



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives
of Iowa

● JANUARY 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Preview of 2024
legislative session**

**How co-ops prepare for
extreme weather**

New Year's resolution recipes

Win an All-Clad immersion blender ▶ See Page 3

CONTENTS



6



8



10

VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 1

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Let's not fix what isn't broken

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an All-Clad immersion blender

14

STUDENT LEADERS

A chance to design a Youth Tour T-shirt

15

OUT BACK

Writing the story of a lifetime

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn

IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Chuck Soderberg

IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Erin Campbell

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Kenny VandenBerg, District 1 – President
Jim Miller, District 5 – Vice President
Deena Moore, District 4 – Secretary/Treasurer
Tony Lem, District 2 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Keleher, District 3
Gordon Greimann, District 6
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

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.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

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.

© Copyright 2024, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



ON THE COVER

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

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO STATE LEGISLATORS: IF IT ISN'T BROKEN...

BY KEVIN CONDON



As a new year begins, so will the 2024 legislative session of the Iowa General Assembly. And as always, Iowa's electric cooperatives will have a strong presence at the Iowa Statehouse to ensure lawmakers and their constituents understand clearly how policy proposals will impact rural Iowans. For more than 80 years, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has advocated on behalf of our members so state legislators can make informed decisions.

Protecting electric cooperative members

This year, Iowa's electric co-ops are not proactively seeking significant changes to Iowa laws but are instead taking a "do no harm" message to Iowa policymakers. While there are tremendous challenges ahead in the energy industry, most of those debates occur on the national stage and will take place outside the halls of the Iowa Capitol.

Iowa lawmakers have gotten it right over the past several years as it pertains to setting the state's energy strategy. Iowa electric co-ops can provide reliable power to our member-consumers without unnecessary interference from the state government. In Iowa, we have established a positive balance between central regulatory compliance and local flexibility.

Avoiding unnecessary regulations

Iowa's electric cooperatives are prepared for various ideas to resurface from the last session, in addition to untangling new ideas that may be introduced in this session. Threats to Iowa's service territory laws are ongoing and real. Calls to "deregulate" Iowa's electric boundaries under the guise of "competition and choice" will result in higher electric bills for homes and farms, while "Big Data" tech companies laugh all the way to the bank.

We also expect to hear the phrase "integrated resource plans" (IRP) quite a bit this year. IRPs are simply a "wolf in sheep's clothing" effort from special interest groups to take decision-making authority away from your local utility and shutter reliable power generation assets well before their useful life is up.

While the threat of rolling blackouts is real in many regions of the country, now is not the time to irresponsibly close dispatchable power plants. The Iowa Legislature shouldn't require IRPs but instead could expand our energy strategy to incorporate even more of an "all the above" approach to include nuclear generation and energy storage technologies.

Focusing on safety threats

Unfortunately, we must also be concerned about threats to the safety of our electric infrastructure. Iowa electric co-ops follow the National Electric Safety Code (NESC) guidance

on overhead line clearances to accommodate large agricultural and industrial equipment. There appears to be efforts to remove liability from a person who negligently damages electric infrastructure if contact is made, and they can prove the line was outside the NESC guidelines.

Safety is paramount at your co-op, and we are concerned about changing the law in a way that would almost encourage an equipment operator to hit a power line rather than simply call the co-op to move it.

We look forward to having respectful and productive discussions with state legislators again this year. We wish Iowa lawmakers a happy and successful new year and hope that they'll remember the old saying when it comes to energy policy: *If it isn't broken, don't fix it.*

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN ALL-CLAD IMMERSION BLENDER!

Make quick work of countless food-prep tasks with All-Clad's high-performance immersion blender, which offers superior versatility and unsurpassed efficiency. Its powerful motor blends foods in seconds, from thick milkshakes and homemade mayonnaise to baby food and delicate sauces.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Jan. 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 Ring spotlight security camera from the November issue was Tina Nelson, a Consumers Energy member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY JAN. 31!

USDA GRANTS AND LOANS SUPPORT RURAL IOWA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development office announced it is investing \$12,154,700 in loans and \$508,000 in grants to nine rural Iowa projects to spur economic development and catalyze rural prosperity through rural cooperatives. USDA is making the investments through the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program.

