

PLUGGING INTO ELECTRIC TRANSPORTATION:

MELROSE-MINDORO SCHOOL DISTRICT RECEIVES AREA'S FIRST ELECTRIC BUS

The Application Process

In the spring of 2022, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) announced a \$5 billion Electric School Bus (ESB) initiative to be released over five years (FY 2022–2026). The first round of funding in 2022 was a rebate program, which is the fastest way for applicants to apply and receive a quick turnaround. Soon after learning about the program, Jackson Electric, the school's power provider, approached the Melrose-Mindoro School District to determine if there was interest in applying for the grant. Jackson Electric representatives also met with the school's staff, along with bus and charging station vendors, to educate them on electric vehicles, charging, rates, and distribution services.

School districts applying for this rebate were selected via lottery, with priority given to schools identified as rural, high need, and low-income, and tribal schools.

Casey Pfaff, finance administrator at the Melrose-Mindoro School District, was actively involved in the application process in May 2022, with over 20 hours committed to the application process. "As with other federal grants, there were logistical questions, financial questions, and narratives identifying how the district intended to use the bus and how the district would benefit from having an



Casey Pfaff, Mel-Min School District Finance Administrator

electric bus in our fleet," she explains. "Being a rural Wisconsin district, we knew there would be some challenges with an electric bus, so we made sure we did our research before applying."

Recipients Selected

On October 25, 2022, the district received notice that it was selected as a \$395,000 recipient to purchase an electric school bus and charging station. The next step was selecting the right vendor and model to incorporate into the district's existing fleet. "After site visits and vendor discussions, we purchased a Blue Bird model through Wisconsin Bus Sales," Casey shares. "Our charging station was purchased from InCharge Energy, Inc."

Installation of the charging station at the Melrose-Mindoro bus garage occurred during the summer of 2023. Both Jackson Electric and Kish & Sons Electric were involved in the process to ensure the charging station would meet the district's needs. "Our bus arrived on March 13, 2024, and we are excited to have this electric bus join our fleet," Casey says.

The Electric Bus Experience

With the turn of the key, Melrose-Mindoro bus driver Paul Lash starts the first electric bus in Jackson Electric's service area. He explains that the noise you hear at the initial start-up is the air compressor. Once the compressor quiets down, the bus is just that—quiet. "There's actually a safety feature that generates noise when you are going less

than 15-20 mph," shares Paul.

Paul has been a driver for the district for five years and enjoys operating and learning more about the electric bus. He shares that the major differences between driving the electric bus and its diesel-powered counterpart are the quietness and the regenerative braking. This type of braking converts the energy from deceleration back into stored energy for the vehicle. "Rather than applying the brake pedal to slow down, you take your foot off the accelerator and allow the bus to coast to regenerate the battery. You don't brake as much. This was something to get used to," Paul shares.



School bus driver Paul Lash plugs in the electric bus to charge after a route.

The electric bus was used on Paul's regular route from April until the end of the school year, which was approximately 80 miles per day. The bus then charged overnight for the next day's route. It was also used for summer school transportation in June. "The dash has a gauge that shows the remaining range," Paul explains. "At the start of the day, it shows I can go about 120 miles on a single charge."

Dan Stetzer, director of transportation for the school district, explains the criteria that was considered in selecting Paul as the primary driver of the electric bus.

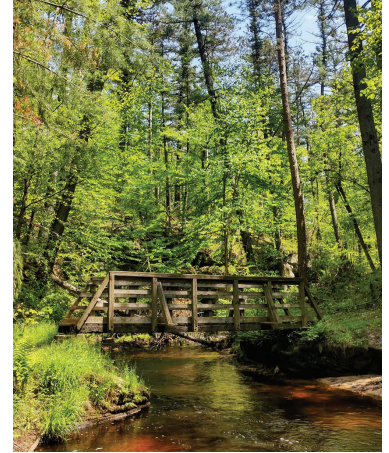
Continued on page 18



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR JUNE PHOTO WINNER

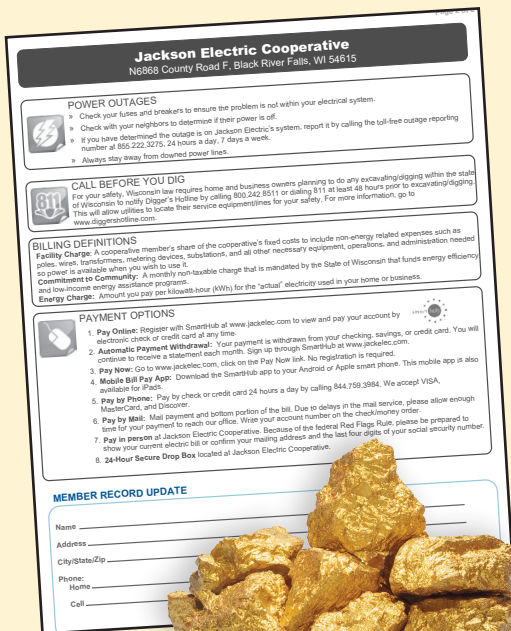
Congratulations to Lexi Zeller of rural Sparta for submitting her winning photo, Enchanting. This photo was taken at Perry Creek. Lexi will receive a \$25 energy credit on the next billing statement.

