

You're Entitled to a Refund

WEC returns \$770,000 to current and former members in 2020

“People don’t really know that one of the big benefits of Co-op membership is that WEC returns money to them every year,” said Dawn Johnson, WEC’s Administrative Assistant. “We need to explain that you keep getting your money back years after you were on the lines.”

Johnson spent much of her time during lockdown going through the files of WEC members who lost touch with the Co-op after moving away. That means every year thousands of dollars, rightfully owned by these former members and their estates, go unclaimed.

So, here are the main points to keep in mind:

- First, a quick explanation. For-profit businesses are designed to make more money than they need to break even. Those revenues are profits. When not-for-profit cooperatives have excess revenues, those are called margins.
- As a member of the Co-op, you are a part owner. That means that margins belong to you—not shareholders. Capital credits is WEC’s term for your allocation of those margins.
- The Board decides how much money it can afford to return to the membership every year. If you are a current member, that money shows up as a credit on your November bill.
- If you move off WEC’s lines, keep your address up to date. WEC will

continue to send a refund authorization form for you to complete.

- Whether you’re a current or former member, you can donate your refund to WEC’s Community Fund. Now, here are the details:

At the end of each year, after all operating expenses are paid, WEC takes the money that’s left and allocates it to the membership.

Folks, I’ve got your money. Come and get it!

– Patty Richards

Your allocation depends on how much electricity you purchased. Year after year, that money builds up in your account.

Those funds provide a necessary cash reserve for WEC—which is required by lenders. But the money in your account is earmarked for you.

So, every year, the Board looks at WEC’s finances and decides how much it can afford to return to members while staying in lenders’ good graces. This year, WEC’s Directors are sending \$770,000 back into the wallets of its member-owners and former members.

In the interest of fairness, the Board doesn’t just return the margins from the previous year. Instead, the Board returns a portion of funds from the earliest years and the most recent year. That’s so everyone gets some money back: members who are new to the lines and members who have been on WEC electricity for decades.

What that means is even if you move away, WEC will keep returning money to you. As long as your

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Courtesy HEAT Squad

Auditor Sally Ayers with HEAT Squad performs a blower door test. The test determines where the home is leaking warm air to the outdoors. This helps HEAT Squad and the homeowner prioritize where and what kind of weatherization to install to reduce air infiltration the most. A reduction of 10 percent or more triggers Efficiency Vermont rebates. To request a home audit, contact HEAT Squad in the Northeast Kingdom; Capstone Community Action in the other counties WEC serves.

Weatherization Helps WEC Members Save Big

Efficiency Vermont rebates at their highest

Carol Enriken, a WEC member in Walden, lives in a big farmhouse built in 1830. For several years, her son, Luke O’Brien, told her she should have an energy audit done on the house. “I kept saying yes, I should, but I never did it,” Enriken laughed. “He applied, and told me, ‘Mom, it’s a Christmas present.’”

Take note, adult children whose parents live in old houses, because that energy audit was the Christmas present that keeps giving.

Her audit identified several drafty spots, so Enriken had weatherization work done. The work

was finished in late December, 2019. Over January, February, and March it made such a difference in her home heating bill that her oil company reduced her 2020-21 monthly budget estimate by \$150.

“150 bucks a month. That’s a nice savings,” Enriken said.

How it works

Enriken’s audit was performed by the HEAT Squad. About a decade ago, the Rutland-based affordable housing organization Neighborworks of Western Vermont developed the HEAT Squad model, which

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Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

Inside

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WEC seeks former members for refunds: People on this list are still eligible for capital credits refunds. P. 4.

Student opportunity: Co-op Currents seeks a student journalist. Details p. 7.



The annual Ride the Ridges bike and food fundraiser to support Cabot Mentoring is canceled for 2020, but the work continues to forge relationships between kids and caring adults. Read more in Will Lindner’s story, p. 6.

President's and General Manager's Message

State Grants for Members in Arrears Due to COVID; WEC Increases Capital Credit Refunds

State relief for COVID-related unpaid bills

Patty: This is important information for our members who are more than 60 days late on their bills as a result of COVID-related hardship. Using federal CARES act funding, the state passed a bill that allocates \$8 million to help people in arrears with their utilities. That includes electric utilities as well as water providers, telephone, landline. In the electric space, every residential member in arrears is eligible for up to \$440 per account.

In order to be eligible, you have to be 60 days late in your bill payment, and you have to attest, in the report, that you've had some impact from COVID that makes you unable to pay your bill.

The grants are administered by the state, and WEC will help our members get through the process. It started at the end of August and goes through November 1, and it is first come, first served.

Barry: Patty, in order to help get members into this program, are we sending letters out?

Patty: Yes. We're sending letters, calling, doing an active reach-out to the members we know could be eligible. Members still need to attest to the COVID impact to be eligible for the funds. The member will do the report, not WEC, but we're reaching out to make sure members who could be eligible are aware of the program

so they can fill out the application as quickly as possible.

Barry: It's most helpful if any member with an overdue account works to make a budget plan with our Member Services Representatives, because the \$440 may not cover the whole outstanding bill in many cases. That way we can work with the member to make the remaining amount as easy to repay as possible.

Patty: Exactly. We're extending the limits for some accounts; we've extended some past a year. We encourage people to call early rather than later.

Barry: I applaud the state, the DPS, and our staff for making this program work on behalf of our members. Falling behind on bills can make things very hard long-term. This addresses a real need in real way.

Capital credits and the Community Fund

Patty: We are giving back \$770,000 this year. This is our largest return ever. We've been returning credits since 1998. Is that right, Barry?

Barry: That's right.

Patty: I'm pretty proud that we were able to increase our credit return this year. I'm very glad to be giving back to members during this time. For our current members, anything we can do to lessen their bill, the better.

Barry: We've increased the amount going to current members—based on those who paid electric bills this past year—so that we can help reduce their bills and they can hold on to some more cash this fall. For those who are newer Co-op members, capital credits are the main difference between cooperatives and investor-owned utilities. We return profits to our members in the form of capital credits. There's an explanation of how it works on p. 1.

For those members who can afford it, we encourage you to contribute to our Community Fund. The fund is made up of donations from more than 1,400 of our members. A small committee makes sure those monies go to small organizations that serve our

members. Every July, *Co-op Currents* lists the grant recipients. They range from libraries to graduation groups to nonprofits that work with new mothers, to community action agencies. We cover the gamut, and applying is a very uncomplicated process. We give anywhere from \$100 to \$3,000 depending on the organization and what they're doing.

Patty: I want to give a shout out to those nonprofits that our fund supports! These entities work hard to help with the basic needs of Central Vermonters. They provide health care, food, essential services, education, and so many other important services. We don't make grants directly to individuals, so our fund committee is trying to do the next best thing by getting funds to those nonprofits that can help Vermonters out. Any donations our members add to the Community Fund stay local.

This year we increased our gifts to Capstone Community Action and the Vermont Foodbank. This pandemic really shines a light on why these kinds of organizations are necessary. Not everybody who needs help right now can apply for federal or state assistance, or feels comfortable doing that. Many people are simply much more comfortable reaching out locally and for occasional assistance rather than signing up for state run programs that go long term. Filling out paperwork and applying for help can be overwhelming and hard to get started. Going to a local food bank or Capstone is one-on-one and simple.

