

living with energy IN IOWA

FEBRUARY 2020



Guthrie County REC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

High school seniors: Apply for 2020 Guthrie County REC scholarships ▶ See Page 4

Guthrie County REC holds 82nd Annual Meeting

High school students –
win a free trip to
Washington, D.C.!

Visit our website at www.guthrie-rec.coop

Heart-healthy
recipes we love

Tips for avoiding
scams

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ON THE COVER

This month's cover photo is courtesy of Prairie Energy Cooperative, headquartered in Clarion, where steam from a nearby business, along with windy conditions, created a frosty blanket on the Snell Substation on the co-op's lines. Prairie Energy Cooperative serves members in Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Hancock, Hamilton, Hardin, Humboldt, Kossuth, Webster, Winnebago, Worth and Wright counties. ⚡



Passage of federal legislation is good for co-op members

BY CHUCK SODERBERG

It's no secret that Washington politics have become so polarized that it can be tough for Democrats and Republicans to come together to tackle challenges that their constituents face. But that's exactly what happened recently on Capitol Hill thanks to Iowa's congressional delegation.

Our senators and representatives listened to thousands of electric cooperative stakeholders as they fought tirelessly to add important tax and retirement policies to the 2020 spending bill. The bill was signed into law before Christmas and included a provision known as the RURAL Act, which solved an existential issue for electric co-ops and America's rural communities.

Locally owned electric co-ops work to secure government grants to help pay for numerous activities that benefit the communities they serve. These include grants for storm recovery and mitigation, broadband deployment, renewable energy and economic development.

In order to maintain their tax-exempt status, electric co-ops must receive no more than 15% of their income from non-member sources. Historically, government grants to cooperatives were counted as contributions to capital. But due to a glitch in the 2017 tax law, government grants were reclassified as income, pushing some co-ops beyond the 15% threshold and jeopardizing their tax-exempt status.

The tax problem left co-ops with a broad dilemma: Do they take the money they need to turn the lights back on for their members as quickly as possible after a disaster? Do they accept the broadband grants to help close the digital divide between rural and urban America? Or do they turn down those grants so they wouldn't

have to spend critical funds when the tax bill comes due?

Had the unintended consequences of the tax change been in place before 2018, some of Iowa's electric cooperatives may have experienced several instances where they would have lost their tax-exempt status for the year.

Thanks to Congress, electric co-ops across America won't have to make those impossible choices. This is good news for both cooperatives and their member-owners because some co-ops may have had to raise their electric rates to pay new taxes.

On behalf of Iowa's electric cooperatives, we are extremely grateful to Sen. Joni Ernst, Reps. Cindy Axne, Abby Finkenauer, Dave Loebsack and Steve King for their support of the stand-alone RURAL Act. And without Sen. Chuck

Grassley ensuring the provision was included in the final negotiations on the congressional budget bill, those painful scenarios would have begun to play out in co-op board rooms across the country. In standing up for Iowa's rural communities, they proved that Congress can still work for the people.

Notably, the legislation drew the bipartisan support of more than 350 of the 535 federal lawmakers. That's a rarity in Washington these days. In today's fast-paced society, pausing to give thanks is done with increasing rarity. That's unfortunate.

Thank you to all our federal legislators. Thank you for looking out for rural communities across Iowa and working with us to solve this problem. ⚡



Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Cuisinart Digital Glass Steamer



Electric cooperative members looking for a healthy way to cook will love Cuisinart's new Cook Fresh Digital Glass Steamer. A powerful system delivers steam from the top down, surrounding food to cook quickly and evenly. The 5-liter glass cooking pot is large enough for family-size portions of vegetables, fish, chicken, rice and more. For more information, visit <https://amzn.to/35VWnRT>. ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than Feb. 29, 2020. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Canon Photo Printer from the December issue was Martha Statlander from Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Pro tips: Power your Valentine's Day the energy-efficient way



