

living with energy

JANUARY 2020

IN IOWA



Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



GCREC's Lori Hix honored for 25 years of service ► See Page 5

**Energy savings
for the new year!**

Visit our website at www.guthrie-rec.coop

Learn about the 2020
Iowa Caucus Project

Warm up with
soups and stews

Strategic planning guides
Guthrie County REC's future

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JANUARY ENERGY SAVER

Periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it's not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire. Manufacturers recommend using rigid venting material – not flexible plastic vents that may collapse and cause blockages. ⚡



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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Cooperatives of Iowa
www.touchstoneenergy.com

CONTENTS

JANUARY 2020

Features

6 All eyes on Iowa – 2020 Caucus Project

All eyes will be on Iowa in February when the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucuses take place in the heart of the Midwest.



8 Warm up with soups and stews

Soups and stews are the ultimate comfort food. Discover some of our readers' favorite recipes. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



10 Start the new year right with energy savings

New Year's resolutions that involve becoming more energy efficient can be easy to keep all year, and that can be good news for your pocketbook.



Favorites

3 Statewide Perspective

The power of a unified voice

3 Editor's Choice Contest

Win a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker!

14 Energy Efficiency

Momentum is Building

15 Out Back

Snow days are fun for everyone – except mom

ON THE COVER

Brent Koops, a member of North West Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative, captured this iconic Iowa winter shot following a recent year's January blizzard in Sioux County. To learn how your photo could be featured on a future *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cover, see Page 5 of this issue. ⚡



The power of a unified voice

BY KEVIN CONDON

As the second session of the 88th Iowa General Assembly commences in mid-January, it serves as an opportunity to reinforce our cooperative spirit as we advocate for policies at the Statehouse. While there are many shared values among Iowa's electric co-ops, there is also diversity in our ranks. As we chart a course for our legislative goals, we must speak with one voice to ensure success. Showing Iowa's lawmakers the power of our cooperative commitment is much easier when we approach the Capitol with a unified message.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we nurture a cohesive voice through a robust process designed to engage our grassroots at the various levels of our policy development. Just as our friends from Schoolhouse Rock reminded us, knowledge is power, and thus, communication about what happens under the Golden Dome is critical.

As the session begins, we provide weekly (sometimes daily) updates to our member cooperatives through emails, our *Legislative Action* newsletter and video messages to ensure our members are informed of the most current details and developments in legislation. We gather with our members and their legislators in Des Moines on the first Tuesday of the session to "Welcome Back" lawmakers to the State Capitol. Later in January, IAEC's board members visit with legislative leaders, and many electric co-ops will visit the Statehouse throughout the session to discuss issues of importance with their local legislators. In March, we again show our strength when more than 250 electric co-op advocates ascend to Iowa's Capitol for our annual "Day on the Hill" event.

The state's coffers remained full,



with a nearly \$290 million surplus last year, so it is reasonable to expect lengthy discussions about the budget, the state's spending priorities, and perhaps even the tax code that collects the revenue. Amid the annual debates on things like education and healthcare, Iowa's electric co-ops will again share our unified message of promoting legislation that allows for safe, reliable and affordable electric service provided in an environmentally responsible manner.

IAEC will support bills that allow utilities to fairly charge rates that cover costs of service, as well as legislation that gives local Iowans the ability to make decisions about their energy future. We will promote legislative efforts that help strengthen the cooperatives' culture

of safety by focusing on responsible management of easements and rights-of-way and proper education of those who perform work near power lines.

Leaders from our member cooperatives have developed these messages through a lengthy process that began shortly after the 2019 session adjourned last May. The IAEC Government Relations Committee met at the end of October, and the board of directors approved the policy agenda at the November meeting. Member cooperatives informed their local legislators about our goals over the final two months of 2019. We are excited to be back at work in 2020 with a consistent, thoughtful, committed and unified voice of Iowa's electric cooperatives. ⚡

Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

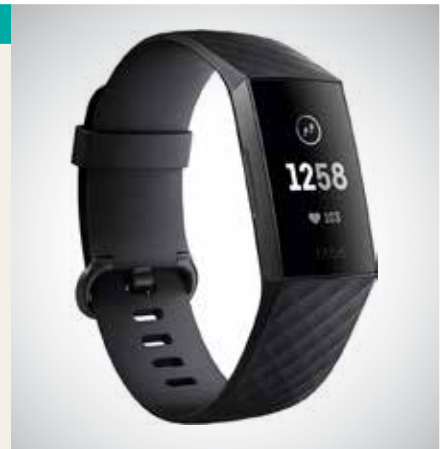
EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker!

