

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Developing a strong workforce for the short- and long-term needs of the cooperative



By Jesse Singerhouse, General Manager

As we begin to take a deeper look at the components of our strategic plan, the first area of focus is on the employees of the cooperative. Any business can develop great strategic plans, but if you don't have a top-notch labor force to execute those plans you won't accomplish much. Dunn Energy Cooperative has always been one of the industry leaders, in the cooperative world, in terms of being efficient with our employees. Our 28 employees help deliver energy to over 10,180 accounts by maintaining 2,019 miles of line. For comparison I looked at our annual report from 22 years ago, in 2000, when I started with the cooperative. At that time, we had 27 employees serving 7,835 accounts over 1,743 miles of line. Over the past 22 years your cooperative has added almost 2,500 accounts and roughly 275 miles of line, all while adding one full-time employee. That one staff person is actually a safety and compliance officer shared amongst several cooperatives. So, we are basically at the same staff level we were in 2000.

There are many reasons we are able to do so much with so few staff. One of the biggest reasons is the dedication

and commitment our employees have to serve their friends and neighbors in the most efficient way possible. We all live here too. We know that we serve our community and that creates a strong connection for our employees. Secondly, technology has played a huge role in allowing us to become more efficient. Things like automated payments, e-billing, and digital document retention have increased our efficiency in the office. In the field, our crews make use of the latest technology, equipment, and services to help us deliver you reliable power. We have also used strategic partnerships with other cooperatives to allow us to share resources that enable us to deliver you high-quality service.

The board of directors and management team not only keep a keen eye on expenses, but also on service. We strive to have the right staff and equipment that will deliver top-level customer service and reliable power quality to our members.

During strategic planning we talked about both the short- and

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Cooperative Principles and Educational Scholarships: A PERFECT MATCH

While today's world is radically different than it was when Dunn Energy was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today.

Our top priority is providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy, but we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we

invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs, and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

Each year Dunn Energy provides educational scholarships to 15 high school students who are embarking on higher education, as well as one non-traditional scholarship for someone going back to school to further their education after being in the workforce a while or raising their family. We also provide a scholarship at CVTC in memorium of Todd Bauer, a lineman we lost too early to cancer. His scholarship benefits a



person going into the Electrical Power Distribution Program.

We believe in supporting the future generation of leaders in our communities. To make it as convenient as possible, you will find copies of both the youth scholarship application and the non-traditional scholarship application in the following pages of this month's magazine. Applications are due the first week of March. (140018058)

Working for You



Youth Scholarship Application

Each year Dunn Energy awards local high school students from our membership educational scholarships, to promote advanced education. We firmly believe our future lies within these young leaders. Dunn Energy will choose 15 applicants at random as the winners of the \$1,000 scholarships.

Name: _____ DEC account no. _____

Permanent address: _____

Home phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Name of parent/guardian who is a member of Dunn Energy: _____

How you want your parents listed in the program: _____

High school you attend: _____

School you propose to enter: _____

Please list three goals you have for the future:

THIS SECTION IS TO BE FILLED OUT BY SCHOOL COUNSELOR OR PRINCIPAL

1. Name of applicant _____

2. Does the applicant have at least a four-year cumulative GPA of 3.0 on 4.0 scale? YES / NO

Signature Principal/Counselor

Date

Return application to:
Dunn Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 220
Menomonie, WI 54751

Or by email to:
jolene@dunnenergy.com

Applications are due the first Friday in March

Qualifications:

1. Parent or guardian of student must be a member of Dunn Energy Cooperative.
2. Student must be a graduating high school senior and plan to begin college or vocational training in the following their senior year.
3. Student must hold a 3.0 GPA or better on a 4.0 scale.
4. Complete basic application and have it signed by guidance or school official.
5. Checks will be presented to students after Dunn Energy Cooperative receives a copy of your first semester college grades.

