

Since 1940

WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* NEWS

April 2026

VERNON
Electric
COOPERATIVE — WESTBY, WISCONSIN
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

LOOKING UP
TO LINeworkERS

SHOULD I UPGRADE
MY APPLIANCE?

CARROT RECIPES

KIDS AND CRITTERS

PLATFORM
TILT UP

ON

PLATFORM
ROTATE CCW



POWERING OUR COMMUNITIES:

Recognizing the Team Behind the Lines



by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

When a storm rolls through the Driftless Region and the wind begins to howl, most people head indoors and wait for the weather to pass. For line workers, that is often when the work is just beginning.

Line workers are the individuals most people associate with electric cooperatives, and for good reason. They are the ones climbing poles, repairing damaged power lines, replacing equipment, and restoring service when outages occur. Their work is physically demanding, highly technical, and often performed in difficult and dangerous conditions. Whether it's the heat of summer, the cold of winter, or the middle of the night during a storm, line workers are ready to respond when members need them most.

Every April, electric cooperatives across the country celebrate Line Worker Appreciation Day to recognize the dedication and commitment of these highly skilled professionals. At Vernon Electric Cooperative, we are proud of our line workers who serve our members each day. Their work is essential to maintaining the reliable electric service that powers homes, farms, and businesses throughout our service territory.

The responsibilities of a line worker go far beyond responding to outages. Much of their time is spent maintaining and strengthening the electrical system so that outages are less likely to occur in the first place. This includes replacing aging equipment, inspecting poles and lines, trimming vegetation that could interfere with power lines, and upgrading infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our members.

Safety is always a top priority. High-voltage electricity presents serious risks, and line workers undergo extensive training to perform their work safely and effectively. From specialized climbing techniques and equipment operation to detailed safety protocols, every task is approached with caution and professionalism. The goal is simple but critical: to ensure that everyone returns home safely at the end of the day.

During major storms, they often work long hours under challenging conditions to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. Members may see the trucks and crews along the roadsides and understand that help is on the way. Those moments are often when the dedication of line workers is most visible. However, the work that goes into restoring power is rarely accomplished by one person or even one crew alone.



Delivering electricity to thousands of members is truly a team effort.

While line workers are on the front lines of maintaining and restoring the electric system, there is an entire team of employees behind the scenes working together to support them. Every department within the cooperative plays a role in ensuring that the lights stay on and that our members receive the dependable service they expect.

The connection between the cooperative and its members is the member services team. These employees are often the first point of contact when members call with questions about their account, report an outage, or request new service. Their role requires specialized knowledge, and a strong commitment to helping members understand their electric service.

During outage situations, member services employees handle a large number of calls from concerned members. They gather information that helps crews identify the scope of the outage and communicate updates as restoration work progresses.

Another critical part of the operation is system mapping. Mapping specialists maintain the detailed records that show

where every pole, line, transformer, and piece of equipment is located across the cooperative's service territory. These maps are far more than simple drawings; they are essential tools that allow crews to quickly identify circuits, isolate problems, and determine the safest and most efficient way to restore power.

Accurate mapping is essential, especially during outages. When a problem occurs somewhere along the system, line workers rely on mapping information to understand how the electrical system is connected and where potential trouble spots may exist. Without accurate and up-to-date maps, restoration efforts would take significantly longer.

The metering department also plays a key role in ensuring reliable service. Meters measure the electricity used by members and provide the data needed for accurate billing. Metering specialists install, test, maintain, and troubleshoot meters to ensure they are functioning properly.

Modern metering technology provides valuable information that can help identify service issues and monitor system performance. This data can assist crews in diagnosing problems more quickly, ensuring members receive reliable service.

In today's world, technology is deeply integrated into the operation of an electric cooperative. This is

where the information technology (IT) team becomes essential. IT professionals maintain the computer systems, communication networks, and cybersecurity protections that support nearly every aspect of the cooperative's operations.

From outage management systems and billing software to employee communication tools and system monitoring platforms, IT staff ensure that the digital infrastructure remains secure and operational.

Another vital part of the cooperative is the accounting department. These professionals manage the financial side of the organization, ensuring bills are accurate, payments are processed properly, and the cooperative remains financially healthy.

Equally important is the role of human resources (HR) in supporting the cooperative's employees. HR professionals help recruit and retain the talented individuals who make up the cooperative team. They coordinate employee training, manage benefits and policies, and help ensure that employees have the support they need to succeed in their roles.

Supporting the entire operation is the cooperative's warehouse team, which manages the inventory of materials and equipment needed to maintain the electric system. From large items like poles and transformers to smaller hardware used in daily work, the



Members of VEC's member services team gather for a quick photo. The team plays an important role in assisting members, answering questions, and communicating updates during outage situations.

warehouse ensures that crews have the supplies they need when they need them.

When outages occur or major projects are underway, having the right materials available can make all the difference. The warehouse team carefully tracks inventory, coordinates deliveries, and ensures that equipment is ready for crews heading out into the field.

All of these departments work together to support the cooperative's mission of providing reliable, affordable electricity to our members. While the

Continued on page 18





STRIPES, SPOTS, AND *Wagging Tails*



By Leah Call

Is it a tiger? Is it a giraffe? No — it’s a Labradoodle sporting a whole new look after a visit to Furry Kid Grooming Salon LLC in Readstown.

Owner and professional groomer Chelsey Clark has added creative coat coloring to her lineup of grooming services, and her canine clients are turning heads wherever they go. From giraffe spots and cow prints to brightly colored tails and ears, this Vernon Electric Cooperative member’s playful designs add a touch of whimsy to the traditional grooming routine.