Make keeping those New Year's exercise resolutions easier with a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker! This tracker allows you to better measure calorie burn, understand resting heart rate and more with 24/7 heart rate tracking and a battery life of up to seven days. Choose from more than 15 exercise modes, such as run, bike, swim, yoga, circuit training and more. Set a goal, and access real time stats during your workouts to see how you can keep getting better. ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than Jan. 31, 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 KEURIG® from the November issue was Darlene Stamps from Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative.



FUN FACTS

Super Bowl energy use

One of the most anticipated sports events of the year will occur next month when Super Bowl LIV gets underway at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami.

With a stadium capacity of over 65,000, and over one-third of the American population tuned in to their televisions, the Super Bowl might be the cause of the biggest strain on our electric grid all year. In actuality, however, energy use during the Super Bowl actually plummets to 5% below normal levels, according to a 2013 survey by OPower. That's because the people who view the Super Bowl tend to do so at big gatherings with friends and family, or in public spaces, where electric use is concentrated in one area.

Also, as a member of the Green Sports Alliance, Hard Rock Stadium could host the Super Bowl with the lowest carbon footprint, due in part to all energy-efficient LED lighting at the venue. ⚡



Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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www.guthrie-rec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

We want to hear from you

BY COZY NELSEN

Admittedly, I am old enough to remember when conversations weren't interrupted by pop-up notifications. I grew up combing through volumes of printed encyclopedias for school research. Our house phone was rotary dial, and there was just one line to reach every person in my family. Dinnertime meant conversation and listening without distraction to the challenges and successes of our day.

Smartphones and all electronic communication devices have changed all that. Today, companies spend billions to put their messages in front of us wherever we are or whatever we're doing. We are bombarded with this one-way communication of offers, pitches and promises, but is anyone listening on the other end?

At Guthrie County REC, we *are* listening, and we're eager to hear from you. Whether you connect with us through a survey or social media post, by email or in person, it means the world to us to get your feedback. Connecting with you helps us keep pace with our community's priorities and needs.



We exist to serve our member-owners with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. For more than 80 years, those have been the tenets this cooperative has held above all else. And while those things are important, they aren't *why* we do what we do. You are. We hope you consider us more than your energy provider, but also as a local business that champions our communities.

Let me be clear. As we embark on the year 2020, our vision is 20/20. We see clearly that we are in the midst of unprecedented changes in the energy sector, as technology and the drive for more environmentally friendly electric generation shape our future. Navigating through these changes takes all of us, together. Remember, you are why we do what we do, and we can't do it without you.

For our co-op and community to thrive now and in the future, we depend on hearing from you. I hope you will connect with us and let us know your perspective. I will be listening. ⚡

Cozy Nelsen is the CEO for Guthrie County REC.

SAFETY MATTERS

Winter health safety tips

Now that we're smack dab in the middle of the winter season, preventing injuries should be top of mind for any outdoor activity. Falls, back strains and hypothermia are common occurrences in emergency rooms this time of year. But they don't have to be, if you're mindful of these safety tips:

Frostbite: Nearly 10,000 people in the U.S. are affected each year. The nose, cheeks, lips, ears, hands and feet are most vulnerable. If the skin is red, numb, hard or pale, seek medical attention immediately to prevent infection and damage.

Shoveling snow: Such a simple task can be the cause of injuries from muscle strains to heart attacks. To remove snow

safely, use an ergonomic shovel, warm up, keep up with the snow as it falls (as opposed to all at once when it's over), push the snow instead of throwing it, take breaks, keep hydrated and use your legs to lift if you must.

Falls: Falls contribute to 40% of brain injuries – more than any other factor. Navigate icy sidewalks and parking lots by keeping arms free, wearing proper shoes and walking like a penguin with feet turned outward.

Hypothermia: Wet clothing makes you feel even colder. If possible, change clothes quickly after they get wet to prevent loss of body heat. Also dress in layers, wear a hat, a scarf to cover your mouth, mittens and outerwear with a wind and water-resistant material. ⚡

Statewide association honors Hix for 25 years of service to Guthrie County REC



Congratulations to Guthrie County REC Office Manager Lori Hix who was recognized Dec. 5 for 25 years of service to the co-op. She was honored during the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' Annual Meeting in West Des Moines.

Hix began her career with the co-op as a work order clerk. At the time, she was looking for a job she could grow with.

"I wanted a stable office position with a business or cooperative and was looking for retirement benefits,"

Hix says. "I wanted to be close to home so I wouldn't have to commute to a job."

Hix recalls a particularly challenging time during the winter of 2009-2010 when a winter storm knocked down about 350 miles of line across the service territory.

"It was a rough time for our office and our linemen because it was back to back, and we didn't have time to recoup from the first major storm in December before another major storm in January hit us," she says.

