



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa

NOVEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Shop co-op local  
this holiday season

Gift ideas for energy savings

Slow cooker recipes

Win a Ring spotlight security camera ▶ See Page 3



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Knowing is half the battle

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*Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase **Iowa Electric Cooperative Living** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

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**Website**  
www.ieclmagazine.com

**Postmaster**  
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

**Change of Address**  
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Ryan Van Dyke, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES POWER IOWA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

BY CHUCK SODERBERG



You depend on your local electric cooperative to power your life every day, but did you know that your co-op also powers economic growth in your region?

Earlier this year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives commissioned an economic impact study through the esteemed Goss & Associates of Omaha. This study confirmed what we've long known about our association members: Iowa's locally owned electric co-ops contribute greatly to the state's economy.

For the five years ending in 2021, the study found that Iowa electric co-ops generated a total impact on the state of \$4.8 billion, produced \$688 million in wages and salaries, directly supported 1,961 jobs, generated self-employment income of \$79.5 million and paid \$144.7 million in state and local taxes.

## Powering people and communities

Powering lives and empowering communities are at the core of our cooperative mission. This economic analysis is helpful as we talk with legislators, policymakers and other decision-makers about how electric cooperatives invest in rural Iowa. For more than 80 years, electric co-ops have maintained reliable and affordable electric service, provided stable career opportunities and paid taxes, which have vast ripple effects throughout the regions we serve.

Not only have electric co-ops' economic impacts been historically significant, but the study also concludes that co-ops have assisted local and state organizations in retaining, attracting and expanding businesses in the state. Separate from their spending impacts, electric cooperatives invest in efforts to attract and retain jobs and investment within their communities.

In addition to their daily duty of providing safe, reliable and affordable power,

the study found that Iowa electric cooperatives had an impact of \$14.7 billion in economic development projects between 2018 and 2022, supporting 7,366 jobs (retained, attracted or expanded) during that same time period.

## An important connector

Your electric cooperative has undoubtedly supported many economic development initiatives over the decades by serving as an intermediary for U.S. Department of Agriculture revolving loan funds, among other programs and projects. For example, several Iowa electric co-ops have been instrumental in developing industrial speculative buildings to accommodate local business expansion or to attract new businesses and jobs to the community. Iowa's electric cooperatives also give generously to local charitable causes and support youth education initiatives.

You should be proud of your local electric co-op's contributions to Iowa's economy. As a member-owned and locally governed entity, your electric co-op is more than a service provider; it's a major economic engine of progress for your community.

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

Access a PDF of our 2023 economic impact study at [www.iowarec.org](http://www.iowarec.org).

## Economic Impact: By the Numbers

For the five years ending in 2021, Iowa electric cooperative investments and operations generated the following impacts on the state of Iowa.

\$14.7  
BILLION

Impact in economic development projects.

\$4.8  
BILLION

Overall economic activity.

\$688.1  
MILLION

In wages and salaries.

\$79.5  
MILLION

Self-employment income.

\$144.7  
MILLION

In state and local tax collections.

1,961  
JOBS

Supported each year.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# WIN A RING SPOTLIGHT SECURITY CAMERA!

Shine a light on your home security with a Ring spotlight security camera – a versatile outdoor dynamo fit for any property.

See vivid detail with HD video in almost any weather. Deter threats with built-in spotlights. And get real-time alerts when there's motion in your yard.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Nov. 30. 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 wireless weather station from the September issue was Nathan Stauffer, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!

## 75 YEARS AGO IN RURAL IOWA

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

### Claims Mark for Patience

Earl Belk of Bellevue believes he holds some kind of record.

He wrote about it in a letter recently to Edgar D. Beach, manager of the Maquoketa Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.

Belk said:

*Will you send me a contract? I believe we received one some time ago but were unusually busy and must have mislaid it, as we couldn't find it when our wires were strung between the buildings.*

*We are anxiously waiting for electricity and were very happy to see the poles set as it was TWELVE YEARS ago that we made the application.*

*It was in July, 1936, that I worked to get my neighbors to sign for REA.*

*Can anyone else say they've waited that long?*

# CIPCO AND DAIRYLAND POWER BATTERY PROJECTS AWARDED DOE CLEAN ENERGY FUNDING

Five rural communities, including two in Iowa, will see improved grid resilience and reliability because of a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the National Renewables Cooperative Organization (NRCO) has announced. The funds will help bring cutting-edge, long-duration energy storage to five electric cooperative-served communities.

