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Broadband: Members asked, we looked into it



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Unfortunately, there are areas within the EnerStar service territory with limited access to broadband internet. At the 2023 annual meeting, concerned members inquired about ways EnerStar could provide to meet this need. Based on these discussions, the EnerStar board of directors engaged a firm to develop a professional broadband feasibility study.

The firm chosen was one with an extensive cooperative background. And to be honest, the results were discouraging. While not surprising, one of the most significant findings was that the capital investment for a broadband project would far exceed the investment in our electric plant. Substantial grant funds may be available but will not cover the initial investment or associated operating costs. That "gap" in funding would need to be met with higher broadband rates or subsidization of the project through higher electric rates.

Understanding EnerStar's service territory is helpful in this discussion. EnerStar is Illinois' third most rural cooperative, with just 3.5 accounts per mile of line. That means fewer accounts to pay for a mile of line. Compare that to numbers in town, where there are 50-60 accounts per mile of line. Low density and many poles and wires

between accounts mean higher costs. It is simple economics.

When considering a broadband project, we also need to consider that a significant number of our accounts are nonresidential. We serve many barns and grain bins; most would not require broadband service. Further complicating the situation is that the more densely populated areas of our service territory already have varying levels of broadband.

Assumptions within the study were based on other projects' subscriber saturation and price points. Based on the study results, while broadband MAY be feasible in a best-case scenario, the EnerStar board and management team regrettably determined the financial risk is too significant for our small co-op and not economically viable at this time.

Other complicating factors for this decision are:

- A project of this magnitude would threaten electric rate stability and jeopardize EnerStar's mission of providing our members with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. We remain committed to our core business.
- Co-op members, whether they subscribed to broadband service or not, would likely subsidize the debt from the project through their electric rates, especially during the startup years.

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

11597 Illinois Highway 1
Paris, IL 61944
800-635-4145
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



EnerStar's team of Connor McCollum, Russ Camp and Ryan Haddix competed in the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo.

EnerStar line personnel earn high scores at Lineworker's Safety Rodeo

Line personnel from EnerStar participated in the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) on Thursday, Sept. 21. Eighteen teams from 14 electric co-ops and two municipal electric utilities participated in the friendly competition, along with eight others competing individually. The rodeo highlights the skills lineworkers use to work safely and efficiently.

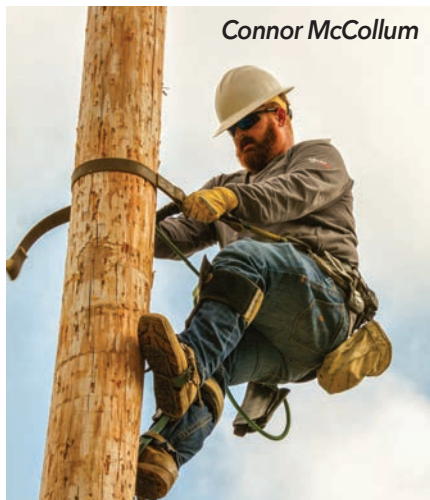
Russ Camp, Ryan Haddix and Connor McCollum

represented EnerStar at the rodeo, held at the LLCC Line School Yard in Springfield. They competed against teams from across Illinois in events using skills that focus on agility, speed and accuracy. While these skills are part of the judging criteria, above all, participants are judged on safe work practices.

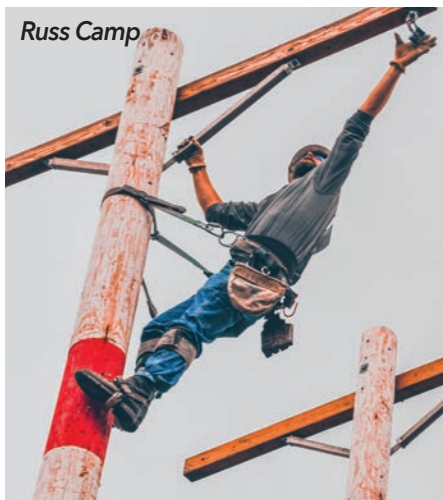
Line personnel competed in four team and individual events, a 40-foot climb, pole-top rescue, H-structure obstacle course and a cutout change. The day concluded with a head-to-head climbing challenge.

