

Southwest Lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

July 2026

Local teen participates in national leadership development program

Carson Boswell, a student of Southwest Valley, recently participated in the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., sponsored by Southwest Iowa REC. He joined 34 other student delegates from Iowa for the trip in June.

For more than 6 decades, electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students for Youth Tour, a leadership development program that helps young people discover their voice, build confidence, and expand their understanding of civic engagement. While in Washington, D.C., students met with elected officials, explored historic landmarks, and even operated their own student-led snack cooperative, gaining hands-on experience in teamwork, responsibility, and leadership.

The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is a collaborative effort supported by locally owned electric cooperatives like Southwest Iowa REC, statewide trade associations, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Carson described the experience as unforgettable. "The Youth Tour was so amazing," Boswell said. "It was really cool to meet our elected officials and learn about politics up close. I also made new friends and experienced history firsthand. It made me think about what it means to be an American and showed me that people my age care about this country. You can truly make friends no matter where they are from."



Four Iowa Youth Tour students (two males; two females) able to participate in the wreath laying ceremony; however all students there to observe it. Carson was honored to be chosen as one of the 4 presenters of the Iowa Youth Tour wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown. In addition to touring the nation's capital, 2,100 students from across the country gathered for National Youth Day, hosted by NRECA, where they heard from inspiring speakers and public figures. This year's program featured Mike Schlappi, a 4-time Paralympic medalist and 2-time world wheelchair basketball champion, who shared a powerful message about perseverance and leadership: "Just because you can't stand up doesn't mean you can't stand out."

Since 1958, Iowa's electric cooperatives have sponsored students through Youth Tour with opportunities to meet members of their U.S. congressional delegation, participate in leadership and advocacy sessions, and explore our nation's capital.



For more information Youth Tour program, contact www.IowaYouthTour.com. You can also find "Iowa Youth Tour" on Facebook or Instagram to see highlights from the 2026 trip.



What is the role of Southwest Iowa REC when it comes to serving new loads like data centers and crypto-mining operations?



Phil Kinser CEO

In recent months, data centers have become a growing topic of conversation in communities across our region. It is understandable that people have questions and it is also important that those conversations be grounded in fact.

As an electric cooperative, our role is not to advocate for or against a particular type of business development, such as a data center or crypto-mining operation. Our responsibility is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to the members and communities we serve. That obligation includes evaluating new requests for service fairly and carefully, whether they come from a farm, a manufacturing facility, a hospital, a school, or a data center/crypto-mining operation.

Our ability to serve any new load is not unlimited. Every request must be assessed based on the capacity of the existing electric system, including local distribution facilities and the transmission network that supports them. Simply put, we can only accommodate new growth that our system can reliably handle. If the proposed project exceeds available capacity, significant upgrades may be required before service can be provided. And those upgrades would not fall on the members of Southwest Iowa REC to finance. Bottom line – reliability for existing members will always remain the top priority.

It is important to distinguish between the electric utility's role and the role of local government. Our cooperative's responsibility is to determine whether electric service can be provided safely and reliably, and what infrastructure may be needed to do so. Questions about zoning, land use compatibility, permitting, environmental review, and local ordinances are not handled by Southwest Iowa REC. That responsibility falls on our county or municipal officials. Those processes exist so that communities can weigh benefits, impacts, and appropriate safeguards.

As these discussions continue, our commitment is to remain factual, transparent, and focused on our mission. We understand that large projects can create uncertainty. We also understand that misinformation can spread quickly, especially when emotions run high. That is why it is so important to separate legitimate concerns from unsupported claims.

Our cooperative has an obligation to serve, but that duty is exercised responsibly. We do not promise service where the grid cannot support it. We do not ignore the need for system planning. And we do not dismiss the questions communities ask. Instead, we evaluate each service request on its merits, consider the capabilities of our distribution and transmission systems, and work within the regulatory and planning frameworks that govern these projects.

As your local electric cooperative, we will continue to do our part by focusing on reliability, fairness, and facts. That means serving a new load when it is feasible, protecting service for existing members, and participating in these conversations with professionalism and clarity.

A Balanced Perspective

No industrial or commercial development is without tradeoffs. Communities should carefully evaluate infrastructure requirements, energy availability, environmental considerations, and economic benefits before approving any project.

However, productive discussions depend on accurate information.

Data centers and cryptocurrency mining operations represent an increasingly important component of the digital economy. They support technological innovation, contribute to local tax bases, create infrastructure investment, and provide services that millions of individuals and businesses rely upon every day. We all use data. Every Google search, Facebook post, AI assist, Snapchat, etc. requires data and lots of it.

As communities consider future development opportunities, the conversation should focus on objective analysis, transparent engagement, and thoughtful planning that balances economic growth with community priorities.

Looking Ahead

The demand for digital infrastructure continues to grow as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and digital services become more integrated into everyday life. Whether communities choose to pursue these investments or not, data centers and high-performance computing facilities will remain critical components of the global economy.

The key question is not whether digital infrastructure is needed—it is how communities can responsibly harness its benefits while addressing legitimate concerns through planning, innovation, and collaboration.