The storms were bad enough to warrant federal assistance with an emergency declaration coming from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). System restoration efforts and paperwork continued for five years.

Of course, when you spend 25 years in one place, things are bound to change. They have to, in order to grow, and Hix has witnessed a lot of change in the last 25 years.

"The ability to adapt to change within our own electric cooperative as well as the electric utility industry has been a challenge at times," she says. "Smart phones, iPads, electronic meters, electronic documents and the cybersecurity efforts that go along with all those things have been important for us to work through. We've updated our software for billing and accounting. Now, electric cars and members building their own solar and wind facilities are emerging technologies. We know these advancements are important to keep pace with what our members expect from their electric service, and in that regard, I feel we've made a difference in their lives." ⚡

POWERING THE FUTURE

Strategic planning sets course for co-op's future

The Guthrie County REC board and leadership team held a strategic planning session in Audubon in early December. Representatives from the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) were in attendance to guide the discussion.

The strategic plan provides direction and focus for the cooperative over the next three to five years. It identifies specific results to be achieved and establishes a course of action for achieving them, which helps create alignment within the organization.

"Our strategic plan helps position our cooperative as an organization

that is financially sound, provides a safe, reliable supply of electricity, and enhances the lifestyles of the members we serve," says CEO Cozy Nelsen. "It's our roadmap for

defining who we are, what we will do and how we're going to do it."

Guthrie County REC utilized CFC services to facilitate the session at no cost to the cooperative. ⚡



All eyes on Iowa – 2020 Caucus Project



BY ANN THELEN

All eyes will be on Iowa in February when the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucuses take place in the heart of the Midwest. In 2020, our country will re-elect or elect a new president, and in Iowa, all U.S. House Representatives and Sen. Joni Ernst are up for re-election.

Through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' grassroots advocacy arm – Iowa Rural Power – cooperative directors and employees have been hard at work. They have been learning more about the process for the Iowa Caucuses and meeting with candidates as they crisscross the state. If you've spotted an individual in a green Iowa Rural Power T-shirt at a political or public event, then you've seen a co-op advocate in action.

The overall goal of IAEC's 2020 Caucus Project is to tell the cooperative story to as many candidates as possible. This grassroots advocacy during the presidential caucus season provides a unique opportunity for Iowans to share the cooperative story on a national stage.

Iowa's electric cooperative members, in all the state's 99 counties, are encouraged to learn more about the process and meet with candidates when they visit your communities.

Here are some facts to know about this prominent time in the political process.

What is a caucus?

A caucus is a gathering of like-minded voters where they discuss party platforms and select delegates and candidates for general elections. Both the Iowa Democratic and Republican parties hold caucuses. The Iowa Caucuses are essentially neighborhood meetings of the major political parties. This year, the Democrats and the Republicans will hold caucuses in nearly 1,700 precincts across the state.

Is a caucus an election?

No. Caucuses are not elections. They are organized and run by the state parties and not state government. They are simply a mechanism where individuals show their support for a candidate and tell the parties what issues matter.

What time do the Iowa Caucuses start?

Each neighborhood caucus starts precisely at the same time – at 7 p.m. on Feb. 3. Participants must be on time. Late-comers are not allowed to participate.

How do I participate in the Iowa Caucuses?

- You must be registered to the party for which you are caucusing. Therefore, you must be a registered Democrat to participate in the Democratic caucus, and you must be a registered Republican to participate in the Republican caucus.
- If you are not registered to a party or are registered to a different party, you can still caucus. You can change your party registration at your precinct caucus.
- You must reside in the precinct where you are caucusing.
- You must be eligible to vote. If you have not registered to vote yet, you will be able to do this at your precinct caucus.
- You must be 18 years old by election day.

Why are the Iowa Caucuses a big deal?

The Iowa Caucuses are the first official contest of the presidential primary season. They are a great indicator of how candidates will perform in other states and give candidates publicity and momentum.

At-a-glance – Key dates in the 2020 presidential election

Early states

Iowa Caucuses – Feb. 3, 2020
New Hampshire Primary – Feb. 11, 2020
Nevada Caucuses – Feb. 22, 2020
South Carolina Primary – Feb. 29, 2020

Super Tuesday (Mar. 3, 2020)

Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia

What do electric cooperatives want to achieve with Iowa's 2020 Caucus Project?

- Educate and engage with candidates, regardless of party
- Educate Iowa's member-consumers about advocacy efforts and candidates' stances on rural energy issues
- Tell our story and impact public policy



Electric cooperative members, employees and directors are asking presidential candidates this question:

“How will your energy plan help provide affordable and reliable power to rural Iowa?”

to continue their campaigns. The results of the first-in-the-nation caucuses can make or break a candidate.