### In Iowa, the projects are:

- Meswaki Indian Settlement in Tama County, served by Central Iowa Power Cooperative
- Waukon in Allamakee County, served by Dairyland Power Cooperative

NRCO and its project partners will use the funding to bring five vanadium flow batteries (VFBs) capable of discharging 700 kW to 3.6 MW of electricity for up to 20 hours to these rural communities. The grant is part of \$325 million available from DOE's Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations.

"Long-duration energy storage is necessary for the clean energy transition, and we are excited to partner with DOE to demonstrate

the capabilities of VFBs in rural communities. Electric cooperatives are innovators, and the five sites our members have selected will help demonstrate to other utilities the many beneficial uses for long-duration energy storage," says Mike Keyser, CEO of NRCO.

Long-duration energy storage (LDES) allows utilities to charge up when renewable energy is plentiful, and then discharge for an extended period in the evenings and overnight hours. LDES also provides reliability during extended outages, allowing crews to assess and address issues while minimizing consumer impact.

"Electric cooperatives are an integral part of the communities they serve, and as not-for-profit organizations, their actions are rooted in doing what's best for people and the community," Keyser says. "This chapter of the story is about co-ops bringing innovation to rural America that provides new economic opportunities while enhancing grid resilience and charting a path to a cleaner energy future."



2 KIDS  
IN COLLEGE  
\$115,000  
MORTGAGE

RESTORING  
POWER TO  
THE  
COMMUNITY

BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S  
YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH. The last thing he needs is for you to drive into his utility truck because you ignored the flashing lights, cones and signs. When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.

MOVE OVER  
SLOW DOWN



# FIRE MOVES FAST

In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a major fire. Heating is the second leading cause of home fires. In Iowa, the fall and winter months can lead to the increased use of fireplaces, wood stoves and space heaters.

**To protect your home and family from a fire, follow these tips:**

- 1 Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from fireplaces, wood stoves, space heaters and radiators.
- 2 When you leave a room or go to bed, turn heaters off or unplug them.
- 3 Plug space heaters directly into the outlet and never use an extension cord or power strip.
- 4 Make sure your heater has an automatic shut-off switch that turns it off if it tips over.
- 5 Have your furnace, chimney and chimney connector inspected by a professional each winter. To the extent possible, make repairs before cool weather sets in.
- 6 Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms and test them every month.



## SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

**RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED 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 \$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](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com) with "Cover Submission" in the subject line. **NEW: Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.**



## LIHEAP APPLICATION PERIOD IS OPEN



The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) reminds consumers that limited financial heating assistance is available to income-eligible utility customers through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The annual application period runs from Nov. 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. The application period for homes with elderly or disabled residents began Oct. 1.

The LIHEAP program is designed to help low-income homeowners and renters pay a portion of their primary home heating costs through a one-time payment made directly to the utility or heating fuel vendor. Under LIHEAP or the weatherization assistance program, Iowa law protects qualified applicants who are the head of a household from being disconnected from natural gas or electric service from Nov. 1 through April 1. Although qualified applicants cannot be disconnected during the annual winter moratorium, the IUB urges all LIHEAP-certified customers to continue paying toward their energy bills through the winter to avoid accumulating high debt and facing potential utility service disconnection in the spring.

Eligibility for the federally funded LIHEAP program is based on household size and income, type of fuel, and type of housing. Interested applicants should review the federal income guidelines and then apply at the community action agency serving their area. Heating assistance dollars for LIHEAP and the weatherization assistance program are limited.

If you're not sure where to apply, visit [humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply](http://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply). To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

# SHOP CO-OP LOCAL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

It's time to start this year's holiday shopping, and it's easy to be merry when you surprise a loved one with a special gift.

During the holiday season, shopping local is a festive way to support your friends and neighbors who are also business owners. Many of these small businesses are served by Iowa's electric cooperatives and share a common mission – being committed to the communities they serve.

To help your holiday gift-giving or list-making, we've combined a list of electric cooperative-served businesses that offer unique gifts to place under the Christmas tree or in a stocking. As you embark on Santa Claus duties this year, keep in mind that this list is just a sampling of local businesses. Take a walk along your community's Main Street or explore all that your local area offers for additional inspiration to shop local this holiday season!



## 300 ACRES

[www.300acres.llc](http://www.300acres.llc)

**Facebook:** 300acres

300 Acres is a local and veteran-owned business in Ocheyedan (located on Business Corner near May City). They focus on supplying the highest-quality products, which include LED lights, shovels, coffee, coolers, custom decals, signs and much more.



