



August 2026

POWERLINES



Above: Washington, D.C. Youth Tour delegates. Read their story on back. >

Sharing our appreciation and progress with members

88th Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day Report by General Manager Steve Stroshane

Employees and directors of Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative welcomed 650 members and guests to the Centuria office Friday, June 5, for Member Appreciation Day and our 88th Annual Meeting. The day began at 11 a.m. with food, fun and giveaways for all ages, including bounce houses, lunch and wagon rides. Board President Ed Gullickson called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

We enjoy meeting our members, sharing our appreciation for you and talking with you about co-op performance, especially our mission to keep the lights on with efficiency and extraordinary service. I'd like to thank all who attended and share meeting highlights.



**Board President
Ed Gullickson**

Some of the projects we're most proud of are the new Cedar Lake Substation, local solar to benefit co-op members and our conversion to underground power lines. Today, we have more miles of underground line than overhead.

Polk-Burnett delivers power to more than 22,000 electric services across 3,500 miles of power line; about 2,000 are underground and 1,500 are overhead. The co-op installed 274 new services in 2025 and invested \$6 million to maintain and upgrade the electric system.

Cedar Lake Substation, a significant milestone for Polk-Burnett and our members, became operational in December 2025. It's our first new substation since 2001. It is important for modernizing the grid and will improve reliability in East Farmington, Somerset and Star Prairie areas. The substation investment of \$2.2 million has new technology to restore outages faster and will save the co-op about \$25,000 in operational costs per year.

Outage time is trending lower for co-op members over the past two decades, with an average of 40 to 50 minutes per year without power, when you factor out major event days. When I started at Polk-Burnett, the average was four hours without power.

When the lights go out, the co-op works to keep members informed through an outage map on the website, outage text alerts and Facebook.

We know your number one expectation is reliable power. We're always working to reduce outages, restore power faster and communicate better.

At the conclusion of my report, I announced that members gave the co-op a score of 87 out of 100 on the 2025 American Customer Satisfaction Index. We're proud of the level of service and satisfaction we provide.

Heather Gerber, Polk-Burnett's finance and accounting manager, reported the co-op has \$116 million in electric assets, with electric operating revenue of \$39 million and electric operating margins of \$2.8 million.

Polk-Burnett does not own power plants; 56% of our revenue, just under \$22 million, goes to purchase

wholesale power from Dairyland Power, a La Crosse-based generation and transmission cooperative," said Gerber. "We use 56 cents of every dollar we collect to purchase power on your behalf. The remaining 44 cents is what we work with to deliver power to our community."

During her report, Gerber introduced Luck and Viola Solar. The new arrays connected to our local power grid in 2025. Each powers about 600 homes.

"Local solar benefits us by locking in our price of power at a fixed rate for the next 30 years," said Gerber. "This offsets power market costs and relieves high summer demand at our substations."

Gerber also explained the co-op's rate history, and the difference between the daily availability charge and the kWh energy charge on member bills.

"The availability charge covers your share of the cost to build and maintain the electric grid and make sure electricity is available at your location," she said. "The availability charge is higher in rural areas because there are fewer members to share these fixed costs."

A 3% rate increase went into effect in July 2025. There will be no increase in 2026.

Gerber reminded members about co-op programs to help with electric bills, including SmartHub, EnergySense rebates, prepay, auto pay and budget billing. She said that Polk-Burnett gave \$153,262 in rebates to help members boost energy efficiency and lower bills in 2025.

Board President Gullickson said the co-op also returned \$2.2 million in Capital Credits to members in 2025.

Gullickson continued with the co-op's commitment to community report, stating, "We work to improve our local quality of life not only with reliable power, but also with support for our community."

In 2025, Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up donated \$69,300 to 68 local nonprofits thanks to the generosity of members who round up their electric bill, said Gullickson.

"Polk-Burnett's scholarship program also makes a difference," he said. "The board approved \$154,000 in scholarships for 77 students in the Class of 2026. Each recipient will receive \$2,000 to continue their education, our largest scholarship amount ever!"

Members unanimously approved amendments on four bylaws: notice of director meetings, dispute resolution, joint membership and director election process.

During the Q&A forum, members asked co-op leaders about data centers, underground power lines, funding for EnergySense rebates and building near transformers.

[See back for prize winners and board election results. >](#)



Visit polkburnett.com for event photos, prize winners, updated bylaws and meeting handouts.



Co-op Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. educates and inspires local teens

Each summer, high school students from across the country travel to Washington, D.C., to see government in action and learn how their voices can shape the communities they call home. The annual trip helps students better understand American government and the role electric cooperatives play in their communities, inspiring them to become stronger civic and community leaders. Students describe Youth Tour as a memorable and meaningful trip of a lifetime.

