



# NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC

OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE

# WATTS NEWS

VOL. 29 NO. 1

PUBLISHED FOR THE MEMBERS OF NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

JANUARY 2026

## CEO Report

*Good evening, North Itasca!*

By the time you read this the holiday season will be over. I hope you all had time together with friends and family.

If Santa dropped off some new fishing gear, it looks like a good year for the lakes around the area. I threaten to go fishing more every year, who knows? This could be the one.

My buddy Jim almost had me talked into taking up snowmobiling again. Yesterday we hit mid-forties, our snow is depleted, I'm kind of glad I didn't fold to Jim's sound logic. The snow will eventually come; I'll reassess the decision when that happens.

Once again, I get to be the bearer of bad news. On Monday

before Christmas, we will hold our December board meeting. I haven't been able to improve our budget beyond what I have been talking about the past couple of months.

It looks like we are going to see a five percent rate increase in 2026. It will be up to our Board to act on the budget, but that is what the numbers are showing.

Why are we having another rate increase? Costs continue to climb year after year, and we take smaller increases than in the past. Several years ago at the Annual Meeting in Northome I proposed smaller increases but more often to the attendees. Previously rate increases were less often but large.

This created a feast and famine curve at the



Brad Dolinski, CEO

cooperative. Year one, we were flush. By year two or three we were in the sweet spot, by year four we were generally barely making our lenders' capital requirements. I asked for a change, I want to live in the sweet spot: small increases more often than one large one. The outcome is the same, the bills go up as costs increase, but it's not as big of a hit in one year. The crowd in attendance generally supported this approach, unfortunately costs have climbed

CEO to p.2>

## Member Services Update

*by Drew Francisco*

Hello again everyone! Another month has passed already, and winter is in full swing. Winter brings basketball season, and coaching the Bigfork Youth programs has taken up a lot of my after-work hours. It's been a lot of fun to see the improvement and growth over the last few months.

Winter months also bring the heating season as you're all very familiar with. I have been dedicating a lot of my time to ensure North Itasca Electric's load

control equipment is operating as it should. Auditing the meters and control devices to make the billing process as accurate as possible. With that being said, you may see me driving around our system changing meters or testing load controllers. Over the next month, Member Service Managers across multiple co-ops throughout the state will begin to meet and discussions will begin about next

year's operational plans. Everything from rebates, load control strategies, communications and all the other great things we are responsible for.

What I enjoy about these meetings is hearing how other cooperatives do things; sharing ideas or offering insight

Member to p.2>

*National grid exercise simulates wildfires, ice storms and sabotage*

## GridEx VIII puts GRE to the test

Practice makes perfect. That was the mantra last month at Great River Energy as the two-day GridEx VIII crisis exercise simulated several emergencies, including a substation fire, cybersecurity breach, wildfire, winter storm and widespread power outage.

GridEx, the electricity industry's largest cyber and physical security exercise, is hosted every two years by the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC). It provides industry and government partners the

opportunity to practice in real time how they would respond to — and recover from — coordinated security threats to the grid. The crisis exercise began with a simulated act of vandalism quickly followed by reports of a wildfire threatening transmission corridors.

Meanwhile, IT responders were busy reacting to a simulated cloud provider outage and a coordinated cyberattack that coursed through the cooperative's network infrastructure.

Throughout the two-day exercise, a team of

crisis commanders held regular calls with liaison teams representing various areas of the company, from cyber and physical security to finance and human resources, to foster collaboration and communication.

As the crisis exercise grew and evolved, teams across GRE acted quickly to determine the most prudent solutions to handle the simulated events. The cooperative's security operations center also remained engaged

GridEx to p.3>

### Our Promise to You

As the demand for electricity continues to grow, our commitment to providing you with reliable power remains steadfast. Looking ahead, we are dedicated to:

- Advocating for energy policies that support our local communities.
- Leveraging innovative technologies to strengthen our grid.
- Listening to your feedback to enhance co-op programs and services.

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### Office Hours

Mon. - Thurs.

6 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

On weeks with holidays, office hours are 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.



## CEO Report

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substantially since 2018.

Great River Energy passed a rate increase to their members again in 2026. This is roughly half of the increase you will see on your bill. GRE makes up roughly 50% of the expenses at North Itasca Electric. When a 5% rate increase comes along you see 2.5% passed to your bill. An additional 2.5% is directly related to our operations. We continue to maintain and improve the system we all share. These

operational costs are shared among all members at the cooperative.

These are investments in reliability. Last night the wind was blowing forty plus miles per hour. I believe we had five outages in total. That is an improvement from what we have seen in the past. To make a more reliable system, we need to invest in the system.

There are several changes and challenges coming in future years. Currently we are looking

at changing the way we are billed from GRE. These changes will affect how the off-peak system is operated. I know my friend Nick from Sand Lake will enjoy this change. We will have different programs to offer based off these changes, opportunities for all to save money on these monthly bills. As I know more, I will share with you what these changes or programs could be. Andrew's article about back-up generators will be revisited in the future. Home batteries could have

credit attached to them. Generators could have a value added to them that isn't available today.

One important parting thought. Thank you, Gina and our office professionals, for managing the capital credit retirement. Many of you got a bill credit on your December bill. I heard from many Member-Owners that the new process was appreciated.

Until next year, happy holidays!

*By your side! Miigwech  
Brad*

## Member Services

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on things we have experienced that may help their cooperative, collaborating on major projects or potentially incorporating some practices that other co-ops have deemed successful.

A lot of these meetings are down in the southern part of the state, so it takes me out of the office at times. But I have been trying very hard to return calls or emails when I return. Having a presence at these meetings is important. It gives North Itasca Electric a



Drew Francisco

chance to voice concerns or opinions on all the strategies I listed above.

As always, please reach out if you have any upcoming projects or questions related to your electrical service. I hope all of you have great holidays and stay warm!

*Until next time,  
Drew Francisco*

## Keep us up-to-date

Please keep your contact information current with our office. Please notify North Itasca Electric of any changes in property ownership, mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses.

You can send in a change of address using the form on page 4.

### NorthItascaElectric.com

- pay a bill, download a form, find a contractor
- worksheets to calculate the cost of running your appliances

## We may have a check for you!

North Itasca Electric has a long list of Members and former Members who have been sent capital credit checks, but whose checks were returned. One of the checks may be for you or someone you know! For instance, have you changed addresses over the last 20 years without updating your contact information with the office?

Check the list at NorthItascaElectric.com! If you know anyone on the list, have them contact the office at (218) 743-3131 or 1(800) 762-4048, or email support@nieci.com to update your contact information and claim the check.



