

# FAMILY FARMSTEAD PROVIDES CONSUMERS WITH LOCALLY SOURCED, QUALITY FOODS



Nestled in the countryside on Cloverdale Road in Black River Falls is your not-so-average farm store where they sell much more than just meat. Imagine a store with a full line of Westby Cheese, organic eggs, natural food products, homemade items, and even chainsaw carvings. “You have to be here to take it all in,” shares Jackson Electric member Holly Meimann. Together, Holly and her mom, Shirley Wagner, operate Wagner Family Meats. Most times, the granddaughters are also there to lend a hand.

“I like to know where my food comes from and what’s in it.”

—Shirley Wagner

The store opened in October of 2021, and is situated on the Wagner Family Farm, which has been a certified organic farm since 1992. Organic farms must follow a strict standard of no antibiotics, synthetic hormones, or toxic pesticides. The store carries organically farm-raised chicken, pork, and beef. “I like to know

where my food comes from and what’s in it,” says Shirley.

Shirley opens the large chest freezer located in the store and pulls out a package of beef sticks and summer sausage. “I’ve become aware of additives,” says Shirley. “Look at the ingredient list. There are organic spices—no additives or preservatives, so these are great for those who have sensitivities.”

Also in the freezer, you’ll find brats, hot dogs, ring bologna, roasts, chops, steaks, bacon, sausage links, chicken, ham, and Alaskan-caught salmon when there’s availability.



Holly Meimann (l) and Shirley Wagner (r) show off some of the products available at their family’s store.

The beef is sourced from the Wagners’ milking shorthorns, which are a dual-purpose animal that provides both milk and meat. “We are seeing items become popular seasonally,” shares Shirley. “In the summer it was the brats and hot dogs for grilling, and in the fall, customers sought after stew meat.”

“We’ve had really good reviews on our hamburger patties,” adds Holly. “Everything is processed by a local certified butcher and packaged for resale.”

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Left: Wagner Family Meats carries a variety of locally produced items to appeal to everyone. Above: The fridge is stocked with Westby and Pasture Pride products, along with farm-fresh eggs.

Shirley closes the freezer and moves to the refrigerator, which is packed full of Westby Cooperative and Pasture Pride products. Think cheese, butter, cottage cheese, sour cream, grated parmesan, and cheese curds. Wagner Family Meats carries Westby products because they are members of the Westby Cooperative and have their milk hauled there. “We’re happy to have that relationship with them and have some of our milk made into these products,” says Shirley.

You’ll also find varieties of Pasture Pride Cheese, a Cashton-based company Shirley discovered on the way to Westby. “Carrying Pasture Pride Cheese allows us to offer more variety, such as mozzarella and muenster, which Westby Cooperative



There’s a freezer full of local, organically raised meat products waiting for you. Don’t forget to grab some hamburger patties!

Tortilla Soup Mix from the shelf and lists off the ingredients: “Black beans, onion, corn, red pepper, green chili pepper, green pepper, garlic, chili spices. I know exactly what’s in the mix,” she says.

Holly and Shirley continue the tour by showing off the jams they made together, Amish-made cutting boards, mittens crafted by Shirley’s sister-in-law, sauerkraut and bloody Mary mix made by a gentleman in Hixton, Great American Pancake Company products, and more. “There isn’t a shortage of people that want to market their items in the store,” shares Shirley.

“We have more than you might think,” adds Holly.

If you’re someone who likes to know where their food is sourced, now is the time to give Wagner Family Meats a try. You might even become one of the regulars that Holly and Shirley visit with each weekend. “I enjoy being able to meet new people and provide them with something farm-raised,” shares Holly.

“We feel good about selling our meats because the quality is there,” concludes Shirley.—*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*

does not produce,” Shirley says. “I also keep some cream cheese on hand for the dips we sell so that customers don’t have to make a trip to the store.”

On the shelf near the fridge are spices, soup mixes, and dip mixes made by Wildwood Specialty Foods, a Trempealeau-based company. Their products contain all natural ingredients and are quick and easy to make. Shirley grabs a package of the Classic



**Wagner Family Meats**  
N5228 Cloverdale Road,  
Black River Falls, WI 54615

Open Fridays from 1 to 6 p.m. and  
Saturdays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
(or by appointment)

Call Shirley at 715.299.2607 or  
Holly at 715.896.2284

Check their Facebook page  
@Wagner Family Meats LLC for  
promotional announcements  
and updates.

**Attention gardeners:**  
Clover Valley Compost, produced  
locally at the farm, is also available  
for purchase upon request.



## ENERGY ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

If you are in need of energy assistance, please visit [homeenergyplus.wi.gov](http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov) to learn more about the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program and income guidelines or contact your county’s Department of Health and Human Services.

## UPCOMING DISTRICT MEETINGS

District meetings will be held in Districts #2, #3, and #8. Members who have a meter in each of these districts will receive a meeting notice via USPS with a mail date of January 23, 2023.

Meeting dates, times, and locations are as follows:

**District #2** – Tuesday, February 7, 2023, Alma Center VFW

**District #3** – Wednesday, February 8, 2023, Mentor Town Hall

**District #8** – Thursday, February 9, 2023, Millston  
Community Center

Call for District Director Nominations was published in the November 2022 issue of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.



## RETIRING EMPLOYEES LOOK FORWARD TO THEIR NEXT CHAPTER

After 46 years of combined service to Jackson Electric’s membership, Steve Bucholz and Brian Dolesy have each announced their plans to close a chapter on what each says was a rewarding career. Retirement is bittersweet. It’s never easy to say goodbye to longtime employees with their countless hours of experience, but we wish both good health and happiness as they begin their new adventures.

