

WATTS *Current*

September 2022

For Our Members

During harvest: know and teach electrical safety on the farm

Harvest means long hours, increased stress and tight schedules. Because of that, MVEC wants to remind farmers that it only takes a split second for someone to come into contact with electricity. Your most seasoned worker to your least - any person on your farm is at risk of becoming injured or killed due to electrical contact.

“Review overhead power line locations and height clearance with anyone and everyone working on the farm or doing business there,” said Jeremey Richert, MVEC CEO.

To keep those on your farm safe not only during harvest but year-round, follow these electrical safety tips:

- Educate everyone that potential electrical hazards include both direct and indirect contact with an overhead power line or pole. Indirect (coming too close to a power line or pole), could cause electricity to arc/jump.
- Start every workday with a safety meeting. Discuss all operations for the day and go over power line/pole locations. Emphasize safety above speed to everyone on the farm, especially during busy seasons like harvest.
- Encourage drivers and operators to position grain augers in their lowest position or to lower truck bed boxes before moving. Be especially cautious of overhead lines when using augers in the field to load trucks on the road.
- Review potential hazards with truck drivers and spot them when possible. Also:
 - Encourage drivers to load and unload all materials away from overhead power lines.
 - Even better, create a dedicated drop zone away from all overhead power lines.
- If you see that a hydraulic truck bed, extensions or other equipment gets within 10 feet of or contacts a power line, utility pole or guy wire, instruct the driver to stay in the cab. Call 9-1-1 to have your electric cooperative or utility dispatched to deenergize the power. Give instructions from 50 feet away and inform everyone else to stay back.
- Encourage folding and unfolding to be done well into the field, not at the field's edge, which could have power lines running next to it.
- Do not store irrigation pipes, hay bales, machinery or anything else under power lines.
- Be aware of power line locations in the proximity of grain bins. Always load and unload on the side without a power line. Contact your electric cooperative or utility with questions about grain bin power line clearance/OSHA regulations.

Contact MVEC about any damaged or downed power lines or poles. Utility crews would much rather check out an issue than risk a potentially dangerous situation.



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HARVEST SAFETY TIP

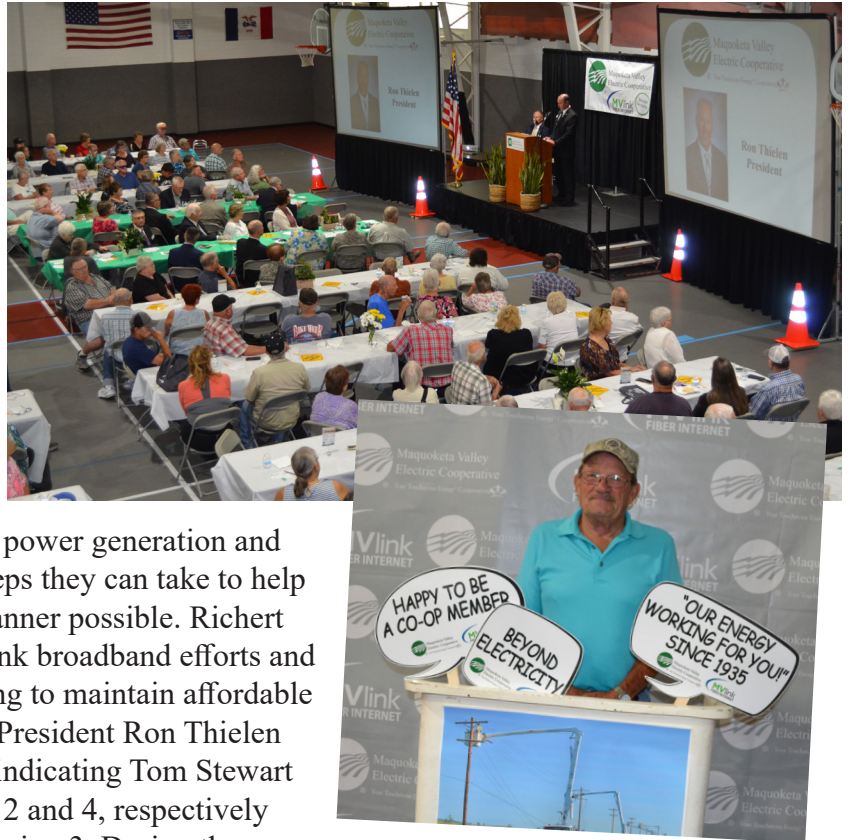
Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.





