

You are invited!

Dear valued members,

On behalf of the board of directors and employees, I am pleased to invite you to attend our upcoming Annual Meeting of Members. This meeting is an opportunity for us to come together as a community to discuss the progress and direction of our cooperative. The meeting will take place on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at Athens Christian Church, 1411 IL Hwy 29, Athens. Registration will begin at 4:30 p.m.

We know you have many things competing for your time, and to show our appreciation we will offer a \$20 bill credit for each registered membership at the event. Registration and attendance also include entry into a prize drawing for additional credits. You can expect a savory grilled pork chop dinner prepared by the Mason County Pork Producers, and by popular demand, the return of Kona Ice snow cones.

Check out the Official Notice booklet you received earlier this month for a detailed agenda, as well as financial reports and profiles of the directors slated for election. The business meeting will commence at 7 p.m., and will include reports from myself, your Board President and Treasurer, as well as the director election.

If your schedule doesn't permit you to attend our meeting, I encourage you to return the proxy card located on the back cover of your Official Notice booklet. Proxies are key to ensuring we reach a quorum of members to allow for the business of the cooperative to be held, and for your voice to be heard. This democratic process is crucial to what makes us a cooperative. We must receive your proxy by Friday, July 7.

As a member-owned cooperative, your participation shapes the future of our organization, and I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.



Alisha Anker
General Manager

Member spotlight

Jefferies Orchard

Spend a few moments with Dale Jefferies Jr., and you will quickly realize that Jefferies Orchard is about much more than produce. It is about family, tradition, community and relationships.

Dale Jr. is the seventh generation of Jefferies to work the orchard and retail store. He does so alongside his sister Madeline and their parents, Dale Sr. and Pam. The four partner to cover all aspects of the business — Madeline focuses on the agricultural side, and Dale Jr. on sales and marketing; you'll find Pam in the store and Dale Sr. either in a field or tinkering with equipment. Cousins, aunts, uncles and other family members also join the fun and come in seasonally to help out.

Farmland located on Jefferies Road in Springfield was purchased by the Jefferies family in 1818, with the current market and orchard sites purchased in 1855. Dale Jr.'s great grandparents, A.E. and Helena Jefferies, became original Menard Electric Cooperative members when they signed up for electric service in 1937. Look carefully inside the shop and you'll see many historical artifacts, such as photographs, original tools, antique items and more; see if you can spot one of our favorites, a sign noting Helena Jefferies as owner of an all-electric farm powered by Menard Electric.



Three generations of Jefferies in front of the store — Elaine, Pam and Dale Jr.

“Ever since I was a kid, my family has worked this farm every day, all day. My grandparents, Albert and Helen, ran the store then,” says Dale Jr. “All the tractors and equipment were purchased by grandpa or great grandpa. I like that they have a lower impact on the environment. And we just like to use the older things. There might be more modern ways, but there’s history in the way we do it.” Dale Jr. notes that his dad is gifted in mechanics and woodworking, so he is able to keep everything in tip-top shape, from the tractors to the shop to the original wooden cider press.

Currently the farm encompasses about 300 acres growing a variety of produce, from asparagus to zucchini, plus a store that is open April/May–November. The crop year starts with asparagus season, as the store opens following the first asparagus to pop. Rhubarb is not far behind, and then “U-pick” berries, followed by garden crops all summer and fall, with peaches and apples in the mix and ending with pumpkins and squash. “Pumpkin season is my personal favorite,” Dale Jr. admits. “I just love the variety we have here.”

The store closes the day before Thanksgiving for the winter, but that isn’t an end to work, rather a shift to completing maintenance and preparing for next year, along with planning for future years and future generations.

“We are really lucky to have our customers. We have a lot of support. It’s just amazing to hear where people travel

from to come here,” says Dale Jr. The store has a loyal following of customers who look forward to visiting the store each season. For some, it is part of their family traditions to pick blueberries or strawberries with their own families just as their parents and grandparents did. “The fun part of this for me is talking to the customers,” he adds.

Dale Jr. mentions two nearby businesses that carry their produce — Humphrey’s Market and Suttill’s Gardens, both in Springfield. Natural Artistry in Sherman uses their produce for their jams, as does Red Barn Desserts in Greenview and The Talisman at Broadgauge in Petersburg; you’ll also find seasonal creations from each in the Jefferies Orchard retail store. “It’s a collaboration we have with local establishments to have other products here. We have built some great relationships with our customers and with other businesses. We cherish all of them.”

Thanks to a cooperative, the store also sells items from other small farmers. You’ll find plants from New City Greenhouse north of Pawnee; honey from Prairie State Beekeepers, led by fellow Menard Electric Co-op members Dave and Michelle Tebrugge; and melons from Hodgson Produce & Greenhouses in Kilbourne. Other items are too numerous to name; just look carefully and you’ll find something unique. The Jefferies family created a fruit and veggie recipe book, organized by season, of course, that is very popular



also. “There are some great recipes in there from ancestors and customers alike,” says Dale Jr. “A lot of recipe trading also goes on in this store, for sure.”

That’s one of the great things about buying food directly from the grower —if you find something you aren’t sure what to do with, just ask. What’s the best way to eat delicata squash? Or purple cauliflower? Which apple varieties are best for baking? Pam or Dale Jr. are often in the store and can point you in some tasty directions.

“Talking with the customers is the best part of this for me,” says Dale Jr. “The disappointing conversations come when I have to convey to members that we are at the mercy of Mother Nature.” When asked about predictions for this year’s growing season, he gives a simple shoulder shrug. Like all farmers, they prepare the best they can.

Here are a few unique things about three popular crops at the orchard.

