



Russ Falkenberg, Jr.



LEADERSHIP CHANGE AT CVEC



Dean Ortmann

The board of directors of Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) have named Russell Falkenberg, Jr. as the cooperative's new president/CEO. Falkenberg is the eighth person to lead CVEC in the cooperative's 86-year history.

"On behalf of the board of directors, I'm proud to announce the selection of Falkenberg as president and CEO of CVEC," said John Petska, chairman of the cooperative's board of directors. "Russ is member-focused with a deep understanding of cooperative values and is a proven leader. As a board, we feel we have found the right person to lead CVEC into the future."

Falkenberg was hired by CVEC in 2006 as a member services technician/electrician leading the load management program. He was promoted to member services director in 2010, adding director of IT to his title in 2016. He has over 30

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years of experience managing IT-related projects, including the design of the cooperative's headquarters, development of communication systems to substations, and the implementation of an enhanced metering system.

Falkenberg has also been instrumental in the development and startup of Ntera, the cooperative's Fiber-Fast internet services provider formed in 2017 by the joint venture of CVEC and Citizens Connected. Ntera has offered the successful deployment of broadband services to co-op members and the surrounding community.

"I am honored to be chosen by the board of directors to be the next leader of CVEC," Falkenberg said. "I look forward to working with our talented CVEC team as we continue to provide reliable electric service and cooperative programs to our members. I am thankful for Dean Ortmann's leadership the past many years. He has been an invaluable asset while maintaining the strong financial standing at the cooperative. I wish him the best as he begins his retirement years."

As of April 1, after 31 years at CVEC, president/CEO Dean Ortmann has retired. Ortmann started at CVEC in February

1991 as an accountant. He was promoted to office manager in 2000 and served as president/CEO since July of 2016.

"Dean has been a wise leader and financial expert at CVEC, continually leading the co-op in the right direction," said John Petska, board chair. "He never lost sight of the members. At every board meeting he reminded us that the co-op belongs to the members: it's theirs. Make decisions about the future for them and for the good of the employees. He kept his attention on the co-op's vision statement: to provide reliable electrical services at competitive rates, while focusing on member satisfaction and employee safety. Dean has consistently made the right decisions for the cooperative and we are thankful for his many years of dedicated service to CVEC."

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In addition, Ortmann kept safety at the forefront. Ongoing training of safe workplace practices for employees and promoting education to the community through the co-op's high-voltage safety demonstration to local schools and first responders were important to him. He is credited with enrolling CVEC into the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP), a program that utilizes a framework for continuous improvement of safety performance and culture. He also prioritized continued educational opportunities for employees and directors.

Ortmann kept his eye on the future and new technologies that would strengthen the cooperative's electric infrastructure. He rallied the support of the board to understand the importance of forming Ntera and the advancements it would bring to the community and cooperative. Ntera's direct fiber connection to the co-op's substations and circuit switches provides reliable communication with CVEC equipment. Under his direction, CVEC's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system was added to the work plan and brought to life. The real-time monitoring and efficient resolution of system issues is unparalleled and will carry the cooperative into the future.

In retirement, Ortmann says he plans to "Do as little as possible for as long as possible. Please send cheese puffs."

A photograph of Keith Zimmerman, a man with a beard and a grey cap, standing with his arms crossed next to a white utility truck. The truck is equipped with a bucket and various tools. The side of the truck features the CVEC logo and the text "Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative, Cornell, WI". The number "208" is visible on the door, and "USDOT 437575" is printed on the lower side panel. The background is a well-lit indoor space, likely a garage or workshop.

KEITH ZIMMERMAN RETIRES

After 35 years with Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC), Keith Zimmerman journeyman lineman, retired on March 3, 2023. Keith was hired as a 1,000-hour employee in 1987 and proved himself to be a valued worker and was then offered a full-time position in 1988 as a right-of-way clearing technician.

“Keith has been a dedicated employee to Chippewa Valley Electric, working his way up to a journeyman lineman. It didn’t matter what job or task you gave Keith; he always gave 110% and did what was best for CVEC,” said Nic Alberson, CVEC operations manager. “He also mentored many of the cooperative’s up and coming linemen, passing along valuable work experience. I wish Keith the best in retirement, and it’s been an honor to work alongside him.”

To know Keith is to understand his love of fishing. He and his wife, Wanda, spend every summer in Washburn taking their boat out on Lake Superior to fish. “Keith was not just a coworker but a good friend. He will be missed by everyone,” said Kevin Scheidler, CVEC line superintendent. “He took me and my family on fishing trips twice on Lake Superior and wouldn’t accept anything in return.”

Kevin continued, “One of my best memories is when I was on the line crew and our boss called to tell us to cut a tree off a phone line because people were calling in, mistakenly thinking it was a power line. When we got to the site, I had Keith hang onto the phone line so it didn’t whip up in the air fast and hard. Then, I cut the tree and the line lifted

Keith up into the air about 15 feet. He went up and down twice into a creek below before letting go. And if you ask him, I’m sure he would remember it!”

