



# TOGETHER WE SERVE

Cooperation among cooperatives is the sixth of seven cooperative principles. Through practicing this principle, Illinois cooperatives are sharing resources to save labor and equipment costs, coordinating personnel and equipment on a state level to ensure faster outage restoration, and sharing best practices to provide innovative solutions for meeting our industry's and members' changing needs.

We are your cooperative, and our sole purpose is to serve you.  
Together, we can serve you better.



**Rock Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# BRIGHT FUTURES

## Await Scholarship Winners



**T**his year's Rock Energy Cooperative scholarship winners include a future agriculturalist, art teacher, nurse, optometrist, sports medicine doctor, lawyer, and a few engineers.

These young scholars possess the qualities that will help them succeed in their college studies as well as their future professions. They have participated in dozens of school clubs, competed in sports, performed in band and theater, worked on 4-H and scouting projects, and joined church groups.

Even with all those extra-curricular activities, they still found time to volunteer with community organizations and work to gain experience in their chosen field of study and help fund their college education.

A committee of co-op members met in February to select 10 graduating seniors from our service territory to receive \$500 scholarships. Ask any of them, and they'll tell you it isn't easy task because all applicants are outstanding in their own way.

Since 1989, Rock Energy has awarded \$102,000 in financial aid to deserving students. Funds for the scholarships come from unclaimed capital credits. Here's a brief introduction to the winners with excerpts from their applications:

**Kenneth Ballmer** is a senior at Clinton High School and plans to study agronomy and agricultural education.

"Even as a 4-year-old riding along with my grandpa in his cattle truck, I knew I wanted to grow up to be an agriculturalist. All my life I have been surrounded by agriculture. I have spent thousands of hours riding or driving a combine picking corn or soybeans, baling hay on a hot summer day, and mowing lawns. I love it, and I really would like to pursue the passion I have for agriculture and gain more knowledge and skills.

"I want to learn about and utilize practices and techniques to produce the best yields and highest efficiency on a farm of my own someday. I also hope to have the opportunity to work one-on-one with farmers so they can do the same. Further, I hope to learn about possible solutions to improve crop production in order to feed more people to keep up with the growing population and help fight world hunger.

"Through my participation in 4-H and FFA, I became interested in agricultural education. As a member of these organizations, I have learned about and gained skills in many different aspects of agriculture. I have shown swine and dairy at the county fair. But most importantly, I raised these animals. Through showing swine and dairy, I learned how to care for an animal and keep it healthy and properly fed and watered."



**Bryan Bartlett** is a senior at Evansville High School who will continue his education in biological, electrical, or mechanical engineering.

"I plan on studying STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) related subjects, most likely engineering. My father is an engineer and designed and built our house. He has taught me a lot about both engineering and many other subjects too. I have always been curious on why the world works the way it does and how we can use it to help us, and I can think of no better way to do that than to become an engineer and make devices to help other people.

"I hope to help our community and make it a better place to live, just like what Rock Energy is doing today."



**Holly Black** is a senior at Honeogah High School in Rockton who plans to study biology and sustainability and become an optometrist.

"As a young child I learned that I had poor vision and that it impacted my learning. I got glasses in kindergarten and even today I cannot perform many everyday functions without the help of my glasses or contacts. Despite



this, I work hard and have been successful in school. Being an optometrist would allow me to aid others through similar struggles and open them up to a world dominated by the sense of sight. Not only is vision a key factor for learning, but it also builds confidence and personality. Without my optometrist, I would not have been living my fullest. My ultimate goal is to bring improved vision to those who need it as I once did.

“As the drum major for the Hononegah High School Band, I am responsible for 100-plus marching band members and the smooth operation of practices and rehearsals. Being in this leadership position for three years has taught me life lessons and developed skills that I can use in the workplace and in college. ... Marching band molded me into a more confident self, something I can’t imagine developing anywhere else. Throughout my high school career, I have been very particular about my academics and grades. My developed leadership ability and academic record proves that I have what it takes to impact my community through higher education.”

