



By Michael P. McMahon

Future Building and Warehouse Planning

Vernon Electric Cooperative's present headquarters is on Main Street in Westby. The current headquarters building began construction in 1956 and became

our present home in 1957. Ten years later, 1967, a garage was added to the back of the building. Since then part of that added-on garage has become additional office space. The garage can hold eight vehicles but there are only four entrances, so often vehicle juggling occurs as usually the vehicle needed is blocked by another vehicle.

In 1971 a large garage was built one block west of the current headquarters building to house line trucks and material. This garage is packed to capacity. Again, trucks need to be juggled often because other trucks often block

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trucks that may be immediately needed. Trucks have to be backed out because there is no room to turn around, and the garage exits right onto a city street. Visibility is difficult backing out, causing several close calls and one minor accident so far. There is also no room in this garage for large material, so only small materials are kept here. Linemen need to go to a different warehouse to pick up large material.

In 1994 Vernon Electric built a new warehouse for large material with an outdoor pole yard extending off the back. Inside the warehouse are mostly overhead and underground transformers, reels of wire, and meter pedestals. The unconditioned building has a loading dock for large trucks and is situated about 1/4 mile from the headquarters building. When a materials delivery truck comes, an employee has to drive up to the building, crossing heavy traffic on Main Street, to open up the building for the delivery.

A review of our headquarters shows that our space is

limited and there is no place to expand. Our building is inefficient both in working conditions and in energy use. The cost to upgrade the building is substantial, and upgrades do not increase the usable space. We estimate that with our growing membership of 200 to 300 new members per year, we will have an increase in line crews, engineering and member service personnel. We will also need more IT (Information Technology) personnel with specialized equipment in future years.

Planning

For the benefit of our members, we need to consider the most economic course of action and develop an action plan that will suit the cooperative's needs now and into the future. With an action plan in place, we can start initiating the plan in steps:

- Step 1 – Locate a suitable site to support the future growth needs. Submit the proposed site for board consideration and approval and then acquire the site.
- Step 2 – Design a facility with expansion capabilities and develop a plan to finance and construct it. This must then be presented to the board for consideration and approval.
- Step 3 – We will need to secure financing, commence construction, and at the same time consider the disposition of the old facilities.

What's Happened So Far?

Step 1 has been completed. Several acres of vacant land were acquired on December 29, 2006. The property is adjacent to the city limit of Westby and is suitable for the cooperative's future use. The land will continue to be farmed under a lease agreement.

Currently the Board of Directors has taken action moving on to step 2 and is considering the requirements necessary for design of a new facility. Step number 3 has yet to begin, and the continuation of this project would be carefully weighed and fully analyzed prior to an actual construction decision by the cooperative. This is a once-in-a-50-year-type project, the first of which was undertaken back in 1956! ■

Remembering Dorothy Krause

Former Vernon Electric board member Dorothy Krause passed away on August 2, 2007. Dorothy made Vernon Electric history when she was elected as the first woman to its board in 1992. She served as secretary to the board until her retirement from the board in 2001. Even though Dorothy was the only woman on the board, she represented herself and her constituents well and always voiced her opinion when she had one. It was not uncommon for Dorothy to ask questions about current issues and to make suggestions when warranted. She was active in all the activities of the cooperative. Dorothy thought it was very important that at least one woman be represented on the board and gave her verbal support to the nomination of her successor, Bernadine “Bernie” Hornby, when she retired from the board.

Dorothy lived her entire life in Vernon County. As a teenager, she was secretary for one of the county’s first 4-H clubs. For 45 years she was an elementary school teacher and served as secretary and president of the

Vernon County and La Crosse teachers organizations.

Preserving history was always important to Dorothy. She was involved with and served as president of the Vernon County Historical Society and helped organize the Westby Historical Society. She was an important volunteer at Norskedalen and received their Homstead Award for her service. She was a regular exhibitor at the Vernon County Fair and started its Antique Department, for which she was superintendent.

