

# RURAL ROUTE TO *The Heartbeat*

A gentle breeze carries the scent of fresh-brewed coffee through open windows into the early morning country air. Chickens peck at dew-damp ground, searching for bugs, while the rooster sounds the alarm. Sunlight fills the old farmhouse, spilling across a book left on the dining room table. On the wall hangs a sign that reads, “Home is where your story begins.”

Sitting at that table is Scott Schultz, a Jackson Electric member, a writer, a veteran, a farmer, and the founder of the Heartbeat Center for Writing, Literacy, and the Arts.

The Heartbeat Center is more experience than place, more feeling than structure. Its name comes from the novel *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. “Papa tells *Esperanza* that when you lie down on the ground you can feel the earth’s heart beating,” Scott recalls. “At first, she can’t hear it. But once she’s still and quiet, she understands. That’s the purpose of the Heartbeat Center: to help people reconnect with the land and the soil.”

Scott’s own story began on a farm in rural Clark County, where he first found both the land and the written word. He remembers chasing a woodpecker around, scribbling notes about everything it did. That early spark

turned into his first publishing venture, printing and selling a student-made newspaper with a neighbor kid. “We were shut down when the school caught on,” says Scott.

By senior year, Scott thought he had an easy study hall ahead of him, until his English journalism teacher, Mrs. B, marched in. “She grabbed my ear, pulled me out of the back row, and

“Just start. Don’t worry about chronology. Our lives are made of stories. Write the stories that shaped you. And remember, good reading makes good writing.”

told me I wasn’t going to waste my potential,” Scott smiles. “I guess she saw something in me.” Soon, he was writing a sports column for the local paper.

Around the same time, a Marine recruiter came to school. The impression stuck, and Scott enlisted. Much of his military career was spent as a combat correspondent. “Whatever the Marines were doing, that’s where I



Born and raised in the countryside, Scott Schultz, writer and founder of the Heartbeat Center, connects people to the land.

was, covering the news,” he explains. His last active-duty role was as Public Affairs NCO with the Marine Corps Air Reserve, often performing military honors at funerals.

When he returned to civilian life, Scott worked at papers in Abbotsford, Marshfield, and Loyal before landing at *The Country Today* in Eau Claire, where he retired as managing editor. “I enjoyed meeting real people from the countryside, the salt of the earth,” he says.

In 2001, while still at *The Country Today*, Scott got an unexpected call. An English professor from Florida, attending a conference in Milwaukee, had found the paper’s number in a directory. She wanted to start a program to mentor young writers. “That call made me think of Mrs. B pulling me out of study hall. I couldn’t ignore the chance,” Scott says. From that, the Heartbeat Center was born.

Not long after, Scott had an opportunity to purchase the historic Eimon Homestead near York, at the edge of Jackson Electric’s service territory. “When Dee first visited (the



While the Heartbeat Center is situated on the historic Eimon Homestead, the organization is more concept and feeling than a physical place. Writers have explored the property to express their creativity.

English professor who first made that call), she stopped at the nearby scenic overlook on Highway 53. She told me, ‘This is where I belong.’ Now she’s my wife,” Scott laughs. Dee is a high school English teacher at the Osseo-Fairchild School District.

What started as a program for young writers grew into something much bigger. As a veteran himself, Scott discovered how writing could help process trauma. He partnered with The Highground and other organizations to create safe spaces for veterans to share their stories. “I’ve seen how healing it can be,” Scott says. “Veterans will open up to other veterans and family if you ask the right kinds of questions. You don’t need to press. Ask questions that help you understand who they were while serving or something funny that happened. That can open the door.”

He recalls two young Marines who had lost a friend to suicide. “When they wrote and talked about him, you could see their hearts open,” Scott says. “They started with a funny story, then eased into harder truths.”

One exercise Scott often uses



**Beyond the old pasture fence is a campfire ring where stories come alive for writing event participants.**

is writing an obituary, not for a person, but for something lost. “One gentleman wrote about losing his dignity,” Scott says. “Another responded, ‘I know what you mean.’ That small exchange built a connection.”

Scott’s advice to anyone who wants to write—whether to heal, to share, or just for fun—is simple: “Just start. Don’t worry about chronology. Our lives are made of stories. Write the stories that shaped you. And remember, good reading makes good writing.” —*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Supervisor*

Scott and the Heartbeat Center have partnered on projects including:

- Music in the Park – Veterans Night (featuring veterans from the VA)
- Upper Northwest Veterans Expressing Themselves (VETs)
- Collaborations with veteran officers, The Highground, and Bong Veterans Center in Superior
- Wisconsin Humanities storytelling programs
- UW–Madison Odyssey Project – Odyssey Beyond Bars (prison outreach) and Odyssey Beyond Wars (veteran outreach)

Follow on Facebook @ The Heartbeat Center for Writing, Literacy and the Arts, Inc.  
[www.theheartbeat.us](http://www.theheartbeat.us)

### Join the “Hey, Bud” Project

Next spring, choose a bud from a tree or bush and follow it through its journey—from first bloom to the season’s first snowfall. Capture the experience in whatever creative way speaks to you: write about it, take photos, sketch, paint, even make music. The possibilities are endless when you slow down, pay attention, and let creativity guide you.

## DON'T MISS OUT ON YOUR REBATE

Jackson Electric Cooperative offers rebates to its members who purchase qualified energy efficient items. These rebates are paid from the Commitment to Community (Public Benefits Funds) dollars that are collected each month from each member account. This is a state-mandated program where half of the dollars are used toward low-income energy programs and the remaining half toward energy efficiency programs.

