

RPU Plugged In

Photo by Josh Banks.



2014 Environmental Achievement Award Recipients





Individuals and Organizations Recognized for Environmental Efforts in the Community

Seven local individuals and organizations were selected to receive the Environmental Achievement Award for their environmental efforts in 2014. The award banquet held in late January was a small gesture to recognize their big contributions in protecting and promoting a healthy environment in Rochester and Olmsted County.



Frank Hawthorne (nominator) left, Ed Cohen right

Edward Cohen

Edward Cohen actively educates on climate change and clean energy in the Rochester area and statewide through networking with the Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Team. Ed has also helped organize discussion panels and public marches to draw attention to climate change and clean energy alternatives. He has helped draw the connection between more frequently occurring extreme weather events and climate change. Ed also serves on the Rochester Energy Commission, has sought grants from RNeighhors for boulevard trees, and has participated in numerous public energy and climate education events.



Peter Gerrard left, Andrew Masterpole (nominator) middle, Paul Gerrard right

Gerrard Corporation

Located on the corner of 1st Avenue SW and 6th Street SW, the newly designed Metropolitan Marketplace has an eye-catching design. In addition to its modern look, the marketplace displays sustainable site features that mitigate storm water run-off by utilizing structural soils, street trees, and porous concrete pavers in the boulevard. Rain gardens with native plants growing in two feet of top soil effectively control storm water runoff from the parking lot into the public storm sewers. These site modifications also create a safe, comfortable, and ecologically friendly pedestrian environment.



Sister Rafael Tilton left, Sister Claren Sellner (nominator) right

Sister Rafael Tilton

Promoting energy conservation is a passion for Sister Tilton. To conserve energy and decrease waste, she and the Sisters of Assisi Heights have instituted kitchen waste composting. Composting directly

benefits Assisi Heights' garden soils by encouraging vigorous root growth, making nutrients more available for plant uptake, and returning significant quantities of organic matter to the soils. This, in turn, helps our community by reducing the amount of municipal solid waste that is transported off the property to be deposited at the Olmsted County Sanitary Landfill or at the Olmsted Waste-to-Energy Facility. The improved soils also enhance water infiltration, which reduces storm water runoff and increases groundwater recharge.



Andrea Lorek Strauss (nominator) left, Kevin Strauss middle, Brett Osby right

Zumbro Watershed Partnership

The Zumbro Watershed Partnership created an organizational goal of raising public awareness of the Zumbro River and its tributaries in an effort to protect the river. This project took place in the City of Rochester, greater Olmsted County, Dodge County, and Goodhue County. In Olmsted County, 58 new bridge signs now educate the public as to what stream or river they are crossing and inform the public that the waterway is a part of the much larger Zumbro Watershed. There are also 12 new educational signs located in six parks, among the three counties, that give the public information about the role of human activity on the waters of the watershed.



Jill Danielsen (nominator) left, Terry Grier middle, Joyce Grier right

Terry and Joyce Grier

Terry and Joyce Grier have played a key role in the bird-banding programs offered at Quarry Hill Nature Center. Banding obtains information about migration, longevity, mortality, feeding behavior, and other activities pertaining to birds. The Griers' expertise has been invaluable to the community as they are actively involved in public education and conservation. People of all ages are able to share an 'up close and personal' experience with birds because of the work that Terry and Joyce provide. A strong passion for the environment is evidenced by their involvement with Quarry Hill, the National Audubon Society, and other works promoting environmental education.



Richard Lyke left, Judy Hagland middle, Shelia Craig (nominator) right

Oronoco Township

Oronoco Township went far beyond the traditional role of townships in helping residents fix long-standing sewage treatment problems in the King's Park area. In 2011, the Town Board began working with the Southeast Minnesota Wastewater Initiative to bring the residents of King's Park together to find a solution to their sewage treatment problems. An earlier study had found that some of the homes had straight pipes that delivered raw sewage to Lake Zumbro. These systems were classified as an "imminent threat to public health." In 2013, a soil-based shared treatment system was constructed that serves 14 homes in the area to treat nearly 5,000 gallons of sewage each day. The final work on the system was completed in 2014.



Piper Winn, Mary Idso (nominator) not pictured

Piper Winn

The act of public speaking is consistently rated a top fear among adults, but Piper Winn is no adult. In September 2014, at the age of 8, Piper was asked to speak at the People's Climate March and Rally in Rochester. Piper prepared her own speech explaining what climate change is and

the important role we play in stopping it. As Piper brought awareness to climate change, she was able to relate to her audience and support the community dialog on this important subject.