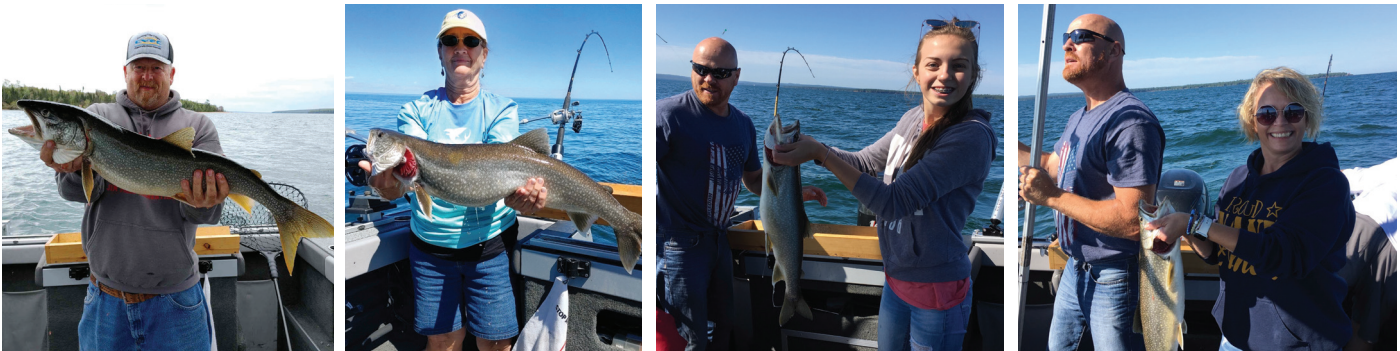
Keith feels the same appreciation for CVEC that has been shared about him. Keith explained, “When the co-op offered to send me to apprenticeship school in 2010 it was one of the greatest things that could’ve happened. It gave me the opportunity to do linework alongside the crew, which was something I always wanted to do. I am so grateful for the opportunity.”

In retirement, Keith plans to continue to fish the Great Lakes with his family.

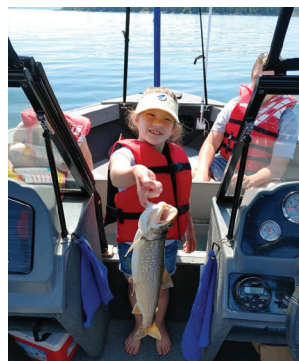


After completion of the apprenticeship program in 2012, Jim Hodowanic, line superintendent, and Rod Patten, operations manager, presented Keith and Dan with their certificates.

Keith’s favorite thing is to take kids fishing, especially his grandkids. He loves watching the excitement they feel when they bring in their catch. CVEC wishes Keith many years of fishing with the ones he loves!



Keith Zimmerman has always enjoyed sharing his love of fishing with family and friends. He is pictured above left; his wife, Wanda, is pictured above, second from left; and their three grandchildren, Trinity, Josh, and Gracie are pictured (left to right) at right, and individually below. Above, second to right, are friend and CVEC Line Superintendent Kevin Scheidler and his daughter, Klynn; Kevin and his wife, Tonya, are pictured above, far right.



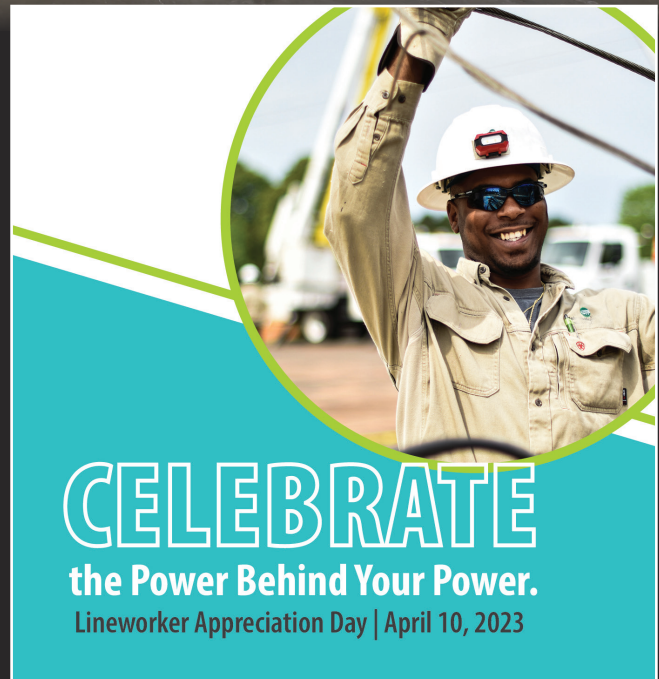
Lineworker Appreciation Day



Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative honors the hard work that our crew puts in to keep the power on. CVEC is thankful for the many years of dedicated service the crew has offered to the co-op. We're grateful to them for working in all types of weather conditions to keep our members' power on. We thank the crew for working safely and often sacrificing time with their families. Our crew is loyal and they are the best!

Pictured above, left to right: Nic Alberson, Operations Manager, Eric Zurakowski, Keith Zimmerman, Greg Olmstead, Zach Sonnentag, Quentin Muska, Ben Modl, Dan Ferris, Kyle Glaus, Trevin Jensen, Kevin Scheidler, Line Superintendent.

Back row, left to right: Ed Rosseter, Chris Larson, Tyler Jones.




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Russ Falkenberg, Jr., President/CEO



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