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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Defined electric service areas protect rural Iowans

Smart insights about smart appliances

Holiday party recipes

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'Tis the season for traditions

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Allen Hollopeter, a T.I.P. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

DEFINED ELECTRIC SERVICE AREAS PROTECT RURAL IOWANS

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we are constantly monitoring issues that could impact the people and rural communities served by Iowa's electric cooperatives. Our state's 2025 Legislative Session will begin on Jan. 13, and IAEC will prioritize efforts to ensure Iowa's law regarding defined service areas is not undermined. I'd like to explain why this law has been so crucial to our mission to serve co-op member-consumers.

What are defined service areas?

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve you. This regulatory protection is called defined electric service territory, and the State of Iowa wrote Senate File 1258 into law almost 50 years ago to efficiently ensure that every square foot of our state has an electric utility obligated to provide service upon request.

Why do Iowa's electric cooperatives support defined service areas?

Electric co-ops are committed to safeguarding defined service areas because they protect rural Iowans by supporting affordable electric rates, fostering a resilient electric grid and encouraging economic development.

Defined service areas provide a high degree of certainty to Iowa's electric cooperatives, which allows us to confidently make long-term investments in power generation to maintain affordable rates, finance major grid upgrades to ensure resiliency and utilize new technologies to enhance service. Electric co-ops can also be proactive in maintenance and vegetation management to

improve reliability for the homes, farms and businesses we serve every day. Additionally, defined service areas allow electric co-ops to robustly support economic development efforts in the communities we serve, which retain and create local jobs and provide needed services and tax revenue.

Any efforts to remove or weaken Iowa's defined service areas could result in higher electric bills and decreased reliability for Iowans. This issue is non-negotiable for Iowa's not-for-profit electric cooperatives, which are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities by providing electricity that is safe, reliable and affordable.

Since the 1990s, several states have deregulated their electric utilities, but the hopes that competition would result in lower rates and improved

reliability have not materialized. In fact, according to a 2023 *New York Times* investigation, "Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced." The report goes on to conclude that "On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity..." This outcome is unacceptable for the Iowans we serve.

We invite you to learn more about this issue at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com where you will also find links to research and studies on deregulation. Your locally owned electric cooperatives are working hard to safeguard defined service area protections that have benefited Iowans since 1976.

Leslie Kaufman is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Scan the QR code to learn more about why defined electric service territories are important to rural Iowans.



EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SMART MUG!

Discover a smarter way to drink coffee! Experience the comfort of consistently hot coffee (or tea) at your chosen temperature. The Ember Mug 2 offers up to 80 minutes of heat (120 to 145 degrees F) or all-day warmth on its charging coaster. Ideal for keeping drinks at the perfect temperature, the mug wakes up when hot liquid is poured and goes to sleep based on motion detection. Features like auto sleep and memory ensure your drink is always at the right temperature.



ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Dec. 31. 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 \$100 gift card to a local business from the October issue was **Daryl Geiken**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.

GUTHRIE COUNTY REC OFFICIAL NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association will be held at the Guthrie County Event Center at the Fairgrounds in Guthrie Center, Iowa, on Jan. 4, 2025, to take action upon the following matters:

1. Receive the written reports of officers, directors, and committees;
2. The election of three (3) directors of the Cooperative for a term of three years each;
3. All other business which may legally come before the meeting or any adjournment or adjournments thereof.

In connection with the election of directors scheduled for this meeting, the following members have been nominated for Director by the Committee on Nominations appointed by the Board of Directors of the Cooperative pursuant to the Bylaws.

THREE-YEAR TERM (Three to be elected)

District No. 1: Julie Kiley*

District No. 2: Jim Mazour*

District No. 3: Ronny Bristle*

We encourage you to complete the ballot if you have a candidate running in your District and return it in accordance with instructions that accompany the ballot. We encourage you to exercise your rights as a member and vote.

Please contact the Cooperative if you have any questions. The election results will be published on the Cooperative's website and in the newsletter following the meeting.