Dorothy often visited homebound people and folks in nursing homes. They often looked forward to her visits because she would always bring her beloved Sheltie dogs with her. Dorothy also enjoyed volunteering, raising animals, gardening, and making quilts. ■



Introducing E-Billing

The e-bill option at Vernon Electric Cooperative is now available, and as an incentive you will receive a \$5 credit on your next billing statement after signing up. E-bill gives you the

ability to instantly view information about your bill from your home, office, or any place that you have access to the Internet. It also allows you to view your account and pay your bill online through a secured web site via the Internet.

To get started, simply access the e-bill site by visiting Vernon Electric’s web site:
www.vernonelectric.org.

- Have your VEC account number ready
- Click on “Account Services”
- Click on “E-Billing”
- Follow the appropriate instructions and then click on “submit”

It’s that easy and you’re on your way to accessing your account. Not only can you look at the current bill that would have actually been mailed to you, but you also have the capability of looking back at previ-

ous months’ bills and payments too.

“Not only do our customers benefit, but it also saves time and money for Vernon Electric by not having to print monthly bills, process payments, and for the most obvious of reasons — it eliminates postage costs,” said Karla Yanske, director of office services.

Once you decide to sign up, Vernon Electric will e-mail a notification that the bill is ready to view online, along with a link to Vernon Electric’s web site. A bill will no longer be mailed to you after this point. Upon entering the e-bill site, you will need your e-mail address and password to sign on to the secured site. A helpful suggestion would be to add the site as a favorite to your browser for future access.

“By providing this new billing option, we hope that our members realize Vernon Electric’s commitment to bringing them the best services possible,” Yanske said.

If you are interested in using the e-bill option, please visit our web site at www.vernonelectric.org, or call 608-634-3121 or 1-800-447-5051 and ask how to get signed up for our e-bill service. You may also contact Karla Yanske at kyanske@vernonelectric.org. ■

The **COOPERATIVE** *Difference!*

Vernon Electric Cooperative Celebrates Co-op Month

We here at Vernon Electric would like to celebrate Co-op Month by inviting you to our Open House on Friday, October 19. We will have some refreshments available, some displays to look at, some door prizes to win, and we'll even give you a tour of our building. I look forward to seeing you here at our office.

Co-ops across our nation, Wisconsin, and right here in our local counties are taking time this month to recognize cooperatives as an excellent way to do business and provide needed services. Vernon Electric is located in Westby, which

by itself has six cooperatives in this small town of approximately 2,500 people. I've counted 20 cooperatives in Vernon County, and chances are you have done business with one or more of them. Here they are, and I hope I haven't forgotten any (let me know if I did):

1. Vernon Electric Cooperative
2. Vernon Telephone Cooperative
3. Farm Credit Services
4. Viroqua Food Cooperative
5. Westby Co-op Credit Union
6. Hamburg-Stark Mutual Insurance
7. Accelerated Genetics
8. Organic Valley
9. Heartland Country Co-op
10. Vernon Co-op Oil Assoc.
11. Westby Co-op Creamery
12. Hillsboro Farmer's Co-op
13. Chaseburg Farmer's Co-op
14. Vernon County Farmer's Union
15. Foremost Farms
16. Vernon/Crawford DHIA Milk Marketing Co-op
17. Northern WI Tobacco Pool
18. Golden Guernsey
19. Rural Insurance
20. Vernon Co. Farm Bureau ■

VEC OPEN HOUSE

Friday, October 19

Come help us celebrate Co-op Month at the Vernon Electric Cooperative office in Westby from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Displays and Activities:

- Slide show of August storm damage
- Electric/gas hybrid cars on display from Honda Motorwerks
- Rural well water screening for nitrates by the Vernon County Land & Water Conservation Department from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Bring in about a pint of fresh water in a clean glass or plastic container.
- Blood pressure, total cholesterol, and glucose screening (\$10 fee for cholesterol and glucose screening) by Vernon Memorial Health Care from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Electric grills
- Surge protection equipment
- Uninterruptible battery backup units for computers
- Renewable energy displays
- Door prizes
- Refreshments



VEC Joins ENERGY STAR Change a Light Campaign

Vernon Electric has joined the ENERGY STAR® Change a Light, Change the World campaign again this year. “We have joined a growing community of corporations, utilities, manufacturers, individuals, and countless others who have made a firm commitment to change the world, one light — one energy-saving step — at a time,” said Dave Maxwell, director of marketing & communications.

