

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

SPARKS

October 2026



A PATCH OF PARADISE

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SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Jennifer Erickson, Graphic Artist

October 2026
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Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

**Outages:
800-788-7784**

On the cover: The sights and sounds of autumn are on full display at Patch on the Point near East Grand Forks, Minnesota.



The cooperative value

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

Your cooperative conducts surveys periodically to ensure we are serving you in the best manner possible and also to identify any areas that may need improvement.

Last month, we published the overall results of our June member satisfaction survey. That survey resulted in an overall American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 83, putting us above the average of our peers across the electric industry as a whole.

While that is gratifying, one area I found interesting that showed room for improvement was in the area of how you identify yourselves as part of Red River Valley Co-op Power.

Fifty-eight percent of our survey respondents identified themselves as a member-owner of Red River Valley Co-op Power. While that is higher than the benchmark for cooperatives, it tells me it is an area where we can do better.

Do you know that as a member of your cooperative you actually are a part-owner of Red River Valley Co-op Power and have a representative seat at the table where decisions are made?

You elect six directors (generally two per year) to act in the best interests of the cooperative and to provide oversight in the governance and fiduciary responsibilities of your cooperative. Not many other companies provide you with a direct line to make your voice heard.

Did you know that we are a not-for-profit?

Eventually, all our operating margins are returned back to you after being reinvested in the cooperative

for reliability purposes. To date, more than \$11.6 million has been returned to the membership.

Did you know that your cooperative invests substantial sums of dollars into local communities, mainly through scholarships to support our youth?

To date, more than \$342,000 has been given to area schools as youth scholarships. After seven years, unclaimed capital credits are donated to school scholarship funds as a way of investing in the future and vibrancy of local communities.

Did you know that electric cooperatives form a partnership of mutual aid to help others in need when a severe storm strikes?

We have been on both ends of that partnership, and it feels good to receive help and help when called upon.

Did you know that your employees work hard to obtain grant funding and low-interest loans to keep the reliability of the electrical distribution system at high levels?

In the last two years alone, your cooperative has been awarded \$1.4 million in grants to improve reliability on electric infrastructure that benefits 1,054 of our cooperative members. We do that to stretch your dollar further, not to benefit far away investors.

This month is Co-op Month, and as we near our 90th year of existence, I am grateful to work for an organization that has clear-cut goals and a defined compass – pointing to you, the member-owners of Red River Valley Co-op Power. That is a distinction worth celebrating.

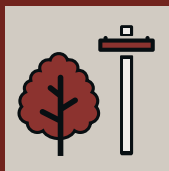
WATCH THE WIRES HOME FIRE PREVENTION

Your home is one of your greatest treasures, filled with comfort and memories. The last thing you want is for fire to burn it all away. We've assembled a short list of fire prevention tips (electrical and otherwise) to help ensure your home remains a safe oasis.



EXTERIOR FIRE PREVENTION

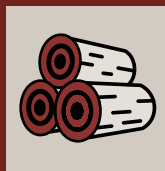
Don't plant shrubs or trees near electrical infrastructure like power lines or transformer boxes. If they grow into the equipment, the contact could spark a fire.



- If a tree is growing close to a power line, don't trim it yourself – call the electric cooperative.

When it comes to outdoor fires, offense is your best defense. Prep your lawn and home to be inhospitable to embers that may come from neighbors or wildfires.

- Keep grass mowed, remove dead plants, and trim shrubs and trees away from the house.



- Clear the roof and gutters of debris.
- Keep combustible materials like firewood, propane tanks and mulch piles away from the house.

INTERIOR FIRE PREVENTION

The easiest way to prevent fire inside the home is to remember electrical safety.



- Don't overload outlets or power strips. High-wattage appliances like space heaters and air conditioners should be plugged directly into the wall outlet.
- Replace damaged cords and appliances immediately.
- If you notice flickering lights, buzzing noises or warm outlets, call an electrician. You could have faulty wiring.



Beyond electrical safety, there are other steps you can take to prevent indoor fires.



- Never leave cooking food unattended.
- Test your smoke alarms every month.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from furniture and combustible materials.
- Clean the lint filter of your clothes dryer after each load, and inspect and clean the vent system regularly.
- Keep working fire extinguishers on every floor. Know how to use them.

A PATCH OF PARADISE

AT PATCH ON THE POINT, THE VETTER FAMILY TURNS ITS EAST GRAND FORKS FRONT YARD INTO A HAND-BUILT FALL TRADITION.

Before you notice the horses, the towering slide or the petting zoo, you see the pumpkins.

They are everywhere.

Big orange pumpkins. Tiny pumpkins. Gourds in shades of green, yellow and cream. Some are smooth and perfectly shaped, while others are warty, twisted and wonderfully unique. They spill across Patch on the Point near East Grand Forks, adding color and texture to a landscape buzzing with families, animals and the sights and sounds of fall.

And just beyond it all is Kristen and Clayton Vetter's home. Every fall, the Vettters don't simply open a business. They open their front yard.

"We're really welcoming people to our home," Kristen said.

Kristen grew up on the property with horses, sharing the passion of her mother, who inspired its name: Point Paradise. After her mother passed away, Kristen kept the name. She and Clayton bought the property in 2009 and launched Point Paradise Stables, a horse-drawn carriage business.

The couple provides carriage and sleigh rides throughout the year, traveling to weddings, celebrations and community events. As the business grew, the Vettters began asking themselves a question: What if they brought people to the horses instead?