Why do Iowa’s electric cooperatives get involved?

Iowa’s electric cooperatives have long recognized the importance of political advocacy and sharing our story with policymakers and elected officials. While not everyone who campaigns for president will win, ultimately, they are all influential public figures and provide a national stage for cooperative issues.

Why are we doing this when there is a sitting president?

Electric cooperatives are nonpartisan organizations. We look forward to sharing our story with anyone in Iowa who will listen, including President Trump and those campaigning to be his opponent. It would be a missed opportunity to not share our story with sitting members of U.S. Congress, mayors and governors – even if they are not elected president. After the caucuses, many presidential nominees will likely return to Iowa and help campaign for down-ballot candidates. ⚡



Find your Iowa Caucus location

Democratic Party of Iowa

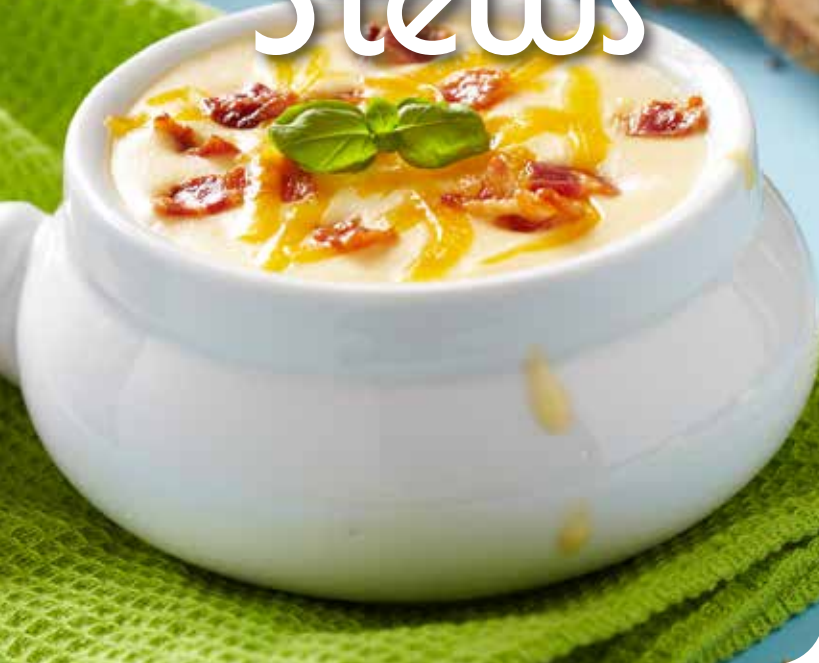
iowademocrats.org/2020-caucuses

Republican Party of Iowa

www.iowagop.org/2020-caucus-locations



Warm up with Soups & Stews



PERFECT PURÉES

To blend ingredients for a smooth and silky soup, remove any whole herbs and spices, ladle a cup or two of the liquid into a measuring cup, then put the rest of the solids and liquid into a countertop blender or food processor. Or use an immersion blender. Blend the ingredients, thinning it out with the reserved liquid as needed.

Cheeseburger Soup

- 1½ cups water
- 2 cups potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped to taste
- 1 tablespoon beef bouillon granules
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 pound ground beef, cooked and drained
- 2½ cups milk, divided
- 3 tablespoons flour
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 8 ounces American cheese, cubed
- Optional toppings: Shredded cheddar cheese, crumbled bacon bits, chopped dill pickles

Combine first six ingredients and boil for 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in cooked ground beef and 2 cups milk; heat through. Then combine flour, pepper and ½ cup milk. Add this to other ingredients and bring to a boil; cook until thickened. Stir in cheese until melted. When serving, top with shredded cheddar cheese, crumbled bacon bits and chopped dill pickles.

Joni Rus • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Ham and Bean Soup

- 2 15-ounce cans great northern beans, drained
- 2 14-ounce cans chicken broth
- 4 medium potatoes, diced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, diced
- 3 cups fully cooked ham, in bite-sized pieces
- ¼ cup dried parsley flakes
- 1 bay leaf
- salt and pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove bay leaf and serve.

Patricia Michels • Panama
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

Baked Beef Stew

- 14.5 ounces diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 cup water
- 3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds lean beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 2 celery ribs, cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 1 medium onion, cut into chunks
- 1 slice bread, cubed

In a large bowl, combine tomatoes, water, tapioca, sugar, salt and pepper. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into a greased 13x9x2-inch or a 3-quart baking dish. Cover and bake at 375 degrees F for 1¾ to 2 hours, or until meat and vegetables are tender. Yields 6-8 servings.