Barry: As people saw during the Farmers to Families food box distribution at Central Vermont Medical Center in Berlin, the lines were miles long. The COVID crisis has affected people of all incomes. People who felt secure, and even fairly well off, lost their jobs. The need is growing. As a cooperative, we're invested in our community and ready to help any way we can. For those members who don't need their capital credits for themselves, please help us help our neighbors.

WEC's COVID protocol

Patty: We've been fully back to work and deployed for a few months now. Everyone at WEC is working full

Co-op Currents

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The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson, at 224-2332.

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Got something to say?

Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip? Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651, Attn: Co-op Currents.



time. The office is open but we have limited office hours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you need to reach anybody, you can reach everyone by phone. Our phone system allows us to take calls whether we're in the office or working remotely. If you need to talk to someone at WEC, call first. The vast majority of things can be done by phone or email and we encourage everyone to use those methods of communication.

Mask-wise, all staff wear masks away from workstations. We practice social distancing in the office. If you want to meet face to face, we're happy to, but our first preference is a virtual meeting. We're using Microsoft Teams and Zoom if you want to have a meeting.

Service-wise, you should have the same high-quality experience as always. Keep calling in outages. Outage information comes in, the line crew heads out, and we're good.

We're able to perform the way we normally would; we're using technology to do that. We're functioning very well. It's not without its challenges—I don't have high speed internet at home, and the connection can get choppy. But overall, we're operating at a very high level. Our staff is so seasoned at rising to a challenge, and they've done a fabulous job throughout these months.

Barry: Vermont has been really fortunate to have such a low incidence of cases compared to the rest of the country. Even the counties we serve are quite a bit lower than Chittenden County. But I have noticed that even though our numbers are lower, there has been a rise recently. Not to panic, but just that COVID is still, unfortunately, a constant threat. Even though there's a state mandate, I still let people know I'm asking them to wear masks. I'm vulnerable because of my age and previous health conditions. Even if you're young and healthy, protect people close to you who may be more vulnerable.

That's what we're doing here at the Co-op. Our workers are healthy, out in the field working with members. If our crews get sick and we're not able to do that, it puts our more vulnerable members in a more difficult position if they don't have power. It's a circle. Let's all please just be conscious that our choices have consequences.

Patty: It's like the Cooperative Principle. By being vigilant, we're able to keep WEC staff healthy while being able to address outages, help members, and be the cooperative our members have come to appreciate. We'll all do our part, and we'll kick this together!



In order to be eligible [for up to \$440 in state relief on your electric bill], you have to be 60 days late in your bill payment, and you have to attest, in the report, that you've had some impact from COVID that makes you unable to pay your bill.

— Patty Richards

Efficiency Vermont programs and WEC incentives

Barry: In helping out a friend who's putting in a new heat pump water heater, I learned that Efficiency Vermont has a few really attractive financing options available right now. Some of these end at the end of October, so take note. If you're income-eligible, some options include zero percent interest, the first six months of loan payments, and 100 percent financing.

Efficiency Vermont helps our members and others make their homes more efficient by lowering their energy usage and bills. You can talk to Efficiency Vermont directly, or the Co-op to learn more. It's a great opportunity. Also, if you bought that heat pump water heater directly, there's incentives both from

WEC and Efficiency Vermont. If you're in the market, you can take advantage of a lot of opportunities to benefit your home and our climate.

Patty: Everyone's trying to help out right now. Efficiency Vermont, utilities, our state government.

Barry: It's all about making it easier to help give people a lower energy bill and switch off fossil fuel. If you've been locked out of making these choices in the past because you haven't had the capital to do it, you have more options now.

Broadband

Barry: The Co-op has been working for two years to find out what role we can play in getting high speed internet to our members. I want to thank the members who sent us emails letting us know they hope we can do something. If we get involved with this, we need to know people will sign up and use it.

It takes lot of work by our staff and others just to get the info together so we can have a discussion about what it takes to get broadband. We have

to be patient, but I'm convinced over the next several years our state will be transformed. Some people will get it sooner, some will get it later, but it will come at some point. This pandemic has made everybody aware high speed internet is necessary. But there are a lot of promises out there, and I just hope we, throughout the state, are prudent with our money. The Co-op isn't looking to make money on this. I'm interested in how we can get the work done effectively and fairly.

Patty: I echo what Barry said. I have a very slow connection at my home. It's a challenge for Vermonters all over the state. Broadband is an essential service in our modern way of living. It's going to happen that we all get high speed, it's just a matter of time.

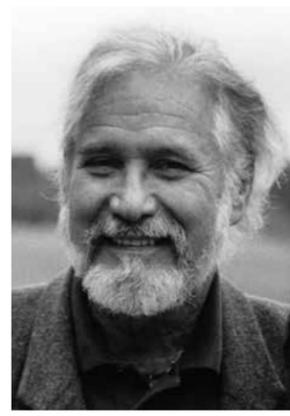
New rate structure implementation

Patty: Barry, you're a low user. How much did your bill go up when the first phase of the new rate structure took effect?

Barry: I gotta tell you: my last bill was \$36. Yes, the new member charge would have raised it some, but the thing is, I put in my heat pump water heater, which dropped my kilowatt hours. So, I'm back where I was. I did talk to one member who felt it more, because they don't have any weatherization done.

Patty: I'm getting a few phone calls from low users. Their bills have gone up. But the thing is, they understand. They don't like it, but they understand. People are digesting the change has happened. I'm taking the calls that come in, talking it through, explaining how we're looking to reduce your total energy use and help you off fossil fuels. People understand. They just want to register their thoughts.

Before the new rate structure took effect, high users would call me to say our rates were really high. And they were right. I haven't gotten any of those lately. Higher electricity users



We've increased the amount going to current members so that we can help reduce their bills and they can hold on to some more cash this fall... Capital credits are the main difference between cooperatives and investor-owned utilities.

— Barry Bernstein

are seeing slightly lower bills. For the people in the middle, their bills are about the same.

Barry: We have to be able to pay for poles, wire, and service, and that can't be contingent on selling electricity while people are getting more and more efficient. For net meterers, WEC is a backup battery; for the rest of us, it's an essential service. We're trying to do the right thing in a number of ways, to keep WEC in good fiscal health and to help you lower your total energy bill at home.

Patty: Barry, one of the ways I've explained it to members is that every year our kilowatt hour sales decrease, even our low users are impacted by our old rate structure. That's because we can't

keep up with finances with declining sales. Selling fewer kilowatt hours drives the per unit cost up, and we're all harmed by that. Over the long term, the new rate design moves us away from that dependency on kilowatt hour sales and brings in more stability with slower, lesser increases over time.

Barry: That makes sense.

Patty: Also, I love how you keep saying what we are trying to do is to help our members' total energy bills go down. All fuels. Switch your devices over to our 100 percent renewable electricity, and in long run we expect that will be less expensive than continuing on fossil fuels, with a lot less harm to the planet. We're one of the few utilities in the country that can say that.

Barry: With power from WEC, you're using renewable resources and a very high percentage comes from in state. That's pretty darn good. We can be proud of that.

Patty: At the end of the day, long term, in order for humanity to combat climate change, we have to deal with our fossil fuel air emissions. WEC can

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COVID-19 WEC Office Guidelines

- WEC's office in East Montpelier is open from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- If you need to visit the office outside open hours, you must make an appointment.
- One member or member family in the building at a time.
- Maintain six-foot distance from other people, please.
- You must wear a mask to enter the office.

