Volts&Jolts

Published monthly for the members of Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
SERVING THE FOUR-COUNTY AREA OF MARSHALL, PENNINGTON, RED LAKE AND POLK
and a portion of the lands of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa

RLEC
OCTOBER 2026



The Hytta comes to life

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RLEC Volts & Jolts

OCTOBER 2026 – Vol. 62, No. 1

Official Publication of
Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc.
P.O. Box 430 • 412 International Drive S.W.
Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430
(USPS 663-400)
Subscription rate: $2.50 per year

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Published 10 times a year, January through May, July and September through December, by Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc., in the interest of its members and others. Periodical postage paid at the U.S. Post Office in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota 56750. POSTMASTER, SEND ADDRESS CHANGES to Volts & Jolts, c/o Red Lake Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 430, Red Lake Falls, Minnesota 56750-0430. Email: info@redlakeelectric.com.

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Any time you or an electrician does wiring or other electrical work at your home or farm, Minnesota state law requires a state wiring inspector to conduct a proper inspection of the work. A rough-in inspection must be made before any wiring is covered. A final inspection is also required. Please visit www.dli.mn.gov for more information. The inspectors can be reached weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Red Lake Electric Cooperative to enhance the quality of life for people of our service area by safely and consistently providing quality electric service and other valued services while holding our employees, our community and our environment in high regard.



The cooperative value

by Rich Whitcomb, CEO

October is National Co-op Month, a time where the contributions of cooperatives and their members (like you) are recognized as a decades-old business model that is transparent and ethical in its purpose and business dealings.

Red Lake Electric Cooperative was organized almost 88 years ago with the basic premise that we can accomplish more together than separately.

Do you know that as a member of your cooperative you actually are a part-owner and have a representative seat at the table where decisions are made?
You elect nine directors (generally three per year) to act in the best interests of the cooperative and to provide oversight in the governance and fiduciary responsibilities (22458 Jamie Fort) 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 to back to you after being reinvested in the cooperative (31335 Cynthia Kaushagen) for reliability purposes. To date, more than $16.8 million has been returned to the membership.

Did you know that your cooperative invests substantial sums of dollars into local communities, mainly through the Operation Round Up program?
To date, more than $736,000 has been given to area non-profit community organizations. You invest in your communities by rounding up your electric bill to the nearest dollar every month. That money is then distributed by an Operation Round Up board comprised of three local citizens. Your generosity (30830 Brandy Good) directly enhances the communities in which we all live.

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. Also, five of your Red Lake Electric Cooperative employees also serve on local fire departments and first responder organizations. Additionally, many have coached or done other community involvement as well.

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 Lake Electric Cooperative. That is a distinction worth celebrating.



In observation of Veterans Day, Red Lake Electric headquarters will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11.

*In case of an electrical outage or emergency, call the after-hours phone number at **218-253-2200.***

OPERATION ROUND UP® GRANTS TOTAL $13,500

The Red Lake Electric Trust board met recently and awarded 20 grants to area non-profit and community organizations that totaled $13,500. Since its inception in 1993, 1,193 Operation Round Up grants totaling $736,000 have been gifted to area community organizations. The Red Lake Electric Trust receives money for grants (33070 Darla M Prudhomme) from the Operation Round Up program administered by the Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Today, 98% of Red Lake Electric's members voluntarily "round up" their monthly bill for the Operation Round Up program.

The following organization were awarded Round Up funds to help the disadvantaged:

- **Prairie Community Services:** $1,000 to enhance quality of life for adults with mental or developmental disabilities.

Three area grants were awarded for the general public:

- **Pennington & Red Lake County Public Health & Home Care:** $500 to help provide maintenance home care and foot care for patients.
- **Goodridge Veterans Memorial Park:** $500 to help purchase two portable power distribution boxes for their annual Freedom Festival.
- **Goodridge Lion Tamers:** $500 to repair the accessibility ramp and upgrade the accessibility in the bathrooms.

Three area grants were provided for historical sites:

- **Goodridge Area Historical Society, Inc.:** $500 to help with historical building maintenance.
- **Heritage Community Center (TRF):** $500 to help purchase a ceramic kiln for developing community programs.
- **Polk County Historical Society:** $500 to help repair and replace the roof on the historical log house.