- Set the mood with good lighting. Did you know that ENERGY STAR® certified light bulbs use 70-90% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs?
- Cast a romantic spell and save energy by dimming the lights.
- Stream your favorite date night movie on your tablet instead of your TV. The power required to operate a TV is much more than a tablet, which makes the tablet a more energy efficient choice. Plus, it's cozier.
- Or, why not give your electronics a break altogether and focus on each other instead? Reading poetry, playing a card game or taking a walk are a few ways to spend quality time together.
- Planning a nice meal? Use a convection oven, Instant Pot, slow cooker or microwave to save energy. ⚡



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www.guthrie-rec.coop

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HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

Thank you for attending the

The employees and board members of Guthrie County REC are grateful to our member-consumers who attended our 82nd Annual Meeting on Jan. 4. We had 250 total guests in attendance.

The three incumbent board members all retained their seats: Bob Batschelet (District 4), Don Schwartz (District 5) and Steve Bireline (District 6). The board executive committee is as follows:



- **President:** Steve Bireline
- **Vice President:** Joni Rees
- **Secretary/Treasurer:** Julie Kiley
- **Asst. Secretary/Treasurer:** Bob Batschelet

All members in attendance received a canvas bag with a cutting board, ice cream scoop, pizza cutter and serrated spatula as a thank you gift. The following individuals were awarded door prizes:

- **Jim Smith:** Electric grill cart (grand prize winner)
- **Trudy Woolman:** 32" Philips Smart Roku TV
- **Ted Erickson:** Home music system
- **Sharon Wessling:** Power smokeless grill
- **Larry Hamlin:** Frigidaire ice maker
- **Courtney Allen:** Rotating Belgian waffle maker
- **Darrell Stamp:** Shark Ion Robot Vacuum
- **John Wilson:** Air pop popcorn maker
- **Ruth Benton:** Keurig single serve
- **Gail Peterson:** \$50 cash
- **Joanne Zieser:** \$50 cash ⚡



Jim Smith



Trudy Woolman



Ted Erickson

Annual Meeting



Cooperative employees recognized for their years of service during the annual meeting were (pictured from left to right): Rebecca Schwartz, 5 years; Doug Downing, 35 years; Lori Hix, 25 years; and Elden Wolfe, 45 years.

Apply now for 2020 scholarships



As an electric cooperative with strong ties to our local communities, Guthrie County REC is proud to sponsor an annual scholarship opportunity for area students.

High school seniors in the Guthrie County REC service territory who are interested in continuing their education in any field of study, or power line program, are invited to apply for the 2020 scholarship.

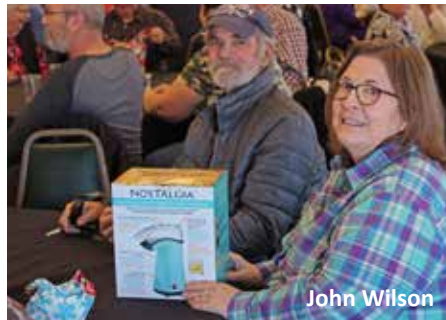
Guthrie County REC will award three \$1,000 scholarships to students enrolled full-time at an accredited college, university or vocational/technical school, or attending power lineman school, for the 2020-2021 school year. Applicants must have a guardian or parent who is a member of Guthrie County REC.

Applications must be postmarked on or before Friday, April 3, 2020. The application must include the application form; a personal letter stating your educational goals, financial need and work experience; a statement on why you think rural electric cooperatives are important; a wallet-sized photo of the applicant; and your most recent academic transcript. Due to the volume of applications, only students awarded a scholarship will be notified.

Visit www.guthrie-rec.coop for more information and to download the application. ⚡



Sharon Wessling



John Wilson



Larry Hamlin



Ruth Benton



Courtney Allen



Gail Peterson



Darrell Stamp



Joanne Zieser

John Dvorak: Celebrating a career dedicated to cooperatives

When John Dvorak retires in March from his role with the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), people will miss his positive energy, knowledge and above all, his commitment to helping co-op employees go home safely each day.