### North Itasca Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Directors

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Secretary: Lloyd Kongsjord, District 5

Treasurer: Roy Bain, District 9

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## WATTS NEWS

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WATTS NEWS Editor: Sally Sedgwick

Send all calendar items, recipes, advertisements and other correspondence for WATTS NEWS to the Editor at: P.O. Box 43, Spring Lake, MN 56680



## Highlights from the Board Room

NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC CO-OP., INC.  
MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
Nov. 24, 2025

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the office and electronically through Zoom on Nov. 24, 2025.

**Directors Present:** R. Bain, T. Christensen, J. Kilian, M. Rahier, L. Salmela and T. Kallio.

**Directors Present Via Zoom:** L. Kongsjord, W. Waller and Andy Shaw.

**Also Present:** CEO Brad Dolinski, Dan Heinecke, Drew Francisco, Daryl Pederson and Gina Vickerman.

- Pledge of allegiance was recited.
- Motion to adopt the agenda. Seconded; motion carried. A motion was made to consent agenda. Seconded; motion carried. A reminder was given that December meeting date was moved to December 22nd due to the holidays.
- A safety discussion was held by T. Kallio. After having three side by side accidents within a mile of the same area in Squaw Lake, he reminded everyone of the importance of wearing their seatbelt. Brad also reminded everyone that it is required by law for children to wear helmets while riding.
- Dan presented the Operating Report. Motion to approve was made. Seconded; motion carried.
- Board Policy: Board Policy 400.92 – Use of Cooperative Equipment was reviewed and will be modified.
- Daryl presented the Line Department report. MREA rescheduled for November for UG Fault Findings and Slips, Trips and Falls training. The crew have completed all new services and revamp for 2025 and are currently working on retirements and pole replacements.
- Drew presented the Member Services report. The Revitalization Grant had 4 businesses apply for this round and 3 of the 4 were awarded the \$5000.00 match. Their available funds have made it to their goal of \$99,000.00 for the first year.
- Dan presented the Office Report. We are adjusting our hours to a 4-day work week, Monday through Thursday 6:00 – 4:30. The exception would be weeks with holidays remaining at 8-hour days.
- Brad presented the CEO report.
- Wes Waller gave the MREA report.
- Lloyd gave the GRE report.
- Round Table discussion was held. Made a motion to adjourn. Seconded; motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

*Regular board meetings are generally held the fourth Thursday of every month. If you wish to speak with the board or have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda, please contact CEO Brad Dolinski at least two weeks in advance to be included on the agenda.*

## Moody's affirms strong credit rating

Moody's Ratings has affirmed its A3 rating of Great River Energy, maintaining a stable outlook for the cooperative.

This affirmation highlights confidence in GRE's financial strength, even as the organization prepares for a significant increase in capital spending over the next several years.

"Moody's affirmation of our credit rating is a testament to Great River Energy's sound financial management and the strong support of our member-owners," said GRE's Treasury Services Director Tim Faulkner. "Our investments in the electric system will ensure we continue to deliver safe, affordable and reliable energy for years to come."

GRE's annual capital investments are projected to support major transmission projects to address regional reliability and strengthen the grid.

Despite the need for additional debt to fund these projects, Moody's expects GRE's financial metrics to remain appropriate for the rating level, thanks to proactive measures taken by the cooperative.

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### MEMBER NOTIFICATION TO SMALL POWER PRODUCERS, COGENERATORS

In compliance with Minnesota Adopted Rules relating to Cogeneration and Small Power Production Chapter 7835, North Itasca Electric Co-op, Inc. is required to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers which satisfy the conditions of a Qualifying Facility.

North Itasca Electric Co-op, Inc. will provide free information to all interested members regarding rates and interconnection requirements. An application for interconnection is required for a Qualifying Facility to interconnect and operate in parallel with the cooperative's distribution system and is subject to approval by the Cooperative.

Any disputes over interconnection, sales and purchases are subject to resolution by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Members interested in further information should contact North Itasca Electric Co-op, Inc.

## GRE part of GridExVIII exercise

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to coordinate responses by employees and local authorities.

According to E-ISAC, participation in the 2025 exercise increased by 48% from the last time it was held in 2023, with more than 370 organizations simultaneously running through their emergency preparedness plans and protocols.

The national exercise concluded with a tabletop session that brought together industry and government executives to focus on strategic and policy-level issues raised during the event. A public report on GridEx VIII will be released by E-ISAC in the first quarter of 2026.

*"The crisis exercise reached just about every corner of the company and tested several business-critical response plans. It was remarkable to watch everyone jump to action to protect our system and serve our member-owners."*

...Walt Ullrich, control center support supervising manager who led the team tasked with creating and facilitating the crisis exercise at GRE.



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# Cold weather rule & energy assistance program notice

In accordance with Minnesota’s Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between Oct. 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by North Itasca Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from North Itasca Electric Cooperative. Minnesota’s Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects. Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between Oct. 1 and April 30:

**North Itasca Electric Cooperative must provide:**

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members’ rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

**Energy Assistance Program**

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 60 percent of the state median income (\$71,999 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2026. To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance, Kootasca Community Action (218) 999-0800. North Itasca Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact Sheila Hafeman at (218) 743-3131 to set up a payment plan.



**STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

NORTH ITASCA ELECTRIC CO-OP, INC.

Bigfork, Minnesota 56628

is the recipient of Federal financial assistance from the Rural Utility Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provide that no person in the United States on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap shall be excluded from participation in, admission to, access to, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any of this organization’s programs or activities.

That person responsible for coordinating this organization’s nondiscrimination compliance efforts is Brad Dolinski, chief executive officer. Any individual, or specific class of individuals, who feels that this organization has subjected them to discrimination may obtain further information about the statutes and regulations listed above from and/or file a written complaint with this organization; or the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC. 20250; or the Administrator, Rural Utility Service, Washington, DC. 20250. Complaints must be filed within 180 days after the alleged discrimination. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

## Energy assistance

If you cannot pay your winter heating bills, contact one of these locations for energy assistance help.

KOOTASCA ENERGY ASS'T. -Itasca  
822 NE 5th Ave.  
Grand Rapids MN 55744  
218-999-0800; 877-687-1163

KOOTASCA ENERGY ASS'T. - Koochiching  
900 5th St. Suite 304  
International Falls, MN 56649  
218-283-9491

BI-COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 579  
Bemidji, MN 56601-0579  
800-332-7161

ITASCA COUNTY SOCIAL SERV.  
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Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
218-327-2941

KOOCHICHING COUNTY FAMILY SERVICES  
615 4th St  
International Falls, MN 56649  
218-283-8405

LEECH LAKE ENERGY ASS'T.  
115 6th St, Suite E  
Cass Lake, MN 56633  
218-335-8292

## Meter seals

If you or an electrician is performing electrical work at your residence which requires opening meter sockets or load control receivers, you need to contact North Itasca Electric first.