Don’t wait until December to submit your rebate applications. Please submit to our office your completed and signed rebate form within 60 days of your invoice date with the Energy Star label (if applicable) and paid receipt. Your rebate application may be rejected if all required documentation is not completed, signed, and received.

Applications available online at <https://jackelec.com/rebates-and-incentives> or at Jackson Electric’s office. Availability of rebates are subject to change without notice. Rebate amounts less than \$500 will be issued a credit on the member’s billing statement. More than that amount, a check will be issued to the member on record.



# TIME-OF-USE (TOU) BILLING IS AVAILABLE!

Jackson Electric members now have the option to enroll in time-of-use (TOU) billing, a program that rewards you for shifting energy use to times when demand on the electric grid is lower.

With TOU, the price of electricity isn't the same all day — it varies depending on when you use it. Electricity costs more during “peak hours,” when demand is highest, and less during “off-peak hours,” when demand is lower. By adjusting when you run certain appliances, you can reduce your bill and help us keep energy costs stable for everyone.

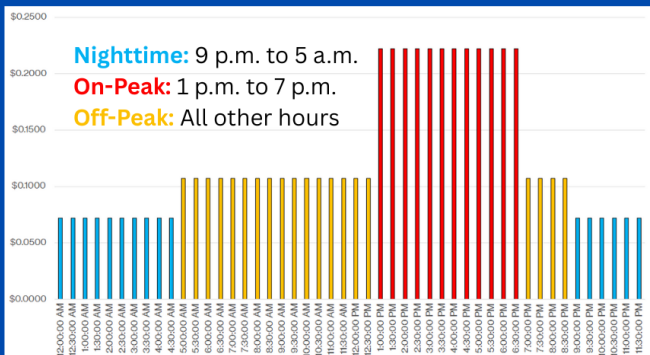
This program is especially beneficial if you:

- Aren't home much during the day
- Can shift energy use to evenings or early mornings (9 p.m. – 5 a.m.)
- Do most of your laundry, cooking, or other high-energy tasks during off-peak hours
- Prefer to schedule activities like charging an EV, running a dishwasher, or drying clothes overnight or on weekends

Even small changes, like running the dishwasher after 9 p.m. or waiting to do laundry can add up to noticeable savings over time.

If you're interested in learning more about TOU or want to see how your bill might look under this program, call 715.284.5385, press 3. (Qualifications may apply.)

## Time-of-Use Billing Shift Your Use, Lower Your Bill



Office Closed  
November 27 and 28 for the  
Thanksgiving Holiday.

Report outages to 855.222.3275.



## JACKSON ELECTRIC WELCOMES BEN VAN AUKEN AS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT & HR ADMINISTRATOR

On September 29, Jackson Electric welcomed Ben Van Auken to the team as Executive Assistant and Human Resource Administrator.



Originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado, Ben has lived in many parts of the country. “My dad built golf courses, so we first moved to Wisconsin in the 90s,” Ben shares. He now resides in the Tomah area.

For the past 21 years, Ben has served in the U.S. Army and will officially retire in December. His service has taken him to forts across the United States, as well as deployments to Iraq, Kuwait, and Poland. “I’ve spent a lot of time in the desert,” Ben recalls.

Ben’s military career has prepared him well for his new role. He has served in field artillery, psychological operations, chemical defense, and as a battalion operations assistant. Most recently, he worked as a unit administrator with a focus on human resources. “I have experience in communicating and coordinating, travel administration, budget management, training, physical security, and establishing a unit from the ground up,” he explains.

A people-person at heart, Ben says he joined Jackson Electric because of its focus on serving members and the community. “In the Army, every soldier is important. I believe a good HR administrator is there to build trust and work in the best interest of everyone,” he explains.

Outside of work, family keeps him busy. Ben and his wife have three children involved in golf, dance, and soccer, where Ben coaches his youngest. At home, they share life with their Pomeranian American Eskimo pup named TJ.

Ben also loves to cook, especially when it comes to a good cookout, and he’s always willing to travel to try new foods. “I’m not a big baker, but people say I make the best carrot cake they’ve ever tried,” he shares.

When he’s not in the kitchen, you might find him tending flowerbeds, running a race, watching Sunday football, or most likely, out on the golf course.

Welcome to the Jackson Electric team, Ben!

## ENERGY ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

If you are in need of energy assistance, the regular energy assistance benefit period is open now through May 15.

Jackson Electric members are encouraged to contact their county's local energy assistance department directly to see what benefits are available. By submitting an application locally, your request may be processed sooner, and your local agency can inform you of other programs you may be eligible for.



**Energy Assistance Available**

**Jackson County:**  
715.284.4301

**La Crosse County:**  
608.785.5582

**Monroe County:**  
608.487.9356

**Clark, Eau Claire, Trempealeau Counties:**  
715.836.7511

## DUAL FUEL LOAD MANAGEMENT WINTER PREPAREDNESS EVENT NOVEMBER 19

Members who participate in the dual fuel (off-peak) electric heating program will experience an interruption in their electric heat on Wednesday, November 19, starting at 6:55 a.m. A gradual restoration of electric heating systems will begin at 10:00 a.m. with all systems being restored by 11:00 a.m. Please make sure your backup heating system is operational before this date. This system-wide test is administered by Dairyland Power Cooperative to ensure equipment is operating properly for the winter heating season. The dual fuel program is optional. If you have questions, concerns, or would no longer like to participate please contact Jackson Electric's office.



*Thank You*  
**VETERANS**

for your selfless service, courage, and sacrifice in protecting our freedom.

11.11.2025



Customer Service 715.284.5385  
800.370.4607

Outage Reporting 855.222.DARK (3275)

Diggers Hotline 800.242.8511

Card Payments 833.679.0919

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 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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

Carol Blaken, General Manager/CEO

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