

# NORTHERN

L I G H T S

October 2017



*SUBSCRIBE to locally-produced renewable solar energy today!*



**B**eltrami Electric Cooperative held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Northern Solar Community Solar Garden on Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2017. Construction and commissioning of the array was completed in August, and the array's 180 solar panels have begun generating solar electricity. This project is the result of cooperative member-owners expressing their desire to have a local renewable energy option and their willingness to enter into subscriptions to support the project.

The cooperative is pleased to be able to add this local renewable solar energy option to the other renewable energy available to our member-owners. As part of the Minnkota Power Cooperative system, the standard electrical service provided to all cooperative members has significant renewable energy. In terms of nameplate capacity, our portfolio includes 34 percent wind, 8 percent hydro-electric, 55 percent baseload generation and 3 percent other resources.

Participating cooperative members will soon begin seeing solar energy credits on their monthly electric bills. Solar panel subscriptions are still available as well as a Pay As You Go option for members who don't wish to lock in a 20-year subscription. Visit our website to learn more, view the solar production e-Gauge or download a Northern Solar Agreement form or contact our office today at 218-444-2540.

## Payment Options Available:

**Option 1:** One-time Payment (One-time upfront cost – receive credit on your electric bill for 20 years based on current electric rates)

**Option 2:** Easy Pay (12, 24 or 36 month payment plans available – subject to review of account standing)

**Option 3:** Pay As You Go (No contract – simply tell us how many kWh you want to receive from Northern Solar and pay an additional fee on your electric bill)

**\$1,295/1 panel • \$647.50/1/2 panel**

*(Each panel is projected to produce an average of 450 kWh/year or 37.5 kWh/month)*

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**Touchstone Energy® Community Award – page 8**

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Monday – Friday

**Member Service:** 218-444-2540  
or 1-800-955-6083

[www.beltramielectric.com](http://www.beltramielectric.com)

## Board of Directors

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CEO	Jared Echternach
Editor	Angela Lyseng

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## Minnesota State Electrical Inspectors

Beltrami County

Davis Smid

507-227-2772 - [mntristate@gmail.com](mailto:mntristate@gmail.com)

Cass and Hubbard Counties

Steve Schauland

218-652-2213 or fax 218-333-0451

*These are the inspectors covering the area served by Beltrami Electric. They can be reached by phone Monday through Friday between 7 and 8:30 a.m. or by fax or email as indicated.*

## Gopher State One Call

1-800-252-1166 or 811

[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

Anyone who plans to dig is required by law to notify the state of their intentions at least 48 hours in advance.

All digging requires the 48-hour notification so that buried telephone line, television cable, pipelines, utility electrical lines, municipal water and sewer lines can be located to ensure that none will be severed or damaged.

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## Northern Solar, Cooperative Month and employee retirements

Jared Echternach, CEO

### Northern Solar energized

Last month we energized our long awaited community solar facility. Northern Solar came on line the end of August and began producing energy for our member-subscribers. We conducted a ribbon cutting ceremony on Aug. 29, and we were honored to see such enthusiasm for this project from our subscribers and our community.

The concept of a community solar array began several years ago and in 2015 your cooperative began taking subscriptions for the output. The 80-kilowatt array is located at our headquarters facility. Northern Solar provides members with an opportunity to purchase the electrical output from a solar panel at a guaranteed rate for 20 years. A payment for the output of the panel will appear as a credit on the member's electric bill based on our retail rates. Advantages of community solar over individual installations include cost certainty, no ongoing maintenance and insurance expenses and no structural assessment or issues in relation to installing panels on the roof of your home. A common sentiment we've heard from our subscribers is their desire to purchase locally-produced renewable energy.

It will be interesting to watch the production of our array over the next 20 years. Members can track production as well by visiting our website at [www.beltramielectric.com](http://www.beltramielectric.com). Additional details on the ribbon cutting and project are included in this issue.

### Cooperative Month

October is Cooperative Month and I'd like you to take a moment to

think about how cooperatives are part of our everyday life. As you might imagine, I'm partial to the cooperative business model, and I'm amazed by how many cooperatives operate within our local communities. We have energy cooperatives, communication cooperatives, agriculture cooperatives, food cooperatives, housing cooperatives and credit unions, just to name a few. We're fortunate to have a strong cooperative presence within our communities and I applaud you for being a member.

### Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open

Last month we held the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy Open and raised more than \$9,800 for the United Way of Bemidji Area. Over the past 13 years we have raised more than \$109,000 at this event to help our communities through the United Way. I'd like to thank those who participated, our sponsors and our team of volunteers who put on another successful event to benefit people in our community.

### Employee retirements

Two longtime employees hung up their belts and hooks recently. Journeyman Line Worker Jeff Marden retired Sept. 8. Jeff served our members faithfully for 28 years. Kurt Yerbich, Line Foreman, will retire Oct. 5 after 38 years of service to our members. I'd like to thank Jeff and Kurt for keeping the lights on through thick and thin and for their dedication to the cooperative and our members. I wish them a long, healthy and safe retirement. They will be missed!

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives and Beltrami Electric Cooperative invite you to celebrate the second annual National Co-op Connections Day

*Friday, Oct. 6, 2017*

October is National Cooperative Month and the members of Beltrami Electric Cooperative (BEC) are getting ready to celebrate the cooperative business model by SAVING BIG and SHOPPING LOCAL with their Co-op Connections® Card this October.

On Oct. 6, 2017, BEC invites you to take advantage of the benefits the Co-op Connections Card provides by participating in the second annual National Co-op Connections Day, sponsored by Touchstone Energy. Cooperative employees and member-owners can celebrate this money-saving program and receive even more benefits when they use **The One Card That Does It All®** at participating national and local retailers.

Co-op Connections Day will feature special flash deals and a social media photo contest that runs throughout the first week of October. Be sure to get involved by sharing photos featuring your Co-op Connections Card with the hashtag **#ImConnected** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You may be announced as the photo contest winner!

BEC encourages all members to get involved and take advantage of the savings and discounts offered on Oct. 6. If you need a new card, download the "Co-op Connections" app, print one from [connections.coop](http://connections.coop) or contact our office.

If you are a local business wishing to be part of the Co-op Connections Program, you can join for no cost to you. Just contact Angela Lyseng at 218-444-3689 or [alyseng@beltramielctric.com](mailto:alyseng@beltramielctric.com) to sign up. For more information on the Co-op Connections Program and benefits, visit [connections.coop](http://connections.coop).

# REEL IN A DEAL!

National Co-op Connections® Day is October 6th.

#ImConnected



You work hard all year long, so on October 6, let The One Card That Does It All® work hard for you.

Help celebrate National Cooperative Month by using your Co-op Connections Card on October 6 to receive special deals and discounts. Then share a photo featuring your card with the hashtag #ImConnected to be eligible to win a prize.



## DEFINED BY PRINCIPLES

There are more than 40,000 co-ops in the U.S. alone. All are guided by the same set of Seven Cooperative Principles.

1. Voluntary & Open Membership
2. Democratic Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy & Independence
5. Education, Training & Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

CO-OP MONTH | OCTOBER 2017

# 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open

**Raises \$9,800 for the**

United Way  
of Bemidji Area



The Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open Golf Tournament Committee presents a check for \$9,800 to the United Way of the Bemidji Area. Pictured left to right: Jeff Noren, Bob Gregg, Kay Olson, Holly Solo, United Way Director Denae Alamano, Cammie Vogel, Rich Riewer and Angela Lyseng.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Beltrami Electric Touchstone Energy® Open was held Friday, Aug. 18, at Castle Highlands Golf Course, and raised \$9,800 for the United Way of the Bemidji Area. To date, the annual tournament is the United Way's largest single fundraising event.

"For the 13<sup>th</sup> straight year, we are thankful for the tremendous support of local and regional businesses," said Cammie Vogel, Beltrami Electric's campaign coordinator. "With their help, Beltrami Electric has held this tournament for 13 straight years and raised, cumulatively, more than \$109,000 to support area needs through the United Way and its partner agencies."

Beltrami Electric Cooperative thanks the businesses, the 114 golfers and the tournament volunteers on behalf of the United Way of Bemidji.