This announcement is part of a larger national announcement detailing \$1.2 billion in support for projects in rural America. The Iowa projects include:



Photo Source: INVISION Architecture

- **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** received a \$300,000 grant to help replenish a revolving loan fund. This project will provide Monroe County Hospital in Albia with financing to expand its existing facility. This project will construct an addition to house a magnetic resonance imaging machine and renovate spaces in the radiology department and the acute-care wing.
- **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** received a \$2,000,000 loan to fund a pass-through loan to Sedes Group LLC to purchase and install equipment for a startup business. This project will help provide a material flow system, an extruder, a cutter and feeder, a dryer/cooler and a separator at a facility in Centerville. Sedes Group LLC plans to develop animal feed and human-grade consumption products using organic and non-GMO soybeans.
- **North West Rural Electric Cooperative** received a \$208,000 grant to help fund a pass-through loan to the city of Hawarden for vehicles and equipment. This project will purchase a fire truck, a ladder truck and response equipment for the city's fire department.
- **Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** received a \$2,000,000 loan to fund a pass-through loan to PlantBased Innovations LLC. This project will enable the food manufacturing business to expand operations by purchasing equipment to create new product lines at the facility in Fredericksburg.
- **Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** received a \$1,804,000 loan to help fund a pass-through loan to Community Nursing Home, Inc., doing business as Clarksville Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, for facility renovations in Clarksville. This project will provide a new roof, a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, a parking area and sidewalks for the facility.
- **Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative** received a \$1,520,000 loan to help fund a pass-through loan to Wernimont Welding, LLC for expansion in Carroll. This project will involve constructing a new welding shop and purchasing additional equipment.
- **Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative** received a \$ 830,700 loan to help fund a pass-through loan to Matt Meister Trucking Inc., an interstate freight hauling carrier. This project will construct a facility for the business in Breda.
- **Corn Belt Power Cooperative** received a \$2,000,000 loan to help fund a pass-through loan to PlantBased Innovations LLC. This project will enable the food-manufacturing business to expand operations by purchasing equipment to create product lines at the facility in Fredericksburg.
- **Heartland Power Cooperative** received a \$2,000,000 loan to help fund a pass-through loan to A to Z Drying, Inc. This project will purchase and install drying equipment at the facility in Osage.

ENTER TO WIN

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO



SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

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 with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.

NEW: Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.

WEATHERING A WINTER STORM

When ice and heavy snow bring down limbs and power lines, safety is a priority indoors and out. Make sure you know how to weather the storm. When outside, stay away from downed power lines. Here are a few important safety reminders to keep in mind this winter:

- A power line need not be sparking or arcing to be energized. Equipment near power lines can also be energized and dangerous.
- Lines that appear “dead” can become energized as crews work to restore power or sometimes from improper use of emergency generators. Assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous. If you see a downed or sagging line, contact your utility.
- If you are in an auto accident involving a downed power line, your vehicle is usually the safest place (unless it is on fire). If it is safe to do so, stay in your car, call 911, and wait for electric utility personnel to arrive to deenergize the power. If you step out of the vehicle and the ground is energized, you could become the electrical current's path to the ground, and you could be electrocuted. If your vehicle is on fire or you see smoke, make a solid, clean jump from your vehicle and hop away with your feet together as far away as possible. If you run or walk away, you could get electrocuted.
- Motorists should never drive over a downed line, as snagging a line could pull down a pole or other equipment and cause other hazards.
- Be careful approaching intersections where traffic or crossing lights may be out.
- If you plan to use a generator, know how to operate it safely.



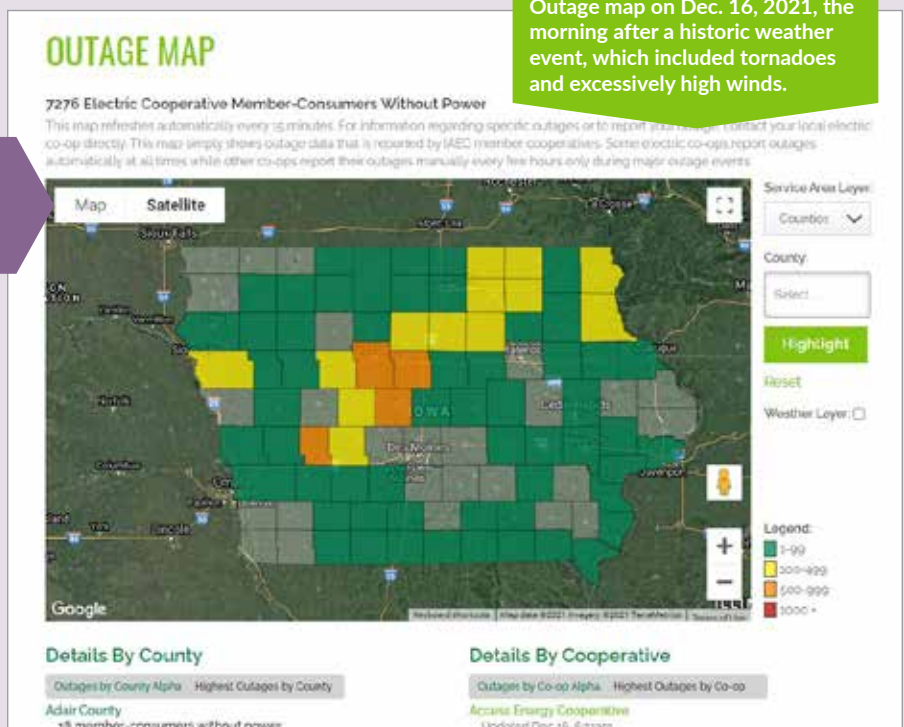
DID YOU KNOW?