Six area emergency service providers were awarded grants:

- **Red Lake Falls Volunteer Ambulance Service:** $1,000 to help purchase a computer and a blood pressure machine.
- **Plummer Volunteer Fire Department:** $1,000 to help purchase turnout gear and handheld radios.
- **RLF Volunteer Fire Department:** $1,000 to help outfit a new fire truck.
- **Goodridge Area Fire and Rescue:** $1,000 to help purchase first aid training materials and replace personal protective gear.
- **Viking Fire and Rescue:** $1,000 to help with firefighting equipment's fuel and maintenance.
- **Newfolden Volunteer Fire Department:** $1,000 to help purchase a tracked vehicle with a trailer for wildfire and rescue events.

Monies to benefit the youth were awarded to these four organizations:

- **TRF Chapter of the MN Deer Hunters Association:** $500 to help fund fall youth day event.
- **Blazin' Saddles:** $500 to help cover costs of camps and retreats.
- **Thief River Falls Area Community Theater:** $500 to help cover a workshop to teach theatrical lighting and safe backstage electrical practices.
- **Pennington County Teens Toward Zero Deaths:** $500 to help educate young drivers, passengers, bikers and pedestrians on road safety and responsibilities.

Three organizations that provide help and service to area seniors received the following grants:

- **Goodridge Senior Citizens Center:** $500 to help with window repair/replacement to the senior citizens building.
- **North Valley Public Health:** $500 to help support foot care for residents of Eastern Marshall County.
- **Tri-Community Living at Home/Block Nurse Program:** $500 to help fund caregiver training.

The RLE Trust Board of Directors determines (31060 David D Tietz) grants two times per year, in March and September. Serving on the board are: Stacy Bierman - President, Thief River Falls; Pamela Vettleson – Vice-President, Plummer and Laura Kasprowicz - Secretary/Treasurer, Thief River Falls. Ex-officio directors are Bonnie Christians of Crookston and Rich Whitcomb of Fertile, representing Red Lake Electric Cooperative. Grant applications are available at the Red Lake Electric Cooperative office or by visiting their website at **redlakeelectric.com**. The next deadline for Operation Round Up grant applications is **Feb. 26, 2027**.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



The Hytta comes to life

On a family farm near Red Lake Falls, a small cabin and a grandmother's creative spirit have inspired a fall tradition that keeps getting bigger





Marie Seeger (pictured above) painted Norwegian folk art and taught classes to women throughout the area in the Hytta.

The cabin itself is easy to miss.

Tucked beside a pond on the Seeger family farm near Red Lake Falls, The Hytta is small, rustic and nearly 50 years old. Most days, it blends naturally into a working farm surrounded by fields, equipment and generations of family history.

Then, once a year, everything around it changes.

The yard fills with vendors and visitors. Hundreds of mums add splashes of red, yellow, orange and purple. Pumpkins are stacked around wagons and displays. Antique tables and chairs dot the lawn, while music carries through the grounds. There is a corn maze nearby, a scenic pond beyond the crowd and wind turbines turning over the fields in the distance.

It feels like a Hallmark movie.

The event is called The Hytta at Seeger Farms, and it has quickly become one of the Red Lake Falls area's most popular fall gatherings. Kelly (Seeger) Pahlen, Hannah Seeger and Julie Seeger lead much of the planning, but husbands, parents, children, cousins and friends build displays, move furniture, prepare the grounds, direct traffic and shuttle visitors.

That attention to detail is part of what keeps people around long after they have finished shopping.

"There are people who will come in the morning and stay all day, and I think those are my favorite people," Kelly said. "That is the best part – creating a space that you want to stay and hang out and just enjoy the day."

A humble start

The original Hytta was built in 1976 after the farm needed to replace a pumphouse. The late Marie Seeger sketched out something more ambitious, and local carpenters brought the idea to life. Drawing on her Norwegian heritage, she called it The Hytta, meaning "the cabin."

For years, it was Marie's creative space. She painted Norwegian folk art there and taught classes to women throughout the area. During the 1980s and 1990s, she also hosted an annual "Boutique at the Hytta," where she and her students sold their work.

Those gatherings eventually ended, but the memories stuck.

Years later, after Marie's 100th birthday celebration brought family and friends back to the farm, Kelly, Hannah and Julie began talking about recreating some of that experience. They chose a date, contacted vendors and figured they would see what happened.

Friends and neighbors came to see Marie, who sat in a rocking chair inside the cabin while people stopped to visit.

"She sat up on the porch and held court up there," recalled Steve Seeger, her son. "A steady stream of people visited with her. And it was really surprising how many people I talked to that said, 'Oh yeah, I came here for painting lessons.'"

The family did it again the next year, and The Hytta has continued growing ever since.