Annual Meeting Held

MVEC's annual meeting of the members was held in Monticello on August 18th. Through mail-in ballots and in-person attendance, 1,093 members participated in the governance of the Cooperative they own. Voting members were entered into a drawing for cash prizes totaling \$2,000 and those who attended in-person were treated to a roasted pork meal. During the meeting, CEO Jeremy Richert discussed how the Cooperative works behind the scenes to deliver affordable and reliable electricity, discussed the importance of an all of the above approach for power generation and provided the members with some important steps they can take to help MVEC crews complete their work in safest manner possible. Richert also provided members an update on the MVlink broadband efforts and its impact on service reliability while continuing to maintain affordable rates for both electricity and internet services. President Ron Thielen reported on the results of the director election indicating Tom Stewart and Billie Zumbach were re-elected to regions 2 and 4, respectively and that Ron Thielen was re-elected to serve region 3. During the Board of Directors re-organizational meeting, the following directors were elected to office positions as follows: President, Ron Thielen; Vice President, Tom Stewart; Secretary, Gene Manternach and Treasurer, Judy Gotto. Charles McCullough was elected to be the Assistant Secretary.



Annual Meeting Prize Winners

MVEC awarded \$2,000 in cash prizes to randomly-selected members who returned their Annual Meeting ballot.

*Pauline Antons, Center Junction
Karen Breitbach, Maquoketa
Robert Brune, Peosta
Gary Childers, Durango
Ailene Dondlinger, Bellevue
Phyllis Errthem, Holy Cross
Dan Furman, Marion
Neil Gavin, Cascade
Keith Gillmore, Monticello*

*Cletus Hellman, Ryan
Lori Keck, Greeley
Bernie Kluesner, New Vienna
Carol Lorenzen, Center Junction
Diane Ludovissy, Holy Cross
Brent Manternach, Worthington
Charles Martin, Dubuque
Bob McCarthy, Peosta
Joe McQuillen, Peosta
Larry Mormann, Worthington
Jim Nicks, Dubuque
David Nissen, Maquoketa*

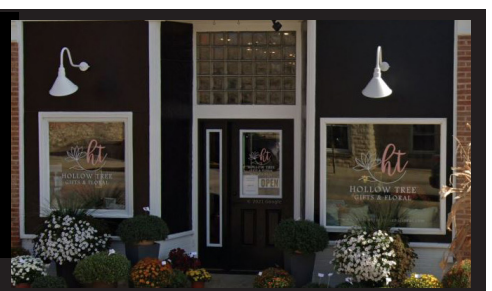
*David Osterhaus, Earlville
Carol Powell, Cascade
Joseph Recker, Dyersville
Donna Robinson, Masonville
Dorothy Rupp, Center Junction
Gary Spellerberg, Manchester
Debbie Stevens, Cascade
John Taylor, Holy Cross
Betty Thill, Dubuque
Don Von Behren, Anamosa
Karen White, Dubuque
Margaret Wilson, Maquoketa*



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MVEC Members Shine the Light on Local Volunteers

The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa are driven by our commitment to community. To celebrate local volunteers, the Shine the Light contest returned for a second year and received 68 entries from 26 co-ops across the state of Iowa during the month of June. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative members submitted six nominees for this year's awards. While none of the six were selected as winners, MVEC appreciates our nominators' time and efforts to recognize the impact volunteers make in our communities. Please join us in celebrating these nominees for their outstanding commitment to community. Learn more at IowaShineTheLight.com.

Sandi Bartels from Clinton was nominated by Chandra Williams for her work with Midwest Pets for Life.

Mary Goebel from Guttenberg was nominated by Joseph Goebel for her work with the several Dubuque County organizations including the Historical Preservation Commission, Eminent Domain Compensation Commission and the Guttenberg Resource Center.

Barbara Pestka from Maquoketa was nominated by Lisa Gottschalk for her work with Friends of the Maquoketa Public Library and Maquoketa YMCA.

Lynn Waelchli from Peosta was nominated By Lisa Digman for her work with Inspiration Stables.

Candy Roberg from Anamosa was nominated by Peggy Michaelsen for her work with Animal Welfare Friends.

Barb Sauser from Cascade was nominated by Joyce McMullen for her work with several Dubuque and Jones County organizations including Dubuque County Dairy Association, Aquin Catholic School and American Legion Auxiliary.



Watts Green

Renewable Energy Program

Because you care...