## ADVANTAGE APPAREL

[www.advapparel.com](http://www.advapparel.com)

**Facebook:** advapparel2019

Advantage Apparel is a local small town, family-owned, one-stop apparel shop in Albia. They pride themselves on quick turnarounds, with quality service guaranteed on business, school and sports logos, stadium chairs, uniforms, sportswear and other items.



## BLOOMS & THINGS

[www.albiablooms.com](http://www.albiablooms.com)

**Facebook:** albiablooms

The shop offers arrangements for every special occasion. It also has green plants, silk flowers and small gift items such as candles, soaps and journals. Orders can be delivered throughout Albia and surrounding communities within a 20-minute radius.





## BOUILLON FLOWER & GARDEN

[www.bouillonflower.org](http://www.bouillonflower.org)

**Facebook:** [BouillonFlowerGarden](#)

Bouillon Flower & Garden in Greene is a one-stop-shop for flower-related needs. They boast an impressive selection of flowers and arrangements for everyone's taste! From home décor options to bouquets for special occasions – there's always a reason to invest in a beautiful arrangement.



## BRITCHES 'N' BOWS COUNTRY STORE & BOUTIQUE

**Facebook:** [shopbnb](#)

Gift and décor shop in Panora offering modern farmhouse décor, boutique-style clothing and trendy accessories.



## CORNCRIB DESIGNS

[www.corncribdesigns.com](http://www.corncribdesigns.com)

**Facebook:** [corncribdesigns](#)

A trending shop filled with farmhouse vibes, traditional and seasonal home décor, apparel, and vintage and repurposed finds. The business features a mobile trailer, which offers pop-up shopping around rural Iowa. Corncrib Designs strives to inspire patrons to transform your home into a place you love.



## FOREST MILLS QUILT SHOP

[www.forestmillsquilts.com](http://www.forestmillsquilts.com)

**Facebook:** [forestmillsquiltshop](#)

This unique quilt shop is located just south of the beautiful Yellow River outside of Postville on the family's Century Farm. They carry material, quilt kits, quilts for sale and host events.



## GRAND VIEW BEEF

[www.grandviewbeef.com](http://www.grandviewbeef.com)

**Facebook:** [GrandViewBeef](#)

For more than 100 years, the Severson family has been farming in Clarion and calling Grand View Farm and Ranch home. Now, people across the nation can enjoy their products. Send or receive a box of this family-raised, 100% grass-fed beef. The meat is shipped on Monday in a compostable cooler with dry ice and arrives within two days.



## J&J CANDLES

[www.jjcandlesmanson.com](http://www.jjcandlesmanson.com)

**Facebook:** [jjcandlesmanson](#)

J&J Candles is a family-owned business that has been offering handcrafted, scented products for more than 25 years. They feature nearly 200 scents. In addition to individual sales, they offer wholesale pricing with minimum orders and do fundraisers. All the scented products are made at its facility south of Manson.



## MOLLY'S

**Facebook:** [mollyscountrystore](#)

Molly's in Audubon is an old barn turned retail store with home décor, clothing and more!



## PROMISELAND WINERY

[www.Promiselandwinery.com](http://www.Promiselandwinery.com)

**Facebook:** [promiselandwinery](#)

Located on the southern hills of Guttenberg along the Great River Road, this winery offers a full experience of tasty wines, food, six boutiques for shopping and beautiful views!



## RECREATION UNLIMITED

[www.recreationunlimited.net](http://www.recreationunlimited.net)

**Facebook:** [recreationunlimited04](#)

A family-owned and operated business in Traer offering top-notch outdoor equipment and accessories, including Green Mountain Grills.



## THE RED SHED

**Hwy. 63, Bloomfield**

The Red Shed has a wide variety of gifts, handmade chocolate and Amish-made items.



## RHONDA'S COUNTRY RETREAT

**Facebook:** [rhondascountryretreat](#)

Rhonda's Country Retreat was founded in October 2020. This home-based specialty shop offers Iowa-made home décor, jewelry, soy candles, Iowa wines and more. All available products can be purchased at her farm store or online.



## SHELBBIE DEBOLT DESIGNS

[www.etsy.com/shop/ShelbieDeBoltDesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/ShelbieDeBoltDesigns)

**Facebook:** [shelbiedeboltdesigns1](#)

Operating via an Etsy shop, Shelbie Ehlers makes custom clothing, including holiday and everyday items.



## SWEET HONEYMOON WINERY

[www.sweethoneymoonwinery.com](http://www.sweethoneymoonwinery.com)

**Facebook:** [sweethoneymoonwinery](#)

Sweet Honeymoon Winery is a craft winery in Calhoun County making quality wines (including dry wines) in small batches from imported grape juice from all around the world.

