



Shine The Light recognizes local teacher's passion for giving

Erica Lindaman, a fourth grade teacher in Clarion, saw a need during the COVID-19 pandemic, and took action.

She started her Gift of Giving 501c3 nonprofit organization to help collect Christmas gifts for children.

“We saw a need based on people not working as much,” she said. “Hours were cut, just having to stay home.”

Gift of Giving could have just kept with the Christmas theme, but that wasn't in Lindaman's plans. Since that first Christmas, the program has grown exponentially. The Gift of Giving now assists with everything from food insecurity to bedding and furniture.

“It's grown into this massive entity,” she said. “We are trying to get people in Wright County to keep their clothing and pieces here rather than take them to a different county.”

Emily Bernhardt, one of Lindaman's many nominators, has known her for 13 years.

“I think Erica has seen a need in the community through her background being a teacher and working with students on a daily basis,” she said. “She just stepped in to fulfill that need. I know she spends a lot of her personal time and effort working with the Gift of Giving. Her whole family has become involved and quite dedicated.”

For Lindaman, it's almost become a full-time job and one that she loves.

“I literally get between 20 and 30 texts, emails, Facebook messages saying, ‘I'm in need of this,’ or ‘How can you help me with this?’” she said. “We have expanded,



Above | Chad Chapman, left, member services, Prairie Energy Cooperative, presents a check for \$2,500 to Erica Lindaman, Gift of Giving, for being one of three 2023 Shine The Light volunteer contest winners. Lindaman's nonprofit initially began to collect kids' Christmas gifts and has grown to help with everything from food insecurity to furniture.

where we are helping to pay for electric bills, helping to pay for water bills. We have provided gas cards for people who are having health problems. We are just here to give.”

That tenacity shines through for all to see, even when she may not want the credit.

“Erica has a huge heart,” Bernhardt said. “She may be quiet sometimes and likes to be in the background. But, she has a huge heart and huge passion for the youth and families in the community.”

Today, Lindaman and the Gift of Giving accept any items in Wright County. Those items are stored in a temporary warehouse location, where those in need can meet with Erica by appointment or visit one of the

organization's “pop-up” events.

“If you have a need, and you come to me, or you come to my mother or my father, or anyone who is involved in the organization, we're going to find you a resource or find you somebody else to help you.” she says. ■

To learn more about the Gift of Giving, find them on Facebook or visit:

bit.ly/GiftOfGivingWrightCounty

Project Flo improves quality of life in Butler REC service territory



As Lynn Thronson puts it, his family – which includes 14 brothers and sisters - just wanted to find a way to honor their mother, Florence.

“My mother spent a lot of time raising the kids,” he says. “As we got older, she started to daycare. When the youngest daughter graduated high school, she stopped daycaring and started to volunteer. She had a volunteer opportunity almost every day Monday through Friday.”

Florence passed away at 82 in 2011.

“When she passed away, we started thinking, ‘how are we going to honor her memory,’” he said. “We came up with the idea, let’s do a volunteer project. I think at that time there were 15 to 20 of us.”

They called it Project Flo and the rest is history. With dozens of projects completed, Project Flo celebrated its 10-year anniversary last year. They’re also a \$2,500 donation winner of this year’s Shine the Light volunteer competition.

The purpose of Project Flo is to serve others in a meaningful way. All those involved are invited to share the gifts entrusted to them through service to others. There are many ways to participate in the project and while all participants contribute to the project sharing different amounts of time, talent or treasure, Flo taught that all contributions are equally important.

As currently designed, Project Flo is a



Above | Project Flo volunteer caulks window.

one-week project that allows participants to generously share their gifts with a family in need. The focus of the project is not on the need of the individual(s) being served. Rather, the focus is on the need of the participants to cheerfully give back some



Shine the Light winner

Above | Anne Gardiner, left, public relations specialist, Butler County REC, presents a check to Lynn Thronson and his wife Jane of Project Flo. Project Flo is a charitable organization that helps repair homes in the Butler County REC service territory. With dozens of projects completed, Project Flo celebrated it’s 11-year anniversary this year.

portion of the gifts God has given them and to honor Flo in doing so.

Project Flo excels in painting, caulking, window replacement, landscaping, floor replacement, general clean up, drywall installations, bathroom remodeling and more. Everyone in the family has a role.

“The unskilled stuff, we are very good at,” he said. “Fortunately, in our family, we have two contractors that help us out. We used to do a lot of shingling, but we found out as family members have gotten older, we don’t like climbing roofs anymore. Often, we will hire that work out, or get a grant.”

Project Flo spends a lot of time applying for grants, but community support around the organization has swelled in recent years.

“There are multiple fundraising activities that go on,” he said. “We apply for grants, but we have people who donate, neighbors who donate. Last year, if you count the food crews and people who worked a day or so, we had 80 people working. It’s family members, and community members, friends of family members and people who we have done houses before come out and help. It’s turned out to be, a very good community project.”

While it’s a community project for those in and around Chickasaw County, it’s more than that for the Thronsons.

“It’s turned out to be a great family reunion for us,” he said. “We have brothers and sisters who live all over the United States. Most of those folks come home. My grandchildren who live in Minneapolis and Memphis love to come home and see their cousins.”