Disbursement of scholarships will be awarded after all qualifications are met and with receipt of transcripts and verification of enrollment from eligible recipient.



**Dunn Energy
Cooperative**

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Non-traditional Scholarship Application

One \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to an eligible student returning to a university, vocational, or technical college after spending a minimum of three (3) years in the workplace or raising a family.

Name: _____ DEC account no. _____

Permanent address: _____

Home phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Current school and program you are enrolled in: _____

How far along are you in your program? _____

Why did you choose to go back to school? _____

Return application to:
Dunn Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 220
Menomonie, WI 54751

Or by email to:
jolene@dunnenergy.com

Applications are due the first Friday in March

To be eligible:

1. The applicant or their spouse must be a member of Dunn Energy Cooperative and a bona fide resident of the cooperative's service territory.
2. The applicant must be in good standing with Dunn Energy Cooperative.
3. The recipient must have maintained a 2.5 (or better) grade point average during their current quarter or semester of post-secondary education.
4. The recipient must be enrolled in a course of study leading to an associate's or bachelor's degree or certificate.
5. The recipient must be enrolled with a minimum of five (5) credits and be in good standing at the school they are attending.
6. Children of full-time DEC employees or directors are not eligible.
7. The non-traditional scholarship will be limited to a one-time award. After receiving a scholarship, the individual will not be eligible for future awards.
8. The program must be a minimum of one year.

Disbursement of non-traditional scholarships will be awarded after all qualifications are met and with receipt of transcripts and verification of enrollment from eligible recipient.

long-term staffing needs of the cooperative. In the short term (1-2 years) the cooperative has to prepare for several possible retirements. Knowing we have retirements coming up, we begin by looking at job descriptions to make sure the position we are going to hire for matches what is needed both internally and externally at the cooperative.

We also prepare for retirements in other ways, including internal cross training, hiring new staff early enough to train with outgoing employees, and examining any shared service opportunities between cooperatives. Being a small staff, having good cross training and procedure documentation is also critical to ensuring things run smoothly if we are faced with something unexpected. COVID-19 is a good example. It was something unexpected that required us to be prepared if an employee needed to be out. We quickly developed our remote work capacity and relied on our cross training to cover any unexpected issues. While 99.9% of things related to COVID are bad, the one good thing we

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Long term (3-5 years), the cooperative must prepare for several staffing-related matters. First, we have to make sure our staff and board are prepared for the issues the cooperative will face in the years ahead. While technology is great, it also changes quickly. If a business is not prepared for technological changes, it might find itself obsolete or left reacting to changes instead of being prepared for them. We

must also develop the workforce of tomorrow. This might possibly mean more remote employees, an increase in shared services, or investing in local programs that train the employees we need with the skills we are looking for.

Your cooperative has been successful over the years due in large part to the employees past and present who have worked day in and day out to deliver you reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy. They have built the lines, restored power during storms, answered your calls, processed your payments, and served the community. Sometimes we forget everything that goes into making sure the lights come on when we flip the switch. I'm very proud of all the people behind the scenes that make that happen.

The goal with any strategic planning is to think about what you'll need down the road so you can begin preparing for it today. Yes, there will be unexpected things that arise, but if you develop your plan with flexibility, you'll be able to adapt. A strong, well-trained, and innovative workforce is one of the most important things needed to keep the cooperative strong. Our strategic plan will focus on making sure we are ready to meet your energy needs today, and in the years to come.

Jesse Singerhouse, Manager

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Jolene Fisher, Editor



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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

About 30% of a home's heating energy is lost through inefficient windows. Caulk and weatherstrip all windows to seal air leaks.

When running your home heating system, lock all operable windows to ensure the tightest seal possible.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Hidden Account Numbers

If you find your account number hidden in the pages of this magazine and you call and tell us before the next issue is mailed, we'll put a **\$50 credit** on your electric bill. Happy hunting!

Last month's winners were Jon and Sharon Berg and Darren and Tonia Miller.