



Concern for Community Award winner, Mark Zuber



MARK ZUBER HONORED WITH CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY AWARD

Each year Eau Claire Energy Cooperative recognizes a cooperative member who exemplifies Cooperative Principle #7, Concern for Community. During Co-op Month, we are proud to present our sixth annual Concern for Community award to co-op member Mark Zuber. Mark was nominated for this award because of his extensive service to the community. He is the clerk for the Town of Drammen and serves on two Eau Claire County committees. He performs maintenance for the Drammen Lutheran Church and is the secretary of the Fall Creek Mutual Insurance Board. You may find Mark mowing lawn at the Drammen Lutheran Cemetery or helping construct a community building. His hard work does not go unnoticed and his friends, neighbors, and all of us at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative thank him for his Concern for Community!

Then. Now. Always.
We're proud to power your life.
October is National Co-op Month.



#PowerOn

MY CO-OP

ELECTRIFY YOUR LAWN CARE

The transition from summer to fall brings an abundance of new scenery and pastimes. The beautiful colors. The aroma of cool, crisp air. Pumpkin spice in nearly anything your heart desires. Apple orchards, pumpkin patches, football, hunting and the list goes on. Fall truly is a magical season.



...and then there's the cleanup. As the season changes, your once-lush, green lawn is quickly covered with leaves. Your sidewalks, driveway, gutters are now leaves, leaves, and more leaves. The hedges are looking a bit overgrown and the lawn is creeping over the edge of your walkways. Gas-powered equipment may be your go-to, but times they are a changin'. Before you go to the shed to dig out the leaf blower and start your yearly fight to get it running, maybe you could just add a battery, push a button, and get to work.

We're not talking about pulling a couple of AA batteries out of the junk drawer. Within the past decade, the market has seen a boom of battery-powered yard tools. Everything from leaf blowers and string trimmers to lawn mowers and chainsaws are not only electrified, but also a viable option for many households thanks to the introduction of large-capacity, high-output battery packs. Battery technology allows tools to produce power and performance comparable to their gas-powered counterparts, and they are running longer and charging faster than ever before.

Going electric isn't perfect, however. Aside from the obvious "when you're out, you're out" nature of battery power (which can be easily managed with a second battery, by the way), you're also looking at a piece of equipment that carries a higher upfront cost in most cases. That upfront cost can be recovered quickly since electricity is less expensive fuel than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines.

Lot size can be a hurdle as well. In most cases, a half-acre lot and normal lawn care can be taken care of easily with battery-powered equipment. If you're looking for a tool to use for hours on end, or your lot has unique characteristics such as uneven terrain, unusually thick or tall grass, or numerous obstacles, your runtime will be affected and perhaps gas is still your best option for now.

On the positive note, electric lawn equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life, and quieter, greener products compared to their gas-powered counterparts.

If you're interested in electric lawn equipment, but don't know where to start, it might be a good idea to stick with what you know; by that I mean, check out your toolbox. Whether your cordless drill is red, yellow, blue, green, or some other color, the chances are very good that you will find a growing battery-powered line of lawn tools available in those same brands. Are you more comfortable with the big names already in the small engine game? You're in luck; they have battery-powered tools, too!

If you're looking to electrify your lawncare, be sure to do your homework. Search online for the latest reviews and check trusted websites for information. With a little research, you'll be on your way to a tidy lawn with less maintenance, hassle, and noise. Now if only these battery-powered tools could take care of the lawn on their own...actually, you might want to do some research on that. You may be surprised at what you find! —Adam Westaby, ECEC Member Services Associate





PUMPKINS AND CAMELS AND PEACOCKS, OH MY!

Many of us feel the hectic nature of the season change—farmers are busy harvesting crops and families are scurrying to get one last trip in before school activities ramp up. Frankly, fall can be a bit of a zoo. Josh and Ashley Schulner of Fall Creek are no different. They are busy with their two boys, Isaiah and Noah; however, they take the word “zoo” quite literally.

What started out as a hobby to grow and sell pumpkins has morphed into a full-time operation of pumpkins, produce, unique animals, and a traveling petting zoo. With over 150 animals on their 20 acres, Outlaw Farms LLC has a whole lot to see and do.

In non-pandemic years, you may find the Outlaw Farms petting zoo at church events, care facilities, or even at your local library. The petting zoo mostly consists of the hoofed animals like the camels, donkeys, alpacas, mini-horses, and goats. Pepper the alpaca is a fan favorite and along with his friends, Sugar, Nutmeg, and Chili, he seems to know when the camera is near and is quick to give a toothy smile. Skeeter the goat is not shy and can



often be found begging visitors for food. Kids of all ages love to interact with the animals.

If the zoo doesn’t come to you, Outlaw Farms hosts several public events throughout the year like *Fourth of July on the Farm* and *Pick of the Patch* in early October. Guests may also use their spacious outdoor areas to host parties and school field trips. When roaming the farm, you will not only see all the petting zoo animals, but you may encounter Fifi the skunk, Vince the tortoise, and Kevin the peacock! The Schulner family plans to grow their business by adding a permanent pavilion and expanding their presence at local events.

Ashley and Josh also care for a few exotic animals like Vuc the arctic fox, Roscoe and Remmi the ringtail lemurs, and Nico the bobcat. Some of these friends may not be available to see in-person, but if you follow Outlaw Farms on Facebook, you’ll find plenty of interesting photos, videos, and information about the happenings on the farm. So, as you transition to fall activities, keep Outlaw Farms in mind. You don’t have to travel too far to buy a pumpkin or visit some unique creatures.



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