Asparagus: Part of the farm is located along the Sangamon River on a sandy bluff from glacial till, and that is where 10 acres of asparagus is planted. “It’s a large crop for us. At the peak of the season we can pick 800 pounds a day, all by hand. We used to walk the rows, but now dad has created a cart with a seat and basket for each person that is driven through the field,” says Dale Jr.

Apples: Multiple varieties of apples are grown. The most intriguing is an

antique variety named the Russet. “It first developed as a sport mutation, which they say is when the tree produces it for sport, and is a cross between Golden varieties. We’ve kept it going, and it’s very popular,” says Dale Jr. He says the unique flavor and skin texture, similar to a russet potato (thus the name), is very popular for eating and baking both.

Peaches: It’s not easy to grow peaches in this area, says Dale Jr., but by using the old methods of grafting and keeping

only the healthiest trees in production, the orchard has developed quite a following for the white and yellow peaches offered. “Our peaches are almost as popular as our apples now,” he says.

Visit Jefferies Orchard today to become part of their community. Say hello to Dale Jr. and Pam. Swap a recipe or two. Discover a new favorite apple. Enjoy picking berries with friends or finding the perfect pumpkin and gourds for your fall displays.



When this article prints, it just might be blueberry picking time! For the most up-to-date information on what’s in season and self-pick times, be sure to watch the Jefferies Orchard Facebook page. Frequent travelers to and from Springfield on Route 29 can also keep an eye out for changes to a sign that indicates what produce is available. Find the store at 1016 Jefferies Road, Springfield. For more information, visit jefferies-orchard.com, email jefferiesorchard23@yahoo.com or call 217-487-7582.

Capital credit payments

We will return approximately **\$900,000 in capital credits in 2023** to members who purchased electricity in 2000, 2001 and/or 2002.

Instead of returning profits to investors and stockholders we return capital credits to our member-owners.

Watch for a check in the mail or a credit on your July bill.

Credits over \$75 are mailed as a check; under \$75 as a bill credit.

With this retirement we will have paid out a total of \$15 million in capital credits to members!

What are capital credits?

1. Co-op members use electricity and pay bills.
2. At the end of the year, the co-op determines if there was a profit (margin).
3. The co-op allocates margins to members to be repaid later as capital credits.
4. If the co-op’s financial condition permits, the board of directors authorizes retirement (payment) of capital credits.
5. Members receive capital credit payments.

Board highlights

For full minutes visit menard.com or contact the office.

April 25, 2023

- All Directors present except Jay Frye & Don McMillan; also present were General Manager Alisha Anker & Attorney Charles K Smith.
- Adopted revisions to Net Billing of Excess Member-Generated Electric Energy Policy to mirror Prairie Power Inc. changes.
- Anker discussed Illinois Commerce Commission reports alleging violations of Illinois Underground Utility Facility Damage Prevention Act.
- Approved Moraine Sands Wind Power Consent & Crossing Agreement Amendment to add additional crossings.
- Anker reviewed monthly & YTD financial operating report, balance sheet & financial trends. Operating margins as of 03/31 were \$1,055,656 compared to \$1,272,36 last year; equity at 42.44%; 12-mo TIER 2.36 & DSC 1.70. Reviewed forecast of maximum debt limit exposure.
- Reviewed operations report w/81 incidents; longest duration of outage 4,319 minutes for 36 members after Sherman tornado; largest # affected by single outage 1,157 for 14 min. due to loss of transmission to substation during same storm.
- Appointed Goetsch voting delegate to NRECA Director from Illinois election; Worner alternate.
- Next mtg 5/23/23 @ 6:00 p.m.



New employee

Cole Chalmers worked as fall help in our operations department in 2021 after earning his Electrical Distribution Lineman Associate's Degree from Lincoln Land Community College. We are happy to welcome him back as a second-year Apprentice Lineman. Originally from Oakford, Cole says he is happy to return to Menard Electric Cooperative. "I like the people here and being back home. I like the cooperative feel. I think this is the best way I can serve," he says.

Kilo Watt Korner Fans



This month we look at a Honeywell 5-speed oscillating fan running nightly in a bedroom. Our "fan-atic" tester enjoys the soothing hum and has the fan perfectly pointed to circulate air his way while avoiding blowing air directly over his wife, keeping both of them comfortable.

The unit comes with a convenient 8-hour timer, and when run that amount of time on the second setting, aptly labeled "calm," it consumes 0.14 kWh per night, costing about 1.7 cents. That's about 52 cents a month, or \$6.20 a year. Our user claims it is a small price to pay for a better night's sleep and marital harmony.

Fans come in all shapes and sizes and can be placed about anywhere — your kitchen ceiling, standing in a bedroom corner, sitting on a desk or even hanging around your neck. Did you know that a fan does not lower a room's temperature? The wind chill effect produced makes you feel cooler because of the movement of the air across your skin. You can utilize ceiling or stand fans to save energy if by turning one on it allows you to stay comfortable without lowering your air conditioner's thermostat.

Our test fan gets moved throughout the home during the hottest days to keep the family comfortable. On its highest speed it consumes 25 watts, costing just pennies while blowing away the temptation to lower the thermostat.

Kill-a-watt Recommendation: Become a fan-atic to stay comfortable this summer. Just remember to turn it off when you are not in the room.





BETTER Together

2023 Annual Meeting

Join us on Wednesday, July 12th
At Athens Christian Church, 1411 IL Hwy 29, Athens
For our 85th Annual Meeting of Members

Registration 4:30-6:30 p.m. • Dinner served 4:30-6:45 p.m.
Business meeting begins at 7 p.m.

See page 18A for more.