Because of this approach, the business offers varietals not normally available to wineries in our northern climate.

They also make an award-winning Mead (honey wine).

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



To find more local businesses in your area, check with your local chamber of commerce or electric cooperative. Happy shopping!



SPECTACULAR  
SLOW COOKER  
RECIPES

## SLOW COOKER MAID-RITES

- 3 pounds hamburger
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 can chicken gumbo soup
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 teaspoons dry mustard

Cook meat and drain. Dissolve bouillon in hot water. Add remaining ingredients and place in slow cooker for 4 hours.

**Karen Caldwell • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative**

## PEACHY KEEN SWEET POTATOES

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1 cup peach pie filling
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Put all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on low for 5-7 hours.

**Marlene Burns • Swisher  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SLOW COOKER PORK CUTLETS

- 1 can beef stock
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 package brown gravy mix
- 1 package onion soup mix
- 2 pounds pork cutlets
- ½ pound mushrooms
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- mashed potatoes

Pour beef stock, cream of mushroom soup, gravy mix and onion soup mix in slow cooker and stir together. Season cutlets with salt and pepper. Add to slow cooker and top with mushrooms. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Serve over mashed potatoes. *Serves 4-6*

**Tiana Stroman • Merrill  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SLOW COOKER APPLE CRISP

- 2 cans apple pie filling
- 1 package butter pecan cake mix
- ½ stick butter, sliced

In the order listed, layer ingredients in slow cooker. Don't stir. Cook on high for 2 hours.

**Cindy Pottebaum • Alton  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**



## CREAM CHEESE CHICKEN

- ½ cup butter
- 1 7-ounce envelope Italian dressing mix
- 2 pounds boneless chicken breasts
- 1 10.75-ounce can cream of chicken soup
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese  
mashed potatoes, rice or noodles

Melt butter in bottom of slow cooker on high. Stir in Italian dressing mix until well mixed. Cut chicken into 1-inch strips. Place chicken in slow cooker and stir to coat with butter and dressing mix. Cook covered on high for 2 hours.

Remove chicken and set aside. Add soup and cream cheese to liquid in slow cooker. Stir to melt until smooth and creamy. Add chicken back to slow cooker and turn to low until ready to serve.

Serve over mashed potatoes, rice or hot buttered noodles. Can be frozen for a great make-ahead meal. *Serves 6*

**Regina V. Lloyd • Linden**

**Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## SLOW COOKER PIZZA-LASAGNA

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 98-ounce package mini lasagna noodles
- 1 package pepperoni
- 1 28-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- ¾ cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 10 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, grated

Cook beef and onion until meat is browned, drain. Cook noodles until almost tender (you can substitute with rotini). Combine all ingredients except Mozzarella cheese in layers in slow cooker. Sprinkle Mozzarella cheese over top. Bake on low for 5-7 hours, or on high for 2 hours.

**Larae Van Wyhe • Lester**  
**Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## ITALIAN ROUND STEAK

- 2 pounds round steak  
salt and pepper
- 3 cans Italian diced tomatoes
- 2 cans French-style green beans  
onion, to taste, sliced

Cut steak into serving-sized pieces, season with salt and pepper. Place all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 7 hours. *Serves 4-5*

**Gladys Willey • Yale**

**Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## APPLE STREUSEL DESSERT

- 6 cups apples, sliced
- 1¼ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¾ cup milk
- 5 tablespoons butter, divided
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1½ cups Bisquick baking mix, divided
- ½ cup brown sugar  
ice cream or cream

Toss apples with spices. Place apples in greased slow cooker. In a bowl, combine milk, 2 tablespoons butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and ½ cup baking mix. Pour over apples. Combine 1 cup baking mix, brown sugar and 3 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle over apples. Cover and cook on low for 6-7 hours. Serve with ice cream or cream.

**Sue Cook • Deep River**

**T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

**WANTED:**

## SHEET PAN MEALS

**THE REWARD:**

**\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

**Deadline is Nov. 30**

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](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

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

**MAIL:** Recipes

*Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48,  
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

A woman with dark hair tied back is shown in profile, looking at a smart home control panel mounted on a light-colored wooden wall. The panel is a tablet displaying a user interface with various icons and a central lock icon. She is touching the screen with her right hand. The background is a plain wall with a light wood grain pattern.

# ENERGY-SAVING GADGETS & GIZMOS

BY PAUL WESSLUND

With the holidays approaching, shoppers will soon be eying an abundance of devices and gadgets to gift friends and loved ones – or to buy for themselves.

