

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC

P.O. Box 207

22534 State Highway 86
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
www.northwesternrec.com

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Main Access Number

1-800-352-0014

Emergencies/Outages

1-800-352-0014

FAX

814-398-8064

Office Hours

Monday through Friday

7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Amy Wellington, Editor

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From the President & CEO



Giving back to our community

By Bill Buchanan

OVER THE years, you've probably heard or read about Northwestern REC's concern for our community. This is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. We've always taken this mission and responsibility to heart. It's who we are as a co-op.

Over the past few months, like so many of you, we've risen to meet new challenges and strengthen the safety net for our community, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've made numerous adjustments to programs and operations to maintain business continuity while staying focused on the bigger mission of helping our consumer-members during this turbulent time.

Now, with the holidays fast approaching, these recent events have made me pause and think about the role we play in our community. While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, the members we serve, we have a greater mission: to be a catalyst for good.

You're probably aware of our Operation Round-Up program, where we take donations from generous members like you who have "rounded up" the amount due on their electric bill to help our most vulnerable neighbors pay their bills. Or our Youth Tour program, where we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for a weeklong immersion to experience democracy in action.

We also have a strong commitment

to safety — not just for our employees, but for our community as well. We visit schools to teach children of all ages how to stay safe around electricity. With our new mobile hot wire safety demo, we hold safety demonstrations at community meetings and other gatherings.

Northwestern REC invests in the economic development of the community through an active role in our local chamber of commerce. We've also combined efforts with the local planning commission to secure grant monies for "Main Street" improvements in downtown Cambridge Springs and Titusville through our Rural Rocks initiative.

You'll see our employees serving on local boards, coaching youth sports, volunteering at charitable events or simply lending a hand. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is — after all, without you, the co-op wouldn't exist.

We know that our core job is to keep the lights on, but our passion is our community. Because we live and work here, too, and we want to make it a better place for all.

If there's anything we can do to help you, whether providing energy-saving advice or payment plan options during these difficult times, please reach out to us at 1-800-352-0014.

Concern for community is the heart and soul of who we are. And no matter what the future brings, you can count on your electric co-op to care about you. 

Need Help? Don't Know Where to Turn?



Call 211
Free, confidential
info & referral

**24/7
365**

DIAL 2-1-1
or visit **PA211NW.org**

FIND HELP. GET CONNECTED.

2-1-1 connects you to information about:
 Aging Services • Child & Youth Services
 Counseling • Education/Training • Food/Shelter/Clothing
 Health Services • Parenting • Support Groups
 Substance Abuse • and much more!



Grant money is available to help pay electric bills, but no one is applying

By Amy Wellington, *Manager of Communications*

YES, you read that correctly. Despite our efforts to get the word out regarding the availability of special funds designated to help keep electric bills current, very few people are taking advantage of the opportunity. And we are not sure why.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Northwestern REC stopped all service disconnections for non-payment. The co-op has also waived late penalties during this time. This virus has wreaked such havoc for so many of us, and we want to help in any way we possibly can.

This temporary halt to disconnections and waived penalties will eventually come to an end, just like the virus. Members who haven't been able to keep up with their electric bills are going to be facing huge dollar amounts for many months' worth of electric consumption and possible disconnection. This may or may not apply to you, but regardless, please read on.

We are truly here to help. First and foremost, if you are struggling to pay any of your bills, 2-1-1 is a service that can connect you with valuable resources within your community. Simply call/text 2-1-1 or visit pa211nw.org for more information. This free service is pow-

ered by the United Way and provides information for a wide range of topics, from health to paying utility bills.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps

our website, NorthwesternREC.com, or at your local assistance office, such as the United Way of Venango County, the United Way of Western Crawford County, or your local Associated Charities.

LIHEAP benefits open Nov. 2, 2020, and will close April 9, 2021. If you qualify for these grants, please apply. All information remains completely confidential.

Since the 1980s, Northwestern REC has offered grants through the Member-to-Member (M2M) program. Funds for this program come from member donations, our annual M2M golf outing and other events, as well as donations from the employees of Northwestern REC. In 2020, the co-op applied for and received community grants for M2M from the United Way of Venango County and the Erie Community Foundation. Special COVID-19 monies were also deposited into the M2M fund.