STATEWIDE OUTAGE MAP

www.iowarec.org/outages


The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) maintains a statewide outage map. The map refreshes automatically every 15 minutes and shows outage data that is reported by IAEC member cooperatives. Most electric co-ops report outages automatically while other co-ops report outages manually every few hours only during major outage events.

For information regarding specific outages or to report your outage, always contact your local electric co-op directly. It's also important that your local co-op is notified if your phone number or other contact information changes.



Outage map on Dec. 16, 2021, the morning after a historic weather event, which included tornadoes and excessively high winds.

If you see downed power lines, always stay away from the lines and poles. Always assume the lines are energized and report any damage to your local electric cooperative.



RETHINKING ENERGY

HOW USING MORE ELECTRICITY CAN SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Of all the world's changes during the past 30 years, few are as significant as how we use energy.

In the 1990s, new drilling techniques brought a boom in natural gas production. That increase in supply cut prices so much that natural gas started replacing coal power plants, which generated half of the country's electricity. Concern for the environment grew and now renewable energy produces more of our electricity than coal.

Major changes to how we use energy have also come into our homes.

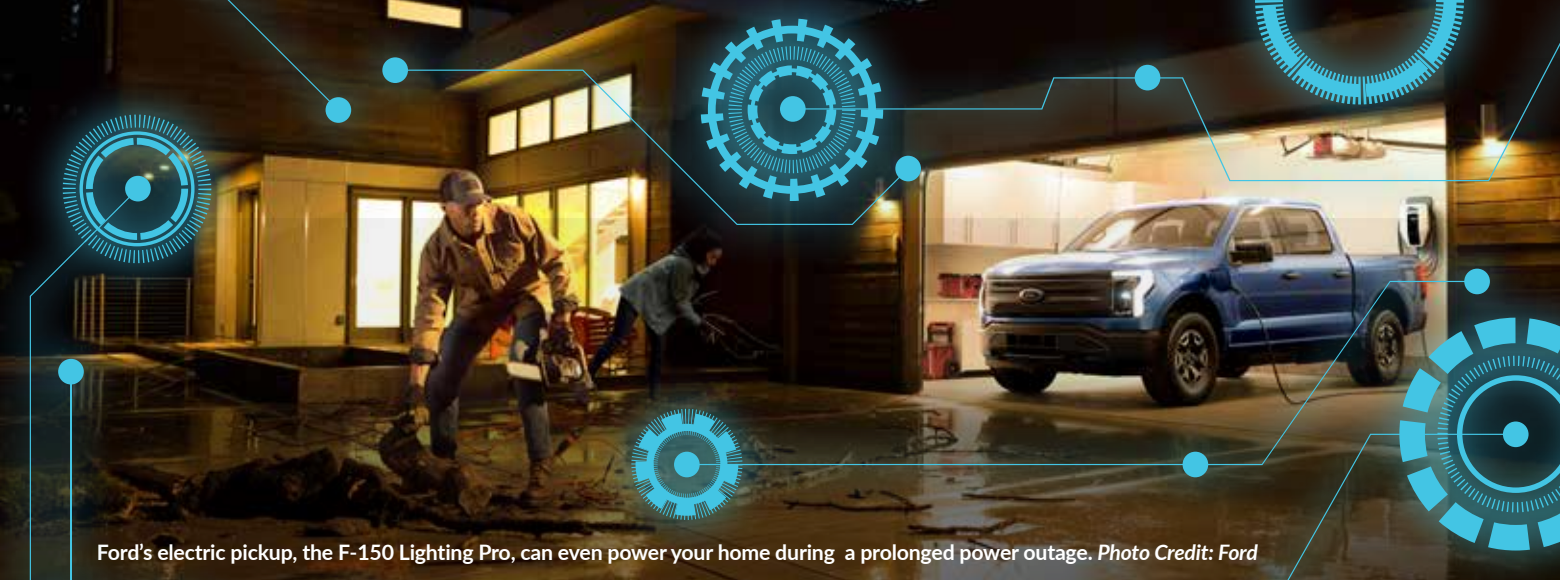
If you go to the movies and forget to turn off your kitchen lights, you can switch them off from an app on your phone. If you're returning from a vacation, you can adjust your thermostat from anywhere so the temperature of your home is comfortable when you get back.

Every vehicle manufacturer is racing to build electric models. Last year, Ford even started producing an electric version of their best-selling pickup truck. And the electric F-150 is more than just being promoted as better for the environment. The ads show it running power tools on a remote job site.