For the past decade, Dvorak has served as IAEC's Director of Safety and Loss Control, working with electric cooperatives across the state to provide safety training and general work procedures training while promoting a proactive safety culture. Before joining IAEC, Dvorak worked for Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative in south central Iowa for more than 30 years as a lineman and operations manager.

During his career, Dvorak has witnessed industry changes, technological advancements and an evolving safety culture. He is passionate about safety, and his enthusiasm is contagious. It's contributed to the depth of safety programs across Iowa and fostered a culture where employee and member safety is always the No. 1 priority for electric cooperatives.

We recently sat down with Dvorak, where he shared some of his career experiences.



Q: Tell us about how your career started with Iowa's electric cooperatives.

A: I graduated from the Powerline Program at Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon and immediately started working for Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) as a lineman, earning \$5.63 per hour. Coming out of school, my biggest fear was getting burned while working on power lines and equipment. Working in this industry can be unforgiving, and I was fortunate to have mentors at CVEC who taught me to do things right the first time, even if it takes longer.

Q: You've worked a lot of long hours during storms and outages. What are some situations that stand out in your memory?

A: The coldest weather I ever worked in was a day with a windchill of 85 degrees below zero. Ice storms are long, tough days. During one of those storms, I once worked 42 hours consecutively and slept in coveralls at a hotel with no power for two nights. It's what we do, and it's in our DNA. Co-op members depend on us, and there

is nothing cooler than restoring power and seeing the lights come back on. Working in the heat can be even worse. When I started, staying hydrated while working out in the sun with high heat and humidity was challenging. Today, there are products on the market, such as Gatorade, which are game-changers for this type of work.

Q: What is it like to be a lineman?

A: It's fulfilling work to know that we're helping to power homes and businesses that ultimately improve the quality of life in areas served by electric cooperatives. Line work is demanding on your body and family. The daily grind of climbing in and out of ditches, climbing poles and construction aspects take a toll over time. It can be worrisome for our families, knowing that severe injuries and fatalities are possible if we don't have our minds 100% on the task at hand. Through my role at IAEC, it's been gratifying to help linemen hone their safety skills and have a mindset of safety first.

Q: How has technology improved for line crews since your career started in the 1970s?

A: Technology has transformed nearly everything from the trucks and equipment to the apparel linemen wear. On the jobsite, there are better warning devices, such as lights and alarms. The trucks are bigger with rotating and elevating buckets that extend farther to reach line equipment. Many of the boom and digger trucks are now four-wheel drive. We also have more computers and Automated External Defibrillators on the trucks. Hydraulic and battery-operated tools have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the equipment. Technology has also improved

"Since John's first day at IAEC, his focus was to build on and improve the safety program for electric cooperatives and the members they serve. With John's leadership, the entire safety team has incorporated many new and innovative safety education and training ideas. His commitment and dedication have allowed us to emphasize the importance of safety and have taken the safety program to the next level. He has transformed IAEC's safety program and is leaving it in a better place than when he started. We are grateful for John's dedication to Iowa's electric cooperatives."

— Chuck Soderberg, executive vice president and general manager, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

clothing with flame-retardant and high-visibility materials. Cell phones have drastically improved communication. From a power generation perspective, wind, solar, electric vehicles and battery technologies have emerged and will likely continue to change the energy landscape.

Q: What accomplishments are you most proud of in your role at IAEC?

A: Knowing that our training programs helped prevent an injury or saved a life is always at the very top of the list. In addition, I'm proud of developing the four-year linemen apprenticeship training program. The U.S. Department of Labor-certified program includes 7,000 hours of online and hands-on training, study and tests. We saw a need for this type of program for electric cooperatives in Iowa and worked to implement this rigorous training effort. Working on power lines is an unforgiving business and specialized training is needed. Today, almost every state has an apprenticeship training program.