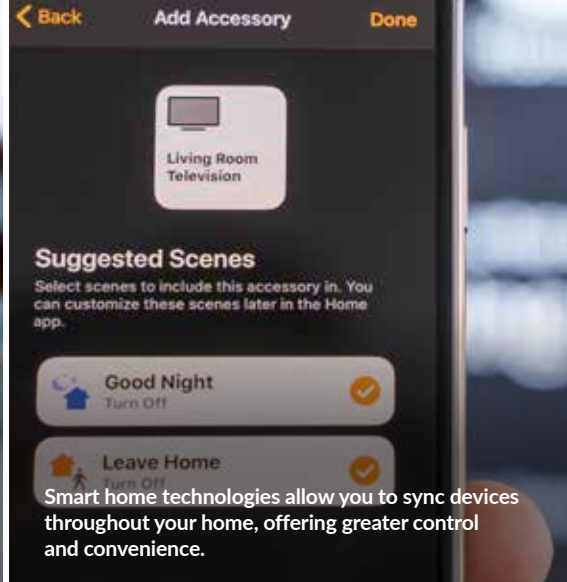
Many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including one often-overlooked perk: energy savings. With so many options available, choosing the best tech for your needs can be overwhelming.

**The following four tips can help you determine the right smart home technologies for your home.**





When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including energy savings.



Smart home technologies allow you to sync devices throughout your home, offering greater control and convenience.



Smart thermostats offer convenience and achievable energy savings.  
Photo Source: Ecobee

## 1 ASK YOURSELF HOW SMART YOU WANT YOUR HOME TO BE.

Smart plugs, energy-use apps and home monitors are cool devices that can help you save energy. But it helps to understand how they work to make the most of them. Before you invest your time and money, ask yourself, how much technology do you want? What are your habits when setting up and using the latest development? If you like to tinker, an energy app on your phone could be fun and help you save money. But as electronics get smarter, even non-tech-savvy people find them easier to use.

## 2 GET THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK.

The most frequently recommended energy-saving device is a smart thermostat. And that makes sense because the thermostat controls your heating and cooling, which account for the most energy consumption in your home. Smart thermostats can program an energy schedule to adjust the heating or cooling when you're sleeping or out of the house during the day. Additional smart thermostat features include detecting movement in a room to adjust energy use, learning your daily habits, responding to voice commands and tracking the weather.

Renters might even be able to convince a landlord to pay for an energy-saving smart thermostat.

If you have a heat pump, contact your electric co-op before using a smart thermostat. Lowering the temperature too much when you're not home could result in switching to more expensive auxiliary heat to bring the house back to room temperature.

Other devices that can produce energy savings for minimal cost and effort include smart light bulbs, outlets and charging stations.

## 3 DETERMINE YOUR ENERGY-SAVING GOALS.

A home energy monitor is one way to save on electricity, and the range of choices means you'll need to ask how much you're willing to pay and if it's worthwhile. One study found that spending about \$1,800 on a full home, commercially installed energy monitor could save about 16% on electric bills and pay for itself in 10-15 years. Much less ambitious approaches involve downloading an app on your phone to keep track of your electricity use and even turning smart appliances on and off when you're away.

## 4 DO A SIMPLE ENERGY CHECKUP.

Take a walk through your home with the intention of identifying everything that uses electricity. You'll likely notice a lot of functions that could be managed with smart devices. If your phone sits plugged in long after it's charged, smart power strips and smart outlets can stop the electricity use when the battery is at 100%. Smart

light bulbs can be controlled with an app on your phone, saving energy and giving your home that lived-in look when you're away. Ceiling fans can now adjust themselves for the best air flow, depending on the temperature. Motion detectors can turn indoor lights on and off when you enter or leave a room; even solar-powered outdoor lights can detect when you're approaching and light the way.

With just a little planning, you can make sure this gift-giving season is merry, bright – and smart.

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



Smart lights allow you to manage home lighting from anywhere, anytime.

# MINI-SPLIT SYSTEMS ARE GAINING TRACTION

BY LESLIE TATE

A ductless air conditioner, also referred to as a mini-split system or air source heat pump, offers a variety of options for heating and cooling, particularly for older homes and buildings. Several years ago, mini-split models were thought to be inefficient for colder climates, but these systems have made great strides, making them a more viable option for most U.S. regions.

Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the most attractive feature is the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home.

