

PIONEER



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

INSPIRING CURIOSITY THROUGH SCIENCE: ORU SUPPORTS GENERATION GENIUS

Meeker Energy's Operation Round Up® program proves how small contributions can create meaningful opportunities close to home. By voluntarily rounding up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar, participating Meeker Energy members and Vibrant Broadband subscribers help build a trust fund that supports local nonprofits, schools, community organizations, and educational initiatives.

Once a year funds are set aside for a grant opportunity for schools to support collaborative, cross departmental projects. One grant recipient is Kimball Elementary School, where Operation Round Up® funding helped second-grade students

access Generation Genius, an online learning platform used to support science instruction.

According to Kimball Elementary teacher Abigail Lorentz, Generation Genius offers engaging lessons written to meet state standards. Each lesson includes a video with demonstrations and explanations, written lesson plans, interactive experiments and explorations, quizzes, and vocabulary games. The platform includes lessons for kindergarten through eighth grade in math, science, and English language arts.

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GENERATION GENIUS CONTINUED...



Mrs. Lorentz's class along with two other classrooms benefitted from the Generation Genius program.

This year, Lorentz used Generation Genius with second-grade students in science.

"Many schools have invested in outdated, unengaging science curricula that lack excitement and substance for students to relate to," Lorentz said. "But with Generation Genius, students are engaged and excited, and there are more opportunities for them to relate to what they are seeing and how it is presented."

The Operation Round Up® grant allowed Kimball Elementary's second grade to purchase a one-year teacher license for Generation Genius. Through that license, students gained access to interactive Kahoot games and quizzes connected directly to the videos, lessons, and experiments. They also used text-based learning resources, music, vocabulary activities, and comprehension questions.

Lorentz said the program helps students stay connected to the main ideas throughout each lesson. Questions are built in before, during, and after the lesson, while supplemental text supports help students follow along with the videos and demonstrations.

The student response has been memorable.

"I absolutely love how my students sing the intro song along with the videos," Lorentz said. "It is just like being back in grade school, singing along to Bill Nye the Science Guy's video intro."

Students also enjoy the large-scale experiments featured through the program, including experiments that would not typically be possible in the classroom. 11-12-312 The interactive technology component gives students another way to participate in the lesson using their school devices.

For teachers, Generation Genius also provides practical planning support. Lorentz said the lessons are already aligned with Minnesota state science standards and include fully written lesson plans that are easy to follow.

"Other than the consumable materials, everything is done for you," Lorentz said.

For Meeker Energy members who participate in Operation Round Up®, Lorentz said the impact of those small monthly contributions is significant.

"What seems small for one can add up fast when many contribute," she said. "Your small contributions, when combined, make a big impact on our communities. Thank you."

Her message to members is simple:

"Thank you. Everyone is capable of changing the world, especially when we all do it together."

Since its launch in 1998, Meeker Energy's Operation Round Up® program has distributed more than \$1.1 million to local organizations, schools, and community initiatives throughout the Cooperative's service area. Each grant reflects the power of members working together, one rounded-up bill at a time.

Operation Round Up® proves that a few cents can go a long way. By rounding up their monthly electric bills, Meeker Energy members and Vibrant Broadband subscribers help fund local schools, nonprofits, and community projects, including hands-on learning tools like Generation Genius at Kimball Elementary.

Thank you to the members who participate. Together, your small contributions are creating meaningful opportunities close to home.



OPERATION ROUND UP: SMALL CHANGE, BIG LOCAL IMPACT

Through Operation Round Up®, Meeker Energy members and Vibrant Broadband subscribers help support local projects, programs, and organizations by rounding their bills up to the next dollar. For most participating members and subscribers, that means contributing less than \$1 per month, but together, those small donations make a meaningful difference. With about 84% of members and subscribers participating, the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust is able to gather and distribute an average of about \$60,000 each year.

Operation Round Up® grants are awarded to community projects and charitable efforts within Meeker Energy's service area, including fire departments, schools, youth and senior programs, community events, agricultural societies, and other local needs. The program is overseen by the Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Board, a volunteer group that reviews applications and awards funds three times each year.

The next grant application deadline is close of business on Thursday, July 2, 2026. Applications will be considered by the Trust Board in August.

To learn more about Operation Round Up®, review grant guidelines, or apply for funding, visit meeker.coop/operation-round-up.



NEW KIMBALL-AREA SUBSTATION WILL SUPPORT GROWTH AND LONG-TERM RELIABILITY

At Meeker Energy, reliability is never something we take for granted. It is the result of careful planning, ongoing investment, and a responsibility to look beyond today's needs and prepare for what our members will need in the years ahead.