In his retirement, it's unlikely the energetic safety leader will sit still for very long. His priority will be spending more time with his wife of 45 years, Linda – who was his high school sweetheart – and daughter, Kristine, and son, Aaron, along with their families. The first stop on the road to retirement, however, will be on sunny beach in Florida where he'll proclaim, "I made it!" And, he'll be right. John Dvorak always made it a better environment when he was around. Whether it was sharing his expertise, a smile or laugh, he has made Iowa's electric cooperatives safer and will be missed. ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.



Heart- Healthy recipes we love



Tips from the American Heart Association

KNOW YOUR SALT

Sea salt is obtained directly through the evaporation of seawater. It is usually not processed and retains trace levels of minerals like magnesium, potassium and calcium. Table salt is mined from salt deposits and then processed to give it a fine texture. This processing strips table salt of any minerals. Both contain equal amounts of sodium.

Grilled Basil Chicken and Zucchini

- 2 cups brown rice
- 1-2 limes
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 red chili
- 4 small zucchini
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 pound chicken
- 2½ cups of basil, roughly chopped

Cook rice per package instructions. Zest 1 lime into a large bowl, then squeeze in 2 tablespoons of lime juice. Grate garlic into bowl, then stir in soy sauce, sugar and thinly sliced red chili. Brush zucchini with olive oil and season with black pepper. Grill zucchini until just barely tender. Cook chicken until cooked through. Cut chicken and zucchini into pieces then toss in with sauce in a large bowl. Fold in basil and serve over rice with lime wedges.

Sue Nagel • Panora • Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Black Bean and Avocado Salsa

- 2 jalapeños (seeded for less heat)
- 1 clove garlic, diced or smashed
- ½ medium white onion, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can black beans
- 2 scallions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 avocado
- ½ cup fresh cilantro

In a large bowl, combine jalapeños, garlic, onion, salt and pepper. Add beans, scallions, lime juice and oil. Toss to combine. Fold in avocado and cilantro.

Dave Duit • Nevada • Consumers Energy

Granola Bar Bites

- 1¼ cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup honey
- ⅓ cup mini chocolate coated candies
- ⅓ cup mini chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons flax seed
- ¼ cup coconut, optional

Combine all ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Stir well until everything is coated. Roll mixture into small balls. Store refrigerated in an airtight container.

Marie Pudenz • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Zesty Roasted Vegetables

- ½ pound mushrooms
- 1½ cups baby carrots
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 large red, yellow or green bell pepper, cut into 8 strips
- ⅓ cup Italian dressing
- ⅓ cup Parmesan cheese, divided

Toss vegetables with dressing and ¼ cup of cheese. Spread in a 15x10-inch pan lined with foil and coated with cooking spray. Bake at 450 degrees F for 28-30 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring after 15 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

1-2-3 Grilled Salmon

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon dried minced garlic
- 6 salmon filets (5 ounces each)

Combine the first four ingredients. Pour half into a large resealable bag, then add salmon and turn bag to coat. Refrigerate salmon for 30 minutes and refrigerate the unused marinade. Lightly coat a grill rack with cooking oil. Drain the salmon and grill over high heat for 5-10 minutes, or until fish flakes easily. Serve with the remaining marinade.

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Stir-Fry Vegetables

- 2 medium carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 1 medium bunch broccoli, cut into pieces
- 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, quartered
- 1/8 cup oil
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar

Cut carrots, celery crosswise, then lengthwise into matchstick thin strips. In a 12-inch skillet, heat oil and add carrots, celery, onion and broccoli. Stir quickly and frequently for about 3-4 minutes. Add mushrooms, water, salt and sugar. Cover and cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve immediately.

Penny Sue Haley • Keswick
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Spaghetti Chicken Bake

- 12 ounces thin spaghetti, cooked
- 4-5 chicken breasts, browned and diced
- 1 jar pimento
- 1 can mushrooms
- 2 cups celery, diced
- 1 onion, to taste
- 2 cans fat-free, reduced sodium cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can 98% fat-free cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese

Mix ingredients together in a 9x13-inch pan and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour.

