

# APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS BY JANUARY 10!

This is a wonderful chance for students living in member homes to apply for money for higher education. This year up to sixteen \$750 scholarships will be awarded to students attending area high schools—one for each of the following:

- |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Altoona                 | Eau Claire Regis |
| Augusta                 | Elewa–Strum      |
| Cadott                  | Elk Mound        |
| Chippewa Falls          | Fall Creek       |
| Chippewa Falls McDonell | Mondovi          |
| Eau Claire Immanuel     | Osseo–Fairchild  |
| Lutheran                | Stanley–Boyd     |
| Eau Claire Memorial     | Home School      |
| Eau Claire North        | Charter School   |

One \$750 scholarship will be awarded to a current student at each of the following schools:

**Chippewa Valley Technical College**  
**University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire**



## Eau Claire Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

One \$750 scholarship for the Electric Power Distribution – Lineworker program at the Chippewa Valley Technical College is also available.

### Questions?

For answers to your questions about Eau Claire Energy Cooperative’s Federated Youth Foundation Scholarships, contact Jeni Thorpe at [jthorpe@ecec.com](mailto:jthorpe@ecec.com) or 715-836-6466.



## AWARD NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

Do you know an Eau Claire Energy Cooperative member who has gone above and beyond to help others? Do you know a member who has made a difference in the community through local service projects or non-profit organizations and local events? Now is the time to nominate your friends or neighbors for the annual Concern for Community Awards. Nominate an ECEC member at [www.ecec.com](http://www.ecec.com) by **February 14, 2020**. This year’s recipient will be honored at our 83rd Annual Meeting at the Florian Gardens on March 17, 2020.



### ECEC at local high school Career Night

It’s an opportunity for high school students to learn about career options including what’s available in the electric co-op industry. In November, our Operations Manager Patrick Bethke (left) spent the evening talking with students at Augusta High School’s Career Night. If your school has a similar event coming up, contact Eau Claire Energy Cooperative at 715-832-1603.



## MEMBER ADVISORY COUNCIL TO MEET FEBRUARY 3, 2020

The next Member Advisory Council meeting has been set for February 3, 2020. (This date has been changed from January 20 due to some scheduling conflicts.) We invite members interested in meeting quarterly with our Board of Directors Chair Clarence Boettcher and President/CEO Lynn Thompson to discuss co-op and industry topics. We meet at the Eau Claire Energy Cooperative headquarters between Eau Claire and Fall Creek (8214 Highway 12, Fall Creek), with a light meal beginning at 5:30 p.m. The meeting is adjourned by 7:30 p.m.

This is a non-elected council. There is no “running for office” or speeches to make. Just fill in the form on our website or call us for one. This is your opportunity to give your opinions about co-op topics and learn more about how your cooperative works. The council normally meets in January, March, July, and October with a light meal.

To sign up, go to [www.ecec.com](http://www.ecec.com) and click on the COMMUNITY tab. If you have any questions about the council, call us at 715-832-1603.



# CHANGING LIVES FOREVER IN *Guatemala*

**D**o you and your family plan for months in anticipation of escaping the wintry snow and frigid temperatures of Wisconsin, traveling to countries south of the United States to bask lazily in the sun? Well, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative Line Worker Lee Alberson had other ideas for traveling

**“We have changed the lives their children will have.”**

**—Lee Alberson, Line Worker at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative**

to a southern destination. He joined NRECA in planning a trip to Guatemala with 11 other line workers from Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois to bring electricity to 50 homes, a church, a school, and a medical outpost. Working day after day for two weeks in sweltering humidity and temperatures of over 90 degrees, they were able to bring lights to the villagers,

many of whom lived in homes with dirt floors. NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) is the national organization that works with local cooperatives to organize projects such as this to bring electricity to countries without power.

Lee had an important role in the project planning, traveling to Guatemala with NRECA planners a number of weeks before the project began, in order to set up details with the local utility company. He shared many impressions of his planning trip and the actual trip with the entire group to install electricity in the village. He stated that after flying into Guatemala City they flew to a smaller location and then traveled over rough terrain by pickup trucks.

Each day the line workers drove 24 miles from the village where they stayed overnight to the village where they were installing electricity. According to Lee, it took about 2.5 hours to go the 24 miles over boulders, through ponds,

Eau Claire Energy Cooperative Line Worker Lee Alberson distributes toys to the local children. Volunteers from Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois surprised the children with backpacks filled with school supplies—much needed in the area.

and over rickety bridges. “The drive was crazy! Kids and adults were walking right on the side of the highway. It took a really long time to get to where we were going, but we weren’t traveling that many miles,” Lee said.

“Yes, it was great to see how happy the locals were to have power and they were so grateful. It was great to hear from them how we have changed the life their kids will have.”

When asked about what the line workers experienced when they arrived back in the United States, Lee smiled and said, “the clean air.” Along with the unbearable heat and humidity in Guatemala, line workers were aware of the unclean air, driven by many diesel trucks that belched black smoke continually.



Above: It was not unusual for youngsters to work together shouldering the heavy load of power poles, trudging over rough terrain for two miles to the final destination for installation. Left: Line workers installed one or two lights in each home. The first was usually installed over the kitchen's open fire. All the homes had firepits in the kitchen area. Line workers were happy to get out of the hot sun to run electrical wiring for the lights, but were surprised how terribly hot the homes were inside. Fire pits were lit all day long to allow the baking of tortillas, an all-important food for each family. Below left: Travel to and from the village every day was dicey, over plank bridges and through streams. Below right: Lee Alberson handed out water filters to local villagers. ECEC employees joined other cooperative employees in donating enough money to supply all 50 homes with water filters. With the generation of electricity, another goal was to provide clean water for the villagers. A future goal is to install a well so villagers will not need to carry water from local ponds that are also used for bathing and washing clothes.