**SECOND PLACE**

(Above) Taking second place with a score of 52.05 was the team from Bemidji Collision Center. From left: Lee Pemberton, Dave Evenson, Rob Pemberton, Jr., Gary Cartwright and Rob Pemberton, Sr.



**THIRD PLACE**

Third place went to the team from Coca-Cola Bottling of Bemidji, with a score of 54.30. From left: Jack Reed, Cody Stevens, Brandon Earl, Jerry Stevens and Matt Stevens.



**FIRST PLACE**

(Above) The team from PBTV captured first place with a score of 51.40 in the 5-person team scramble tournament. From left: Dane Jones, Doug Garrigan, Bob Lindberg, Brian Bissonette and Don Dale.

Beltrami Electric



Arctic Spas of Bemidji  
BSU Beaver Pride  
Bemidji Collision Center  
Bemidji Sports Centre  
Bill Noren  
Bob Lowth Ford, Inc.  
Chapman Metering  
Co-Bank  
Coca-Cola Bottling  
Countryside Restaurant  
Cruise Masters  
Darrell's Auto Glass  
Division Dental

## THANK YOU SPONSORS!



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Marco  
Miller McDonald  
Minnesota Twins  
National Information Systems Co-op (NISC)  
NFP  
Norenberg & Associates Tax & Consulting  
North Central Door Company  
Northern Engineering



United Way

United Way  
of Bemidji Area

Okonite  
Otter Tail Power  
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Per Mar Security  
Pinnacle Marketing Group  
RESCO  
Riverwood Bank  
Sanford Health Bemidji  
Security Bank USA  
Spinal Health Professionals  
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Your QFM

# COLD WEATHER DISCONNECT RULE

## 216B.097 COLD WEATHER RULE; COOPERATIVE OR MUNICIPAL UTILITY.

### **Subdivision 1. Application; notice to residential customer.**

(a) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. A municipal utility or cooperative electric association utility may (i) verify income on forms it provides or (ii) obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income.

(2) A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

(3) A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

(b) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must, between August 15 and Oct. 15 each year, notify all residential customers of the provisions of this section.

### **Subdivision 2. Notice to residential customer facing disconnection.**

Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15, a municipal utility or cooperative electric association must provide the following information to a customer:

- (1) a notice of proposed disconnection;
- (2) a statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
- (3) a list of local energy assistance providers;
- (4) forms on which to declare inability to pay; and
- (5) a statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

### **Subdivision 3. Restrictions if disconnection necessary.**

(a) If a residential customer must be involuntarily disconnected between Oct. 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with subdivision 1, the disconnection must not occur:

(1) on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a municipal utility or cooperative electric association;

(2) on a weekend, holiday, or the day before a holiday;

(3) when utility offices are closed; or

(4) after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to the customer.

Further, the disconnection must not occur until at least 20 days after the notice required in subdivision 2 has been mailed to the customer or 15 days after the notice has been personally delivered to the customer.

(b) If a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice, the customer must not be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

(c) If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

### **Subdivision 4. Application to service limiters.**

For the purposes of this section, "disconnection" includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way.

## Beltrami Electric cold weather disconnect procedure

Per the Cold Weather Rule, Beltrami Electric Cooperative has a cold weather disconnect procedure in place. Our crews visit members who have not responded within 20 days of our mailed past due notice. Notices ask members to contact our office to create a payment arrangement and/or pay their bill within 20 days of receipt, and a response by members will prevent them in paying an additional \$50 for a collection fee/occupancy check. Inability to make acceptable arrangements or payment will result in the disconnection of service after the 20-day period. If you have further questions, please call our office at 444-2540 or 800-955-6083.

## Penalty process

**ALL** payments are due by the due date or a penalty will be applied. (NOT POSTMARKED)

If you choose to pay by traditional mail, the payment **MUST** be received in our office by the due date. Please allow additional mail time to avoid a late fee **OR** visit our website at [www.beltramielectric.com](http://www.beltramielectric.com) for more payment options.

## ATTENTION MILITARY SERVICE PERSONNEL

Section 325E.028 of the Minnesota statutes pertaining to utility payment arrangements for military service personnel outlines their rights and responsibilities effective August 1, 2007. A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during period of active duty, deployment, or change in duty station if residential consumer meets criteria set forth in this statute.