By contacting North Itasca Electric, you can help prevent possible problems which could occur when North Itasca Electric finds that seals have been cut. These problems would mostly be on sub meters where load control meters are installed.

This equipment is owned, controlled and maintained by North Itasca Electric. These seals may only be cut if permission is granted by North Itasca Electric in advance or deemed an emergency by an electrician.

North Itasca Electric does realize that there could be instances where work needs to be done, in such cases; North Itasca Electric still needs to be contacted. If it is determined that loads have not been controlled during load control periods, demand charges could be applied to your billing.



**800-252-1166 or 811**  
**Call before you dig**

Whenever you plan to dig over 12 inches deep, 2 days before you start, call Gopher One at 811 or (800) 252-1166. It's required by Minnesota state law and it is a free service.

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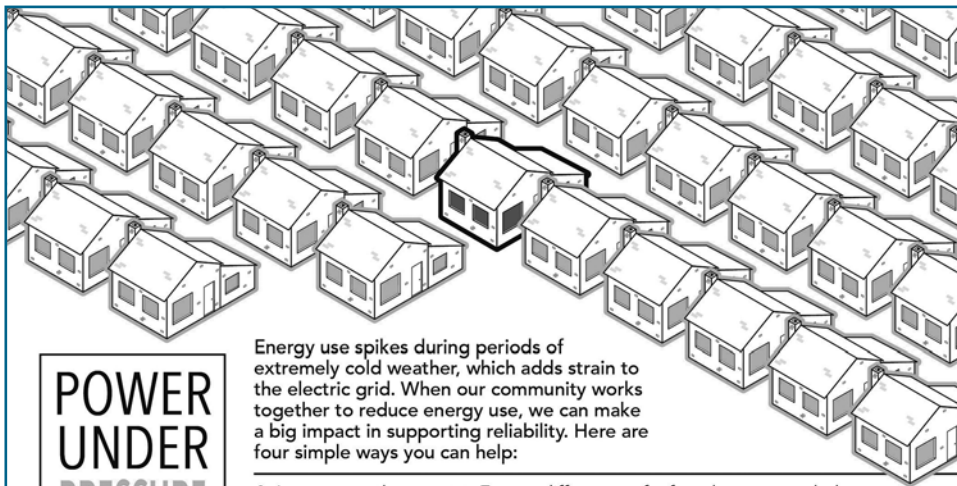
Send to: North Itasca Electric Co-op P.O. Box 227 Bigfork, MN 56628



## Working together to lower demand

When outdoor temperatures drop, electricity use naturally rises. Colder weather drives us indoors, where we rely more heavily on home heating systems, more lighting, and household appliances. Heating systems run longer and more frequently to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures. Combine that with the fact that most people use electricity at the same times—typically in the mornings and early evenings—and the result is significant pressure on our electric grid.

North Itasca Electric works closely with Great River Energy, our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, to plan for these seasonal weather patterns and changes and ensure you have reliable power every day of the year. This partnership involves detailed resource and infrastructure



**POWER UNDER PRESSURE**

Four Ways to Ease Grid Strain This Winter

Energy use spikes during periods of extremely cold weather, which adds strain to the electric grid. When our community works together to reduce energy use, we can make a big impact in supporting reliability. Here are four simple ways you can help:

1. Lower your thermostat. Even a difference of a few degrees can help.
2. Delay using large appliances. Run them in the evenings or midday when demand is lower.
3. Lower your water heater to 120 degrees and avoid back-to-back showers.
4. Unplug unnecessary devices. Electronics and lighting add up. Unplug any unused items.

planning to make certain electricity is available whenever you need it. However, it's important to remember that our local system is part of a much larger regional and national electric grid.

During the winter months, when homes and businesses across the country are using more electricity simultaneously, overall demand can approach—or occasionally exceed—available supply. This is especially true during severe weather events, such as ice storms, sudden temperature drops or equipment malfunctions that reduce generation capacity. In rare cases when demand threatens to outpace supply, the regional grid operator may call for temporary, controlled outages—often referred to as rolling blackouts—to prevent broader system failures. If such a situation arises, North Itasca Electric will provide timely updates and information to members.

To prepare for these scenarios and minimize risks, North Itasca Electric and our G&T partner take proactive measures to strengthen reliability year-round. These include routine system maintenance, investments in grid modernization and comprehensive disaster response planning. It's one reason our right of way clearing program is so important; it is designed to ensure our portion of the grid remains resilient even under extreme conditions. Yet, maintaining a reliable electric system requires a collective effort—and every member plays an important role in lowering demand

when the grid is under stress.

You can help by taking simple actions during periods of high electricity use, especially on the coldest days of winter:

1. Lower your thermostat slightly. Even reducing the temperature by a few degrees can help.
2. Delay using large appliances during peak hours. Run dishwashers, washing machines and dryers during off-peak hours—typically midday or late evening.
3. Adjust your water heater. Setting it to 120 degrees F and spacing out showers helps conserve both energy and hot water.
4. Unplug unnecessary devices. Power used for lighting and electronics adds up and accounts for a significant portion of home energy use. Disconnect unused items to reduce energy waste.

Understanding how winter weather impacts electricity demand is key to maintaining system reliability. By practicing simple energy conservation habits at home, you not only save money on your monthly bill—you also help strengthen the resilience of the grid that powers our community.

Together, through small actions and shared awareness, we can ensure that our homes remain warm, our lights stay on and our local grid continues to serve us reliably throughout the season.

## Roxanne's Repair Tips:

Why does my manual defrost freezer get ice built up on the top coils only?

There are a few common issues that will cause ice buildup:

The first thing to check is the freezer gasket on the door. Is the door sealing properly? If not, wash the gasket with warm soapy water and see if that helps. If the gasket is old and brittle, maybe try a little Vaseline on your finger and rub the seal. This can help to make the seal more pliable, so it fits tighter.

You can check the seal on the door with a piece of paper. Start at the top, close the paper in the door and pull. If the seal is good, it will pull hard. If the seal is loose, when you pull the paper will come right out. Keep moving the paper down to check the whole seal.

Look for any cracks or gaps in the freezer construction – if there is any, it could be letting warm air in causing moisture to condense and freeze on the coils.

Are you putting hot food in the freezer? Placing hot food in the freezer will cause humidity, contributing to frost build up. To prevent this, let food cool off before you put it in the freezer.

Finally, you could have defrost system failure. If this happens it may not clear the defrost as designed and cause ice to build up on the coils. This can be caused by a faulty temperature sensor, heater, or control board.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Winter weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weatherstripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. You can also save energy by lowering your thermostat a few degrees. Even small adjustments like these can reduce heating costs and improve comfort during the coldest months.

