Back to School:
RPU Employees Step Up to Donate School Supplies to the United Way
See page 4
RPU’s Fall Checklist

September marks the downward slide into the Minnesota fall season. It’s a beautiful time of year, but it poses a few questions when it comes to energy and water usage, so we want to set the record straight. Follow our five tips below and be on your way to a comfortable and efficient fall season. Watch for Tips From Tony this fall, where Tony goes over some of his favorite fall tips for RPU customers.

1. Check Your Lightbulbs and Consider Changing to LEDs (Light-Emitting Diodes)
   Over the summer, we were fortunate to be able to utilize the sunlight much longer throughout the day, which resulted in less reliance on indoor lighting. Replace one or two bulbs in areas of your house where you use lighting most often and use up to 75% less energy than if you were using incandescent lighting. LEDs can be purchased in different light colors and temperatures, and are very energy efficient. Make sure to check the RPU website (www.rpu.org) for available rebates of up to 50% off the bulb cost!

2. Take an Inventory of Your Trees Near Overhead Lines
   By addressing your trees and limbs near overhead lines now, you might reduce your chances of an outage this winter due to wind, ice, or snow accumulation. Walk your property and look for limbs hanging on or near overhead lines. Look for trees that might be growing near lines or that look unhealthy and could cause a problem to lines if they were to fall. Call RPU with your tree concerns and we will send out a tree expert to look at your property and talk with you about what can be done. RPU may need to trim the tree and limbs, or a licensed contractor may need to address the situation.
   Always use caution and be safe when addressing tree-trimming needs. Never try to trim trees or branches yourself. Leave this work to a licensed contractor!

3. Turn the AC Off
   A bold, but beneficial step in energy conservation would be to turn off the air conditioning for the season in September. Rely on the fall breeze and cooler morning and evening temperatures to keep you cool as you head into the fall. Ceiling fans can still provide cooling relief in your home, without adding a large amount of energy usage to your monthly bill. (See the energy conservation tip regarding ceiling fan usage on page 5.)

4. Water Lawns Sparingly
   Take a look at how much you are watering your lawn and see if you can reduce the time and amount of your watering. The sun isn’t as warm as it was a month ago, so if you water during the efficient times of early morning or evening, you should be able to reduce your watering times. If you have an irrigation system and you are starting to think about getting it blown out for the season soon, make sure to talk to your irrigation contractor about getting it tested. The backflow assembly must be tested annually due to Minnesota plumbing code. For more information on efficient watering or backflow testing, visit the RPU website (www.rpu.org) for more information.
Attend an Upcoming Neighborhood Energy Challenge Workshop and Sign Up for an Energy Audit

The Neighborhood Energy Challenge includes:

Free Energy Workshop. Attendance at our free “Saving Energy 101” workshop is mandatory to participate in the program — and a great opportunity to learn new no- or low-cost strategies to stop energy waste, all while visiting with your neighbors. Free child care is provided.

Home Visit and Materials. At the workshop you will have the opportunity to sign up for a Home Visit, where our crews of energy professionals will visit your home for an hour and a half to run diagnostic tests (like a blower door to test for air leaks), install energy-saving materials, and find your home’s best opportunities for saving energy and reducing your utility bills.

Help with Next Steps. If our crews find an opportunity for significant savings through installing additional insulation, attic air sealing, or replacing old heating equipment, we can make the next steps easy by connecting you with qualified contractors, financing, incentives, and rebates.

The Home Visit, materials, and recommendations are all included in a one-time $50 fee. Materials provided may include:

- Gasket seals
- Safety caps
- LED bulbs
- Pipe insulation
- High-efficiency faucet aerators
- High-efficiency showerhead

For questions regarding the Neighborhood Energy Challenge or to sign up, contact Stacy Boots Camp at 888.734.6365 or sbootscamp@mncee.org.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENERGY CHALLENGE UPCOMING DATES

Thursday, September 20, 2018
6:30-7:30pm
Northrop Community Education Center - Room 308
201 8th St. NW

Saturday, November 17, 2018
10-11am
Northrop Community Education Center - Room 308
201 8th St. NW

Saturday, January 26, 2019
10-11am
Northrop Community Education Center - Room 308
201 8th St. NW
Going back to school in the fall is something that some people may look forward to, and something that others may not. Regardless of wanting to go back to school or not, we want Rochester students to be prepared with supplies and backpacks for the start of the new school year. That’s why we partner with the United Way Running Start for School program (www.uwolmsted.org).

This year, RPU employees donated stacks of folders, notebooks, pencils, backpacks, and other necessary school items for students. In addition to the supplies, RPU employees also donated over $300 to give to United Way to further support the program. These are all personal donations from employees, not RPU donations.

School supplies are a necessity, and they are a hardship for many families. If donations aren’t collected and distributed, families and often teachers face financial burdens to help ensure children have the tools they need to succeed in school. We hope this donation can help make an impact on the lives of students and educators as the school year starts up again.

Thank you to all of the teachers in Rochester! We appreciate the work you do! Have a safe and fun school year!
Monthly Tip for Plugging into Savings!

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Using a ceiling fan is a great way to stay cool in your home, but don’t forget to turn it off when you leave the room.

Fans cool people through wind-chill but do not cool the room. Leaving them on can cost you more money on your electric bill.