Thank you!



WEC Seeks Former Members Owed Refunds as Co-op Returns Historic \$770,000 to Members

Capital credit refund program the difference between cooperative and for-profit utility structures

This year, WEC is returning a record-breaking \$770,000 in capital credits to its members. Unlike for-profit utilities, whose excess revenue goes to enrich shareholders, cooperatives return that money to their members.

This year, the Board will refund eligible members on the Co-op's lines in years 1996 and 2019. An additional amount will be returned to members on the lines in 2013 whose rates included what's called a Contribution in Aid of Construction. All individual refunds will be reduced by any uncollectible or delinquent amounts owed to the Co-op, and no early retirements will be made to the estates of deceased members. Current members will see their refunds appear as a credit on their November 2020 bills.

Former members are entitled to receive refunds as well. In order to be eligible, former members must have a minimum \$20 capital credit distribution, and must submit an authorization form to the Co-op. Earlier this summer WEC mailed out Capital Credit Patronage Refund Authorizations former members. Listed below are the names of people or accounts whose authorizations are undeliverable.

If you know any person on this list or their rightful heirs, please have the former member or beneficiary contact Washington Electric Cooperative directly, at 802-223-5245.

Co-op Community Fund

Approximately 14 percent of WEC members currently choose to donate their refunds to WEC's Community Fund. Any current or former member may direct their refund to the Community Fund, as a one-time gift or in perpetuity.

The Community Fund supports small not-for-profits serving Central Vermont communities. The people served by these organizations are often WEC members. In 2020, generous donations from Co-op members allowed the Community Fund to grant \$54,426 to 96 organizations in WEC's service area. The full recipient list is in the July 2020 issue of *Co-op Currents*. A report on 2020 Community Fund activities will be published in *Co-op Currents* in 2021. 

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Cable/Berlin
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Brock Estate
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Julia Brown
Leticia Brown
Margaret Brown
Kendall Bruleigh
Matthew Bryant
Bryant & Dailey
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Seila Burgieliwicz
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James Foster
Kip Foster
Kenneth Foster
Estate
Donna Frado
James Francke
Elizabeth Frank
Larry Frappier
Scott Fraser
Ronnie Freeman
Beverly French
Ronald French
Stella French
Leonard Freund
Howard Friedman
Helen Frost
William Frost
Everett Fullam
Gail Fuller
Stephanie Fuller
Lawrence Furber
Edward Gadapee
Susan Gaelic
George Gagnon
Dorius Galipeau
Ruth Gallagher
Michael Garand
Florentio Garcia
Ross Gardner
Rosanne Garland
Traci Garneau
Gregory Garone
Nancy Garrett
Edmund Garron
Peter Garrow
Julie Gauthier
David Gazaway, Jr.
Kevin Geiger
Rolland Gerhart
Cheryl Gilbert
Louise Gilbert
Scott Giles
Jonathan Gill
Mae Gillander
Peter Gilleney, Jr.
Kathleen Gilman
Michael Giroux
Kermit Glines
Gloria'S Salon of
Beauty
Norman Goddard
Brian Godfrey
Marion Godfrey
Brunhild Goettsche
Kari Gokey
Joseph Gonsalves
Dean Gonyaw

Jeff Gonyon
Esther Goodall
David Goodrich
Deanna Goodrich
Margaret Goodwin
Edward Gorchinski
Alexis Gordon
Ruby Goslant
Elmer Goslant, Jr.
Jeffrey Gould
Robert Gove
Patricia Govoni
Robert Grab
Alan Graham
Heather Grandfield
Donna Grant
Albert Grasson II
Edward Gravel
Bernard Gray
Debra Gray
James Gray
Jane Greaves
Margaret Green
Raymond Green
Eileen Greenan
Leo Greenberg
Glenn Gregoire
Paul Grier
Bridget Griffin
Valdah Griffin
Jesse Griffith
Trinidad Griffith
Mariann Grimm
Roger Griswold
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Donald Guadagnoli
Giovanni Guarcello
Christian Guggemos
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Estate
George Gumbrell, Jr.
Stuart Guy
Edward Habeck
Jeff Hackmann
Nina Haddad
Thomas Haggett
Michelle Hagman
Kristin Hall
Raymond Hall
Jeremy Halper
Robert Halpin
Michael Hambro

Frances Hamelin
Borden Hance
May Hanks
Robert Hanley
Winifred Hansen
Lisa Hanson
Angela Hardy
Christine Hardy
Mary Harney
Diane Harriman
Fredrick Harris
Susan Harris
Amy Hart
John Hart
Leann Hart
Lillian Hart
Mark Hart
Mary Hart
Ray Hartson
Peter Haskins
Margaret Hatch
Marguerite Hatch
Ralph Hatch
Lynn Hathaway
Glenn Hawkes
Sherrill Hawkins
Wanda Hawkins
Terri Hay
Larry Haynes
Elizabeth Hayslett
Shawn Hayward
Peter Hazelton
Robert Healey
Donald Heath
Parker Heath
Richard Heath Estate
Richard Hebert
David Heft
Lucille Heft
William Hein III
Clif Helbert
Margaret Helburn
Gary Henderson
Robert Henning
Fred Henrikson
Trust
Bernard Henry
Tom Henry
Anna Herbert
Julie Herbert
Sylvia Herman
James Herrick
Cynthia Herriott
Thomas Herzig

Where's WEC?

Where ROW crews are working to keep your power reliable:

- Coles Pond Road, Walden/Stannard
- North Street, East Montpelier
- Three-phase line, Maple Corner substation to County Road
- Three-phase line, George Street, Orange
- Keiser Pond, Danville
- Shady Rill, Middlesex
- Button Hill Road, Tunbridge
- Weeks Place and Keene Farm Road, Wolcott/Woodbury



