



More Power to You

You Can Help Your Neighbor With Project Lift Up Donation

By Shane L. Larson,
Chief Executive Officer

Recent headlines paint a grim picture of the local economy:

*Jobless rate soaring. Jobless rate up again.
More workers are looking for jobs.
Jobless claims rise more than expected.*

The national unemployment rate rose to 9.5 percent in June, reaching a 26-year high. With its heavy reliance on manufacturing jobs, our area is faring worse than the rest of the nation. The rate was 14 percent in Winnebago County and 13.2 in Rock County. Beloit's jobless rate was the highest in Wisconsin at 18.6.

Numbers help us quantify the problem, but we must remember that those statistics represent real people who no longer collect a regular paycheck. They are our neighbors, and they need our help. In the true spirit of neighbor helping neighbor, Rock Energy Cooperative is launching Project Lift Up, a voluntary donation program that will help members who are struggling financially pay their energy bills.

Starting Sept. 1, you will have the opportunity to voluntarily donate to Project Lift Up by adding spare change to the amount paid on your monthly energy bill. That small amount of extra money will help fund our Rock Cooperative Care program. With the help of local agencies, Rock Cooperative Care assists low-income members with their utility bills. I have found that our co-op members are as kind and generous as they come and are always willing to lend a hand to a neighbor in need.

You have four options in which you can participate in Project Lift Up:

- Round your energy bill up to the nearest whole dollar amount. So if your bill this month is \$83.23, you would pay \$84. The extra 77 cents would be donated to Rock Cooperative Care. The most you could donate would be \$11.88 per year.
- Add \$1 each month to your budget billing plan. If you are on the budget plan, your bill already is a whole

dollar amount so \$1 will be added to your statement. If you choose this option, your annual donation would be \$12.

- Add a set monthly contribution each month. If you want to make a larger regular donation, this is the option for you. For example, \$5 could be added to your monthly statement for an annual contribution of \$60.
- Make a one-time only donation. If you choose this option, the amount you select will be added to your next bill.

Sign-up forms for Project Lift Up will be included in the newsletter you receive with your September energy bill. Participation forms also will be available at Member Appreciation Day on Sept. 19. Additionally, the form can be found online at www.rock.coop/projectliftup.html.

The funds you donate will go directly to Rock Cooperative Care, which offers a one-time grant of up to \$500 to help our residential members pay their utility bill. The actual level of assistance is determined by income guidelines. Rock Cooperative Care is designed to supplement the federal Low Income

Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which helps income-eligible consumers offset the cost of their heating bills.

Project Lift Up funds donated to Rock Cooperative Care will be distributed to low-income members through local community action agencies. This assistance is in addition to funding available through LIHEAP and actually will help more members because the income guidelines are less stringent. It will benefit members who fall through the cracks because they earn too much to qualify for federal assistance but not enough to make ends meet.

Please consider participating in Project Lift Up. Times are tough for a lot of our neighbors, and they need our help. Remember that one of the seven principles of Rock Energy and all cooperatives is Concern for Community. This is your chance to show you care.

I also want to call your attention to other items of ▶





interest in this month's magazine. You've heard a lot about the federal stimulus bill, formally known as the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and you might be wondering: What's in it for me? Well, on the energy side, Uncle Sam is offering tax credits for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. If you're in the market for a new furnace or central air conditioning system or want to take steps to make your home more energy efficient with insulation or new windows, your tax refund next year might be bigger than you expected. Tax credits also are available for renewable energy projects. See page 28 for all the details.

Once again, I'm asking for your help with the Our Energy, Our Future campaign, which asks Congress to remember consumers when they debate climate legislation. Since early this year, Congress has been considering what is commonly referred to as cap and trade as a way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Any action undoubtedly will increase electric bills. Electric co-ops like Rock Energy want Congress to make sure the results are fair, affordable, and achievable. While some progress was made, the bill that came out of the House could still prove to be devastatingly expensive for those of us in the Midwest. The time is now to let our senators know we are very concerned and we are monitoring their actions. See the ad on this page to join the grass-roots campaign. If you don't have Internet access, call our office and we'll fill out the online form for you.