Today's changing energy landscape is bringing more attention to renewable energy resources. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative supports generation that is safe, reliable, cost effective and environmentally responsible.

Watts Green - Green renewable energy is electricity produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Sources of green energy include the sun, wind, and water, which are pollution free and naturally reoccurring.

Renewable electricity technologies are among the cleanest and have the least impact on the environment.

Some of the renewable energy that is sold to our members is purchased from other members who have renewable energy systems.

Costs - The price for new green power is slightly higher than power generated from conventional sources such as coal. MVEC's Watts Green Renewable Energy Program enables you to support renewable energy by paying a small premium on your bill. The extra cost is currently 2 cents per kilowatt hour, or \$1 for a 50 kilowatt hour block, which is applied only to that portion of renewable energy that is chosen.

Benefits

- Quick to market.**
- No air emissions.**
- Needs no water.**
- Zero fuel costs.**

To participate in the Watts Green Renewable Energy Program, detach and complete the form below. The form can be returned with your energy bill or mailed separately to:

Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative
109 North Huber Street
Anamosa, Iowa 52205

Account #: _____ Name: _____

Yes! Enroll me in the Watts Green Renewable Energy Program. I hereby request that Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative bill to my account _____ kWhs (blocks of 50 kWhs only) at the renewable energy rate each month according to MVEC's tariff. The current price is \$1.00 per 50 kWh block above the standard rate. I will be notified at least 30 days in advance of any price change, and may terminate this enrollment at any time by notifying MVEC.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



Preston Business with Unlimited Potential Breaks Ground on Expansion

Traveling on Highway 64, just outside of Preston, you might not realize that the business situated between two cornfields possesses cutting edge technology to produce high-quality parts for some of the world's most well-known manufacturers.

Plastics Unlimited is a custom thermoforming, composites and urethane parts manufacturer started by Terry and Nancy Kieffer in 1993 in a shop on their rural Preston farm. The business now occupies a 100,000 sq. feet building just outside town and has broken ground on a



30,000 square foot expansion to accommodate significant growth the company has experienced since the COVID pandemic.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, Plastics Unlimited employed 60 workers. The company now boasts 140 employees working three shifts and is seeking to fill another 26 open positions in shipping & handling, assembly, production, and materials handling just to name a few. You can find opportunities on the company's website at www.plasticsunlimited.com or by following them on Facebook.

Plastics Unlimited was founded by the Kieffers when Terry suffered a back injury that prevented him from growing his hog farm operation. He identified a need in the area for plastics manufacturing and landed on thermoforming as the best opportunity to get in business. The Kieffers launched and continue to grow Plastics Unlimited while still farming full time.

The second generation of Kieffers, Terry and Nancy's sons Travis and Dakota, now run the business day-to-day. They have been working in the business since they were

"walking and able to push a broom," according to Travis. The brothers have combined their experience of growing up in the business with formal educations (in engineering and business) to continue to evolve the company's capabilities and patented processes.

Thermoforming is a unique process that starts with a flat sheet of plastic that is then vacuumed onto a mold (or part). While the majority of products Plastics Unlimited produces are for companies in

Iowa or surrounding states, up to 20% of the company's products are shipped worldwide.

Plastics Unlimited primarily serves customers in the construction, agriculture, material handling, aerospace and consumer goods industries making parts and products for some of the largest brands in the world.

Chances are, you use a product in your daily life on your farm or in your home that is connected to Plastics Unlimited - from the cab of your tractor or combine to your toothbrush.

The Kieffers and the team at Plastics Unlimited have worked to diversify the company's customer base and expand capabilities to become a preferred vendor of those they serve. There are only a couple of other thermoformers in Iowa - with Plastics Unlimited being the largest.



The products that Plastics Unlimited produces are highly engineered for durability and pleasing aesthetic versus mass produced, more price sensitive products. The company has continually invested in education, tools and technologies to better serve customers' specific requirements. The company does more than thermoforming - with some projects requiring a process that adheres fiberglass to the



plastic (to increase durability) and also assembles and finishes products for some customers. Part of the company's mission is to produce quality products with on-time delivery - a promise that goes a long way with customers in today's market.

In April, the company announced that it had been awarded a Manufacturing 4.0 Grant for \$475,000 to invest in robotic trimmers from the Iowa Economic Development Authority. This will allow Plastics Unlimited to trim plastic parts much more efficiently. The company plans to add a total of four new robots this year to meet growing demand.

