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JULY 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

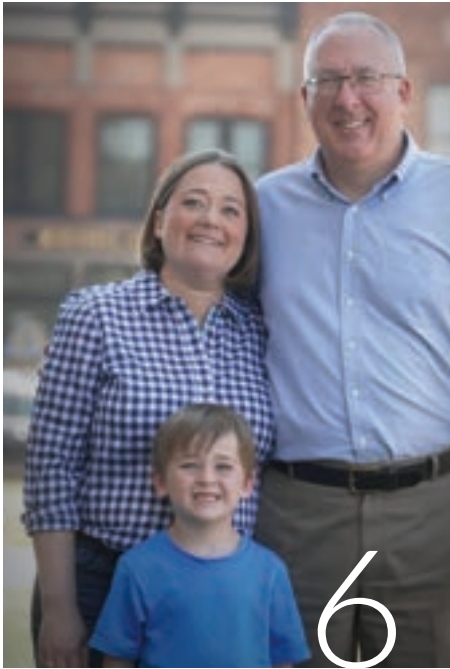
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Attorney General**

**Seal in savings
with efficient doors**

**Summer's best
vegetable recipes**

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Kent Schlwin, a Prairie Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

GROWING RELIABILITY THREATS

BY JIM MATHESON



American families and businesses expect the lights to stay on at a cost they can afford.

But that's no longer a guarantee. Nine states saw

rolling blackouts last December as the demand for electricity exceeded the available supply.

This is no longer a theoretical conversation. And unless policymakers change course, it's going to get worse.

Warnings and challenges mount

In May, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to regulate power plant emissions. This proposal will further strain America's electric grid and undermine decades of work to reliably keep the lights on across the nation. It's just the latest instance of EPA failing to prioritize reliable electricity as a fundamental expectation of American consumers.

It shouldn't have to be this way. When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging. But instead of putting down the shovel, EPA wants to bring in an excavator.

But don't just take my word for it. Warnings about the threat of reliability challenges have snowballed in recent months. The 2023 North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) summer reliability assessment recently highlighted that more of the country is at risk of blackouts than last year. NERC says that the EPA proposal will accelerate the reliability challenges.

In May, several Federal Energy Regulatory Commission leaders warned the U.S. Senate about threats to reliable electricity. In March, Manu Asthana, who is the CEO of PJM Interconnection – a regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in 13 states –

said that the regional transmission organization needed to slow the pace of generation retirements to avoid reliability problems by the end of the decade.

Voicing reliability concerns

America has a reliability problem. With the help of co-op leaders across the nation, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association has been a leading voice in sounding the alarm on reliability. Today's energy decisions will determine if there are sufficient resources to keep the lights on tomorrow. Five issues are impacting the reliable delivery of electricity across the nation.

- 1 Increasing demand for electricity as other sectors of the economy are electrified.
- 2 Decreasing electricity supply due to the disorderly retirement and insufficient replacement of existing generation.
- 3 Permitting delays that prevent new electric infrastructure from being built and connected to the grid.

4 Supply chain challenges.

5 Problems with natural gas availability.

Commitment to member-consumers

None of these challenges will be easy to address, but we can start by asking ourselves these questions:

- Is this what America is supposed to be?
- Should the threat of rolling blackouts be a permanent facet of U.S. energy policy?

The answer to both of those questions is a resounding no for electric co-ops and the communities we serve.

The long-term solution requires policymakers and regulators to recognize the need for time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure. These are the essential ingredients for an energy future that prioritizes reliable electricity for all consumers, including the 42 million Americans served by electric cooperatives.

Jim Matheson is the CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a grilling package!

July is National Grilling Month! To celebrate, we're giving away a beef bundle, including \$50 in beef certificates, a cast iron skillet and additional summer grilling essentials, courtesy of the Iowa Beef Industry Council.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than July 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 local nursery gift card from the May issue was Phillip Boehnke, Prairie Energy Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!

FROM THE
ARCHIV[⚡]S

75 YEARS AGO IN RURAL IOWA

In 1948, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives began publishing a statewide newspaper for member-consumers, titled *IRECA News*. Excerpts from the following article appeared in the July 1948 edition (verbatim content from our archives):

Lighted Kitchen Used for Class

LOVILLA – Most of the students attending rural schools near here have electric lights in their homes now that the Chariton Valley [Electric Cooperative, Inc.] project is nearly completed

The school in which Mrs. Frank Etcher, farm wife near here, taught last year was not, however, wired.