Ardine Dillingham • Hartley
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Creamy Broccoli Casserole

- 2 10-ounce packages frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained
- 1 can condensed low-fat, reduced sodium cream of chicken soup
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 cup crushed seasoned stuffing
- 1 tablespoon reduced-fat margarine, melted
- 1/4 cup reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese

Place broccoli in 8-inch square baking dish coated with non-stick cooking spray. Combine soup and lemon juice, pour over broccoli. Toss together stuffing and margarine then sprinkle over soup mixture. Cover and bake 350 degrees F for 25-30 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle with cheese, bake 5 minutes longer until cheese is melted.

Cindy Briggs • Centerville
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.



Wanted:
Summer-
inspired
recipes for
turkey lovers!

The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

June is Turkey Lovers' Month®. As a high-quality protein and nutrient-rich food source, turkey is something to be celebrated all year long. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is Feb. 29, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com (Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:

Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

CHOOSE WISELY

Read food nutrition labels, even for so-called "healthier" foods. Choose the item with the lowest amounts of sodium, saturated fat, trans fat and added sugars.

HEART-HEALTHY TIPS

AVOID ADDED SUGAR

Although sugars are not harmful in small amounts to the body, our bodies don't need sugars to function properly. Added sugars contribute additional calories and zero nutrients to food.

HEART-HEALTHY TIPS

BODIES NEED FATS

Dietary fats are essential to give your body energy and to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs and help keep your body warm. Fats help your body absorb some nutrients and produce important hormones, too. Choose foods that provide good fats (mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fats).

HEART-HEALTHY TIPS

Opportunity of a lifetime: **WIN** a trip to Washington, D.C.!



Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 18-25 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the eighth year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Living with Energy in Iowa* 2020 Youth Tour Contest!

Of course, students at supporting co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. However, students can double their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op. More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs. ⚡



Official Contest Rules

The **2020 Youth Tour Contest** is open to any high school sophomore, junior or senior who's part of a member family of an Iowa electric co-op that's a member of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC). **One all-expenses-paid trip will be awarded by *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, in addition to the trips sponsored by local electric cooperatives.**

Students at supporting co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest, too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

To enter, you must submit an official entry

form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement: **Pick one of the seven cooperative principles and share how your local electric cooperative embodies it.** Entry forms are available at www.iowarec.org/youth-tour/living-with-energy-in-iowa-youth-tour-contest-form. You can submit your essay online at this address or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by April 6, 2020.

Living with Energy in Iowa magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. **The winner of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* Youth Tour Contest will not be announced until April 15, 2020**, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives have chosen their 2020 Youth Tour participants.

An Iowa student will earn a \$1,000 college scholarship, too!

During the 2020 Youth Tour this June, a student from each participating state will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC).

Those students will return to Washington, D.C., in July to participate in leadership training and will be invited to attend the 2021 annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in San Diego. As a bonus, the student chosen from Iowa will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship! This year, the Iowa Youth Tour director and chaperones will interview Iowa's YLC candidates on Saturday, June 20, during the Youth Tour.

Sarah Herz from Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative was the 2019 YLC representative from Iowa, and she'll be attending the annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in New Orleans later this month. Read more on Page 14 about Sarah's experience on Youth Tour. ⚡





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youth-tour



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iowayouthtour

Walking in footsteps of history while sightseeing, exploring and learning!

Youth Tour students can look forward to visiting these iconic places and taking part in some fun activities, which can only be found in our nation's capital:

- Albert Einstein Memorial
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Ford's Theater
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- International Spy Museum
- Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Madame Tussauds Wax Museum
- Mount Vernon
- The National Mall
- U.S. Capitol tour
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- Washington National Cathedral
- White House
- World War II Memorial



2020 Iowa Youth Tour intern announced

Hollie Nelson has been selected as the Iowa Youth Tour intern for 2020. Hollie went on Youth Tour in 2018 as the winner of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* essay contest. Her family farms in Access Energy Cooperative's service territory.

