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With an Eye to Altruism, Minnesota Investor-Owned Utilities Empower Our Communities

Minnesota's investor-owned utilities have a strong history of working with the communities they serve, enhancing the quality of life for citizens across the state. Through charitable donations, environmental stewardship, educational initiatives, and volunteering, among other things, the investor-owned utilities serve hundreds of community organizations, contribute thousands of employee engagement hours, and collectively donate millions of dollars each year to various foundations and organizations across the state.

The investor-owned utilities are committed to volunteering their time and encouraging employee volunteer activities in the communities where their customers and employees live and work. **Otter Tail Power** sponsors the Power of Two matching gifts program, a charitable giving endeavor that encourages employees to be active in their communities and gives employees the opportunity to be involved in selecting organizations that Otter Tail Power supports. In 2015, the program resulted in \$5,300 in company donations to 42 organizations on behalf of Otter Tail Power employees.

Minnesota Power similarly encourages its employees to participate in community projects and, in return, offers paid time off to employee volunteers. Through the Minnesota Power Foundation, the company runs a Power Volunteering program for employees, partnering with the Head of the Lakes United Way to assemble nutrition- and hygiene-related care packages. The company also partnered with the Duluth firefighters' Operation Warm program, where Minnesota Power employee volunteers distributed new winter coats to children in need.

The investor-owned utilities also contribute financially to volunteer and nonprofit organizations across the state. **CenterPoint Energy** has served communities across the United States; while building relationships between employees and customers by donating to health and human services programs, safety and environmental initiatives, community development, education and youth development. The company's Community Partnership matching grant program, encourages safety awareness and safe practices in Minnesota's cities. The program awards grants to cities, fire departments, and police departments to fund safety-related equipment and projects. Through the program, the company was able to award the city of Minneapolis a \$2,500 grant for Project Lifesaver and Safety Net by Lojack- a new service that can help public safety officials locate missing community members. The program has issued more than \$1.4 million grants for more than 715 projects over a 14-year span.

Minnesota Energy Resources offers a Matching Gifts program, designed to encourage its employees and retirees to actively support nonprofit organizations in its operating region and the communities where its employees live and work. Any eligible employee or retiree contribution is

matched dollar-for-dollar, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per employee and \$2,000 per retiree. As part of a measure to enhance public safety, Minnesota Energy Resources, through its supporting foundation, also awarded \$10,000 to first responders in its service area as part of the foundation's "Safety: It's Worth the Energy" grant opportunity.

Each year, **Xcel Energy** sponsors an employee campaign that for six consecutive years has raised well over \$2.5 million annually in employee and retiree pledges that are matched by the company. The funds support United Way programs and hundreds of nonprofit organizations throughout Xcel Energy's service territory. The Xcel Energy Foundation also contributes to the Northside Funders Group. Initiatives undertaken by this group include the new North Market, a Pillsbury United Communities' social enterprise providing food, health care services, and wellness education to the north Minneapolis community, funded by a \$150,000 challenge grant.

Environmental stewardship is also a priority for Minnesota's investor-owned utilities. **Minnesota Power** focuses on forest management through its Rajala Woods initiative, an effort to restore white pine and other conifer trees to more historical levels in central and northeastern Minnesota over 10 years across 3,000 acres of company-owned land. **Minnesota Energy Resources** partners with Rochester Public Utilities and other community organizations to promote Arbor Day with Rochester area schools. Backpacks, provided by Minnesota Energy Resources, are distributed during the event.

Significant contributions to primary, secondary, and higher education are also made by Minnesota's investor-owned utilities. **Xcel Energy** has a robust grant initiative that, among other things, supports higher education and scholarship opportunities. For example, in 2015, the Xcel Energy Foundation contributed \$345,000 in grant funding to more than 50 colleges and universities throughout Xcel Energy's service territory for scholarships and STEM programs.

Otter Tail Power provides scholarship programs to several area institutions of higher learning. Since 2006, the company has contributed over \$300,000 to Bismarck State College to help students continue their education in areas that impact the electric utility industry. In support of the K-12 education system, the company donated \$5,000 to North Dakota State College of Science to support the Skills Careers Success Camp for ninth and tenth graders, where students explore career and technical programs. The company sponsors K-12 teachers to attend the Lignite Energy Council's annual Teacher Education Seminar at Bismarck State College, giving teachers a first-hand look at electricity production and the lignite industry.

CenterPoint Energy values the superior reputation they have formed in Minnesota. Not only is the company known for its commitment to delivering natural gas safely and reliably, but also for addressing the needs of the communities each day. Volunteerism is at the heart of the company culture and so is giving back to make the communities where they work safer and better places to live.

Minnesota's investor-owned utilities recognize that their success is connected to the success of the communities they serve. Not only are the investor-owned utilities committed to delivering reliable energy to Minnesota communities, but also to empowering these communities through the shared values of community engagement and altruism.