

Members First!



**HANCOCK-WOOD
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

HANCOCK-WOOD ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Co-ops power communities with purpose



Bill Barnhart
PRESIDENT & CEO

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative is deeply committed to our consumer-members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community.

This month, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For Hancock-Wood Electric our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives, and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including Hancock-Wood Electric, are guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles, which embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

- 1. Open and Voluntary Membership:** Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.
- 2. Democratic Member Control:** Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.
- 3. Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At Hancock-Wood Electric, this happens through paying your energy bills.
- 4. Autonomy and Independence:** Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.
- 5. Education, Training, and Information:** Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.
- 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.
- 7. Concern for Community:** All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is reliable power. Our purpose is people — the local communities we're proud to serve.



Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative offers a membership value that extends far beyond just reliable electricity. The cooperative's commitment to its members is evident in many ways, highlighting four key reasons why being a part of Hancock-Wood is valuable!



Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative exemplifies what it means to serve its members with reliability and dedication to community. Being a member means more than just receiving electricity — it means being part of a cooperative that truly values its members.



1. History of stable rates

In a time when material costs have risen by an average of 32% to 215% in the past year, Hancock-Wood Electric has made great efforts to keep member rates stable. With an average daily cost of less than \$6 a day, the cooperative has introduced Time-of-Day rate adjustments to help members better manage their electricity usage. In a testament to HWE's commitment, the cooperative returned a remarkable \$3.1 million in patronage refunds this year, the largest amount distributed in the past 25 years. Unlike for-profit utilities, Hancock-Wood's primary goal is to provide electricity at the lowest cost possible for its members.



2. Timely restoration efforts

When power outages happen, Hancock-Wood Electric's dedicated lineworkers are on standby, ready to fix and restore service around the clock. Members can receive real-time outage information through the cooperative's mobile app and website. Significant restoration efforts include new services installed, meters tested, and extensive line inspections. The Arlington Substation Rebuild Project, initiated in 2023, will enhance services for approximately 600 members in the Arlington area, demonstrating the cooperative's proactive approach to maintaining reliable service.



3. Unmatched power reliability

With an annual investment of \$5 million to \$7 million in electric system upgrades, Hancock-Wood Electric prioritizes power reliability. In 2023, the cooperative managed a total of 918 outages, with an average outage length of just 81 minutes. Members can be assured that Hancock-Wood is implementing the most effective strategies for power and system efficiency.



4. Operation Round Up and community engagement

Giving back to the community is incredibly important to Hancock-Wood Electric. The Operation Round Up initiative allows members to contribute spare change, raising more than one million dollars for area charities since its creation in 2008. Operation Round Up has supported local organizations and initiatives, such as fire departments, educational institutions, and food banks. Additionally, Hancock-Wood hosts a variety of member appreciation events, including the Findlay Children's Museum event and the annual Member Appreciation Drive-Thru celebration, showcasing the co-op's commitment to valuing membership.



Volunteer needed for Community Trust Fund Board

In October, members in all districts are eligible to run for our Community Trust Fund Board. The CTF board is a five-member board, separate from the Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative board, that reviews all the Operation Round Up grant applications quarterly and approves applications for assistance, based on demonstrated need and funds available.

Operation Round Up is a program which rounds up participating member's bills to the nearest dollar then combines each amount for grants to local organizations and individuals in need. The funds have helped support our local communities in the 10 counties served by Hancock-Wood Electric since 2008.

The board is responsible for reviewing applications prior to their quarterly meetings on the third Monday of February, May, August, and November and attend four board meeting per year.

If you are interested in running for the CTF Board, please contact Leslie Guisinger at leslie@hwe.coop or 419-257-5015. Applications must be received by Oct. 15, 2024.



Operation Round Up Program Grants more than \$20,000 to local nonprofits

In August, the Community Trust Fund Board, which oversees the Operation Round Up grant program, awarded six grants to the following organizations:

- Allen Township (Van Buren) Fire Department for PPE.
- Findlay Digital Academy for computer upgrades.
- Findlay Hope House for Eviction Prevention Program.
- Forest-Jackson Public Library for Wonder Books.
- Cooperative Family Fund for grief and loss of co-op employees.
- NRECA International for electricity for farmers in Guatemala.

The next quarter's grant applications are due on **October 21, 2024**. Please visit www.hwe.coop for more information about the requirements and how to apply for a grant.



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**Hancock-Wood will be closed
on Monday, Oct. 14,** for an employee
training day.

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