

HOME IS JACKSON COUNTY

They say home is where the heart is. Jackson Electric member Will Peasley may have left Jackson County to pursue a college degree and complete an internship abroad, but Jackson County has always been the place he wanted to return to, the place he calls home. “I always had the intent to come back to Jackson County and the Black River Falls area because of my ties with the family farm,” says Will.



Will Peasley returned to Jackson County to apply his degree in agribusiness and manage the family farm.

Will’s journey in agribusiness began with the youth opportunities made available through Jackson Electric. Will participated in the first youth ambassador group, which presented him with the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., for the Electric Youth Tour. “I wasn’t really a traveler, and this trip helped me grow as an individual,” shares Will. “I gained real-life experience, met peers from across the country, and became more confident.”

He also cites the Black River Falls FFA Test Plot Cooperative as an influential experience that allowed him to approach agriculture from a different perspective. The test plot is a collaboration between the Black River Falls FFA and Jackson Electric. Under the leadership of FFA advisor Brad Markhardt, students apply the scientific method to agriculture by asking a question, researching, forming a hypothesis, setting up their experiment, analyzing the data, forming a conclusion, and communicating their results. “The data analysis led to my interest in agribusiness,” says Will. “I have used this model to advise my local community, providing direction and advice when helping people through a decision-making process.”

A graduate of Black River Falls High School, Will continued his education at University of Wisconsin-Madison where he graduated with a degree in agricultural business. During his senior year, he decided to gain international experience by interning with a feed consulting company in Chili for a semester. “The greatest takeaway was being able to visit 50-60 farms as they were consulting and advising and having exposure to agricultural practices in a different part of the world,” Will explains. “They have a different climate but still figure out how to graze all the animals. Grazing became a large part of my family’s operation when we transitioned to organic.”

Following graduation, Will returned home and started a career as an agricultural lender at a local bank, in addition to farming alongside his father. He was able to use his real-life experiences to assist local farmers in securing financing for

new purchases for crop or dairy operations. “I was in this role for four years before transitioning to the insurance industry,” he says.

Not only is Jackson County and the family farm home to Will, but it is also home to his wife, Kelsey, and their three young children. Will believes our community offers a nice setting for a family because of its connection to agriculture and the opportunities to enjoy the outdoors that you won’t find in the city. “My children are able to be on the home farm and have the same exposure to agriculture and learning opportunities that I had,” Will says.

Will shares that there are many opportunities for young adults in our community, from employment to volunteering. Since COVID, there has been an increase in remote work opportunities. “Your place of employment doesn’t have to be the place where you live. There’s new opportunities and flexibility to stay in this area rather than moving to a larger city. We also have employment opportunities in the Black

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The family farm is home to Will, his wife, Kelsey, and their three children, who have the opportunity to grow up on the farm and experience agricultural opportunities firsthand.

GET TO KNOW JACKSON ELECTRIC'S YOUTH AMBASSADORS

This month, we learn from youth ambassadors who are high school seniors participating in the program for their first year. These students wanted to grow their social skills and become more involved in the community.

Brianna Baker

School attending:

Melrose-Mindoro High School and Western Technical College

Grade in school:

Senior



Why did you join the youth ambassador program? "To be able to learn, meet new people, and have fun."

Future career interest/career path: Pursue a business-related career.

Extracurricular activities: Drama, mock trial, Battle of the Books, trap shooting, student council, DECA (formerly known as Distributive Education Clubs of America) and Vice President of DECA school store, National Honor Society President, Senior Class Vice President.

Hobbies/part-time work: Hunting, reading, traveling.

What three items would you bring with you on a deserted island? A friend, knife, and a can.

Chloe McFarlane

School attending:

Lincoln High School (Alma Center)

Grade in school:

Senior



Why did you join the youth ambassador program? "To grow my leadership and social skills, be more involved in the community, visit different businesses, and learn more about electricity."

Future career interest/career path: Police officer

Extracurricular activities: Cross country, softball, track, National FFA Organization, Family Career and Community Leaders of America, 4-H, student council.

Hobbies/part-time work: Hunting, fishing, sports, community service, raising animals.

What three items would you bring with you on a deserted island? Water filter, water, food.

Charlie Severson

School attending:

Black River Falls High School

Grade in school:

Senior



Why did you join the youth ambassador program? "I joined this program because I wanted to be more involved in my community, and it sounded like a fun experience."

Future career interest/career path: Marine vet technician/wildlife rehabilitator (ocean animals).

Extracurricular activities: National FFA Organization, Family Career and Community Leaders of America, tennis.

Hobbies/part-time work: "I currently work at the Cheese Hut in Hixton. I like to hunt, fish, travel, play tennis, watch basketball, hike, and play with my dogs."

What three items would you bring with you on a deserted island? A lighter, my dog, and a blanket.

MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST

Submit your photos January 1-31, 2024, to be considered in the January contest.

JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
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GET OUT YOUR CAMERAS!

Jackson Electric's Photo Contest is Back

We cover lots of territory with our camera, but now we want to see how you view our service territory through your lens. We are looking for fresh, creative, high-quality photos in the places where our members live, work, and volunteer in our service territory.

Each month from January through December, members can submit up to two photos into our monthly photo contest for a chance to win a \$25 energy credit. Photos should be current and original.

Contest entries can be submitted through the webform at www.jackelec.com. Emailed or in-person submissions will not be accepted. The contest runs January 1 through December 31, 2024.