The Kieffers not only care about meeting expectations of the company's customers, they also care about their employees. "As an employer, we care and we work to have a good culture. Employees are not just a number here. Travis and I walk the production floor so that we are accessible to employees. Plastics Unlimited is more family oriented," said Dakota. Further, "you are doing things at Plastics Unlimited that you will go home and see on your farm - your work supports a large company that is feeding the world - what you do here matters," said Dakota.

Looking ahead, the Kieffer brothers anticipate continued growth, further process refinement and additional automation to keep the business vibrant. And, in addition to adding more automation, they know they will need to rely on future workforce to get them there. "It used to be hardest to get sales, now that's the easiest part. Now, the hard part is keeping up with demand and adding people and equipment to do so," said Dakota.

"There are very few people coming out of high school who want a job in a manufacturing facility versus going to college. But, we have a variety of positions from engineering, to IT to CNC operators," said Travis. "Manufacturing isn't like it was 20 years ago where you punch a clock and do the same thing all day. It's innovative and rewarding work in a cleaner, nicer environment. Give it a try."

While hiring can be difficult in a rural setting, the

co-owners acknowledge that as a difficult task regardless of location and are grateful to be doing business in rural Iowa. "We receive good support from the City of Preston, the state of Iowa and Maquoketa Valley. Our requests get answered in a timely fashion and there is a willingness to make adjustments to meet our timelines. We appreciate that. I can't imagine doing business in Illinois or California. The cost and requirements would be too steep. Our community is so supportive and pushes for us, not against us. There is a general ease of doing business here," said Travis.

July MVEC Board Update

- Reviewed the Cooperative's property damage and workers' compensation claims from recent years.
- Received an update on the status of getting approval from the Iowa Utility Board for the revised MVEC tariff that was filed in 2021.
- Discussed and approved services to be provided by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives for the 2022-2023 IAEC fiscal calendar.
- Discussed and approved the annual wage adjustment for Cooperative employees.
- Reviewed the Cooperative's insurance coverage levels and approved renewal with Federated Insurance for the next two years.
- Appointed voting delegates for upcoming affiliate association meetings.
- Discussed the status of wholesale power contract and reviewed items of interest that are still being discussed in detail.

August MVEC Board Update

- Elected Board Officers for the next year in the reorganization meeting that immediately followed annual meeting.
- Received an update on recent activities of the member services and business development group.
- Reviewed the Operations and Maintenance Inspection report that was recently completed by RUS.
- Reviewed outage data that was collected by the Iowa Utility Board for 2021. Maquoketa Valley's average outage time over the last five years is 48% lower than the average Iowa rural resident.
- Reviewed the status of progress made on initiatives identified in the Cooperative's 2021 Strategic Plan.





TECH LINK

When Should You Consider a Wi-Fi Booster?

MVlink offers a whole home (or small business) Wi-Fi option for an additional \$4.95 per month with the GigaSpire router, a next-generation Wi-Fi system. Leveraging the latest advancements in Wi-Fi 6 technology, the GigaSpire combines blazing-fast speeds with whole-home coverage to give you an unrivaled online experience. MVlink couples the GigaSpire with a fiber modem to provide a superior experience for members.

If our GigaSpire Wi-Fi router is getting installed with your MVlink fiber internet service, your MVlink install technician will conduct a home evaluation taking into account your home's layout, construction materials, and your family's internet habits. Then, they will make a recommendation on the number of routers needed, placement of the router(s) or recommend a mesh unit Wi-Fi booster.

A Wi-Fi Booster extends Wi-Fi coverage upstairs, downstairs as well as to the basement, garage and yard. Your home's square footage, the location of the router (centrally located in your home is best) and the number of Wi-Fi challenges (brick or stone walls, heavy furniture, etc.) may require using a Wi-Fi Booster - MVlink offers Mesh Wi-Fi to boost or extend Wi-Fi signals.