Linda J. McCarville • New Hampton
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Hobo Stew

- 1½ pound beef roast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 cups carrot chunks
- 4 cups potato chunks
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- 16 ounces green beans, undrained
- 32 ounces tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup minute tapioca
- ¼ teaspoon celery salt
- 1 tablespoon salt

Combine all ingredients well in a large roasting pan. Cover and bake at 275 degrees F for 5 hours. Stir occasionally but try not to open lid too often. Let slowly bake until it becomes a thick, savory stew.

Cherry Marsden • Ankeny • Consumers Energy

Potato Soup

- 6 cups potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 5 cups water
- 2 cups chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup sliced carrots
- ¼ cup butter
- 4 teaspoons chicken bouillon
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 12 ounces evaporated milk
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley

Combine all ingredients in a large slow cooker. Cover and cook 7 hours or until the vegetables are tender.

Jim Krier • Remsen
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Cheesy Chicken Chowder

- 6 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups potatoes, diced and peeled
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup peas
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- ⅓ cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced

In a 4-quart saucepan, bring chicken broth to a boil. Reduce heat and add potatoes, carrots, celery, peas, onion, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Meanwhile, melt butter or margarine in saucepan. Add flour and mix well. Gradually stir in milk. Cook over low heat until slightly thickened. Stir in cheese and cook until melted. Add to broth mixture along with chicken. Cook over low heat, stirring until heated through.

Vicky Converse • Fredericksburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative



Search our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's co-op cooks.

www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com/recipes

Chicken and Bacon Chowder Soup

- 1 pound sliced bacon
- 3 cups celery, diced (optional)
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 4 cups potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cups carrots, sliced
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups chicken, cooked and diced
- 2 10¾ ounce cans condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 3 cups half and half milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cook bacon until crisp or use already cooked bacon; crumble and set aside. Place uncooked carrots, celery, potatoes and onions in crockpot. Add broth, chicken, soup, milk, bacon, salt and pepper. Stir well and cook on low medium heat most of the day. Can be started in the morning in a slow cooker and cooked on low-medium all day.

Dianne Riley • Osceola
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Wanted:
Recipes to celebrate spring!

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

Welcome warmer weather with fresh spring recipes, filled with favorite seasonal ingredients like rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries, spinach and more. 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.livingwithenergyiniowa.com.

The deadline is Jan. 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.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

RICHER STOCK

For a richer flavor when making vegetable stock, brown the vegetables in a tablespoon of butter before adding the liquid to the pan.

SOUP TIPS

FINISH WITH A GARNISH

Garnishes are easy, attractive and delicious ways to elevate soup and add texture. Ideas for garnishes include fresh herbs, freshly grated cheese, pesto, cream or homemade croutons.

SOUP TIPS

FREEZER STARS

The best soups for freezing include bean soups and chilis, broth-based soups made without cream or milk, puréed soups, grain and wild rice soups, and vegetable soups.

SOUP TIPS

NUTTY AND SWEET

Adding the rind from a Parmigiano-Reggiano or grana cheese to a simmering soup can give it a nutty, sweet flavor.

SOUP TIPS

Start the new year right with energy savings

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN



Photo: Consumers Energy

1

Dial in savings.

Now: The first place to start is your home thermostat. In most homes, the most substantial portion of the energy bill goes toward heating and cooling. Setting back your thermostat by 7 to 10 degrees for 8 hours a day can save you up to 10% a year on heating and cooling. In the winter, you could aim for 56 F at night and when no one is at home, and 68 F when you're up and around. If you're used to a warmer house, it may mean throwing on a sweater or pair of slippers. It should be noted this tactic is not as effective for some homes with radiant heat systems.

Later: Make sure to adjust your air conditioning settings next summer. If you have a manual thermostat and don't always remember to adjust it, consider purchasing a smart thermostat, or at least one that's programmable.

The new year marks a great time to begin new habits. Approximately 6 in 10 people make New Year's resolutions. The bad news is that less than 1 in 10 people keep those resolutions. However, once you get started, resolutions involving becoming more energy efficient can be easy to keep all year-long, and that can be good news for your pocketbook. These five energy-saving measures can be done right away and help you plan for greater savings down the road.



Photo: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

2

Set refrigerator and freezer temps for efficiency.

Now: Make sure your refrigerator and freezer aren't set to a colder temperature than needed. The fridge should be at 38 F to 40 F, and the freezer compartment should be 5 F. If you have a separate chest freezer, set it to 0 F. Also check your water heater setting. You should aim for a setting of 120 F.