When reflecting on her 2018 trip she says, "When I participated in Youth Tour in 2018 it was an eye-opening experience as I was able to see that my voice matters here in rural America. As a result of this trip, I have been more involved in organizations that help influence rules and regulations regarding agriculture. From this, I have seen what positive pressure on elected officials can do for advocacy groups and specific demographics, for example, farmers."

Hollie is in her second year of college studying agribusiness. Her plan is to ultimately graduate with a Bachelor of Applied Science – Agriculture, and then her goal is to gain employment with the National Resources Conservation Service. ⚡



These electric cooperatives are sponsoring the 2020 Youth Tour

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

- Access Energy Cooperative
- Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Butler County REC
- Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association
- Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Consumers Energy

- East-Central Iowa REC
- Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative
- Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Greenfield)
- Franklin REC
- Grundy County REC
- Harrison County REC
- Heartland Power Cooperative
- Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
- Lyon REC

- Midland Power Cooperative
- MiEnergy Cooperative
- Nishnabotna Valley REC
- North West REC
- Pella Cooperative Electric Association
- Prairie Energy Cooperative
- Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative
- Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Southwest Iowa REC
- T.I.P. REC
- United Electric Cooperative

Trending: The electric fireplace

If you dream of a cozy living room with comfy couches to get you through a tough Iowa winter, but don't want the work of an inefficient traditional wood or the expense of a gas fireplace, there's a third option to tick off all your boxes.

Electric fireplaces continue to trend upward in popularity due to their versatility, low maintenance and many other factors. Here are 10 reasons why you should consider an electric fireplace:

- 1. No fumes.** With no gas being pumped into the unit, you can have the look and feel of a real fire without having to worry about potentially inhaling toxic fumes.
- 2. Low maintenance.** There's no chimney to clean and you never have to worry about cleaning up the logs or ash. You just turn it on when you want to and turn it off when you're done. It's that simple.
- 3. Low cost.** Not only are they less expensive to purchase and install, electric fireplaces can allow you to lower the overall temperature of your home by 10-15 degrees, heating only the room you are in. This can save you up to 15 percent on your energy bills.
- 4. Energy efficient.** Electric fireplaces are one of the most efficient and beautiful ways to heat a room. A traditional wood burning fireplace will lose over 90% of the heat of the fire out the chimney, not to mention much of the heated air in the room.
- 5. Longevity.** Unlike other heaters and fireplaces, electric fireplaces are less susceptible to problems like corrosion or rust.
- 6. Easy installation.** Many electric fireplace designs will fit seamlessly into your home's décor. The most complicated thing you need to worry about is where to plug it in.



- 7. Plenty of design choices.** Whether you want a free-standing electric fireplace, or one that hangs on the wall or is incorporated into an entertainment center, there are plenty of styles to choose from.
- 8. They are safe.** Although these fireplaces can heat up a room, they are often still cool to the touch so children and pets won't get hurt if they get too close. Many also come with an automatic shut-off option so you don't have to wonder if it's still
- going while you're not at home.
- 9. Anyone can enjoy it.** Renters and those living in apartments, condos, small homes or even recreational vehicles can enjoy the warmth and ambiance of an electric fireplace.
- 10. Usable year-round.** It doesn't matter if it's the middle of summer, or even if there is a burn restriction, the electric fireplace doesn't use real flame or wood so you can use it whenever you please no matter what the weather is like outside. ⚡

What Powers Us: Commitment to Community



Journeyman Lineman Jalen Spack cares about the community in which he lives and works which is why he volunteers for the AC-GC Booster Club.

Thank you, Jalen, for your commitment to our communities!



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Tips for avoiding scams

DERRILL HOLLY

Our increasingly connected world is giving scammers more opportunities to connect with unsuspecting consumers. Local authorities, electric cooperatives and other businesses are working overtime to keep people informed. “If you see something, say something,” is a vigilance adage that can help prevent you, your family or your business from being victimized.