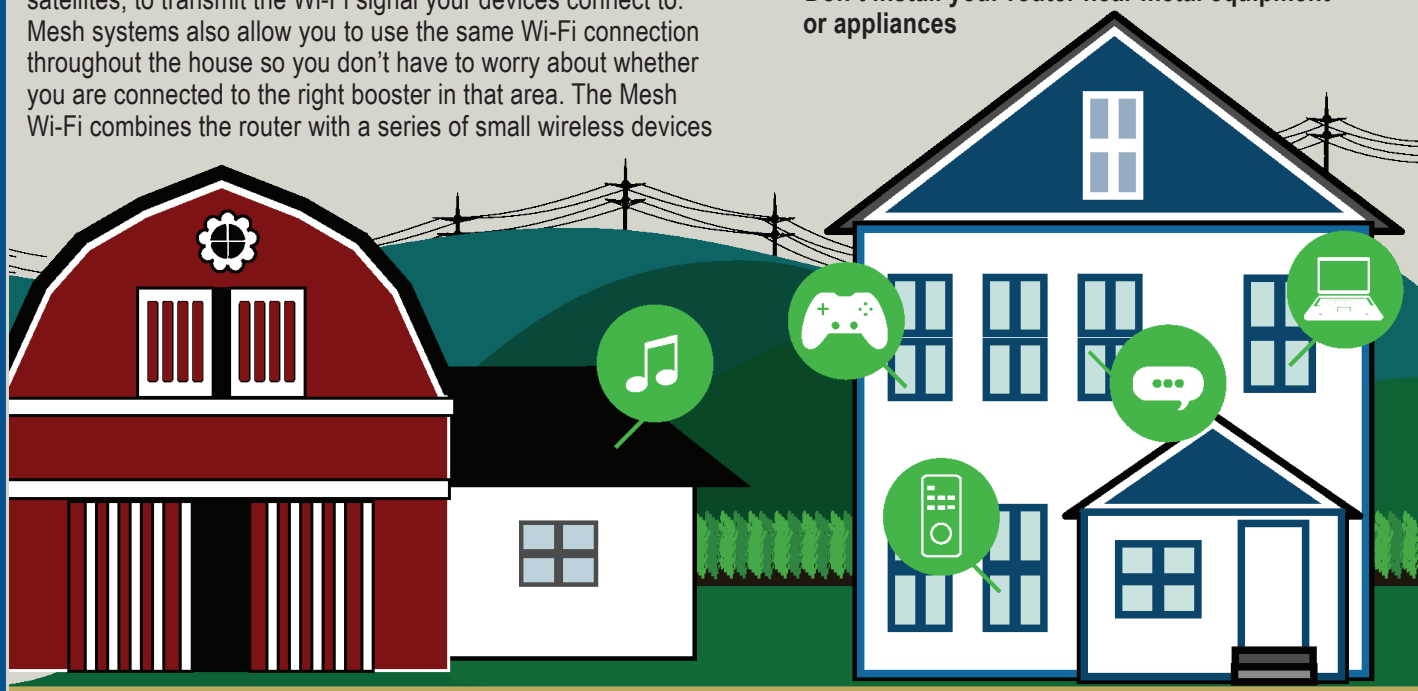
What's different about mesh Wi-Fi systems is the equipment: there's a router as well as a series of satellite modules. Like your current Wi-Fi network, Mesh Wi-Fi uses a router, along with satellites, to transmit the Wi-Fi signal your devices connect to. Mesh systems also allow you to use the same Wi-Fi connection throughout the house so you don't have to worry about whether you are connected to the right booster in that area. The Mesh Wi-Fi combines the router with a series of small wireless devices

- called satellites - which you place in different rooms in your home. These satellites communicate with the router and provide you with a strong Wi-Fi signal everywhere, whether it's your bedroom, your home office, or even your backyard. What's more, once you're connected to your Mesh Wi-Fi network, there's nothing else you need to do. You can roam freely in your home with any of your devices and not have to worry about losing your connection or dealing with poor performance. The Mesh Wi-Fi system knows where you and your device are at all times and connects you to the nearest satellite.

In addition to solving your biggest home Wi-Fi challenges, and giving you outstanding performance, Mesh Wi-Fi is cost-effective. You can purchase a mesh unit from MVEC for a one-time charge of \$90 plus tax. With the router/Mesh Wi-Fi combination, if you experience any technical issues MVlink's tech team is just a phone call away to access your network and remotely figure out the source of your problem.