Later: Old refrigerators and freezers can use a lot of electricity. If yours was made before 1993, you could save upward of \$65 a year with a new ENERGY STAR® model. If you eliminate a second refrigerator or freezer, you can save even more, especially if they are stored in your garage.

3





Maximize the heat you've got.

Now: Look around each room and make sure the vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or other objects. If the floors feel cold even when the room is warm, put down area rugs for additional warmth. Open curtains and blinds to let the sunshine in, and close them at night.

Later: Enlist the help of an energy auditor or HVAC specialist to test for duct leakage and ensure your whole system is balanced and running efficiently.



4

Make bright moves with your lights.

Now: The obvious first step is to make sure lights are turned off when they're not in use. You can do this manually or employ one of the many automated strategies. If you're still using incandescent bulbs, you could switch the five most-used bulbs to LEDs and save about \$75 per year. LEDs last much longer and use about 25% as much energy. Prices on LED bulbs have decreased in the past few years, and you can save more if you buy them in packs.

Later: Over time, plan to replace all your old incandescent bulbs and consider smart lighting options that can be programmed to turn off when a room is not in use.



Photo: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

5

Eliminate drafts.

Now: Look carefully around your home for signs of air leaks. If you have a gap under an exterior door, you can block it with a towel or better yet, install some weather stripping. Make sure windows are sealed with caulk. You can also seal areas around plumbing and wiring penetrations.

Later: Have an energy auditor do a blower door test, which is the best way to identify all air leaks.

Taking some of these easy steps now should provide some quick energy savings. To save even more, you'll need a plan that includes the "later" steps we've shared above. An energy audit can help you determine a much better plan, and your electric co-op may be able to provide an audit or recommend a qualified local auditor. ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

LEGAL TOPIC

Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

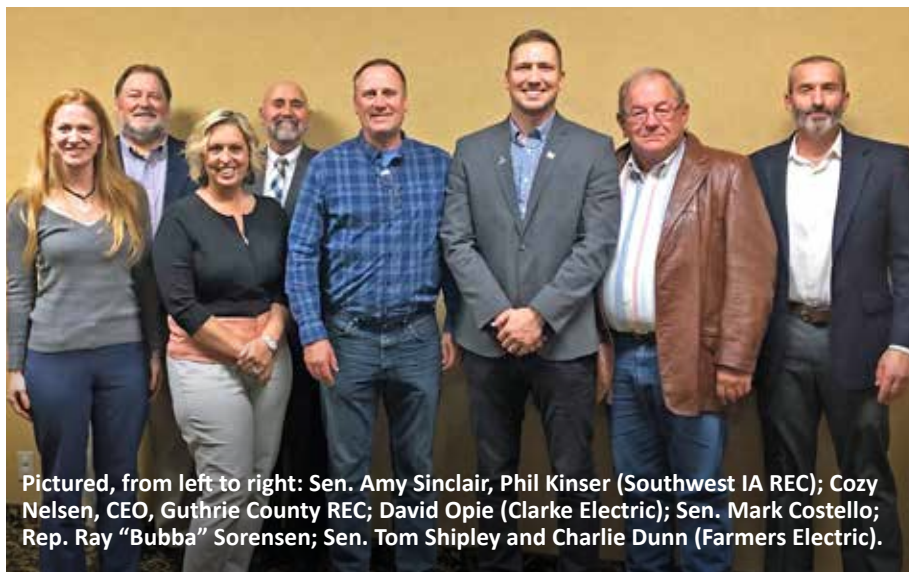
Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
 - (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
 - (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov
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GRASSROOTS ACTIVITY

Area co-ops host state legislators



Pictured, from left to right: Sen. Amy Sinclair, Phil Kinser (Southwest IA REC); Cozy Nelsen, CEO, Guthrie County REC; David Opie (Clarke Electric); Sen. Mark Costello; Rep. Ray "Bubba" Sorensen; Sen. Tom Shipley and Charlie Dunn (Farmers Electric).

Representatives from Guthrie County REC, Clarke Electric (Osceola), Farmers Electric (Greenfield) and Southwest Iowa REC (Corning/Mt. Ayr/Stanton), hosted a Legislative Meeting in Creston Nov. 25.

With about 30 people in attendance at the meeting, Iowa Sens. Amy Sinclair, Mark Costello and Tom Shipley, and Iowa Rep. Ray "Bubba" Sorensen discussed the upcoming 2020 Legislative Session and issues that may impact Iowa's

rural electric cooperatives.

This annual gathering gives your cooperative a chance to talk about these key topics in detail with our area representatives and express any concerns. It also gives our legislators a chance to hear firsthand how your electric cooperative is different from municipal and investor-owned utilities, as well as issues impacting fairness down the lines and offer support for programs that promote rural growth opportunities. ⚡



TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

From all of us at Guthrie County REC, thank you for entrusting us to power your lives.