Dated this 1st day of December, 2024

Julie Kiley, Secretary

*Denotes incumbent

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025

Guthrie County Event Center

Guthrie County Fairgrounds in Guthrie Center

- 11 a.m. Registration opens
- 11:30 a.m. Free meal
- 12:30 p.m. Call to order
 - Invocation
 - Welcome
 - Business session
 - Board President's remarks
 - CEO's remarks
 - Recognition of staff service anniversaries
 - Drawing for door prizes
 - Adjourn



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Website
www.guthrie-rec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



2025 BOARD CANDIDATES

The Guthrie County REC annual meeting is just around the corner! That also means it's election time for some co-op members. There are three districts with a seat in the election – Districts 1, 2 and 3. Only members residing within these districts will receive a mailed ballot and are eligible to vote. Voting in the annual election is a small but meaningful act that ensures you're represented on the board by someone with your best interests in mind.

If you're unsure which district you're in, visit www.guthrie-rec.coop, click "About Us," then "Your Board of Directors" to view the district map. You can also call our office at 641-747-2206 with any questions.

DISTRICT 1



Julie Kiley

Address: 27497 141st St., Woodward

Family: Husband John; son JB (Erika); daughter Erin (Daniel); granddaughters Courtney, Brooke, Elizabeth, Audrey and Vivienne; grandson Lucas

Education: Bachelor's and master's degrees in education; Credentialed Cooperative Director, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

Occupation: Retired teacher of Woodward-Granger Community School District, Boone Community School District and Des Moines Community School District

Leadership positions: Church council board president, Vacation Bible School director, 4-H leader, church food pantry

Why are you seeking re-election to serve on the Guthrie County REC board of directors? I am seeking re-election for the Guthrie County REC board of directors for three main reasons. First, I am a second-generation REC board member. Therefore, I understand the importance of cooperatives and the board members' role in representing their area while ensuring safe and reliable energy.

Second, the classes that I have taken through NRECA have provided valuable knowledge that I can use to make important decisions to promote Guthrie County REC and its members.

Third, as our scope of providing power for members within our district has changed, I feel that my experience and education will help to provide consistent guidance and decision-making.

I have truly enjoyed serving as a Guthrie County REC board member, and I appreciate your support in re-electing me to represent you.

DISTRICT 2



Jim Mazour

Address: 9179 Diamondhead Dr., Dexter

Family: Wife Marsha; daughters Jessica and Jennah; one granddaughter and one grandson

Education: University of Nebraska; Credentialed Cooperative Director from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

Occupation: Retired private investigator, James Mazour Investigations

Leadership positions: Four-term member and officer on the Diamondhead Lake Homeowners Association board, founding member of the Iowa Association of Private Investigators, veteran of the U.S. Army

Why are you seeking re-election to serve on the Guthrie County REC board of directors? I am seeking your vote in this year's election for a second three-year term as the District 2 representative on the board of directors.

Following a 40-year career in the private investigation profession, I retired with my wife Marsha to the Diamondhead Lake community in 2016. I became involved in the lake community's homeowners association, serving on its board of directors for eight years in various positions, including the lake security committee, vice president and president.

In 2020, I assumed the position of District 2 director following the retirement of John Masmar. It was a challenging time learning the duties of a new board member while also balancing health restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the subsequent three-year term, I witnessed the effects of severe weather events – locally and nationally – that taxed electric distribution systems. I now better understand our country's reliance on reliable, cost-effective electric service. Our co-op is still feeling the economic effects of the pandemic, with increased labor, services and product costs. The demand for electric service continues to increase while, at the same time, politics are influencing the decision-making for the future of the industry. These and other important issues have been topics of discussion at monthly board meetings as we plan the strategic future of this organization.

Following several years of taking NRECA education and training courses, I received my Credentialed Cooperative Director certification in 2024. I believe my five years serving as a director, coupled with this NRECA education program, prepare me to be an effective director representing District 2 going forward.

I ask for your vote in this election and pledge to you that I will work with other board members and Guthrie County REC staff to make decisions that are in the best interests of our electric co-op community.

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G&Ts ARE THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Photo Source: Corn Belt Power Cooperative

You might be surprised to learn that your local electric cooperative doesn't generate the electricity you use in your home or business. In most cases, your co-op does not own a power plant but instead purchases electricity from an outside source and then routes the power to your community.

For more than 800 electric cooperatives across the country, the source of electricity is a different kind of cooperative. Referred to as G&Ts, these generation and transmission cooperatives exist to help electric co-ops serve their members as reliably and affordably as possible. Their only members are local electric co-ops, so G&Ts are actually cooperatives that serve – you guessed it – cooperatives.

