



*Jan Bloesser* presents the Sidney Gymnastics Club with a check for \$1,000 to expand the club's current facility and equipment.



*Ann Bouchard* presents Cutting Edge Dance Boosters with a check for \$1,000 to help offset the cost of the professional dance instructors during a week-long intensive camp.

## Operation Round Up makes our community better

Operation Round Up (ORU) is a charitable program that gives Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) members the opportunity to make a difference in their community with a few cents each month. The average a member would donate is 50 cents a month or \$6 a year. This is not a tax and the funds do not go toward paying other members' electric bills.

The funds are used for nonprofit and community organizations in LYREC's general service area and are solely for charitable, educational, scientific, health or safety purposes. The ORU board is comprised of members just like you. Each district has a board member and the ORU board is separate from the LYREC board of trustees.

In the final quarter of 2018, three grants were awarded to the Foundation for Community Care, Sidney Gymnastics Club and Cutting Edge Dance Boosters. In 2018, a total of \$9,979 was donated to the community through Operation Round Up funds.

Through the generosity of LYREC members, the ORU program is making a big difference in our communities. To download an application or for more information on ORU, go to [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com). The next applications are due March 15. ■



Operation Round Up Trustee **Beth Ladue** presents a check for \$1,000 to **Megan Johnson** for the Foundation for Community Care. The funds will be used to expand the Foundation's endowment fund for current and future health care needs in northeastern Montana.

## SmartHub keeps you informed



Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) members who haven't taken advantage of SmartHub yet are missing out. It's not just a portal for online bill pay. It features powerful tools to help users monitor their electric usage and gain an understanding of the charges on their monthly bills.

Members who spend part of the year away from their homes can especially benefit from using

SmartHub. It's a fantastic way to monitor the electricity usage in their homes and monitor any changes that could indicate a problem. For instance, a spike in usage unrelated to weather may be caused by a malfunctioning pump or water heater.

SmartHub may be accessed one of two ways: The web version is available from any web-enabled device by clicking on the link at [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com), and the mobile app can be downloaded and installed on your mobile phone or tablet via your device's app store. Either version will provide secure access to the member's account and it takes less than three minutes to set up.

In addition to viewing bills,

payment history and making payments, users have the ability to monitor and manage electric usage from afar with the use of graphics and usage comparisons. SmartHub can give you peace of mind when you are enjoying warmer winter temperatures outside of Montana. Members can view their safe and secure account data 24/7 with SmartHub.

By utilizing SmartHub, members can gain a better understanding of how their residences use electricity, which will enable them to adhere to their budgets and become more energy-efficient at the same time.

Contact LYREC if you have questions or need help signing up for SmartHub. ■

## Energy assistance program available

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is still accepting applications. LIHEAP assists Montana residents with their heating costs. If you currently reside in Montana and need help paying your heating bill, you can contact Energy Share at 800-227-0703, download an application at [www.lyrec.com](http://www.lyrec.com), or pick up an application at Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's (LYREC) office. The application deadline is April 30.

If you do not fall within the income guidelines to receive LIHEAP, but have an emergency and need assistance, Energy Share of Montana may be able to help. To apply for Energy Share during the winter months, you must first complete an application for LIHEAP.

North Dakota residents can contact Williams County Social Services at 701-774-6300, McKenzie County Social Services at 701-444-3661 or Community Action at 701-572-8191 for assistance.

### Energy Share of Montana

Energy Share of Montana's primary purpose is to help Montanans faced with energy emergencies meet their needs and move forward toward self-reliance. Energy Share is funded through private donations. Recipients are encouraged to repay these funds when they are financially able to do so.

Energy Share is the only assistance available to Montana families who have income too high to qualify for the Low-Income Home Energy

Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Applicants must first apply for LIHEAP before they can apply for Energy Share. If applicants are ineligible for LIHEAP or are still in need of assistance once receiving LIHEAP, they can apply for Energy Share. For more information regarding Energy Share, contact LYREC at 406-488-1602. ■

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# Three easy DIY projects to save energy

**W**inter weather can have a significant impact on your energy bills, hitting your pockets a little harder than you would have liked. Now that spring is just around the corner, it's the perfect time to tackle a few DIY efficiency projects for your home. The good news: You don't have to be an energy expert to do this!