Watch Out for Leaks!

Check out the water and wastewater usage on your bill. If you notice a large increase, please check your toilets for leaks. RPU bills the waste water for Rochester Public Works. With the current charge at \$3.10 per unit (1 unit = 100 cubic feet or 748 gallons), a leak can be very expensive.

There are a number of reasons for high water charges this time of year. For example, constructing an ice rink in your backyard will result in large bills. But sometimes, it comes down to toilets. Toilets that are running – due to faulty parts – can be a significant cause of your water use and waste water charges.

Sometimes, these leaks are not detectable, and are referred to as a “silent” leak, so you could have a problem with your toilet and not even be aware of it.

How can you check for leaks? Add some food dye to your tank (don't flush) and wait to see if it appears in the bowl. If it does, you have a leak. A licensed plumber will be able to help eliminate the leak.



Holiday Light Recycling

Thank you for dropping off all of your old holiday lights! We collected 1,493 lbs. of holiday lights for recycling, which will keep them out of a landfill.



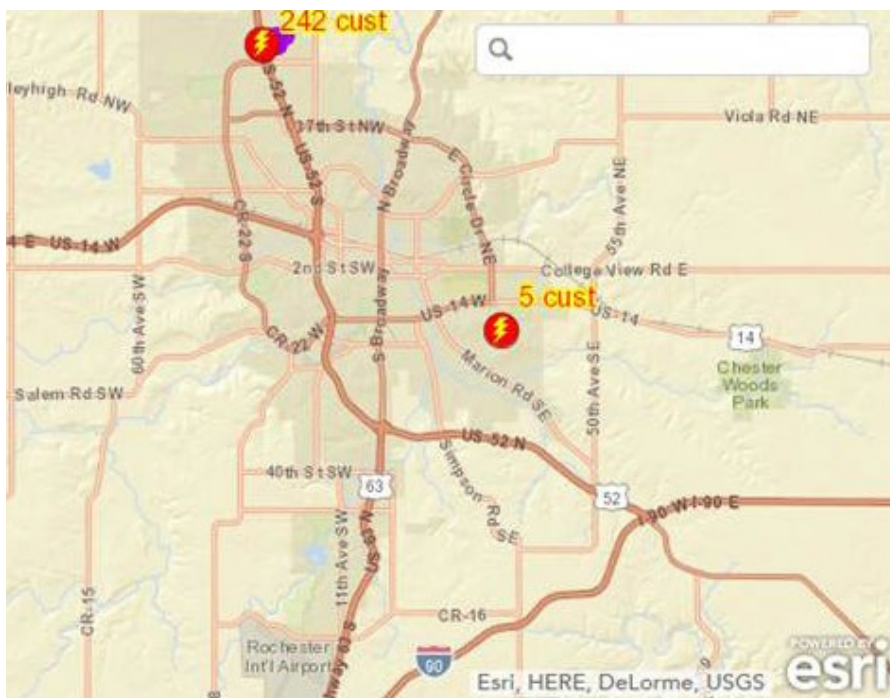
RPU ELECTRIC OUTAGE MAP NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

Be sure to check out RPU's new electric outage map by clicking the Power Outages link on the www.rpu.org home page or go there directly www.rpu.org/contact-us/power-outages.html.

Users can view this map on any device including: phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. The map gives you the ability to see all the outages occurring throughout RPU's service territory. In the example shown there are two electrical outage incidents. One incident has five customers out and the other with 242 customers out of power. As you zoom into the map, you will be able to see the individual services that are affected by the outages.

For complete instructions on how to use the new electric outage map, click the Help link at the top of the map.

RPU Electric Outages



SAFETY MILESTONE SET!

RPU's water crews set a safety milestone recently by eclipsing two years without an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordable safety incident. This is significant because of all of the different types of hazards that water crews can come in contact with while providing safe, reliable water to Rochester residents.

One of the most dangerous hazards that crews encounter each day are vehicles in work zones. Please use caution and slow down in RPU and any work zones.



Spring into ENERGY EFFICIENCY!

**ATTEND A FREE ENERGY
EFFICIENCY WORKSHOP
AND QUALIFY FOR A \$50
HOME ENERGY AUDIT***

Tuesday 03.17.2015
6:30 pm • Kellogg Middle School

Tuesday 04.07.2015
6:30 pm • Lincoln Choice Elementary School

**TO RESERVE
YOUR SPOT CONTACT:**

Stacy Boots Camp
888.734.6365
sbootscamp@mncee.org

LEARN MORE AT:
www.rpu.org



At the Neighborhood Energy Challenge workshop, we learned new things and realistic suggestions for our home... Our energy auditor was professional and easy to work with... The knowledge we acquired, from both the workshop and energy audit, has aided us in implementing conservation and energy efficiency improvements to our home.