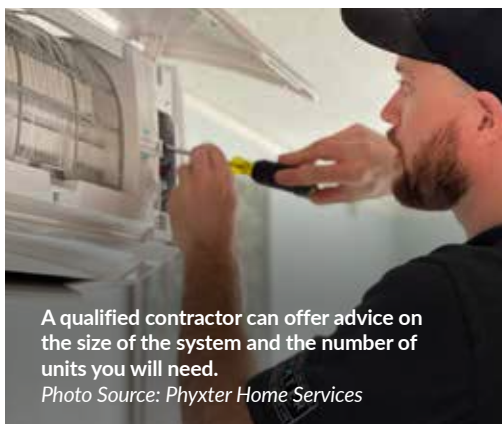
## System benefits

An indoor air-handling unit (evaporator) and an outdoor compressor/condenser make up the two major components of a mini-split system. In many ways, mini-split air conditioners operate like conventional air conditioning systems. In cooling mode, the system transfers heat from inside the home to the outside. With a central air system, cold air is blasted throughout all the ducts in the home from a single air handler, such as a large fan in an attic or basement. A mini-split can blow air from up to six independent air handlers and regulate temperatures for different rooms or areas inside the home.

Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or homes where a duct system may not be practical. When a duct system is too expensive to install, a mini-split system can efficiently heat and cool a space while keeping installation costs down.

## Choices for comfort

A mini-split can also settle thermostat disagreements for those working or living together with different comfort preferences. For example, mini-split systems are frequently installed in classrooms to give teachers control over the temperature in their spaces.



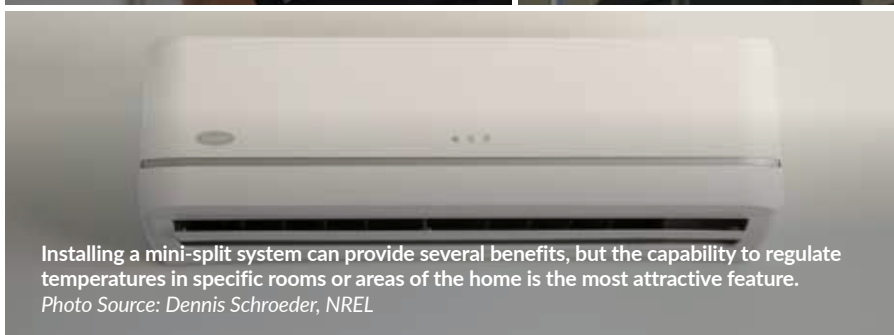
A qualified contractor can offer advice on the size of the system and the number of units you will need.

*Photo Source: Phyxter Home Services*



Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or homes where a duct system may not be practical.

*Photo Source: Gary Cziko*



Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home is the most attractive feature.

*Photo Source: Dennis Schroeder, NREL*

## Technology creates advantages

Compared to conventional HVAC systems, mini-splits can significantly reduce energy consumption and have the potential to save up to 30% on cooling costs and 50% on heating costs. Additionally, inverter technology, which enables variable-speed operation, is frequently included with mini-split systems. This results in increased energy efficiency and a cheaper cost of operation as the system adjusts its output based on the actual heating or cooling demand.

In addition to greater control over heating and cooling, mini-splits can also be managed with a mobile app, smart thermostat or remote control. They provide better air quality, and homeowners can easily replace the filters themselves, saving money on the pricey duct cleanings needed for conventional air conditioners. Reheat dehumidification is a common feature of mini-split systems to maintain a steady room temperature while lowering humidity.

A few factors should be considered before installing a mini-split system. Determining the right size and quantity of units is a key first step. The location of the system is another important factor to consider.

A mini-split should be installed where it will help maximize air distribution throughout the home. A qualified contractor can offer advice on these factors. Additionally, your home should be properly sealed in order for the mini-split system to operate efficiently.

For many homeowners, a mini-split ductless heating and cooling system can be a fantastic alternative for heating and cooling. Contact your local electric cooperative if you have questions about mini-split systems.

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



# HOW TO SELECT A NEW STOVETOP

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

When considering a new stovetop, it pays to consider the options that will make the most of your cooking experience. Fortunately, there are many great choices in the market today.

Most people who enjoy cooking have pretty strong opinions about their preferred fuel choice: gas or electric. Induction is a newer option for home stovetops, which is growing in popularity.

According to a study completed by the Electric Power Research Institute, 74% of the energy from an electric range is transferred to food, versus 40% on a gas range. Induction cooktops are the most efficient option at 90% energy transferred to food. Regardless of your stovetop choice, right-sizing pots and pans to the burner is important to avoid wasting energy.

## Evaluating electric cooktops

Electric cooktops are a tried-and-true option for many homes and are typically the most affordable option. Glass-top models offer a cleaner look than the traditional coil elements. They are easier to clean but tend to be a bit more expensive. The most common complaint about electric cooking is that the heating controls are not as fast or precise.

