

## Board Changes in 2021

Mark Nibaur, General Manager, presented a plaque to outgoing AU Board Commissioner, Tyler Hulsebus, in December thanking him for his service after the end of his four year term. Incoming Commissioner Jay Lutz joins the Board of Commissioners at the January 19th, 2021 Board meeting.



## United Way Donation

Austin Utilities raised over \$8,500 in November through its yearly employee pledge campaign and loose change challenge. Pictured left to right in the check presentation are Dar Duholm, Melissa Swenson, Mark Nibaur, Mower Co. United Way Executive Director, Molly Lanke, Keven Maxa and Austin Utilities new mascot, Meter Buddy.

### NOTICE

In compliance with the Code of Federal regulation #49, Part 192.16, Austin Utilities must notify each customer who owns buried natural gas piping after the meter.

1. Austin Utilities does not maintain the customer's buried piping.
2. If the customer's buried piping is not maintained, it may be subject to the potential hazards of corrosion and leakage.
3. Buried gas piping should be:
  - (a) periodically inspected for leaks.
  - (b) periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic.
  - (c) repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered.
4. When excavating near buried gas piping, the piping should be located in advance, and the excavation done by hand.
5. Austin Utilities and plumbing and heating contractors, can assist in locating, inspecting, and repairing the customer's buried piping.

Customers with buried natural gas piping should feel free to contact Austin Utilities at 433-8886. You can also find information at [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com).

**The Austin Utilities Board of Commissioners**  
Monthly Meeting was held on December 15, 2020.  
Agenda items included:

- 2020 Budget projections
- 2021 water rates
- Recognizing Tyler Hulsebus, outgoing Commissioner
- Recognizing Todd Jorgenson retirement

Meeting minutes are available at [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com)

# Connections

February 2021  
Customer Newsletter



## Retiring Staff

AU's Employee Relations Director, Kim Duncomb, retired in Jan. 2021. Over her 20 year career at AU Kim has supervised the Marketing, Customer Service and Safety programs while directing all AU's Human Resource activities. We wish her well in retirement as we welcome her replacement, Dan Ulland. Dan brings with him an extensive background in HR and many connections in our community. Welcome to AU Dan.

**Austin Utilities  
Office  
will be Closed  
Mon. Feb. 15th  
for  
President's Day**



## Staying Safe in Your Home

### NATURAL GAS LEAKS

More than sixty-five percent of homes in the Midwest use natural gas safely and cost-effectively to heat their home. While natural gas leaks are uncommon, you need to be able to identify them should they occur. Your sense of smell, sight, and hearing can all be used to detect a gas leak.



#### Smell

We add an odorant called Mercaptan to give a sulfur or rotten egg type odor to help you smell a gas leak



#### Sight

When there is no snow cover, watch for dirt blowing up into the air, water bubbling in wet areas, or dead or brown vegetation in lawns or boulevards



#### Hearing

Listen for hissing, blowing or roaring type sounds

### WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you should experience any of the above, you should leave the area immediately and call Austin Utilities at 507-433-8886. Our trained service technicians will identify the cause of the leak and turn off any valves if necessary. This service is FREE of charge, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

**Carbon Monoxide** is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, and non-irritating gas. It is sometimes called The Silent Killer because when it enters the blood stream it prevents the blood from absorbing oxygen. When oxygen deficient blood reaches the heart and brain, it can damage those organs and cause illness or even death. The best way to identify Carbon Monoxide in your home is to install carbon monoxide alarms. For your safety, Minnesota Statute 299F.51 requires that every single-family home and every unit in a multifamily dwelling must have an approved and operational carbon monoxide alarm installed within ten feet of each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes.



Even if the lobby is closed you can still reach us at:

**Austin Utilities**

1908 14th St NE Austin, MN 55912 Office: 507-433-8886  
Email: [talk2au@austinutilities.com](mailto:talk2au@austinutilities.com) Website: [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com)





# THANK YOU FOR HELPING YOUR NEIGHBORS STAY WARM

Austin Utilities presented the Salvation Army with a check for \$3,163.97 which represents funds collected from our customers to support our local HeatShare program. HeatShare is a program administered by the Salvation Army that helps those in need survive our long winters by providing funds for heating bills and heating-related repairs.