Children who had seen the kerosene lamp relegated to the emergency category at home found themselves straining their eyes to see their lessons on dark days in school.

This spring Mrs. Etcher began to worry about one of her eighth grade boys whose eyes were very weak. Suppose, she thought, it is a rainy, dark day when he has to take his final examinations.

Sure enough, exam day found it cloudy and rainy. Instead of insisting that the youth work at his dark desk in the school room, Mrs. Etcher took him to her own home several miles away, seated him at a chair by the kitchen table and snapped on her new gleaming white overhead light in the kitchen.

There the lad took his finals. He passed, too.



DID YOU KNOW?

1930s

\$.86
PER
KILOWATT HOUR

\$.44
PER
GAL. MILK

\$.18
PER
DOZEN EGGS

\$.82
PER
GAL. STUMP

\$.18
PER
GAL. KEROSENE

NOW

While the cost of most things has increased twenty-fold or more during the past 75 years, electricity has remained very affordable.

The average cost of electricity per kilowatt-hour has only doubled since the 1930s.

PER
KILOWATT HOUR

PER
DOZEN EGGS

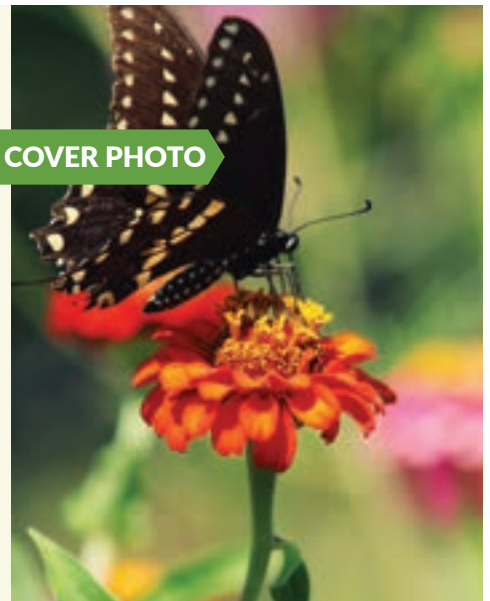
PER
GAL. STUMP

PER
GAL. KEROSENE

ENTER TO WIN

WIN \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED COVER PHOTO

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you with \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution. To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.



CO-OP LEADER TO CONGRESS: ROLLING BLACKOUTS CANNOT BECOME NEW NORMAL

The push to rapidly replace always-available energy sources could spark rolling blackouts across America, the leader of a Midwest generation and transmission cooperative warned a Senate panel in June.

“Lawmakers must support policies that include all energy sources to maintain reliability and affordability. Rolling blackouts cannot become the new normal,” David Tudor, CEO of Springfield, Missouri-based Associated Electric Cooperative Inc., told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee at a hearing on electric system reliability.

“It is critical that policymakers recognize the need for adequate time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure before taking our nation down an energy path that prioritizes speed over successfully keeping the lights on.”

Tudor cited the North American Electric Reliability Corporation’s (NERC) recent Summer Reliability Assessment, which warned that two-thirds of the U.S. could face energy shortfalls during periods of extreme heat this summer.

“Importantly, the 2023 NERC summer reliability assessment is just the latest in a series of alarming reminders about the new electric reliability challenges facing the nation,” Tudor said.

“Last month, Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner Mark Christie warned this committee of threats to reliable electricity, stating ‘I think the United States is heading for a very catastrophic situation in terms of reliability.’”

Associated Electric Cooperative, which serves 935,000 meters across rural Missouri, northeast Oklahoma and southeast Iowa, was able to keep the lights on during severe winter storms the past two years that knocked out power to millions of Americans and led



David Tudor, CEO of Associated Electric Cooperative Inc., talks about threats to electric reliability at a June 1 Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing. Photo credit: Denny Gainer

to the deaths of more than 700 people in Texas during Winter Storm Uri in February 2021.

“Associated relies on a balanced generation mix, with proven and reliable coal and natural gas generating plants as a valuable foundation for reliability and dispatched its units to full capacity in advance of the cold temperatures,” Tudor said, describing the co-op’s response to Winter Storm Uri.