Marilyn Heskett	Leo Knapp	Thomas Mangum	Rhoda Neader	Elizabeth Pulsifer	Rodney Schneider	William Sugarman	Clayton Ward
Gregory Hetzler	Deborah Knowlton	Kelly Manning	Carroll Nelson	Kathleen Purcell	Esther Schumaker	C Theresa Sullivan	Ronald Ward
Thomas Hickey	Violet Koeppl	Maple Corner Waters	Joyce Newton	Dale Pushee	Eric Schwarz	Robert Sullivan	W Warsley Estate
Donna Hickory	Arlene Kohl	Bryan Marble	Black Ink Nichols	Anders Pytte	Lucille Schwarz	William Sullivan	Randall Wasley
Penny Hidy	Lawrence Kokoszka	Robin Marciello	Trust	John Quagliano	J Kenneth Scott	Ethel Sweeney	Mark Waters
Robert Hierons	Donald Kramer	Marion Mark	Kevin Nielsen	Annette Quesnel	Lynn Sellyei	Rheagene Sweet	Wayne Watker
Amy Higgins	John Krause, Jr.	David Markwood	Etsuro Nishiyachi	Carl Rabstajnek	Cecilia Setien	Sidney Sweet	Timothy Watkins
Camellia Hill	Estate	William Marone	Gregory Noble	James Randall Sr	Diane Sevigny	Clyde Sweetser	Bryant Watson
Joseph Hill	Philip Krone Estate	Alma Marrier	Lorenzo Noel	Jamie Randles	Greg Sewell	Mark Sweezy	Barbara Watts
Rodney Hill	Keith Kuegel	Christine Marsh	Maryann Nolan	Sikander Rashid	Lori Shatney	Randall Swift	Daniel Webster
Fred Hill, Jr.	Cindy Kurutza	Douglas Marsh	Philip Norman	Heinz Rathmann	Steven Shearer	Rosalind Swift	Lori Webster
Susan Hilton	Joseph Labbie	Catherine Martin	Shawn Norman	Raymond Raynor	Connie Shepard	Helen Symons	Michael Webster
James Hiner	Hughes Labrie	Herbert Martin	Northland Tel Co	Barbara Reed	Francis Shepard	Alfred Szulc	Daniel Weiss
Henry Hinton	Robert Lacasse	Robert Martin	of Vt	William Reed	Patricia Sherman	Elaine Taffe	Stephen Weiss
Lisa Hiscox	Walter Lacillade	Mary Martin Estate	Jack Northrup	Brenda Reese	Charles Sherman	Thomas Tafuto	Allison Welch
Harry Hoblin II	H John Lackey	David Mascoveta	Catrina Noyes	Darien Regan	Anne Shields	Hallie Tamez	Patrick Welch
Edwin Hobson, Jr.	Joan Laclair	Ralph Mashburn	Martin Nunn-Hudson	William Reid	David Shipman	Roger Taplin	Randy Welch
Clara Hodgdon	J Everett Ladd	Victor Masi	Michael Nutter	Tomasa Remele	Betty Shor	John Tassie	Stanley Welch
Peter Hodgson	Diane Lafaille	Carroll Mason	Jason Nye	Theresa Remick	Sheri Shumway	David Taylor	Dwight Weller
Heather Hoehl	Bertha Lafogg	Terry Maxfield	David O'Brien	Sheila Renaudette	John Shuttle	Marilyn Taylor	Gary Wells
David Hoffman	Robert Lagerstedt	Maxham Warehouse	Richard Obrien	Resource of Comm	Brent Sicely	Maurice Teitelbaum	Bert Wendel Sr
Marion Hoffman	Russell Lahart	Co	Kimberly O'Brien	Livin	Michelle Sicely	Jon Terhune	Kevin West
J Kent Holden	Frank Laing	Frances Mayer	Sandra O'Brien	Peter Revers	Kenneth Sikora, Jr.	Amy Terrien	Ronny Westcott
Jessica Hollyer	Luciano Lalli	Christy Mayes	David O'Donnell	Stacey Rheume	Jane Simard	Chaya Thanhauser	Dean Westover Sr
Patrick Holman	Gordon Lambert	Mark Maytum	Nelson Olmstead	Albert Rice	Rick Simmons	Mary Thayer	Daniel Wetmore
Donna Holmes	Lamoille Valley Rr	James Mazzonna	Kelly O'Meara	Kevin Rice	Tausha Simmons	David Therrien	Gerald Wheeler
June Holmes	Michael Lamp	Ronald Mazzucca	Jennifer Omelianoff	Alfred Richard Estate	Isabelle Simpson	Georgette Thibeault	Herbert Wheeler
Raymond Holmstrom	Roger Lamson	Mark McAllister	Elizabeth Richardson	Elizabeth Richardson	Peter Sinclair	Timothy Thibodeau	Lucy Wheeler
Tim Holst	Anita Landa	George McCarthy	Raymond Richer	Raymond Richer	Joanne Sinon	Roger Thivierge	Richard Wheeler
Marilyn Horton	Lorraine Landers	Joseph McCarthy	William Richmond	William Ricker	Christopher Slade	Alison Thomas	Helen Wheeler Estate
Alex Hotchkiss	Joshua Landis	Jane McChristal	Ryan Ricker	William Ricker	Barbara Smith	John Thomas	Leona Wheeler
Sarah Hotchkiss	Jonathan Lange	Maurice McCracken,	Barry Smith	Douglas Riddel	Barry Smith	Judson Thomas	Estate
Elliot Houghton	Wilford Langevin	Jr.	Benjamin Smith	John Rider	Benjamin Smith	Kathleen Thomas	Fred Whitcomb
Estate	David Langford	Kevin McCue	George Smith	John Rider	George Smith	Constance Thompson	Frank White
William Houston	Melissa Langmaid	John McCullough	Jonie Smith	Clifford Riggs	Jonie Smith	Paul Thompson	Thomas Whiteley
Cindi Hovey	Robert Langone	Marilyn McCullough	Karl Smith	Francis Riley	Karl Smith	Robert Thompson	Keith Whittemore
Gail Howell	Alan Laperle	Larry McEnany	Kenneth Smith	Thomas Riley	Kenneth Smith	Philip Thorne	Jennifer Wilcox
Samantha Hoyt	Tammy Laperle	Stephen McFarland	Philip Smith	Beverly Ripley	Philip Smith	Andrew Thurston	David Wild
Thomas Huestis	Margaret Lapierre	J&D McGadden	Richard Smith	Don Robar	Richard Smith	Diana Thurston	David Wild
Anna Huffman	Jessica Laporte	Meghan McGeary	Sarah Smith	David Robb	Sarah Smith	Pamela Thurston	Wayne Wilder
J Norman Hughes	Annie Larivee Estate	Sheila McgGovern	Stuart Smith	Jeff Roberts	Stuart Smith	Germaine Tibbetts	Christopher Wilder
Dwight Hull	Glen Larkham	John McGrath	Trevor Smolen	Kelly Roberts	Trevor Smolen	Patricia Tierney	Delene Willey
Dana Hunt	Phyllis Larrabee	Nicole McGrath	William Snyder	Dale Robertson	William Snyder	Scott Tighe	Gwen Williams
Ruth Hutchins	Reginald Laundry	Frederick McGuire Sr	Marvin Snyder	Ella Robertson	Marvin Snyder	Shirley Tillotson	Steven Williams
Tammy Hutchins	Frank Lawrence	Jean McIntosh	Allison Snyder &	Walter Robertson, Jr.	Allison Snyder &	Estate	David Williamson
Wendy Hutchins	John Leahey	Robert McKay	Steven" Somers	Jeremy Robinson	Steven" Somers	Marion Toohey &	Kendall Willis
Barbara Hutchins	Janice Lebron	Lurlene McLam	Mary Sorensen	Bonnie Robtoy	Mary Sorensen	Edith Tousignant	Virginia Willis
Christine Isham	Paula Leeper	Michael McLane	Jose Sousa	Michael Rock	Jose Sousa	Bruce Towle	Cindy Wilson
Robert Jackson	Kevin Lefevre	Thomas McMahon	David Spaulding	Mary Rode	David Spaulding	Susan Towle	Nicole Wilson
Stanley Jackson	John Leggett	Thomas McMahon, Jr.	William Spearance	Alona Rogers	William Spearance	Charles Tracy	Richard Wilson
Stuart Jackson	Jonathan Leibold	Joyne McPhee	Carolyn Spencer	Joyce Rogers	Carolyn Spencer	Thomas Treece	Thomas Wilson
Peter Jamele	Juliette Lemay	Charles Meeks	Fred Spencer	John Roggensack	Fred Spencer	David Trepanier	Otto Winhold
