

PIONEER



IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 3

The Power of Gratitude

PAGE 4

Capital Credits

PAGE 5

Member Events



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

HONORED TO BE VOTED THE BEST OF MEEKER COUNTY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST, YOUR VOTES, AND YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

We're proud to share that Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband were recognized in three categories in this year's Best of Meeker County Awards: Best Internet Provider, Best Employer, and Best Customer Service.

This recognition means a lot to us because it comes directly from you: our members, subscribers, and neighbors. The Best of Meeker County Awards invite residents to nominate and vote for their favorite local businesses, people, and organizations. Categories range from dining and

entertainment to home services and technology, with results published each fall in a special section of The Litchfield Rail newspaper.

For us, these awards are more than titles, they're a reflection of the relationships we've built over time. They remind us why we do what we do every day: to serve you well, to listen, and to keep your homes and businesses connected.

For Vibrant Broadband, this marks the fourth consecutive year being voted Best Internet Provider in Meeker County. That recognition tells us our commitment to

Continued on page 2.



AWARDS CONTINUED...

delivering fast, reliable fiber internet is making a difference. We were among the first to bring widespread fiber to our region, and every step, from construction to installation to ongoing service, has been designed with our customers in mind.

Our team often hears from subscribers who share their experiences:

“Outstanding from the initial contact through the complete installation. Everyone was professional and informative,” one wrote.

Another said, “Your technicians showed up early, were friendly and professional, and we’re thrilled with the service.”

For Meeker Energy, being named Best Employer and Best in Customer Service is a true honor. We take great pride in our employees; the linemen who keep electricity flowing, the technicians who ensure your internet runs smoothly, and the account specialists who answer your calls with care. Every person on our team plays a role in creating the kind of service we’d want for our own families.

When someone stops by our office or calls with a question, we greet them with a friendly “hello” and make sure they’re heard. Sometimes the answer comes right away, and other times it means connecting them with one of our specialists. Either way, our goal is simple: to be helpful, responsive, and kind.

As a member-owned cooperative, we’re not just serving customers, we’re serving our neighbors. 28-27-206 We live, work, learn, and play right here in the same communities you do. That shared connection is what makes recognitions like this so meaningful.

We want to thank everyone who took the time to vote for us in this year’s Best of Meeker County Awards. Your support inspires us to keep improving, keep innovating, and keep putting people first.

From all of us at Meeker Energy and Vibrant Broadband, thank you for trusting us to serve you.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence, Ave, SW, STOP 9410 Washington, DC 20250-9410; or
- (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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ABOUT THE BEST OF MEEKER COUNTY AWARDS

Each year, The Litchfield Rail invites residents to nominate and vote for their favorite local businesses, people, and organizations across Meeker County. Categories include dining, entertainment, home services, retail, and more. Results are published each fall in a special “Best of Meeker County” edition celebrating local excellence and community pride.



THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

Reflecting on the values that drive your local, member-owned Cooperative

As another year draws to a close, I've been thinking a lot about gratitude. It's something we talk about often this time of year, but in a cooperative, it's more than a seasonal sentiment. It is part of who we are and how we operate. Gratitude shows up in the way we work together, care for our members, and support this community day after day.

On a personal level, I am especially grateful for my family's understanding and support. The work we do at Meeker Energy often extends beyond regular hours. It includes evening meetings, community events, and regional conversations that shape the future of rural power. My family knows that this work matters. Their encouragement reminds me why it is worth the time and effort. They believe in the mission of this cooperative as much as I do, and I am thankful to have them beside me in it.

Professionally, I am grateful for our members, their trust, participation, and pride in being part of Meeker Energy. Seeing so many of you come together to celebrate our 90th anniversary this year was a highlight. It reminded me how strong this community is and how deeply people care about its future. That sense of ownership and belonging is what makes the cooperative model so powerful.

There are moments throughout the year that remind me what local and member-owned truly means. One that stands out is our donation to the Meeker County Ag Society to help improve the horse barn at the fairgrounds. It may seem like a small thing, but it represents something much bigger. We are not just keeping the lights on. We are investing in the places and people that make this community home. That is the difference between simply providing electricity and powering a purpose.

