

# heartland LINK



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

a publication of  
East-Central Iowa Rural  
Electric Cooperative

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

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## CALENDAR NOTES

**Feb. 5** - All offices closed for ECI REC employee development

**June 17** - Annual Meeting of the Members

# DATES SET FOR YOUTH TOUR 2026

... PLUS SCHOLARSHIP INFO!



a Community Connected feature

**EVERY YEAR**, over a thousand high school students from across the country travel to Washington, D.C., for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. This year, ECI REC is looking for two students to sponsor on the trip, which will take place June 14–20. An orientation will be held the evening of June 14 in Des Moines.

To be eligible, students must be in their sophomore or junior year and have parents or legal guardians who are members of ECI REC. Applications can be found on the Youth Tour page at [ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop), under the Community & News menu.

Youth Tour attendees participate in leadership training, engage in one-on-one conversations with elected officials, learn about electric cooperatives, and tour sites like the Washington

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## MESSAGE FROM CEO TERESA FLOYD

### Strong Foundations for 2026 Building a Reliable Future Together

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!** It's hard to believe we've turned the page and 2026 is already here. What does this year hold for your Cooperative?

We're starting with a theme of **Strong Foundations**—a reminder that the actions, planning, and participation we commit to today will make our Cooperative stronger for years to come. That strength is built through **reliability, infrastructure upgrades, a strong safety culture, new technology, energy efficiency programs, and grassroots engagement** with elected officials.

#### A Major Safety Milestone

Before we go any further, we're proud to share that **ECI REC has reached 500,000 hours without a lost-time accident!**

This milestone reflects our team's dedication to safety and the culture we continue to build together. A safe workplace means reliable service for our members, and it's a foundation we're committed to strengthening every day.

Stay tuned for our next issue, where we'll highlight **our most important safety asset—our employees.**

#### Investing in Reliability

In this issue, you'll also read about our **four-year, \$26 million Work Plan** to modernize and strengthen our electric system. This major project will help ensure continued safe, reliable, and affordable service across our service area.

#### Protecting Our Service Territory

As we plan for the future, it's critical that we can continue to serve the members and communities who built this Cooperative more than 80 years ago. Reliability doesn't happen by chance—it's also shaped by the laws and policies that govern our service area.

That's why we stay engaged with our elected officials through

Senator Charlie McClintock and Board President Steve Rau.



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## BOARD APPROVES 2026 BUDGET NO RATE CHANGE AHEAD

*a Keeping the Lights on update*

The ECI REC Board of Directors has approved the 2026 budget and confirmed that energy rates will remain the same for the coming year.

#### WATCH THE PCA LINE ITEM

Your 2026 bill will continue to include the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA), a separate line item that reflects changes in wholesale power costs. The PCA helps us manage increases or decreases in power prices without adjusting base electric rates.

#### WHY THE PCA CHANGES

Our wholesale provider, Central Iowa Power Cooperative, purchases power from a diverse mix of natural gas, wind, solar, hydro, and coal. Their rates shift each year based on fuel costs and the market.

### CONNECT WITH ECI REC

#### Emails

[memberservices@ecirec.coop](mailto:memberservices@ecirec.coop)

(rebates)

[csr@ecirec.coop](mailto:csr@ecirec.coop)

(billing, new customers)

#### Phone

319-443-4343

#### Toll Free

877-850-4343

#### Fax

319-443-4359

#### Website

[ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop)

#### Facebook

[facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec](https://facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec)

(operations news and general updates)

#### Hours

Monday–Friday  
Office: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
(closed Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays)

#### Address

2400 Bing Miller Lane  
PO Box 248  
Urbana, IA  
52345-0248

# STRENGTHENING YOUR ELECTRIC SYSTEM RELIABILITY: BOARD APPROVES \$26 MILLION WORK PLAN

*a Keeping the Lights On feature*

**AT A RECENT MEETING**, your Board of Directors approved a new four-year Work Plan totaling more than \$26 million. This investment focuses on upgrading and strengthening our electric system to ensure continued safe, reliable, and affordable service for members across our service area.