Melissa Janes	William Lemieux	C Padma Meier	Michael Spinelli	Arthur Ronner	Michael Spinelli	Tracie Trepanier	Steven Winkler
Jauhola Estate	Deborah Leno	Travis Melkonian	Steven Spitzer	Harriet Ross	Steven Spitzer	Aldis Trombley	Heidi Winter
John Jenkins	Sterry Leno II	Donna Melvin	Howard Spooner	Douglas Rossi	Howard Spooner	Joanne Trombly	John Wires
Sandra Jenkins	Lilli Lenz	Katherine Menard	June Spooner	Mark Rossi	June Spooner	Clove Tsinde	Janet Wiseley
Amy Jenner	Milford Leonard	Tara Mendes	Forrest Spooner	Boyd Rossignol	Forrest Spooner	Dwayne Tucker	Warren Wiseman
Erik Jenvold	Carolyn Leshure	Barry Merritt	Estate	Donna Rossiter	Donna Rossiter	James Tullar	Hugh Witham Estate
Sarah Jerome	Robert Lessig	Robert Merritt	Terry Spoonire	Fred Rouelle Estate	Fred Rouelle Estate	Lisa Turner	Henry Witzemberger
Adelaid Jewell	Rosanna Lester	Sarah Merritt	Ralph Spoor	Stanley Rounds	Stanley Rounds	Daniel Unverzagt	Joseph Wnukoski
Marilyn Jewell	Corinne Levarn	Merritt Sugarhouse	Jeffrey Squires	Norbert Rousse	Norbert Rousse	Martin Upmal Estate	Guenter Wolf
Joanne Jewett	Marty Levin	Richard Messer	Marcia St. Cyr	Robert Roux	Robert Roux	Lisa Upson	Gary Wollman
Gregory Johnson	Brice Lewis Sr	Priscilla Messier	Victor St. Germain	Danielle Roy	Danielle Roy	Charles Vaczy	Gregory Wood
Harold Johnson	Norton Lewis	Loan Metlife Home	Anita Stark	Jody Roy	Jody Roy	Edith Vail	Harriet Wood
Jeffrey Johnson	Wenbo Li	Robin Miller	Ivy Stark	Kristy Roya	Kristy Roya	Michael Vandenburg	Susan Wood
John Johnson	Kim Lilley	Melanie Mills-Brown	William Starr Estate	Shirley Rutledge	Shirley Rutledge	Brenda Vangordon	Stanley Woodard
Lanae Johnson	Alona Litwack	Richard Minard, Jr.	Cynthia Steed	Erla Ryan	Erla Ryan	Claire Vasquez	Gordon Woodbury
Pauline Johnson	Julian Locke	Robert Miner	Gretchen Stein	Levi Pearce	Levi Pearce	Nathan Vasseur	David Woodbury
Robin Johnson	Norman Locke	Austin Minor	Nancy Stein	Logan Pearl	Logan Pearl	Roberta Veech	Joanne Woodward
Tish Johnson	Eugene Long	Elizabeth Miskolczi	Angeline Stender	Philip Peatman	Philip Peatman	Perry Veillette	Steven Woodworth
Vinnie Johnson	Charles Lord	Richard Missner	Alan Stephens	Brandy Peck	Brandy Peck	Joanne Vermette	Matthew Wootton
Walfred Johnson	Marian Lord	Lanny Molleur	Richard Stephens	Mark Peck	Mark Peck	Thomas Vermette	Florence Wright
Kenneth Johnston	Sandy Lord	Lorraine Monmaney	Harvey Stetson	Samuel Peck	Samuel Peck	Vermont Sports	Nancy Wright
Allison Jones	Michael Lori	Kenneth Monte	Mae Stevens	Laura Peduzzi	Laura Peduzzi	Apparel	Dianne Wyeth
Corey Jones	William Loring	Frank Montgomery	Candace Stewart	Norman Peduzzi	Norman Peduzzi	Steven Veves	Bartlett Yates
David Jones	Ann Lovald	David Moody	Nicholas Stewart	John Pegues	John Pegues	Carole Victory	Edward Yoder
Dean Jones	Lisa Lovelette	Dwight Moody	Lewis Stiles	Micheal Pelletier	Micheal Pelletier	Janine Vitkauskas	Margie Yoder
Deborah Jones	William Lovering	Eleanor Mooney	Speella Stillwell	Tracie Penny	Tracie Penny	Marion Vitti	James York
Marie Jones	Carol Lowell	Helen Moore	Arline Stocking	Timothy Perkins	Timothy Perkins	Frank Volpini	Jackie Young
Todd Jones	Neil Lowell	Mavis Moore	Ronald Stoeckel	Renee Perras	Renee Perras	Howard Wagner	Judy Young
Warren Jones	Paul Lowney	Pearl Moore	Gregory Stone	Linda Perry	Linda Perry	H Paul Wakefield	Marcia Young
Laura Jorstad	James Lubas	Roger Morey	Harvey Stone	Marybeth Perry	Marybeth Perry	Frances Walbridge	Roland Young
Bruce Joslyn	Hilda Lucas	David Morin	Carla Straight	Courtland Perry II	Courtland Perry II	Gerald Walbridge	Wayne Young
Helene Jurkiewicz	Patricia Lucas	Grace Moroch	Gerard Stratthaus	D Persons	D Persons	Jacqueline Walker	Thomas Zaremski
Marjorie Justice	Donald Lumbr	Anita Morreale Estate	Robert Stratton	Russell Persons	Russell Persons	Marlene Wallace	Mark Zedick
Daniel Kaminski	Robert Luongo	Antonia Morris	Alvin Strayhorn	Douglas Petell	Douglas Petell	Christoph Walsh	Nancy Zeno
John Katz	Lylehaven III	Kenneth Morris	Donald Suarez	Sonia Lee Peters	Sonia Lee Peters	Deborah Walsh	Nikolajs Znamenskis
Roy Kaufman	Vincent Lyn	David Morrison		George Peterson	George Peterson		
Joshua Keels	Douglas Lynch	June Morrison		Susan Peterson	Susan Peterson		
James Keene	Catherine Lyndes	Ceylan Morse		Mary Pettibone	Mary Pettibone		
Gail Keith	Richard Lyons	Ben Pierce		Ben Pierce	Ben Pierce		
Meghan Keith-Hynes	Robert Lyons	Gregory Pierce		Gregory Pierce	Gregory Pierce		
Amber Kelley	Michael Macarilla	Walter Pierce		Walter Pierce	Walter Pierce		
Leslie Kelley	Gloria Macaulay	Emily Pike		Emily Pike	Emily Pike		
Mary Elle Kelton	Ronald Macie	Francis Pike		Francis Pike	Francis Pike		
Douglas Kemis	Roger Mack	William Pilbin		William Pilbin	William Pilbin		
Marcia Kemp	Diane Mackay	Betty Plante		Betty Plante	Betty Plante		
Marie Kenefick	Stephen Mackay	Cheryl Plaster		Cheryl Plaster	Cheryl Plaster		
Lisa Kent	Stephen Mackenzie	Helen Plattner		Helen Plattner	Helen Plattner		
F Ray Keyser	Craig Maclellan	Victor Polewsky		Victor Polewsky	Victor Polewsky		
Omar Khan	Wallace Macnow	Nyna Polumbaum		Nyna Polumbaum	Nyna Polumbaum		
James Kiefer	Jerrol" Magoon	Todd Poole		Todd Poole	Todd Poole		
Allen Kimball	Edgar Magoon	Arthur Pope		Arthur Pope	Arthur Pope		
Pamela Kinder	Lori Magoon	David Poplawski		David Poplawski	David Poplawski		
William Kindestin	Robert Magoon	Ute Porcello		Ute Porcello	Ute Porcello		
Tammy King	Patricia Mahon	Ruth Potter		Ruth Potter	Ruth Potter		
Pamela Kinney	Alyson Mahony	Yana Poulson		Yana Poulson	Yana Poulson		
Scott Kirkpatrick	Amanda Males	Therese Powell		Therese Powell	Therese Powell		
Lee Kitchen	R D Mallary II	Wilfred Powers		Wilfred Powers	Wilfred Powers		
Christine Kijer	Joseph Manavola	Patricia Prechtl		Patricia Prechtl	Patricia Prechtl		
Christine Klaine	Jessica Manchester	Carl Preston		Carl Preston	Carl Preston		
Andrew Kline	Jim Mangene	Robert Prosser		Robert Prosser	Robert Prosser		
Douglas Klinefelter	Albert Mangino	William Provencher		William Provencher	William Provencher		