**Noelle Buggs** is a senior at Craig High School in Janesville, where she is valedictorian of her class. She plans to study nursing specializing in fertility.

“I want to help others create families and have a smooth experience during their treatments. ... I plan on being committed to a career that will help others be in a better place in their lives.”

She remembers attending Rock Energy’s Member Appreciation Day events when she was younger. “During my childhood, my mother and grandparents would bring my sisters and me to the annual pancake breakfast and cookouts. It was always fun to get a ride in the (bucket truck) box and rise above everyone.”



**Zachary Currie** is a senior at Craig High School in Janesville who plans to study pre-med and biology and become a sports medicine doctor.

“My life’s ambition has always been to become a professional athlete. Then injuries wiped away most of my dreams. ... I did not let the injuries shape my story—the lessons of those injuries helped me succeed as a soccer captain, dedicated student,

and compassionate volunteer. Each injury taught me to draw strength from my family, my friends, and those that I serve.

“My love to become a sports medicine doctor is because

I know I can help athletes not only physically but mentally. What most doctors fail to understand is that the mental struggle is far worse than the physical for an athlete. I will help them overcome both obstacles, which in turn will make them stronger individuals.”

He coaches Special Olympics basketball teams and volunteers at homeless shelters. “These athletes opened my eyes to what truly matters in life. ... Staying overnight on one of the coldest nights at the men’s shelter revealed the strength of the men despite their rough situations. These experiences have opened my eyes to a world I never knew existed—a world I want to help change.”

**Samuel Fisher**, a senior at South Beloit High School and valedictorian of his class, plans to major in mechanical engineering.

“I have a great passion in all things science, so this type of degree is the right option for me.

“I am hoping to work for a company that develops and manufactures products in the aviation and space industry. ... I have always loved my classes in mathematics and science. I feel my passion for these subjects would lead me to be very successful and happy as a mechanical engineer.”

He has participated in the Running Start Program at South Beloit High School, which allowed him to attend Rock Valley Community College during his junior and senior years and receive an associate of science degree.



**Clyde Jacob Hollister**, a senior at Boylan Catholic High School in Rockford, plans to major in chemical engineering and minor in music.

“I chose chemical engineering because I enjoy chemistry a lot. I also enjoy math and science, which led me to choose engineering as my field of study.”

Music has been a major part of his life. At Boylan, he is a violinist who participated in the pit orchestra for musical productions. He also is a member of the Rockford Symphony Youth Orchestra and is involved in the group’s Chamber Orchestra. In addition, he is a member of Measure 5, an advanced string orchestra that performs concerts in area communities.

**Megan Kreier**, a senior at Milton High School, wants to major in history and pre-law with minors in theology and political science.

“I plan to study history with the idea of becoming a lawyer. ... I want to study history because I believe that knowing about our past can only help shape our future.

“My goal and dream is to work in national security or foreign relations. My future legal career will help me build a solid foundation in being a leader for communities and our country. ... My goals to serve communities and our nation fit with the ideals of a cooperative. I will work hard to reach my goals and continue to represent my community through serving others.”



“I took as many hard classes as my school offered, worked hard to get good grades, and participated in many groups and organizations in the community and at Dakota High School. I have been busy with activities like NHS (National Honor Society), band, Drama Club, Student Council, 4-H, golf, track, and Varsity Club.”

**Keegan Thiele** is a senior at Parker High School in Janesville and plans to major in education and minor in art.

“My goal is to be certified to teach art classes at the high school level. Art is my passion, so I not only plan to use it through education but also incorporate business aspects to sell my products. Teachers have similar schedules as the students, so I fortunately would have the summer months off. In that time,

I will have free time to pursue my passion for painting.

