



# MISSED HOLIDAYS COME WITH THE JOB

## Assistant operations manager retires after 42 years

Denny Dolgner still remembers the Christmas Eve when he responded to a member's house that was on fire.

As the on-call lineman, he was dispatched to the burning house to disconnect the power for the fire department. A single mother and her two little girls lived in the house.

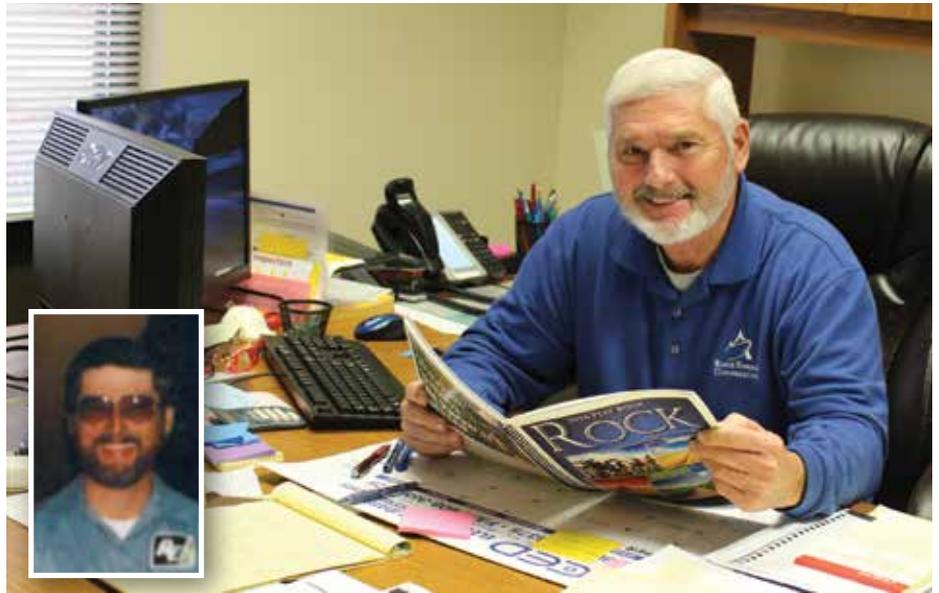
"It was Christmas Eve, and her house was burned to the ground," Dolgner said. "And she came up to me and thanked us for coming down there. She said, 'I didn't want to ruin your Christmas Eve.' And I said, 'You didn't ruin our Christmas Eve.'"

He was touched that the woman who had just lost everything was concerned that he was missing the holiday with his family.

During his 42-year career at Rock



In 2002, Dolgner sang the "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the Beloit Snappers game.



Denny Dolgner, assistant operations manager, is retiring after 42 years at the co-op.

Energy Cooperative, Dolgner missed many holidays because he was working. After he retires this month, he'll be around for all those future special occasions. He started working at the co-op in 1976 as a groundman, then became a journeyman lineman, and eventually moved up to assistant operations manager.

There was one year when Dolgner missed Christmas Eve, his wedding anniversary, his wife's birthday, and both of his young sons' birthdays because he was called out to work. He also didn't see his son's first home run. Despite all that he missed, his family was always understanding.

One of his big moments was singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the beginning of the Beloit Snappers game in 2002 during the co-op's annual Night at the Ballpark. Dolgner frequently does karaoke, but he was nervous to sing a cappella in front of a packed stadium. Later in the night he led the crowd in "Take Me Out to the Ballpark" during the seventh-inning stretch.

His worst moment at work happened after he and another employee used a boom to load a utility pole onto a truck. He drove away from the Janesville ware-

house with the 20-foot boom still up in the air. He took down an overhead power line that caused the entire Kennedy Road industrial park area to lose power.

"I never did that again, and I never lived it down," he said.

Dolgner is the third member of the operations department to retire in the last year and a half. Denny Schultz, director of utility operations, retired in May after almost 45 years, and Lynn Maier, operations manager, retired in September 2017 after 40 years.

"The co-op lost about 127 years of experience with those three retirements," said Shane Larson, chief executive officer. "As the Baby Boomers reach retirement age, many companies are seeing a similar shift in their work force. It's difficult to lose that much institutional knowledge within such a short period, but I'm confident that a new generation of employees is ready to step up."

In retirement, Dolgner has lots of house projects to tackle as well as hunting, fishing, golfing, and spending time with his 7-year-old grandson.

"It was a pleasure working with Denny, and I wish him and his family all the best in retirement," Larson said.



## TRIP TO WASHINGTON TEACHES TEENS ABOUT CO-OPS, POLITICS

“A once-in-a-lifetime experience!” That’s how students who went on the 2018 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., described the trip.

