

PIONEER



IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 3

What's Next in Energy Costs

PAGE 4

Reliable Rural Internet

PAGE 5

Air Source Heat Pump Rebates



The Pioneer Newsletter is the official Cooperative publication.
Meeker Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

EXPLORING CAREERS IN ENERGY: STUDENTS GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT MEEKER ENERGY

Through a community-led initiative organized by the Litchfield Kiwanis Club and FACS teacher Laura Hulterstrum, two local students recently spent the day job shadowing at Meeker Energy gaining firsthand insight into the people, technology, and teamwork that power their community.

The experience is part of a broader effort to connect students with real-world career opportunities close to home, helping them explore potential paths and build relationships with local employers. By stepping into the day-to-day operations of a cooperative utility, students gain a deeper understanding of how essential services are delivered and how they might contribute in the future.

The program pairs students with local businesses based on their interests. This year, Meeker Energy was proud to welcome Patrick Coblentz-Wies and Sam Grabow, both 8th graders at Litchfield Middle School.

During their visit, the students spent time in both the IT and line departments, exploring the wide range of roles that keep the cooperative running. 15-12-308 They were curious, engaged, and eager to see how their talents might one day support Meeker Energy and their community's energy needs.

Read more on page 2.



PATRICK'S EXPERIENCE IN IT AND NETWORK OPERATIONS

Patrick was introduced to Meeker Energy through a school project that involved applying for a job shadowing opportunity. What attracted him to the energy industry was its capacity to impact people's lives on a daily basis. Patrick had the chance to observe a variety of roles, including those in the Network Operations Center (NOC) and with the internal IT team. He even got a firsthand look at some of the equipment used to ensure smooth communication and operations within the company.

One of Patrick's standout moments was his tour of the server room. "Being around so much technology was both fascinating and overwhelming. I was shown how everything works and the importance of having backups in case something fails," Patrick shared. His experience with the company's teamwork and friendly culture left a lasting impression. "The people at Meeker Energy were welcoming and made me feel like part of the team," Patrick reflected.

After his job shadowing experience, Patrick is now considering a career in cybersecurity, a field that has always piqued his interest. "The more I learned, the more I realized how much I could do in this industry. I'd love to return one day and work in cybersecurity," he said.

SAM'S HANDS-ON FIELD EXPERIENCE

For Sam, the job shadow experience was more physically immersive. As the son of one of Meeker Energy's employees, he had a unique opportunity to work alongside his father, John Grabow, as well as Wyatt Shea and other team members in the field. Sam spent much of his time assisting with the installation of primary wire and helping to set up transformers and meters, a real-world introduction to the essential work that keeps communities powered.

Sam was particularly impressed by the practical skills he gained. "I learned a lot about how transformers work and got to help with the installation process," Sam noted. His enthusiasm was clear as he shared the excitement of setting up transformers and

working alongside people who took pride in their work. "The job is challenging, but it's rewarding. I like the idea of helping people and being part of something bigger," he added.

Sam's dad, John Grabow, said programs like this are an important part of Meeker Energy's values. "It's a way for students to see and experience what we do here. All the guys took time to explain each step and show Sam how the process works. It shows faith in our kids' futures and helps them see what's possible."

Sam's experience has influenced his future career aspirations, as he now dreams of following in his father's footsteps to become a foreman in the energy industry. "I think I'd like to be in line for a role like that. I love the idea of working outside and helping people get power back when they need it," Sam said.



MEEKER ENERGY'S COMMITMENT TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Meeker Energy's job shadow program is more than just an opportunity for students to observe; it's an investment in the future of the energy industry. By partnering with local schools and organizations like the Kiwanis Club, Meeker Energy is working to ensure the next generation is well-prepared for a range of careers within the Cooperative. The company's dedication to youth outreach and workforce development plays an essential role in helping students discover their passions while equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed.

