



# NEWSLINE



January 2023

## Member Appreciation Open House

Our lobby was filled with members visiting on December 9. Cookies and warm drinks were enjoyed and delightful conversations were had. The Member Appreciation Open House was a success with nearly 150 attendees and generous donations made to the Salvation Army.

Thank you to all who made it!



## Itasca-Mantrap and Minnesota Power Help Light Up Park Rapids For the Holidays



Itasca-Mantrap and Minnesota Power crews worked together to string lights and decorate the community Christmas tree in downtown Park Rapids. Pictured are Itasca-Mantrap team members: Chad Grande, Chris Bungert, and Mike Moen along with Minnesota Power crew members.



## CEO Update - *By Christine Fox, President-CEO*

Happy New Year!!

This time of year is perfect for reflection. As I look back over the past year, I feel a sense of

pride over all that Itasca-Mantrap has accomplished:

- The Advance Grid Infrastructure project (one of the largest projects we have endeavored at Itasca-Mantrap) has come a long way.
- We have installed all the infrastructure pieces included in the original design. As you may recall from previous articles the "infrastructure pieces" consist of collectors and repeaters. The collectors receive information from a meter and send it via cellular signal to our head end software. The repeater works as a catalyst to get data from the meter to the collector. Data originated at a meter can "hop" between other meters and repeaters to get to the nearest collector and then to the head end software. You may have noticed that some of our poles now have new devices hanging on them. These would be the collectors and repeaters.
- We have installed just over 11,000 of approximately 16,000 meters (69%).
- We have essentially completed the Meter Data Management

(MDM) portion of the project. The MDM system is the communication portal between the head end software mentioned above and our billing system. The MDM system also houses the data that will be used for future data analytics projects. (More details to come on this)

- The load management piece of the project has fallen slightly behind schedule due to supplier shortages. However, as receivers become available, we are out in the field replacing the old ones.
- Most policies, processes and procedures surrounding this project have been complete.
- As shared in my last newsletter, we developed a new strategic plan.
- We were able to keep rates stable in 2022.
- We have worked safely and have zero recordable accidents in 2022.
- We passed our Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program safety audit with excellence. Safety audits are conducted every three years and we have historically come away with very favorable scores.
- We expanded our member engagement opportunities. Our Apps and Amps events have been well attended and phenomenally successful. I always enjoy the conversations "sparked" at these events. Members also enjoyed the new EV Ride and Drive and Beat the Heat events.

- Despite record inflation, Itasca-Mantrap will have a positive financial outlook for 2022, which can be attributed to our philosophy of continuous improvement, efficiency, and cost consciousness. Although I would say the primary driver of these positive results was our record growth of 38%.
- While our suppliers experienced material shortages and long lead times (sometimes up to two years), we developed a plan and made a commitment to hold more inventory so we would have enough supply to finish out the year without compromise. We are also well positioned for our 2023 construction plan.
- We finished several work plan projects converting 11 miles of line from overhead to underground.
- As of the time of this writing, we have built nearly 150 new services and completed nearly 75 service alterations.

Overall, we have been remarkably busy and had many accomplishments in 2022. I can summarize by simply saying Itasca-Mantrap had a good year. We certainly hope you did too.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Follow us to stay updated on the latest!





## Friends of the Park Rapids Library win the Touchstone Energy Community Award

Itasca-Mantrap has named the Friends of the Park Rapids Area Library the winner of the 2022 Touchstone Energy Community Award. In appreciation of its community service, the organization received an engraved plaque and a \$500 check that will be used for its community cause.

The Friends of the Park Rapids Area Library (Friends) is a 48 member volunteer organization that has helped provide financial and volunteer assistance to the Park Rapids Area Library. Friends host five used book sales at the library each year, giving members of the community the opportunity to purchase books at affordable prices. The funds raised from the book sales are used to support the Park Rapids Library and its multiple community programs.

A few activities supported by the Friends book sale are:

- "New Baby" Book bags - A book bag given to new parents for every baby born in the Park Rapids hospital.
- "1,000 books before Kindergarten" - An early literacy program that encourages parents and caregivers

to read with their children before they start kindergarten.

- "Take and Make" - Weekly and monthly crafts for adults and kids.
- "Story Stroll" in Deane Park - Part of the summer reading program for children and parents - reading in Deane Park.
- "2nd Saturday STEM" - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math events for 8 to 18 year olds.
- "Snowtime to Read" - An adult reading program that takes place in January and February.
- "Yesteryear Kits" - A sensory materials kit for older adults with memory issues.