“Despite significant outside pressure in recent years to move to other options, these fossil-fuel generating stations were the major factor in keeping the

lights on for the 2.1 million people we serve. Hydropower allocated by the Southwestern Power Administration was a reliable energy source. Wind generation in Associated’s mix played a minor role.”

Last December, nine states experienced rolling blackouts as the demand for electricity exceeded supply during Winter Storm Elliott.

“Again, coal and natural gas generation carried the day, preserving reliability for Associated’s members when they needed power the most,” Tudor said.

Article submitted by the National Rural Energy Cooperative Association.



MEET IOWA'S ATTORNEY GENERAL

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Editor's Note: As a non-partisan publication, we profile government officials from time to time to help our readers get to know these important Iowans and to understand how their roles impact rural Iowa.



In November 2022, Iowans elected Brenna Bird as their next Attorney General – the first Republican to hold the office

since 1979. Before becoming Iowa Attorney General in January 2023, Bird served as a prosecutor for six years, first as the Fremont County Attorney and then since 2018 as the Guthrie County Attorney.

Born and raised on a farm in Guthrie County, where she was homeschooled, Bird graduated from Drake University and received her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School.

We sat down with Bird in June to learn more about her perspectives and priorities on various topics in her new role serving Iowans.

Q: Tell our readers more about your background and family.

I grew up east of Dexter, and we had corn, soybeans, cattle and farrow-to-finish pigs. My husband, son (who is 6 years old) and I live on what was once my grandpa's farm – where my dad grew up – and in the house my grandpa built in rural Dexter.

My husband Bob is an Iraq War veteran. He is also a lawyer and works in the Iowa State Senate. Over the years, my legal career has included working in private practice, in Congress in Washington, D.C., as legal counsel for Gov. Branstad and then Lieutenant Gov. Reynolds. I've served as the county attorney in Audubon, Fremont and Guthrie counties.

Q: Over the years, how have you been involved in your community/state or other activities? What are your hobbies?

Beyond professionally, one of the ways I've been most involved in the

community is through our church and the local activities that our parish gets involved in. The strength of our rural communities is one of Iowa's best assets. We are good at working together and solving problems. I enjoy reading, cooking, gardening, quilting, bicycling and spending time with family.

Q: How has agriculture shaped who you are today?

My family has been involved in agriculture for generations. In fact, my brother is a seventh-generation farmer. Growing up in agriculture taught me to stick to things even when they get tough and keep trying and working hard.

Like many Iowa families, we learned through the farm crisis that people matter more than possessions. From firsthand experience, I know that Iowa farmers care more about the land than anyone else and support good conservation practices.

Q: What are some topics that you are passionate about that impact rural Iowa/lowans?

One area is pushing back against the federal government in court when they go too far with federal overreach. An important example for Iowa is the Waters of the U.S. rule, which would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to control 97% of Iowa farm ground and other lands. We've challenged the rule and have received some favorable rulings to stop it, but we're still litigating that through court. That's very important because it could change agriculture in rural Iowa as we know it. We need to keep decision-making local and out of D.C.

I'm also passionate about supporting and maintaining strong law enforcement. An alarming trend is the infiltration of drugs into rural Iowa. In every county in the state, it's important to keep our communities safe.

Q: As a member of Guthrie County REC, what are your thoughts/perspectives on the cooperative business model?

The cooperative business model works well. Initially, electric cooperatives brought power to rural Iowa, including where I live. It's essential to have affordable and reliable electricity. Because of its local ownership structure, cooperatives excel with customer service, responsiveness and community engagement. The co-op business model is even more relevant today than ever before.

Q: What personal and professional accomplishments are you most proud of?

Personally, it's being a wife and mom. I worked full-time to pay for college. I learned a lot serving in different roles in the Governor's office and Congress. Then, starting my law firm while also working as a county attorney.

Regarding my accomplishments as a prosecutor, I think the best part of the job was working with law enforcement because they're heroes with good hearts. People don't see all the things that law enforcement does daily and the compassion and bravery they bring to the job. Working to enforce the law to keep our communities safe and helping crime victims is rewarding.

Q: What excites you the most about being Iowa's Attorney General?

Having the opportunity to make Iowa safer, support our law enforcement and push back against the federal government when they go too far.

Q: What is another top priority that you are working on?

We're here to serve lowans. If someone falls victim to a scam or thinks something might be suspicious, we want them to reach out to our office.