If you have a photo that you feel expresses life in Jackson Electric's service territory, submit it in August's photo contest for a chance to win an energy credit. Go to jackelec.com and click on the Photo Contest button to enter.



WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT YOUR BILLING STATEMENT

If you receive power from Jackson Electric, then you receive a bill every month whether it's through the USPS or email. Have you ever looked at the back side of your billing statement? There is a gold mine of information! Let's check out two of the features!



POWER OUTAGES

WHAT DO I DO IF THE POWER GOES OUT?

If your first reaction to a power outage is, "Oh no," DO NOT PANIC.

Locate your electrical panel inside your home.

- Check your fuses and breakers. Is it just a tripped breaker? No? Go further →
- Do you have a disconnect switch/overload protection outside by your meter? Is that tripped? No? Go further →
- Contact your neighbors. Is their power off? If yes, it is most likely a larger outage. If no, perhaps it is just an individual outage. Either way, proceed to the next step. →
- Report the outage by calling the toll-free outage number at 855-222-3275.

OUTAGE REPORTING NUMBER IS AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY/7 DAYS A WEEK!

Remember to ALWAYS stay away from downed power lines!



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED TO DIG ON MY PROPERTY?

The answer is simple, contact Digger's Hotline. Wisconsin law requires home and business owners to call in a "diggers ticket" prior to performing any digging.

- You may submit a Digger's Hotline request by dialing 811 on your phone or by selecting "File a Request" at their website, www.diggershotline.com.
- Various questions will be asked
 - **Contact Information** – Name, address, contact name and phone number
 - **Dig Site Location** – City/township/village, address, side of street, nearest intersecting road
 - **Dig Site Information** – Requested start date, type of work, marking instructions
- Digger's Hotline will contact the member utilities requesting any underground facilities to be marked.

REMEMBER, Digger's Hotline WILL NOT locate privately owned underground facilities.

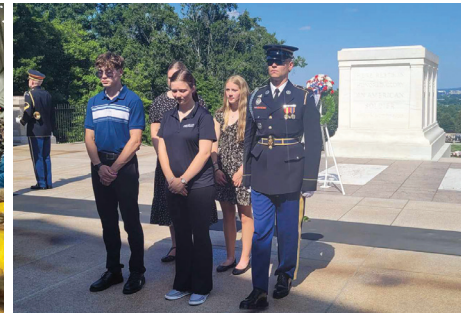
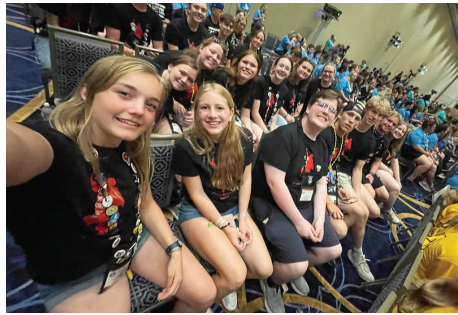
YOUTH AMBASSADORS REPRESENT AT YOUTH TOUR

“A really, really cool experience.”

These were the words of Jackson Electric Youth Ambassador Cortney Nicolai. She and three other Jackson Electric youth ambassadors participated in the NRECA Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., June 16–22. Those joining Cortney on the tour were Isabella Libke, Brianna Baker, and Mytchell Wollin. All four students hail from the Melrose-Mindoro School District. In total, 18 junior/senior students from Wisconsin attended, and a total of 1,659 delegates from around the country represented 44 states.

Students not only learned about cooperatives on the national level but had the opportunity to visit many of the memorials and historical sites in our nation’s capital. Students toured a long list of sites including the WWII Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Mt. Vernon, National Archives, Iwo Jima Memorial, and the Smithsonian, to name a few.

Of all the memorials toured, the Sunset Parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial really resonated with many of the students. “I was amazed how the Drill Platoon did their drill without a single verbal command and the Drum & Bugle Corp was amazing,” says Mytchell. This parade was led by the Marines and featured the Drum & Bugle Corp, the Silent Drill Platoon, and a 21-gun salute. Isabella commented that it was very meaningful to her because her dad was a Marine.