"All of our kids say this is the best day of the year," Hannah said. "Everyone looks forward to it."

Now in its fifth year, the event features roughly 42 vendors offering artwork, clothing, handcrafted goods, food and other products. The family is selective about the mix, maintaining the quality and character that have become part of its appeal.

"I feel like we all enjoy creating a space that other people can enjoy," Julie said. "It makes me feel good to see somebody else enjoy the day."

Joe Wavra, a chainsaw carver and owner of Red Lake Falls-based Klondike Carvings Custom Artwork and Gifts, has watched the event evolve from the vendor side.

"This thing keeps getting bigger and bigger," said Wavra, who has participated every year. "The Seegers are good people. I've known Steve and the family here my whole life."

Lori Hagl, owner of Lake Pleasant Designs of Red Lake Falls, has seen the same progression.

"It just keeps growing," she said. "The girls just do such a great job. They're great organizers and it's a beautiful spot."

A family effort

Cole Seeger, Hannah's husband, describes his job during the event simply: "Whatever needs to be done."

As attendance has grown, so has the support. Cole said more people volunteer each year alongside the Seeger family members, who wear branded Hytta apparel.

"There's always people that want to help," he said. "More and more every year because it keeps growing. It takes more golf carts, more help, more people."

"People are always volunteering," Steve added. "One guy told me, 'I've got a golf cart that can haul six people. I'll come next year and haul people.'"

That help proved especially valuable this year. Rain forced organizers to move The Hytta from Saturday to Sunday, leaving the fields normally used for parking too wet for vehicles. Instead of dampening attendance, the change helped produce the largest crowd yet.

"It was such a blur that day," said Nick Seeger, Julie's husband. "Before the time it was supposed to start, the yard was already full."

Once people made it onto the grounds, many were in no hurry to leave on a picture-perfect fall day.

Nearly five decades after Marie made the little cabin her creative place, people are still coming to the farm to create, visit and spend time together.

There are just a few more of them now.











Mark your CALENDAR!

Midterm election day is Tuesday, Nov. 3, and your vote counts!

State and national policy is key to a stronger power grid. Research your local candidates early and make sure you're ready to cast your ballot.

Want to learn more about your elections? Visit your Secretary of State website by scanning your state!



MINNESOTA



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE ® **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

1. Publication Title	2. Publication Number	3. Filing Date
Volts & Jolts	663-400	9/23/2026
4. Issue Frequency	5. Number of Issues Published Annually	6. Annual Subscription Price
Ten Times Year	10	$2.50

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®) — Contact Person: Kelli Brateng; Telephone (Include area code): 218 - 253 - 2168
PO Box 430 Red lake County Red Lake Falls MN 56750-0430

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer)
PO Box 430 Red lake Falls MN 56750-0430

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address)
Red lake Electric Cooperative Inc PO Box 430 Red Lake Falls MN 56750-0430
Editor (Name and complete mailing address)
Kelli Brateng PO Box 430 Red lake Falls MN 56750-0430
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address)

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

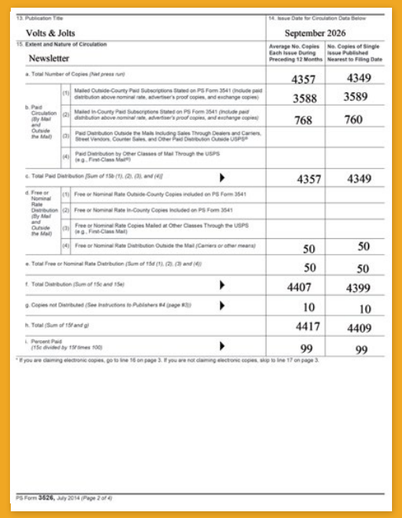
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Red Lake Cooperative Inc	PO Box 430 412 International Drive S W Red lake Falls MN 56750-0430

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☐ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Rural Development Utility Programs	11400 Independence Ave SW Washington DC 20250

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☒ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

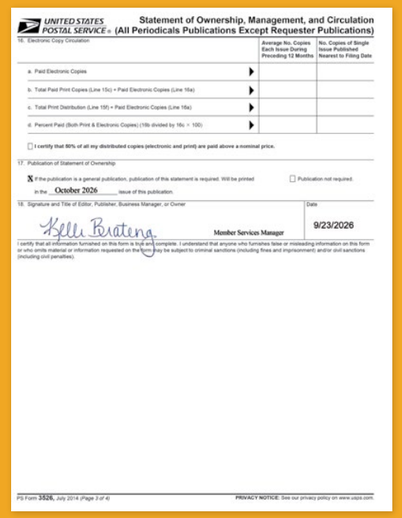
PS Form **3526**, July 2014 (Page 1 of 4 (see instructions page 4)) PSN: 7530-01-000-9931 **PRIVACY NOTICE:** See our privacy policy on www.usps.com.