If you're looking to get started or boost Wi-Fi reach at your home, you'll need to consider the following when determining how to get the best performance from your Wi-Fi router (or when to add a Mesh unit):

- **1 router for each floor of your home**
- **1 router for every 2-3 bedrooms**
- **1 router for every 8 devices**
- **Install your router on interior walls**
- **Don't install your router near metal equipment or appliances**

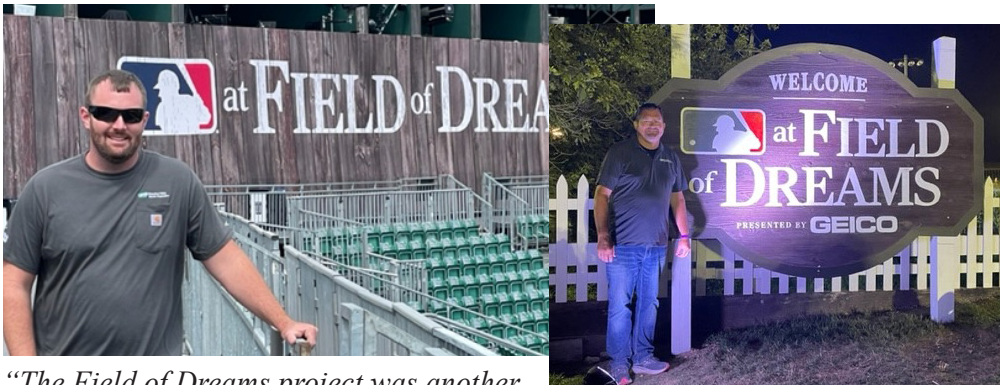




MVlink Steps Up to the Plate for Second MLB Game at Field of Dreams

MVEC's MVlink fiber internet was used for the second ever Major League Baseball game at the Field of Dreams in Dyersville on August 11, 2022. As with last year's historic game, BaAM, the production company, relied heavily on MVlink's services. With the help of MVlink's high speed fiber network, BaAM in turn provided services to assist Fox Sports for production and onsite internet needs. MVEC also facilitated connections that carried all voice connections for the event as well as connections for two of the temporary cell towers erected to handle the influx of fans. The cellular provider for the event reported 100% availability of its cell tower before, during and after the game.

"Last year's inaugural game was truly a hallmark event that provided great visibility to the combination of rich history and innovation that we have here in Iowa," said Jeff Geistkemper, Fiber Plant Manager. "We were pleased to play a part in the success of this year's event by providing fast, reliable internet service to the field to enable a flawless broadcast."



"The Field of Dreams project was another opportunity to not only showcase MVlink's capabilities but to illustrate how critical broadband access is to rural America. The implications of having access to reliable, fast internet are far reaching - from educational opportunities to growth in commerce to economic development. That event producers can produce a worldwide broadcast from the middle of a corn field in Iowa is a testament to the infrastructure we have invested in. Our team worked hard to deliver our piece of this large project and once again, we were able to step up and meet the needs of those we work for," said Jeremy Richert, CEO, MVEC.

The MVlink fiber internet network, launched in 2016, was developed to expand MVEC's Smart Grid capability to allow communications with substation, line and meter equipment to help operate the Cooperative's electric system in the most efficient and reliable manner possible. In addition to improving system operations, this network helps members track their energy usage, improve energy efficiency and work and learn from home.



WANTED: Rural Iowa high school students who have a passion for leadership

Attend our webinar series in October for a chance to win Apple AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship! Learn more at [IowaYouthTour.com](https://www.iowayouthtour.com)

All students who register online by October 1 will receive a special box of co-op goodies in the mail.



Watts The Answer?

1. Discuss all operations for the day and go over power line/pole _____.

2. MVlink couples the GigaSpire with a fiber modem to provide a _____ experience for members.

3. As with last year's historic game, BaAM, the production company, relied _____ on MVlink's services.

Mail your answers in with your energy bill, or email them to efletcher@mvec.coop

Two winners will each receive a \$10.00 credit on their energy bills.

Please complete the following:

Name _____

Address _____

June winners:

Laverne Freilburger, Holy Cross
Matt Kolbet, Manchester



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**Happy
LABOR DAY!**

MVEC will be closed
Monday, September 5th
in observance of Labor Day

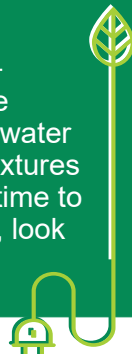
SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

MVEC will observe summer hours
May 2nd-September 30th, 2022
Monday-Thursday: 7:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Friday: 7:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Water heating accounts for a large portion of home energy bills. To save energy (and money!) use for water heating, repair any leaky faucets, install low-flow fixtures and insulate accessible hot water lines. When it's time to purchase a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for models that are ENERGY STAR® certified.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Understanding Your Electric Bill

ON-PEAK hours are 4 p.m. - 9 p.m.

OFF-PEAK hours are
Midnight - 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. - Midnight

These times are in effect every day.

Watts Current

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