While weather, terrain, and daily operations can all affect power quality, thoughtful design and long-term planning also play a major role in how consistently we can keep the lights on. The newly approved Work Plan outlines specific system improvements and reliability goals that will guide our construction and maintenance projects over the next several years.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN INCLUDE:

- **Upgrading aging infrastructure.** Portions of our electric system have reached the end of their expected lifespan. Replacing older poles, wires, and equipment will reduce maintenance issues and outages in the years ahead.
- **Improving access and safety.** Wherever possible, new lines will be built along existing roads or rights-of-way to make maintenance and repair work faster and safer, especially during storms.
- **Balancing system load.** Transferring line sections to other substations or feeders and changing phases on single-phase taps—all of this will help our system operate more efficiently and minimize the number of members affected by outages.
- **Enhancing outage response.** We will undertake projects that create alternate power feeds and load transfer capabilities, which will allow crews to restore service more quickly and perform maintenance with fewer interruptions.
- **Targeting areas with frequent outages.** Areas that have experienced higher-than-average outage hours will be prioritized for upgrades and corrective actions.

Each of these improvements is designed to not only enhance reliability, but to ensure that member dollars are invested wisely—with priority given to projects that benefit the most members or that reduce long-term costs.

Your rural electric Cooperative continues to grow and adapt to our members' needs! This Work Plan reflects our commitment to maintaining the dependable electric service our member-consumers rely on every day. 🌱

## 2026–2029 WORK PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

### UPGRADING AGING INFRASTRUCTURE



**WHAT'S HAPPENING:** Replacing old poles, wires, and equipment



**IMPACT:** Fewer outages and reduced maintenance issues

### IMPROVING ACCESS & SAFETY



**WHAT'S HAPPENING:** Building new lines along existing roads/rights-of-way



**IMPACT:** Faster, safer repairs (especially during storms)

### BALANCING SYSTEM LOAD



**WHAT'S HAPPENING:** Shifting line sections, adjusting phases, and redistributing load



**IMPACT:** More efficient system operation, fewer members affected during outages

### ENHANCING OUTAGE RESPONSE



**WHAT'S HAPPENING:** Adding alternate feeds and load transfer capabilities



**IMPACT:** Service restored faster with fewer interruptions

### TARGETING AREAS WITH FREQUENT OUTAGES

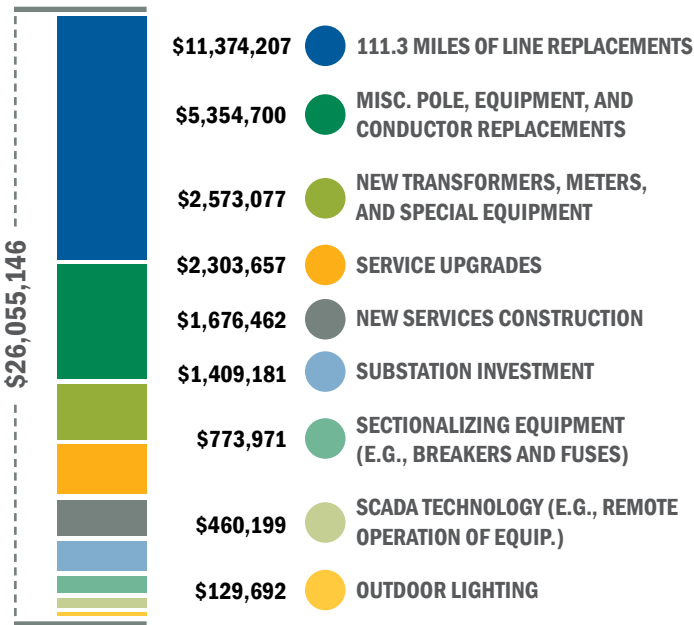


**WHAT'S HAPPENING:** Making upgrades that focus on “high outage” areas first



**IMPACT:** Members in those areas see more reliable service

## 4-YEAR WORK PLAN BUDGET







# READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

## Consider running for the ECI REC Board of Directors!

*a Cooperative Difference message*

**OUR MEMBERS CAN HELP SHAPE** the direction of ECI REC by serving on our Board of Directors. The Board plays a key role in ensuring we continue to provide safe, reliable, and affordable service.

