

one business profile



Trails Edge Food, Fuel and Liquor

Businesses demonstrating the power of one®—with effective energy choices

November 2012

Store saves energy ... and reenergizes community.

Trails Edge Food, Fuel and Liquor stands like a beacon of hope on the edge of Buckman, Minn., a tiny town south of Pierz on Minnesota Highway 25. Lit up by energy-efficient light emitting diodes (LEDs) inside and out, the 5,000-square-foot complex opened in July 2012, reenergizing a community that had recently lost its only grocery store.

"It kills a community to lose groceries and gas; you become a ghost town," said John Britz, a Buckman native and local businessman, who opened Trails Edge along with his wife, Carmen, and partners, Paul and Kim Seppelt. "Our concept was to keep our hometown alive."

Trails Edge is more than a convenience store. In addition to groceries and gas, it has a hot and cold deli, liquor store and beauty salon. There are window booths where people can eat, drink coffee and visit. In many ways, it is the new community center, with townsfolk stopping in to buy essentials and share news.

Launching a new business in a small town like Buckman is challenging, but circumstances made the new store feasible for Britz. His primary business, Britz Store Equipment, Inc., is just down the road. It supplies new, used and remanufactured equipment to supermarkets and convenience stores. These business connections allowed him to purchase many items at reduced costs. Britz also drew upon a family history as Buckman grocers.

"My folks had Britz Market in Buckman for 42 years," Britz said. "We were out of the business for 18 years, and now we're back in—there was a real push in the community and among family members to do this."

As a businessman, Britz was eager to save energy and lower operating costs. Trails Edge worked closely with Minnesota Power's commercial energy conservation team to analyze lighting options and other energy-saving opportunities. Dean Witt and Craig Kedrowski, of Minnesota Power, and Tanuj Gulati, an energy consultant for the utility, gathered information from vendors, estimated energy and cost savings, and calculated **POWERGrant** rebates.



"We could not have made these choices without the rebates. Minnesota Power made it so easy."

*John Britz, Partner
Trails Edge
Food, Fuel and Liquor*



Left Side Bar: 1) Business owner John Britz (I) with Tanuj Gulati, Joseph Frauenshuh and Charlotte Campbell of Energy Management Solutions, a firm that provides energy consulting for Minnesota Power; 2) LED canister lights illuminate the Trails Edge store; 3) employees and owners value energy savings and light quality of LEDs. **Above:** Trails Edge Food, Fuel and Liquor in Buckman, Minn., is saving nearly 130,000 kWh and thousands of dollars per year thanks to LED lighting and other energy-efficient choices.



"We contacted Minnesota Power to find out what was available for rebates before we started, not really thinking about LEDs. A few years ago, installing LEDs would not have paid, but the price has come down and with rebate incentives from Minnesota Power it fell into place."

*John Britz, Partner
Trails Edge Food, Fuel and Liquor*

LED lights illuminate the Trails Edge liquor store, grocery coolers and exterior gas canopy. The versatile, high performance lights save energy, lower maintenance costs and are perfect for numerous indoor and outdoor applications.

The process convinced owners to select LED lighting for the parking lot, gas canopy, freezer and refrigerator cases, and interior canisters—choosing the right bulbs and fixtures for each application.

LEDs are increasingly popular in grocery and convenience store settings. Outdoor advantages include significant energy savings, bright light with fewer fixtures, instant on/off, less maintenance, and reduced light pollution. Indoors, they are an excellent choice for cooler and freezer lighting because they do not generate much heat. Owners chose LEDs for interior canister lighting because of energy savings and ambience. In addition to energy-efficient lighting, Trails Edge installed high performance heating, ventilation and air conditioning units with economizers and electronically commutated motors (ECMs).

These choices qualified the business for more than \$15,000 in **POWERGrant** rebates from Minnesota Power. They will help Trails Edge save nearly 130,000 kWh per year, reduce monthly electric demand by almost 25 kW, and avoid annual energy costs of more than \$8,000. Rebates and energy savings brought payback to around two years.

"We could not have made these choices without the rebates," Britz said. "Minnesota Power made it so easy."

He added that in talking with owners of similar businesses around the region, Trails Edge is paying much less for energy in comparison. Savings are on track with estimates provided by Minnesota Power ahead of the project. Britz would encourage other gas and convenience stores to consider converting to LED lights.

The new store has revitalized the small rural community, giving Buckman new life and energy. This truly demonstrates **power of one** success in action by fostering personal growth while tapping into a sense of purpose and community.

"It brings people into town and benefits other businesses, as well," Britz said. "People are moving around again. I love to see kids on bicycles, leaving the store with shake cups in their hands. This is my hometown."

For more information:

Take the first steps toward managing energy use and costs at your business. Learn more about **POWERGrant**, Minnesota Power's commercial, agricultural and industrial energy conservation program, and fill out your free online pre-application form.

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