## Pros and cons of gas stovetops

Many home chefs prefer gas stovetops because you can easily see the size of the flame, a visual clue that helps you control the cooking temperature. Temperature adjustments are also faster and more precise than on electric stovetops. However, there are some concerns with safety and indoor air quality associated with gas stoves because gas emissions can be harmful to your health. To help reduce indoor air pollution, always use your exhaust fan when using your gas stovetop. Ideally, your exhaust fan should be vented to the home's exterior.

Access is also a consideration. Natural gas is typically available in more populated areas, while rural customers may need a propane storage tank installed outside their homes to use a gas stove.

## Exploring newer induction stovetop options

An induction stovetop can offer a higher-end cooking experience than a standard electric stovetop, and some people prefer it to cooking on gas.

Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste. Instead of heating the stove's surface, they heat the pans themselves, resulting in faster cooking times. They also allow for more precise temperature control, which can deliver better results.

Induction cooktops are typically more expensive than similar gas or electric models. They also require you to use specific cookware. Stainless steel and cast-iron cookware are both

compatible with induction cooktops. If you want to test your pots and pans to see if they are induction-compatible, do the magnet test. If a magnet sticks to the bottom of the pan, it will work on an induction stove.

If you are remodeling and have a gas range, consider running electrical to support an induction cooktop if you change your mind in the future. Setting up the power supply during a remodel can offer significant savings.

If you are considering making the switch, keep an eye on any incentives for your state or region. A rebate for replacing your gas stove with an electric one may be available under the Inflation Reduction Act.

*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.*



Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste.

# IOWA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CONNECT WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

More than 25 representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives traveled to the nation's capital in September to advocate for their co-op members. While in Washington, D.C., the group attended high-level briefings on key issues impacting the electric industry and met with all six members of Iowa's Congressional Delegation to discuss priorities and concerns.

Advocates shared concerns that could impact electric cooperatives' ability to provide reliable and affordable power, including federal Environmental Protection Agency mandates that may force electric generation plants to shut down prematurely. Additionally, co-op representatives talked about continued supply chain challenges and how they impact day-to-day operations.

Co-op advocates also asked their senators and representatives to support permitting reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act to avoid costly delays in the permitting process. The group urged the Iowa Congressional Delegation to authorize an increase in funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant program as part of the Farm Bill reauthorization to support our rural Iowa communities.

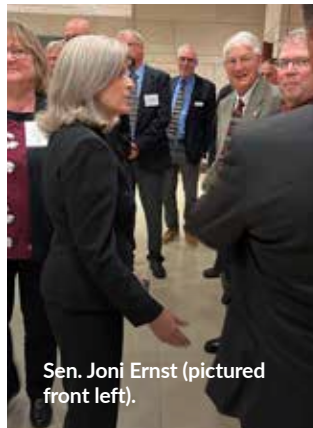
Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster funding was also a concern, as the electric co-op group asked the Iowa Delegation to support supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund to ensure that support is available should a natural disaster strike Iowa.

We appreciate the service of Iowa's elected officials and the tireless work of their staff who help look out for Iowans in the Halls of Congress.

*Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*



Rep. Zach Nunn (pictured in the center).



Sen. Joni Ernst (pictured front left).



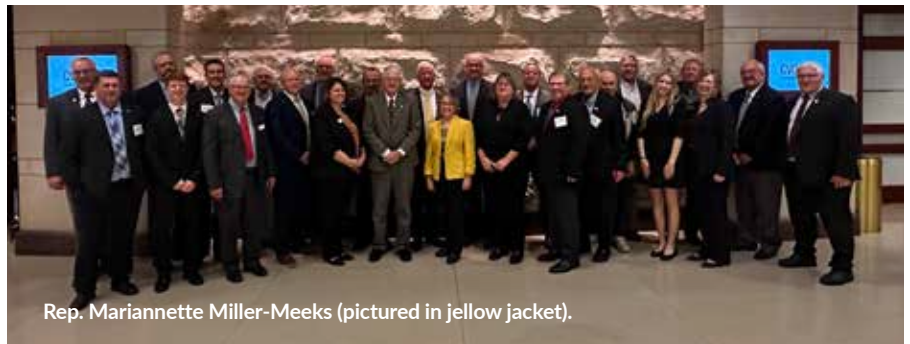
Rep. Ashley Hinson (pictured in red jacket).



Sen. Charles Grassley.



Rep. Randy Feenstra (pictured at the front of the room).



Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (pictured in yellow jacket).



# KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When I was growing up, some of the most popular toys had their own cartoon shows. This included G.I. Joe, who also narrated public service announcements (PSA).