Last year, we were contacted by a woman who received a scam call and was told that she had a fraudulent Amazon charge for thousands of dollars on her account. The scammer convinced her they would help cancel

the payment. They claimed her account showed unusual activity in other states, that she had become a victim of ID theft, and that her information was used to commit a crime. The scammer impersonated law enforcement and informed her to protect her assets, she needed to send a box with \$20,000 in cash to California. The day after she shipped the money, she realized she had been scammed and contacted the Iowa Attorney General's office. Our team was able to stop the shipment and return the money to this woman.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.

See Page 14 for tips on protecting yourself against utility scams.



Brenna Bird with her husband Bob and their son.



Vegetable

RECIPES

for summer

SWEET AND SOUR GREEN BEANS

- 4 slices of bacon
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- flour, optional
- 3 tablespoons vinegar
- 1 pint green beans

Fry bacon, drain and crumble. Put brown sugar in pan, stir in flour thickener if desired. Add bacon, vinegar and beans and heat through. *Serves 2*

**Allyson Bailey • Hamilton
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

MICROWAVE SUCCOTASH

- 1 16-ounce bag frozen corn
- 1 16-ounce bag frozen lima beans
- ¼ cup water
- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon thyme, dried
- 1 teaspoon parsley, dried
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup sweet onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon butter

In a 2.5-quart microwave-safe bowl with lid, mix corn, lima beans and water. Microwave on high for 10 minutes. Let bowl sit in microwave covered. In a separate bowl, combine tomatoes, garlic powder, paprika, thyme, parsley and salt. Mix well and set aside. Sauté onions in butter until clear. Add to bowl of tomatoes and spices, mix well. Combine tomato mixture with corn and lima beans. Thoroughly stir together. Microwave on high for 2 minutes or until hot. *Serves 6*

**Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**

EASY SCALLOPED POTATOES

- 2½ cups milk, heated
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 6 medium potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons butter, plus enough to coat casserole dish
- pepper, optional

Stir the milk, flour and salt together. Layer in a buttered casserole dish alternating potatoes and milk mixture. Top with 3 tablespoons butter and season with pepper, if desired. Bake at 350 degrees F for 60-75 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. *Serves 8-10*

**Elinor Moeller • Tripoli
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

LOTTA (LOW-TAH) FINNISH VEGGIE CASSEROLE

- 5 potatoes, sliced
- 4 carrots, sliced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 beet, sliced
- ½ pound salt pork, preferably frozen
- ⅓ cup water

In a medium-sized roaster or Dutch oven, place a layer of potatoes followed by a layer of carrots. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add a layer of onions followed by a layer of beets, salt and pepper. Repeat the vegetable layers one more time. Slice salt pork ¼-inch thick and approximately ½-inch wide, frozen pork is easier to cut. Place salt pork on top of vegetables and add water. Place under the broiler to cook salt pork until crispy brown. Cover roaster and cook at 400 degrees F for 50 minutes. *Serves 6*

Michele Dirks • George • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

INFINITY CABBAGE SALAD

- ¼ cabbage, shredded
- 1 cucumber, thinly sliced, optional
- ½ carrot, thinly sliced, optional salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame dressing, optional
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds

Put the shredded cabbage in a colander. If desired, add cucumber and carrots. Sprinkle with salt, mix well. Set aside for 5-10 minutes. Meanwhile, create a dressing by mixing soy sauce, sugar, apple cider vinegar and sesame oil. Add sesame dressing, if desired. Squeeze vegetables to drain excess water. Pour dressing over vegetables and sprinkle with sesame seeds. *Serves 3*

Erina Westphal • Guthrie Center
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

EGGPLANT CASSEROLE

- 1 small eggplant
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil salt, to taste pepper, to taste
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, sliced medium thickness
- ¼ cup American cheese, grated

Peel eggplant and slice about ¾- to ½-inch thick. Cut slices in half. In a large frying pan, heat oil until starting to smoke. Place eggplant in hot oil and brown each side. Season with salt and pepper to taste. In a 2-quart baking dish, alternate layers of eggplant, onion, green pepper and tomatoes. Cover and bake at 375 degrees F for 50 minutes. Remove cover and sprinkle grated cheese on top. Return to oven and bake uncovered until cheese is melted and browned. *Serves 4*

Greg Flugum • Forest City
Prairie Energy Cooperative

GOOD CARROTS

- 8 cups carrots, peeled and sliced
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup plus 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1 pound Velveeta
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 cups crackers, crushed