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Christmas Coloring Contest

Congratulations to our winners of the Christmas coloring contest, and thank you to every child who sent us an entry!



Fynn, grade 2: Winner!



Zoey, grade 2



Pre-K



Rissa, grade 1: Winner!



Camden, pre-K



Conner, grade 2





Declan, kindergarten: Winner!



Syriana, grade 1



Garry, kindergarten

# Roxanne's Sales Talk

by Roxanne Prather, Member Services Representative

Hello-

December is cruising right along! It's the 11th as I'm writing this. I'm sure it seems to fly because of all the extra work of getting everything done and getting ready for Christmas.

I love this time of year, it truly is magical, with all the lights and decorations. We like to drive around different areas to just look at the lights!

I'd like to share a wonderful little story with all of you. Last summer my sister lost her home in a fire. She lost almost everything. With the help of a GoFundMe and a wonderful community, they finally were able to purchase a home and get moved in right before it got too cold.

I went last weekend to check it out and was totally impressed that the house looked completely furnished. I was expecting a lot of empty space! I walked into a beautiful, furnished home. Pictures on the walls, furniture in all the rooms, the house was beautiful!

There are so many wonderful people out there that gave them stuff to help get them back on their feet. With a world

that is so divided into so many ways it was nice to see how people all pull together in this time of need. Because of all of you they will have a very Merry Christmas... Thank you for all your generosity!

\* \* \*

Have you checked out the Speed Queen® washers and dryers? These washers and dryers continue to outshine all others. Speed Queen first started in 1908 in Ripon, Wisconsin when the company was founded by Joe Barlow and John Seelig as Barlow & Seelig Manufacturing. They built the first washer powered by an electric motor in 1911. In 1915 they introduced the first swinging wringer to operate in any direction.

The brand name "Speed Queen" was officially launched in 1928. In 1922, the manufacturing of washers built with nickel copper tubs, a first in the industry, began. And in 1939, Speed Queen traded in the nickel copper tubs for stainless steel that is still used in our washing machines today.

They pride themselves on identifying people's needs and doing what

needs to be done to fulfill them. That mindset took a slightly different turn in the early 1940s. Like many manufacturers during World War II (1942-1945), Speed Queen halted its production of laundry equipment to manufacture 20mm shells as well as parts for airplanes, tanks and guns. Operating 24 hours a day to support the war effort, the company received numerous awards for its service.

Speed Queen has over 100 years of commercial quality and expertise and has always and will always continue to bring you a line of washers and dryers that are built better

and last longer.

Their latest dryer that has gotten a lot of attention is the DR7. This dryer is made for all of us pet owners. They added a pet plus cycle that works wonderfully at removing pet hair from your clothes.

Not only are they built better and last longer, but they have the best warranties around as well. Depending on which model you purchase the warranty ranges from 3, 5 and 7 years.

Don't believe me? Stop in and see the quality for yourself!

Hope you had a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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# January Refrigerator Sale



**GRFC2353AF - \$2021.50 SALE \$1909.35**  
Frigidaire, stainless steel, 22.6 c.f. counter depth, French door refrigerator with ice and water dispenser, smudge proof stainless steel. Auto defrost, two drawers, LED lighting, adjustable racks, door storage, gallon door storage and adjustable door bins, air filter, basket divider, power failure alarm.



**FRSS2623AS - \$1151.33 SALE \$1036.20**  
Frigidaire, 25.6 c.f. 36" wide stainless steel side-by-side refrigerator. frost free, LED lighting, door alarm, gallon door storage, door storage, dairy compartment, temperature alarm, power failure alarm, water dispenser, ice dispenser.



**FRSS2623AW - \$1151.33 SALE \$1036.20**  
(SAME AS ABOVE BUT WHITE)

**FFTR1835VW - \$619.37 SALE \$557.43**  
Frigidaire, white 18.3 c.f. top mount refrigerator, glass shelves, ADA, optional icemaker, EvenTemp cooling system, flexible interior storage system, humidity controlled crisper drawers, auto close doors, optional slim icemaker, LED lighting, frost-free freezer, reversible door.



**MRF29D3AST - (\$1560-\$175 DENT) = \$1385 SALE \$1300**  
Midea, stainless steel, 29 c.f. jumbo capacity, ice & water dispenser, standard depth. Ice and water dispenser, instant water filtering, optimized internal space, smart control, easy lift door bin, LED lighting, interior adjustable cabinet shelves, Energy Star certified. Door storage, gallon door storage.



**MRB19B7AST - \$1435.85 SALE \$1292.26**  
Midea, stainless steel, 18.7 c.f. bottom mount 30" wide refrigerator. Two level freezer drawer, full width door shelves. humidity controlled crisper bins, LED lighting, frost free freezer, Energy Star certified.



**FRGFS287DAF - \$1696.50 SALE \$1435.85**  
Frigidaire, 28 c.f. stainless French door refrigerator with external ice/water dispenser with filter. Adjustable temperature drawer in refrigerator, air filter, two clear crispers, clear door bins, automatic humidity controls, interior LED lighting, glass shelves, three gallon plus door bins, produce keeper included. Nine total door bins. Two adjustable shelves, one fixed shelf. Marinade and oven pan, wine rack, air filter indicator, control lock, digital display, door ajar alarm, ice maker on/off, mute sound control, power failure alarm, on/off display, Sabbath mode, water filter indicator. Auto door closing, child lock.



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\*Rebate available with the purchase of select Speed Queen dryers between January 26, 2026 and March 1, 2026.

("rebate period") from an authorized Speed Queen retailer. All rebate claims for the above time period must be submitted no later than April 1, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted. Any submissions that require correction or further information must be completed by June 7, 2026. Only one eligible machine is permitted. Limit one rebate per household. Rebate must be redeemed for residential use only.

Visit <https://speedqueen.com/products/rebates/> to submit a claim.

AR26-0004

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## Classic Movie Series: *Spellbound*

by Jack Nachbar  
The January Classic Movie at the Edge in Bigfork offers a delicious grab bag of goodies. There's a passionate love story with two rising mega stars, Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck. There's artwork in the sets by the czar of surrealism, Salvador Dali. There's Oscar winning music by Miklos Rozsa. There's

a serious treatment of Freudian psychology. There's a great climax directed by the Master of Suspense, Alfred Hitchcock. Wow and double Wow! No wonder *Spellbound* (1945) was one of the top five most popular movies of the year. The plot of *Spellbound* takes place at a mental hospital where Bergman

and Peck work together. But things get complicated and scary. More and more it seems that Gregory Peck may be guilty of murder. Is he? Is Bergman in mortal danger?