Monthly Tip on Saving From the Tap!

WATER CONSERVATION

When you give your pet fresh water, don’t throw the old water down the drain. Use it to water your plants, trees or shrubs.

Utility Payment Arrangements Available for Military Service Personnel

When a household member has been ordered to active duty, for deployment, or for a change of duty station, some customers may find it hard to pay their utility bills. Minnesota Law protects military personnel from shut-off if they cannot pay their bill in full. To qualify for this protection, you must enter into and keep reasonably current with one of the payment plans described below.

- If your household income is below the state median household income, pay 10 percent of your household’s gross monthly income toward your RPU bill.
- If your household income is above the state median household income, make and keep a payment plan.
- If you receive energy assistance, pay 10 percent of your household’s gross monthly income toward your RPU bill. The full statute description for Minnesota Statute 325E.028 can be found on the state of Minnesota website https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs/.

If you would like to sign up for payment arrangements or have questions regarding the “Military Service Personnel Disconnection Law,” please contact RPU customer service at 507.280.1500.
CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS!

Environmental Achievement Awards are given annually for outstanding environmental achievement in Olmsted County.

Nominations are sought for individuals, families, youth, organizations, or businesses in any or all categories:

- Climate Change
- Conservation
- Education
- Energy
- Renewables
- Sustainable Food Production
- Water
- Other

DOWNLOAD A NOMINATION FORM AT WWW.RPU.ORG
DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 5

Photo by Martin Larsen
RPU Commercial Customer Corner:
Recover Wasted Heat to Improve Efficiency

Do you work in a facility where certain areas seem to be unnecessarily warm due to equipment or a process? This excess, or “wasted,” heat could come from multiple sources including refrigeration systems, food storage, mechanical equipment, server rooms, etc. Recovering waste heat can generate cost savings and reduce environmental impact while improving comfort and productivity.

One of the more widespread and efficient means to recover waste heat is a heat pump. Heat pumps essentially move heat from one source to another instead of creating heat. The sources can vary from ambient air and cooling tower water loops to industrial process water and even wastewater. Since heat pumps are only moving heat, they can upgrade heat to a value of more than twice the energy consumed by the heat pump itself. This practice results in both energy savings and improved comfort. Potential end uses include domestic hot water, space heating, and low-temperature process heating.

For example, a heat pump can remove excess heat from a server room and provide domestic hot water for your building. It could also use the waste heat from the refrigeration process to provide space heating. You can use a heat pump anywhere you need to “upgrade” heat to a higher temperature and have a waste source of heat.

There are a wide range of facilities that can benefit from this technology including grocery/convenience stores, office buildings, and manufacturing facilities. The potential for the application of heat pumps is growing, and a number of facilities have already benefited by recovering waste heat.

Now is the time to look at your waste heat as a resource and not something you need to get rid of. If you have any questions about waste heat recovery or other energy-saving tips, contact an RPU representative.

RPU’s Bandel Reservoir was originally constructed in 1979. The ground storage reservoir measures 95 feet in diameter with a height of 45 feet. The potable water storage of this tank is 2,250,000 gallons (nearly 4½ times the storage capacity of the Apache Mall water tower).

It is imperative that RPU maintain the coatings of the water storage facilities to protect the steel structure from corrosion and for protection of the potable water stored in the tank. In general, paint coatings on these tanks have a life expectancy of approximately 15-20 years. The specification on this project calls for an entire interior coating replacement, which includes sand blasting the existing paint coating off to bare steel, and then replacing the entire interior paint coating. The coating exterior will be touched up where there are noticeable coating failures, and then completely painted.

MK Painting of Wyandotte, Michigan, coming in at a total cost of $239,500, has been awarded the painting of this tank with a projected timeline for completion of 5-6 weeks. Key timeline dates include:

- Mobilization of contractor equipment: ...............July 31
- Interior coating replacement: .................. September 7
- Exterior repair and recoating: .................. September 21
- Estimated in-service date: .....................September 28

Once the painting operations are completed, RPU will begin filling the tank with potable water. RPU will disinfect the tank and test for bacteria per MN Health Department standards. If no signs of bacteria are present in the tank, the tank will be placed back into service the first week of October.

A photo of the St. Bridget Water Tower painted in the tan color used now for water storage facilities. The color is Sahara.
What You Should Know About the Minnesota Cold Weather Law and Winter Bills

RPU’s objective is to ensure that residential customer accounts are protected during the cold weather period and to follow the requirements of Minnesota Statute 216B.097.

Minnesota Statute 216B.097 states that a municipal utility must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

1) The household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. RPU may verify income on forms it provides or obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income;

2) The customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household. “Reasonably timely payment” means payment within five working days of agreed-upon due dates;

3) The customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer’s energy bills.

To be protected from service disconnection during the cold weather rule period, customers are required to complete an application which is available by contacting RPU. Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15, RPU will provide the following information to the customer:

1) A notice of proposed disconnection;
2) A statement explaining the customer’s rights and responsibilities;
3) A list of local energy assistance providers;
4) A form on which to declare an inability to pay; and
5) A statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

The contact information for the local energy assistance provider is:

Three Rivers Community Action
800.277.8418
www.threeriverscap.org