I see gratitude lived out every day through the people who make this cooperative run. Our line workers head out in the middle of the night when storms roll through. Our member services team listen and solve problems with patience and care. Our operations and engineering staff spend countless hours maintaining and improving the systems that keep power reliable for thousands of homes and businesses. Their dedication and pride are unmatched. They do not look for recognition, but they deserve it.

I am proud of our employees not only for the work they do but for how they do it. They approach each day with integrity, teamwork, and heart. They put others first and take ownership of the results. They are the heartbeat of this cooperative, and I could not be more thankful for the team we have at Meeker Energy.

As we head into a new year, I am hopeful for the continued growth and strength of our cooperative family, our employees, our members, and the communities we serve. Every year brings new challenges, but also new opportunities to make a difference. I am thankful for your trust, your partnership, and the chance to keep building on the foundation that has guided Meeker Energy for 90 years.

Gratitude does not erase challenges, but it changes how we face them. It reminds us that we are not alone in this work, and that together we can keep building something strong for the future.

From all of us at Meeker Energy, thank you for your continued support and for being part of this cooperative family.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson

CEO, Meeker Energy



CAPITAL CREDITS: SHARING SUCCESS WITH OUR MEMBERS



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

At Meeker Energy, we believe in supporting lifelong learning and the bright futures of our members and their families. Two scholarship opportunities are now open for applications:

Basin Electric Power Cooperative Two \$1,250 College Scholarships

These scholarships are available to dependent children of Meeker Energy members or Vibrant Broadband subscribers who plan to attend a two- or four-year college, university, or technical school full-time in the fall of 2026. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and have not previously received this award. Application deadline: January 30, by close of business (4:30 p.m.).

Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Two \$1,000 Non-Traditional Student Scholarships

Funded by Operation Round Up®, these awards support adult learners, students returning to school five or more years after high school, who are pursuing a degree, certificate, or license.

Applicants must be a Meeker Energy member, employee, or Vibrant subscriber and have already completed at least one semester or quarter in their chosen program. Application deadline: February 5, by close of business (4:30 p.m.).

Applications for both scholarships will be available by December 1 at www.meeker.coop/ download-forms, at the Cooperative office, or by calling 320-693-3231.

Investing in education is one of the many ways Meeker Energy continues to power our community forward.

Meeker Energy is proud to continue its long-standing tradition of giving back to the members who power our community. The Board of Directors has approved the general retirement of \$1,114,928 in capital credits for 2025. This year's retirement includes payments to estates and former members, as well as current members who received electricity from the Co-op in 1996. It also includes credits from our power supplier dating back to that same year.

Capital credits are one of the many benefits of being a member of a cooperative. Unlike for-profit utilities, which are focused on generating revenue for shareholders, Meeker Energy operates on a not-for-profit basis.

This means any revenues collected beyond the cost of providing electricity are returned to our members, rather than to outside investors. Since its inception, Meeker Energy has returned more than \$24.6 million in capital credits to its members, reinforcing our commitment to local ownership and community investment.

What are Capital Credits?

As a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, any revenue collected that exceeds the cost of providing electricity is known as margins (or profit). 22-23-116 These margins are allocated to members as capital credits, helping fund the Co-op's operations, such as infrastructure maintenance and improvements. When the financial situation allows, the Co-op returns these capital credits to its members, as decided by the Board of Directors.

Current Members

If you're a current member eligible to receive capital credits, you will notice a credit applied directly to your December electric bill.

Former Members

Former members who are eligible will receive their share in the form of a check, also sent out in December. Checks are issued once your total capital credits reach \$25. If your credits are below that amount, they will accumulate until they meet the minimum threshold for payout in a future year.

Unclaimed Capital Credits

Each year we attempt to locate members who have moved without leaving a forwarding address. After seven years, if the credits remain unclaimed, the funds are donated to Operation Round Up®, our charitable program that supports local scholarships and community initiatives.

Want to see if you or someone you know has unclaimed credits? Visit our website at www.meeker.coop and navigate to the "Capital Credits" section under the "About Us" tab. If you recognize any names on the list, let us know so we can reunite them with their funds.