### Steve Bucholz: Growth came from learning opportunities

He started out as a mechanic, completed a lineman apprenticeship, worked as a lineman for many years, and ended his career as a GIS technician. Jackson Electric’s jack-of-all-trades, Steve Bucholz, known around the office as “Bucky,” is closing a chapter on a 31-year career. “I started out as a mechanic,” shares Bucky. “I hadn’t thought about becoming a lineman prior to my employment here, but when three linemen retired, I was asked if I was interested in a lineman apprenticeship.”

Bucky’s learning didn’t stop there. After gaining experience as a lineman for several years, Bucky assisted in the deployment of advanced metering systems. He was heavily involved in the computer/

technological side of the deployment, where he naturally picked up valuable computer skills that would transfer to his current position. “Eventually with my computer skills I moved into the office full time to work in GIS,” he says.

As we often hear from retirees, Bucky is going to miss the camaraderie of the workplace and the employees he’s gotten to know over the years. His time as a lineman offered rewarding experiences, and he was motivated by opportunities to always learn something new. “It’s been an enjoyable career,” he says.

During his career, Bucky not only saw changes in his job title, but also the electric industry. “All of the equipment and devices on our lines used to be



mechanical,” he recalls. “With advancements in technology, we’re seeing more computerized equipment/devices.”

Bucky doesn’t have anything specific on his retirement bucket list, but he does plan to do more hunting, fishing, traveling, and maybe even some camping.

### Brian Dolesy: Technology drives changes

About 15 years ago, Brian Dolesy applied for Jackson Electric’s warehouse clerk/facilities maintenance position on a whim after his family’s milk-hauling business was sold. “I wasn’t sure what I was going to do, and then my wife saw the ad for the position,” recalls Brian. “I hadn’t been through the job application and hiring process for a long time, but I decided to give it a try.”

After an initial interview, phone call, and follow-up interview, Brian learned



he was selected for the job. Prior to Brian, there had never been an official warehouse clerk, so it was essentially a new position that he took ownership of. He had to start somewhere, and that was with learning to identify the inventory items and industry lingo. “I didn’t know one item from the other when I started,” shares Brian. “There also wasn’t any software for tracking inventory.”

Brian’s next task was to develop an inventory system that would work for the crew and office employees for tracking work orders. This first started with a sign-out sheet and developed into a spreadsheet for tracking. “At that time, it was more manual, hands-on tracking to make sure everything matched,” Brian says. “With advancements in technology we now have barcoding and an inventory system that monitors inventory and ordering.”

In addition to the inventory system, Brian has witnessed several

advancements in technology throughout his time at Jackson Electric. In the early days, Brian was part of the team that installed WildBlue internet for members when it was available, and he remembers when LED bulbs were just taking off. “This industry is constantly changing,” says Brian. “We’ve added more inventory items, such as solar, EV chargers, and now generators.”

As Brian reflects on his time at Jackson Electric, he appreciated the five-day work weeks and not working weekends or holidays after having been self-employed. “Overall, it was a good experience,” shares Brian. “It’s going to be a change not seeing my co-workers every day.”

Most importantly, we asked Brian how he plans to spend his retirement. He plans to spend more time visiting his two daughters who live in the Cities and his son in Holmen. “My wife and I like to travel,” Brian concludes. “We might be snowbirds someday.”

**Editor’s Note:** If you know Bucky and Brian, you know they’re always willing to help when needed. The board of directors, management, and employees at Jackson Electric wish only the best for Bucky and Brian as they begin writing their retirement chapter.

# WELCOME TO JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, REED!

Jackson Electric recently added a new team member to its roster with the hiring of Reed Holliday as warehouse technician. "I heard great things about the cooperative and the people who work here and thought it would be a good fit," shares Reed of his interest in the position.

Hailing from the Ettrick area, Reed brings his experience of growing up on a dairy farm and his most recent employment at Tractor Central to the table. He also holds an agricultural business degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. "I'm enjoying the position so far, and I hope to keep learning from the knowledgeable crew here that's been teaching me what I need to know."

When Reed's not at work, it's likely that you'll find him in the woods either bow or gun hunting, helping out whenever he can on his family's farm, and maybe even watching a Packer game.

We had to ask Reed a couple more

questions to learn more about him:

1. *What is your favorite animal?*  
A whitetail deer. I admire the challenge of the hunt.

2. *What songs are on the soundtrack of your life?*  
Anything classic country like George Strait or Garth Brooks.

Reed is responsible for Jackson Electric's inventory, ordering and purchasing materials, maintenance of the building and grounds, along with other warehouse responsibilities. The next time you stop at Jackson Electric to pick up a water heater or meter socket, you may have the opportunity to meet Reed.



## 2023 ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES


This year's rebates for the purchase and installation of qualified energy efficient appliances, lighting, heat pumps, and more are available. Visit [jackelec.com/rebates-and-incentives](http://jackelec.com/rebates-and-incentives) to determine if your item qualifies or contact our office. More details on this year's rebates will be announced in next month's *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*.

## NEW BILLING LINE ITEMS

**PCA:** A Power Cost Adjustment, or PCA, is a mechanism that is put into place so that Jackson Electric can either credit or recover unbudgeted wholesale power costs during the year without having to continually restructure energy rates. The PCA on your billing statement will be zero unless the Jackson Electric board of directors authorizes the implementation of the charge or credit.

**Demand Charge:** This charge will help recover some of the demand fees that Jackson Electric pays to Dairyland Power each month. This, too, will be zero on your billing statement unless the Jackson Electric board of directors authorizes the implementation of this charge.



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