Monthly meetings are typically held the last Wednesday of each month from 8:00 a.m. to noon, with occasional special sessions or training events. Serving on the Board usually requires about a day and a half commitment per month, plus additional time for learning opportunities and meetings. Directors serve three-year terms and receive compensation for meetings and mileage. New directors are encouraged to complete the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate during their first term.

### To be eligible, candidates must:

- Be a member of ECI REC.
- Live in and receive service at their primary residence within the district they represent.
- Have no conflicting employment or financial interests.
- Not be an immediate or household family member of an ECI REC employee. 🏡

**To learn more, contact your district's Nominating Committee member, visit [ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop), call 877-850-4343, or email [ecirec@ecirec.coop](mailto:ecirec@ecirec.coop).**

## WHY DEFINED SERVICE TERRITORIES MATTER

**Strong foundations depend on stability.** Defined electric service territories ensure ECI REC can plan for the future and keep power reliable and affordable.



### AFFORDABLE POWER:

Clear territories help control costs and prevent unnecessary duplication of infrastructure.



### LOCAL RELIABILITY:

Cooperatives can focus on maintaining strong, resilient systems for the communities they serve.



### RURAL GROWTH:

Stable territories encourage investment and support local economic development.



### AVOIDING DEREGULATION RISKS:

Other states that removed service boundaries saw higher rates and lower reliability.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO *Continued from page 2*

events like our recent legislative night, where we invited our area legislators to visit our Cooperative, tour our headquarters facility, and visit with our Board and key staff members. We spoke about what is important to our Cooperative, and they shared what we can expect when the session convenes in January.

We want to make sure decisions made at the Capitol don't create challenges for our Cooperative or our members. In particular, ECI REC—and Iowa's electric cooperatives statewide—support the current law defining electric service territories and will continue to oppose any changes that could weaken it. We will continue to advocate for fair, consistent policies that protect our members and preserve the cooperative model that has served rural Iowa so well.

### The Bottom Line

Defined territories protect you—the member—by keeping power dependable, rates fair, and service local.

As we build on these strong foundations in 2026, we remain committed to serving our membership with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. Together, we'll continue to power our communities, support local growth, and strengthen the cooperative spirit that makes our service area a great place to live, work, and thrive. 🏡



*Seated at the table, starting at the lower lefthand corner and going clockwise: Scott McLaughlin, engineering technician; Nathan Groom, information services manager; Representative Chad Ingels; Tom Schmitt, operations manager; and Gary Cook, director.*



*Representative Tom Gerhold visiting with Director Gary Cook and Engineering Technician Scott McLaughlin.*

*Legislative night photo credits: Teresa Floyd*


# COMMITTEE NOW TAKING NOMINATIONS FOR 2026 BOARD ELECTIONS

*a Cooperative Difference announcement*

**AT A RECENT MEETING**, the ECI REC Board of Directors appointed member-consumers from each board district to serve on this year's Nominating Committee. This committee is responsible for identifying one or two qualified member-consumers from each district with an open director seat and placing their names on the ballot for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Members.

If you're interested in running for a board position, would like to suggest a candidate, or plan to submit a petition, please reach out to the Nominating Committee representative for the appropriate district. Nominations may also be delivered directly to the Urbana office. Following the deadline, the Nominating Committee will meet to review all submissions and confirm the final list of candidates.

## Eligible candidates can be placed on the ballot in two ways:

- By the Nominating Committee, which submits candidate name(s). These names must be filed at Urbana Administrative Headquarters by 10:00 a.m., February 19, 2026.
- By petition, which requires 35+ member signatures. Petitions must be submitted at least 100 days before the election meeting. 

