



By Shane L. Larson,  
Chief Executive Officer

## More Power to You

If you've seen the recent news coverage about a legal dispute between Rock Energy Cooperative and the village of Rockton, you might be wondering what's going on at the co-op. Rest assured that we filed the lawsuit only after years and years of discussions with village officials.

We are asking the federal court to invalidate an April 2005 referendum that village officials claim authorizes them to acquire and operate the electric and natural gas distribution systems needed to provide electric and gas service within the village. We believe the 2005 referendum was flawed, primarily for two reasons.

First, there is a \$13 million difference between the dollar amount shown on the ordinance published before the election (\$35 million) and the dollar amount shown on the ballot voters received on Election Day (\$48 million). That's a big difference and simply isn't right. Just like it wouldn't be right for a retailer to advertise an item for \$35 and then expect you to pay \$48 at the checkout. Or for my son to ask me for \$35 for the latest video game and then take \$48 out of my wallet after I agreed to the smaller amount.

Second, the referendum specifically authorizes the village to buy the assets of South Beloit Water, Gas & Electric. It did not refer to acquiring assets from Rock Energy or Rock County Electric Cooperative Association, which was our name at the time. This is significant because Rock Energy Cooperative (or Rock County Electric Cooperative) is not SBWG&E. Rock Energy Cooperative is a cooperative, which means that residents of Rockton, like all of our members, already have a financial stake in their electric and natural gas company, so essentially they would be buying something they already own.

While our current lawsuit focuses on the flawed referendum, we firmly believe that Rock Energy can provide less expensive, more reliable, and safer service to the village. For the past seven decades, Rock Energy Cooperative has operated as a not-for-profit, cost-of-service provider. As a cooperative, any revenue collected by the co-op that isn't needed to cover the cost of providing ser-

vice is returned to members in the form of capital credits. To date, Rock Energy Cooperative has paid out nearly \$9 million to our members through capital credits.

Rockton officials have publicly stated that the village can purchase the utility, operate and maintain it, and give better service at the same cost as or less than residents are currently paying. But they haven't provided specifics. Where will the energy come from? How can such a small entity, like the village, negotiate favorable rates? Who is going to run the utility? How much will it cost to hire well-qualified people?

If you live in Rockton, you deserve to know the answers to these and other questions. I encourage you to talk to your village officials to assure that a potential purchase of the utility services would be in your best interest. Remember that as a co-op member, you already have a financial stake in Rock Energy. Again, why buy something that you already own?

Here's an interesting fact: In Illinois, the last municipal utility takeover occurred more than 50 years ago. Existing municipal systems were created decades ago when federally subsidized power and other financial advantages were available. There must

be legitimate reasons why a municipality in the state of Illinois hasn't taken over an existing utility in over 50 years. Rockton isn't the first Illinois municipality to explore a utility takeover in recent years; however, over the past 50-plus years, all others have done the analysis and determined that it was not in the best interest of their residents.

Rock Energy also is concerned that safety and reliability may suffer greatly if the village attempted to take on this very serious responsibility. We have been providing safe and reliable utility service for more than 70 years. It's what we do, and we do it well. And it's the only thing we do. Municipalities already provide many necessities—paving and plowing streets, keeping residents safe with police and fire protection, and maintaining city parks. The list goes on and on. Why does Rockton want to get into the electric and natural gas business?

Village officials recognize when other entities can operate businesses better than they can. In March 2009, the village board entered into a contract with the Stateline Family YMCA to take over management of the village- ▶

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owned swimming pool. A Rockton official was quoted in the *Rockford Register Star* saying this about the Y running the pool: “I think it’ll be a professional operation, run well and more efficiently, and the bottom line is it will be less of an expense to the village. They have trained staff on hand and do a lot of the training we previously had to outsource.”

The outcome of this lawsuit and a countersuit the village filed in state court will affect all Rock Energy members—those living outside of Rockton as well as those within the village. As a cooperative, we have a responsibility to do what is best for all of our members. When Rock Energy acquired the Illinois service territory from Alliant in 2007, our size more than tripled. With the additional members, our fixed costs are spread over more accounts, which helps keep costs down for everyone.

We didn’t file this lawsuit on a whim. As stewards of the co-op, we have a duty to our members to ensure that the cooperative’s assets are secured. As these matters work their way through the courts, Rock Energy will remain focused on delivering safe and reliable utility service at the lowest practical cost to all of our members, both in Rockton and across the rest of our system.

As always, we truly appreciate the opportunity to serve your energy needs. If we can do anything to improve our service to you, please contact us. ■




*Darrel Weber, new chairman of the Rock Energy Cooperative Board of Directors, presents Stan Dybevik (above, right) with a plaque in recognition of his service as chairman. Dybevik, who had served as chairman since 1995, passed his gavel to Weber. James Quade (below, right) receives a plaque for serving as treasurer since 1996.*



## Offices Closed for Independence Day

**R**ock Electric Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day and will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Monday, July 6. Members can make payments in the drop boxes at both offices throughout the holiday weekend. Even though our offices are closed, standby 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. Have a safe and happy Fourth of July! ■



### Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

When using your laptop computer at home, put the battery charger (an AC adapter) on a power strip that can be turned off. The transformer in the charger draws power continuously, even when the laptop is not plugged in.—Source: U.S. Department of Energy

### A Partnership to Help You Save Money!

# Rock Energy Cooperative Joins Forces with Focus on Energy

**R**ock Energy Cooperative is a new partner in Wisconsin's Focus on Energy initiative. That means you—our Wisconsin members—now have access to the valuable services and financial incentives provided through the program.