Steam and drain carrots and onions. Place in 9x13-inch pan. Melt 1 cup butter with Velveeta. Mix in brown sugar and pour over carrots. Mix crackers and 4 tablespoons melted butter, sprinkle over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-25 minutes. *Serves 6*

Lizzy Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ONION PIE

- 1 cup soda crackers, crushed
- ¼ cup margarine, melted
- 2 cups onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- ¾ cup milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ¾ teaspoon salt pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- parsley, to taste, chopped

Mix crackers and ¼ cup melted margarine. Press into an 8-inch pie pan on bottom and up the sides. Cook onions in 2 tablespoons margarine until tender, not brown. Place onions in pie pan. Combine milk, eggs, salt and pepper, then pour over onions. Sprinkle with cheese and a little chopped parsley. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes, until custard is set. Serve hot. *Serves 8*

Truman Nester • Rock Rapids • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BAKED ZUCCHINI CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup cracker crumbs salt, to taste pepper, to taste
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 large zucchini, cubed (or 2 small) bread crumbs for topping

Brown beef and onion. In large bowl, mix beef and onion with green pepper, cracker crumbs, salt, pepper, soup, eggs and zucchini. Place mixture in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Top with bread crumbs and bake at 350 degrees F for 35-40 minutes.

Mrs. Charles Hanes • Stuart
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

WANTED:

SLOW COOKER RECIPES

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

Deadline is July 31

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

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A TRIP OF A LIFETIME DELORES FAGLE THOM RECALLS EXPERIENCE ON 1958 YOUTH TOUR

BY JENNIFER ACHENBACH

Sixty-five years ago, Delores (Reed) Fagle Thom stepped on a bus headed to Washington, D.C., for the first-annual Rural Electric Co-op Youth Tour.

It was a trip that would leave a lasting impression on the recent high school graduate.

At the time, Delores was working at the Iowa State University Extension Office in Independence. As a member of the Buchanan County Rural Electric Cooperative, her boss suggested she complete the application for the tour, writing an essay about why she wanted to be chosen. She was one of the over 30 participants from Iowa selected to go to D.C. in 1958. As a recent Independence High School graduate, Delores was engaged to Dwaine Fagle. In her words, she thought that if she was going to go on a trip like this, she better go before she was married.

On June 14, Delores got on a bus headed to D.C., her first time visiting the nation's capital. The group spent the night in Toledo, Ohio, before arriving in D.C. the next evening. They stayed at the Arva Motor Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

Impactful lineup of tours and conversations

The first day of the trip, the group had breakfast with members of the Iowa Congressional Delegation, followed by a tour of the U.S. Capitol, led by Sen. Thomas Martin. That was followed by a tour of the Library of Congress, visiting both the House of Representatives and Senate, as well as the Supreme Court Building. Delores recalls the time she spent visiting with her local delegates, as well as posing as a group on the Capitol steps.

On June 17, participants visited the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) building, followed

by a visit to the Bureau of Printing and Engraving and the Department of Justice.

Activities the next day included touring the Rural Electrification Administration headquarters at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), viewing the Washington Cathedral and touring the USDA Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland.

June 19 holds a special place in Delores' memory. That was the day participants got a special tour of the White House.

After the White House tour, the group visited the Washington Monument, including an elevator ride to the top. Next, they



went to the Smithsonian Institute and finished the night with a trip to Glen Echo Amusement Park. On the final full day of the trip, they toured Arlington National Cemetery, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Lee's Mansion, then concluded the visit with a tour of Washington's home at Mt. Vernon.

After five days of learning about government, the group got back on the bus to Iowa on Saturday, June 21. They spent the night in Chicago. Delores recalls feeling a little scared as their hotel room didn't have a lock on the door.

Despite the full schedule of activities, there was also a lot of fun and bonding with her fellow participants.

"We stayed in a motel room with four of us to a room. We filled the bathtub with ice cubes and put watermelon in it. We invited a few people to our room, and we had a watermelon treat," she remembers.

When she returned to Iowa following the tour, Delores presented what she'd learned to her co-op.

The next chapters of life

What started as a trip before settling down turned into an experience that shaped the rest of her life. Delores and Dwaine got married the following year. They lived in Independence, then Dewar and Sumner, before settling onto their farmstead three miles west of Fayette. There, the couple raised seven children while operating their dairy farm.