Through these programs, Meeker Energy provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the industry, from the technical aspects of network operations to the on-the-ground work that powers communities. As Patrick and Sam's experiences show, these opportunities can inspire students to consider careers they may not have previously imagined, and in doing so, help shape the workforce of tomorrow.



**FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Energy before August 31, you will have \$10 credit to your account. When you call and verify your information is correct in our system, you will also receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.



LOOKING AHEAD: PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT IN ENERGY COSTS

At Meeker Energy, we work hard to plan ahead and to keep you informed. When we see changes coming that will impact our members, we believe in communicating early and openly.

Recently, we were notified by one of our wholesale power suppliers, Basin Electric, that a rate increase is likely coming. While we are still in the early stages of discussion and working hard to reduce the impact, we know enough to say this: a rate adjustment will likely take effect on January 1, 2026.

I know that's not the kind of news anyone wants to hear. But as your cooperative, we feel the importance to explain what's happening, what's driving it, and what we're doing to manage the impact because you're not just customers, you are member-owners.

Over the past several years, we've shared that electricity prices are projected to rise across the utility industry. That projection is now becoming reality. Like most electric cooperatives, Meeker Energy does not generate its own power, we purchase it from wholesale generation and transmission (G&T) providers. When those providers face rising costs, those increases are passed along to us, and ultimately to you as a member.

While the specific numbers for our 2026 rate adjustment are still being finalized, it's important to focus on why this shift is occurring. The answer lies in large-scale industry changes that are impacting electric utilities across the country:

- **Steady Load Growth:** As homes, businesses, and communities increase their reliance on electricity, demand continues to grow. This includes the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), and new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). Agricultural operations are also becoming more electrified, and even everyday conveniences like home charging stations and smart appliances are adding to the overall load. To meet this growing demand, our wholesale providers must invest in new generation capacity.
- **New Generation & Transmission Projects:** To support growing electricity demand, our wholesale providers are investing in new power plants, including natural gas facilities for on-demand generation. In addition, new high-voltage transmission lines are needed to carry electricity from where it's produced to where it's used. These large-scale infrastructure projects are complex, take years to permit and construct, and require billions of dollars in capital.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Much of the grid infrastructure in the U.S. was built decades ago. Aging substations,

transformers, and transmission lines are nearing the end of their operational life. Replacing and upgrading these critical components is necessary to avoid failures, maintain system safety, and ensure reliable delivery of power in all conditions.

- **Reliability & Reserve Requirements:** Grid reliability is now under greater scrutiny than ever before, especially following high-profile outages caused by severe weather and unexpected system strain. Utilities are now required to maintain higher reserve margins, a buffer of available generation capacity above projected demand. This helps prevent blackouts during peak usage or emergencies but requires significant investment in additional power supply, whether through market purchases or new construction.
- **Stricter Financial Benchmarks:** In today's lending environment, strong credit ratings are essential for power providers to access financing at competitive interest rates. To maintain those ratings, providers must meet higher margin and cash flow requirements, which means keeping adequate revenue above expenses. This financial stability helps ensure they can fund necessary upgrades and projects without dramatically increasing borrowing costs, which in turn helps keep long-term energy prices more stable.

These challenges are not unique to Meeker Energy, they're national in scale. But they will have local impact and we take that seriously.

We're currently working with Basin Electric and other partners to phase in any increases and avoid large, immediate jumps in bills. We're always looking internally to reduce costs and identify operational savings wherever possible.

You'll hear more from us as the final rates are confirmed. We'll share details through the newsletter, bill inserts, and our website. 25-33-116 We're also available anytime by phone or in person if you have questions or concerns.

For members who want help managing monthly bills, we encourage you to explore options like SmartHub usage tracking, energy management programs which offer a lower electric rate for qualified loads and energy efficiency rebates for homes, farms and businesses, all designed to give you more control over your energy use and costs.