If, **prior to disconnection**, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

### **Beltrami Electric's Cold Weather Rule/ Military Service Personnel Appeal Procedure:**

If you wish to appeal, submit a personal letter stating your situation and issues in the dispute to 4111 Technology Dr. NW, Bemidji, MN 56601. Your letter of appeal must arrive at the Cooperative **BEFORE** the date of disconnection. You will be notified when the board of directors will review your appeal so that you may be present during it. No disconnection of service will take place during the appeal process.

If you would like a copy of these policies or forms sent in the mail, please contact the office at 218-444-2540 or 800-955-6083. An application without copies of income statements and proof of military orders overseas will be considered incomplete, resulting in the possibility of no shut-off protection.



# ELECTRIC HEATING SALES TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE

**Please complete and return to:** Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc.  
PO Box 488  
Bemidji, MN 56619-0488

This is to certify that the main source of heat for my home (more than 50 percent) is furnished by **permanently** installed electric heating equipment (not portable) and I, therefore, am eligible for the electric heating sales tax exemption as provided by Minnesota State Law. This is for the billing months of November through April only.  
*\*Exemption forms should be resubmitted every 3-4 years. Please notify us if you change from electric heat to a different primary heating source.*

Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location # \_\_\_\_\_

Meter # \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Tax ID#/FEIN/Driver's License# or State Issued ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_ Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**E**lectricity sold for residential use is not taxable for the billing months of November through April when sold to metered members who use electric heat as their primary source of residential heat. If more than one type of heat is used, electricity is not taxable if electric is the primary source of heat. Primary source of residential heat is the source that supplied more heat than any other source for the largest period of time during the heating season. Members with an off-peak meter are only exempted sales tax on the electricity that is recorded on the off-peak meter.

Some buildings have both residential quarters and commercial operations. If there is one meter for the entire building, the exemption applies if more than 50 percent of the square footage of the building is residential.

Complete and submit the following form only if you are eligible for the exemption. If you have more than one account, an exemption form must be filed with each location.

The State of Minnesota recommends the exemption forms should be updated and resubmitted

every three to four years to be eligible for the exemption. Members who receive a tax exemption when electric heat is not their primary source of heat are in violation of the sales tax law.

Commercial Accounts must use an ST3 form, which is available on our website.

\*Please note that this form can also be submitted online at <https://www.beltramelectric.com/content/electric-heating-sales-tax-exempt>.

## STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

Beltrami Electric Cooperative, is a recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations/policies, USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs or reprisal/retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA; not all bases apply to all programs; remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA TARGET Center at (202)720-

2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) **fax:** (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **email:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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## Board Meeting Highlights

Beltrami Electric's board of directors conducted its regular monthly meeting Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2017. A quorum of directors was present.

### The following reports were given:

- CEO Echernach made his monthly report, including discussion on the new meter system and Northern Solar. He also reported on two upcoming employee retirements.
- Sid Sletten gave the Financial and Statistical report for July, including review of work orders. He also presented 2016 Form 990.
- Rich Riewer reported on the new meter system.
- Sam Mason reported on Northern Solar.
- Arlene Hogquist presented the second quarter balanced performance score card.
- Mara Cobb gave a report to the board on the NRECA Youth Tour she attended.
- Billy Benso gave a report on the No Barriers Warriors Program Expedition he attended.
- Directors shared highlights of meetings attended on behalf of the cooperative and discussed upcoming meetings and educational conferences.

### The following actions were taken:

- Approved the consent agenda and work order inventories.
- Appointed Jared Echernach as the CFC voting delegate
- Approved 2016 Form 990.

The next regular board meeting will be Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2017.

## SYSTEMWIDE METER UPGRADE – installing new meters to help serve you better

Work continues on our systemwide meter upgrade. Our existing metering system was installed in the mid-1990s and has reached its end-of-life, and the manufacturer is no longer supporting this older equipment.

BEC contracted with a third party metering group, Allegiant Utility Services, to assist in completing the remaining meter exchanges. Allegiant Utility Services' vehicles have its logo, as well as signage designating that they are a contractor for Beltrami Electric. The contractors from Allegiant Utility Services also wear an ID badge with their name and photo.