— Tony & Lynne Drumm
Rochester Homeowners



(*Audit has a \$400 value)

DISSECTING A WATER MAIN BREAK

There are many reasons why a water main can break. Ground shifting due to large temperature fluctuations is the most noticeable cause for water main breaks. Water mains in Rochester can range in age from new to over 125 years old. The water main material may also be different depending on the age of the water main. Older water main material is comprised of cast iron, which is strong, but very brittle. The majority of our water main breaks occur in cast iron water mains due to this fact. Cast iron water mains were installed in Rochester until 1970 when a switch was made to ductile iron.

This is a simplified list of the steps that RPU takes to repair a water main break.

1. RPU is contacted about a possible water main issue; the indication is usually water surfacing from a crack in the street or roadway.
2. A water utility employee will be dispatched to the area to verify if it is a possible water main break or another issue. If it is a water main break, a repair crew is called to make the necessary repairs. If the break occurs after normal working hours, a crew is called in to make the repairs. RPU policy is to immediately repair these breaks, if at all possible, to prevent loss of water and potential damage to customer property.
3. Safety equipment, excavation equipment, and repair materials are gathered at the RPU Service Center. These items include a backhoe, a trench box to prevent the ground from caving in on the water crew, and materials to fix the main.
4. Utility locations must be called in prior to excavation to identify all other utilities in the excavation area. Utility locations are required so crews don't damage these utilities during excavation and to ensure safety for the RPU water utility employees.
5. At this point, water may be turned off in the affected area depending on the size of the break, location, time of day, and number of customers possibly affected. Sometimes the water crews can isolate a certain part of the water system to maintain service to a majority of affected customers while repairs are made.



6. The area is excavated and the trench box is placed in the ground over the failed water main.



7. Since most failures occur on cast iron water mains, a break can normally be repaired by installation of a repair sleeve. These sleeves are made of stainless steel and are placed over the failed portion of the water main.



8. After the water main is repaired, water service is restored and hydrants are flushed in the area to prevent rusty water from entering homes and businesses.



9. The final step is to fill the excavation hole with crushed rock to street grade. The roadway is finished with blacktop or concrete at a later date, depending on the weather and time of year.

Ask any water utility employee at RPU and they will tell you every water main break is different. We know that being without water is an inconvenience and that's why we always have crews on call to fix water main breaks at all times. We appreciate your patience and understanding when repairs are being made. Please help us keep our employees safe by slowing down when you reach these work areas and paying attention to the emergency road signs.

Thank You for Attending Our Trade Ally and Commercial Customer Meeting

RPU, in partnership with People's Energy Cooperative and Minnesota Energy Resources, held its annual Trade Ally and Commercial Customer Meeting in late January. This meeting is important for customers and trade allies alike, to keep them apprised on all of the current and new rebate offerings and programs available to customers.

Over 80 attendees came to the meeting to hear from the three utilities. Being equipped with the latest rebate information and knowing where to readily find it will help customers save energy and money, and will help the trade allies build business and provide value to their customers.



To access all of RPU's rebate information for 2015, visit www.rpu.org for full details.

Pick a Pair of... **REBATES!**

NEW IN 2015 – REBATES FOR CLOTHES DRYERS



*Visit our website at www.rpu.org to download a rebate application with minimum efficiency requirements and complete terms and conditions.

CONSERVE & \$AVE®



4000 East River Road NE
Rochester, MN 55906
507.280.1500
www.rpu.org

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BlueSpire

Cold Weather Rule Window Ending Soon

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule window is coming to an end on April 15. If you are behind on paying your RPU bill, please contact RPU customer service to make arrangements to bring your account current by April 15.

If no arrangement has been made and your account is not current as of April 15, your electric service may be shut off for non-payment. RPU customer service is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to assist you.

Visit the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website for full details on the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule: <http://www.puc.state.mn.us/puc/consumers/index.html>.

Images may be from one or more of these sources: ©iStock, ©Fotolia.
©2015 Rochester Public Utilities

SAVE THE DATE!

RPU's 13th Annual

Arbor Day Celebration

Friday, April 24, 2015

Three Links – Silver Lake Park

11am–1pm

Rain Location: RCTC's Field House

FREE Food*

FREE Trees*

Giveaways*

Live Music & Family Activities

Poster Contest Winners Awarded

**while supplies last*

ADMISSION IS FREE!

