

MELROSE HEADQUARTER OFFICE

900 Kraft Drive SE, PO Box 40
Melrose, MN 56352-0040
(800) 962-0655 | (320) 256-4241

**ST. JOSEPH BRANCH OFFICE**

29643 Frontage Road, PO Box 816
St. Joseph, MN 56374-0816
(800) 448-1737

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: 5/8/2019

For more information contact:

Amanda Groethe, *Director of Communications and Marketing*
agroethe@stearnslectric.org
(800) 448-1737

STEARNS ELECTRIC WINS TWO NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Stearns Electric Association's communication and marketing team recognized with two gold awards of excellence in industry communication.

St. Joseph, MN

Stearns Electric Association's communication and marketing team, Amanda Groethe, director of communications and marketing, and Whitney Ditlevson, communications and marketing specialist, recently received recognition at the national level in the 2019 Spotlight on Excellence Awards program, sponsored by the Council of Rural Electric Communicators and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The duo received a Gold Award in the Best Total Communication Program category for their work in building awareness for electric vehicles on their Road Trip; Recharged. The team also received a Gold Award in the Best Use of Digital Story Telling category for their safety campaign "This Is My Why."

"Electric cooperatives are being challenged to communicate to the people they serve more than ever before," said Scott Peterson, Senior Vice President Communications for NRECA. "Printed news publications, social media and videos are all more important than ever to keep members updated on issues affecting the electric cooperatives and their members."

A special reception honoring the award recipients took place this week during the CONNECT '19 Conference held in Houston, Texas, on May 7. The annual Spotlight on Excellence Awards program recognizes the best communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related industry organizations. Faculty members from the University of Missouri – Columbia and University of South Carolina, as well as noted professionals in the fields of marketing, web design and digital

member driven. community focused. energy smart.

WWW.STEARNSELECTRIC.ORG

Stearns Electric Association is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

communications, and newspapers judged the event, which uses a finite scoring system to determine the winners.

ROAD TRIP; RECHARGED

In May 2018, the Stearns Electric Association Communications team endeavored on a cross-country electric vehicle expedition to gain the hands-on experience their Cooperative needed to stand as the trusted source of energy information for their member-consumers.

Together, Amanda and Whitney traveled over 2,600 miles in a Tesla S across rural America. They kept an extensive driving log, collected data for research, provided electric vehicle education and shared their experiences along the way. In a total of 17 days, the team created the concept, completed their research, developed a marketing plan, finalized a strategy, wrote extensive content, traveled 2,600 miles, attended a professional conference, met some amazing people and created electric vehicle awareness - evident by more than two million impressions and over 60,000 likes, shares and comments on the trip's social media platforms.

THIS IS MY WHY

Stearns Electric's video series "This Is My Why" set out to increase the awareness and effectiveness of the Cooperative's Safety program while demonstrating to employees that their safety is a priority and valued by their co-workers. Stearns Electric, like most utilities, provides a wide range of fundamental education and training to keep their employees safe. The Stearns Electric "This is My Why" video series captures employees and their families creating a more personal connection to safety. A reminder that the main purpose or WHY behind all the training is that everyone has someone or something to go home to at the end of each work day. The personal appeal of employee family members creates a strong emotional connection that reiterates the message that safety is of the utmost importance.



Caption: Amanda Groethe, director of communication and marketing at Stearns Electric accepts two national awards in Houston, TX on behalf of Stearns Electric's commitment to excellence in communications and marketing.

###

Stearns Electric Association is a member-owned electric cooperative. Since 1937, Stearns Electric Association has provided electricity and related products and services to Central Minnesota. Today, Stearns Electric Association serves 27,000 members in six Central

Minnesota counties including Stearns, Todd, Morrison, Kandiyohi, Pope and Douglas. For more information about Stearns Electric Association, please visit www.stearnselectric.org

The Council of Rural Electric Communicators was organized in 1982, and seeks to advance the recognition, education, and professionalism of electric cooperative communicators and their affiliated organizations. It is a volunteer association working on behalf of more than 4,000 electric cooperative communicators across the United States.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing the national interests of cooperative electric utilities, coordinates the Council's activities.