Patch on the Point opened in 2018, building on something Clayton and Kristen had already seen firsthand. Years earlier, their oldest daughter's kindergarten class

Clayton and
Kristen Vetter



visited the farm, where the children spent hours simply brushing cows and horses. For the Vettters, who grew up around animals, it was ordinary. For many of the children, it was anything but.

"They would just brush and brush and brush because they had the opportunity," Clayton recalled. "People are really starving for that kind of an experience and to be around animals."

"We really just want to get people back to nature," Kristen added. "We want them to have some real memories with their family and spend some time away from their phones."

Today, visitors can explore trails, take pony and wagon rides, visit the petting zoo, play games or simply wander. Some families spread out a blanket and stay for hours.





BUILT BY HAND

Nearly everything at Patch on the Point carries the Vettters' personal touch. Kristen is usually the one dreaming up the next attraction. Clayton, a welder by trade, figures out how to build it.

"I'm the idea factory and he's a magic maker," Kristen said with a laugh.

It takes the whole family to bring those ideas to life. Kristen and Clayton both work full-time jobs, their teenage daughters help,

and Kristen's father remains part of the operation. Friends and others from across the community pitch in along the way.

The pumpkins, of course, remain at the heart of it all. The Vettters grow about 15,000 to 20,000 pounds themselves each year, focusing on gourds, squash and unusual varieties. Kristen and the kids tend a roughly three-acre patch, while many traditional orange pumpkins come from other

small Minnesota growers. Altogether, Patch on the Point typically moves about 70,000 pounds of pumpkins each season.

But what the Vettters have built goes well beyond pumpkins.

"People tell us that we're part of their family traditions," Kristen said. "We never really think about it that way. We're in so many people's pictures and memories for years and years and years."



IS YOUR OFF-PEAK
HEATING SYSTEM

READY FOR WINTER?

Since weather conditions and future wholesale power market prices make the amount of load control hours hard to predict, all our off-peak members are encouraged to have a reliable, automatic dual heating system in place and ready to use.

To ensure your total comfort this winter, consider the following questions about your backup heating system:

1. Is the system sized to heat your entire home or business?
2. Does it maintain an adequate comfort level?
3. Is it reliable?
4. Is it fully automatic?

Check current fuel prices and be sure to fill your propane or fuel oil tank. Also, make sure your tank is large enough to hold an adequate supply. Remember, prices typically rise as demand increases during the heating season.

Our member services department is glad to answer any off-peak questions you may have.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE FUNDING AVAILABLE

TO HELP LOCAL HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS PAY THEIR ELECTRIC BILLS

Winter is right around the corner. Members who meet income guidelines and have trouble paying their electric bills are encouraged to apply for the Energy Assistance Program by contacting their local energy assistance service provider. If you aren't sure where to begin, you can contact Red River Valley Co-op Power for additional guidance on how to get started.

Household income must be at 50% or lower than the state median income to qualify. Grants up to \$1,400 to help homeowners or renters pay their electrical bills plus assistance for past-due energy bills are available. The eligibility is based on the past month of income.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Funding is limited and administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Households apply at their local Energy Assistance Program service provider.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	1 MONTH MAX. INCOME
1	\$3,205
2	\$4,191
3	\$5,177
4	\$6,164
5	\$7,150
6	\$8,136

- Clay County – Contact West Central Minnesota Communities Action at **1-800-492-4805** or go online to <https://www.wcmca.org/programs/energy-assistance-program/>.
- Norman and Polk counties – Contact Tri-Valley Opportunity Council at **218-281-9080** or go online to tvoc.org.

If you have questions or need help contacting these agencies, please call Red River Valley Co-op Power at 218-456-2139.

SNUGGLE *up to savings*

An air-source heat pump and/or a modulating plenum heater is a great way to achieve comfort and super efficiency year-round.

Heat pumps make perfect cents, especially when coupled with up to **\$500 per ton in rebates** from Red River Valley Co-op Power!



For information on great rebates, please call Member Services at 218-456-2139.



YOU HAVE THE POWER TO...



- View daily and monthly energy use.
- View and pay your bills online.
- Go paperless and receive an email notice when your bill is ready to view.
- Compare energy use to changes in temperature.

SIGN UP FOR SMARTHUB: RRVCOOP.COM

For assistance, call us during regular business hours at 218-456-2139 or send an email to info@rrvcoop.com.

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**RED RIVER VALLEY
CO-OP POWER**

Celebrate

CO-OP MONTH

with us!

Don't miss your
chance to win a

LitFlask Smart Water

Bottle and a **Hatch**

**Restore 3 Smart
Sleep Clock**

HOW TO GET ENTERED TO WIN:

*You must complete
tasks to gain up
to four chances
at winning a prize.*

**1
CHANCE**

SIGN UP FOR CO-OP MONTH (first step for chances)

There are two ways to sign up:

1. Send a postcard or slip of paper with your name and account number to: Red River Valley Co-op Power, PO Box 358, Halstad, MN 56548
2. Email your name and account number, subject "Co-op Month," to info@rrvcoop.com

**2
CHANCES**

Sign up or already
be signed up for
SmartHub

**3
CHANCES**

Sign up or already
be signed up for
autopay

**4
CHANCES**

Sign up or already be signed up for paperless billing

11/12

**ALL ENTRIES
MUST BE
RECEIVED
BY 4 P.M. ON
NOV. 12, 2026**