

Eau Claire Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



VON HADENS HONORED FOR CONSERVATION EFFORTS

It all started back in 1987, and now they have been recognized as the 2019 Conservation Farm Award winners. It was made official for Dan and Dawn Von Haden and family members at the presentation during the Eau Claire Chamber's annual Breakfast in the Valley in June. At that time, 32 years ago, the Dan and Dawn Von Haden family purchased a farm from a neighbor. That farm not only grew livestock and crops but also three children who are grown

now—Alex, Amanda, and Justin.

The Von Hadens' farm currently has 100 dairy cows and 125 head of young stock. They own and rent a total of 380 acres with rotational cropping of beans, corn and alfalfa.

They were honored for the conservation work they have done, including conservation tillage, maintaining waterways, creating and following a stringent nutrient management plan, and working with a farmland preservation program.

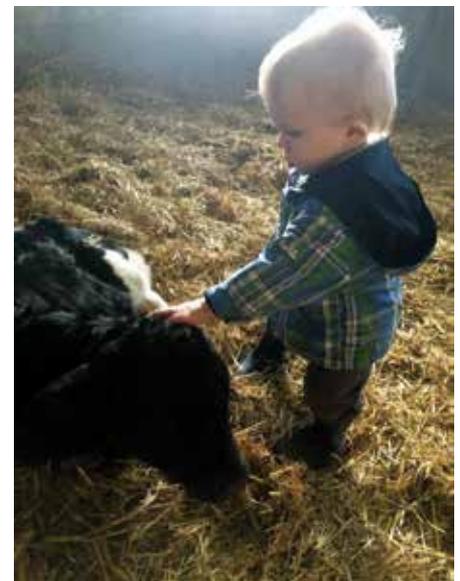
The Dan and Dawn Von Haden farm southeast of Fall Creek.

The grown children are involved on the farm in one way or another. Alex works on the farm with his parents. Amanda works as credit analyst for the Unity Bank in Neillsville, so her expertise comes in handy. Justin is a technician at Tractor Central in Mondovi, working on the farm when time allows.

Congratulations to the Von Hadens and their family!



Left: Congratulations to the Von Hadens for being named the 2019 Conservation Farm Award winners! Pictured are Alex, Dawn, Dan, Amanda, and Justin. Right: Dan and Dawn Von Haden's cute 18-month-old grandson, Jeffrey, was not afraid to get up close and personal with one of their calves this spring. (Contributed photos)





As a partner with other organizations from the area for many years, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative sees the importance of providing a “hot” live line safety demonstration. With ECEC’s Safety & Compliance Manager Ben Bella and Journeymen Lineman Kris Dubiel and Beau Blade providing the 45-minute demonstration, the young people learned how to identify unsafe conditions and how to stay safe around electricity. The youngsters also learned about animal safety, water safety, seatbelt safety, first aid, internet safety, and helmet safety from other safety partner sponsors.

According to Kimberly Strasburg from Mayo Clinic Health System, kids “...are quite surprised to find out how much fun safety lessons can be!” Not only do they have a great time at the free one-day safety camp, but they learn important safety lessons that they will carry throughout their lifetime.

“This is a wonderful camp for the over 100 elementary-aged children in fourth and fifth grades who attend,” she said. “We are in the 21st year of the annual event at Carson Park in Eau Claire. And, it’s a perfect

partnership between MCHS and the Eau Claire Area School District.”

But, the camp isn’t all about safety. According to Strasburg, the Mayo Clinic Health System also includes regular camp fun, like tug-o-war, playground time, lunch, snacks, and general silliness. The camp is free, includes a cool T-shirt, a first-aid kit that they put together themselves, snacks, and lunch.

“They are quite surprised to find out how much fun safety camp can be!”
 – Kimberly Strasburg

“This is a wonderful safety camp for elementary-aged children.”

– Kimberly Strasburg, RN, Injury Prevention Coordinator, Trauma Services at Mayo Clinic Health System

Mayo Clinic Health System Safety Camp Sponsors include:

- Eau Claire Energy Cooperative
- Eau Claire Area School District
- Eau Claire Police Department
- Eau Claire Fire Department
- Eau Claire YMCA
- Eau Claire Red Cross
- Oakwood Hills Animal Hospital
- Chippewa County Sheriff’s Office
- Eau Claire Parks and Recreation



This is your chance to join other Eau Claire Energy Cooperative members to discuss issues centered around the cooperative and the electric industry. Discussions are led by our Board Chair Clarence Boettcher, with discussion items from our President/CEO Lynn Thompson and other management staff. If you haven’t already signed up, click or call at www.ecec.com and COMMUNITY or 715-836-6471.