ENERGY COACH SAYS:

Now Is the Time to Weatherize

Efficiency Vermont rebates for weatherization have never been higher - and they will drop at the end of the year. Now is the time to book an energy audit of your home. You'll learn what projects you can do now to save you the most money and have the greatest effect on your energy savings.

Need to know where to start? Wondering what incentives WEC can offer for better technologies? Contact the Energy Coach today: energycoach@wec.coop.



It's Been a Good Ride, and Will Be Again

Cabot Mentoring to skip its fundraiser this year

by Will Lindner

An exhilarating bike ride along the dirt roads and the trails that wind up, over, and along the hills cradling the village of Cabot, Vermont, is an excellent way to cap off an unmatched Vermont summer. That's especially so when you know what's waiting at the end of the ride – a celebratory, communal meal with fellow riders and townsfolk, appetites whetted by exertion, featuring healthy foods produced locally by artisans attuned to the Vermont ethic of natural foods prepared with dedication and skill.

This has been how gravel-riding enthusiasts in our area have marked the cusp of fall for the past seven years. “Gravel riding,” a fairly recent bike-adventuring classification, weaves together the rural terrain of unpaved roads, pathways, and mountain trails. The annual event, known as Cabot Ride the Ridges, is held on the second Sunday of September. Jen Boucher, a member of the organizing committee, describes it, aptly, as “a supported ride with a great localvore meal at the end.”

By “supported ride,” she means that signs are placed periodically so riders can be sure they won't get lost; there are aid stations that provide water refills, snacks, and drinks to replenish the electrolytes the body needs for safe exertion in warm weather. Participants can choose a 10-k ride, a 30-k ride, and 60- and 100-k rides that attract the most dedicated cyclists. The aid stations on the longer routes provide tools, a tire pump and someone to help with basic repairs if they're needed.

Actually, the event isn't restricted to bicyclists. On the 10-k route, Boucher says, “People can participate how they wish, running or walking... We even have a local rider who does it on a unicycle!”

(That would be something to behold, considering that, according to a website associated with Cabot Ride the Ridges, the routes feature “amazing scenery, challenging climbs, and exhilarating downhill.”)

“It started out, seven years ago, with 30 riders participating,” says Boucher. “Now it's more like 200. We've had people from as far away as Philadelphia and North Carolina; there's a gravel-riding online network, and ours is known now as a pretty great ride.”

One regular rider, she says, has even ridden in the Tour de France. Boucher admits, however, that he's a local resident.

Two important details!

There are two additional, very important, things to point out about Cabot Ride the Ridges.



Courtesy Cabot Community Mentoring

Cyclists enjoy a scenic Ride the Ridges route in a previous year of the fundraiser. While 2020's ride is postponed, Cabot Community Mentoring continues its mission to support local youth.

The first is that it's not just an eagerly anticipated community event that renews the spirit of cohesion in this small central Vermont town each year; it's a fundraiser for Cabot Mentoring, a program begun several years before anyone dreamed of a bike ride to help support it.

Cabot Mentoring has been a frequent recipient of donations from Washington Electric Cooperative's Community Fund, the Co-op's program, inaugurated in 2003, that aggregates voluntary donations by WEC members of their annual capital credit returns, and with them provides grants to local nonprofits and community groups that are engaged in efforts, large and small, that improve the quality of life in our region.

While similar programs often target at-risk youth, Cabot Mentoring welcomes any and all Cabot kids interested in experiencing a mentor-mentee relationship. Furthermore, it's born out of a belief that it's not just children who benefit from these connections. “Cabot Mentoring,” its website explains, “seeks to strengthen the Cabot community with intergenerational friendships. We provide opportunities for adults to share their passions and connect with the younger generations, and opportunities for youth to expand their interests, practice relationship skills, and have a trusted friend from an older generation.”

“The goal,” Jen Boucher elaborates, “is to strengthen community ties, to give kids adult connections and friends who are outside their family. Maybe their parents aren't interested in the same things they are, but an adult mentor can share and encourage those interests. It's been shown that mentoring strengthens kids' resilience and their ability to get through tough times, or to get through school and feel supported.”

“Because sometimes,” she admits,

“it's hard to be a kid in a tiny town.”

There are two mentoring formats in Cabot. Through community-based mentoring the adult and mentee get together a few times a month and pursue common interests, anything from hiking to fishing to cooking, from playing games to creating art. Mentors and mentees sometimes team up with others and do things together.

In school-based mentoring, the meetings are scheduled weekly. “These can be particularly helpful for a child who might be struggling in school,” Boucher explains. “It adds a bright spot in their day, so they have something to look forward to.”

These benefits are what attracted Washington Electric Co-op to the Cabot program.

“We've been proud to be an annual supporter,” says WEC General Manager Patty Richards, who facilitates the selection of Community Fund recipients by a Co-op committee. “The Cabot mentoring program provides the kind of personal support that helps our kids get through difficult times, or thrive as they pursue new interests. Our dollars also support the volunteers and staff who are an integral part of this trusted and inspiring organization. When it comes to supporting the youth of our local communities, count us in!”

Cabot, though, is a small town, and there aren't always enough adults eager to become mentors. “Some new adults had just signed up when Covid happened,” Boucher says. The virus shut down the school; community-based mentoring, though, has continued, through outdoor activities, video chats, and similar safe practices.

Which brings us to the “second very important thing” noted above: For 2020, Cabot Ride the Ridges has been cancelled.

“At first,” Jen Boucher recalls, “we felt like a bike ride seems to be a pretty

safe thing to do, so let's think about how we can make it happen. But then one of the organizers decided he was not excited about a lot of people coming into our town” – an influx starkly at odds with the safety-related protocols of the Covid era – “and quickly others realized they felt the same way. There's so much fear, and we didn't want to create more discomfort.”

Fortunately, the bike ride, which raises money primarily through rider registrations after the costs of the event have been met, is not the only funding stream for Cabot Mentoring. Corporate donors, such as WEC, help stabilize the program. No alternative fundraising schemes are being planned.

“It looks like we have the money to maintain it during the coming year,” Boucher predicts. “The mentors are continuing their connections with the mentees, and the program coordinator, Susan Socks, is continuing her work, making opportunities happen and connecting mentors with interested children.”