Thank you



Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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Electric cooperatives: A partner and trusted source

Electric cooperative members across the country, including Iowa, are increasingly satisfied with the performance of their electric co-ops, and more than ever before see them as trusted sources for information on keeping their energy costs low. These are among the key findings of a recent national survey commissioned by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national trade association representing more than 900 electric cooperatives, and conducted by Frederick Polls.

The survey found increased satisfaction over 2018 numbers from respondents who say their electric co-op keeps them informed about its actions (84 percent) and is a trusted source for information about energy use and devices, including solar energy (83 percent). It also recorded an increase from 2018 in co-op members who say their electric co-op is a partner in understanding energy technologies and controlling energy costs (83 percent).

“We hear a lot of stories about how Americans are losing faith in institutions like big companies and government, but that’s clearly not the case with electric cooperatives,” says NRECA Communications Senior Vice President Scott Peterson. “The positive view that members have of electric co-ops is a testament to their reputation as honest brokers and entities who truly care about their communities.”

A telephone survey, which has been conducted annually for the past six years, polled 750 co-op members in mid-July. It had a margin of error of 3.6 percent.

Other data shows electric co-ops holding steady with prior surveys on overall job performance (93 percent positive), providing reliable electric service (95 percent positive) and quickly restoring power after outages (92 percent positive).

Electric co-ops care about the local

communities they serve and want to be the trusted energy source for their members. If you have questions about your energy use or ways you can make your home more efficient to save money on your energy bills, contact your electric co-op – they’re ready to help. ⚡

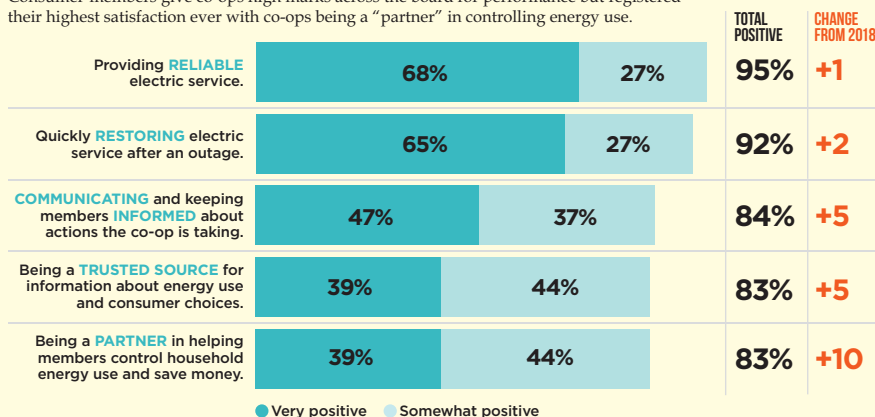
Locally owned electric cooperatives power the lives of 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties.

NEW REPORT

Members Have a High Opinion of Their Co-op

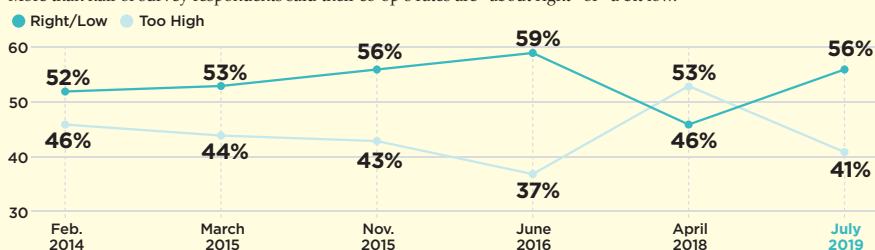
CO-OP PERFORMANCE ON SPECIFIC TRAITS

Consumer-members give co-ops high marks across the board for performance but registered their highest satisfaction ever with co-ops being a “partner” in controlling energy use.



PERCEPTION OF ELECTRIC RATES

More than half of survey respondents said their co-op’s rates are “about right” or “a bit low.”



83%

have a positive opinion of their co-op as a **trusted source of information** about energy use and consumer choices.

Source: Survey of 750 electric co-op members, July 2019, margin of error +/-3.6% by Frederick Polls

Efficiency is coming to 2020 Momentum is Building conference

Energy efficiency technologies and demonstrations for contractors and building trades professionals are the focus of the 2020 Momentum is Building (MIB) conference, scheduled for Feb. 6 and 7 in West Des Moines.

The conference provides attendees with continuing education credits, networking opportunities, presentations by recognized industry energy efficiency and building trades experts, along with exhibits on state-of-the-art technologies.