As part of this national movement, Vernon Electric Co-op has again volunteered to encourage 100 individuals to pledge to replace at least one incandescent bulb or fixture at home with one that has earned the government’s ENERGY STAR label as a first step to preserve our energy resources and environment. One hundred pledges could save up to \$3,000 over the lifetime of the bulbs and prevent 450,000 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.

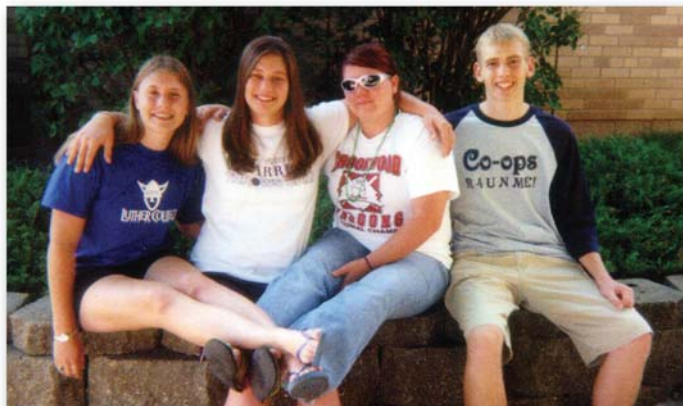
“Like many organizations, we want to do our part to create a better environment,” said Maxwell. “Participating in this national campaign is both easy and effective. We are proud to spread the word about the simple steps individuals in our communities can take to make a difference.”

Vernon Electric will take an active role in encouraging individuals to make a simple, yet meaningful commitment by taking the ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge. With lighting accounting for about 20 percent of the typical home’s electricity use, switching to energy-efficient options is a significant way to reduce greenhouse gases, save energy, and protect the environment for future generations. To be part of Vernon Electric’s efforts, take the pledge online at www.energystar.gov.

“Organizations like Vernon Electric Cooperative are an important part of the ENERGY STAR Change a Light community who have committed their time to help us spread the word about the ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge, and we are proud to work with them,” said Wendy Reed of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The ENERGY STAR Change a Light Pledge is already having a dramatic impact. Individuals who pledged to change a light in 2006 alone have the potential to save more than \$2 million in energy costs and prevent more than 33 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions!

The ENERGY STAR Change a Light, Change the World campaign is a national challenge sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. ■



L to R: Rachel Oppriecht, De Soto HS; Tallitha Reese, Hillsboro HS; Jenna Los, Brookwood HS; and Ian Begeman, Westby HS.

Local Youth Attend Leadership Congress

Four high school students from the Vernon Electric Cooperative membership attended the 44th Youth Leadership Congress this summer on the UW–River Falls campus. Over 115 students from around the state attended the Youth Congress. Based on comments from the students, the Youth Congress was a huge success again this year. The goals of the Youth Congress were to introduce cooperative basics, demonstrate the value of cooperation in every day life, identify and encourage the development of leadership skills among students, establish a forum for teens to examine important issues of the day, and provide a taste of college life and have fun.

This year’s learning sessions focused on careers with electric cooperatives, climate change, credit unions, and the life of politics. Students were given the opportunity to campaign and run for election to the YLC Board. Ian Begeman, representing Vernon Electric, was elected by his peers to serve on the 2007–08 board. Ian, along with five other elected youth, will help plan next year’s event and will be given the opportunity to go on a Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. Congratulations to Ian! ■



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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