir in the carrot. Bring the mixture to a simmer and cook, whisking constantly until the stock is thick and smooth and the carrot is tender, about 2 more minutes.
3. Stir in the wild rice, turkey, salt, pepper and almonds. Return to a simmer and cook 2 more minutes to heat the ingredients. Stir in the lemon juice and half and half, bring the soup almost to a boil and serve hot.

*GIVE YOUR FAMILY (AND YOURSELF) A VIBRANT GIFT...  
...AND ENJOY IT ALL YEARZ LONG!*

**VIBRANT**  
Broadband™

Powered by Meeker Cooperative

Providing **Rip Snort'n FAST**  
Fiber-Fed Internet to our  
Rural Communities.

Call **320-693-3231** for  
a VIBRANT Sales Representative



# \$1,000 Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Non-Traditional Student Scholarship

A \$1,000 scholarship is being offered to a student five or more years beyond high school graduation who is working toward a degree, certificate or licensure in some area of expertise.

**Eligible candidate must:**

- have an educational plan,
- have been enrolled for at least one quarter or semester in the chosen program, and
- be a member or employee of Meeker Cooperative.

Application is available:

- on Meeker’s website (meeker.coop, select Member Services, Download Forms),
- at the Cooperative, or
- by calling 320-693-3231.

**Application deadline:**  
Close of business (4:30 p.m.)  
February 4, 2021.



The scholarship is made available by the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust.

Members of the Cooperative may choose to have their bills rounded up to the nearest dollar and employees of the Cooperative are given the opportunity to have their paychecks rounded down to contribute to this fund. This extra change is accumulated in the Operation Round Up® Trust Fund and is awarded as grants to non-profit and charitable organizations. High school scholarships are also awarded to qualifying area students.

All members of Meeker Cooperative are eligible to participate in Operation Round Up. Please call Meeker Co-op at 320-693-3231 if you do not currently participate and would be willing to contribute your extra change each month to local non-profit organizations in your community.

## Pioneer Ads

**For Sale**

24 FT. FREE STANDING CORRAL PANELS with 3/4" rods \$230 each, Watkins. 320-333-6540

TEN INCH MITER SAW like new with stand, \$100. 320-275-3705

BEMIS HUMIDIFIER, 4 room size, three speed, works good. 320-275-9898

8'x10' ALUMINUM SNOWMOBILE TRAILER, V front, with ramps, 320-260-1638

OLDER STRIKEMASTER AUGER, runs great. 320-291-2337

OVER SIZED CHAIR taupe color, 48x42x40, \$75. 320-420-2649

4" STEEL SIDING light grey, approx. 10 sheets, \$400. 320-455-7269=

OTTER POP-UP PORTABLE FISH HOUSE sled, \$125 OBO. 320-693-2277

TWO 1970's CHILDRENS SLEDS steel runners, excellent condition. 320-587-6707

PORTABLE FISH HOUSE, fish finder, lights, TV, \$300 for all. 320-295-8125

CHILD'S ROUND TABLE and 2 chairs, solid oak, \$50. 320-293-5435

TITLEIST SUREFIT TOUR GOLF BAG, great Christmas gift. 320-583-9561

ANTIQUE CAST IRON lard press/ sausage stuffer. 320-212-7655

DEWALT 3pc. TOOL KIT, drill light and circular saw. 320-212-7655

(4) P225/60R16 USED TIRES, (2) P225/70R17 used tires. 320-220-1343

VINTAGE CHRISTMAS CATALOGS, good condition, make offer. Leave message. 320-275-3188

FIBERGLASS DOOR. 36" x 80" \$75. 320-693-6590

LIVE, FINISHED BEEF to be butchered, naturally raised. 320-979-6949

HAMBURGER, LOCALLY PROCESSED, naturally raised beef-no hormones. 320-979-6949

LIFE MAGAZINE, dated 6/25/56, Mickey Mantle cover, \$60 OBO. 320-276-8575

**Wanted**

PAYING CASH for wooden extension ladders. 320-221-0464

OLD SPEARS & spearing decoys, will pay cash. 320-583-6903

WANTED: DEHUMIDIFIER. 320-582-0864

OATS, 500 bushels. 320-974-8783

LAKE SUPERIOR AGATES! 320-493-7555

CASH PAID FOR HARLEY PARTS, call or send pictures. 651-260-9938

**Automotive**

1999 DODGE INTREPID 125k miles, good condition, \$1250 OBO. 320-980-0158

1998 SLS CADILLAC, Black Beauty, needs battery, engine, \$298. 320-276-8575

**Agricultural**

SPRAYER 60' RANGER 2200 diaphragm pump 540 PTO 2500 controller. 320-583-3131

5'x7' PLASTIC TENDERFOOT with stands, scrapers with stainless cable. 320-260-1638

24' FREE STANDING CORRAL PANELS 3/4" rods, \$230ea, Watkins. 320-333-6540

**Services**

WELDING FABRICATION STAINLESS alum. shop on-site. 320-290-5950

SMALL ENGINE REPAIR Muonio Motors repairs all small engines. 763-244-7426

*We will not have a January issue. Please stay tuned for more information.*

## ALL IS CALM. ALL IS BRIGHT.

Our smart home security systems protect your home and loved ones from intruders, carbon monoxide, fire, and other threats.

888.264.6380 | heartlandss.com

RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL  
AGRICULTURAL • MEDICAL

A SUBSIDIARY OF

Light and Power Association

Even though we are social distancing this Christmas, you're always in our hearts.

*Sending you warm Holiday wishes and the happiest of a New Year.*

From the Board and Employees of your Cooperative