“The Federal Trade Commission has been hearing about scammers impersonating utility companies in an effort to get your money,” says Lisa Lake, a federal consumer education specialist. “Your reports help us fight these scams.”

Iowa’s electric cooperatives are among the businesses and consumer organizations supporting Utilities United Against Scams (UUAS). The international consortium of electricity, natural gas, water and sewer providers, and trade and industry associations is sharing information on payment scams, identity theft, sales and service schemes.

Imposter scams are the most common type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), according to UUAS officials. Impersonators call homes and small businesses demanding payment for supposedly delinquent bills and threatening to terminate service.

The frequency of the incidents picks up during peak heating and cooling seasons, in part because consumers are most concerned when temperature extremes increase the urgency of maintaining utility service.

Variations on the scam are also becoming more common. Rather than making an initial claim that a consumer owes an outstanding balance, some scammers are now claiming an overpayment is the reason for

a telephone call to a consumer. They will make contact in an attempt to get banking information so they can process a refund.

“Never give banking information over the phone unless you place the call to a number you know is legitimate,” Lake writes in an FTC blog.

There has also been an uptick in door-to-door scams by people claiming to represent utility providers like your electric co-op. Representatives knock or ring the doorbell offering to replace or repair a meter or other device, or solicit personal information to sign a consumer up for programs that could reduce their energy bills.

They may try to charge you for the phony service, sell you unnecessary products, collect personal information for use in identity theft or simply gain entry to steal valuables, officials say.

High-pressure demands are a common tactic in many of the schemes. Urging immediate decisions or actions, like immediate payment, particularly by a specific option like a gift card, wire transfer, cell phone

or third-party computer app should raise serious concerns.

Utility-connected scams are common, because utility services are so common. Lighting, heating, water and sewage services are all essential to modern living, so any threat of service disconnections can provoke a lot of anxiety.

Your first defense is personal awareness of your account status, including knowing whether balances are up to date. This is becoming more important as scammers use more automatic dialers or robocalls to phish for potential marks.

“Even if the caller insists you have a past due bill, that’s a big red flag,” says Lake, offering an alternative response. “Contact your local electric cooperative directly using the number on your paper bill or on the company’s website. Don’t call any number the caller gave you.” ⚡

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



TIPS TO AVOID SCAMS

Scammers can threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

Here are a few reminders from your electric co-op.

- Co-op employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Co-op representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let them know as soon as possible.

Youth Tour opened my eyes to the possibilities for the future

BY SARAH HERZ

Holding your phone, you have access to almost everything. You need a ride somewhere? Use the Uber passenger app. If you want to know more about the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), you can Google it. Do you need a flashlight? You can turn on the one in your hand.

You have a lot at your fingertips, thanks to electricity and technology. Without electricity, our lives would undoubtedly be different. I can't imagine not having my phone, laptop, hairdryer and curling iron, a washer and dryer, and more.

Thankfully, we had a group of people that supported rural electrification and invested in engineering and technology that allowed electricity to be more affordable for everyone. And here we are today – with much hard work in the intervening years.

Like those early days of people working together to bring electricity to rural areas, many things in life take working with others to get things done.

Every summer, my family gets together for the Fourth of July. One of our favorite jobs is making homemade ice cream. The kids are in charge! We mix up the ingredients, and we put it in an ice cream maker. I'm not talking about one of those easy electric ones. This is a dusty, rusty, hand-crank, only-off-the-shelf-once-a-year ice cream maker. Honestly, I think that is why all the adults put us in charge – they don't want to crank it.

Thankfully, we all take turns cranking the machine. After our hard work, we enjoy the ice cream. So, what do electricity and ice cream have in common?

It took a group of people working together to ensure rural America received electricity. In 1942, electric co-op leaders organized NRECA, so all cooperatives could have their



voices heard. It required cooperatives to work together, demonstrating one of the seven cooperative principles, "Cooperation Among Cooperatives." Whether it's electricity or ice cream, we can accomplish more when people work together.