## TWO BOARD POSITIONS UP FOR ELECTION

					Illyria (17) Fayette County
					5
	Fremont (24) Fayette County	Harlan (25) Fayette County	Smithfield (26) Fayette County	Fairfield (27) Fayette County	Sperry (28) Clayton County
Franklin (33) Bremer County	Oran (34) Fayette County	Jefferson (35) Fayette County	Scott (36) Fayette County	Putnam (37) Fayette County	Cass (38) Clayton County
	Hazleton (45) Buchanan County	Buffalo (46) Buchanan County	Madison (47) Buchanan County	Richland (48) Delaware County	

**5**

**Steve Rau, President**  
Director since 2005  
Board District 5

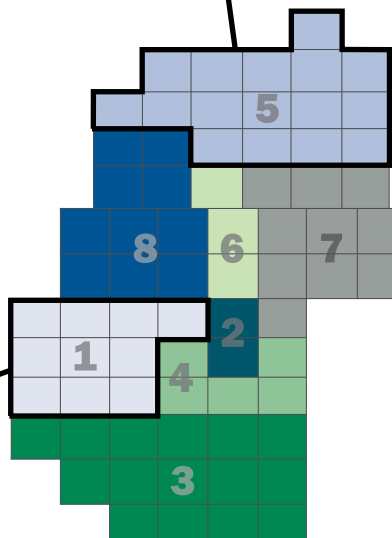


**1**

**Jeff Elliott, Vice President**  
Director since 1990  
Board District 1



Geneseo (133) Tama County	Bruce (134) Benton County	Cedar (135) Benton County	Harrison (136) Benton County
1			
Clark (143) Tama County	Monroe (144) Benton County	Jackson (145) Benton County	
Oneida (153) Tama County	Homer (154) Benton County	Big Grove (155) Benton County	



## NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### BOARD DISTRICT 1

**Currently represented by Jeff Elliott,  
La Porte City**

Serving: Geneseo, Clark, and Oneida Townships in Tama County; Big Grove, Bruce, Cedar, Harrison, Homer, Monroe, and Jackson Townships in Benton County

**Nominating Contact: Robert Hanson**

5071 15th Avenue  
La Porte City, IA 50651  
Text/Cell: 319-560-9933  
Email: robert.hanson@plantpioneer.com

### BOARD DISTRICT 5

**Currently represented by Steve Rau,  
Stanley**

Serving: Franklin Township in Bremer County; Illyria, Fremont, Harlan, Smithfield, Fairfield, Oran, Jefferson, Scott, and Putnam Townships in Fayette County; Sperry and Cass Townships in Clayton County; Hazleton, Buffalo, and Madison Townships in Buchanan County; Richland Township in Delaware County

**Nominating Contact: Joe Bahe**

9804 20th Street  
Stanley, Iowa 50671  
Text/Cell: 563-920-6792  
Email: jbahe@hotmail.com



# New 2026 Energy Efficiency Incentives Are Available for You!

*an Energy Wise special feature*



SCAN THE  
QR CODE TO  
VIEW THE  
REBATE FORMS

## WEATHERIZATION INCENTIVES

### LIHEAP and Non-LIHEAP Requirements

- Rebates based on heating source.
- Home must be built prior to 2000.
- Must be upgrade to existing home (new additions do not qualify).
- Project cost must be \$150 or more (labor costs for self-installed projects cannot be included).