Friends has been an asset to the Park Rapids area since 1981. When asked about the lasting impact of the organization, Deb Massey, Friends volunteer, said, "The Friends of the Park Rapids Area Library firmly believes that we put books into the hands of people who may not have the funds to pay full-price, and because of that would have left some books behind." Janet Dixon, another Friends volunteer, adds, "The book sales and reading programs

encourage our local citizens to continue to read, learn, and grow."

Itasca-Mantrap sought candidates during the month of October for the Touchstone Energy Community Award, which recognizes organizations for outstanding contributions to the local community.

The Friends of the Park Rapids Area Library award application will be submitted for consideration in the statewide Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award. The statewide award recipient will be selected from award winners around Minnesota. The winning organization will receive \$1,000 to go toward its community cause. The Minnesota Touchstone Energy Community Award will be presented to the award recipient in March during the Minnesota Rural Electric Association annual meeting in St. Paul.

The Touchstone Energy Community Award highlights the *Cooperative Principle-Concern for Community*.



Friends Members (L-R): Sandy Drury, Jill Johnson, Pat Mickelson, Annamae Holzworth, Diane Thoeke, Christine Bettendorf, Diane George, Deb Massey, Janet Dixon, and Nikki Torkelson (I-M Marketing/Member Services Manager).



## Start Planning for the New Year

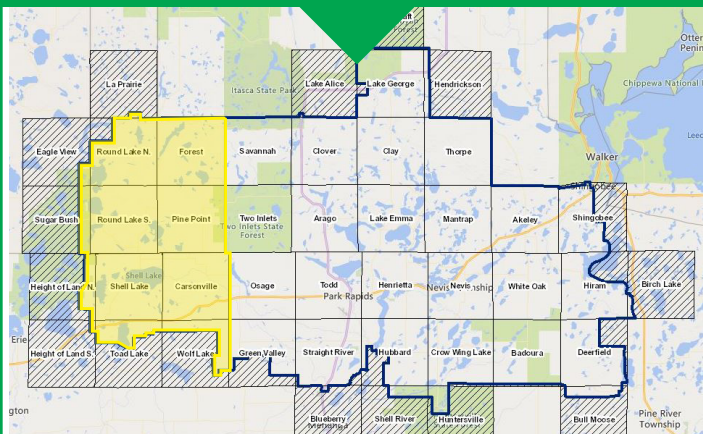
Does your list of New Year's resolutions include a project that might require new electrical service or changes to existing service? If so, let us know!

We receive many service project requests in the early spring and late fall. However, projects requiring electric lines to be built, rebuilt, or moved aren't as simple as they may seem.

We strongly encourage anyone thinking about projects that might require new or modified electrical service to contact Itasca-Mantrap. We can begin the planning process early.

For questions, please contact Itasca-Mantrap during regular business hours at (218)732-3377.

## Advanced Meter Update



Itasca-Mantrap has made a significant investment in our infrastructure by purchasing a new advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system. Modernizing our equipment and communication capabilities is essential to maintaining the quality and service our members have come to expect.

We have invested in new equipment, including advanced meters. The new meters that Itasca-Mantrap is currently installing will help us respond more quickly to outages, resulting in shorter restoration times. They will also provide better tracking of momentary outages, helping us to address your power concerns. The new meters will also give members the information they need to use energy wisely.

Lineworkers can be found working on the East side of the Itasca-Mantrap service territory. If you have any questions about the meter exchange, please visit our website at [www.itsasca-mantrap.com](http://www.itsasca-mantrap.com) or contact our office at (218)732-3377.

Normal power line

Lines weighed down by ice

Top line melted after bottom line

## ICE ON POWER LINES IS A WEIGHTY SUBJECT



When it comes to getting electricity across power lines and into homes, ice can be a force to be reckoned with.

### ICE ON DISTRIBUTION LINES

Ice can quickly lead to broken power poles and other pole equipment. Ice can also make falling tree branches 30x heavier and much more likely to break power lines.

### ON A 300-FOOT SPAN OF 1-INCH-THICK POWER LINES

- 1/2 inch of ice adds 281 pounds of weight
- 1 inch of ice adds 749 pounds of weight
- 2 inches of ice adds 2,248 pounds of weight

### WHEN ICE MELTS

Melting ice can cause power outages. If ice on the bottom (neutral) line melts before the lines above, it can cause the lines to touch.

### OTHER ICE FACTS

- Damage can begin when ice exceeds 1/4 of an inch
- 1/2 inch of ice can cause a line to sag up to 12 inches
- Pressure can also be caused by a broken tree limb
- Both ice and melting ice can cause power outages

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## Board Report: Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors for Itasca-Mantrap Co-op Electrical Ass'n. was held on Thursday, October 27, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at the Itasca-Mantrap office.

