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2021 Scholarship Recipients



Peter Hale

Aspen Peters

Scott Barfuss

Jazzell Tovar

Brad Dowson

Benton REA is proud to announce the 2021 recipients of the cooperative's continuing education scholarships:

Peter Hale of Benton City, son of Joseph and Laurie Hale.

Aspen Peters of Prosser, daughter of Troy and Shauna Peters.

Scott Barfuss of West Richland, son of Brad and Katie Barfuss.

Jazzell Tovar of Prosser, daughter of Angel and Maria Tovar.

Brad Dowson of West Richland, son of Scott and Marci Dowson.

These high school seniors each earned an \$8,000 Benton REA academic scholarship toward their college or university tuition.

Thirty-eight students applied for the academic scholarships in January. No applications were received for Benton REA's two \$4,000 trade and technical scholarships.

When unclaimed ownership credit checks are returned to Benton REA, the money is used to fund member

education programs, including scholarships for students whose parents or guardians are members of Benton REA.

The academic scholarship committee determines recipients by reviewing applicants' high school GPA and 500-word essay.

Trade and technical scholarship applications are judged on the student's experience in their field and

three reference letters.

Academic scholarships are distributed in increments of \$2,000 per school year. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher to maintain the scholarship.

Learn more about the winners in your April 2021 Ruralite magazine and at www.BentonREA.org/Scholarships. ■



Lineworkers brave ice, fire, floods and storms,

Keeping Life Connected.

Thank you doesn't quite cover it.

Celebrating Lineworkers All Year

April 18 is National Lineman Appreciation Day. On April 12, the second Monday of April, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association honors lineworkers at America's more than 900 electric cooperatives. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and other industry associations honor lineworkers July 10.

This goes to show, our appreciation for lineworkers shouldn't be limited to one day a year. That's why Benton REA will celebrate all month long.

Lineworker is listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S. They work day and night, braving

ice, fire, wind and rain to power our community and keep life connected, in more ways than one.

Benton REA members are invited to like and share the #ThankALineworker posts from Benton REA on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn this month.

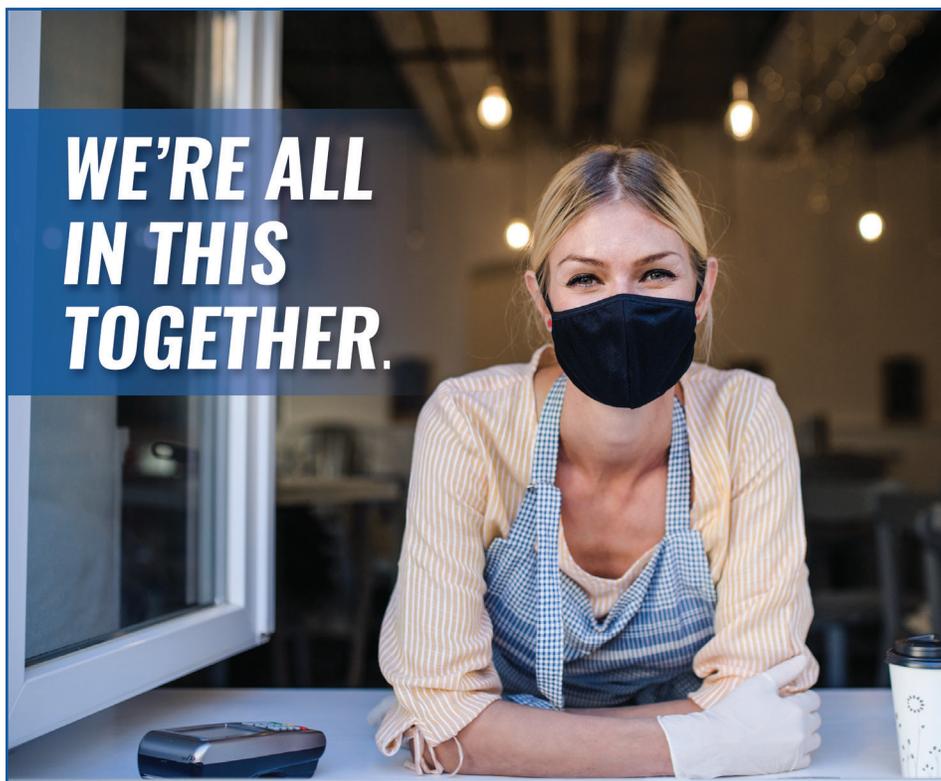
So, anytime you see a lineworker—not just in April—join Benton REA in thanking them for their exceptional service. ■



Keeping Life Connected.

Lineworkers brave ice, fire, wind and rain.

#ThankALineworker



**WE'RE ALL
IN THIS
TOGETHER.**

Let's Keep Small Businesses Thriving.

It's time to power a Small Business Comeback across America.

Co-op Connections is a free member benefit program brought to you by **BENTON REA**. Download the free Co-op Connections app to find discounts from your local merchants and nationwide. We can support our neighborhood businesses and reopen safely if we all work together and practice smart social distancing.

Visit www.SmallBusinessComeback.coop for more information.



#POWERON

IS YOUR POWER OUT?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes:

- Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or use the SmartHub app.

COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office
402 7th St. | P.O. Box 1150
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-2913

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office
6095 West Van Giesen St.
West Richland, WA 99353
509-967-2921

Office Hours: Mon.- Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Toll Free: 800-221-6987
www.BentonREA.org

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Department:

- Elecia Copenhaver, Marketing and Communications Coordinator
- Troy Berglund, Community Development and Member Relations Manager
- Shannon Olsen, Assistant Community Development and Member Relations Manager
- May Hays, Community Relations Coordinator
- Ron Mitchell, Electrical Advisor
- Eric Miller, Energy Advisor

Know What's Below

Spring is here. There's never been a better time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Perhaps you're making plans for a new garden or a lawn makeover. However you're planning to revamp your backyard oasis, remember to keep safety in mind for all projects—especially those that require digging near underground utility lines.