As for the future, Thronson says Project Flo is in good hands.

“As time has gone on, as family members become older, how do we continue this,” he says. “It’s very heartwarming that the younger people want to be a part of this. They invite their friends to come and work on the project.” ■



Above | Thronsons volunteer for Project Flo

To learn more about Project Flo visit:

www.thronson.com

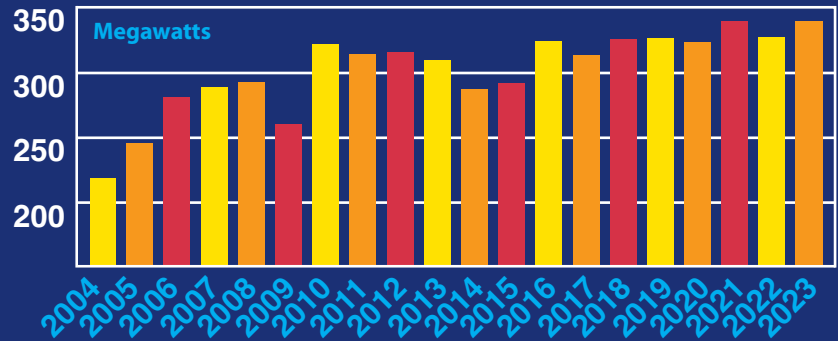
Cooperative sees second highest all-time July peak

It's been a hot summer and Corn Belt Power has the numbers to prove it.

The cooperative saw a peak demand of 323.4 megawatts in July. That marked the second highest all-time peak for a month of July, just behind 324.2 megawatts set during July 2021.

"The cause of the peak was multiple days of hot and/or humid weather with daytime high temperatures at or above 90 degrees," said Jacob Olberding, vice president, power supply, Corn Belt Power. "High overnight temperatures also contributed to higher loads. The timing of the July peak was a little later in the day than what we typically see. At that time of day,

Power in High Demand (July)



Above | Corn Belt Power Cooperative's electricity demand reached its second highest July record of 323.44 megawatts of demand due to high temperatures July 26.

Corn Belt Power and its member systems would have been providing more power to member-consumers with smaller behind the meter solar facilities than we would have if the peak would have occurred earlier in the afternoon. This contributed to the peak."

Corn Belt Power's load control program - which includes water heater control and the

cooperative's new battery storage system - was put to the test. Load control generated more than \$200,000 in savings for the Corn Belt Power membership.

As temperatures continue to rise at the time of this publication, Corn Belt Power expects to see August peak demand at or above record levels. ■

The Cooperative Difference

Saving members money

The summer months are a busy time for Corn Belt Power's technical services department.

Collin Weber, energy services engineer, and Ross Welterlen, director of energy services engineering, have crisscrossed Corn Belt Power's service territory providing much needed services to the organization's member-cooperatives. These services include energy audits, thermography inspections and power quality analysis.

"Our goal is to visit as many of our members' larger accounts as possible in the summer," Weber said. "The summer months are the best time to do some of these inspections and analysis."

The program's goal is to help key accounts and residential members reduce energy consumption and prevent equipment failures.

Weber and Welterlen visited multiple large accounts in June and July for thermography inspections. That includes inspections of all

breaker panels, contactor panels and other electrical cabinets.

"The goal is to identify trouble spots in electrical equipment," Weber said. "Once we identify those locations, the business is able to make the necessary repairs and/or upgrades, which help prevent electrical failures and allow the system to prevent unscheduled downtime."

In various locations across the Corn Belt Power system, Weber continues to conduct power quality analyses on both residential and commercial accounts.

"Our goal with power quality analysis is to identify issues inside the home or business. Those could be flickering lights, equipment that creates harmonics, or failing equipment," Weber said. "We want to find solutions to problems that lead to high bills. At the end of the day, it's about saving the member money, by keeping the equipment running smoothly." ■



Wiring inspection

Above | Collin Weber, left, energy services engineer, and Ross Welterlen, director of energy services engineering, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, inspect wiring during a summer key account visit.

Jon Girres, journeyman electrician, successfully places a basketball into a barrel during an Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative forklift training August 11.



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August Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Jared Hannasch, journeyman lineman, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, donated his \$100 prize to the Pets for Life in Spencer.

Ruthven microwave equipment protected with new shelter building

Corn Belt Power communications crews installed a new microwave building inside its Ruthven station in July.

“This is one of our busiest sites,” said Brad Hill, communications superintendent, Corn Belt Power Cooperative. “The new building will house multiple microwave radios to various sites. It also houses one of our 17 two-way radio repeater sites.”



New microwave building

Above | Corn Belt Power installed a new microwave building at its Ruthven location in July. The new concrete building will house microwave radio equipment and will serve as an upgrade over the existing building.

The new shelter is concrete and will last for years to come. “It’s sealed and will better protect the radio equipment,” said Hill. “We have redundant wall mount air conditioners which will help the equipment run more efficiently.”

Crews also replaced the existing generator at the site for better reliability during power outages. ■

Corn Belt Power Cooperative **Watts Watt**

Watts Watt is published monthly for employees and associates of Corn Belt Power Cooperative, 1300 13th St. North, Humboldt, Iowa 50548-0508. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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