



# CVEC HIGHLIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE GROWTH AT ANNUAL MEETING

**C**hippewa Valley Electric Cooperative's annual meeting held Thursday, March 27, at the CVEC headquarters in Cornell, saw record attendance with over 300 members and guests.

John Petska, CVEC Board Chairman, reflected on the past year and the cooperative's vision for the future, emphasizing thankfulness, excitement, and preparedness. Petska highlighted the cooperative's challenges

and opportunities, including a potential business venture that didn't materialize but reinforced the cooperative's commitment to growth. "We remain thankful for the opportunity given, and we will continue to support and provide for our communities," he said.

Petska expressed enthusiasm for future growth, noting increasing interest from businesses looking to establish themselves within the cooperative's service area. "Like many small utilities,

we recognize the need to drive more load and generate additional sales revenue to ensure financial stability and sustainability."

As the cooperative looks ahead, preparation remains a top priority. Petska emphasized the importance of securing additional funding, acquiring new equipment, and staying ahead of regulatory changes. "To serve our future goals, we must remain proactive," Petska noted.



Top Left: Lake Holcombe High School students handcrafted the 2025 member appreciation gifts given out at the meeting. Top Right: Line crew members Kyle Glaus, Zach Sonnentag, Kevin Scheidler, Trevin Jensen, and Chris Larson helped serve the meal. Bottom Left: The Tellers Committee consisting of Kathy Swanson, Vern Weeks and Sue Hartzell were busy tallying ballots. Bottom Right: Lake Holcombe High School students, along with CVEC crew members, helped to pass out member appreciation gifts.

Closing his speech, Petska reaffirmed the cooperative's commitment to its members. "We're thankful for our past, excited for our future, and prepared to meet the challenges ahead. Together, we will continue to strengthen our cooperative and our communities."

CEO, Russ Falkenberg, reinforced this commitment in his speech, highlighting major infrastructure improvements that have strengthened the cooperative's distribution system. "We've made essential upgrades, rehabilitated aging equipment, implemented smart grid technologies, and expanded capacity to meet increasing energy demands," Falkenberg said. "Thanks to these efforts, our members now experience an average outage time of just fifty minutes per year—one of the lowest in the state."

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"Our team not only works in the communities we serve—we live here, raise our families here, and are committed to the future growth of our area because this is our home."

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One of the most significant announcements of the evening was the formation of Chippewa Valley Connected LLC, a new underground construction company wholly owned by Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative. "For a long time, we've struggled with the availability of underground contractors," Falkenberg explained. "By creating our own company, we can ensure our needs—and the needs of neighboring cooperatives—are met."

Reflecting on the past year, Falkenberg expressed appreciation for the dedication of the cooperative's employees and the strong sense of community that drives their work. "Our team not only works in the communities we serve—we live here, raise our families here, and are committed to the future growth of our area because this is our home."



Russ Falkenberg, CEO/President, shared his insights with the membership into the growth and changes at the cooperative over the last year.

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Looking ahead, members can expect continued improvements and strategic developments that will enhance their experience. "I look forward to sharing more updates in the coming year," Falkenberg concluded. "Thank you for being a part of our cooperative and for supporting the work we do to keep our communities powered and thriving."

Falkenberg then recognized directors Steve Johnson and John Petska for meeting the requirements to earn their Director Gold certification through NRECA.

Other speakers included Joe Harrison of Bauman Associates, who presented the financial statement, and Vern Weeks, Operation Round-Up Board President, who reviewed the program's financials.

Director elections saw incumbents Steve Johnson (District 2), Kevin Meistad (District 4), and John Petska (District 7) re-elected.

Attendees received custom wood gifts from LH Products, a manufacturing and business class at Lake Holcombe High School, and door prizes were awarded throughout the evening.



Left: Executive Assistant Becky Chwala and Chairman of the Board of Directors John Petska, talked with volunteer Kaysen Westaby. Right: Tim Ludvigsen, Operations Manager for CV Connected, showed U.S. Representative Tom Tiffany and Wisconsin State Senator Jesse James the equipment on display at the event.