Grants are available, we just need you to apply. One member wrote to us regarding her M2M grant, "My husband was laid off the same week I gave birth to our son. Money was very tight, and we couldn't keep up. Member-to-Member helped us through those tough months until my husband found another job."

Here are the LIHEAP income requirements for 2020-2021

Household Size	Income Limit
1	\$19,140
2	\$25,860
3	\$32,580
4	\$39,300
5	\$46,020
6	\$52,740
7	\$59,460
8	\$66,180
9	\$72,900
10	\$79,620
For every additional person, add \$6,720	

keep families safe and healthy through assistance with energy costs. This includes electric bills. You do have to qualify for LIHEAP grants, which include cash and crisis benefits. Grants range from \$200 to \$1,000, depending on household size, income and heating fuel type. You can apply online via

Following the LIHEAP guidelines, members qualify for M2M funds based on income levels. The co-op has established a website for the M2M program, M2MFund.org, where you can find more information regarding the M2M program, as well as make a referral for someone you know to receive a grant. Qualifying members can receive up to \$300 in M2M grants per calendar year. Simply call Member Services at 1-800-352-0014 for more information.

Perhaps you won't qualify for either LIHEAP or M2M grants, but you are still struggling to pay your bills. There are other ways we can help.

Budget billing is available to members with electric bills that fluctuate significantly during the heating season. This option is based on previous electric use and spreads monthly electric bills evenly over one year.

The co-op courtesy plan offers extended due dates for disabled or senior citizens. It is also possible to request a new monthly due date if you are having difficulty meeting the one you have now.

Northwestern's PrePay program can

also be a valuable tool to regulating your monthly electric costs. With PrePay, you pay for electricity before you use it. When your meter gets to a certain low level, you'll receive a

“Money was very tight, and we couldn't keep up. Member-to-Member helped us through those tough months until my husband found another job.”

notification to add more dollars to your account. You can add as much or as little as you want.

There are certain guidelines that must be met prior to enrolling in PrePay. For instance, members with outstanding balances are not able to enroll in PrePay until that balance hits zero. Members are also required to begin the PrePay program with a \$30 credit balance.

The benefit to the PrePay program is that you, the member, are able to closely monitor and control how much or how little electricity you use each

month. Questions regarding the PrePay program can be referred to the Member Services department at 1-800-352-0014, or email NorthwesternRECMemberServices@northwesternrec.com.

To those of you who have been able to keep your electric bills current and want to help in some way, your generosity would be greatly appreciated.

If you know someone who needs a little help on their electric bill, give us a call or download the gift certificate form from our website. You can pay any dollar amount toward the bill. A notice will be mailed to the member, but

your gift can remain anonymous if you so choose.

Other giving opportunities include donating to the M2M fund, either through direct donations, Operation RoundUp or by returning your yearly capital credits check. Please consider giving to the M2M fund.

Due to the ongoing effects of COVID-19, we are facing a record number of accounts with high past due balances. Member-to-Member is a hand up, not a hand out. Call Member Services at 1-800-352-0014 or visit us online at NorthwesternREC.com. 



Your fellow co-op members, the employees and directors of Northwestern REC have donated to this fund to help struggling members keep their monthly electric bills paid.

To apply, call Northwestern REC at 1-800-352-0014 or visit M2MFund.org for a referral to your county's participating agency.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

Crawford & Erie Counties:

Western: Center for Family Services, 814-337-8450
Eastern: Associated Charities, 814-827-6613

Venango & Forest Counties:

United Way of Venango County, 814-676-6545

Warren County:

Associated Charities, 814-827-6613

Mercer County:

Center for Family Services, 814-337-8450

M2M is a hand up, not a hand out.

Find great local discounts with NEW Co-op Connections program

RECEIVE 50% OFF at J.C. Penney's Portraits in Erie. Or receive 20% off at Harbor Freight Tools in Oil City or Erie. Those are only two of the many new deals you can receive using the new and improved Co-op Connections program.

As a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Northwestern REC members and friends can find new local and national deals at Connections.coop. Many vendors offer multiple discounts, too! For instance, you can find three discount offers for Monroe Auto Service and Tire Centers in Meadville, Edinboro, or Erie.

You may recall the Co-op Connections card and key fob Northwestern REC sent to you several years ago. But even if you don't, or you can't find your card, don't worry. You don't need the card to receive these great deals. However, in order to receive pharmacy, dental and pet services discounts, below you will find images of the new Co-op Connections Card for Northwestern REC members.