Thank you for your continued trust.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson
CEO, Meeker Energy



WHY RELIABLE INTERNET MATTERS IN RURAL MINNESOTA

In today's world, high-speed internet isn't just a luxury, it's a necessity. From education and healthcare to running a business or connecting with family, reliable broadband impacts nearly every part of daily life. But for many rural Minnesotans, access to fast, dependable internet has lagged behind, until now.

Vibrant Broadband is helping bridge the gap by bringing powerful fiber internet to communities that have long been underserved. Whether you're managing a farm, working remotely, attending virtual classes, or streaming your favorite shows, Vibrant ensures you can stay connected without frustration.

Reliable internet in rural areas opens doors. Students can access online learning tools without buffering. Businesses can compete in a digital economy with confidence. Families can enjoy the same quality of service as those in urban centers, making rural living more viable and attractive than ever.

Vibrant's local roots and commitment to customer care set it apart. When you call for support, you're talking to someone right here in Minnesota. And because Vibrant is a division of Meeker Energy you know your service is backed by a trusted local provider that understands the needs of our region.

As technology continues to evolve, access to fast, reliable internet is no longer optional. 27-18-401 It's essential infrastructure and Vibrant Broadband is making sure rural Minnesota isn't left behind.

To see if service is available in your area or to learn more about packages, visit vibrantbroadband.com or call today.

No Gimmicks. Just Reliable Internet.

Honest people. Honest pricing.

Sign up before **August 29** and receive
\$35 off your second bill if you sign up for
a 200 Mbps or higher package.



**WILLIE WIREDHAND'S
ELECTRICITY FUN FACT**

Plants generate electrical signals in response to stimuli like light, touch, temperature, and injury. These signals regulate growth, development, and defense responses, helping plants adapt to their environment and react to potential threats such as pests or physical damage.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICE CLOSED

Meeker Energy offices will be closed Monday, September 1 in observance of Labor Day.

LOAD CONTROL EQUIPMENT UPDATES UNDERWAY

If you are enrolled in one of Meeker Energy's energy management programs, you may see electricians from Mid-Minnesota Electric of Litchfield on your property. We've contracted with them to update the load control equipment located outside your home, shop, barn, or other building.

All work will be done outdoors near the load control receiver and energy management meter. As a courtesy, the electrician will knock on your door before beginning. If no one answers, they will proceed with the update, which typically takes 15–20 minutes.

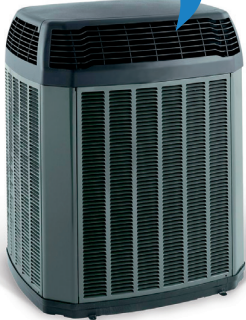
This project is expected to be completed by November 2025. Thank you for your cooperation!



Air Source Heat Pump Rebates

Anything
you can do, I
can do better!

Air Source
Heat Pump



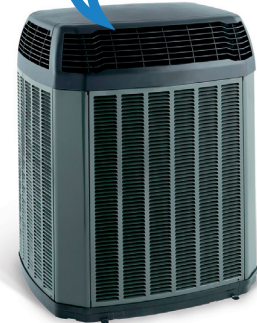
No
you can't!

Central Air
Conditioner



Yes
I can!

Air Source
Heat Pump



It's the best of both worlds. Air source heat pumps provide home cooling and supplemental heating with 72% less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.

Learn more about our rebates and programs at meeker.coop/programs

ASHP	Rebate
≥ 8.2 HSPF / 7.0 HSPF2	\$650
≥ 8.8 HSPF / 7.5 HSPF2	\$925
≥ 9.5 HSPF / 7.7 HSPF2	\$1,200

HSPF/HSPF2 is the Heating Seasonal Performance Factor. The higher the HSPF number, the more efficient the ASHP operates.



BERRIES ON A CLOUD

Submitted By: Amanda Peterson

INGREDIENTS

MERINGUE:

- 6 egg whites
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1¾ cups sugar

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups Cool Whip

Optional Topping:

- Fresh berries of your choice (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, etc.)