One example of that planning is the proposed construction of a new substation north of Kimball.

The project is being driven by growth in the area and the need to maintain reliable electric service for Meeker Energy members. As the Cooperative continues to serve homes, farms, businesses, and expanding communities, the electric system must be able to keep pace. A new substation helps ensure the infrastructure is in place not only for today's members, but for future growth as well.

Substations play an important role in the electric system. They help move electricity from the transmission system to the local distribution lines that serve members. As electric use grows in a specific area, a substation can help support capacity, improve system strength, and maintain reliable service during periods of higher demand.

To support the new Kimball-area substation, Great River Energy, one of Meeker Energy's wholesale power providers, will construct a new 115-kilovolt transmission line into the area. This line is considered local transmission infrastructure and is being built specifically to serve Meeker Energy members.

That distinction is important. The Great River Energy transmission line connected to the new substation is different from the Xcel Energy transmission line planned through portions of the Meeker Energy service area. Meeker Energy will not receive electricity from the Xcel line. Instead, that line is designed to move energy from renewable generation resources in the southwest part of Minnesota to Becker.

The Kimball-area project is different because it is directly tied to local service needs.

"Reliability doesn't just happen on its own," Meeker Energy CEO Luke Johnson shared during the Meeker Energy's annual meeting. "It requires planning, investment, and long-term thinking."

That long-term thinking is becoming even more important as the electric industry changes. Across the region, the

grid is being transformed at the same time demand for electricity continues to grow. New generation resources, new transmission projects, replacement infrastructure, and additional infrastructure for growth are all placing new demands on the electric system.

At the same time, expectations for reliability remain high. Members depend on electricity for heating and cooling, business operations, farm equipment, medical devices, communication, and daily life. During extreme weather events, such as the Polar Vortex earlier this year, demand for electricity can rise quickly, placing additional pressure on the grid.

Those are the moments when reliable infrastructure matters most.

For local Cooperatives like Meeker Energy, preparing for the future means balancing reliability, affordability, and responsible investment. Infrastructure projects require planning and resources, but delaying needed improvements can create greater challenges later. The new substation north of Kimball is one way Meeker Energy is working to stay ahead of local growth and make sure the system remains strong for the members it serves.

The project also reflects the Cooperative's duty to serve. As new homes, businesses, and electric needs develop within the service area, Meeker Energy must be prepared to provide safe, reliable power. That responsibility has guided the Cooperative for nearly 91 years and continues to shape decisions today.

While the electric industry is facing significant change, the purpose of the Cooperative remains steady: to serve members well, plan responsibly, and make decisions with the long-term interests of the Cooperative and its members at the center.

The new Kimball-area substation is more than an infrastructure project. It is an investment in reliability, local growth, and the future of the communities Meeker Energy serves.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson

CEO, Meeker Energy

MEMBERS GATHER TO CELEBRATE, CONNECT, AND LOOK AHEAD



Meeker Energy members and Vibrant Broadband subscribers gathered Wednesday, May 20, at Meeker Energy Headquarters for the Cooperative's 2026 Annual Meeting and Member & Subscriber Appreciation Event. The evening brought together more than 1,200 attendees for Cooperative business, community connection, educational displays, family activities, and a shared celebration of Meeker Energy's 91 years of service.

As a member-owned cooperative, Meeker Energy's Annual Meeting is an important opportunity for members to take part in the governance of their Cooperative. During the business meeting, members received reports from Cooperative leadership and member committees, reviewed updates from the past year, and took action on important business items.

One of the key items of business was the approval of updates to Meeker Energy's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. These governing documents help guide how the Cooperative operates and how decisions are made on behalf of members. The approved updates help ensure the documents remain current, clear, and aligned with the Cooperative's services and member needs today.

Members also participated in director elections. Paul Bugbee, Karen Becker, and Neil Pearson were each re-elected to serve three-year terms on the Meeker Energy Board of Directors. Their continued service helps support the Cooperative's mission of providing reliable service, strong local leadership, and long-term value for members and subscribers.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Member & Subscriber Appreciation Event offered a come-and-go evening filled with food, learning, and fun. More than 1,200 meals were served, featuring Wattenhofer grilled pork chops alongside potato salad, baked beans, chips, and cookies from Any Thyme Catering.

Throughout the event, attendees had the opportunity to visit educational and vendor displays highlighting programs, services, and new technologies. Displays included electric yard tools and equipment, electric bikes, Heartland Security Services, and demonstrations featuring artificial intelligence and 3-D printing. Bingo also returned by popular demand, giving members another way to enjoy the evening and connect with others.