In 1986, Delores decided it was time to go to school and pursue her passion. She started taking accounting classes at Northeast Iowa Community

College (NICC) in Calmar. She finished her degree in 1987 and opened Delores Tax and Accounting. For over 30 years, Delores has built her business, at times with more than 200 tax clients a year, in addition to her accounting jobs.

"I just love it," she says, noting she now has cut back on her tax work but stays busy year-round with accounting. She was recognized by the governor for 25 years of work in 2013. She also was named a 2017 NICC Alumni Shining Star.

Dwaine passed away in 1996 from cancer. After a second marriage, Delores found love with her high school sweetheart, Bill Thom. Delores had reached out to Bill after the death of his wife. Six years later, Bill contacted Delores and they struck up a relationship. The two married. They later divorced but remain in touch today. Delores now resides in Fayette, just three miles from where she and Dwaine farmed.

Fond memories and advice for future participants

Although it's been well over half a century since Delores was on the Youth Tour, she still has fond memories of the trip.

Delores is excited for future Youth Tour participants to experience the thrills she had.

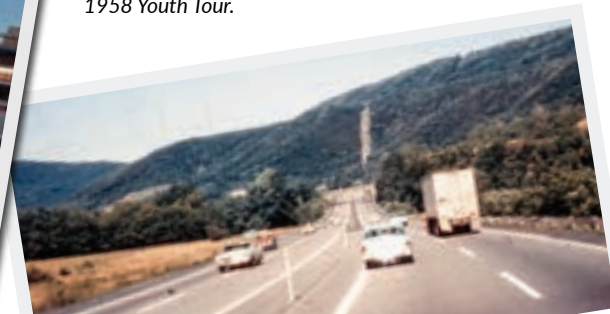
"Make it a learning experience because there's a lot to learn, but still enjoy the time that you're there," she says. "It was a good experience for me, a good learning experience."

Jennifer Achenbach is the manager of marketing and communications for Allamakee Clayton Electric Cooperative.



Delores (Reed) Fagle Thom is pictured with a photo from her Youth Tour experience in 1958.

Vintage photos from the 1958 Youth Tour.



RESIDENTIAL SOLAR CONSIDERATIONS

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Your local electric cooperative should top your list of project contacts if you're considering residential solar. Iowa's electric cooperatives are well-versed in both the pros and cons of solar installations. They can help you make an informed decision and navigate the process of connecting your system to the electric grid.

Do your homework

For many homeowners, solar installations are considered an investment. As with any investment, you need a clear understanding of your final investment costs, the expected annual energy production, its corresponding value, and the ability to determine how long it will take before you achieve a return on your investment.

Location matters

To successfully install solar, you must first overcome location obstacles. Choosing an unobstructed, sunny location to install solar panels on your property is essential. The choice between a roof or ground-mounted system is also important. The cost for roof installations can vary with different roof designs, just as the location of a ground-mounted array can vary based on soil types and the distance an array is from the interconnection site.

Correct sizing

Your home's average energy use will be reflected in your bills from the

previous year, and certain factors may change your use over time. For instance, a growing family will use more energy, but the departure of college-age children can reduce energy consumption.

Careful consideration and addressing your home's energy efficiency may reduce the size of the solar array you will need. Many electric co-ops offer energy audits to help identify opportunities for savings.

Installation and payment

Selecting a professional installer, the right system and best payment method are equally crucial considerations.

Solar installations may be purchased with cash, loans or leases. An upfront purchase will help you save the most money over the lifespan of the solar panels, but you need the cash upfront. A lease means someone else owns the solar panels and sells you power at a reduced cost each month, but you won't save as much over time. With a loan, the system is yours, but you make monthly payments plus interest.

Installing solar is a significant decision. You need a reputable energy partner to help you decide. Remember to contact your electric cooperative first. They're ready to answer your questions and help you make an informed decision.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



THINKING ABOUT SOLAR?

If you're considering solar, use the following questions as a guide before entering a contract to install the system.

Initial questions

- Do you plan to stay in the home long-term?
- How much shade does your roof receive?
- How old is your roof? (If it's old/in poor condition, consider replacing it before installing solar.)
- What are your goals? (If you're looking to save on energy bills, consider an energy audit first.)
- Will you lease or purchase the solar system?