## SPOTLIGHT ON CVEC'S NEW VENTURE



For a significant amount of time, we have struggled with having underground contractors on site when and where we need them. Not having underground work completed when expected can result in our CVEC crew not completing work plans and new services within the constraints of the expected timeline.

To help our crews and the crews of neighboring cooperatives, Ntera and local municipalities, Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative is excited to announce the formation of Chippewa Valley Connected, LLC. This is a separate entity, wholly owned by CVEC.

The decision to form this new endeavor was not taken lightly; CVEC engaged our accounting firm, Bauman & Associates, to do a deep dive into the financials of a new entity, and the information was presented to CVEC's Board of Directors, which is made up of 7 of CVEC's members. After careful consideration the Board decided to move forward with the formation of Chippewa Valley Connected.

The community will see CV Connected trucks out and about throughout the summer working on underground projects. Be sure to wave and welcome them to our co-op family!

## *Honoring* STEVE JOHNSON



It is with an incredibly sad heart that we share the unexpected news of our co-op friend and CVEC Board Director, Steve Johnson's passing.

Steve served on the Board for two terms and was recently re-elected to serve a third. During his time on the Board, he held the role of secretary/treasurer of the CVEC Board of Directors as well as secretary/treasurer of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association.

To the co-op he not only brought great insight and depth of knowledge of the electrical industry and so much more, but always seemed to know the right question to ask to move the conversation forward. He always came to Board meetings prepared and ready to engage in meaningful discussion. His caring and approachable personality helped to make new board members, co-op staff, and CVEC members all feel welcome.

Steve was also active serving the Big Bend Township on the Zoning/Ordinance Committee. He cared deeply about conservation efforts and was a big advocate for the local Lake Association and the Wildlife Restoration Association of Rusk County.

He will be greatly missed by his co-op family and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. Please continue to keep his family in your thoughts and prayers.





Your Cooperative Powering Your Future

# CVEEC Sparks CO-OP NEWS

**CELEBRATING OUR CO-OP COMMUNITY!**

## Youth Leadership Conference



The annual Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) will be held at UW-Stout on July 15–17, 2025. The YLC is a dynamic three-day event for high school students across Wisconsin to develop their leadership skills while learning about the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative business. High school sophomores and juniors with family members who belong to CVEEC are eligible to request an application.

To request an application, please contact CVEEC at [cvec@cve.coop](mailto:cvec@cve.coop) or call 715.239.6800.

**Applications are due to CVEEC by June 20, 2025.**



## Save the Date—Member Appreciation Picnic

CVEEC invites you to attend our 2025 Member Appreciation Picnic on Thursday, June 12 from 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. The event will be held at the co-op headquarters located at 317 S. 8th St., Cornell.



As always, great food, games and prizes for the kids, and time to connect with other members and co-op staff will be provided. New this year: Balloon Artist and Juggler, Kevin Schwartz, will provide entertainment at the event. We hope to see you there!

## May is Electrical Safety Month

Electricity powers our lives, but it can also be dangerous if not treated with care. May is National Electrical Safety Month—a time to focus on the importance of electrical safety and the steps we can take to prevent accidents. Here are a few tips to help keep you safe as you head outdoors this spring:

- Look up and keep yourself and any objects at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines.
- Always use extension cords marked for outdoor use when plugging in outdoor power equipment.
- Make sure all outdoor outlets are GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) protected.
- Keep kites, toys, and drones far away from overhead power lines. If a toy or drone gets caught in power lines, never attempt to retrieve it yourself.




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## Board of Directors

District 1 – Sue Frei  
District 2 – Steve Johnson  
District 3 – Frank Draxler  
District 4 – Kevin Meistad  
District 5 – Joe Melville  
District 6 – Steve Wall  
District 7 – John Petska

**Russ Falkenberg, President/CEO**



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Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 7:30–4 p.m.

**Rebecca Pehlke, Editor**