There are several easy ways to save energy, but if you're willing to take a hands-on approach, here are three projects you can do now to start saving:

## Make the most of your water heater

Let's start with one of the easiest projects: insulating your water heater. Insulating a water heater that's warm to the touch can save 7 to 16 percent annually on your water heating bills. It should also be noted that if your water heater is new, it is likely already insulated. But if your water heater is warm to the touch, it needs additional insulation.

You can purchase a pre-cut jacket or blanket for about \$20. You'll also need two people for this project. Before you start, turn off the water heater. Wrap the blanket around the water heater and tape it to temporarily keep it in place. If necessary, use a marker to note the areas where the controls are so you can cut them out. Once the blanket is positioned correctly, tape it permanently in place, then turn the water heater back on. If you have an electric water heater, do not set the thermostat above 130 degrees, which can cause overheating.

## Seal air leaks with caulk

The average American family spends

\$2,000 annually on energy bills, but unfortunately, much of that money is wasted through air leaks in the home. Applying caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing can save energy and money. There are many different types of caulking compounds available, but the most popular choice is silicone. Silicone caulk is waterproof, flexible and won't shrink or crack.

Before applying new caulk, clean and remove any old caulk or paint with a putty knife, screwdriver, brush or solvent. The area should be dry before you apply the new caulk.

Apply the caulk in one continuous stream, and make sure it sticks to both sides of the crack or seam. Afterward, use a putty knife to smooth the caulk, then wipe the surface with a dry cloth.

## Weather strip exterior doors

One of the best ways to seal air leaks is to weather strip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Weatherstripping

materials vary, but you can ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need.

When choosing weatherstripping materials, make sure it can withstand temperature changes, friction and the general "wear and tear" for the location of the door. Keep in mind, you will need separate materials for the door sweep (at the bottom of the door) and the top and sides.

Before applying the new weatherstripping, clean the moulding with water and soap, then let the area dry completely. Measure each side of the door, then cut the weatherstripping to fit each section. Make sure the weatherstripping fits snugly against both surfaces so it compresses when the door is closed.

By completing these simple efficiency projects, you can save energy (and money!) while increasing the comfort level of your home. And you can impress your family and friends with your savvy energy-saving skills. ■



# Set a timer to operate your engine block heater

For some, an engine block heater is a necessity to survive our harsh winters.

Unfortunately, engine block heaters also use a lot of electricity and can be expensive to run day after day. To save energy and money, it's a good idea to install your heater with a programmable electric timer.

Even on the coldest of winter nights, engine block heaters only need approximately four hours to fully warm an engine. For convenience, many people plug them in when they arrive home in the early evening and leave them on all night.

The typical block heater is between 400 to 1,500 watts. For example, if you have a 1,000-watt block heater and your vehicle is plugged in from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. every day of the month, you would pay \$25.50 each month using Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) rates.

To figure out the exact cost of an engine block heater, you can use this simple formula:

Watts X hours divided by 1,000 equals kilowatt-hours

Example: 1,000 (watts) X 12 (hours) divided by 1,000 = 12 KWH

Kilowatt-hours times the rate (7.1 cents) equals cost

Total cost for 12-hour period: 12 KWH X .071 = 85 cents or \$25.50/month

Or by using a programmable timer for four hours a day:

Example: 1,000 (watts) X 4 (hours) divided by 1,000 = 4 KWH

Total cost for four-hour period: 4 KWH X .071 = 28 cents or \$8.40/month

With this calculation, you can save \$17.10 per month by using a timer. Programmable electronic timers can be found at most hardware and auto parts stores and should be set to start engine block heaters anywhere from 2-4 hours depending on temperature before starting your car. Be sure to purchase a heavy-duty, outdoor timer that is cold-weather resistant and rated for 15 amps (1,800 watts) capacity. ■



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



## Operating report

Year to date:	December 2017	December 2018
Total miles energized	2,102	2,103
Total number of meters	6,167	6,157
Kilowatt-hours sold	260,972,860	260,782,541
Revenue	\$26,483,788	\$26,838,760
Total expenses	\$24,866,666	\$25,562,362
Operating margins	\$3,796,490	\$2,370,588