The partnership with Focus on Energy, which is effective July 1, benefits everyone by helping to manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, and protect the environment. Focus on Energy works with eligible residents, farms, and businesses to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, resulting in millions of dollars in energy savings for all Wisconsin utility customers each year.



**focus on energy**<sup>SM</sup>

*The power is within you.*

What can Focus on Energy offer to our members?

- Financial incentives that help offset the cost of eligible projects.
- A wealth of energy-efficiency tips and information available online at [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com) to help you learn more about what you can do to start saving energy today.
- Assistance with identifying high-efficiency products and local service providers qualified to make efficiency upgrades to your home or business.
- Technical expertise to help guide complex or innovative projects, such as renewable energy installations, from start to completion.

Rock Energy collects a Wisconsin-mandated public benefits fee of \$1.33 per meter each month. Half of that amount goes toward energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

“We have provided successful energy efficiency resources to our members since the program started in 2000,” CEO Shane Larson said. “Now, we’re excited that Focus on Energy will help us take that service to the next level. Our members will gain access to all the major players in energy conservation and renewables in the state.

Businesses, in particular, will appreciate the expertise available through Focus on Energy.”

Focus on Energy saves Wisconsin consumers more than \$239 million each year. The program offers residential, commercial/industrial, and agricultural consumers with rebates, incentives, energy audits, and project development assistance. It also provides resources for renew-

able project development, including site assessments, grants, and other incentives.

“In their effort to meet program goals, Focus on Energy service providers will actively seek out op-

portunities for viable projects that will benefit our members,” Larson said.

Rock Energy’s Wisconsin members are eligible for electricity-saving services and incentives for projects that begin July 1 or later. To learn more about what Focus on Energy has to offer, call (800) 762-7077 or visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com). ■

## Public Benefits Fee Now Charged for Each Meter

**R**ock Energy Cooperative is adjusting its collection method for the state-mandated public benefits fee so additional resources can be provided for energy conservation and low-income energy assistance programs.

To comply with state law, the \$1.33 monthly public benefits fee now is applied to each meter that a member has with Rock Energy. Previously, the fee was charged per member.

Half of the fee goes toward energy conservation and renewable energy programs, which now will be administered by Focus on Energy (see separate article), and the other half helps low-income members pay their utility bills. ■

## Get Connected

Check out these great deals offered with your Co-op Connections Card



### Marcella's Ceramics - Beloit, WI - (608) 362-5056

Hobby ceramics supplies, equipment, and services since 1958. We also manufacture casting slip, greenware, and bisqueware.

**20% Off Retail Products (excluding equipment)**



### Milwaukee PC - Janesville, WI - (608) 743-1267

Local computer retailer specializing in service and repairing all name brand PCs. We also sell new custom computers and various parts. Milwaukee PC is unique in the philosophy of providing outstanding customer service, alongside aggressively competitive pricing.

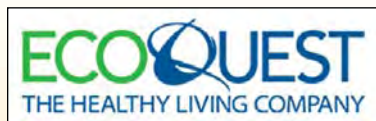
**10% Off Parts; 25% Off Labor**



### Patterson Auto Sales - Edgerton, WI - (608) 884-6890

Quality pre-owned vehicles, lowest prices around on cars, trucks, and accessories. Family owned.

**10% Over Cost on All Truck Accessories**



### Green Living Today - Beloit, WI - (608) 364-4585

Committed to healthy living in today's world. Offering multiple products that provide cleaner indoor air, purified drinking water, energy savings, and nutrition for a healthy body, home, and workplace. Our products are designed to make the entire indoor environment safer and greener. Ask about a free in-home trial of our fresh air purifier.

**5% - 10% Discount**

For a complete listing of current deals, visit [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Terms and conditions subject to change as desired by individual participating businesses.

## Tell Us What's Happening

Several pages in this magazine each month are devoted to news and features about Rock Energy Cooperative and its members, and we want to tell your story.

Have you taken any unusual steps to save energy and lower your utility bill? Do you know of a member who has installed a renewable energy source, such as solar or wind, to help conserve resources? Have you saved a significant amount of money using your Co-op Connections Card?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes," we want to hear from you so we can tell other members about your success. Call Barbara Uebelacker, communications specialist, at (866) 752-4550, e-mail her at [BarbU@rock.coop](mailto:BarbU@rock.coop), or write to her at Rock Energy Cooperative, P.O. Box 126, South Beloit, IL 61080. ■

## Member Appreciation Day 2009

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**Saturday, September 19**

**REC Headquarters**

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Hot dogs • Brats  
Hamburgers • Chips  
Popcorn

Shane Larson, CEO  
Barbara Uebelacker, Editor

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