“My work ethic and past accomplishments are a good indicator of my future success. ... School is important to me, which shows through my level of involvement, high academic course rigor, and hard-earned GPA and class rank. These three elements have developed me into a hard-working student and prepared me for the education I have further selected.”



**Jared Lee** is a senior at Dakota High School and intends to major in mechanical engineering with a minor in mathematics.

“I plan to study mechanical engineering because I like math and science. Not only do I like it, I am pretty good at it. ... I have always had an interest in building things. 4-H has allowed me to create projects in electricity, woodworking, robotics, welding, and agriculture.



**CALL BEFORE YOU DIG**  
April is National Safe Digging Month

As part of National Safe Digging Month, Rock Energy Cooperative encourages homeowners to take the following steps when planning a digging project this spring:

- Always call 811 a few days before digging, regardless of the depth or familiarity with the property.
- Plan ahead. Call on Monday or Tuesday for work planned for an upcoming weekend, providing ample time for the approximate location of lines to be marked.
- Confirm that all lines have been marked.
- Consider moving the location of your project if it is near utility line markings.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that a call to 811 has been made. Don't allow work to begin if the lines aren't marked.
- Visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) for complete information.





## STATEWIDE REBATES NOT AVAILABLE TO ROCK ENERGY MEMBERS IN ILLINOIS

Rock Energy Cooperative periodically receives inquiries from Illinois members interested in getting rebates for purchasing energy-efficient products, smart thermostats, or other items designed to help them save energy.

Unfortunately, Illinois does not provide a statewide energy-efficiency program that offers incentives. Some larger utilities sponsor their own incentive programs, which are funded by a monthly fee added to customers' bills. Instead of collecting such a fee from all members and then disbursing funds in the form of rebates, Rock Energy allows individuals to make their own choices about whether to spend their hard-earned money on these improvements.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, mandates that utilities collect a fee from customers to support energy-efficiency programs and energy assistance for low-income households. For this reason, Rock Energy members in Wisconsin have a Public Benefits Charge on their bills. A portion of this money funds Focus on Energy, a statewide energy-efficiency program.

Even though statewide rebates aren't available, Rock Energy encourages its Illinois members to continue making energy-efficient improvements to their homes and businesses. These energy-saving measures will result in savings on future monthly energy bills.

## INSURANCE POLICIES COVER LOSSES FROM POWER OUTAGES

Rock Energy Cooperative works diligently to make sure your electricity and natural gas are there when you need it. But like all things, nothing is 100 percent guaranteed.

Outages or voltage issues—whether triggered by a storm, lightning, trees, equipment failure, animals, or vehicles hitting power poles—can damage computer equipment, TVs, and other appliances in your home. These events are out of our control, and Rock Energy Cooperative does not compensate for any damaged equipment.

However, most homeowner's and business insurance policies cover losses from interruptions caused by lightning, windstorms, and other sources. Make sure you're familiar with your policy and what is covered. Call your agent if you're not sure about your specific coverage.

You can help protect your own equipment by unplugging it during a power outage and by installing surge protection.

## CAPITAL CREDITS GENERALLY NOT TAXABLE

As tax time is approaching, Rock Energy Cooperative members might be wondering if the capital credits they receive are taxable.

Controller Dave Lancour said he believes that capital credits generally are not taxable for individual members. Whether your capital credit refund is taxable generally depends on whether or not you claimed your energy bills as a business expense, Lancour said. For example, a farm or other business claiming 75 percent business use of their energy costs would have to include 75 percent of the cash payment for the capital credits when received as income. The non-business portion is not subject to taxation.

Lancour suggested that members with specific questions should consult a tax adviser.

*Happy Easter!*



Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, March 30, in observance of Good Friday. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Monday, April 2. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, crews are always available 24 hours a day. If you need to report a power outage, please call 608-752-4550 or toll-free 866-752-4550.

**Shane Larson, CEO**

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**Barbara Uebelacker, Editor**



**ROCK ENERGY  
COOPERATIVE**  
Empowering Members Since 1936