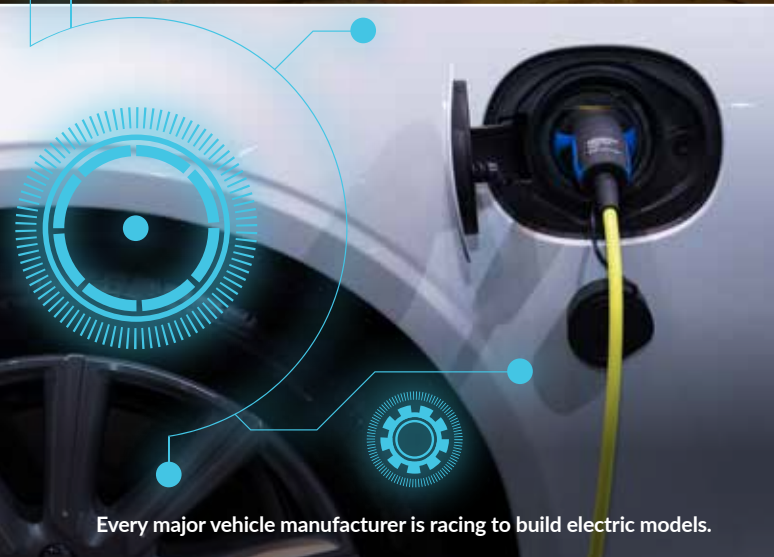
That approach to showing the benefits of an electric vehicle (EV) highlights a whole new way of thinking about energy.

Powering your home with a truck

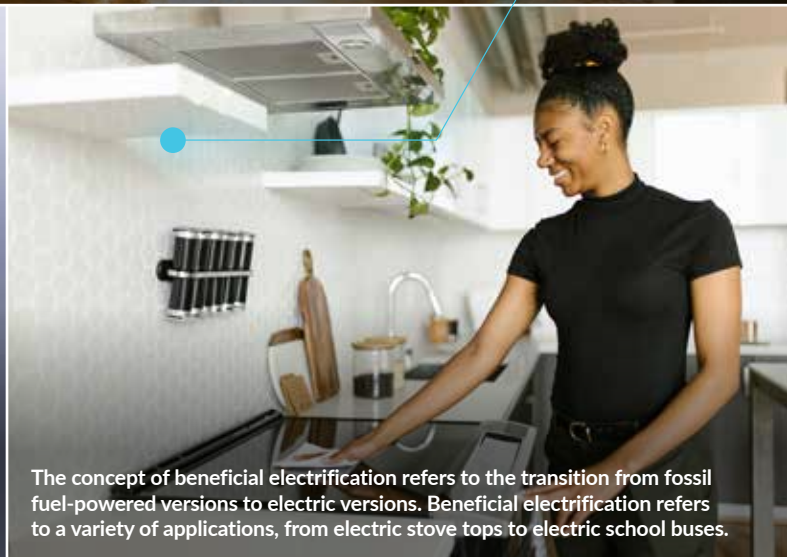
For example, instead of just going out and buying a new pickup truck, you or a business could consider the advantages of electric options. A traditional gasoline-powered model would be best for long trips, but how many miles a day does the truck really travel? What would it be like to plug it in overnight and never have to visit a gas station again? What if it could also power home appliances during a power outage?



Ford's electric pickup, the F-150 Lighting Pro, can even power your home during a prolonged power outage. Photo Credit: Ford



Every major vehicle manufacturer is racing to build electric models.



The concept of beneficial electrification refers to the transition from fossil fuel-powered versions to electric versions. Beneficial electrification refers to a variety of applications, from electric stove tops to electric school buses.

There's a name for that kind of thinking – beneficial electrification. Although that phrase doesn't easily roll off the tongue, the idea is catching on because it's basically a way to get things done better and cheaper.

There's even an organization called the Beneficial Electrification League. The group aims to improve the nation's economy by making broader use of electricity, from heating and cooling homes and businesses to electric school buses, to replacing diesel motors on farm irrigation systems with more efficient electric models.

According to the League, the benefits of electrification are money savings, less impact on the environment, improved quality of life and smoother operation of the nation's increasingly internet-connected electric grid.

One of the clearest effects of switching from fossil fuel to electricity is on environmental impact. Natural gas, coal and oil all produce greenhouse

gases. Electricity uses some fossil fuels to generate power but is increasingly made with renewable energy. So, switching from an internal combustion engine to an EV, for example, will reduce the burning of fossil fuels.

No more gas cans

Utilities are exploring ways to use the growing number of EVs to create a more resilient electric grid. Using smart-grid analytics, all those electric cars sitting in garages and charging overnight could supply power back into the electric system during outages or during times when the demand for electricity is high.

Consumers can consider beneficial electrification for the home as well, to see how electric options might improve quality of life. Replacing lawnmowers, leaf blowers and other yard tools with battery-powered versions would reduce noise and could get all the gas and oil cans out of your garage.