## A once-in-a-lifetime experience

As Lee stated, it was “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help a country in need.” While he was gone, he was grateful for his family members who helped his wife, Jenna, take care of their children and keep things as normal as possible at home while he was gone.

“FaceTime was very important in keeping in contact with my wife and kids,” he said. “I couldn’t have done this project without my wife and family and the support of the employees at the co-op.”

That project brought some wise words of wisdom from Lee. “Don’t be afraid of the unknown. You are changing lives forever.”











(See “Lighting the way for a brighter future” on page 10 of this issue for more information about the project.)





## SAFETY FOR ALL DECORATING SEASONS

It doesn't matter what holiday you are celebrating, it's all about staying safe no matter where you are. Here are a few tips to keep you and your loved ones safe during any holiday season and beyond. Your friends at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative wish all a safe and happy holiday season.

-  When decorating outside, look up and check that you and any equipment, such as ladders, are at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
-  Get sure footing and use proper equipment, such as sturdy ladders, if mounting decorations on rooftops or rooflines.
-  Inspect all electrical cords for frays, cracking, or spare wires—they can cause serious shock or even start a fire.
-  Follow care instructions for your electrical decorations.
-  Don't overload electrical cords and outlets. Don't allow cords to run through water or under rugs.
-  Keep cords out of hallways to avoid tripping hazards.
-  Turn off all electrical decorations and lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
-  Make sure all electrical decorations used outside are marked for use outdoors, and have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) approved labels.
-  Keep candles away from drapes and other flammable materials. Do not leave them unattended.
-  Keep children and pets safe around decorations. Don't leave items around where they can be reached or chewed.

### Youth Ambassadors meet December 18

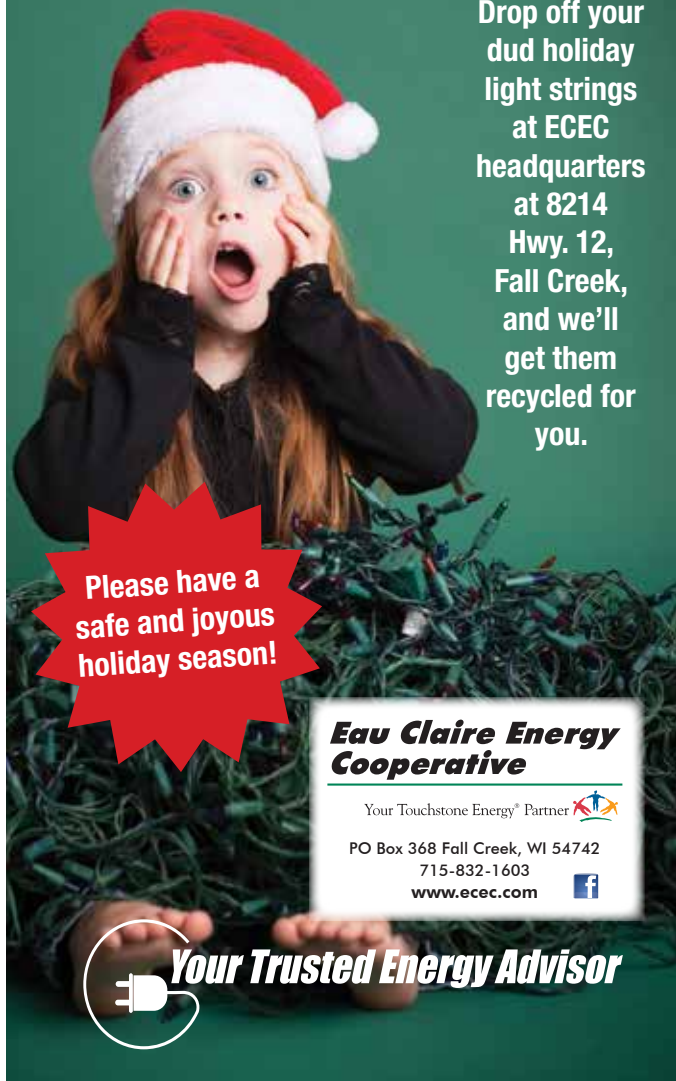
At their December 18 meeting at ECEC headquarters, Youth Ambassadors will spend time with ECEC line worker Lee Alberson regarding his experiences in Guatemala (Lee's story is on page 16 of this issue).

If you know of a high school student interested in getting together with other high school students to learn about leadership skills and electric industry topics, tour local businesses and non-profits, plus get involved in community service projects, sign them up at [www.ecec.com](http://www.ecec.com). With a delicious meal to kick off each meeting, the Youth Ambassadors meet at noon on the third Wednesday of the month from September through May.

## Recycle your holiday string lights here – FREE!


January 10, 2020 deadline

Drop off your dud holiday light strings at ECEC headquarters at 8214 Hwy. 12, Fall Creek, and we'll get them recycled for you.



Please have a safe and joyous holiday season!

**Eau Claire Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

PO Box 368 Fall Creek, WI 54742  
715-832-1603  
[www.ecec.com](http://www.ecec.com) 

 **Your Trusted Energy Advisor**



## Eau Claire Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



**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](http://www.ecec.com)  

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

**Non-emergencies:** 715-832-1603

**Emergencies & outages:** Toll FREE 800-927-5090  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Diggers Hotline:** 811 or 1-800-242-8511  
Call 3 working days before you dig.