Village people

More than just a bike ride, more than just a fundraiser, Cabot Ride the Ridges is a daylong celebration of community, thanks to the efforts of small businesses – particularly in the culinary vein – that are characteristic of the region's culture: wood-fired “farm-to-table” pizza from Woodbelly Pizza in Montpelier; cheeses provided by Jasper Hill Farm and Vermont Creamery, and healthy offerings from Burt's Apple Orchard, the Magic Spoon Bakery, Rhapsody Natural Foods, and Kingdom Harvest Kombucha. Like Washington Electric, other locally rooted banks and businesses appreciate the value of Cabot Mentoring and chip in to support the program.

Boucher and her neighbors have made their peace with taking 2020 off from Cabot Ride the Ridges.

“But we are absolutely planning on doing the bike ride next year,” she says. “It's a great way to get together and to bring more people into our town. We're completely exhausted when we're done, but we always look back on it and say, ‘It's been a good day.’”

- To learn more or to donate directly to Cabot Mentoring: cabotmentoring.org
- To learn more about Ride the Ridges: ridetheridges.net
- To contribute to WEC's Community Fund: call 802-224-5245



Governor Phil Scott Announces Utility Bill Relief Program For Vermonters Affected By COVID-19

On August 18, Governor Phil Scott announced \$8 million in available grant funding to assist Vermonters with overdue utility bills as a result of economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Many Vermonters are struggling to keep up with their basic expenses because of this pandemic, and these grant funds provide necessary relief for those who’ve fallen behind on utility bills,” said Governor Scott. “I’m grateful to the cooperation of Legislature and the Public Service team in funding and

implementing this program.”

Developed by the Department of Public Service, the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program includes federal Coronavirus Relief Fund monies as appropriated by the Legislature. The program will provide 100 percent of eligible outstanding arrearages that are more than 60 days overdue for regulated utility customers with delinquent balances who may face disconnection of service if arrearages go unpaid. Eligible applicants include residential and nonresidential account

holders served by a Vermont electric, natural gas, fixed-line telephone service provider or a private water company.

“The State of Emergency has affected many Vermonters, including individuals who have lost income and small businesses that have lost revenue,” said Public Service Commissioner June Tierney. “This program will help keep Vermonters’ utilities running as we rebuild and recover together.”

Applications will be accepted through November 30, 2020 and grants will be awarded on a first come, first served basis until funds are exhausted or by the program’s end date on December 20, 2020, whichever comes first.

For more information about the program and to apply, visit public-service.vermont.gov or contact the Department at psd.consumer@vermont.gov or 1-800-622-4496. 

Behind On Your Bill? The State Can Help: Act Now.

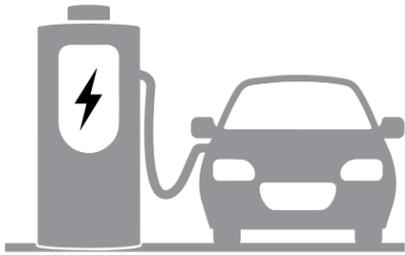
Vermont is giving \$8 million in grants to Vermonters who are behind on utility bills as a result of COVID-19 related hardship.

You have until November 30 to apply. Grants are awarded first come, first served.

To apply, visit publicservice.vermont.gov or contact the Department of Public Service at psd.consumer@vermont.gov or 1-800-622-4496.

Button Up 2020 Incentives

Incentives for Transportation



WEC

- Up to \$1,900 in member incentives towards a new plug-in Electric Vehicle (EV)
- \$1,200 for an all-electric vehicle (AEV)
- \$950 for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV – gas and electric)
- An additional \$700 incentive is available for income qualifying members

Efficiency Vermont

- EV incentive not available

Agency of Transportation

- In 2020 AOT provides up to \$5,000 in additional incentives for EVs: driveelectricvt.com/why-go-electric/purchase-incentives

Incentives for Weatherization



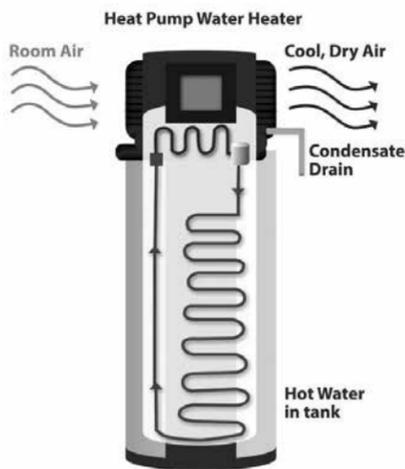
WEC

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: \$600 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor

Efficiency Vermont

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: up to \$2,000 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor; up to \$4,000/50% of project costs with an Efficiency Excellence Network contractor

Incentives for Heat Pumps



WEC

- Qualifying heat pump in “high performance” house
- \$250. (incentives for eligible heat pumps based on verified building shell meeting 2020 thermal performance standards; contact WEC Button Up for specifications)
- Heat pump hot water (HPWH) system
- \$250. (HPWH incentive available where a fossil-fueled (oil/kerosene/propane) hot water system is replaced)

Efficiency Vermont

- HPWH incentive up to \$800
- Cold Climate Heat Pumps (HP):

Equipment Capacity (mini-split)	EVT incentive 2020
≤2 tons	\$400
>2 tons	Up to \$650

- Centrally ducted HP: up to \$4,500
- Air to water HP: up to \$500

Incentives for Pellet Stoves, Furnaces, and Boilers



WEC

- \$250 for either a qualifying pellet stove or a wood stove. Stoves must be installed by qualified installer.
- Pellet furnace: \$500
- Pellet boiler: \$1000

Efficiency Vermont*

- Pellet stove: \$750 when installed by qualified contractor
- Pellet furnace: up to \$6,000
- Pellet boiler: up to \$6,000

* Offers subject to change. See EfficiencyVermont.com for current details.

Co-op Currents Opportunity for Student Journalist

WEC’s member newsletter is looking for a youth journalist to research and write an article for *Co-op Currents*. The successful writer will work with *Co-op Currents*’ editor and editorial committee, will receive a byline, and will be paid *Co-op Currents*’ normal freelance stipend for their work.

The opportunity is open to current high school aged students living in member households and/or students enrolled in a member high school. 2020 high school graduates not enrolled in college full-time are also welcome to apply.

Topics may include: energy issues, climate change, state policy, the student’s own community, cooperative principles, any combination of the above, or another topic. A successful pitch will also demonstrate a fresh angle, curiosity, focus, and alignment with WEC’s values.

The editor and editorial committee will work with the student on contacting sources, structuring, and editing the article.

This is a competitive opportunity. One pitch will be selected by WEC’s editor and editorial committee.

Students: to apply, email a pitch about the topic you would like to pursue

- indicate whether you belong to a member household, member school, or both

- attach one brief writing sample that includes primary sources

Please send all materials to currents@wec.coop by October 31.

802.224.2329 • energycoach@wec.coop



Weatherization

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offers comprehensive home energy audits at a cost below market value, said Ann Lawless, HEAT Squad's Northeast Kingdom Outreach Coordinator. With grant funding, the model has built out to other parts of the state, and now serves Addison, Bennington, Rutland, Windsor, Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia counties.

The process of a HEAT Squad audit starts with the homeowner providing basic information—square

feet, fuel source, goals, and so on. It proceeds to a home visit (now with COVID-19 precautions in place) in which the auditor “explores from attic to basement, especially your heating system,” said Lawless. The auditor also does a health and safety check. There is nothing medical about the process, but certain weatherization fixes can create a healthier home environment. “That can be important for people who have health issues like asthma or COPD,” explained Lawless.