To receive assistance through HeatShare, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must live in Austin Utilities service area.
- You must have an income level at or below 50 percent of the state median income.
- There must be an emergency that has caused the bill not to be paid.

Other important factors:

- Elderly and disabled are given special consideration.
- HeatShare must be used as a "last resort" - clients must try other public resources first, e.g., Energy Assistance or County Emergency Assistance.
- Assistance amount is limited on locality and to once every 12 months.
- Budget counseling and case management services are available.

We encourage you to participate in HeatShare one of the following ways -

- Set up a monthly donation on your utility bill
- Make a one-time donation (send us a check payable to HeatShare)

All donations are tax-deductible.

## MAKE A RESOLUTION TO TRIM YOUR ENERGY WASTE



When you trim your energy waste you save money too. That's why we offer rebates on so many energy saving technologies. Check out the rebates section of our website for details.

# Why meters need to be kept clear of snow

Each winter we ask our customers to keep an eye on the natural gas meter located on the outside of their home or business to be sure it is kept clear of snow and ice. Although designed to withstand winter weather, your outdoor meter has a vent that regulates gas pressure and it must not be blocked by snow or ice to work properly.

Customers should also take time to look up and

make sure ice has not accumulated on the gutter above the meter. If you have accumulated snow or ice on your meter, take proper care to remove the snow or ice carefully with a broom or brush. Never kick or hit your gas meter or its piping with a shovel, hammer or any hard object to break away built-up snow or ice.

Be mindful of these important tips to protect your natural gas meter and ensure safe, reliable service to keep you warm through the Minnesota winter:

- Don't pile snow on or near your natural gas meter.
- Don't use a snowplow or snow-blower near the meter.
- Mark your meters with high-visibility safety flags to mark their location

Austin Utilities is available for assistance by calling 507-433-8886 if your meter is coated with ice.

**BE SAFE, STAY WARM  
KEEP GAS METERS CLEAR**

**Maintain a PATH TO METER**

**REMOVE SNOW & ICE with hand, brush or broom**

**SHOVEL OR PLOW carefully near meters**

**DO NOT USE:**

- sharp objects
- salt or ice melting chemicals
- hot water



## \$500 AU Scholarship

If you know a graduating senior in Austin, encourage them to apply for our \$500 scholarship. Students who enter should submit an original essay from 500 to 750 words, typed and double-spaced to interpret one or more aspects of the theme, "Municipal Utilities: good for all of us." Judges will look particularly for originality and the relevance of the theme to the writer and the community of Austin. High school seniors are eligible. Those eligible must be, or have as a legal guardian, a customer of Austin Utilities. Essays are to be original and from 500 to 750 words, typed and double-spaced. More information can be found at [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com). Deadline for submitting essays to Austin Utilities is April 2nd, 2021. The winner's essay will receive a \$500 scholarship and then be sent to MMUA for entry into the statewide, Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship contest with prizes of \$2,000, \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500.



## Employee Spotlight

### Jay Kohnke Facilities Maintenance Technician

In the summer of 1998 Jay Kohnke decided to switch careers from a Carpenter to a Light Equipment Operator at AU. Soon after Jay moved to the power plant and held positions as a Helper, Fireman, and Maintenance worker before becoming the Facilities Maintenance Technician. He says the best part of his job is contributing to a company that provides such an essential service and the second best part is having the ability to perform his duties on a flexible timetable, so he can do different tasks each day.

As a new grandpa Jay looks forward to spending time with his grandson, Karter, his son Nate, and wife of 31 years, Shelly. Jay enjoys travelling, especially if a motorcycle is involved, whether he's riding one, fixing one, or restoring one. Jay says he's looking at about a ten-year stretch before retirement so his plans aren't definite but he hopes they'll include more travel, more motorcycles, and a few expertly cooked steaks on his grill.