Filling:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened

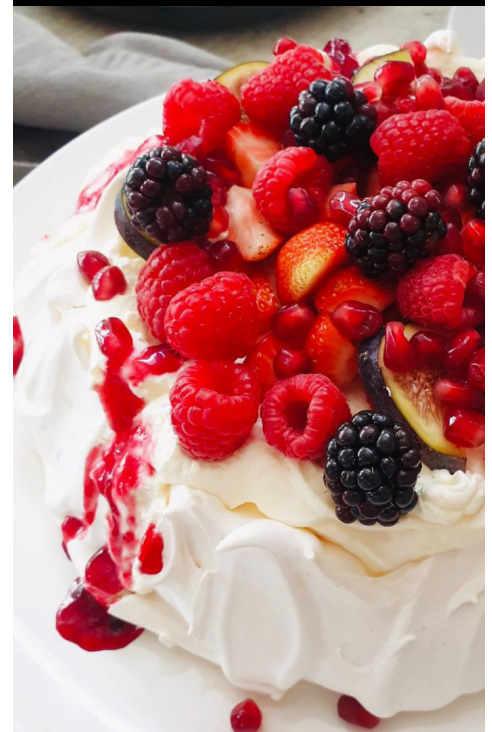
DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 275°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Beat egg whites until frothy, then gradually add salt, cream of tartar, and sugar. Continue beating until stiff peaks form. Spread into two equal circles on the pan and bake for 90 minutes. Turn off the oven and let meringue cool inside for 2 hours.

Just before serving, beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla until smooth. Fold in Cool Whip and spread over meringue. Top with fresh berries and serve immediately.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: August 31, 2025. Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Energy, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

FEATURED RECIPE



CONTACT US

320-693-3231 | Fax: 320-693-2980
1725 U.S. Hwy. 12 E, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355
www.meeker.coop | www.vibrantbroadband.com

CEO/General Manager: Luke Johnson
Contract Editor: Fuller Creative, LLC

FOLLOW US

Stay CURRENT and VIBRANT by following our Facebook pages

 /meekercoop

 /meekercoop

 /vibrantbroadband

 /vibrantbroadband

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Donnay, President — District 3

Luxemburg, Maine Prairie,
South Maine Prairie in Stearns;
Forest Prairie in Meeker

Paul Bugbee, Vice-President — District 1

Roseville, Irving in Kandiyohi;
Paynesville in Stearns;
Union Grove in Meeker

Randy Bryant, Treasurer — District 7

Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker;
Stockholm in Wright;
Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod

Karen Becker, Secretary — District 2

Eden Lake in Stearns;
Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

Barbara Ann Nelson — District 4

Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

Ben Beckman — District 5

Fairhaven in Stearns; Kokato, Southside,
French Lake in Wright; Dassel in Meeker

Neil Pearson — 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

Jerome Wosmek — District 8

Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

Jesse Turck — District 9

North Kingston, Kingston,
Forest City in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney

MORE NEWS & CLASSIFIEDS ONLINE

Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:

www.meeker.coop/news.

A SUMMER OF CONNECTION: MEEKER ENERGY IN THE COMMUNITY

This summer, Meeker Energy has been out in the community connecting with members through local parades and the 2025 Meeker County Fair.

We've already participated in parades in Litchfield, Paynesville, Eden Valley, and Atwater, and we're not done yet. 08-03-316 Look for us in Kimball on August 9 and Grove City on August 16. We've enjoyed seeing so many of you along the routes, handing out candy, and celebrating community spirit.



At the Meeker County Fair, Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband were in Commercial Building 2 from July 31 to August 3. Fairgoers stopped by to ask questions about electric service, internet options, rebates, and energy-saving programs. The weather was perfect, and it was great to see so many families enjoying the fair.

Thank you to everyone who visited us at the booth or cheered us on during a parade. We loved connecting with you and handing out fun giveaways!



AUGUST SPECIAL!

**\$100 OFF AN
ALARM.COM
VIDEO CAMERA!**


**Heartland
Security**

888.264.6380 | heartlandss.com