The six students who represented Rock Energy Cooperative were Brooke Gardner and Amanda Stevens of Rockton; Emily Larson, Rachel Strasser, and Stephanie Wright of South Beloit; and Emily Suiter of Milton. They joined more than 1,800 young leaders from across the country, returning with a greater appreciation of the political process and a better understanding of

cooperative business principles.

The students met with elected officials at the Capitol, and they visited Arlington National Cemetery, the Washington National Cathedral, several Smithsonian Museums, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the World War II Memorial, presidential memorials, the National Archives, the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, the Newseum, and several other historical sites.

The students said they now have a better understanding of co-ops and how they benefit members.

Meeting with Congressman Adam Kinzinger of Illinois are, from left: Amanda Stevens, Emily Larson, Stephanie Wright, Rachel Strasser, Brooke Gardner, and Emily Suiter.

Gardner, a student at Hononegah High School in Rockton, was impressed that the trip offered hands-on and interactive learning. “We were able to create a mock co-op—the Chip ‘n Pop Co-op—during the entirety of the trip, which helped me to learn because I take in information better when it is hands-on,” she said.

Her favorite part of the trip was seeing all the historical sites. “I had just finished my U.S. history course, so I was able to see all the sites my teacher had talked about,” Gardner said.

The favorite part of the trip for Wright, who also attends Hononegah, was the Marine Corps Sunset Parade at the Lincoln Memorial. “It made me realize how wonderful D.C. and America is and how proud I am to be an American,” she said.

Her interest in government and politics has grown since she returned. “This trip has inspired me to become more involved with my community and become more interested in politics and the government,” Wright said.

Visiting Arlington Cemetery held ▶

### How to Apply for 2019 Trip

Rock Energy Cooperative will fully sponsor up to four high school juniors to participate in the 2019 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., which will take place June 14–21.

Applicants must be children of Rock Energy members and reside in the co-op’s service territory. The all-expense-paid trip includes transportation, lodging, meals, and admissions to events. Round-trip travel is by motor coach from Springfield, Ill. Travel to Springfield is not included.

Two elements have been added to the application process this year. Students are required to submit a short video introducing themselves in a creative manner. Two letters of recommendation also must be submitted. All the details are available at [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop). Just go to the Community & Youth tab and click on Youth Tour. The deadline for submitting online applications is Feb. 28. If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Uebelacker, communications director, at 866-752-4550 or [barbu@rock.coop](mailto:barbu@rock.coop).





special meaning for Larson, a Hononegah student. “My great aunt and uncle are buried there, so it was a special experience for sentimental reasons,” she said.

She has always had an interest in government and politics, which the trip reinforced. “It was so surreal to immerse myself in the busy Washington, D.C., atmosphere, just as I have heard in stories and seen on TV,” Larson said. “Getting to meet people like Adam Kinzinger and Dick Durbin was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity as well.”

Stevens, who is homeschooled, had a difficult time picking her favorite part of the trip because she said it was all amazing.

“I fell in love with every memorial we went to and learned so much about how our amazing country came to be,” Stevens said. “One thing that really amazed me is all the monuments for veterans and active-duty soldiers. Being in a family that has members in the service, it is a very touching thing to know how much the country appreciates what our military does for us.”

Suiter, a student at Milton High

School, said her favorite part of the trip was meeting new friends from across the country.

She said the trip also sparked her interest in politics. “It has made me advocate for renewable and reusable energy sources, and now I will look at energy policies when deciding who to vote for in the future,” Suiter said.

Strasser, who attends South Beloit High School, said her favorite part of the trip was meeting all the other Youth Tour representatives from different states.

“I made friendships that will last a long time,” she said.

All six students encouraged current high school juniors to consider applying for the 2019 Youth Tour.

“While being so far away from home in an unfamiliar environment was intimidating at first, I met people and made memories that I won’t forget,” Larson said.

Strasser agreed, saying: “I would for sure recommend it to other students. I may have never been able to go to D.C. and see all of the monuments and museums that I was able to on this trip. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” ■



Rock Energy Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, Dec. 31, and Tuesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year’s holiday. 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.

**LAST CHANCE...**

Jan. 9 is the deadline to apply for Rock Energy Cooperative scholarships for 2019. Go to [www.rock.coop](http://www.rock.coop) for details or call 866-752-4550.

## VISIT WEBSITE BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

If you’re thinking about installing a solar generation system on your property, make sure to learn all the facts before signing a contract.

To get started, go to [www.rock.coop/distributed-generation](http://www.rock.coop/distributed-generation). There you will find a list of frequently asked questions, guidelines for technical requirements, our interconnection agreement, and details about our Small Distributed Generation Rate. This information can be provided to potential vendors so they are aware of the cooperative’s technical requirements.

If you have any questions after reviewing the information, please call us at 866-752-4550 or email [questions@rock.coop](mailto:questions@rock.coop).

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