You might love your gas stove and heating system, but do you like

it enough to pay for two forms of energy, with both gas and electric bills coming due even when you're on vacation? Add to that, the continual improvements in electric heat pumps that will both heat and cool your home with an incredible 300% efficiency.

And if you're concerned about power outages, battery backup systems are getting increasingly powerful and efficient. Compared to a gasoline generator, a battery wouldn't need to be "started up" and wouldn't emit poisonous carbon monoxide.

You may not be ready to make the switch to all-electric. These shifts can take time as technology advances and costs become more competitive. But the notion of beneficial electrification offers a new way to evaluate the tools we depend on for everyday life.

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.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

RECIPES



BLACK BEAN COOKIE DOUGH ENERGY BITES

- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 4 medjool dates, pitted
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons creamy almond butter
- 3 tablespoons coconut flour
- ⅓ cup cocoa
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Blend all ingredients except chocolate chips in blender. Stir in chocolate and shape into balls. Chill or freeze. *Serves 20*

Laura DeSmit • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HEALTHY OATMEAL BALLS

- 4 cups old-fashioned oatmeal
- 2 cups peanut butter
- 1 cup honey

In large mixing bowl, add oatmeal and set aside. Microwave honey and peanut butter for 1-2 minutes. Mix until combined. Pour honey mixture over the oatmeal. Form small balls and place on wax paper. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Freezer friendly to pull out for a healthy snack! *Yields 48 small balls*

Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SUGAR-FREE GRANOLA

- ⅓ cup honey
- 1½ cups Sucanat
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 10 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup dry milk
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- optional toppings: coconut, nuts, raisins

Mix honey, Sucanat and oil in saucepan. Heat until Sucanat is dissolved (oil will separate). Mix all other ingredients in a large cake pan. Pour honey mixture over dry ingredients and stir well. Bake at 375 degrees F for 10-15 minutes. Once cooled, add coconut, nuts and/or raisins, if desired. Store in airtight container. Good as cereal with milk or plain for snacking. *Yields 16-20 cups*

Trina Nester • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HEALTHY DRINK

- 1 large banana
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 10 ice cubes

Cut banana into chunks. Mix all ingredients in a blender and blend well. Serve in a glass. *Serves 2*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedon
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BACON-PEA-SWISS SCRAMBLE

- 3 slices bacon
- 5 eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons chicken broth
- chili powder, to taste
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed and drained
- ½ cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 tablespoons Swiss cheese, shredded
- 4 teaspoons parsley

Cook bacon in a skillet, then cut into pieces. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, broth and chili powder. Stir in bacon, peas and tomatoes. Pour mixture into skillet and cook on medium-low heat, stirring until done. Fold in cheese and parsley.

Cook 30 seconds more, then serve immediately. *Serves 2*

**Beth Townsend • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy**

CALIFORNIA POWER BOWL

- ½ red bell pepper, sliced
- ½ red onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 dash black pepper
- 1 cup spinach or spring mix
- 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup cooked brown rice
- ¼ cup corn
- ¼ avocado, diced
- 1 tablespoon raw sunflower seeds
- 1 can tuna, optional

Sauté bell pepper and onion in avocado oil. Season with salt and pepper. Put spinach in a serving bowl and top with lemon juice. Mix in rice and corn. Top with warm peppers and onion. Add avocado, sunflower seeds and tuna, if desired. *Serves 1*

**Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

TERIYAKI CHICKEN & VEGETABLES

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup Bragg's liquid aminos
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 cups cabbage, sliced
- rice, optional

Mix first three ingredients together. Cut chicken into chunks and place in a slow cooker. Add vegetables on top. Pour marinade mixture over all ingredients. Cook on high for 2-3 hours, allowing steam to release naturally. Can be served over rice. *Serves 6-8*

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

CITRUS-PECAN QUINOA SALAD

- 1½ cups water
- ¾ cup quinoa, rinsed if not prewashed
- 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 2 cups romaine or greens of choice, chopped
- 1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans or chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 15-ounce cans mandarin orange slices, drained
- 3 mini-cucumbers, washed and sliced
- 1 cup pecan pieces, toasted

In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add quinoa and reduce heat. Cover and simmer 12-15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with fork and set aside to cool. Quinoa can be made a day ahead and refrigerated. In a small bowl, finely grate zest from a lemon, then cut and squeeze juice into the zest (can substitute with an orange). Whisk in oil, salt and pepper. In a large bowl, combine greens, beans, oranges, cucumbers and quinoa. Just before serving, add nuts and lemon dressing, toss to coat. *Serves 4-6*

**Karla R. Pals • Belmond
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

WANTED:

SPRINGTIME SALADS

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Jan. 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

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



ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE PREPARING FOR EXTREME WEATHER

BY SCOTT FLOOD

From the earliest days of electricity, weather has presented the biggest challenges to reliability and safety. Severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, derechos, heat waves, heavy snowfalls, flooding and ice events have long

put power lines and co-op crews to the test, including those in Iowa.