Utility questions

- How will you need to work with your electric co-op to connect the solar system to the electric grid?
- How long will the process take?

Contractor questions

- Can the contractor provide appropriate documentation of licensing, permitting, bonding and insurance requirements?
- Can the contractor show documentation of safety practices?
- Can the contractor provide current credentials?

Contract questions

- Do the ownership terms seem fair?
- Do the system performance calculations seem realistic?
- Do the terms change if you sell the property?
- Do the project start and end dates seem reasonable?
- How long is the system warranty?
- Who is responsible for system maintenance?



SEAL IN SAVINGS WITH EFFICIENT EXTERIOR DOORS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

The front door of your home has a lot of meaning. It sets the stage for the home and is the first impression for your guests. Beyond curb appeal, the front door is a good place to look for energy savings.

Efficient exterior doors seal tightly and don't allow air to pass through. Limiting airflow from exterior doors can result in lower heating and cooling costs. Throughout the years, the construction of exterior doors has improved to increase their efficiency. If your door is older, it likely is not insulated.

Replacing your front door

If you want to replace your front door for aesthetic purposes, make it more functional or improve its efficiency, consider upgrading to an ENERGY STAR®-certified model. This certification ensures the door you buy meets efficiency criteria for your local area. It also means the National Fenestration Rating Council independently tested and verified the door.

Certification requires any windows in the door to be double or triple pane to reduce heat flow, which results in a more efficient home. While windows in doors offer aesthetics, more glass means less efficiency. The most efficient doors have no glass or windows in them.

U-factor is the primary rating for efficiency on doors and windows. U-factor is the inverse of R-value, which is the rating used for insulation. Unlike R-value where higher is better, the lower the U-factor, the more energy efficient the door. Check the U-factor on doors at your local hardware store or online to help choose the most efficient door in your preferred style.

ENERGY STAR-certified doors are made of the most efficient materials, such as fiberglass, wood cladding and steel with polyurethane foam core.

They are built to fit snugly into their frames, reducing drafts and airflow.

When it comes to doors, you don't have to sacrifice style for efficiency. There are many styles available to match the architecture, whether your home is historic or modern.

When completely replacing a door and the frame, you can use expanding foam or caulk to fill the space between the door jamb and structural framing.

Upgrading the door you have

If a new door isn't in your budget, there are less expensive options to reduce air leakage and improve your home's efficiency.

All of that coming and going throughout the years can wear out weatherstripping. If you can see daylight around the edges of the door or underneath it, it's time to stop those air leaks. Weatherstripping around the door jamb can be adjusted to make a snug seal or if it's too worn, weatherstripping can be replaced completely. Apply one continuous strip along each side, and make sure it meets tightly at the corners.

Adding a storm door can also help with efficiency and is less expensive than replacing the entire door. Most storm doors have options for using a screen or glass. Swapping the screen for the glass insert can help save energy in both the winter and in the summer if you use air conditioning. Consider a storm door that's easy to switch between glass and screen so you can maximize the benefits.

Open the door to energy savings by improving the efficiency of your exterior doors – without compromising the aesthetics of your home.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.



Adding a storm door can help seal in your home and is less expensive than replacing the entire door.

Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



If you can see daylight around the edges of the door or underneath it, seal in those air leaks with weatherstripping and a door sweep.

Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST UTILITY SCAMS

"Your electric bill is past due, and we will cut off power to your home in the next hour if you don't pay us over the phone immediately!"

Have you ever received a threatening call like this from someone claiming to be from your local electric cooperative? Would you know what to do if you received a call like this?

No matter the season, scammers frequently target consumers, and members of Iowa's electric cooperatives are not immune. Phone scammers often appear to be calling from local numbers and claim to be from the local electric cooperative. Sometimes, the calls include prerecorded messages. In almost all the calls, the scammers threaten the innocent person on the other end of the line, demanding immediate payment to prevent disconnection of electric service.

Your local electric co-op will never contact you out of the blue to demand immediate payment or threaten immediate disconnection. If you receive a suspicious call, text or email from someone claiming to be from the co-op, please contact your electric co-op office directly by using the phone number on a recent bill or on the co-op's website to verify the communication. The best

defense against a utility scammer is an educated consumer; follow these tips from Utilities United Against Scams to protect yourself from a potential scam.