< [The Wisconsin Youth Tour delegation is pictured.](#)

Congratulations to Elijah Argetsinger and Archer Utke, Polk-Burnett Electric Co-op's delegates for the 2026 Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. June 14-20. These young men also received a \$2,000 Polk-Burnett scholarship based on community service.



Elijah Argetsinger, left, is a 2026 homeschool graduate and the son of co-op member Paul Argetsinger. He will attend the University of Northwestern in St. Paul this fall, where he plans to study mechanical engineering and animation. He volunteers through his church and at his community food shelf.

Archer Utke, right, is a 2026 Osceola High School graduate and the son of co-op members Teresa and Jeremy Utke. He will attend North Dakota State University this fall, where he plans to study mechanical/biomedical engineering. He volunteers in his community, church and school, sharing time and talent at the food shelf and as a Salvation Army bell ringer, school peer tutor and church pianist.



Our local Youth Tour delegates joined more than 2,000 high school students from electric co-ops across the country to learn about rural electric cooperatives, U.S. history, government and democracy. They met congressional leaders and toured Capitol Hill, national monuments and museums, and Arlington National Cemetery. The tour was hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA), with local sponsorship by Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative.

"Polk-Burnett and Wisconsin's electric cooperatives play a key role in sponsoring this life-changing opportunity for youth to explore the world outside their hometowns and learn incredibly valuable lessons. Thank you to local co-ops and members, for your investment in these kids and showing them the way to a brighter future!" said Rob Richard, WECA president and CEO.

Polk-Burnett's Youth Tour program does not affect electric rates; it is funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that would be forfeited to the state if not used for education, and by the generosity of members who donate their Capital Credits. For more information or to donate future Capital Credits to Polk-Burnett's scholarship and Youth Tour fund, visit polkburnett.com or call 800-421-0283, ext. 335.

Class of 2027: Apply for co-op scholarships and Youth Tour in September!

Thorman, Morris and Gullickson re-elected to co-op board

Polk-Burnett held its board election this spring and results were announced at the 88th Annual Meeting June 5.



Cindy Thorman



Mike Morris



Ed Gullickson

In District 1, incumbent director **Cindy Thorman** of Osceola ran unopposed and was elected with 266 votes.

In District 2, incumbent director **Mike Morris** of Luck ran unopposed and was elected with 278 votes.

In District 3, incumbent director **Ed Gullickson** of Amery ran unopposed and was elected with 256 votes.

As a cooperative, Polk-Burnett is owned and governed by the members we serve. Directors are local members who guide policy and budget decisions. Congratulations and thank you, co-op board directors, for your service and dedication! [Read more about local board governance on polkburnett.com.](#)

Member Appreciation Drawing, \$50 Energy Credit to:

Dale Mortenson, Luck
Kenneth Prusak, Colorado Springs, CO
Joseph Stinar, St. Paul, MN
Roger Shaide, Luck
Michael R. Johnston, Cushing
Donna Knobloch, Frederic
Robert Welch, Burnsville, MN
Randy Swenson, St. Croix Falls
Judy Becker, Turtle Lake
Emma Bystrom, Balsam Lake

Annual Meeting Drawing, \$50 Energy Credit to:

Allen Sellent, Cumberland
Norma Henning, Bayport, MN
Jim & Connie Siirila, Andover, MN
Craig Swanberg, Frederic
Richard Kaiser, Milltown
Charles Cernohous, River Falls
Lynn Paulke, Somerset
Regis Hammer, Turtle Lake
Carolyn Yost, Osceola
Kenneth Fehlen, Osceola

Rebates on efficient heat pumps and other energy savers



August is one of the hottest months of the year, and that means air conditioners are working overtime to keep homes comfortable. AC is typically the largest driver of increased energy use, which leads to higher electric bills. The good news is that simple steps can make a difference: Set thermostat a few degrees higher when you're away, replace dirty HVAC filters, use ceiling fans, seal air leaks and avoid using the oven, dishwasher, washer and dryer during the hottest times of the day.

Polk-Burnett's EnergySense program can also help! Give us a call for information on home performance tests and rebates on appliances, lighting and energy efficient heat pumps. Today's electric heat pumps (air source and geothermal) provide efficient cooling and heating in an all-in-one system that can lower energy bills and improve comfort in your home. [Contact us to see if heat pumps are right for you, 800-421-0283, ext. 318 or polkburnett.com.](#)

IF YOU RECEIVE AN EMAIL SURVEY, WE APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK TO HELP US IMPROVE.

All members who submit a survey will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 bill credit.

Polk-Burnett is your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.

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800-421-0283 • polkburnett.com



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