Families were a big part of the celebration, too. Kids enjoyed bounce houses, a petting zoo, and the chance to take part in the fun throughout the evening.

Thank you to everyone who attended, participated, asked questions, visited displays, and helped make the event a success. 08-03-403 Meeker Energy is built on the strength of its members and subscribers, and we are grateful for the opportunity to gather, celebrate, and continue working together for the future of our Cooperative.



VIEW MORE PHOTOS

www.facebook.com/meekercoop



Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Energy before June 30, 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.

IS AN AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP RIGHT FOR YOUR HOME?

An air source heat pump is an efficient way to heat and cool your home with one system. Instead of creating heat, it moves heat. In the summer, it moves warm air out of your home. In the winter, it pulls heat from the outdoor air and brings it inside.



Why consider one?

- Provides both heating and cooling
- Helps improve year-round comfort
- Uses energy efficiently
- Can help lower overall energy use
- Works well with many existing heating systems
- May qualify for programs or rebates

Air source heat pumps can be a smart option if you are replacing older equipment, finishing a garage or addition, or looking for a more efficient way to stay comfortable. They can also be paired with a backup heating source for extra support during Minnesota's coldest days.

Want to learn more? Visit www.meeker.coop/programs to explore rebates for air source heat pumps, programs, and energy-saving opportunities. You can also visit the Minnesota Air Source Heat Pump Collaborative at www.mnashp.org.



Just like highways, the electric grid has a daily "rush hour." In early summer, electricity use often climbs between 4 and 8 p.m. as people return home, cook dinner, do laundry, charge devices, and turn on cooling systems. 37-18-301 Utilities plan carefully for these peaks to keep power reliable when demand is highest.

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICE CLOSED

Meeker Energy offices will be closed on Friday, July 3 in observance of Independence Day.



STAY INFORMED DURING AN OUTAGE

Want faster updates when the power goes out?

Sign up for Meeker Energy's outage text message notifications. It is a simple way to receive important outage information right on your phone, so you can stay informed when service is interrupted.

Visit meeker.coop/outage-notification to learn more and sign up.



**GO ELECTRIC.
SAVE ENERGY.
WIN \$250.**

Join one of Meeker Energy's Energy Management Programs for a chance to win a \$250 VISA® Gift Card.

When you sign up for an eligible electric load, you'll be entered into a quarterly drawing, four chances in 2026 to win, while enjoying lower electric rates on qualifying equipment.

WATT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- Lower electric rates on electric water heaters, electric heat, electric vehicle charger, or heat pumps
- A chance to win \$250 just for participating plus you save money every month!

HOW TO QUALIFY:

- Enroll in an Energy Management Program (new or additional)
- Replacement (10 years or older) of existing heating/cooling equipment on energy management
- You will be placed in the drawing for the quarter when installation is complete

DRAWING WILL BE AFTER EACH QUARTER IN 2026

To enroll or if you have questions, please call 320-693-3231 and ask to speak to the Energy Services Department.

CONTACT US

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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.

STATE FAIR BUS TRIP

AUGUST 27, 2026 | \$45 PER PERSON



Experience the Great Minnesota Get-Together hassle-free! Join Meeker Energy on a luxury motorcoach trip to the Minnesota State Fair on Thursday, August 27, 2026.

Departing from Meeker Energy at 7:30 a.m., the motorcoach will take you to the fair, where you'll enjoy about seven hours of exploration and fun before departing at 4:30 p.m. The \$45 price includes round-trip transportation, fair admission, and beverages on the bus. Activities, snacks, and meals inside the fair are on your own.

While you're there, don't miss:

- Exploring the Agriculture Horticulture Building – See impressive displays of giant pumpkins, crop art, flowers, and award-winning produce.
- Catching a Free Concert – Enjoy live performances on outdoor stages throughout the fairgrounds, featuring a wide variety of music and entertainment.
- Visiting the Butter Sculptures – Stop by the Dairy Building to see Princess Kay and her court carved into 90-pound blocks of butter.
- Sampling Iconic Fair Foods – Treat your tastebuds to Minnesota State Fair favorites like cheese curds, Sweet Martha's Cookies, corn dogs, and more.

Seating is limited and filled on a first-come, first-served basis until the bus is full. Tour participants must have a 11-17-301 cell phone and provide their number before the bus leaves Litchfield.



Skip the parking headaches and ride with Meeker Energy to the MN State Fair for a day of food, fun, and festivities. Scan the QR code or call 320-693-3231 to sign up!

Home security to help protect what matters



Most break-ins start at the door. Heartland Security door sensors detect entry instantly. Connect them with fire, water, and life-safety protection in one system.



Contact us to help secure your home.

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