If you think storm events seem to be more frequent and more intense these days, you're not wrong. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which

tracks weather and climate disasters causing more than \$1 billion in damage, reported an annual average of 18 such events between 2018 and 2022. That compares to an average of just 8.1 major disasters per year from 1980 to 2017.

Proactive upgrades, vegetation management

While scientists and policymakers debate the causes of our wild weather, electric co-ops are diligently working to prepare for it. From coast to coast, cooperatives are taking steps to harden the vital infrastructure that delivers electricity to our members' homes, farms and other businesses. Co-ops have been upgrading equipment and our connections to the nation's electric power grid so we can better withstand disaster-level events. We're also taking steps to prevent damage from happening in the first place.

For example, you may have noticed our emphasis on tree trimming and other vegetation management strategies. Keeping trees and branches at a safe distance from power lines reduces the potential for weather-related outages. Like you, we're sometimes sad to see our favorite trees trimmed, but many of the outages we handle every year happen when trees tangle with power lines.

Because recent wildfires have spread to places where they've previously been rare, we also need to plan for the possibility of fires in our area. Keeping vegetation away from power lines and equipment helps us prevent wildfires and limit their spread.

Hardening our infrastructure will include a long list of other strategies. We're paying more attention to the condition of our system. If one of our power poles is damaged or otherwise weakened, strong winds might bring it down and leave a big area of our community in the dark. That's why we keep an eye on all our poles and install more durable replacements when necessary.

When our crews aren't fixing problems, they're working just as hard to prevent them from happening. Poles and wires are frequent targets for lightning, so we can protect the local power grid by installing devices that safely divert surges caused by lightning strikes.

Leveraging new technology

We also invest in sophisticated management systems – what some call the smart grid – capable of drawing our attention to potential issues before they grow into problems. Paired with innovative technology like reclosers, these systems are engineered to keep your power flowing even in the toughest weather conditions (or when



Vegetation management is a preventative process to keep trees and brush from coming into contact with power lines.



Extreme storms have long put power lines and Iowa's crews to the test.

a squirrel makes a poor choice). We're also taking steps to protect substations and other important outdoor equipment from severe weather events.

Outages, availability impact costs

Power outages are just one way extreme weather can affect your energy costs. Weather extremes in one part of the country can have significant effects on energy availability and costs elsewhere. As winter temperatures drop in many areas, the demand for heating drives market energy prices up, and not-for-profit electric co-ops may have to pass those higher costs along to members.

Reducing peak energy use

You and your neighbors can help us limit the impact of those higher costs

by shifting your energy use during peak times. For example, instead of running the dishwasher in the early evening when energy costs are highest, set it to run while everyone's asleep and rates are lower. The more members who help by reducing energy use at peak times, the less everyone will have to pay for energy.

Considering the impact of potential weather disasters and implementing steps to prevent damage is just one more example of your electric cooperative's dedication to making sure your power is always ready when you need it most.

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

TIPS TO STAY WARM AND SAVE ENERGY THIS WINTER

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell – the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

Understand how your home is heated

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

Adjust your thermostat

The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in



Air seal around plumbing penetrations with expanding foam to reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.



If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty.



Operating an additional heat source to warm a room or section of a home may increase your monthly electric bills.



The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. Adding a layer, slippers, a hat or a lap dog can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze.

Space heater considerations

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Block cold air

Air sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings. A common

air sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check.

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.

POWERING THE FUTURE OF IOWA'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

In today's world, sustainability and energy efficiency are paramount in the construction industry. The annual Momentum is Building Conference equips contractors and their teams with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in a rapidly changing construction landscape.

Iowa's electric cooperatives invite area building-trades professionals to the 2024 conference, scheduled for Feb. 8-9 at The Meadows Events and Conference Center in Altoona.

Iowa's electric cooperatives serve as a source of information and expertise for members to help save energy and lower their electric bills. Educating Iowa home builders and contractors about the latest energy-efficiency innovations is

another way to assist members in reaching their energy goals.

According to a 2021 National Association of Home Builders survey, "What Home Buyers Really Want, 2021 Edition," more buyers are willing to pay extra for a home if they understand it will lead to savings in annual utility costs. In fact, 57% are willing to pay \$5,000 or more (on top of the price of the home) to save \$1,000 a year on utilities.

For more than 30 years, the annual Momentum is Building Conference, sponsored and organized by the Iowa Cooperatives for Energy Efficiency, connects Iowa's construction industry with the local services and resources available from Iowa-based electric cooperatives, which serve nearly 650,000 Iowans across 99 counties.



Feb. 8-9, 2024

The Momentum is Building Conference serves as a resource to provide the information area contractors need to design and improve homes that are energy efficient, healthy, comfortable and affordable.

CONFERENCE BENEFITS

Stay ahead of the curve

Get the latest insights on industry trends, green building best practices and innovative construction technologies. There are opportunities to earn valuable Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for electricians, plumbers, and HVAC professionals.

Network

Connect with fellow contractors, builders, energy-efficient product specialists and industry experts. Share experiences and foster valuable partnerships.

Be inspired

Our list of speakers promises to inspire and provide valuable insights that will recharge your next project.

Sustainability matters

Discover energy-efficient products and practices and chat with the experts who market and sell products and services that can save money, attract more clients and contribute to a greener future.

For more information about the conference or to register, visit www.momentumisbuilding.com or call your electric cooperative.



DESIGN A T-SHIRT FOR YOUTH TOUR AND YOU COULD WIN \$300

During the annual rural electric cooperative Youth Tour every June, Iowa participants wear matching T-shirts on each day of the trip. It's an excellent opportunity to showcase our great state while providing a unifying theme and look for the students.

This year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) is excited to announce a new contest for design submissions. Students across Iowa, grades 9-12, can create a unique design for the 2024 Youth Tour. If selected, the winner will receive \$300 in cash!

The idea for a statewide design contest came from Olivia Marti, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, who is Iowa's representative on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Leadership Council (YLC). As part of YLC, Marti and other young leaders meet virtually and participate in leadership training, polish their public speaking, attend co-op forums, and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

Connecting youth leaders and providing them with experiences and exposure to our nation's capital is a cornerstone of the Youth Tour program.

Q: What is the Youth Tour?
Iowa's electric cooperatives have been sending high school students to Washington, D.C., since 1958! On the weeklong tour in June, students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as American citizens. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their elected legislators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital. In Iowa, students apply for slots from their local electric cooperative. High school students passionate about government and public service are encouraged to apply. **Learn more at iowayouthtour.com.**

Q: When is the deadline for T-shirt designs?
T-shirt designs must be submitted by midnight, March 1. Designs

should be accompanied by an application found at iowayouthtour.com and uploaded to Dropbox.

Q: What kinds of concepts would work well for design?
Since this trip is focused on learning more about government and our nation's history, the T-shirt theme centers around the seven cooperative principles and leadership. You can learn more about the cooperative principles at iowayouthtour.com. Iowa must be referenced in the design. IAEC welcomes students to use their imagination to create an eye-catching and meaningful design.

Q: Does my electric cooperative need to be part of the Iowa Youth Tour for me to participate?
No. The T-shirt design contest is open to any high school student in Iowa.

Q: Who will judge the contest?
A small group of electric cooperative representatives will vote on the winning design. The winner will be announced March 8.



2024 IOWA YOUTH TOUR T-SHIRT CONTEST

\$300 CASH PRIZE!



ABOUT THE CONTEST

- Open to any high school student (grades 9-12) regardless of co-op membership status.
- The theme is the seven cooperative principles and leadership.
- Shirt will be worn on one day of Youth Tour.
- The state of Iowa must be referenced.

TIMELINE

- Contest begins: Jan. 1
- Submissions due: March 1
- Winner Announced: March 8



Scan this code to upload your T-shirt design.

SUBMISSIONS: Entries must be submitted to Dropbox for review.

www.iowayouthtour.com

WRITING THE STORY OF A LIFETIME

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Every now and then, readers ask where I get my story ideas. Sometimes, people give me a good story lead. More often, the ideas come from paying attention, listening carefully and seeing value in things that are easy to overlook or take for granted.

I think back to last October, when I was interviewing Paul and Sally Brown at their farm between Lanesboro and Churdan. I was working on stories about Sally's quilting hobby and the Brown's Greene County barn. During our conversation about the history of the farm, Paul handed me his self-published book titled "Life is Sweet!"

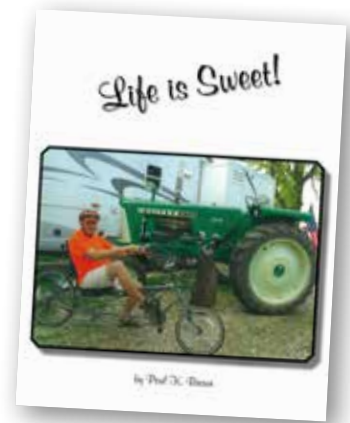
I had no idea Paul had written his autobiography – but I knew this could be a good story. I was fascinated as I flipped through the 35 pages filled with vintage photos, stories and copies of newspaper clippings. Paul wrote the book more than a decade ago when he and Sally were in Arizona for the winter. "After I got started, it was fun," Paul says. "I was excited to keep writing and share it with others."

Sledding with a Studebaker?

An autobiography like Paul's is a testament to a life well-lived. The ups and downs of everyday life provide plenty of fodder to produce an interesting autobiography. Consider this story from Paul's book:

"Probably the stupidest thing we did was in the wintertime while sledding. We used to go down hills on scoop shovels, toboggans, car hoods and tires. Sometimes, we even used a Flexible Flyer sled. This was the fastest sled around. Once, but only once, we took an old 1946 Studebaker (that my brother Earl drove) down the hill. We had four kids inside and one on each side standing on the running boards while we were going down backward and spinning the wheels forward. The car spun around a few times on the way down the hill. When we got to the bottom, we thought, 'How stupid that was!' No one wanted to try it again."

Even if you never went spinning down a hill in a 1946 Studebaker, you can



likely relate to this story. Haven't we all made questionable choices at times? Hopefully, we've learned some useful life lessons along the way, too.

Leaving a legacy

Sharing wisdom is part of leaving a legacy, which is an important part of a life well-lived. I know I'm biased, but I believe it's vital to share these experiences in a lasting format like the written word. Memories tend to fade with time. Family history vanishes if it isn't passed down from generation to generation. Stories preserved in a fixed format like a book stand the test of time.

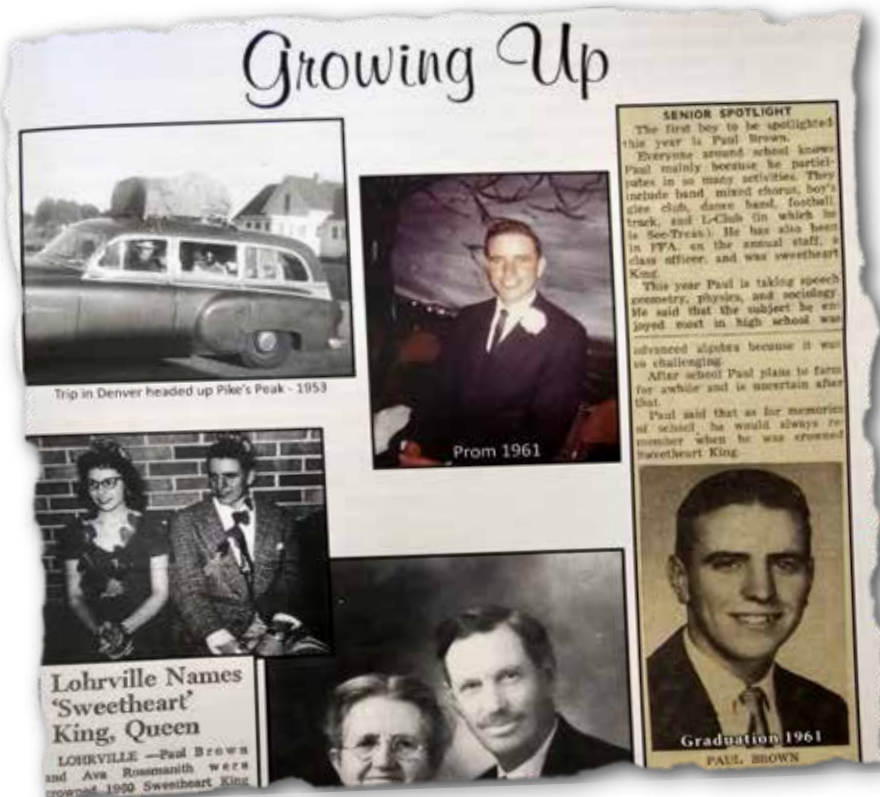
In this season of New Year's resolutions, making a commitment to writing your autobiography can offer a powerful sense of purpose. It also helps you establish deeper connections with family, friends and others who have touched your life.

Paul's daughter Heidi (Brown) Billmeier, who lives near her parents' farm, is grateful she had the opportunity to help her father document his memories.

"It's fun to read all the stories about Dad and his siblings when they were growing up," she shares. "The changes in agriculture, from when Dad started farming with his father to watching how my brother and his sons farm now, are fascinating. I'm happy our boys will have this book available to read when they're ready."

This focus on the future taps into something much deeper. Consider the immortal words of Pericles, the ancient Greek statesman and general: "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

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



Visit our website at www.ieclmagazine.com

A photograph of two men shaking hands at a community event. The man on the left is older with white hair and a beard, wearing a blue patterned shirt. The man on the right is younger with glasses and a beard, wearing a yellow and grey plaid shirt. They are standing in front of a table with coffee service. Other people are visible in the background.

WHERE
WE HAVE MEMBERS
WE
ACTIVELY
LIVE
OUR COMMITMENT



Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative
The power of human connections[®]

As your **Touchstone Energy[®] cooperative**, we are your energy community. The power we provide is much more than a way to keep the lights on, it plugs into the family, friends, and neighbors that make up your local co-op.