Providing at-cost power

Across the nation, 64 G&T cooperatives provide access to wholesale (at-cost) power at a better

price than each of their member co-ops could obtain on their own. Most G&Ts go beyond the delivery of power to provide sophisticated business resources that would typically be out of reach for local co-ops.

Like your local co-op, G&Ts are not-for-profit organizations that exist to serve the needs of their members. G&Ts generally serve all the co-ops in a specific geographic area.

In Iowa, electric co-ops are members of various G&T cooperatives (see map, top of Page 7). These G&Ts generate electricity at multiple sites using a diverse mix of fuels such as coal, natural gas, wind, solar, hydro and landfill gas.

G&Ts employ a leadership team of experts in data, finance, engineering, economic development, environmental management and other important specialties essential

for electric co-ops. The G&T operates behind the scenes to support the local co-op's teams, and although G&Ts may be largely unseen, they operate with complete transparency.

G&Ts are best known as the source for at-cost electricity that is generated elsewhere, then delivered to your local co-op over high-voltage transmission lines. Your co-op uses distribution power lines and transformers to then deliver that electricity to your home or business.

Most G&Ts maintain their own power plants, while others purchase power for their members on the wholesale market. Some G&Ts manage a combination of native power generation and purchases. Because a G&T buys enough power to supply all its member co-ops, it has the bargaining power to secure significantly lower prices than those co-ops could negotiate by themselves. Regardless of how

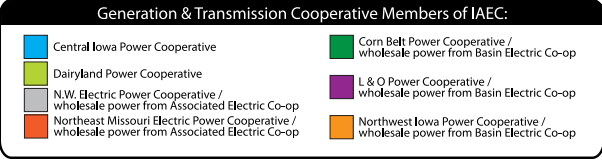
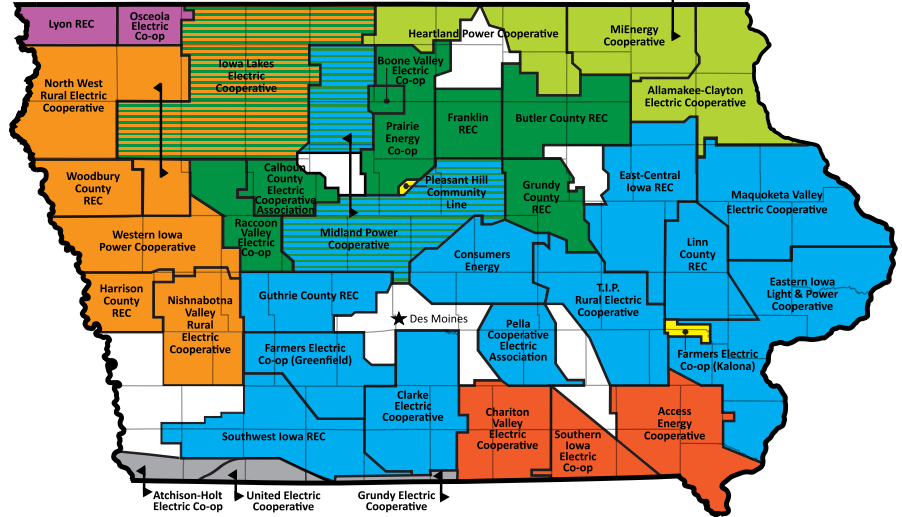
they're structured, G&Ts help keep your electric bill smaller.

Energy reliability is paramount

Just as important is the work G&Ts perform in planning. The nation's energy landscape is changing rapidly. G&Ts constantly work with local co-op staff to study and forecast power needs. They consider how growing communities might affect the demand for electricity in the future and work closely with local co-ops when power reliability is challenged, such as times when electricity demand outpaces supply or after a major weather event.

In addition to obtaining the electricity local co-ops need, G&Ts improve and maintain the reliability of the infrastructure co-ops and their communities depend upon. By working with local co-op staff to upgrade transmission lines and deploy substations, they make sure the power will be there for members like you when you need it. G&Ts also work closely with government agencies that monitor and manage the nation's electric grid.

Electric Distribution Cooperative Members of IAEC:



So, while your co-op may not own the power plant that generates the electricity you use every day, it's part of an even bigger not-for-profit cooperative whose mission is to make your service even more reliable and

affordable. As the power behind your power, just like your electric co-op, G&T cooperatives exist to serve you.

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



G&Ts employ a leadership team of experts across many career fields. Photo Sources: Central Iowa Power Cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.