### Non-LIHEAP Members

#### Electric Heat

*With or without air conditioning.*

- Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- Wall Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- Foundation Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- Infiltration Control: 60% up to \$200
- Duct Insulation/Sealing: 60% up to \$200
- Maximum Incentive per Account: \$2,200

#### Central AC Only

*Non-electric heating.*

- Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 15% up to \$150
- Wall Insulation: 15% up to \$150
- Maximum Incentive per Account: \$300

### LIHEAP-Qualified Members

#### Electric Heat

*With or without air conditioning.*

- Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- Wall Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- Foundation Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- Infiltration Control: 80% up to \$200
- Duct Insulation/Sealing: 80% up to \$200
- Maximum Incentive per Account: \$2,800

#### Central AC Only

*Non-electric heating.*

- Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 20% up to \$150
- Wall Insulation: 20% up to \$150
- Maximum Incentive per Account: \$300

## NEW EQUIPMENT/APPLIANCE INCENTIVES

### Air-Source Heat Pump, Including Mini-Splits

- Cold Climate Heat Pump: \$350/ton
- Standard Air-Source Heat Pump: \$250/ton
- Hybrid Air-Source Heat Pump Bonus: \$50/ton

### Ground-Source Heat Pump

- Closed-Loop System: \$500/ton
- Open-Loop System: \$300/ton (no "pump and dump" systems)
- Hybrid System with Gas Backup: Additional \$50/ton
- Unit Replacement: \$150/ton

### ENERGY STAR® Central Air Conditioning

- ENERGY STAR-Qualified: \$100/unit (min. SEER2 15.2 & EER2 12.0)
- Limit two A/C rebates per account.

### Indoor Air Quality

*Equipment must serve the entire conditioned space of the home.*

- Energy/Heat Recovery Ventilator (ERV/HRV): \$250/unit
- Limit two HRVs per account.

### Heat Pump Water Heater (HPWH)

- ENERGY STAR Integrated Unit: \$500/unit

### High-Efficiency Electric Water Heater

- Electric Resistance Unit: \$75/unit (40 gal. tank min., EF  $\geq$  0.90)
- Geothermal Assisted Storage Unit: \$150/unit (40 gal. tank min., EF  $\geq$  0.90)

Beneficial Electrification (BE) Incentive  
*Available when a resistance or HPWH unit is replacing a natural gas or LP unit, or for new accounts.*

- Go-Electric Bonus: \$100

### ENERGY STAR-Qualified Appliances

- ENERGY STAR Electric Clothes Dryer: \$20/unit
- ENERGY STAR Heat Pump Clothes Dryer: \$100/unit

### Electric Vehicle Chargers

*The primary charging location of the vehicle must be at the home address of the member served by ECI REC. Account must be on time-of-use rate to be eligible.*

- Level II Charger (240/208-volt input supply) installation: 50% up to \$500

## NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION

### All-Star Home: \$1,000 per home

#### Requirements

- Energy-Efficient Home Construction: High-performance insulation and windows.
- High-Efficiency Heating and Cooling: Requires geothermal, cold climate air-source heat pump, or ENERGY STAR air-source heat pump.
- Efficient Electric Water Heating: Requires the installation of a heat pump water heater or geothermal assisted electric water heater.
- Electric ENERGY STAR appliances for clothes dryer, dishwasher, and refrigerator. 🏡

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!

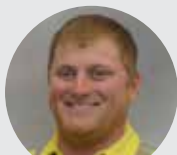
## JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES



**MIKE ADAMS**  
Inventory/Maintenance  
Technician - 28 years



**BRIAN REIDY**  
Line Foreman  
27 years



**JARED GROVER**  
Lineworker  
14 years



**KATIE STADHEIM**  
Human Resources  
Director - 7 years



**MOLLY COOK**  
Member Service  
Supervisor - 25 years



**TERESA FLOYD**  
CEO  
34 years



**ROBIN MOORE**  
Cost Accounting Clerk  
15 years





## DATES SET FOR YOUTH TOUR 2026

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Monument, U.S. Capitol, and Lincoln Memorial. Iowa's electric cooperatives have been sending students on the Youth Tour for over 60 years. It's a program East-Central Iowa REC takes pride in participating in—after all, our teens are our future!

For more information about Youth Tour, email us at [iowayouthtour@ecirec.coop](mailto:iowayouthtour@ecirec.coop) or call toll free: 877-850-4343. Also, follow the Iowa Youth Tour on Facebook, X, Snapchat, and Instagram!