A blower door test helps the auditor identify the locations in the home where air is escaping, and creates a baseline for the work to be done.

Afterward, the auditor compiles a comprehensive written report that includes recommended action in priority order, photos, estimated cost, estimated savings, and estimated incentives and rebates — such as those offered by Efficiency Vermont

and through WEC's Button Up program.

Those recommendations and estimates are a really important part of the process, said Lawless.

“What if you find everything a little overwhelming and you don't know where to start?” she asked. “There's so much info. The tech is constantly changing. How do you know which project is going to gain you the most bang for your buck?” That's where HEAT Squad's professional advice benefits homeowners, as they decide which projects to

start and budget for how much they will cost.

Who's weatherization for?

“Weatherization contracting is for any home that is not built to Vermont's Residential Building Energy Code. This includes most homes,” said Bill Powell, WEC's Director of Products & Services, also known as WEC's Energy Coach. Unless the building was built to a thermal performance standard, most homes can be sealed up here or there, or benefit from new technologies. “It's good for the environment because you burn less fossil fuel. It's healthier for residents because it improves air quality. And it can offer significant return on investment,” Powell explained. His job is to help members start the process and determine how much WEC can offset with incentives.

Ann Lawless agreed that basically all homes can benefit from a weatherization audit. A HEAT Squad audit costs \$150, which is below market value. Beyond that cost, she said, “You have nothing to lose to have an in-depth analysis of everything having to do with your home and fuel usage. What's not to like about that?” she asked. For people proceeding with weatherization work, she added, incentives from Efficiency Vermont have never been higher, and some of those will end on December 31. Right now, everyone can access serious savings: financially, it's the best possible time to weatherize.

In order to qualify for Efficiency Vermont rebates, Lawless explained, the weatherization work in a home must achieve at least 10 percent reduction in air infiltration—in other words, draftiness. Once the homeowner reduces air infiltration by 10 percent, “everybody, no matter their income, can get up to half of their weatherization project costs back, topping out at \$2,000,” she explained. “If you meet the income guidelines, you can get up to \$5,500 back. It's quite a game-changer.” That's even before incentives like WEC's Button Up incentives, which help offset the costs of new devices.

But there are many people for whom \$150 is a steep fee to start a process that might open a can of worms. It can be daunting to know just how much work some homes need.

That's where Weatherization Action

Programs, like Northeast Employment and Training Organization, or NETO, in the Northeast Kingdom, and Capstone Community Action in Central Vermont, are equipped to help. Households that meet income criteria are eligible for dramatic cost savings in getting weatherization work done—savings that continue when fuel bills, like Carol Enriken's, drop by sometimes three

digits a month. Crucially, there are guides ready to help homeowners through the process. The teams at HEAT Squad and Capstone will help homeowners

arrange an audit and provide qualified technicians. After the work is finished, Lawless said, HEAT Squad returns to make sure it's to code and complete. They do a second blower door test to ensure the 10 percent reduction in infiltration, and then file the Efficiency Vermont paperwork on behalf of the client. In WEC territory, Powell is available to guide members through starting the weatherization process, connecting with auditors and contractors, and collecting WEC incentives.

What the process is like

Carol Enriken and her family made lots of updates to her home over time, but the process is different now. Years back, she remembered, there was a place where “you'd go and get truckloads of Styrofoam that came in sheets. That's what everybody at the time was using. The science of winterizing has come a long way.”

Enriken said that when HEAT Squad completed her audit, they went around her house with a roll of blue painter's tape, marking all the spots where heat was escaping. HEAT Squad connected Enriken with NETO, whose staff completed the weatherization work. Enriken, who has asthma, also applied for and received a grant from Northern Vermont Regional Hospital to support home improvements for people with respiratory issues.

For three weeks in December, the NETO team worked on Enriken's home. She was initially concerned about allowing unknown contractors into her home, but “they were wonderful,” she reported. “Courteous and couldn't have been any nicer. They were good with their shoes and boots, they put paper on the floor, so they were thoughtful about things like that.”

The workers installed insulation between the ground and floor under Enriken's summer kitchen. They put a vapor barrier in the dirt basement, built a new bulkhead door, and piped in a new sump pump. They blew in insulation in the upstairs bedrooms, in the eaves behind the kneewalls in her Cape-style home, reaching all the hard-to-access spaces. And the crew had an eye for detail and an appreciation for looks that left Enriken very pleased. “Because I have this open ceiling, they didn't want the insulation coming down onto my bedroom, so they put a nice long board along the wall and stained it so it matched my ceiling. So it looks

really nice and it doesn't look like construction work was done up there,” she said. “Little things like that made all the difference.”

She's happy with the experience, amazed by her savings on fuel, and likes the way her house feels. She's noticed side effects that improve her quality of life, too, like the quiet when her furnace isn't running constantly.

“It was really noisy when it would start up and run, and now, that wasn't happening last winter, so that was the big clue for me. I could hear that something good was happening,” she explained.

And, she added, she noticed that as her furnace ran less, her electric use dropped as well.

And what does her son, the one who gave her the energy audit, think of the way his Christmas present played out?

“He's really happy and pleased with it,” laughed Enriken. “He's a good guy, what can I say?”

Who to call

WEC's service area overlaps with the service areas of both HEAT Squad and Capstone Community Action. Both organizations can help you arrange a home energy audit, and are ready to help anyone in their service area, regardless of household income.

To arrange for an audit of your home, members in Caledonia and Orleans Counties should contact HEAT Squad: www.heatsquad.org or 802-438-2303

Members in Orange and Washington Counties can contact Capstone Community Action at capstonevt.org or 802-479-1053, or toll-free at 1-800-639-1053.

Need help getting started? Contact Bill Powell, WEC's Energy Coach: energycoach@wec.coop. 

President & GM Message

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help in this space. EVs, lawn care equipment, how you heat your house.

Barry: Not that everybody tomorrow should go buy an electric car, but as costs come down, it'll be more affordable overall, both in capital costs and in daily use.

Patty: The more we can shift our devices to electric, the more we'll cut out fossil fuels for 100 percent renewable electricity, be emission-free, and the more we'll have an effect on climate change. 

For more information:

WEC's page on COVID-19

& CARES Act Resources:

wec.coop/covid-19-cares-act-resources/

For WEC Energy Coach: wec.coop/energy-coach-home/

For Efficiency Vermont financing opportunities:

efficiencyvermont.com/services/financing

Refund

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refunds meet a \$20 minimum, you can expect a refund authorization form in the mail mid-July. But you must keep your address updated.

Every year, Johnson reviews a long list of former members WEC can't contact. And those former members, or their heirs, are entitled to their share.

“Shared ownership is key to cooperatives, and the best way to prove it is to put money back into people's hands,” said General Manager Patty Richards. “Folks, I've got your money. Come and get it!”

For a full list of former members entitled to a refund this year, see the list on p. 4. And for current members, take a look at your November bill. It will be lower. That's your money, coming back to you.

Or, if you're one of the roughly 1,500 members who donate their refunds, that money will go into WEC's Community Fund. All the money in the Community Fund is from members' donated capital credits. The Fund makes grants to nonprofits working within WEC's service area. This year, WEC's Community Fund is focusing on nonprofits that provide direct relief, like access to healthy food, to people affected by COVID-19. To donate your refund, this year or in perpetuity, call 802-223-5245 or 800-932-5245. 