Holiday

PARTY
RECIPES



WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE

- 3 cups half and half, divided
- $\frac{3}{8}$ cup white chocolate chips
- 1 3-inch cinnamon stick
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- whipped cream, for garnish
- cinnamon, for garnish

Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup half and half, white chocolate chips, cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Stir over low heat until chips are melted. Discard cinnamon, add remaining half and half and stir until hot. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour into three or four mugs and garnish each with whipped cream and cinnamon.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

EASY PARTY CHEESECAKE

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 can Eagle brand milk (sweetened condensed milk)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 9-inch graham cracker crust

Mix cream cheese and milk until smooth. Add lemon juice and vanilla. Mix, then pour into the graham cracker crust. Refrigerate 2 hours or overnight. *Serves 8*

Kary Blunk • Russell
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BAKED PARMESAN CRISPS

- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- optional toppings: garlic powder, paprika

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put heaping teaspoons of Parmesan cheese on paper, spreading them to make neat circles about 2 inches in diameter. Sprinkle with optional toppings to taste. Bake at 400 degrees F for 5 minutes. Remove and let cool. The cheese makes a lacy disc, almost like a snowflake. Best served the day you make them. *Serves 12*

Patsy Vander Schaaf • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

CARAMEL MACCHIATO

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup instant coffee
- hot water
- 5 ounces caramel sauce
- 3 ounces vanilla syrup
- $6\frac{1}{4}$ cups milk
- whipped topping
- caramel drizzle

Dissolve coffee in a little bit of hot water. Meanwhile, froth caramel sauce, vanilla syrup and milk in a saucepan. Heat to 150 degrees F. Combine coffee with frothed ingredients. Serve with whipped topping and caramel drizzle. *Serves 6-8*

Clark DeSmet • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HOLIDAY SPREAD

- 1 package raw cranberries, chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1-2 jalapeños, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 package cream cheese crackers or chips

Combine cranberries, cilantro, onions, jalapenos, sugar, cumin and lemon juice. Refrigerate overnight or at least 4 hours. Spread cream cheese on a tray or plate and cover with cranberry mixture. Serve with crackers or chips.

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SPINACH TORTILLA ROLL-UPS

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 large spinach burrito tortillas
- ¾ cup raisins
- 3 tablespoons chives or green onions, chopped
- 12 ounces deli turkey slices
- 8 ounces Havarti cheese
- romaine lettuce, ribs removed

Spread cream cheese on tortillas. Layer remaining ingredients in the order listed, avoiding spreading layers all the way to the top as they will slide when you roll them. Roll tightly from bottom to top. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or several hours. Cut into 1-inch slices and serve on plate or platter. These can also be made with deli ham and Swiss cheese. Serves 10-12

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SALMON LOG

- 1 16-ounce can salmon
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated
- 1 teaspoon horseradish
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon liquid smoke
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 3 tablespoons parsley, snipped
- crackers

Drain and flake salmon. Combine salmon with cream cheese, lemon juice, onion, horseradish, salt and liquid smoke. Mix well and chill for several hours. Combine pecans and parsley, set aside. Shape salmon mixture into log and roll into parsley pecan mixture. Chill well. Serve with crackers. Serves 6-8

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CRAB-IN-A-ROUND

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 5-ounce jar Old English cheese spread
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 6-ounce can crab meat, drained
- 1 package English muffins
- canned mushrooms, chopped
- parsley flakes

Combine softened butter and cheese spread, mix well. Add seasoned salt, garlic powder and mayonnaise. Add crab meat and mix well. Split English muffins into halves, add crab mixture and top with chopped mushrooms and garnish with parsley flakes. Bake at 400 degrees F for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown and bubbly. Cut into four pie-shaped pieces and serve with a toothpick in each wedge for a quick appetizer. Serves 24

Karen Segriff • Brooklyn
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

RECIPES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Dec. 31

Submit your **favorite international-inspired recipes**. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322

POWERING LIVES EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Editor's Note: This article is Part 1 of a two-part series showcasing the impact of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout all the state's 99 counties.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to be member-owned, serving our communities with a steadfast commitment to safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable power for over 85 years.

Covering more than two-thirds of Iowa's land area, our cooperatives maintain close to 62,000 miles of power lines – enough to circle the globe two and a half times! We deliver power to nearly 240,000 households, farms and businesses, reaching approximately 650,000 Iowans across every county.