When my electric cooperative selected me for Youth Tour, I didn't know what to expect. I had never been to Washington, D.C. I knew we would sightsee, meet youth representatives from other states and learn more about electric cooperatives. It was all of this and more.

I was struck by the amount of history associated with our nation's capital. Everywhere we looked, there were historical references. Monuments recognize the sacrifices made by members of the military and emphasize the principles our country was built on. Historical events are the groundwork for our future and can also be considered the steering mechanism.

When I read about NRECA's history, decisions made by many different government entities and groups of people working together set things in motion for where we are today. Remembering the past and recognizing the hard work of those before us gives shape to our future.

As a young person, it is essential to remember to work together. By pulling together people of many talents, by incorporating engineering and technology, and by applying hard work and determination, industries such as the electric cooperatives will continue to grow and help our communities.

It's also important for me and others of my age to step up and be a part of that, be a leader, get involved, and make sacrifices that make a difference.

The Youth Tour opened my eyes to the possibilities. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will influence my future decisions and career path.

America is the ice cream, and the crank is the hard work, determination and passion that you put into it. The result is always good. ⚡

Sarah Herz was sponsored by Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative for last year's Youth Tour. She was selected as Iowa's 2019 National Youth Leadership Council representative.

See Pages 10-11 of this issue to learn more about the 2020 Youth Tour. Students – Enter for your chance to WIN an all-expenses-paid spot on this year's trip.

Buyer beware when it comes to food labels

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Once again, I've been duped by food product labeling.

Okay, it's my own fault because I don't always read the labels closely enough, but can't a person pick up some pancake syrup without having to examine every aspect of the labeling?

It started a few years back when I grabbed a frozen roll of sausage from the store's cooler. Same brand I always buy; same colors on the package. When I fried it up and served it, Kent gave me a funny look. "What's wrong with this sausage?" he asked. It had a definite sweet taste to it.

I pulled the wrapper out of the trash and behold – maple-flavored sausage. Is there an actual market for this stuff? Evidently. But it won't be our household.

It happened again a few months later when there was cinnamon in my pancake syrup and club soda in my soft drink. It was obvious I was going to have to be more vigilant in my shopping, which takes place after work when I'm tired, hungry, crabby and ready to take off constrictive undergarments. Not exactly a situation conducive to be reading the fine print on every item I purchase.

But I persevered. It went well for a while – I congratulated myself for avoiding the lime chipotle in my ketchup and for steering clear of the dill pickles in my potato chips. In a moment of weakness, however, I slipped up and picked up "The Cereal."

The Cereal has become a shorthand name for the granddaddy of food mess-ups, so egregious that the mere mention of the phrase conjures up, in our household, a bad



decision of major proportions. The Cereal looked pleasant enough – nay, it looked identical to the nutty flakes I have purchased since college. But lurking beneath that packaged exterior lay a flotsam and jetsam unmatched by even the chocolate vampire-branded cereal I demanded as a kid – and then wouldn't eat.

My first thought on pouring it from the box was that it looked dark – really dark. It was too uniformly brown to think it was burned. Then I noticed the smell. Chocolate? Spices?

I pulled the box out and looked at it closely. "Whole grain fiber flakes with cinnamon and chocolate," the box proclaimed in tiny letters as if they were flouting their fraud. I groaned but poured milk on them. After all, I'd paid \$4.29 for the box, and I'm too Dutch to let them go bad.

On first taste, I didn't need to "let them go bad." They were bad already. It was like eating shingles dusted with cocoa and cinnamon sugar. Dreadful.

It isn't just American brands that are putting together strange flavor combinations.

We've accidentally purchased shrimp-flavored "crisps," or potato chips, in England and foie gras-flavored pasta in France.

So, back to The Cereal. Plan B is to throw them into some bars or cookies. Maybe I could throw the cinnamon pancake syrup in, too? ⚡

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.

Nowadays, some of us take electricity for granted. But no matter where you go, you expect it to follow. And it does. It's there because your electric co-op is here. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TogetherWeSave.com.

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