Above left: Jackson Electric youth ambassadors take a quick selfie: (l-r) Cortney Nicolai, Isabella Libke, and Mytchell Wollin. Brianna Baker is in the row above, fifth from the left. Above right: Isabella, back right, participates in the laying of the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Left: Isabella and Cortney at the FDR memorial. Below: Wisconsin delegation to the Electric Youth Tour.



Perhaps one of the most notable honors of the trip was when Isabella, along with three other students, was selected to assist in the wreath ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Isabella also said visiting the Holocaust Museum revealed many facts that she had not previously learned, which added to this very educational trip.

The Youth Tour is an excellent opportunity for junior/senior high school students to learn about democracy and the importance of being an active participant in it. It is also an opportunity to learn about the role of cooperatives in the national economy and to interact with U.S. representatives and senators. Jackson Electric students were able to meet Senator Tammy Baldwin as well as staffers from the offices of Senator Ron Johnson and Representative Derrick Van Orden. These meetings gave students insight into the role of an elected official and the responsibilities of their jobs.

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association organized the trip for the Wisconsin group. Cortney says, “I was

very impressed with the Wisconsin group because they were all very respectful and didn’t leave anyone out.” Each had a voice in the group, which was a fine representation of the power of a cooperative.

All participants expressed their gratitude for Jackson Electric’s Youth Ambassador Program. They agree it is an excellent opportunity to meet students from other schools, learn new things, serve the community, and experience various field trips. Any student interested in joining the youth ambassador program for the 2024-2025 school year can complete an application at www.jackelec.com. The deadline for applications is August 16, 2024.

The Youth Tour is sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national voice for your local rural cooperatives, working with elected officials to keep electricity safe, reliable, and affordable. They also work to educate the public on electrical issues and promote the cooperative model and benefits of a member cooperative.—*Janet Brandli, communications specialist*

YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

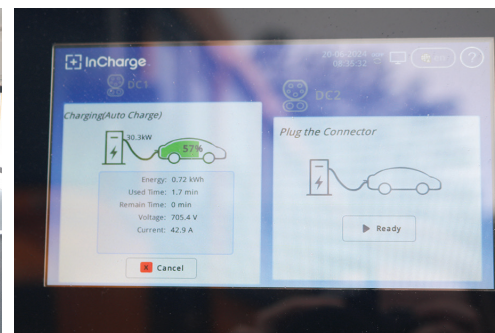
*Develop your skills
out of the school classroom*

**Leadership • Cooperative Model •
Business Skills • Service & Volunteer
Opportunities**

High school juniors & seniors are eligible

**HURRY! Deadline to apply is
August 16, 2024**

Apply at www.jackelec.com/youth-ambassador-program



The driver's seat and bus interior. At right is the charging display, which shows the battery percentage and energy usage.

Electric Bus Continued from page 15



Dan Stetzer, Mel-Min School District Director of Building and Grounds, Transportation

Paul is also a custodian in the building, so he is already at the school in advance of the morning route, and he doesn't keep a bus at home. Another consideration was the route length, as it is one of the district's longer routes. "There are not a lot of large ridges or hills on his route, so we figured he would not be using extra energy to climb hills," shares Dan. "I know he's a good driver who will take care of the bus, and he was willing to give it a try."



A ribbon cutting was held at the school on May 16, 2024.

Learning Opportunities

The school district looks forward to learning more about the technology of this new electric bus and monitoring its efficiency throughout the full 2024-2025 school year. There may also be learning activities built into the curriculum to provide students with more interaction with the bus. "I know the Melrose Volunteer Fire Department was also here to observe the bus and charging station from a safety standpoint," shares Paul.

While there is not a truly easy comparison of diesel to kilowatt-hours, the Environmental Defense Fund indicates that a diesel school bus averages about 8.2 miles per gallon, while an electric school bus operates at a 20.87 miles per gallon diesel equivalent. "We haven't experienced winter with the bus yet, so we will learn how it performs with charging and heating in different elements," shares Paul. "It has been working well for what we are using it for." —*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*

JEC JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Members are invited to attend the
ANNUAL MEMBER PICNIC
Wednesday, October 2, 2024
4 – 7 p.m.

Jackson Electric Cooperative Building
N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, Wis.

More details to come in the September issue of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*



Customer Service 715.284.5385
800.370.4607

Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)

Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511

Card Payments 844.759.3984

www.jackelec.com

Mailing Address: N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, WI 54615

Office Hours: Mondays – Thursdays, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Fridays, 7:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Board of Directors: Gary Woods, President
Chris Curran, Vice President
David Peasley, Secretary-Treasurer
Jerry Huber, Dairyland Power Representative
Dan Smrekar, Kristi Hanson, Brian Huber,
Troy Torkelson, Les Dokkestul

Kevin Babcock, General Manager/CEO

Jackson Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner