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● SEPTEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

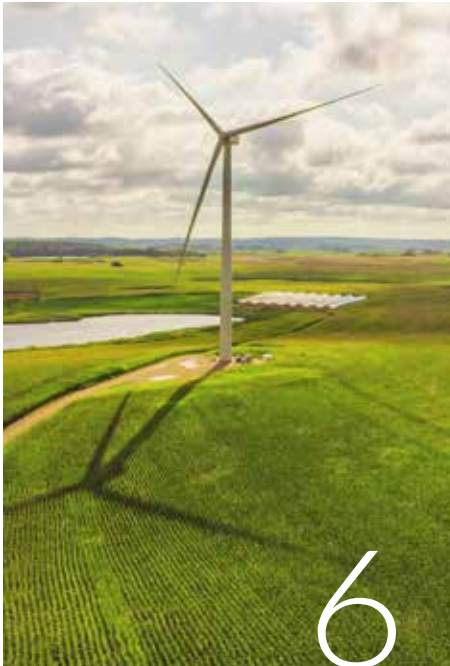
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**Meet the 2023  
Shine the Light  
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### ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Gratia Masters, 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!

# EMERGENCY PREPARATION BEGINS WITH PERSONAL PLANNING

BY SCOTT MEINEKE



There's a common saying in disaster planning, *"It's not a matter of if a disaster will take place; it's a matter of when it will happen."*

Since 2004, National Preparedness Month has been observed each September in the U.S. to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

This year's preparedness campaign focuses on preparing older adults for disaster. Older adults can face greater risks in extreme weather events and emergencies, especially when living alone, are low-income, have a disability or live in rural areas.

One of the most important steps in preparation is to have emergency supplies on hand. The following are tips to help you or loved ones create an emergency kit.

**Step 1: Consider how an emergency might affect your needs and plan accordingly.** It is crucial to consider what kinds of resources you use daily and what you might do if those resources are limited or unavailable.

Consider creating two kits. In one kit, put everything you need to stay where you are and make it on your own for several days. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you need to leave your home.

Basic emergency supplies include water, food, pet food, a flashlight, a radio, batteries, a first aid kit and personal sanitation items (moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties).

**Step 2: Have medications and medical supplies readily available.** If you take medicine, have what you

need to make it on your own for at least a week. You might not have access to a medical facility or drugstore during an emergency. Keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment information.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services, such as home health care, treatment or transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans.

**Step 3: Keep extra essentials in your home.** If you use eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries and oxygen, always have extras in your home. Also have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare or Medicaid cards readily available.

**Step 4: Include copies of essential documents in your emergency supply kits.** Include family records (and contact information), wills, power of attorney documents, deeds, social security numbers, credit card and

bank information, insurance cards and tax records. It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container.

Emergencies, especially natural disasters, can often impact electricity services. Keep your local electric cooperative's phone number handy and always avoid downed power lines. If you plan to operate a generator during a lengthy power outage, take steps now to ensure you follow all necessary precautions to use it safely. Your local electric co-op is an excellent resource for safety information.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient, and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

For more information, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

*Scott Meineke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a WiFi Smart Weather Station!

Ambient Weather's personal weather station allows monitoring of your home and backyard weather conditions with the brilliant, easy-to-read LCD color display. Monitor indoor and outdoor conditions, including wind speed, wind direction, rainfall, UV, barometric pressure, indoor/outdoor temperature, indoor/outdoor humidity and more. The weather station also calculates dew point, wind chill and heat index.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Sept. 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 beef bundle from the July issue was Gerald Kinney, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30

## 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 a 1948 edition (verbatim content from our archives):

### **New headaches for REA as copper prices take jump**

Increases in the price of copper from 21 cents to 23 cents per pound are producing new headaches for REA, according to *Rural Electrification Magazine* Editor William S. Roberts in Washington, D.C.

Copper wire is already so high, Roberts relates, that REA engineers say they would not recommend it if it were not for the fact that aluminum wire, the only alternative, is almost impossible to buy. Roberts points out that high construction can be met with increased member-consumption on rural electric systems.

However, he is quick to add that shortages of material for increasing load-carrying capacities are hampering rural systems with the most need for balancing their costs revenue. Wholesale power is the biggest single expense item in the operation of a rural system.



## USDA GRANTS WILL EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND FOOD SECURITY IN IOWA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced it is investing \$6,209,900 in 10 grants to expand access to health care and food security in Iowa. These 10 investments are funded through the Emergency Rural Health Care Grants program. Many of these grants help organizations recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and support communities served by Iowa's rural electric cooperatives.

**Decatur County Hospital in Leon is receiving a \$274,600 grant.** The hospital will be equipped with financial resources to better serve the residents of this rural community and the surrounding rural areas.

**Floyd County Medical Center in Charles City is receiving a \$1,000,000 grant to purchase and install heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.** Once in operation, the new energy-efficient HVAC systems will help eliminate airborne pathogens, including COVID-19 threats, and increase the comfort of patients, staff and visitors.

**Food Bank of Iowa is receiving a \$1,000,000 grant.** This project will reimburse the food bank for operating expenses associated with pandemic-related food distribution. Once complete, the project will help fight food insecurity in rural areas across the state.

**Greene County Medical Center is receiving a \$1,000,000 grant.** The project will provide the hospital in Jefferson with financial resources to better serve the residents of this region.

**Humboldt County Memorial Hospital in Humboldt is receiving a \$249,900 grant to construct a new outpatient**

**therapy and mental health clinic.** This project will expand health care services, including services for mental health needs and preventive pandemic services.

**Knoxville Community Hospital is receiving a \$699,900 grant.** This project will replace lost revenues caused by pandemic-related challenges and mitigate the expenses of staffing and testing to better serve the residents of this rural community in Marion County.

**Lee County is receiving a \$974,000 grant to construct a public health building in Fort Madison.** This project will provide a public health facility with a main office, workspace for staff, ambulance bays, as well as testing space for COVID-19 and future pandemics, to better serve the health care needs of area residents.

**Sioux Center Health in Sioux County is receiving a \$125,200 grant to construct an infusion center.** This project will build a separate entrance to the hospital for infusions and will provide dedicated treatment bays to accommodate all types of intravenous treatments, including those for chemotherapy, inflammatory bowel diseases and infections to better serve the area.

**Van Buren County Hospital in Keosauqua is receiving a \$419,700 grant.** The project will provide the hospital with financial resources to better serve the residents of this region.

**Virginia Gay Hospital in Vinton is receiving a \$466,600 grant.** The project will provide the hospital with financial resources to better serve the residents of this rural Benton County community and the surrounding rural areas.

# PROPOSED EPA RULE THREATENS ENERGY RELIABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

In August, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) filed comments in opposition to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed rule to further regulate power plant emissions. NRECA CEO Jim Matheson issued the following statement on behalf of the nation's electric cooperatives.

"The EPA's proposal is the wrong plan at a critical time for our nation's energy future. It is unrealistic, unachievable and will reduce key generating resources just as Americans are increasing their reliance on electricity. From deploying microgrids and renewables to launching demand-response

programs, electric cooperatives take an innovative and diverse approach as they work toward a responsible energy future. But expecting the industry to generate more electricity with fewer resources while adhering to unrealistic timelines is not a serious or practical approach.

The energy future outlined by the EPA will result in more blackouts, higher costs and greater uncertainty for Americans. And it will magnify today's reliability challenges with grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid. When you find yourself in a hole, the first step is to stop digging. The EPA needs to put down their shovel."

## WHY THE EPA'S PROPOSAL IS CONCERNING TO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

- The proposal hinges on the widespread adoption of emerging technologies: clean hydrogen and carbon capture and storage. While both technologies are promising, they are not yet widespread or commercially available and have not been "adequately demonstrated" as required by the Clean Air Act.
- The proposal violates the Clean Air Act by giving the EPA vast new authority of major economic and political significance without a clear statement from Congress.
- The proposed rules contain timelines that are unrealistic and unachievable. The compliance deadlines endanger new and existing natural gas plants and all but ensure coal units will opt to shut down by 2035. The requisite infrastructure cannot be expected to be in place due to cost, supply chain challenges, permitting, public opposition, land ownership/access and more.



## ENTER TO WIN

RECEIVE \$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](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com) with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.



In the U.S., wind currently generates twice the amount of electricity it did five years ago and provides 10% of the nation's electricity.

# WIND ENERGY IS SOARING

BY PAUL WESSLUND

**Wind energy is big and getting bigger, in more ways than one.**

In the U.S., wind currently generates twice the amount of electricity it did five years ago and provides 10% of the nation's electricity – a share expected to grow to more than 25% by 2050.

The basics behind wind power technology is a tall pole with rotor

blades at the top. You've likely seen vast fields of those turbines, with white rotor blades spinning lazily around across the Iowa countryside. But they're not lazy at all, and that's another way wind energy is big – in physical size.

### Bigger turbines make more electricity

Wind turbine blades seem to circle slowly due to an optical illusion resulting from their size. The tips of those rotors are likely to be moving at more than 150 miles per hour.

There's a reason for that size. Wind turbines are getting bigger and taller to capture more wind high in the air. The average wind turbine height has increased from about 190 feet in 2000 to nearly 300 feet today, which is as tall as the Statue of Liberty. During that time, the size of the rotor blades doubled, making a circle more than 400 feet in diameter. That size growth has tripled the amount of electricity a wind turbine can produce, lowering the cost of wind power.

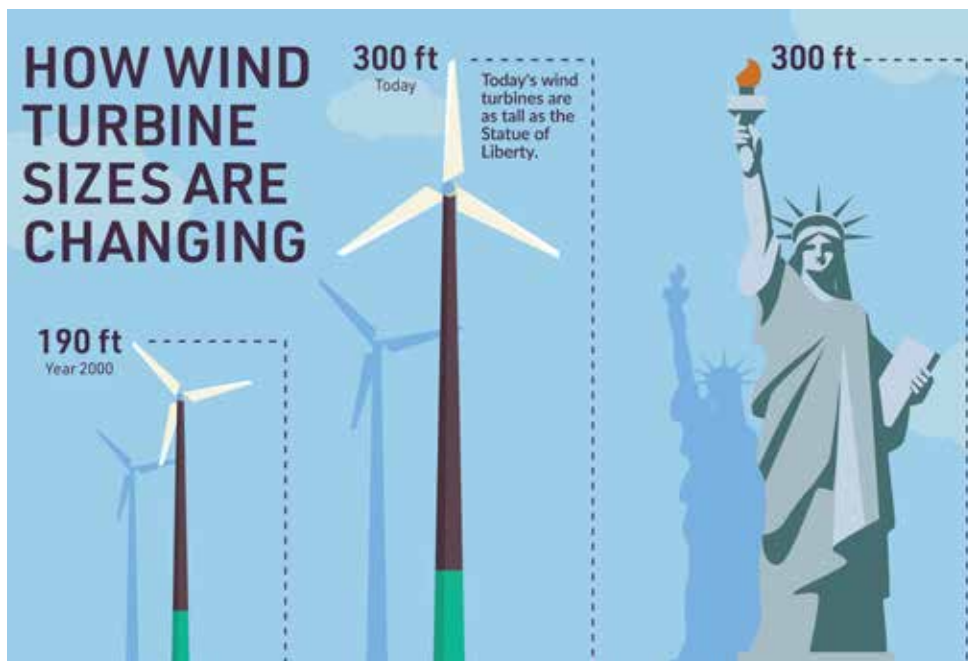
### Location of turbines is changing

One wind turbine can generate enough electricity to power about 900 homes, and they're being installed at a rate of about 3,000 a year. Today, there are more than 72,000 turbines in the U.S., primarily located in the middle of the country. But that's about to change.

Federal and state governments are encouraging developers to build wind turbines out in the ocean, where winds are more constant, and the rotors could be even larger. Sixteen projects have been proposed and one estimate shows there's enough potential for offshore wind to supply nearly all our electricity. Offshore wind turbines are generally even larger than those used on land.

### Navigating real-world challenges

Bigger sizes can cause problems, though, like transporting rotor blades that average more than 100 feet long. Delivering those monsters can



cost more than \$30,000 in finding the right truck for the oversized load, planning the route, obtaining permits, checking clearances and recruiting escort vehicles. Researchers are already working on those problems. One solution is flexible blades that could be carried on three train cars. The blades could bend to allow the train to maneuver around curves.

As the wind industry has evolved, attention has been focused on bird deaths. As many as a million birds a year fly into spinning rotors. This poses a dilemma for wildlife and nature groups, who are generally supportive of renewable energy. The National Audubon Society, for example, supports wind power as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but urges careful planning to locate wind farms in ways that minimize risk to wildlife.

### Local, distributed energy resources

Besides large onshore and offshore wind farms, wind turbines can be used as a distributed energy resource. With support from the U.S. Department of Energy, there have been significant innovations in smaller-scale wind turbines to integrate some of the improvements seen in larger models, including longer blades to capture more wind and advanced composite materials. Smaller turbines can even be used to help power homes, farms, schools and businesses.

Across the U.S., several electric cooperatives and other rural utilities, including those in Iowa, have deployed one or more large-scale wind turbines in their local service territories as a local utility-scale resource to supplement their wholesale power supply. These kinds of local resources can help boost resiliency, hedge or reduce power supply costs, and support local economic development.

Wind energy and the technologies that power it will continue to evolve. For wind power, there will be opportunities for growth at both smaller and larger scales, as well as on land and offshore.

*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. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.*

There are currently more than 72,000 wind turbines in the U.S., primarily located in the central part of the country.  
Photo Source: American Public Power Association



Federal and state governments are encouraging developers to build wind turbines out in the ocean, where winds are more constant and rotors could be even larger.  
Photo Source: Nicholas Doherty



One challenge for wind is transporting rotor blades, which can average more than 100 feet long.  
Photo Source: Artur Zudin



# SCHOOL NIGHT

## RECIPES



### SIMPLE CHICKEN OR SHRIMP ALFREDO

- 8 ounces cream cheese**
- ½ cup butter**
- 1 cup milk**
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese**
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- ½ pound shrimp, detailed and cooked (or 2 chicken breasts, cooked and diced)**
- noodles, cooked**

Mix all ingredients, except meat, in a saucepan over medium heat until cooked through. Add meat and serve over noodles. Serves 2-4

**Marcy Gherian • Alvord**  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### BAKED TUNA SANDWICHES

- 3 eggs, hard-boiled and diced**
- 7 ounces canned tuna, drained**
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickles, diced**
- 1 tablespoon onion, diced**
- ½ cup mayonnaise**
- 1 cup cheese, cubed to taste**
- buns**

Mix ingredients, put on buns and wrap in aluminum foil. Bake at 225 degrees F for 25 minutes.

**Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan**  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

### CHICKEN STIR-FRY

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast**
- ¾ cup mayonnaise**
- 16 ounces frozen stir-fry vegetables**
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- rice**

Dice chicken, then cook in mayonnaise in a large skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and continue cooking until chicken is done and veggies are tender. Serve over rice. Serves 6

**Laura DeSmet • Larchwood**  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### BURGER BOWL

- 1 pound ground beef**
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt**
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 head lettuce, chopped**
- 1 cup cheese, shredded**
- 2 dill pickles, sliced**
- ¼ cup onion, chopped**
- salad dressing**

Brown ground beef and crumble until cooked. Add seasoned salt and pepper. Meanwhile, divide lettuce into four serving bowls. Top lettuce with ground beef, cheese, pickles and onion. Top with ranch, Thousand Island or your favorite dressing.

**Mary Gropper • Chelsea**  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative



## COMPANY GRAVY

- 2 pounds lean stew beef
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of onion soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- ½ cup water
- optional: rice, mashed potatoes or noodles

Place all ingredients in a slow cooker on low for 5-6 hours. Can also be baked covered in oven at 275 degrees F for 3½-4 hours. Stir before serving. Best served over rice, mashed potatoes or noodles. *Serves 8*

**Susie Jacobs • Allison  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## BISCUIT CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 roll refrigerator biscuits
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- ½ cup brown sugar
- mozzarella cheese

Brown ground beef and onion. Cut each biscuit into four pieces and layer on bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Mix spaghetti sauce and brown sugar with meat mixture. Pour over biscuits and bake at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes. Add mozzarella cheese and bake another 5-10 minutes. Gluten free option: Use one recipe box or homemade gluten free biscuits in place of refrigerator biscuits. *Serves 8*

**Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SWEET & SPICY CHICKEN WRAPS

- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups coleslaw mix
- 1 small scallion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha sauce
- 4 frozen breaded chicken tenders
- 4 8-inch flour tortillas

Combine sour cream, 1 tablespoon mayonnaise, sugar, seasoned salt and pepper. Stir in coleslaw mix and scallion (can substitute shredded cabbage and carrots for pre-made coleslaw mix). Create a sauce by combining ¼ cup mayonnaise and Sriracha sauce. Prepare chicken tenders according to package directions. Divide sauce and coleslaw mixture among tortillas and top with chicken tenders. Roll tortilla into a wrap. *Serves 4*

**Chris Daniels • Casey  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## TACO CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 package taco seasoning (4 tablespoons)
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 roll refrigerator pizza crust
- 4 ounces corn chips, crushed
- 1½ cups Mexican cheese, shredded
- optional toppings: salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper, diced tomato

Brown pork, chop into small pieces as it cooks and then drain. Stir in taco seasoning and sour cream until well blended. Spray 9x13-inch cake pan with cooking spray. Press pizza crust into pan and slightly up sides. Bake crust at 400 degrees F for 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle crust with half the crushed corn chips.

Spread meat mixture over corn chips. Sprinkle with cheese and top with remaining corn chips. Bake an additional 18-22 minutes or until cheese starts to brown and crust is baked.

Cut into squares and add salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper and diced tomatoes as desired. Can substitute 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese and ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese for Mexican cheese. *Serves 8*

**Barb Sexton • Rockwell City  
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association**

**WANTED:**

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION RECIPES

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

**Deadline is Sept. 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**  
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# ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their third-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

The judging committee reviewed essays from 126 outstanding nominations and selected three winners.

Congratulations to Erica Lindaman, who is recognized for her generous efforts through Gift of Giving; Betty Thronson, who is recognized for restoring hope for families through Project Flo; and Heather Weers, who is recognized for her compassion for children through Sleep in Heavenly Peace. These three winners have been awarded a \$2,500 donation to their charity.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at [www.iowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.iowaShineTheLight.com).

## GIFT OF GIVING

ERICA LINDAMAN'S PASSION FOR GIVING DOESN'T GO UNNOTICED

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Erica Lindaman saw a need and acted. The Clarion teacher started Gift of Giving 501c3 nonprofit organization to help collect Christmas gifts for children.

"We saw a need based on people not working as much," Lindaman explains. "Hours were cut because people had to stay home."

### A mission grows

Gift of Giving could have stayed with just meeting Christmastime needs, but that wasn't in Lindaman's plans.

Since that first Christmas, the program has grown exponentially. The organization now assists with everything from food insecurity to bedding and furniture.

"It has grown into this massive entity," she says. "We are trying to get people in Wright County to keep their clothing and pieces here rather than take them to a different county to donate."

Emily Bernhardt, one of Lindaman's many nominators, has known her for 13 years. "I think Erica has seen a



Erica Lindaman is presented with a check for her Gift of Giving charity.

*Gift of Giving continued:*

need in the community through her background being a teacher and working with students on a daily basis,” Bernhardt says. “She just stepped in to fulfill that need. I know she spends a lot of her personal time and effort working with Gift of Giving. Her whole family has become involved and quite dedicated.”

For Lindaman, it has almost become a full-time job – and one that she loves.

“I literally get between 20 and 30 texts, emails and Facebook messages saying, ‘I need this,’ or ‘How can you help me with this,’” she says. “We have extended where we are helping to pay for electric bills and water bills. We have provided gas cards for people who are having health problems. We are just here to give.”

### **A heart for giving**

That tenacity shines through for all to see, even when she may not want the credit.

“Erica has a huge heart,” Bernhardt says. “She may be quiet sometimes and likes to be in the background. But she has a huge heart and huge passion for the youth and families in the community.”

Today, Lindaman and Gift of Giving accept any items in Wright County. Those are stored in a temporary warehouse, where you can meet with Lindaman by appointment or visit one of the organization’s “pop-up” events.

“If you have a need, and you come to me, or you come to my mother or my father, or anyone who is involved in the organization, we’re going to find you a resource or the right person to help you,” she says.

Learn more about Gift of Giving at [www.facebook.com/groups/134251198297192](https://www.facebook.com/groups/134251198297192).

*Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.*



## **PROJECT FLO** **BETTY THRONSDON CONTINUES HER** **MOTHER'S LEGACY OF STEWARDSHIP**

**BY ERIN CAMPBELL**

Betty Thronson is pictured in the front row, far right, along with her parents (mom Flo) and siblings.

The Project Flo Association works to build hope in the Chickasaw County area by restoring homes. And it all started with a mother’s love for her community.

Betty Thronson of New Hampton was nominated for Shine the Light by her sister, Shirley Hoffman, a member-consumer of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative in Ionia. In her essay, Hoffman shared that she and Thronson come from a family of 15 children, and they established Project Flo in 2011 after the passing of their mother, Florence “Flo” Thronson. Their mother was known in the New Hampton area for her positive spirit of volunteerism and her children have made it their mission to keep her spirit alive through community service.

Thronson has served as president of Project Flo for more than 11 years and is responsible for gathering family, friends and neighbors once a year in June to offer needed home repairs in the Chickasaw County region. These essential repairs help local families take control of their homes and help restore their faith in humanity. Often, the homes would be deemed unsafe and homeowners’ insurance could be jeopardized if the repairs weren’t made. Hoffman says, “The impact Betty has made on the residents, neighborhoods and businesses in Chickasaw County is immeasurable. Her dedication and leadership have significantly improved the lives of many individuals in need.”

### **A widespread impact**

Project Flo coordinated 80 volunteers working on six projects in 2023,

including home repairs for a disabled veteran, a young family of five, a single mother of three, a low-income couple with a disability, and a retired man who is disabled. The volunteer group of carpenters, plumbers, electricians and masonry professionals use their vast skills to repair steps and sidewalks, install flooring, paint, perform landscaping, remove debris, repair bathrooms, and replace doors and windows.

Since Project Flo began, Thronson’s organization has assisted more than 30 homes in addition to helping with repairs at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and St. Joseph Community School in New Hampton. Thronson takes charge of coordinating the grant and fundraising endeavors for Project Flo. She then conducts a thorough assessment of the tasks needed for each project and prioritizes them. During June each year, Thronson shifts into project mode and reaches out to local businesses to coordinate supplies and services.

Thronson also coordinates volunteer assistance to ensure each home project has the right crew ready to work. Hoffman says, “When Betty visits a work site, her infectious energy fills the air with jubilation, laughter and camaraderie. Volunteers of all ages are thrilled to see Betty, recognizing her as the glue that holds the family and project together.”

The \$2,500 Shine the Light donation will be invested to purchase much-needed renovation equipment and supplies for Project Flo.

Learn more about Project Flo at [www.thronson.com](http://www.thronson.com).

*Article submitted by Erin Campbell, director of communications for Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*



**Continued on Page 14**

# FROM WASTE TO WEALTH

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Biomass energy, which converts animal, human and plant waste into energy, is gaining popularity as a renewable energy source. Biomass energy reduces waste and greenhouse gas emissions, generates electricity and provides additional advantages.

Creating energy from biomass requires several phases. First, the collection and transfer of waste to a processing plant where the biomass is sorted. After sorting, the waste can be converted to energy through a variety of processes, including:

- **Anaerobic digestion.** This is a frequent approach that breaks down organic waste without oxygen. Biogas can be burned to generate power or heat from this method.
- **Incinerating biomass.** This involves a controlled burning of organic waste to generate power or heat.
- **Pyrolysis.** This biomass-to-energy technique produces bio-oil by heating biological waste without oxygen. Bio-oil is a liquid fuel used to generate power or heat.

## Advantages of biomass energy

Since waste is constantly being produced, biomass energy is considered a renewable source. Farms and other agricultural enterprises produce animal waste every day and harvesting crops generates plant waste. Human waste also provides energy-generating organic material. Electricity generated from waste is environmentally sustainable and reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

Cost savings is another significant advantage of biomass energy. Additionally, biomass energy can be produced locally, which reduces reliance on foreign energy sources, stabilizes energy prices and economic risks, and creates employment opportunities in waste management and energy.

## Disadvantages of biomass energy

Even though there are major advantages to biomass energy, there are a few drawbacks. Not all organic waste can be converted to energy, and certain waste materials are contaminated, therefore, unsuited for biomass energy production.

Biomass energy production can also be costly when waste must be transported long distances to a processing facility. To address these issues, the cost and efficiency of

biomass energy production are being improved, and new technologies are being developed to enhance anaerobic digestion and other biomass energy production methods.

Despite these challenges, biomass energy has the potential to become an important renewable energy source.

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

## ELECTRICITY FROM BIOMASS

Biomass is renewable organic material that comes from plants and animals. It can be burned directly for heat or converted to renewable liquid and gaseous fuels through various processes.

### Types of Biomass Used for Energy



### How do electric utilities use biomass?

The electric power sector uses wood and biomass-derived waste to generate electricity. Most electricity generated from biomass is produced by direct combustion.

1. Biomass is burned in a boiler to produce high-pressure steam.
2. Steam flows over turbine blades, causing them to rotate.
3. The turbine rotation drives a generator, producing electricity.

**One Advantage of Biomass:** Electricity generated from biomass waste is environmentally sustainable and reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

**One Disadvantage of Biomass:** Biomass energy production can be costly, particularly when waste must be transported long distances to a processing facility.

*Source: Dept. of Energy*

# ENERGY-EFFICIENT WINDOWS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Upgrading or improving your windows is an important component of your home's energy efficiency. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heat gain and loss through windows consume 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling energy use.

## Understanding efficiency factors

If you're evaluating your windows' energy efficiency, start by identifying what kind you have. Are they single pane or double pane? Looking closely at the window's edge, you can see the number of windowpanes. Are the frames metal, wood or vinyl? Some manufacturers etch the make and model numbers in the corner of the glass so that you can look up the manufacturer for more information.

## Window efficiency

Several components can make windows more efficient. High-quality frame materials insulate and reduce heat transfer. Two or more panes of glass with space in between (filled with air or gas) improve the window's insulation capability. Warm edge spacers hold the panes of glass the proper distance apart and help insulate the edges of the panes. Low-emissivity coatings applied to the glass can reflect infrared light, keeping the heat in during the winter and out during the summer.

Window efficiency is rated in U-factor and Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC).

U-factor measures heat transfer through the window, which relates to how well it insulates. The lower the U-factor, the more efficient the window. The SHGC measures how effectively the window blocks heat from the sun.

