

Meet your cooperative's board of directors

Ed Oplinger: Leading and Learning

Ed Oplinger farms beef cattle and cash crops full-time in the Weidman area. He is married with three grown children and two grandchildren. His granddaughter will be the sixth generation of the family to be involved with the farm.

A 1972 graduate of Chippewa Hills High School, he served as state vice president of Future Farmers of America in 1972-73. He has been the Mecosta County Fair beef superintendent since 1993, and recently served as a board member and then president of the Michigan High School Rodeo Association. He has also served on the Isabella County Soil Conservation District board (1978-80); Barryton Co-op board of directors (1989-1993); and the Chippewa Hills School Board (1991-95) and as board secretary from 1993-95.

How did you become involved with the cooperative?

This farm has been served by Tri-County Electric my entire life; my parents and grandparents had electricity brought out here in the late 1930s.

I'd never attended a district meeting, but I grew up just two miles from Dean Floria and I've served on boards with him. One day he offered information about something he wanted me to consider. Dean said it was the best board he'd ever served on.

What does serving on the board mean to you?

This is another way to serve the community where I live and the people that are my friends and family in that community. It just means a lot to me to serve the people in Isabella and Clare counties. Those friends, neighbors and relations are very important to me and to Tri-County Electric.

What are some highlights you recall?

When I attended the (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) meeting in Orlando, I got a grasp of how important electric co-ops are to the country and to rural



Ed Oplinger provides a treat of salt for some of his beef cattle.

America. I learned that 75 percent of the land mass is served by electric co-ops—but that represents only 12 percent of the population.

Another is member regulation, to bring a little more of the rate-making back to the community rather than having someone else dictate when and how we change our rates. This board knows that reliability and price are most important to our members.

What do you think of member regulation?

It's working well, as intended. We have a lot to learn, and a lot of possible changes coming in the future. I feel very confident it's going to work for us.

What challenges do you see ahead?

The biggest challenge at the moment is government regulations. At one point we have to do things one way, but in the near future we may have to do the same thing another way to satisfy a new rule. In the electric industry, the changes that take place are very slow, with years of planning to get things done. Ten to 15 years is not a long time in this industry, but it is a long time politically. It's hard to plan for regulations coming down the road that you have no control over. It seems a new regulation is no more than implemented and

it's changed on us.

How can members get more involved?

The easiest place at the moment is to go to our Facebook page (facebook.com/HomeWorks.org) and get involved. Help us by letting us know where problems are arising and what your concerns are so we can address them. If we can help, that's what we're here for. And remember, we're all in the same boat—even though I'm on the board I'm still a member, just like you.

On your board of directors, Ed represents District 6, including Clare and Isabella counties. He was elected to the board in 2009.

People Fund Restocks Pantry Shelves

Meeting July 13, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made six grants totaling \$9,100, including:

- ▲ \$1,500 to Central Michigan Red Cross in Mount Pleasant for food pantry items.
- ▲ \$1,000 to the Village of McBride toward playground equipment for Robert Lee Davis Memorial Park.
- ▲ \$2,000 to Clinton County Juvenile Court in St. Johns to help with a new summer program for youth ages 12-16.
- ▲ \$2,000 to St. Mary's Society of St. Vincent DePaul, Charlotte, for their utility and rent assistance programs.

▲ \$2,100 to Habitat for Humanity in Clinton County to help repair the asphalt parking lot at the ReStore location.

▲ \$500 to the Child Abuse Prevention Council, Grand Ledge, to purchase program materials.

How To Apply For a Grant

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI 48875. We'll send you an application form, grant guidelines, and other helpful information. You'll also find information and application forms at homeworks.org. **Applications must be received by Sept. 26 to be considered at the Oct. 4 board meeting.**