“I love doing things that bring smiles to people’s faces. So if I add a little color and it makes people smile, that absolutely makes my internal light glow,” said Clark.

Ninety-five percent of Clark’s four-legged clients come to Furry Kid Grooming for basic grooming services: brushing, bathing, haircuts and nail trims. And after six years of running her business, Clark has built a loyal clientele that keeps her clippers buzzing and her appointment calendar full.

Curiosity to Career

Clark first became interested in pet grooming about 17 years ago while

working at a pet boarding facility in the Madison area. After watching the owner groom dogs, she decided to pursue the craft herself and enrolled in grooming school.

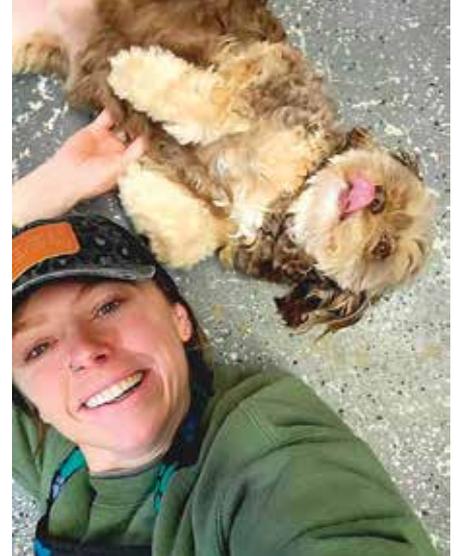
After completing her training in 2011, she worked as a groomer in Middleton before moving to Readstown in 2016. With limited local job opportunities in her field, she launched Furry Kid Grooming Salon in the lower level of her home in 2021.

As Clark’s business grew, her appointment calendar quickly filled. Recently, she added another groomer to help meet demand. “I was turning away business because I was so busy,” Clark said. “Finding another groomer who shares similar viewpoints and practices has been such a blessing.”

A Creative Outlet

Clark was introduced to the more artistic side of grooming through professional seminars, where she took courses on coat-coloring techniques.

“That really inspired me to look outside the basics and find another avenue to express my creativity,” she said. “Not everyone wants to color their dog like a giraffe or a cow, but I’ve had



Chelsey poses with one of her furry clients during a grooming session.

some customers who are fun enough to give it a try.”

One memorable design was a giraffe pattern she did on a Labradoodle named Indigo. “The whole time I was working with her, her tail was wagging and she was dancing around,” recalled Clark.

That enthusiasm can make the job a bit more challenging. “The coloring takes quite a bit of time to do on a



“Indigo Moon” – Golden Doodle



“Charlie” – Golden Retriever



“Riley” – Labradoodle

large dog, there's a lot involved," she explained. "Sometimes the happier the dog, the harder it can be."

Clark wants all her clients—with two legs and four—to be happy. When it comes to coat coloring, she prefers to establish a relationship with a dog before attempting elaborate designs. "I don't expect them to show up and stand here for the extra amount of time if we have just met each other," Clark said.

Safe Products, Happy Dogs

Clark uses top-of-the-line, clinically tested and cruelty-free products for all her grooming services, including the pet-safe, non-toxic dyes and paints used in her creative designs.

With these products— along with foil, plastic wrap, and a lot of patience— she can transform dogs into zoo animals or even paint a poodle pink for breast cancer awareness month. The semi-permanent paint can last a few weeks to several months depending on the dog type, and frequency of bathing and grooming.

Whether she's applying color or simply giving a dog a bath and a trim, Clark measures her success by the bonds she builds with her four-legged clients. "I like to establish a good relationship with the dog. It's not just a groom for me; I want them to be happy and comfortable."

For now, dogs are Clark's only artistic canvas, but she welcomes the chance to try her colorful craft on other animal species. "I would love to do



Chelsey Clark, owner of Furry Kid Grooming Salon LLC in Readstown.

color on a chicken or another animal," she quipped. "I just don't know many farmers who will let you color their livestock. But I'm always up for trying something new."

With more than 15 years of grooming, Clark has built lasting memories with many canine clients – including those who have crossed the rainbow bridge. "Some clients become like family to me. That's what I like most about doing what I do."

Powering Communities

Continued from page 16

work of line workers may be the most visible, it is the collaboration of many individuals with different skills and responsibilities that allows the cooperative to operate effectively.

At Vernon Electric Cooperative, every employee plays an important role in serving our members. The teamwork between line crews, office staff, and support departments ensures that when challenges arise—whether it's a severe storm, equipment failure, or the need for system improvements—the cooperative is ready to respond.

Line worker Appreciation Day gives us an opportunity to recognize the dedication of the men and women who work on the front lines of the electric system. At the same time, it is also a reminder that reliable electric service is the result of a coordinated effort by many talented individuals working toward a shared goal.

From the crews working on the poles to the employees answering phones, managing technology, maintaining records, supporting employees, and ensuring materials are available when needed, every person at the cooperative contributes to keeping the lights on.

We are proud of the entire Vernon Electric Cooperative team and grateful for the work they do each day to power the communities we serve. When members flip a switch and the lights come on, it is the result of the dedication, teamwork, and commitment of all the employees who make reliable electric service possible.

For more information on coloring and other grooming services, visit the Furry Kid Grooming Salon Facebook page.



Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

110 Saugstad Road, Westby, WI 54667

608-634-3121 • 608-447-5051

email: info@vernonelectric.org

website: www.vernonelectric.org

Trevor Clark, Editor