And, finally, please join us on Saturday, Sept. 19, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for Member Appreciation Day. The festivities will take place at our Janesville headquarters, 2815 Kennedy Road. Our employees and directors have lots of activities planned and will be grilling plenty of food, so bring your appetites. See page 29 for the details. Member Appreciation Day is our way of saying "Thank You" to the most important part of the cooperative: You—the members. ■

Have a Safe and Happy Labor Day!

Rock Electric Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7, in observance of Labor Day. We will reopen at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 8. 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.

WE NEED YOUR HELP.



Our Energy, Our Future™
A Dialogue With America

Senators are drafting climate change legislation NOW, and you can impact the outcome.

Climate Change legislation should be:

Fair.

Climate Change legislation needs to recognize regional differences in how electricity is produced.

Affordable.

Any climate change plan must keep electricity affordable for all Americans.

Achievable.

Climate Change legislation must be realistic to ensure long-term success.

▶ Go to www.ourenergy.coop to make your voice heard.



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Use Tax Credits to Fund Efficiency Upgrades

The idea of living in a more efficient home—and paying lower utility bills—has widespread appeal. But finding ways to fund improvements can be difficult during hard economic times.

Fortunately, the federal government offers two ways to recover some of your expenses when planning upgrades: energy efficiency tax credits and renewable energy tax credits.

Through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—known as the federal stimulus bill—Uncle Sam offers a personal tax credit of up to \$1,500 for energy efficiency measures made at existing homes in 2009 and 2010. You can recover 30 percent of the cost of adding insulation materials and exterior doors, windows,

and roofs designed to help reduce your home’s heat loss or gain. The credit also covers efficient central air conditioners, air-source heat pumps, hot water boilers, and biomass stoves.

The credit may be applied toward material costs on all projects. You can also use it on installation costs for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems and biomass stoves.

Also, consider a renewable energy tax credit covering 30 percent of the cost of materials and installation for solar panels, solar water heaters, and geothermal heat pumps. This credit applies to existing homes and new construction. Projects must be placed into service between January 1, 2009, and December 31, 2016.

ENERGY STAR, a program of the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provides guidelines on what qualifies for both tax credits at www.energystar.gov, keyword “Tax credits.”

File for energy tax credits using IRS Form 5695. Remember to get a Manufacturer Certification Statement (a signed statement from the manufacturer certifying that the product qualifies for the tax credit) for your records. Both energy tax credits are non-refundable—they can increase your refund by reducing the taxes you owe, dollar for dollar, and can be carried forward to reduce your taxes in following years. But you don’t get a separate check for the credit amount. ■



Making Sense out of Federal Stimulus Energy Efficiency Tax Credits

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides incentives for you to make energy efficiency improvements to your existing home in 2009 and 2010. Receive a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost of materials for qualifying improvements—up to \$1,500 over both years. The cost of installation is not covered for windows, doors, roofing and insulation. A list of qualified improvements is at www.energystar.gov, keyword ‘tax credits.’ Examples include:

Windows and Doors

- Exterior Windows, Doors and Skylights** Must have Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC) and U-factor less than or equal to 0.30.
- Storm Windows and Doors** When combined with the window/door over which it’s installed, it must meet the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) in your climate zone.

Roofing

- Metal, Asphalt Roofs** All ENERGY STAR metal and asphalt roofs qualify. Must be expected to last 5 years or have a 2 year warranty.

Insulation

- Insulation** Primary purpose must be to insulate. For example, vapor retarders are covered but insulated siding does not qualify. Also must meet 2009 IECC and be expected to last 5 years or have a 2 year warranty.

Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Central Air Conditioning** For split systems, must have an energy efficiency ratio (EER) greater than or equal to 13 and a Seasonal EER greater than or equal to 16. For package systems, must have an EER greater than or equal to 12 and a SEER greater than or equal to 14.
- Air-Source Heat Pumps** For split systems, must have a Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) greater than or equal to 8.5, an EER greater than or equal to 12.5, and a SEER greater than or equal to 15. For package systems, must have a HSPF greater than or equal to 8, an EER greater than or equal to 12, and a SEER greater than or equal to 14.
- Natural Gas or Propane Furnace** Must have an Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE) greater than or equal to 95.
- Gas, Propane, or Oil Hot Water Boiler and Oil Furnace** Must have an AFUE greater than or equal to 90.
- Advanced Main Air Circulating Fan** No more than 2 percent of furnace total energy use.

NOTE: Select non-solar water heaters and biomass stoves also qualify for energy efficiency tax credits. Tax credits are also available for renewable energy, including geothermal heat pumps. For tax purposes, the Manufacturer’s Certification Statement and receipt are generally required.

Source: ENERGY STAR. For details visit www.energystar.gov.



Member Appreciation Day

is our way of saying

THANKS

to you—our valued members!

The employees and directors of Rock Energy Cooperative invite you to join us

Saturday, Sept. 19
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

REC headquarters,
2415 Kennedy Road, Janesville

- Free hamburgers, hot dogs, and brats grilled by employees and directors
- Popcorn and ice cream
- Bucket truck rides high up in the air
- Jumping booth for kids
- Health fair
- Jugglers
- Balloons
- Neighborly atmosphere



Bring your Rock Energy Co-op Connections Card to receive a free CFL

(Limit one per member)

Get Connected

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



All Game Taxidermy



All Game Taxidermy - Evansville, WI
608-322-5494 - www.allgametaxidermy.net

Full-service taxidermy. Formed in 2008, experienced, offering better service and higher quality work, with very affordable prices. Matt and Nick are also avid hunters and sportsmen and enjoy working on all projects to bring out the beauty in all of the animals that are brought to them.

5% Off

Flower Barrel - South Beloit, IL - 815-389-8600
www.flowerbarrelinsouthbeloit.com

Proudly serving the South Beloit area. Family owned and operated, committed



to offering only the finest floral products, backed by service that is friendly and prompt. Our professional staff is dedicated to making your experience a pleasant one. We always go the extra mile to make your floral gift perfect. Specialties include: tropicals; plants; European/dish gardens; contemporary, traditional, and "high style" arrangements; silk and dried floral arrangements; wedding and funeral designs; extensive line of gift, gourmet, and fruit baskets; greeting cards and candles. Let us be your first choice for flowers.

½ Off Delivery

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www.my2.tupperware.com/tupperwarelegacy

Tupperware®

Featuring exceptional designs for food preparation, cookware, knives, and upscale serve ware. Buy in bulk and store with confidence. Create healthy

meals in advance. HOME PARTY PLAN—Earn lots of free, lifetime guaranteed products. FUNDRAISERS—Earn 40% of sales using the Exclusive Fundraiser Line. CUSTOM KITCHEN PLANNING—Utilizing the "Modular Mate" organizational system. Lifetime guarantee against chipping, cracking, breaking, and peeling. No receipt required.

25% Off next product (with \$40 purchase); extra 5% Off for fundraisers

Fox Point Grille - Edgerton, WI - 608-884-0663

Simple elegance in dining. An intimate 50-seat restaurant and 10-seat full bar. Swing by, enjoy a glass of wine at the bar, or grab a table and savor a delicious meal. Featuring steaks and seafood, BBQ ribs and chicken, Cajun and German specialties. Family owned and operated in a beautifully restored historic building in downtown Edgerton. The menu honors four generations of family recipes and Midwestern favorites. Serving both lunch and dinner Tuesday through Saturday, brunch on Sunday, and now serving a FRIDAY NIGHT FISH FRY!

10% Off Dinners Tuesday-Thursday PMs



For a complete listing of current deals, visit www.rock.coop. Terms and conditions subject to change as desired by participating businesses. You also can use your Co-op Connections Card to receive a discount on prescription drugs. In July, Rock Energy members saved \$1,436 on their prescriptions, a 34% discount.