This wonderful Hitchcock classic will be shown at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 8, 2026 at the Edge Center Theater in Bigfork.

FREE. Your only cost will be

a short trip through the winter cold. It will be well worth it.

FEBRUARY CLASSIC MOVIE: Valentine's Day special. A very good movie version of Jane Austen's immortal rom-com, *Pride And Prejudice* (1940). starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier. Thursday, February 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Edge.



## Effie American Legion Auxiliary donates to Veterans Home

The Effie American Legion Auxiliary Waldron-Flaat Post 182 recently donated \$400 to the Bemidji Veterans Home. Shown is Maryhelen Chadwick, volunteer and public affairs coordinator for the facility, accepting a check from Vicki Hill, auxiliary president.



## Nativity Festival

by Sally Sedgwick  
The Nativity Festival has become a tradition: the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Nativity scenes using all types of materials and from all different cultures are displayed at the Sand Lake Alliance Church in Spring Lake.

It is extensive. There are about 350 different scenes, said Susan DeVries, who has acquired the collection over the years. It is fascinating: there are Nativities in snow globes or as ornaments. There are traditional Nativities and some with moose or bears. There are intricate cut wood scenes and one from bent nails. In fact, materials include wood, stone, glass, porcelain, paint, metal – even wool and corn husks. Almost every scene has its own display nook created by DeVries.



Susan DeVries displays a traditional Nativity scene, one of about 350 Nativities she has collected.



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## Practical Water Wisdom series

Do you want to leave a legacy of clean water for future generations? If so, don't miss Practical Water Wisdom: A Virtual Learning Series, hosted by Itasca Waters. This FREE, hour-long program takes place online at noon on the first Thursday of each month (except July, when it's on the second Thursday). Each session includes a live Q&A. Register at <https://itascawaters.org/water-wisdom-2026>

### January 8 - Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Lake Management

Presenter: Shane Bowe, Water Resource Director for the Red Lake Nation Department of Natural Resources. Bowe began working as an Aquatic Biologist for the Red Lake Nation Department of Natural Resources in 2006.

In his time at Red Lake, he has worked on projects ranging from shallow lake research, to water quality monitoring and paleolimnology, to numerous nonpoint source pollution reduction projects including dam removal and stream restoration. As a nonmember managing lakes on a closed reservation, Shane has a unique perspective regarding Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the interplay between resource management and local culture and traditions.

**Topic Summary:** Over the past two decades, we've learned that the most effective way to incorporate tribal community needs and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into our lake management work is to support and empower tribal members to manage their own natural resources. Our approach has evolved to focus on increasing tribal representation within resource management roles. Recent initiatives include strengthened outreach to Red Lake Nation College, a tiered mentorship program, and, most recently, the development of an apprenticeship program designed to build long-term capacity within tribal communities.

### January 29 (rescheduled from Oct 2025) - When the Forest Burns, What's in the Water?

Presenter: Sarah Elliott is a hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey Upper Midwest Water Science Center that leads and supports research on various topics. A majority of Sarah's research the last decade has focused on topics related to the presence of contaminants of emerging concern in aquatic environments and ecological implications. Other areas of research include urban stormwater runoff and treatment, implications of geologically derived contaminants in groundwater, and effects of wildfire on water quality, including a focus on critical drivers of post-wildfire water quality.

## An Inspector Calls

*A play in three acts by J.B. Priestley*

Mark your calendars! The EdgeWild Players will be hosting a play reading of "An Inspector Calls" by J.B. Priestley, an English morality play with an interesting twist!

Come read with us on Monday, January 12, 2026 at 6 p.m. in The Edge Center Theatre, 101 2nd Ave., Bigfork.

What is a play reading? Think book club, but with scripts and reading aloud together. Reading a play out loud helps us imagine what characters and stage directions could look like as a full production. The EdgeWild Players invite anyone to join. This is not a performance; there is no audience.

**Topic Summary:** Wildfires are becoming more frequent and severe worldwide, leading to significant physical and chemical changes in aquatic ecosystems within affected watersheds. These changes can impact both public water supplies and ecosystem health. In the U.S., research has mainly focused on the wildfire-prone West, where surface waters are a major source of drinking water. Despite growing knowledge, key gaps remain in understanding what drives water quality changes after wildfires. This presentation reviews the current science on post-wildfire water quality and offers recommendations for addressing these knowledge gaps.

### February 5: What Lakes Do in Winter

Presenter: Ted Ozersky is an Associate Professor of Biological Limnology at the Large Lakes Observatory and the Department of Biology at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Over the past decade, he has become increasingly fascinated by what lakes and the organisms that inhabit them do during periods of snow and ice cover. His research spans ice-covered lakes around the world, examining relationships among water quality, winter severity, and oxygen, nutrient, and biological dynamics.

**Topic Summary:** For many years, lake researchers focused mostly on open-water seasons, leaving the ice-covered months relatively understudied. Today, growing concern about rapidly changing winter conditions has led to a surge of interest in lake winter ecology. In this presentation, Dr. Ozersky will explore what scientists are discovering about the physics, chemistry and biology of lakes during winter—and what these shifting winter patterns could mean for lake health and the vital ecosystem services lakes provide.

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**4 - 6 p.m.**  
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## Squaw Lake Fire Department 2026 Schedule of Events



Jan. 18th- Pancake Breakfast 9am-11am

Mar. 14th- Perch Jerkers & Spring Raffle 10am-1pm

Apr. 11th- Fish Fry & Pie Auction 4pm-7pm

June 6th- Take A Kid Fishing 9am-Noon

Sept. 12th- Hog Roast 5pm-7pm



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## SAIL classes

For more information or to register (required), contact ElderCircle at (218) 999-9233. New attendees may start anytime. Weights are provided but please bring your own water.

- Virtual via Zoom video conference  
Mondays & Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Virtual via Zoom video conference  
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00-10:30 a.m.

*In person at:*

- Bigfork Old Scenic Church  
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
- Bowstring Town Hall  
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
- Deer River, Bethany Lutheran  
Mondays & Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

## 'Name a Snowplow' contest

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has collected thousands of entries for the annual Name a Snowplow contest - that name actually goes on a plow in one of the MNDOT districts. Voting on the list of finalists will begin in January; watch for it on MNDOT's Facebook page.

Here are last year's winners:

- We're Off To See The Blizzard
- Snowtorious B.I.G.
- Plowabunga!
- Anthony Sledwards
- You're Welcome
- Don'tcha Snow
- Sköl Plow
- I Came, I Thaw, I Conquered

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## Survey shows member-consumers trust, prefer cooperatives

Great River Energy conducted a survey of 800 member-consumers across Minnesota to get a snapshot of what matters most to cooperative members.