The new meters will improve reliability and give you more tools and opportunities to manage and save energy. The impact of the installation is minimal. Co-op members can expect to lose power for a few minutes on the day of installation. You may need to reset your electronic devices, such as digital clocks. In addition, the next bill will show two meter readings: one from the old meter and one from the new meter. We will not need to access your home or business, nor will you need to be on-site when this work is performed.





# Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc.

® Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

4111 Technology DR NW  
PO Box 488  
Bemidji, MN 56619-0488  
218-444-2540 • 800-955-6083  
www.beltramielctric.com

## Seeking nominations for the 2017 Touchstone Energy® Community Award



**D**o you know an organization that has made outstanding contributions to our local community?

Beltrami Electric is seeking applications for the Touchstone Energy® Community Award, which recognizes businesses, nonprofits and community groups that have shown a strong commitment to our community. Any organization that has helped make their community within the areas served by Beltrami Electric a better place to live and work is eligible for the \$500 cash award.

Community members may nominate an organization, association or business by completing the Touchstone Energy Community Award application form, available at Beltrami Electric Cooperative, 4111 Technology Dr NW, Bemidji or online at [www.beltramielctric.com](http://www.beltramielctric.com). Questions may be directed to Angela Lyseng at 444-3689. The application will require a description of the project, program or event and the positive impact it brought to the community. **Completed applications must be received at Beltrami Electric's office by Oct. 31.**

*"As an electric cooperative serving this area, we have a high regard for community involvement,"* CEO of Beltrami Electric Jared Echternach said. *"This award allows us to highlight and encourage those organizations that have shown an outstanding commitment to our community."*

The award recipient will be announced Nov. 3, 2017, and will then contend for the statewide Touchstone Energy Community Award, which has a cash prize of \$1,000. The statewide award winner will be recognized at the Minnesota Rural Electric Association's annual meeting in March 2018. The Minnesota Touchstone Energy cooperatives are part of a national alliance of more than 700 rural electric cooperatives that adhere to the values of integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community. For information and to download an application, please visit our website at [www.beltramielctric.com](http://www.beltramielctric.com).

### Past years' winners

- 2004 - Blackduck Tri Sigma General Federated Women's Club
- 2005 - Bemidji Area Task Force on Underage Drinking, Drugs and Gang Activity
- 2006 - Healthy Community Healthy Kids
- 2007 - The Sexual Assault Program of Beltrami, Cass and Hubbard Counties
- 2008 - The Radiothon to End Child Abuse
- 2009 - Bemidji Garden Club (Formerly Northwoods Garden Club of the Bemidji Area)
- 2010 - Bemidji Skate and Bike Association
- 2011 - Kelliher Resource Center Committee
- 2012 - Bemidji Area Take a Kid Fishing\* *(\*Awarded statewide award)*
- 2013 - Blackduck Area Toys for Kids
- 2014 - Bemidji Area Reading Canines (BARC)\*
- 2015 - Jack Pine Stables
- 2016 - Northland Composite Squadron - Civil Air Patrol

## Congratulations on your retirement! You will both be missed!

### Jeff Marden retires



Journeyman lineworker **Jeff Marden** retired in September after 28 years working in the line department at Beltrami Electric. Jeff started working for the cooperative in 1989. Jeff lives in Bemidji with his wife, Lynn, and plans to find time to hunt, fish and spend time with his grandkids. We wish him the best for a long and happy retirement. Jeff's last day was Friday, Sept. 8.

### Kurt Yerbich retires



Line Foreman **Kurt Yerbich** will retire in October after 38 years working in the line department at Beltrami Electric. Kurt started working for the cooperative in 1979 and worked out of the Blackduck Outpost until it closed in September 2009. Kurt lives in Puposky with Wendy, his wife of 40 years, and is looking forward to spending time with family, friends and his grandkids. Kurt says he enjoyed working with the employees at BEC as well as visiting with the many members he met over the years and will really miss that. We wish him all the best in his retirement. Kurt's last day will be Thursday, Oct. 5.