**DUE DATE:** Wednesday, February 25, 2026 - 4:00 p.m.

**GET THE APPLICATION:** Go to [ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop) and choose Youth Tour from under the Community & News menu. 📄

### Did you know?

Youth Tour alumni are eligible for scholarships! The Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation offers one \$10,000 scholarship and four \$1,000 scholarships to Youth Tour alumni. Applications typically become available early in the new year and are due in May. Visit [electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs/scholarships](http://electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs/scholarships) for more information.



## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE

*a Community Connected notice*

**EVERY YEAR**, East-Central Iowa REC is proud to offer up to ten \$1,000 scholarships to students who will continue their education in college in any field. Up to two \$1,000 scholarships are also available to students accepted to the Powerline Technology program at Northwest Iowa Community College.

**DUE DATE:** Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**GET THE APPLICATION:** Go to [ecirec.coop](http://ecirec.coop) and choose Scholarships from under the Community & News menu. 📄

### Did you know?

ECI REC's youth programs—college scholarships and the Youth Tour—are just two initiatives supported by our Community Reinvestment Fund, which is funded by the Cooperative's unclaimed patronage dividends.



## Recipe

Do you have a favorite recipe that's been passed down through the years—something from Grandma's kitchen or a well-loved dish that always brings people together? We'd love to feature it in an upcoming issue of our newsletter!

Send us your longtime family favorite recipe along with a few words about what makes it special.

If your recipe is selected for publication, you'll receive a \$25 bill credit as our thanks!

Email your recipe to [ecirec@ecirec.coop](mailto:ecirec@ecirec.coop) by February 1, 2026.

Please include your name and address.

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East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

CLIP AND MAIL

See below for Member Challenge questions.

Answers: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_ We cannot accept answers by phone.

PERIODICALS

## FIND TOOLS FOR MEMBERS AT WWW.ECIREC.COOP



### 24-Hour Bill Pay With SmartHub

See account information at [ecirec.smarthub.coop](http://ecirec.smarthub.coop) or download the app.



### Outage Center & Map

View current outages on our website or in the SmartHub app.



### Online Forms

Access rebate, service request, and program sign-up forms.



### Call Before You Dig

Notify utilities before you dig at [www.iowaonecall.com](http://www.iowaonecall.com) or call 811.



### Co-op Connections®

Get discounts on everyday expenses. Visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop) or download the mobile app.



### Heartland Link E-Newsletter

Email [ecirec@ecirec.coop](mailto:ecirec@ecirec.coop) and ask to receive our newsletter via email.



### Iowa Rural Power

Join grassroots advocates for Iowa's electric cooperatives. Visit [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org).

## take the member challenge

1. KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: While weather, terrain, and daily operations can all affect power quality, \_\_\_\_\_ and long-term planning also play a major role in how consistently we can keep the lights on.

2. ENERGY WISE: Beneficial Electrification (BE) Incentive Go-Electric Bonus: \$\_\_\_\_\_

3. COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE: All nominations must be filed at the Urbana Administrative Headquarters by 10:00 a.m. on \_\_\_\_\_.

Find the answers within the stories, features, and content of this newsletter and you could win a prize. Send your answers to [ecirec@ecirec.coop](mailto:ecirec@ecirec.coop). Or, print the word(s) at the top of the page, cut it out, and send it to: ECIREC, PO Box 248, Urbana, IA 52345. You may mail your entry along with your electric bill payment, but remember there is a deadline! Entries for this issue must be received by February 1. Ten names will be drawn from all correct entries.

## last issue's challenge winners

The following names were drawn from the November/December 2025 *Heartland Link* entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Deb K. Reichen

Dennis F. Mills

Brenda G. Smith

David R. Beckner

Gary Humes

Richard J. Sloan

Fred Frost

Lucille Nelson

Dan D. Siemens

Donald M. Putz

Charles W. Pettit

Terry Hertle

Mark Lagrange

Rich Zeis

David Ellingrod

Lester F. Hyke