The Co-op Connections Program has expanded beyond the card. You can find all of the new discounts online at Connections.coop. There is also a Co-op Connections app for you to download to your smartphone. Many of the new discounts are available by downloading and/or printing the coupons found at the Co-op Connections website. You do have to create a login to find your local deals.

To the right is this month's featured Co-op Connections Deal. 🌞

Dunham's Sports

18977 Park Avenue Plaza, Meadville PA 16335

25% OFF

25% off the regular price of one Athletic, Casual, Licensed Team (NCAA, MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL, High School) APPAREL ITEM*

Print Deal

at Connections.coop

Dollar Value: \$10.00 / Expiration: 12/31/2020

10% OFF

10% off entire regular priced purchase*

Print Deal



Available on your mobile app

at Connections.coop

Dollar Value: \$10.00 / Expiration: 12/31/2021

20% OFF

20% Off the regular price of one ITEM*

Print Deal

at Connections.coop

Dollar Value: \$10.00 / Expiration: 12/31/2020

Co-op Connections® Card



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In case of a power outage, log into SmarHub on your mobile device or call **800-352-0014, option 1** to report outages

Learn about program details & log into your electric account **NorthwesternREC.com**

UHS **CHIROPRACTIC** **COAST TO COAST**
 HumanaDental ACCESS
 Provider or questions, call **800-800-7616** or visit **HealthySavings.coop**

nbRx Group # **2203PA03**
 Pet Rx Group# **PET2203PA03**
 Member# **142407524**
 Bin# 022105 | PCN# 7284

Pharmacies: For additional information or assistance please call the Help Desk at 877-640-7912. For pet medications, use the Pet Rx Group ID.
CARD IS NOT INSURANCE. Cannot be used (1) by persons covered by state- or federal-funded programs with certain medications, even if processed as a cash-paying patient or (2) with any insurance benefit or copay assistance programs. You are responsible for the cost of prescriptions when using the card. Discounts vary and restrictions and terms apply. See oprice.newbenefits.com for the full terms and conditions Administrator: New Benefits Rx, Dallas, TX.

Four ways to save energy in the kitchen

AH, THE KITCHEN. It's undeniably one of the most-loved rooms in our homes. It's where we gather with family and friends for our favorite meals and memories. But like most of us, you probably aren't thinking about saving energy when you're planning that perfect dish. Here are four ways you can save energy in the kitchen with minimal effort.

When possible, cook with smaller appliances. Using smaller kitchen appliances, like slow cookers, toaster ovens and convection ovens is more energy efficient than using your large stove or oven. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a toaster or convection oven uses one-third to one-half as much energy as a full-sized oven.

Unplug appliances that draw phantom energy load. Halloween may be over, but it's possible you have energy vampires in your kitchen — these are the appliances that draw energy even when they're not in use, like coffee makers, microwaves and toaster ovens. The Department of Energy has estimated that one home's energy vampires left plugged in year-round can add up to \$100-\$200 in wasted energy costs. Unplug them when they're not in use, or better yet, use a power strip for convenient control.

Help large appliances work less. There are small ways you can help your larger kitchen appliances run



more efficiently. For example, keep range-top burners clean from spills and fallen foods so they'll reflect heat better. When it's time to put leftovers in the refrigerator, make sure the food is covered, and allow it to cool down first. That way, the fridge doesn't have to work harder to cool warm food.

Use your dishwasher efficiently. Only run full loads and avoid using the "rinse hold" function on your machine for just a few dirty dishes; it uses 3-7 gallons of hot water each use. You can also save energy by letting your dishes air

dry. If your dishwasher doesn't have an automatic air-dry switch, simply turn it off after the final rinse and prop the door open so the dishes will dry faster.

Bonus tip: The best way to save energy is to not use it. Try a tasty, no-bake dessert recipe. Your sweet tooth (and energy bill!) will thank you.

By slightly adjusting a few of your habits in the kitchen, you'll be well on your way to energy savings. Visit us online at NorthwesternREC.com to learn about additional ways you can save energy and money at home. ☀

MORE SAVINGS, MORE TURKEY.

The one card that does it all.

Connections.coop

Coop Connections' Card
Tochotone Energy Cooperatives