For questions, please email bshramek@jackelec.com or call 715.284.5385, press 5 for Member Relations.



PHOTOS FROM THE PAST



Electronic lighting equipment in Millston. Pictured L-R: Thomas Harkner, Carl Strozewski, Line Superintendent Robert Ball, groundman Ike Miles, Stanley Bennett, Dale Smothers, and David Bromley.



Herman Rosenbaum and son inside of their dairy barn.



Jackson Electric's line crew, year 1951. Front row (l-r): Gilbert Hagen, Bejamen F. McNeely, and A. Lloyd Bekkelund. Back Row (l-r): Eugene N. Stenulson, Roger R. Swenson, Orville A. Nortman, J. Guy Babcock, Ellis H. Parlow, and Elmer N. Samuelson.

WHAT JACKSON ELECTRIC'S MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

Member question: I use a portable electric space heater during the winter months. Does a space heater of such increase my electric bill?

Answer: Your portable electric space heater will definitely increase your electric bill if used consistently. It is not unusual to see electric bills increase \$40 to \$50 per month because the space heater is operating. With the use of SmartHub usage, we can detect when your space heater is operating and when it isn't. This is something you, as a member, can do, too.

If you have a registered account on SmartHub, Jackson Electric's payment portal, you can view your electrical usage. This is a great tool to view if you feel your usage is higher than typical. By monitoring your usage trends, you can determine what device is plugged in that is causing abnormal usage trends. If you don't have a registered account on SmartHub, contact our office or stop by our office and we can help you set up your account.

Portable electric space heaters are 100 percent efficient, but if used regularly, they still use a considerable amount of electricity. Portable electric space heaters are convenient, but they have one purpose: supplemental heat. They're designed to heat a small area, not your entire home. When used improperly or beyond their intended use, space heaters can be costly to both your wallet and safety.

Calculate the approximate operating cost of an electric space heater:

$$\text{Watts}/1,000 \times \$0.1188/\text{kWh} \times \text{hours of operation} = \text{cost}$$

For example, a 1,500-watt electric space heater operating eight hours a day for 30 days costs \$42.77 per month to operate. There are more economical choices available to heat your home. Contact Jackson Electric to learn more about cost-effective electric heat options.

Space Heater Safety

Make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working condition.

Make sure the heater is clean and in good condition.

Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Accidental contact could cause serious shock or burns.

Turn off your space heater and unplug it before leaving the room or going to bed.



ZOOMING IN ON DON

He's the face of the metering and energy (load) management program. If you've already completed your dual fuel inspection or your load management receiver required a repair, it's likely you've met with Don Fortun.

In addition to ensuring that our meters are accurate and monitoring the load management program, Don has also gained knowledge and experience in solar assessments and installation over the last couple of years. In addition to metering, Don is the primary installer for Jackson Electric's automatic standby generator program. "I enjoy meeting and talking with our members," Don says.



Prior to his 15 years of employment at Jackson Electric, Don completed an apprenticeship program and worked with an area electrician for 11 years. "I was attracted to this position (at Jackson Electric) because I heard Jackson Electric was a good place to work, and it was closer to my home."

When Don isn't installing a generator or working with load management projects, you'll find him fishing, hunting, and spending time with his family and friends. Asked where he sees himself in 10 years, he says, "Retired and living the good life."

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River Falls area that may not be in every small community," he says.

When it comes to volunteerism, Will is a past president of the Jackson County Dairy Promotion Committee and has been involved with the Jackson County Junior Livestock Committee. While he has chosen to reduce his involvement to focus on his family and career, Will shares another passion that he has developed. "My wife and I feel strongly about the foster care system in our county, and we are certified to provide respite care," he says. "We can provide relief to foster care parents. It works well due to the age of our own children."

If home is where the heart is, then Will Peasley's heart is in farming, family, and this community. Will's story is a reminder that you can leave home, grow as an individual, and return to invest that experience and knowledge into your community. "It is fun and rewarding to raise my family here. There are so many opportunities in this area for young adults, whether it's in agriculture or just being in a rural environment and enjoying the outdoors," he concludes.—*Brandi Shramek*

DISTRIBUTED GENERATION UPDATES

Beginning January 1, 2024, there are a few updates to Jackson Electric's distributed generation program.

Application fee: \$250 per application

Why the application fee? Jackson Electric's operations department works with the solar installation company and spends quite a bit of time reviewing the application, correcting one-line drawings and explaining Jackson Electric's requirements. If Jackson Electric requests an engineering review of the application, the member will be responsible for the cost of the review.

Commissioning/anti-islanding fee: \$750

Why the increase in this fee? In the past, Jackson Electric's line crew has gone to a location at a specific appointment time set by the solar installer to find that the system is not ready to be commissioned. The crew either waits at the location for the installer's electrician to finish or the crew comes back to the location at another time and/or day.


A master electrician is required to complete and sign off on Jackson Electric's wiring affidavit. This fee will be paid by the member installing a distributed generation system.

Why is a master electrician required?

This is to confirm that all the wiring for the system is accurate and complete. This is an added level of protection for the member and Jackson Electric.

If you are planning to install a distributed generation system, such as solar energy, and you are not planning to have JacksonSolar LLC install the system, please contact our office before you commit to a contract. Jackson Electric's representative will discuss our procedures, requirements, and fees. We will also talk with you about the impact production will have on your billing statement.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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