The results showed that trust in Great River Energy and its member-owner cooperatives remains exceptionally strong. Over 90% of respondents rate information flow, outage response and board transparency as "good" or "excellent."

The cooperative business model is highly valued, with 70% of members preferring their member-owned cooperative over other types of electricity providers.

Reliability continues to be the highest priority for member-consumers, regardless of age, location or views on energy. Economic optimism is also evident, as 66% of respondents believe Minnesota is headed in the right direction.

Community support is a hallmark of the cooperative model and members appreciate this commitment. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that their cooperative does an excellent job supporting local initiatives, and community investments are rising on the list of priorities.

Support for new transmission investments is strong at 77%, seen as essential for powering the state with clean energy.

Daniel Becchetti, communications and marketing manager at Great River Energy, said the results show the trust that members place in their cooperatives.

"We're proud to see such strong support for the cooperative model and our commitment to community," Becchetti said. "We will learn from these results and use them to continue to deliver exceptional service to our members."

Learn more about the survey results on the Great River Energy website, [greatriverenergy.com](http://greatriverenergy.com).

## DNR Eaglecam is live

The popular Minnesota Department of Natural Resources EagleCam has launched its new season.

The EagleCam shows the nesting behavior of a breeding pair of bald eagles, featuring the same active nest as last season. Since 2013, the Nongame Wildlife Program has provided the DNR EagleCam as a way for people to easily connect with nature as they witness the fascinating lives of breeding birds.

"The recovery of the bald eagle population is a conservation success story. The DNR's EagleCam celebrates this success and gives us a unique opportunity to witness these once endangered birds as they prepare for and raise new chicks," said Kristin Hall, Nongame Wildlife Program supervisor. "Donations to the Nongame Wildlife Program helped restore the bald eagle population in Minnesota and aided their recovery nationally. That shows what is possible for the hundreds of at-risk wildlife that still need our help."

Both cameras can be viewed on [www.dnr.state.mn.us/features/webcams/eaglecam](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/features/webcams/eaglecam). Viewers can also find information on bald eagles and learn about the work of the DNR Nongame Wildlife Program.

Viewers tuning into the DNR EagleCam this month will observe an eagle pair courting and upgrading their nest. They bring in new nesting material and large sticks each year as a bonding activity. The pair typically increases their activity at the nest as winter progresses and will usually have two or three eggs by mid-February, which the adults incubate for about 35 days. Both adults participate in incubating the eggs and caring for the chicks.

## B.I.G. Community Center in Bigfork

Coffee Club/Cribbage, Monday-Friday 7-9 a.m.

Bingo every Thursday, 1-3 p.m.

B.I.G. meetings 1st Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

Crafting Group 3rd Wednesday, 5-7 p.m.

## area bookmobile stops

New to the area? Get your Arrowhead Library Card on the Bookmobile.

**The 2026 schedule has changed for our area.  
See highlighted items for changes.**

Mondays: Jan. no stops; Feb. 9

**2:45 - 3:30 p.m.** Northome; Apartments

**Canceled** Alvwood; Hoot-n-Holler

**4:15 - 5:15 p.m.** Squaw Lake; Community Ctr

Tuesdays: Jan. 20; Feb. 10

**10:00 - 11:00 a.m.** Deer River: Comstock Ct.

**Canceled** Deer River: City Hall

**11:30-12:30 p.m.** Bowstring Store

**1:45 - 2:45 p.m.** Effie: Country Store

**3:15 - 4:15 p.m.** Bigfork: City Hall

Thursdays: Jan. 22; Feb. 12

11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Togo: Junction Bar & Grill

*Bookmobile or Mail-a-Book information: call  
Arrowhead Library System at (218) 741-3840*

### Northome Food Shelf

12059 Main St

Bring your own bags.

1st Mon.: 9 a.m.-noon

2nd Mon.: 2-5 p.m.

3rd Mon.: 9 a.m.-noon

4th Mon.: 2-5 p.m.

### Blackduck

Community Library:

(218) 835-6600

Tues: 1-6 p.m..

Wed: 9 a.m.-noon.

Thurs: 12-5 p.m.

Fri: 12-5 p.m.

Sat.: 9 a.m.-noon

### Northern Itasca

Emergency Food Shelf

200 Main, Bigfork

Thursdays

12:30-3 p.m.

3rd Thursday

12:30-4:30 p.m.

(218) 256-4170

### Northome Library

(218) 897-5952

Mon: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Tues: 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.

Wed: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thurs: noon - 6 p.m.

Fri: 9 a.m.- noon

### Resource Centers:

Blackduck:

(218) 835-5768

Northome:

(218) 897-5952



Community News

Bigfork

Come to the Presbyterian Church on Saturday, January 10 from 1-4 p.m. for an Open House and 70th birthday party for Pastor Ray Cole! No gifts, please, but cards are welcome. Share a memory!

Marcell

This winter, join the music jams at the Marcell Family Center! They will be starting up again the fourth Thursday of the month starting on January 22 at 5 p.m. and continuing on as long as there is interest. Sessions are free.

Did you know that the Marcell Family Center has books and puzzles to check out? Come and help put some together!

Squaw Lake

Support the Squaw Lake Fire Department at a Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, Jan 18 at the Squaw Lake Community Center, 9-11 a.m.

General Interest

Two of Minnesota’s top college teams will square off in the annual U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Museum Women’s Face-Off Classic, Saturday, Jan. 31, 4 p.m. at the Yanmar Arena in Grand Rapids, Minn. Eighteenth ranked Minnesota State University (6-5-1) will take on Bemidji State University (3-6-1) in the annual benefit game which raises awareness for the museum located in Eveleth. The game also showcases NCAA Division I women’s college hockey. Select members of each college team will sign autographs after the conclusion of the game. Tickets can be purchased at gofan.co/event/5371724?schoolID =MN16554



Marcell Family Center

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MFC hours:

Fitness Center, gymnasium, multi-purpose room, public computer room and WiFi hotspot.