## Considerations for replacing windows

If you want to replace your existing windows, shopping for ENERGY STAR®-certified windows is recommended. ENERGY STAR sets specific U-factor and SHGC requirements based on geography so you get the best fit for your location. Replacement windows offer additional benefits, like improved operability and aesthetics.

Storm windows are a lower-cost solution for some homes. Traditional storm windows are made with clear glass. Low-emissivity storm windows have energy savings similar to replacement windows at about a third of the cost. Storm windows are mounted to the interior or exterior and are available in operable styles, so you can still open and close your windows. Look for ENERGY STAR-certified models.

If you want to maintain the historic architecture of your existing windows, low-emissivity storm windows are a great option. Some companies can refit your existing window frames with custom double-pane glass and weatherstripping.



Windows add to the aesthetic of our homes. Ensure they also add comfort year-round by maintaining or replacing old windows.  
Photo Credit: Alpen High Performance Products

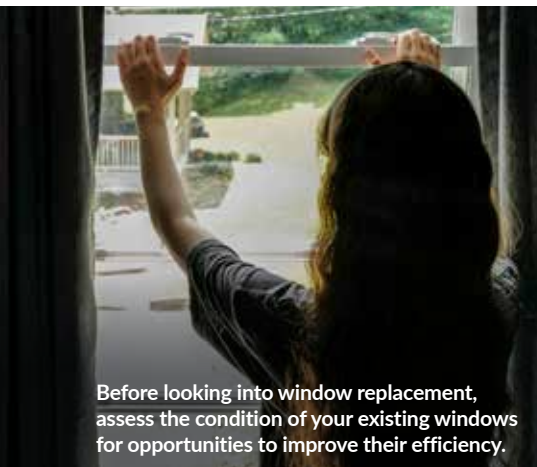
## Maintenance options

If new windows or storm windows are outside the budget, your best bet is to maintain your existing windows. Keep the paint and caulking on the exterior in good condition. That will help prevent damage from the elements. Caulk around the inside trim, ensure sash locks are correctly installed and seal tightly when locked. There are a variety of weatherstripping options for windows to keep drafts at bay.

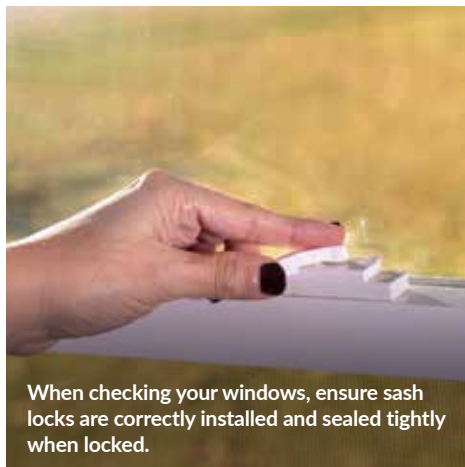
As with any home improvement project, be sure to get multiple quotes to compare pricing and scope of work. You may find additional savings with rebates from your electric cooperative or state or federal tax credits for window upgrades.

Whether you replace or make improvements to what you have, adding efficiency to your windows will add year-round comfort to 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.*



Before looking into window replacement, assess the condition of your existing windows for opportunities to improve their efficiency.



When checking your windows, ensure sash locks are correctly installed and sealed tightly when locked.



Maintain your existing windows by ensuring the sashes lock properly, adding caulk around the trim and replacing worn weatherstripping.

# ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



## SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE HEATHER WEERS WORKS TO PROVIDE BEDS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

BY CHRISTIE REMLEY

Heather Weers (right) is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. She is pictured with MVEC employee and member Megan Ruley, who nominated Weers for the honor.

*Continued from Page 11*

Heather Weers of Center Junction has dedicated her professional and personal life to improving the lives of Jones County children and residents alike.

By day, she works for the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children, which aims to improve the child welfare process. And on her own time, she is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a non-profit dedicated to providing beds for children who would otherwise not have them. While the national organization's mission is "No Kid Sleeps on the Floor in Our Town®," Weers likes to say, "No kid sleeps on the floor in Jones County."

### Addressing a community need

When the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children received a \$1,600 grant to buy beds for children, Weers was shocked to learn how great the need was in her community. While researching ways to help, Weers discovered the national organization Sleep in Heavenly Peace and pursued starting a local chapter. She established the Jones County

chapter in 2019 and has delivered more than 320 beds to local children since then.

Weers is humble and attributes the impact of Sleep in Heavenly Peace Jones County to the local volunteers who help build the beds and donate materials.