Making a Difference with Operation Round Up®

If you are entitled to receive capital credits this year, you can opt to donate all or a portion of your payout to Operation Round Up®, helping make a positive impact in our local communities.

For more information about unclaimed capital credits or to donate your payout, please reach out to Jammie at 320-693-3231.

Being a member-owner of Meeker Energy means more than just receiving reliable electricity; it's about sharing in the success of the Co-op and giving back to the community.



Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Energy before November 26, 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.



COFFEE ON THE CO-OP

Join us for “Coffee on the Co-op” this December!

Stop by from 9-11 a.m. to enjoy a cup of coffee, delicious treats, and great conversation. It’s the perfect way to connect with fellow members and stay updated on what’s happening at the Co-op.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

Queen Bee’s, Paynesville

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

Keek’s, Watkins

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11

Meeker Energy, Litchfield



**WILLIE WIREDHAND’S
ELECTRICITY FUN FACT**

Birds perched on power lines don’t get shocked because electricity follows the path of least resistance. With both feet on the same wire, there’s no voltage difference across their bodies. As a result, the electrical current continues flowing smoothly through the wire, completely bypassing the bird’s body.

MEMBER NEWS

HOLIDAY HOURS

The Meeker Energy office will be closed November 27-28, December 24-25, and January 1 for the Holidays.

SALES-TAX EXEMPTION

You may be exempt from state and local sales tax for your electricity during the heating season if your primary residential heat source is electricity. If more than 50% of the main heat source for a residence comes from purchased electricity, you are exempt from Minnesota and local sales tax during the months of November through April. All electricity used through the same meter, whether for heating purposes or not, is also exempt throughout this six-month period. The sales tax exemption form can be found online at meeker.coop/download-forms, or call 320-693-3231 to have a paper copy sent to you. We are updating our records so please submit a form even if you had previously done so. If you have changed your method of heating since filling out the form, please let us know.



ENTER THE 2025 COLORING CONTEST

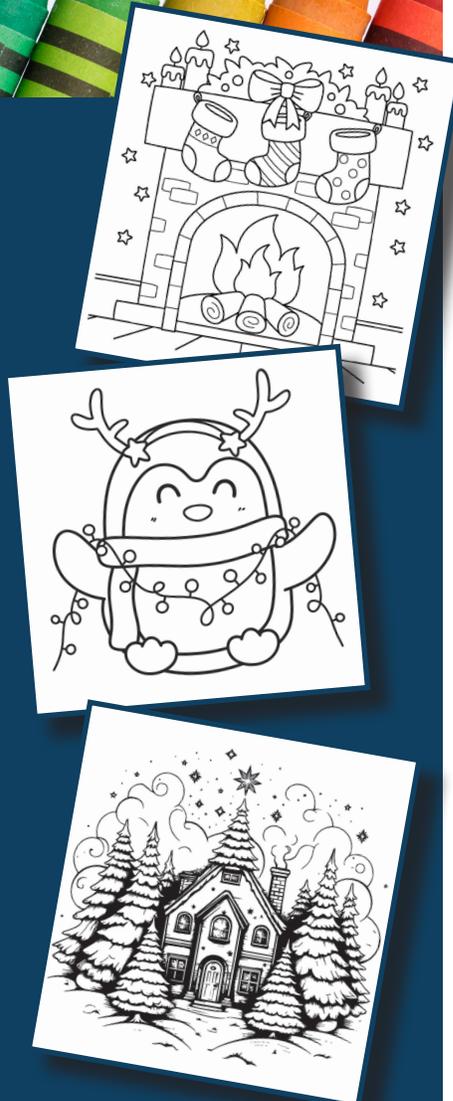
Meeker Energy’s 2025 Coloring Contest is here! Download the coloring pages from our website at www.meeker.coop/color25 or pick them up at the front counter in our office. There are two pages to choose from, and we will be selecting three winners from each age group.

Members attending Coffee on the Co-op will vote 35-16-103 on their favorite entries, and the artwork with the most votes will win. Each winner will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card, and their artwork will be featured in the Pioneer and on our website!

Be sure to submit your entries by the deadline, Tuesday, December 4. You can drop off your entry at the office or mail it to:

Meeker Energy
Attn: Coloring Contest
1725 U.S. Hwy. 12 E., Suite 100
Litchfield, MN 55355

We can’t wait to see your creativity!