Scores for each event are based on completion time, proper execution of the task and safety. Deductions were made to a team or individual's overall performance score due to mistakes such as slipping when climbing poles, dropping tools or executing inappropriate procedures or methods.

At the end of the day, the EnerStar team won third place in the cutout change event. Congratulations to our lineworkers on their team and individual efforts.



Connor McCollum



Russ Camp



Ryan Haddix

- This broadband project would compromise our long-term financial goal for further debt reduction, which EnerStar believes is critical for long-term economic viability.
- Based on our utility experience, rising construction costs will make the project more expensive than forecasted. These projects almost always have unforeseen price increases that someone, most likely our electric rate payers, will need to absorb.

- Considering technology is constantly changing, there is an additional risk. New options exist for wireless and satellite-provided broadband service. Broadband vendors are expanding along main fiber corridors every day.

While this differs from what many wanted to hear, EnerStar remains committed to improving the quality of life in the communities we serve. Improving access to broadband

internet would provide members with opportunities and enhance their quality of life. So, while the project is not feasible now, we will continue exploring partnerships and other opportunities to make broadband available to rural residents in underserved areas. We also appreciate the comments and concerns of our members. If you have thoughts you wish to share, please send them to power@enerstar.com. We look forward to learning more about your broadband or lack of broadband experience.

Seventeen 2024 IEC Memorial Scholarships available

Illinois electric cooperatives will award 17 scholarships in 2024 to financially assist deserving students in the electric cooperative family. The 17 scholarships, \$2,000 each, will be awarded through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

Ten scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors whose parent(s) are an Illinois electric co-op member. An 11th scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director. Five additional scholarships are reserved for high school seniors enrolling full time at a two-year Illinois community college whose parent(s) are an Illinois electric cooperative member, employee or director.

The 17th scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, will help pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill. Children of co-op members, relatives of co-op employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard are all eligible for this scholarship.



"We hope to assist electric cooperative youth while honoring past rural electric leaders with these scholarships," says EnerStar's Angela Griffin. "EnerStar and the other Illinois electric cooperatives are always seeking ways to make a difference in our communities. One of the best ways we can do that is by investing in our youth through programs like this one."

Deadline to apply for the scholarship is Dec. 31, 2023. The lineworker scholarship deadline is April 30, 2024. For more information regarding the scholarships, contact Griffin at 800-635-4145, ext. 103 or agriffin@enerstar.com. Information has also been shared with area high school guidance counselors and is available online at www.enerstar.com.

November Office Closings



**Friday,
November 10th**
(Observed)



**Thursday, November 23rd &
Friday, November 24th**



Youth to Washington

APPLY TODAY TO REPRESENT ENERSTAR IN D.C.

For more than 50 years, the electric cooperatives of Illinois have given tomorrow's leaders the opportunity to learn from today's public officials, and EnerStar is on the hunt for two outstanding students to represent our co-op at Youth Tour this year. EnerStar's Youth Tour is actually two separate events: Youth Day in Springfield and the Youth to Washington trip.

YOUTH DAY IN SPRINGFIELD – DATE TBA

Each year, nearly 300 outstanding students get an up-close, first-hand look at democracy in action when they meet their elected representatives during Illinois Electric Cooperatives Youth Day.

YOUTH
DAY IN
SPRINGFIELD



YOUTH TO WASHINGTON – JUNE 14-21, 2024

Those individuals selected will also travel by charter bus for an all-expense, week-long tour of Washington, D.C where they will create lasting memories and visit all the Washington must-see sites including Gettysburg, George Washington's Mt Vernon, Smithsonian museums, Arlington Cemetery, and much more!

YOUTH TO
WASHINGTON



HOW TO APPLY

Applicants should be high school freshmen, sophomores or juniors during the 2023-2024 school year. In addition, the students must reside in the EnerStar service territory and receive their electricity from EnerStar.

Visit www.enerstar.com to find the application in the Community Section. Applications are due Jan. 31, 2024. Good luck!