A quorum of directors was present.

### Approved:

- Consent Agenda
- September financials, subject to audit
- Board Budget for 2023
- Small Commercial Renewable Energy Meter Rate (SC197)
- 2023 Board Meeting calendar
- GRE's Request for approval for purchase power agreement with Prairie Island Energy on behalf of Dakota Electric Association
- Director Cook to attend the NRECA Director's conference and Director Utke to attend the NRECA PowerXChange conference.
- Development of a new Itasca-Mantrap logo at the discretion of the Itasca-Mantrap Leadership Team.

### Reports Heard:

- Operations and Safety report
- Marketing and Member Services report
- CEO report
- Quarterly reports
- Key Ratio Trend Analysis by Alison Deelstra, regional vice president for the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation
- Directors and CEO Fox reported on meetings attended on behalf of the Cooperative

### Reviewed:

- Changes to Itasca-Mantrap's membership
- Operation Round Up Trust Fall 2022 awards
- Changes to Itasca-Mantrap's 2021 tax return
- Great River Energy (GRE) PCA detail for September 2022
- GRE Strategic Plan 2023-24
- Presentation on Itasca-Mantrap re-branding efforts

The next meeting of the Board of Directors is Thursday, January, 26, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

## Win A Trip to Washington, D.C.

**Attention high school sophomores or juniors: Win an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June!**

Itasca-Mantrap is sending one high school student from our service territory to participate in the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. The selected student will visit with congressional representatives, tour famous monuments and museums, and make memories and friends that will last a lifetime.

Rural electric cooperatives across the nation sponsor nearly 1,500 students to participate in the annual Youth Tour to learn about how government works and about the electric cooperative business model.

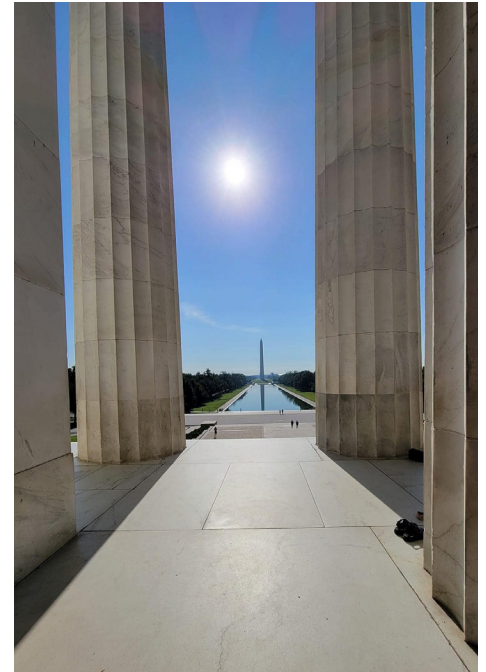
Students who attended this trip in the past said it was a wonderful experience and one of the best things they ever did.

Apply today! This contest is open to sophomores and juniors whose family is a member of Itasca-Mantrap Co-op Electrical Ass'n. The Youth Tour is June 13-18, 2023.

### REQUIREMENTS:

- Complete the Itasca-Mantrap Youth Tour Application (Available at our office, [www.itsasca-mantrap.com](http://www.itsasca-mantrap.com), or at your school's counseling center.)
- Top finalists will be interviewed by a judging committee. First place wins an all-expense paid Washington, D.C. Youth Tour trip. Second place serves as an alternate.

Applications must be received by March 16. For more information visit [www.itsasca-mantrap.com](http://www.itsasca-mantrap.com).



2022 Youth Tour Winner: Jacob Lof

# Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%? This could save you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs. Insulating your electric water heater is an easy, inexpensive project that can improve energy efficiency and save you money each month. The Dept. of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit [energy.gov](http://energy.gov) for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



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# Employee News

Congratulations to Mike Moen!

Mike has successfully completed the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) Lineworker Apprenticeship program and was awarded his MREA Journeyman Certificate at the end of September. He also received his Journeyman Card/Certificate from the State of Minnesota.

Mike is a graduate of the Minnesota State Community and Technical College Electrical Lineworker program and began his employment with Itasca-Mantrap in April 2019.

Congratulations Mike!



## Monitor your Energy Use with SmartHub



Have you used more electricity this winter than last? Curious how many kilowatt hours you use on the weekends compared to the weekdays?

The answers are at your fingertips when you download the free SmartHub app!



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