These PSAs addressed something dangerous kids did unintentionally – such as running out into traffic. After the kids learned the right way to do things, each message ended the same: “Now you know. And knowing is half the battle.”

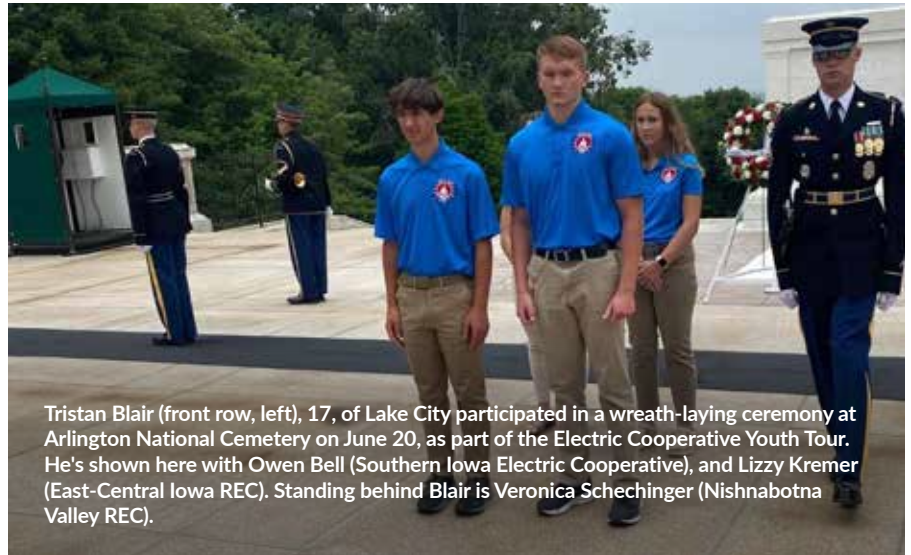
Fast forward to today. I’m concerned we’re letting young people wander down a dangerous road when we fail to teach them history, including the significance of Veterans Day each Nov. 11.

Its roots trace back to World War I. Fighting ceased when an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – Nov. 11, 1918. By 1919, the date became known as Armistice Day, although Congress renamed it Veterans Day in 1954. Veterans Day continues to honor American veterans of all wars for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

## What are we teaching youth?

What’s the state of affairs as we approach Veterans Day in 2023? A recent Morning Consult poll found that only 16% of Gen Z (people born between 1997-2012) are proud to live in the U.S. Every U.S. military branch is struggling to meet its recruiting goals. Volunteering, in general, is also suffering.

A report released in January 2023 by AmeriCorps and the U.S. Census Bureau shows that less than one-quarter of Americans age 16 and older volunteered from September 2020 to September 2021. That’s down from 30% in 2019. Annual hours donated by volunteers has plunged during the



Tristan Blair (front row, left), 17, of Lake City participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery on June 20, as part of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. He's shown here with Owen Bell (Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative), and Lizzy Kremer (East-Central Iowa REC). Standing behind Blair is Veronica Schechinger (Nishnabotna Valley REC).

past two decades, sinking from 52 hours in 2002 to 25 hours today.

I think these disturbing trends are connected to “knowing is half the battle.” What are we teaching young people about the importance of volunteering and serving others? Do we invite our kids and grandkids to place flowers and American flags by the graves of veterans? Do we encourage students to learn about the sacrifices our armed forces have made to protect our freedom?

## Youth Tour offers new perspectives

I’m grateful the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sponsored by many of Iowa’s electric cooperatives, offers students the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. This trip is dedicated to learning about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, while giving students a greater understanding of their role as American citizens.

This year’s Youth Tour participant from my rural electric co-op (Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association) was Tristan Blair (17) of Lake City. At Arlington National Cemetery, Blair escorted fellow students who laid the wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“I felt instant sympathy for anyone who lost a loved one in combat,” says Blair, whose thoughts also turned to his family members who’ve served.

These family members include Dennis Moulds (great-grandpa), Bill Marine (grandpa), Steve and Sheri Nockles (grandpa and grandma), Adam Nockles (uncle), Cara (Blair) Hove, and Kolby Blair (cousin). Some served in the Army, while others joined the Air Force. They included a tank mechanic in South Korea, a signal corps communication specialist and more.

“Thank you so much for asking me to get this information,” Blair told me. “I had no idea about some of that stuff.”

Knowing is half the battle. Once you plant the seeds of knowledge, good things follow.

“Thank you to all the veterans and current soldiers,” Blair added. “I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this without the sacrifices you made for my generation and the whole country.”

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*

Visit our website at [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com)



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