Most people never think about the electric, gas, water and other utility lines buried below the ground, but hitting one of these lines while digging is not the reminder you'll want.

Benton REA reminds all members who are planning a digging project to call 811 at least three business days before you start. Or you can submit a request online by visiting www.washington811.com. Here's how the process works:

After you call 811 or submit your request online, all affected utilities will be notified of your intent to dig. It may take the utilities a few days to get to your request, so please be patient. The affected utilities will send someone out to mark the buried lines with paint or flags.

Before you break ground, confirm that all utilities have responded to your request. If you placed your request by phone, use the process explained by your 811 call center representative. If you submitted your request online, refer to your 811-center ticket to confirm everything.

By taking this important step before you break ground on your project, you can help protect not only yourself but our community. Disrupting an underground utility line can interrupt service, cause injuries and cost money to repair, so remember to call 811 first and know what's below. ■

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.

2-3

3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Paying for February in April?

Stan Fields: “Miss Rhode Island, please describe your idea of a perfect date.”

Miss Rhode Island: “That’s a tough one. I’d have to say April 25th. Because it’s not too hot, not too cold, all you need is a light jacket.”

This scene from the 2000 film “Miss Congeniality” explains perfectly how many of us feel about April weather. Spring is here, you can open the windows and your heating and cooling system gets a break. Winter is a distant memory, but for many Benton REA members, the utility bill still remembers February.

If your April bill is higher than expected, check the dates of service. The region experienced unseasonably cold temperatures February 8-19. If your March bill did not include all of these days, expect to see higher use on your April bill.

“It’s easy to forget about February’s snow and how the prolonged cold affected electric heating systems,” says Eric Miller, energy advisor for Benton REA.

When temperatures drop, heating systems use more energy to keep you comfortable. Even if a thermostat is kept at the same temperature inside, the heat pump or furnace has to work harder when it gets colder outside—increasing energy use and bills as a result.

Space heating and water heating are the two biggest drivers of energy use in most buildings, accounting for up to 70% of energy use during the winter months.

Telephone Energy Audits

If additional space and water heating use during the February cold snap is not the reason for your high utility bill, Eric can review your energy use history and conduct a phone interview with you to determine what is causing your higher than expected energy use.

The installation of a hot tub or purchase of an electric vehicle or additional appliances may be the cause of higher energy use. Did you recently host family or friends who took long showers and cooked more food than usual? The problem could also be aging equipment, in which case Benton REA’s rebate and loan programs may help you get back to normal electric bills. Call Eric at 509-786-8265 to begin the conversation.

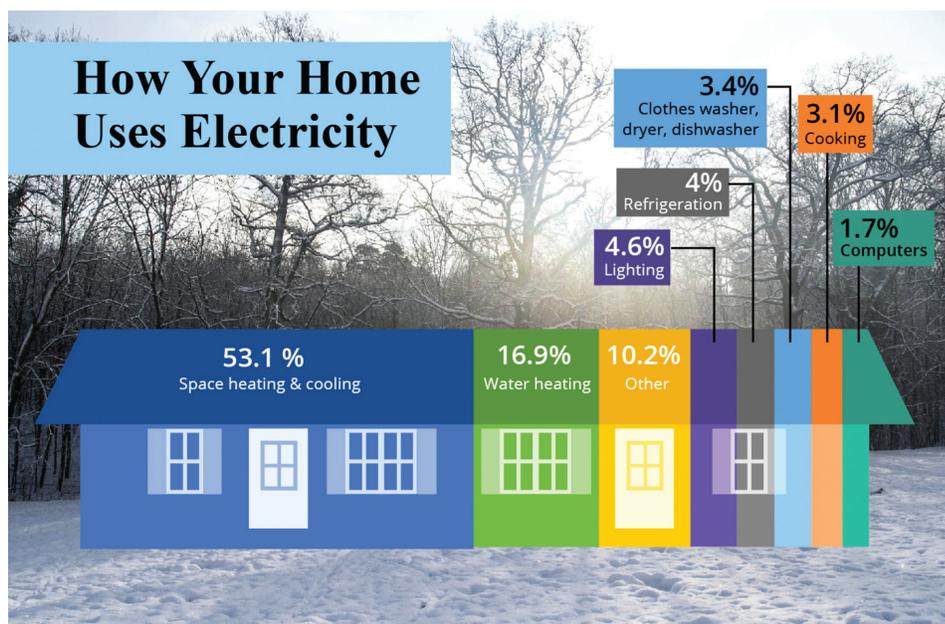
Budget Billing

To avoid seasonally fluctuating bills and stay within your monthly budget, Benton REA offers a budget billing

plan. This free option averages electric use over a 12-month rolling period, keeping payments predictable and manageable.

Payment Assistance

Benton REA also works with its member-owners who are struggling to pay their bill. Members are encouraged to contact Benton REA for information about their payment assistance options, including the cooperative’s new Power To Care program—funded by members who choose to round up their monthly bill to help their neighbors. ■



UPCOMING CO-OP BLOOD DRIVES

April 9 in Prosser

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Holiday Inn Express & Suites
680 Wine Country Rd.

April 16 in West Richland

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Mayfield Gathering Place & Gardens
331 S. 41st Ave.

Schedule your donation: 509-781-6753
or use sponsor code “BentonREA” at
www.RedCrossBlood.org