13. Publication Title: Volts & Jolts	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2026	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Newsletter	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	4357	4349
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	3588	3589
(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	768	760
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))	4357	4349
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)		
(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	50	50
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))	50	50
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	4407	4399
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))	10	10
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	4417	4409
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)	99	99

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

PS Form **3526**, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE ® **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

16. Electronic Copy Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies		
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100)		

☐ I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☒ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the October 2026 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner — Kelli Brateng — Member Services Manager — Date: 9/23/2026

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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Prepare now for winter demand response

Although your electric cooperative can't tell you when the snow will start to fall or how cold it will get this winter, we can tell you one thing for sure: We're ready to help you save during electric heating season with the demand response (or off-peak) program.

Our power provider, Minnkota Power Cooperative, facilitates the demand response program for our regional system. Right now, they're preparing for 200 hours of load control, which is consistent with years past. This means that over (26883 David Weleski) the course of the winter electric heating season, members enrolled in the demand response program will likely see a switch to their backup fuel source for fewer than 200 total hours.

Minnkota Energy Marketer Paige Johnson says control hours are often dependent on energy market pricing, regional wind generation and winter cold snaps, which can be difficult to predict. She adds that Minnkota does not have any planned major maintenance outages at its Milton R. Young Station power plant this year, which could keep control hours steady.

"We also know a 'Super El Niño' weather pattern has been forecast, which should mean warmer temperatures and drier conditions for our region," Johnson explained. "However, we are always prepared for some periods of extreme cold."

Minnkota will be testing the demand response system this fall before cold weather sets in, so it's important for participating members to prepare now. Those with off-peak dual fuel heating systems should check that they have adequate fuel for their backup source (propane, fuel oil, etc.). Members can be caught by surprise when demand response kicks in for the first time, especially when it's early in the season.

The demand response program, which will celebrate 50 years of operation in 2027, is a win-win-win for all involved. Enrolled members are thanked with a reduced electric rate (and no interruption in heating comfort), the co-op can navigate high-demand winter days while avoiding expensive market purchases, and the entire regional grid benefits from reduced demand.

Thank you for helping us provide affordable and reliable energy during our coldest days!

To learn more about the demand response (off-peak) program, visit **valueofelectricity.com**.

NOTICE OF NAMES

Hidden within the text of the articles of this issue of Volts & Jolts are the names and account numbers of some Red Lake Electric Cooperative members. They will appear within the articles in parentheses as such (9999999.99 Willie Ray Member). If you find your name and account number, clip it out and send it with your next payment. You will be credited with $5 on your electric bill.

RECIPE CORNER

Submit your recipes to be published in Volts & Jolts. Email to info@redlakeelectric.com or mail to: Red Lake Electric Cooperative, PO Box 430, Red Lake Falls, MN 56750-0430.

CROCK POT CHICKEN POT PIE PASTA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup (10.5 ounce)
- 3 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 12 ounce bag frozen mixed vegetables
- ½ cup sour cream
- 8 ounce cream cheese
- 1 ½ cups cheddar cheese, grated
- 16 ounces penne pasta or small noodle pasta

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add chicken broth, chicken soup, garlic, black pepper, Italian seasoning, paprika, onion powder, thyme and mixed vegetables. Mix until well combined.
2. Place the chicken in the sauce and vegetables. Then toss to coat.
3. Cover and cook on high for 3-4 hours or low for 5-6 hours.
4. Remove the chicken and shred with two forks. Return the shredded chicken to the pot and add the sour cream, cream cheese and cheddar cheese. Stir until combined (33160 Isabelle A Labine) and cook for 30 minutes more.
5. Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to the box directions until al dente. Then drain, add to the crock pot, and toss until completely coated.

NOTES

- *Cook the pasta just until al dente, so it holds its texture after mixing with the sauce.*
- *Let the cream cheese soften before adding it to help it melt smoothly into the sauce.*
- *Shred the chicken well so it blends evenly and soaks up the creamy flavor.*
- *Taste the sauce after the cheese melts and adjust the seasoning if needed.*

Red Lake Electric Cooperative

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 (26545 Darin Glass) 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.

WATCH THE WIRES

WATCHTHEWIRES.COM