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Imagine all of the necessary actions performed around your house on a daily basis.

Among many things you may have thought of on your list, you may have considered things like taking a shower, flipping on a light switch, or even turning on the stove for dinner. Thanks to local municipal utilities, these actions become second-nature to us, and we do not have to think about the work that makes all these actions possible. Municipal utilities often fly under the radar, but without their services, our communities would be unable to function efficiently and effectively. Serving over 50,000 electric customers and 39,000 water customers, Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) is the largest municipal utility in Minnesota and provides much of my community of Rochester with services we often take for granted in a safe and reliable manner. Six core values define RPU's mission: safety, integrity, service, stewardship, accountability, and skill. These are a portrayal of RPU's immense impact on Rochester and prove that our reliance on them is returned with quality service.

Not only is RPU a provider for clean water and electricity, but also an advocate for conservation efforts. RPU employees are passionate about making sure their customers are informed about preserving Earth's resources, and even offer education courses that inform about changes one can make in their own home to benefit the environment. This is a fantastic example of how municipal utilities benefit us all. Yes, they provide us with necessary services, but they do not stop there. They dedicate time and effort into educating citizens of their communities in the importance of protecting and preserving our environment. Without this education, our actions could continue with their detrimental influences on the earth.

During times of disaster, Municipal Utilities are also there to help. Severe storms are a natural part of our world, but the destruction they cause leaves people desperate for assistance.

When hurricane Irma struck the Southeast, immense damage was caused, and help was needed immediately. I am proud to say that my local municipal utility, Rochester Public Utilities, sent a team of their own down to Kissimmee, Florida to help with relief. On the way down, they met up with teams from other municipal utilities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In times of distress, municipal utilities are there for aid and relief, even in other parts of the country. These selfless actions exemplify the values municipal utilities have. Municipal utilities have extremely busy schedules, with many people relying on them, and yet they still find time to serve and help around the country. If teams had not been sent down to help, recovery would have taken much longer, and more lives could have been lost.

Furthermore, municipal utilities help stimulate local economies, whether it be through the taxes they pay that go to the city, the jobs they create, or competitive rates with other utilities. The common good of their communities is always put first, and they ensure that the needs of the citizens are met. Municipal utilities strive to create utility rates that are affordable and accessible to everyone in their communities, which is usually made possible through boards made up of community members that work to enact reasonable rates and policies. Community involvement is vital for a functional society, and municipal utilities truly understand the relationship between their companies and community members.

Municipal utilities are at the heart of their local communities, and benefit all of us, whether we choose to recognize it or not. Visualize a society where a municipal utility did not exist: people would be forced to revert back to primitive methods of obtaining clean water, and utilizing electricity, heat, and gas would be nearly impossible. Thus, our daily lives become much easier with their help. Altogether, municipal utilities deserve recognition for making our

lives easier, coming together to help during times of disaster, and benefitting their local economies by putting the people foremost to allow access for everyone.