"It's not about me; it's about what the community comes together to do to give children a comfortable place to sleep," she says. Weers hopes to inspire others to make their own impact. "I want others to know that you can help people with the simplest gestures – sometimes it's just a thank you note or a letter that can profoundly impact another person's life," says Weers.

### Dedication to community shines

Weers was nominated for Shine the Light by Megan Ruley, a member and employee at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC).

"When I learned about the Shine the Light contest, the first person who came to mind was Heather," Ruley says. "Her work with Sleep in Heavenly

Peace is heartwarming, and I admire her dedication to improving the lives of our Jones County residents. The work outlined here doesn't even begin to encompass all of Heather's impact in our community as she seems to be behind many initiatives to make Jones County a better place now and into the future."

"Maquoketa Valley is thrilled to recognize Heather's dedication to making Jones County a better place. Heather embodies the co-op principle, 'Concern for Community' by recognizing unmet needs and then rolling up her sleeves to meet those needs," says Jeremy Richert, MVEC CEO.

The \$2,500 award will help the Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapter purchase materials, tools, bedding and mattresses. With the vision of no Jones County child sleeping on the floor, Weers is seeing to that goal one bed at a time. For more information, visit [shpbeds.org/chapter/ia-jones-co](http://shpbeds.org/chapter/ia-jones-co).

*Article contributed by Christie Remley, manager of communications and public relations for Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.*

# IT'S ALL GOOD ON RIVER TIME

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I kept thinking to myself, “How far back in here do I have to drive?”

In July, I was invited to share my “Adventures Along the Lincoln Highway” history program with the volunteers of Iowa Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) – the state’s largest river cleanup event.

Fortunately, I found my contact easily once I reached the campground. “No worries,” my hosts said. “We’re on river time.”

## Decades of cleanup work

It turns out this was the 20th Annual Iowa Project AWARE event, and an impressive 315 volunteers gathered for the big cleanup. They paddled canoes down 58 miles of the Iowa River from July 9-14, removing all kinds of junk along the way. We’re talking serious trash here, including tires, mannequin heads, appliances and farm equipment (some of it 100 years old). The crew hauled 21,360 pounds (10.7 tons) of junk from the Iowa River. An amazing 96% of this (20,520 pounds, including 161 tires) can be recycled.



The origins of Iowa Project AWARE were inspired by Chad Pregracke, “The River Rescuer,” who started a movement to help clean up the Mississippi River. Inspired by his work, three dozen volunteers spent a week during the summer of 2003 camping, canoeing and picking up trash from the Maquoketa River. That first-of-its-kind event became known as Iowa Project AWARE. It quickly became the state’s largest volunteer river cleanup.



Photo Credit: Project AWARE 2023

While it started as an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) event, Iowa Project AWARE now operates through a nonprofit organization known as N-Compass, Inc. Major partners include the Iowa DNR and the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa. Hundreds of participants return each year for this unique event, including multigenerational family groups, youth groups, church groups and scouting groups.

One gentleman I met said his kids grew up participating in Iowa Project AWARE. Now they plan their vacations around this annual, can’t-miss event.

## Diligent volunteers make a difference

Even though they’re on “river time,” these volunteers work hard. They’ve cleaned the Boone River, Maquoketa River, Cedar River, Lower Des Moines River, Wapsipinicon River, Big Sioux River, Iowa River, Little Turkey, Turkey and Volga Rivers, West and East Nishnabotna Rivers, Cedar River, Winnebago River, Shell Rock River, Middle and North Raccoon River, English River and Little Sioux River.

The Iowa Project AWARE team is just as diligent about tracking results as cleaning up Iowa’s rivers. In the past 20 years, 6,223 volunteers from across the country have been part of this effort. They’ve cleaned 1,429 river miles of nearly 1 million pounds (979,480 pounds, to be exact) of trash. A majority (81%) of this trash has been recycled. Wow!

I checked in with my friend Jodi Henke from Norwalk and her daughter Michaela, who started volunteering with Project AWARE in 2021 and helped clean up the Iowa River this summer.

“Hearing a loud ‘whoop!’ from around the river bend means someone found something cool – probably their first tire,” Jodi shares. “Also, some of the nicest people you’ll ever meet are wet, filthy dirty, stinky and so proud of the trash they collect. We totally believe in what we’re doing. Every piece of trash we pull out of the river is one less thing to potentially harm the environment.”

For someone like me who cares about Iowa’s water quality, that’s great news. It also speaks to the goodness of Iowans. There’s nothing quite like Iowa Project AWARE in any other state. These volunteers know it’s all good when you’re on river time.

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



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