Primarily serving rural areas, we are mission-driven to enhance the quality of life for our member-owners and are guided by seven core principles that define all cooperatives.

Iowa's electric co-ops serve **80%** of Iowa's land mass and maintain enough power lines to wrap around the equator **2.5X** (That's around 62,000 miles!)



Owned and governed by the members we serve, not-for-profit electric cooperatives power the lives of

650,000 IOWANS throughout all 99 counties.



Electric cooperatives directly support almost

2,000 JOBS IN IOWA



Empowering communities

For over eight decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have made significant contributions to the local communities we serve by creating stable jobs, paying taxes, returning surplus funds to members and investing in student programs.

Iowa's electric cooperatives directly support nearly 2,000 full-time jobs, providing Iowans with steady careers, competitive wages and benefits in a dynamic industry. Many co-op employees are rooted in small-town communities where they actively participate in local events and initiatives.

Collectively, Iowa's electric cooperatives contribute almost \$29 million annually in local and state taxes. These funds support essential services, including emergency

response, road maintenance, healthcare and public schools.

Being member-owned means electric co-ops build equity for members based on individual electric use, and surplus funds are returned to them over time.

The surplus capital is returned to members over time when local boards determine it is financially feasible. To date, Iowans have received more than \$300 million in retired capital credits from their electric cooperatives.

We are also deeply invested in Iowa's future, supporting various educational and leadership development programs for students. Over the past 65 years, Iowa's cooperatives have sent more than 2,500 high school students to Washington, D.C., for the annual Youth Tour, where students gain insights into citizenship and the cooperative business model. Co-ops further support students with college scholarships and internships.

Economic engines of progress

Electric cooperatives do more than just provide power; we also invest heavily in economic development efforts throughout rural Iowa.

From 2018 to 2022, Iowa's electric cooperatives invested \$4.7 billion in economic development projects, supporting more than 7,300 jobs, both retained and created, across the state.

In that period, our cooperatives generated \$688 million in wages and salaries and produced \$232 million in self-employment income.

Iowa's cooperatives have a long history of partnership with the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development and USDA's Rural Utilities Service, proudly serving as intermediaries for revolving loan funds and other programs. Several Iowa co-ops have also developed industrial speculative buildings to foster local business growth and attract new enterprises to rural communities.

Electric cooperatives are equally proud to work with the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) to bolster rural economic development. Established nearly 40 years ago, IADG provides crucial support for business and community projects on behalf of more than 150 Iowa

electric and telecommunications utilities. IADG has facilitated over 2,550 projects, creating or retaining at least 62,000 jobs statewide.

Investing in economic development is one of the key ways Iowa's electric cooperatives proudly contribute to the vitality of our communities.

Learn more at www.iowarec.org/who-we-are/economic-progress.

Part 2 of this feature will appear in the January 2025 issue of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living and focus on the impact of electric cooperatives in providing reliable and affordable power.



For the five years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive impact of

\$4.7 BILLION

 IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

These investments supported more than

7,300 JOBS



(retained, attracted or expanded) DURING THAT SAME TIME PERIOD.

Continued from Page 5

DISTRICT 3

**Ronny Bristle****Address:** 5257 Panorama Dr., Panora**Family:** Wife Karla; son Ryan (Chrissy); son Brad (Carrie); daughter Jenna (Brady); granddaughters Macy, Hallie, Quinn and Brynn; grandsons Jack, Jett and Brooks**Education:** Ogden Community High School; studied farm operations at Iowa State University; Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)**Occupation:** Retired Boone County farmer of 48 years, now enjoying seasonal farm work helping sons**Leadership positions:** Zion Lutheran Church in Ogden past chairman; Ogden Jaycees past president, Ogden Telephone Board

Why are you seeking re-election to serve on the Guthrie County REC board of directors? I have been honored to serve on the Guthrie County REC board of directors. With the degrees I have earned and am currently seeking, I have gained knowledge and insight into the workings of this REC. I am excited to continue serving our members in this area and feel tremendous growth opportunities are ahead for our local REC and you, the member-consumer. After coming from our farm, which was served by a large corporate electric company, I can confidently tell you that Guthrie County REC's service, dependability and pricing structure are far superior! I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve you, as Guthrie County REC provides you with not only affordable, but also safe and reliable electricity.