Mon: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-7 p.m.  
Tues, Thurs: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-7 p.m.  
Fri: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Area Church Directory

<b>Alvwood Community Church</b> Sun 10:00a 58712 Co. Rd. 131 Blackduck 56630 218-659-4681	<b>Effie Fredheim Lutheran Church (ELCA)</b> Sun 8:30a Hwy 1 Effie 56639 218-743-3368	<b>Northwoods Chapel</b> Sun 9:00a 50539 Mushgee Rd. (corner of Co. Rd. 622) Deer River 56636 218-659-2784
<b>Balsam Bible Chapel</b> Sun 10:00a 41516 Scenic Hwy 7 Bovey 55709 218-245-1960	<b>First Presbyterian Church, BF</b> Sun 10:15a 109 Ash St. Bigfork 56628 218-743-3783	<b>Old Scenic Community Church</b> Sun 9:30a 25747 Co. Rd. 340 Bigfork 56628 218-743-3953
<b>Bear River Lutheran Church</b> Sun 10:00a 11141 Hwy 22 Cook 55723 218-376-1012	<b>Gemmel Community Church</b> Sun 10:00a 10609 Town Rd 34 Gemmel 56660 218-897-5966	<b>Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church</b> Sun 9:00a Mass also Tu, W, 9:00a. 320 Golf Course Ln Bigfork 56628 218-743-3255
<b>Bethesda Lutheran Church</b> Sun 9:00a Mizpah 56660 218-897-5654	<b>Good Hope Church - Bigfork</b> Sun 10:00a 101 Golf Course Ln. Bigfork, MN 56628 218-556-9856	<b>Sand Lake Alliance</b> Sun 10:00a 55581 Co. Rd 4 Spring Lake 56680 218-659-2872 Church website: www.sandlakealliancechurch.org
<b>Bowstring Chapel</b> Sun 10:15a 45114 Co Rd 133 Deer River 56636 218-832-3171	<b>Grace Community Church (ELCA)</b> Sun 10:15a 401 State Hwy 38 N Bigfork 56628 218-743-3368	<b>St. Catherine’s Catholic Church</b> Sat 4:00p 52265 State Hwy 46 Squaw Lake 56681 218-743-3255
<b>Calvary Covenant</b> Sun 10:30a 54764 Co. Rd. 31 Northome 56661 218-897-5684	<b>Hope Lutheran Church</b> Sun 10:30 a.m. 12234 Third St. Northome 56661 218-897-5654	<b>St. Michael Catholic Church</b> Sat 7:00p 12026 Lake St Northome 56661 218-743-3255
<b>Centennial Lutheran Church</b> Sun 8:30a Hwy 46 Squaw Lake 56681 218-259-0115	<b>Jehovah’s Witnesses</b> Tu 7:00p., Sun 10:00a Hwy 38 Bigfork 56628 218-743-3275	<b>Suomi Evangelical Lutheran Church</b> Sun 10:30a 42935 Co. Rd. 48 Deer River 56636 218-832-3883
<b>Clara Lutheran Church</b> Sun 9:00a 41447 Little Clara Drive Deer River 56636 218-360-1503	<b>Jesse Lake Lutheran Church</b> Sun 8:30a 45834 Co. Rd. 4 Talmoon 56637 218-832-3883	<b>True Life Church</b> Sun 10:00a 45976 Terry Talmoon 56637 218-244-7089
<b>Deer River Bible Church</b> Sun 10:00a 33276 State Highway 6 Deer River 56636 218-246-9570	<b>Marcell Community Church</b> Sun 10:30a 49103 State Hwy 38 Marcell 56657 218-832-3200	Church directory sponsored by North Itasca Electric Cooperative, send changes to editor, sedgwick@paulbunyan.net
<b>Dora Lake Alliance</b> Sun 10:00a 59329 Co Rd 145 Northome 56661 218-659-4551	<b>Northome Community Church</b> Sun 10:00a 12071 Bartlett St. Northome 56661 218-897-5040	

~ January Calendar ~

- 1 New Year’s Day: **North Itasca Electric offices CLOSED.**
- 5 School resumes after winter break, all schools.
- 5 ISD 318 School Board organizational meeting at Administrative Board Room, 650 SW 7th St, Grand Rapids 6:00 p.m. Work session 5 p.m.
- 5 ISD317 organizational meeting at Deer River HS, 6 p.m.
- 8 Jesse Lake Lutheran hosts a Grief Support Group at 10 a.m. on Thursday mornings. For more information, call Marion at (320) 293-5741.
- 8 Practical Water Wisdom online programs over the lunch hour with Itasca Waters. Topic: "Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Lake Management" with Shane Bowe, Water Resource Director for the Red Lake Nation Department of Natural Resources.
- 8 Classic Movies presents *Spellbound* (1945), with Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck. 6:30 p.m. at the Edge Center, Bigfork. Free.
- 10 Open House and 70th birthday party for Pastor Ray Cole at he First Presbyterian Church in Bigfork.1-4 p.m.
- 12 Women of the Woods meet at 10 a.m. at Sand Lake Community Center. Call Pat Sievertson at (218) 659-2157.
- 12 Effie City Council meets at Effie Community Center, 6 p.m.
- 12 Blackduck ISD 32 School Board meets, 6 p.m. in the Media Center.
- 12 Stop & Stitch meets at the Marcell Family Center the 2nd Tuesday of every month, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. More info, call Debbie at (218) 360-1503.
- 12 Play reading hosted by EdgeWild Players at the Edge Center, "An Inspector Calls," a play in three acts by J. B. Priestley. Everyone welcome to join in, 6 p.m.
- 12 Perry Heide VFW Post 9703 meets the second Monday of the month, 7 p.m. at the Marcell Family Center. Everyone is welcome.
- 13 Bigfork City Council meets at City Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- 16 No school, Bigfork.
- 18 Pancake Breakfast benefitting Squaw Lake Volunteer Fire Department 9-11 a.m at the Community Center.
- 19 Martin Luther King Day. No school, all schools.
- 20 ISD 318 School Board meeting at **Bigfork School/Edge Center** or at watchictv.org, 6:30 p.m. Work session/Open Forum 6:00-6:30 p.m.
- 20 Jessie Lake Lutheran free community meal 4-6 p.m. January meal is chili and cornbread.
- 21 Stitch-n-Bitch meets at the B.I.G. Community Center in Bigfork the 3rd Wednesday of every month, 5-7 p.m. More info, call Krista at (218) 410-2258.

- 21 ISD 363 South Koochiching-Rainy River School Board meeting, 7 p.m. at Northome School media center.
- 22 Music jam at the Marcell Family Center, 5 p.m.
- 26 Women of the Woods meet at 10 a.m. at Sand Lake Community Center. Call Pat Sievertson at (218) 659-2157.
- 27 Bigfork Valley Hospital board meets in public meeting, 9 a.m.
- 29 Practical Water Wisdom online programs over the lunch hour with Itasca Waters. Topic: "When the Forest Burns, What's in the Water?" (rescheduled from October) with Sarah Elliott, hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey Upper Midwest Water Science Center.
- FEB
- 5 Practical Water Wisdom online programs over the lunch hour with Itasca Waters. Topic: "What Lakes Do in Winter?" with Ted Ozersky, an Associate Professor of Biological Limnology in Duluth.
- 7 Winter Frolic at the Marcell Family Center. 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Family event: crafts, food and fun. Free.