Sponsored and organized annually by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives® of Iowa, MIB offers an opportunity for members of Iowa's construction industry to learn more about the local service benefits available from locally owned electric cooperatives, serving nearly 650,000 Iowans in all 99 counties.

Speakers for the event include keynote Sandra Adomatis, owner of Adomatis Appraisal Service, speaking on high performance appraisals used by builders, appraisers, and energy organizations around the country; Mike Foti, president of Innovate Building Solutions and Innovate Home Org, a "DMG" (digital marketing geek) who uses construction industry and business knowledge to help contractors increase profitability and work efficiency; Steve Gilbert from Rural Housing 360; Ryan Meres from Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET); Darren Meyers from International Energy Conservation Consultants, and many others. Scott Siepker, the "Iowa Nice Guy," will close the conference with his classic Iowa insights.

"Helping inform local contractors about cutting-edge energy efficiency and beneficial electrification

technologies, both new and improved, is important to our co-op members," says Angela Catton, manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, one of the event organizers.

"We're excited about this year's Game of Thrones theme and our interpretation of the Iron Throne. The series has really risen to

an iconic status over the last couple of years and we think attendees will really enjoy the references, even if they haven't seen the show."

For the 2020 conference, one item receiving notice already is the Iron Throne constructed by Scott Schlegel, headquarters maintenance superintendent – utility operations for Central Iowa Power Cooperative. The throne was recently debuted at the Iowa Association of Energy Efficiency's annual summit, where attendees enjoyed sitting in the throne wearing one of three building trades-oriented crowns.

Schlegel, who enjoys creative construction challenges, purchased most of the tools used as key pieces on the throne from an Amish auction in the Hazelton area, spending around \$20.

"The throne was a fun project. You can take a picture of it, but you need to look at it from all different sides because there are little things you don't notice the first, second or third time," he says. "It's an art piece."

The Iron Throne will be auctioned at the end of the conference. Proceeds benefit the MIB scholarship fund to pay for students who would like to attend future MIB events. Preview pictures of the throne can be seen on the Momentum is Building Facebook page.

MIB 2020 will be held at the Sheraton West Des Moines. Registration for the event is available online at momentumisbuilding.com. For more information about the event, please contact your local rural electric cooperative. ⚡



Snow days are fun for everyone — except mom

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I recently heard a young mom talk about what a horror snow days had become ... trying to find a sitter if she had to go to work; the misery of getting kids dressed to play outside; the infighting that went on between her offspring.

I know, I know ... snow days are supposed to develop into playful days in the snow with hot chocolate waiting afterward, or maybe doing crafts together around the kitchen table.

That's in Hallmark commercials, folks. Here's what a real snow day looks like:

6:40 a.m. The kids who couldn't be burned out of bed on a school day stick their heads in the bedroom door and crow, "School's canceled!" I can hear them opening cereal boxes and flipping the television on. They're fighting over what to watch, and all the while, the volume – both kids and television – is getting louder.

7 a.m. I crawl out of bed after hearing a giant crash. Fruity cereal is ground into the carpet, the TV is blaring, and no one owns up to the crash. I wonder what I'm going to find down the road that is irretrievably broken.

9:10 a.m. All three boys have snarfed down enough cereal, surely, to cover them until lunch. They want to go outside. I send them to round up snow pants, extra socks, boots, dry mittens and stocking caps. This only buys me about 5 minutes, as I know they'll come dragging back, claiming they can't find anything.

9:50 a.m. Everyone is clothed, wrapped around, snuggled in, zipped up and ready to go outside. It's not my problem if no one can put



their arms down. Son No. 2 declares he has to go to the bathroom. The process is reversed for him, and then Son No. 3, who decides he needs to go, too.

10:25 a.m. They're all outside. Finally. I contemplate locking the door. Time for a cup of much-needed coffee and a quick glance at the news.

10:30 a.m. I knew it was too good to be true. The door flies open and stays open. Four little heads are looking through the doorway. I'm the only mom home on this snow day, and so our house is obviously going to be the hangout. With a promise to make hot chocolate later, they trudge back out to the snow fort that's under construction.

Noon: By lunchtime, there have

been five "ins and outs" through the kitchen – searches for buckets and shovels, bathroom unswaddlings, some drinks for the snow fort. As they traipse in for lunch, I throw together some sandwiches, chips and carrot sticks. They all leave the carrots on their plates.

The afternoon is a virtual repeat of the morning until, by 5 p.m., I'm exhausted.

When the weather person says, "Looks like everyone's back to school tomorrow," I do a feeble little cheer. Then I clean the cereal out of the rug. ⚡

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.



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