

Energy Saving Competition Brings a Win for Maple Grove Family

A contest between Wright Hennepin and Lake Region Electric Cooperative drew in six area households, including two from Maple Grove, as a way to educate people about saving and conserving energy.

4:29pm

The concept seemed simple. In four months, reduce your household's energy use as compared to the same time last year.

In the end, a Maple Grove family prevailed as "The Littlest User" in a contest between two Minnesota electric cooperatives - [Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association](#) located in Rockford and [Lake Region Electric Cooperative](#) located in Pelican Rapids.

The Lefevre family of Maple Grove competed against five other families in the race to reduce their energy consumption. Between the two electric cooperatives, Wright Hennepin came out on top with a total energy reduction of 43 percent. The Lefevre family of Maple Grove, Minn. reduced their energy use by 58 percent and walked away as the individual household winner of the contest.

The friendly competition encouraged participants to make small changes around their homes to help reduce their energy use. According to Wright Hennepin, it wasn't long before Wright Hennepin team, the Watt Watchers, noticed a difference in their routines as well as their electric bills.

"If it's not critical, it doesn't stay plugged in," said Kent Lefevre. "Changing a few small things can make a huge difference."

The Lefevre household put the "simple changes" theory to the test. To achieve their 58 percent reduction, the family made small changes like unplugging devices that were not in use and turning off the TV when they left the room.

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The Zipp family from St. Michael made small changes that added up to reduce their use by 20.70 percent.

"I do a lot of little things that the rest of the family probably doesn't even notice," said Lisa Zipp. "I wait until my hair is half dry before I blow dry it and adjust the thermostat during the day to reduce our heating and cooling costs. It all adds up."

Most of the families also commented that conserving electricity brought them closer together, according to Wright Hennepin. TV and computer use were often replaced with playing board games and spending more time outdoors.

"We always knew that we were big on board games," said Shannon Bry of Maple Grove. "Since the contest started, we've been playing them a lot more."

Many said they would find it hard to go back to their old practices.

"I was surprised to find out how easy it was to cut back on our use," said Steve Walstad of Buffalo. "It just shows how wasteful we were being before the contest."

Participants also told Wright Hennepin that they'd encourage other households to try to cut back on their energy use as well.

As Kent Lefevre said, "Try it. All you have to lose is a high energy bill."

The households tracked their energy-conserving efforts by using MyMeter. MyMeter is an energy use monitoring software that allows its users to view complex energy use data in a simple graphic format.

WH is a member-owned non-profit electric utility that provides electric power to Wright County and the western part of Hennepin County.