Who: High School sophomores or juniors from AC/GC, ADM, Audubon, CAM, CR-B, Exira-EHK, Panorama, Perry, WCV and Woodward-Granger

What: Free trip!

Where: Washington, D.C.

When: June 15-21. Application deadline is Feb. 1.

Find details and application at www.guthrie-rec.coop



SHOWING OTHERS THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

BY LUCAS OBERT

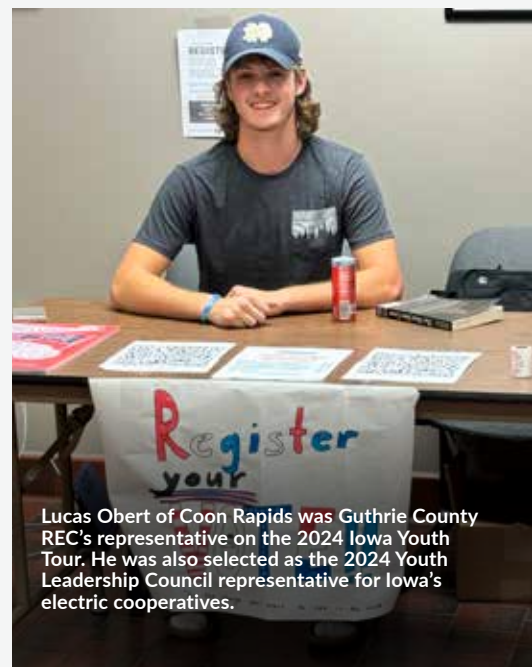
Did you know that in any given election, 35-60% of eligible voters don't even cast a ballot? This is because casting a vote in government elections is seen by many as a "hassle" and "requiring motivation."

This fact inspired me to show people in my hometown of Coon Rapids that registering to vote is simple, easy and vital for supporting electric cooperatives and their service.

On Oct. 9, from 4:30 to 8 p.m., I ran a voter registration drive in the lobby of my city's municipality building. Leading up to the project, I worked diligently to plan the event and advertise and promote my initiative to eligible voters. I posted fliers at local businesses, created graphics for a local TV station and even shared the event on social media. These promotions helped ensure my town had the opportunity to vote for what they believe in and make their voice heard.

Engaging in our legislative and political processes is increasingly

important to protect the community and membership of rural, member-owned cooperatives. Choosing the right candidate can be vital to cooperatives' impact on rural America. Ultimately, reminding Iowans that their vote matters was more than rewarding, and I was beyond grateful for the opportunity to make an impact.



Lucas Obert of Coon Rapids was Guthrie County REC's representative on the 2024 Iowa Youth Tour. He was also selected as the 2024 Youth Leadership Council representative for Iowa's electric cooperatives.

SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE IN THE KITCHEN

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

The holiday season brings opportunities to enjoy meals with friends and family, leading to spending more time in the kitchen. Whether hosting a few or a crowd, consider making new energy efficiency traditions this year with these tips to manage your energy use.

Consider using smaller appliances vs. the oven

Let's start with cooking your meal. Your electric oven is typically the highest-wattage appliance in the kitchen. Yet, people usually don't turn their ovens on for long periods. Assuming an average oven wattage of 3,000 and an average cost of \$.16 per kilowatt-hour, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, it costs \$.48 an hour. Let's say you use your oven for four hours to make a special meal. That's less than \$2 of electricity. While that may not seem like a big deal now, operating your oven for four hours daily is \$700 a year.

Using smaller appliances instead of your oven can help you save. A slow cooker uses between 100 and 450 watts, which is significantly less than an electric oven at 2,000 to 5,000 watts. That means you can use a slow cooker for longer and still use less energy.

Opt for your microwave or toaster oven to reheat or cook smaller items. The microwave uses significantly less energy than the oven. A toaster oven uses about half the energy of a conventional oven, according to ENERGY STAR®.

You should never turn on your oven and leave the door open to heat your home.

This can break your oven and be a safety hazard, especially with gas ovens that can cause carbon monoxide buildup.



Before cooking on your stovetop, clean the burners to ensure the appliance heats evenly, which can help you save energy. Match pots to appropriately sized burners to avoid wasting energy.



Slow cookers use less energy than an oven. You can use a slow cooker for a longer period and still use less energy. Photo Sources: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

Use the stovetop wisely

When cooking on the stovetop, match the pot or pan size to the burner. Lids help your pots retain heat, which cooks food faster and wastes less heat. Keep your stovetop clean to ensure the appliance heats evenly.