STAYING SAFE DURING WINTER STORMS

Practical tips to protect your family, farm, and home when the power goes out.

When winter storms hit central Minnesota, power outages and electrical hazards can appear with little warning. Meeker Energy reminds members to take a few simple precautions to keep families, homes, and farms safe when the weather turns severe.

Heavy snow, ice, and wind can damage power lines or cause trees to fall onto them. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and stay far away. Keep children and pets clear, and report it to Meeker Energy immediately. Never attempt to move a downed line or anything in contact with it, such as tree branches or vehicles.

DURING A POWER OUTAGE:

- Turn off or unplug major appliances to prevent overloads when power returns.
- Use flashlights instead of candles to avoid fire hazards.
- Run generators outdoors only, at least 20 feet from doors and windows.
- Never connect a generator directly to home wiring unless a transfer switch is installed.
- Keep phones charged and check on neighbors, especially the elderly.

During extended outages, protect your pipes by allowing a small trickle of water to run and keep cabinet doors open around plumbing to let warm air circulate. If you need to travel, watch for broken poles or wires that may be hidden under snow.



After the storm, take time to inspect outdoor electrical equipment, like meters or service panels, for visible damage before turning anything back on.

Winter weather can be unpredictable, but a few minutes of preparation can make all the difference. Stay alert, stay connected, and stay safe with Meeker Energy.

ZUCCHINI MEATBALLS IN CREAM SAUCE

Submitted By: Rosalea Hoeft

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Meatballs: | • 1/3 cup dry bread crumbs | Sauce: |
| • 1 lb hamburger | • 1½ cups shredded zucchini | • 1 can cream of chicken soup |
| • 1 small onion, chopped | • ½ teaspoon pepper | • 1/3 cup sour cream |
| • 1 egg | • ¾ teaspoon salt | • 1/4 cup milk |
| | | • Dash of nutmeg |

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the meatballs: In a large bowl, combine hamburger, onion, egg, bread crumbs, zucchini, pepper, and salt. Mix well. Shape and cook: Form mixture into 24 meatballs and arrange them in a microwave-safe dish. Cover with a paper towel. Microwave on high for 6–7 minutes, or until the meat is set, rotating once halfway through. Drain off fat. Make the sauce: In a small bowl, combine cream of chicken soup, sour cream, milk, and nutmeg. Stir until smooth. Combine and heat: Pour the sauce over the cooked meatballs. Cover with waxed paper and microwave on high for 5–6 minutes, rotating twice, or until the sauce is hot and bubbly.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: November 26, 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

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

www.meeker.coop/news.



HOLIDAY ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

Keep the cheer bright and your energy use light.

The holidays are full of sparkle, but all that extra cooking, decorating, and entertaining can add up on your energy bill. Meeker Energy shares a few simple ways to celebrate efficiently without sacrificing the magic.

LIGHT SMARTER

- **Switch to LEDs.** LED holiday lights use up to 80% less energy and last years longer than traditional bulbs.
- **Use timers.** Set lights to turn off automatically late at night, no need to remember before bed.
- **Decorate naturally.** Add sparkle with reflective ornaments, mirrors, and candles instead of more strands of lights.

COOK EFFICIENTLY

- **Bake in batches.** Using a warm oven for multiple dishes saves both time and energy.
- **Keep the oven door closed.** Each peek drops the temperature by 25°F, making it work harder to recover.
- **Use slow cookers and microwaves.** They're great for side dishes and use less electricity than the oven.

STAY COZY

- **Seal drafts.** Check doors and windows for leaks, weatherstripping and draft stoppers make a big difference.
- **Lower the thermostat.** Turn it down a few degrees when guests fill the house or when you're baking.
- **Unplug idle décor.** Even when turned off, plugged-in devices draw small amounts of electricity.

This season, small changes add up to big savings. 24-30-201 Enjoy a warm, bright, and energy-efficient holiday with Meeker Energy, your partner in powering safe and comfortable homes all year long.



NOVEMBER SPECIAL!

Get one freeze or flood sensor
FREE

(with three-year monitoring agreement)



888.264.6380
heartlandss.com