Next Meeting: Monday, October 7, 2019 • 5:30-7:30 p.m.
At ECEC headquarters
A light meal will be served

FROM CRANBERRY BOGS TO LINE SUPERINTENDENT

Operating heavy equipment and working hard in the cranberry marshes near Tomah where he grew up, Josh Vaningan was actually preparing himself for a career in the electric power distribution industry. According to Josh, “Some of my friends’ dads were linemen and when cranberries were not looking like they would be the future for me I signed up for line school.”

His background in the electric industry started in 2000 when he attended the Electric Power Distribution program at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire. He was able to get hired by Eau Claire Energy Cooperative for temporary summer help following school in 2001. After working one summer here, he left to work for Hooper Corporation, an electric power and mechanical contractor based in Madison.

Returning to Eau Claire in 2002 Josh was hired as an apprentice lineman at ECEC. Enjoying his four years working as an apprentice, he graduated to the position of journeyman lineman. He

operated more heavy equipment such as a bucket truck for many years and volunteered to work at a number of different co-ops when they needed help after devastating storms. That included volunteering to go south to help restore power after two different major hurricanes.

During his time as a journeyman lineman he was selected to be part of Eau Claire Energy Cooperative’s Leadership Development Program to prepare for the changes as our co-op grows and develops in this ever-changing industry.

In recent years ECEC’s line superintendent retired so the need for a replacement came up. Josh became an operations technician in December of last year, and six months later he became the line superintendent on June 1 of this year.

And, what does Josh do in a typical day? “My typical day consists of supervising, scheduling, and distributing work to the lineman, warehouseman, and the mechanic. I have to check on a lot of things including the progress of the jobs going on and work that’s coming up,



Josh Vaningan,
Line Superintendent

making sure that safety is at the forefront of every day!”

Josh attributes the safe and reliable energy delivered to member homes to the hardworking, loyal, and devoted people in this industry and our co-op. Sometimes they “...work long hours restoring power to the membership but the job is very rewarding!”

He’s married to Michelle and they have two children, Carter and Haley.

TIGHT-KNIT FAMILY FEEL INSPIRES NEW EMPLOYEE

Growing up in Whitehall, Jeni Thorpe was used to a tight-knit family and community feeling. And, she finds that is beneficial as the new administrative assistant at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative.

She stated that, “I enjoy the tight-knit family feeling here at ECEC and the employee morale that the cooperative and co-workers provide. But, I haven’t been here long enough to tell you a specific favorite part of my job, yet!”

Jeni provides assistance to the executive management team and the board of directors, so she needs to know them well enough to know their individual work needs. She helps make things more efficient with event and meeting planning, travel arrangements, projects, and



Jeni Thorpe,
Administrative Assistant

more. She also provides benefits support to all employees.

Bringing a wide variety of customer service skills in many different types of fields, Jeni is receptive to change in an industry, especially after coming from the insurance industry where guidelines and policy are always changing. She is licensed in life and health insurance, which helps her tremendously with the benefit responsibility of her job.

Jeni attributes her work success to a former officer manager, Alicia, for contributing greatly in her life, professionally and personally. “She gave incredible insight and knowledge about working in a professional environment and how to use my skills to be self-sufficient and driven in my own life and at work.” Jeni’s current supervisor, Monica Obrycki, has contributed greatly by helping her make the transition to ECEC fulfilling through her kind and caring leadership.

Jeni resides in Eau Claire... “with my pup, Milee. I stay active by playing volleyball and softball in many different leagues and have traveled as far as Nevada to play! I also enjoy traveling, hiking, boating, kayaking—if it’s outdoors and requires any kind of physical exertion, count me in! I truly believe that the greatest thing in life, are family and friends. Well, and dogs too!



(Photos contributed by Monica Obrycki)

SPRING FLOWERS SPROUT IDEAS FOR RUNNING A BUSINESS

At their final field trip meeting for the school year in May, high school Youth Ambassadors learned some tips about how a business is run from Dave Burke, owner of The Florian Gardens in Eau Claire. As the featured speaker, Burke gave them tips on applying for a job and keeping that job. He spoke of the need for enthusiastic employees with a very good work ethic. The meeting was topped off with a tour of the facilities, including the wedding and special event grounds outdoors.

At right, Youth Ambassadors Connor Camlek, Iris Adams, and Shaylee Beckfield show off their 2018–2019 graduation STARS. Nineteen in attendance, a total of 23 high school students finished out the 2018–19 school.

The 2019–2020 session for Youth Ambassadors begins in September. Watch your monthly *WEC News* magazine, our website, and energy bill inserts for more information about the dates and topics the students will be learning.



Connor Camlek, Iris Adams, and Shaylee Beckfield.
(Photo contributed by Iris Adams)

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Lynn E. Thompson, President/CEO
Mary Kay Brevig, Editor, Manager of Communications & Public Relations

8214 Hwy 12, P.O. Box 368, Fall Creek, WI 54742-0368
www.ecec.com

Office Hours: 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m. Mon–Fri

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