1 Protect personal information

Never provide or confirm personal information (Social Security number, date of birth) or financial information (banking account information, debit or credit card information) to anyone initiating contact with you and claiming to be from your local electric co-op. Never give out information or provide any payment type to any callers or unexpected individual(s) appearing at your door claiming to represent your co-op. Your local co-op will already have your relevant personal and account information.

2 Take your time

Do not be rushed. If you receive a call, text, email or visitor saying you have to pay your bill immediately to avoid disconnection, tell them you would like to verify that they are a legitimate co-op representative by calling a verified number for the local co-op office. Beware if a representative exhibits impatience, annoyance or anger when you question their authority. While a scammer will

discourage you from hanging up and calling the number on your utility bill, a real co-op representative will encourage you to do so for your own peace of mind.

3 Always ask questions

Ask the person contacting you to provide you with your account number, your last payment amount, date of payment and their employee identification number. If the individual is a legitimate utility representative, this information will be readily accessible. If not, hang up or shut the door, and call your utility directly to report the suspicious activity.

4 Contact your utility directly

If you receive a suspicious call or visit, please contact the local police and your electric co-op immediately. Share details that the scammer told you which might aid in a possible criminal investigation.

For more information on protecting yourself against various scams, visit the Iowa Attorney General's website at www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov and click Consumer Tips & Information under the FOR CONSUMERS tab.



SCOTCHEROOS – AN IOWA DELICACY

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

One of the highlights of summer events is getting to sample all the tasty, homemade treats at picnics, potlucks, parties and more. Iowans are masters of making these informal meals memorable.

When I attended a local high school graduate's reception in May, I couldn't believe my good fortune. At the end of the buffet line, there was a beautiful sight, sure to warm the heart of an Iowan – a huge tray of homemade scotcheroos, all cut into generous portions.

Since it's important to eat a balanced diet, I put a grilled hamburger on one side of my plate and a big scotcheroo on the other side.

I've been a scotcheroo fan since I was a kid. Well into adulthood, I assumed everyone knew about scotcheroos and loved them. After I published my book "A Culinary History of Iowa," I discovered that a surprising number of non-Iowans have never heard of these delicacies. Say it isn't so! It's hard to imagine life without this incredible concoction of cereal, chocolate, butterscotch and peanut butter that's fun to say (doesn't "scotcheroo" sound like a fancy dog?) and even more fun to create.

A convenient history

Occasionally, a member of the media asks to interview me about the origins of the famed scotcheroo. At best, the history is unclear. Some reports say the recipe made its first appearance on the side of Rice Krispies® boxes in the mid-1960s, although there's no definitive answer about who invented scotcheroos – or where.

While some food snobs might sneer at something based on convenience foods, let's take a step back to when scotcheroos first hit the culinary scene. I think of the Iowa home cooks I've interviewed through the years, especially those who remember how popular "modern" convenience foods



were in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. At that time, processed, time-saving foods were all the rage. Serving these types of foods was a sign you were on the cutting edge. It would have been trendier to bring a plate of scotcheroos to a party than a freshly made rhubarb crisp or apple pie.

Through the years, the Midwest has become the epicenter of scotcheroo enjoyment, and I, for one, am grateful.

Scotcheroos are a riff on Rice Krispies Treats, minus the marshmallows. This connection is a nice touch, since an Iowan helped create Rice Krispies Treats. After Mildred Ghrist Day earned her degree in home economics from Iowa State University, she landed a job with the Kellogg's cereal company. By 1939, Mildred and a co-worker invented what we know today as Rice Krispies Treats.

Simple goodness that stands apart

Some say scotcheroos are the Cadillac of Rice Krispies Treats. Even though they incorporate a few great twists, including peanut butter, melted

chocolate and butterscotch chips, scotcheroos don't really taste peanut buttery, nor do they taste quite like butterscotch. More than the sum of their parts, scotcheroos are chewy, crispy and downright addictive.

It's no wonder scotcheroo recipes often turn up in Iowa church cookbooks and community cookbooks – the places where people showcase their culinary "A game." These books abound with proven, practical recipes, meaning you can find most ingredients, if not all, at the local grocery store or your kitchen pantry. The simplicity of scotcheroo ingredients is just one more reason to love them.

Next time you need to bring treats to a picnic or potluck, just whip up a batch of scotcheroos. (Hey, I even learned recently that they freeze well if you want to make them ahead of time.) You're sure to be the hit of the party.

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Visit our website at www.ieclmagazine.com



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