If you want to upgrade your stovetop, consider switching to an induction cooktop. It uses an electromagnetic field below the surface to heat pots and pans directly. This provides more precise heat, faster cook times and higher efficiency. It can also improve the air quality in your home when compared to a gas cooktop.

Find refrigerator and freezer savings

Next, let's look for refrigerator savings. The gaskets on your refrigerator doors should make a tight seal to keep in cold air. Make sure you clean and maintain them or replace them if necessary. Keep frost from building up in the freezer, which can decrease efficiency and

make your freezer work harder to maintain a balanced temperature.

Wait until food cools before putting leftovers in the fridge. Putting hot food in the refrigerator results in more energy used to cool it down. Aim for about 30 minutes of cool time. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, perishable food should be refrigerated within two hours after it is cooked.

Setting your refrigerator colder than needed wastes energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends 37 degrees F for the refrigerator and 0 degrees F for the freezer. Use an appliance thermometer to monitor the temperature.

Whatever you choose to cook or how you cook it, keep in mind these simple tips to make your kitchen more efficient and save energy this holiday season.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

SMART INSIGHTS ABOUT BUYING SMART APPLIANCES

BY SCOTT FLOOD

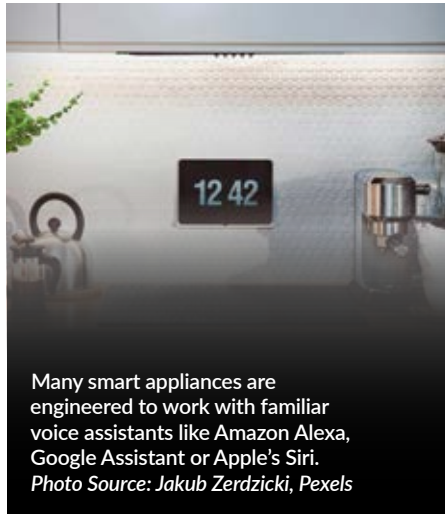
Santa isn't the only one who makes an appearance as the year nears its end. Retailers start trumpeting deep discounts on home appliances. That's great if you've considered replacing some of your home's appliances with one of today's "smart" models. Before deciding to buy a smart appliance, take some time to get smarter about what they offer – and what you really need.

Start with an assessment

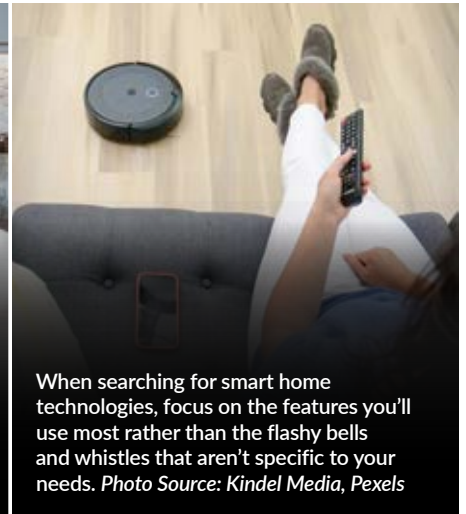
Begin with an honest look at how you live and consider the role your current appliances play in your daily routine. Would the capabilities of a smart appliance make your life easier? For example, if you frequently forget to start the laundry or your dishwasher, Wi-Fi-enabled appliances with remote start capabilities may save you time and trouble. But if you're thinking about stepping up to a smart appliance because it has a cool feature you might use once a year, ask yourself if it's worth the extra cost.

Next, think about any smart devices you already use in your home. Make sure they're compatible with the smart appliance's operating system so you can get all the benefits you expect. For example, many of these appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Incompatible systems might limit your ability to use the features that are most important to you.

Is your home's infrastructure ready to handle the demands of a smart appliance? Depending upon the model you choose, it might require anything from a basic internet connection to a home Wi-Fi network to provide the operation you expect. Some smart appliances may require Bluetooth, Zigbee, Z-Wave or other systems for connectivity. Having access to the right technology



Many smart appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Photo Source: Jakub Zerdzicki, Pexels



When searching for smart home technologies, focus on the features you'll use most rather than the flashy bells and whistles that aren't specific to your needs. Photo Source: Kindel Media, Pexels

ensures your system will function correctly and be able to handle updates as they become available.