Marcell Township has a brand new ice rink!

Thanks to Blandin Foundation grant funding through the Bigfork Valley Community Foundation, and additional support from the Northern Itasca Joint Powers Board and Bigfork Valley Community Foundation, the township has completed several exciting park updates – including a new ice rink that’s now open for business.

The lights are on, the warming shack is open, and the ice is ready. Come check out the new rink and enjoy getting out on the ice!



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Using firewood? Stay safe with smart firewood practices

As Minnesotans settle into the winter season, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is reminding landowners who harvest or buy firewood for heating to take the following steps to protect their homes, woods and selves.

**Avoid moving firewood**

The DNR urges landowners who harvest their own firewood to burn it close to where it is cut. Similarly, the agency reminds people who buy firewood to find locally sourced wood. With insects dormant in winter, cutting firewood during cold months and minimizing the distance cut firewood travels reduces the risk of spreading diseases and fungi. Once the weather warms up and insects become active, unused firewood can spread invasive insects and diseases such as emerald ash borer and oak wilt.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has established pest quarantines in some areas that restrict the movement of firewood. Only firewood that has been processed or heat-treated and is MDA-certified can be moved out of quarantine areas. Moving

untreated firewood out of quarantine boundaries can result in fines. More information is available on the MDA website (mda.state.mn.us).

**Store wood safely to prevent fire**

Sparks, embers or a stray grassfire can ignite firewood quickly. Proper firewood storage is an important step Minnesotans can take to prevent wildfires and protect homes.

- Store only the firewood needed for the season at least 30 feet from a home or other structures.
- Avoid stacking firewood directly against buildings, which can create a direct path for fire to spread.
- Clear leaves, needles and dry vegetation from around stacked or piled firewood to reduce fuel sources.

Maintaining defensible space around homes and outbuildings is especially important during warm or dry winter periods when snow cover is limited. For more tips on how to keep homes and properties safe from fire, visit the DNR’s Firewise webpage (mndnr.gov/firewise).

By following smart firewood practices, Minnesotans can stay warm while protecting homes from fire and woodlands from invasive species.

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Marcell Family Center • Tues., Thurs. 9 a.m.–5 p.m.  
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Submit a recipe to the WATTS News

Please share your recipe with us! If your recipe is chosen, you will receive a \$10 credit on your electric bill from North Itasca Electric Cooperative. Send your recipe to the editor, WATTS NEWS, P.O. Box 43, Spring Lake, MN 56680.

• recipe • recipe • recipe • recipe • recipe • recipe • recipes • recipes • recipes • recipes • recipes • recipes •

Stop by the headquarters building in Bigfork to pick up your own 2025 Christmas Cookie and Candy Contest recipe book! You can also email Roxanne at roxanne@nieci.com or call her at (218) 743-3132 for an emailed copy.

1st

Gourmet Toffee Bars

Thank you to Denise Vigstol for this first place Christmas cookie recipe!

Preheat oven to 350°. No need to grease the pan.

1 cup butter (softened)      1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 cup packed brown sugar    2 cups of all purpose flour  
1 egg yolk                        ¼ teaspoon table salt

1 cup milk chocolate or dark chocolate chips  
(or more if you want a thicker layer of chocolate on top)

1 package Chocolate Covered Heath Chips (I’ve found them at Walmart.)

In large bowl, mix butter, brown sugar, vanilla and egg yolk. Stir in flour and salt. Then gently fold in ½ package of Chocolate Covered Heath Chips (less if you prefer). Press in ungreased rectangular pan, 13”x 9” x 2”.

Bake bars 25 to 30 minutes or until very light brown (crust will be soft).

Immediately sprinkle chocolate chips on hot crust. Let it sit for about 5 minutes or until chocolate chips have softened and spread evenly over the bars.

Sprinkle some of the remaining Chocolate Covered Heath Chips on top of the chocolate layer. (A lot if you are a super chocolate lover like me.)

Cool the Gourmet Toffee Bars in the pan on a wire rack for about 30 minutes before cutting.

3rd

Lemon Spritz

Thank you to Peggy Brula for this third place Christmas cookie recipe!

1 cup of butter  
½ cup powdered sugar

Cream until light and fluffy.

Gradually add:      1 ¾ cup flour  
                                 1/4 cup of cornstarch

Stir in:      1 Tablespoon lemon zest  
                 1/2 teaspoon vanilla  
                 And a few drops of lemon food coloring

Use ribbon disk with spritz maker and press into 12 inch strips, 2 inches apart. Cut into 3 inch pieces – don’t separate. Bake at 350°, 8-10 minutes.

Glaze

Mix together:      1/2 cup powdered sugar  
                                 4 teaspoons lemon juice  
                                 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest

Brush over cooled cookies.



## AD DEADLINE

for the FEBRUARY issue: Friday, Jan. 16

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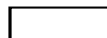
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call: (218) 659-2779  
or email: sedgwick@paulbunyan.net

Put WATTS AD in subject line.  
If no response, please resend.

**Notice****February Marcell Town Board Meeting**

The February Marcell Town Board meeting will include  
representatives from the Itasca County Sheriff's Office,  
who will be in attendance to speak with residents about  
the possibility of sharing a dedicated deputy for the area.

Residents are encouraged to attend with questions or  
simply to listen and learn more.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 11th,  
at 6:00 p.m.

Marcell Township

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Christmas  
at the Edge

What does a great holiday family celebration need? Surely music: a community choir, solos, duets, piano, saxophone, violin and drums! Readings and skits. Maybe some snow jokes? (Where does a snowman keep his money – a snow bank!)

Speaking of snow – would theater snow be possible? Maybe balloons... certainly balloons.

It was all there at the Edge Center on Dec. 14, playing to an almost full theatre and followed by a

Sing-Along, cookies and cider. The production was free and underwritten by sponsors Bigfork Valley Hospital, Kocian’s Family Market, Spring Lake Store, Effie Country Service and a half dozen individuals and families. It also included local students, both adults and kids, from the Itasca Orchestra Strings Program.



(from right top, clockwise) The 30 member community choir dons sunglasses for "Mele Kalikimaka," Christmas in Hawaii; a reading from “Little Women” by (l to r) Londa Storlie, Evelyn Stone, Attalissa

Waldron and Annalise Schmitz; "A Skating Lesson" skit with (l to r) Wyatt Castelino, Josiah Stone, Evelyn Stone and Lynn Heaton; violin students of Dr. Irina Murdick (right), artist faculty of Itasca Orchestra Strings Program

play Jolly Old St. Nicholas.; Dan Heinecke reads from a children's book with his son Lucas; Ben Schlangen on saxophone playing God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.

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