Consider energy efficiency and other factors

It's always important to consider energy efficiency when purchasing a new appliance. Most smart appliances are designed to reduce energy consumption, with operating modes that deliver the performance you want while making more efficient use of energy. Smart appliances that are ENERGY STAR®-certified meet or exceed federal energy efficiency standards and some may use only half as much energy as standard appliances.

Repairs to smart appliances can be expensive, so consider the warranty. Generous manufacturer warranties demonstrate the company's confidence in the quality of its products.

For most homeowners, the biggest downside to smart appliances is that they carry a higher price tag than their not-so-smart counterparts. However, price is just one factor in the cost of any appliance. When you

also consider the long-term value smart appliances deliver – whether in energy savings, helpful conveniences or improved reliability – most will save you money over their service life. In addition, smart appliances may be eligible for rebates and tax incentives, so ask your retailer what's available.

What's ahead for smart appliances in the foreseeable future? The marketplace is starting to see the integration of basic artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities that can make smart appliances provide better service, greater reliability and lower energy needs. As these AI-fueled systems become more common, your refrigerator might know your habits so well that it can generate a shopping list for you. Your dishwasher could adjust its operating cycle to better clean your family's uniquely dirty dishes.

There was a time when appliances changed little from decade to decade. Today, products advance more quickly than ever before, and we can expect to see more big changes ahead.

Scott Flood writes on energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

'TIS THE SEASON FOR TRADITIONS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

We've officially entered the season of traditions. Can you recall a holiday tradition your family had when you were younger? What holiday traditions do you still enjoy today?

For me, these included homemade chili for supper and opening gifts on Christmas Eve. Baking Christmas cookies. Attending services at the country church in Webster County where generations of my mom's family worshipped.

It's always fun to hear about other families' traditions, as well. When I was visiting my second cousin Barb at her home near Coggon last winter, she mentioned the Hamilton Family Cook Off.

This family tradition (inspired by the "Iron Chef" cooking competition on the Food Network) started in 2006 with an M&Ms Challenge. The rules were simple. Any Hamilton family member (or date of a family member) could enter. Contestants just had to include M&Ms in their recipes. Everyone voted on their favorite dish when the family gathered for the Christmas holidays. (The winning entry was a cheesecake with M&Ms.)

This friendly competition was such a hit that it has endured. Each year, the featured ingredient is announced around Thanksgiving. Options have included cheese, apples, cranberries, beer, cinnamon, olives, bacon, peanut butter, ginger, chipotle peppers, oranges, corn, maple, lemon and honey.

After the judging is complete, the year's winner receives a traveling trophy (a kitschy, chef-themed ceramic pig), plus the winner gets to choose the "secret ingredient" for next year's Hamilton Family Cook Off.

Decoding the power of traditions

This got me thinking about how traditions can enrich our lives. They are the glue that holds families,

communities and even countries together. They can be as diverse as a summer family vacation, tailgating at college football games each fall or celebrating America's independence on the Fourth of July.

Traditions hold the power to shape human history. "Tradition" comes from a Latin word that means "to hand over, to transmit." Psychologists tell us that traditions are important to our mental health since they strengthen shared values and provide a sense of stability.

Passing traditions from generation to generation also preserves our heritage and helps us reconnect with our roots. The results can be especially profound for children.

I'm fascinated by research conducted by Marshall Duke, a clinical psychologist and faculty member at Emory University in Atlanta. His studies have shown that the more children know about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives and the higher their self-esteem. These children prove to be more resilient and can cope more effectively with the stresses of life.

Time won't wait

This lesson in resilience is something I need to remember. With my busy schedule, I've gotten away from some family traditions, like decorating homemade sugar cookies in the weeks leading up to Christmas and sending holiday cards.

Did all that busyness enrich my life? Not really. I can hardly remember what was so important that I

sacrificed some family traditions to slog through a never-ending to-do list.

The longer I live, the more I'm reminded that time won't wait. The country church where we used to gather for the Christmas service closed permanently in 2010. Some of my loved ones have passed away. Yet, I still cherish the traditions we shared and the priceless memories we created together.

During this holiday season and the year ahead, let's all make more time to enjoy the traditions that keep us connected. Maybe even create a new tradition. It's never too late to start something good.

If you have beloved traditions in your life, I'd love to hear about them. Email me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



This pig is a traveling trophy for the Hamilton family's holiday cooking competition.



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