Operation Round-UP® 2026



Each month, Southwest Iowa REC simply “rounds up” the electric bills of participating member-owners to the next highest dollar. All Operation Round-UP® donations are placed in a separate fund to be disbursed for charitable purposes only. The Operation Round UP committee has donated \$359,875 to individuals and community improvements since its start in 2009.

A committee comprised of community leaders, Southwest Iowa REC employees, and directors receives and evaluates all donation requests. This committee makes recommendations for disbursements to the full Southwest Iowa REC Board of Directors. The REC Board has the final approval of all Operation Round-UP® disbursements.

Typically, Operation Round-UP® funding will be used to address individual and community needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health, education, and service projects. Operation Round-UP® funds cannot be used for political purposes.

Individuals or organizations requesting donations do not have to be members of Southwest Iowa REC. Recipients need to be a resident and located in one of the 11 counties we serve. These counties include: Adair, Adams, Cass, Decatur, Fremont, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, Taylor, and Union.

Southwest Iowa REC is committed to improving local residents’ quality of life. Operation Round-UP® is an innovative way to continue to make a difference in our local communities. We encourage individuals and organizations with needs to apply for Operation Round-UP® donations. Applications can be requested from any of our two offices or online at www.swiarec.coop under the “Community” tab.

Of our 5,793 accounts, we’re excited that 4,254 meters are signed up for Operation Round-UP®.

If you’re not currently signed up – why not call today and join in?

Operation Round-UP® = Small Change That Changes Lives

A Simple Blessing received a donation of \$2,000 from Southwest Iowa REC’s Operation Round Up organization to help provide meals in Ringgold County.

Pictured: Left to right, Denatta Phelps, Southwest Iowa REC’s Sarah Newton, and Nancy Jarred.



Mount Ayr Community Schools received \$5,000 to help with their new CTE building construction.

Pictured: Southwest Iowa REC’s Sarah Newton and Mount Ayr Community School Superintendent Jason Shaffer.



Red Oak Fire and Rescue received \$2,000 to aid the Midwest Regional Dive Team in updating their equipment.

Pictured left to right: Randy Askey, Southwest Iowa REC’s Phil Kinser, Kenny Hamman and Greg Vetter



Stanton Historical Society received \$2,200 to help replace the Swedish Heritage & Cultural Center’s windows.

Pictured left to right: Southwest Iowa REC CEO & General Manager, Phil Kinser, Stanton Historical Society Board Members, Carroll Peterson, Don Hicks, Maurine Allen, Lyle Strickland, and Millie Newman. Photo taken by Becky Peterson, Media.

MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN



Please make room for roadside crews

By Abby Berry

When the power goes out, so do Southwest Iowa REC's line crews. Lineworkers are the first to respond after an outage occurs, and they work tirelessly to restore power to the communities we serve.

If you're traveling and see one of our crews on the side of the road, we kindly ask that you move over if possible and give them a little extra space to work. We deeply care about the safety of all, and this extra precaution ensures just that.

If you approach a crew while traveling on a two-lane road, moving over to the next lane might not be an option. In this case, we simply ask that you slow down when approaching roadside crews. If you approach a crew while traveling on a four-lane road, and safety and traffic conditions allow, we ask that you move over into the far lane.

Iowa's Move Over Law, which was established in 2002, requires motorists to change lanes to give space for vehicles stopped along the side of the road. Anyone who violates the law could face a fine of up to \$10,000.

Utility crews aren't the only ones who could use the extra space. Emergency responders, such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians, often find themselves responding to emergency situations near busy roadways. We ask that you follow the same procedures mentioned above to help keep these crews safe.

There's plenty of room for all. Let's work together to keep everyone safe on our local roadways.



Good luck to all the 4-Hers in the surrounding county fairs this summer!



SOUTHWEST IOWA
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



Find us on
Facebook

Patriotic Mini-cheesecakes



Ingredients

- 1 cup crushed graham cracker crumbs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tbsp butter melted
- 3 pkgs cream cheese 8oz each - softened
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup diced strawberries
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1 cup granulated sugar

Instructions

1. Combine berries & 1 cup sugar in a small bowl & toss to combine. Set aside to macerate until it becomes like a syrup with the berries.
2. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
3. Melt butter in microwave safe bowl for approx 30 seconds.
4. Add graham cracker crumbs & 2 tbsp of sugar. Mix until combined & crumbs are moist.
5. Line muffin tins with 18 baking cup liners.
6. Put approx 1 tsp of moist crumbs in the bottom of each liner & press down to compact & cover bottom.
7. Beat cream cheese, vanilla extract & remaining sugar in electric mixer until well combined.
8. Add in eggs one at a time- mixing until just blended.
9. Scoop into your prepared liners on top of your crackers. I did one large scoop to start & then went back & topped each off with my remaining batter so that they were all uniform in size.
10. Bake 25-30 minutes- until center is almost set.
11. Cool completely.
12. When ready- peel papers off, top with macerated berries
13. Store in refrigerator in airtight container.

Bravo.....

Dear Southwest Iowa REC,

Thank you for choosing me to receive your scholarship, as it will help cover the costs of lineman school this fall. Thank you for letting me work there this summer, as it is a good start.
- Tanner Streit

Dear REC,

Thank you for selecting me for the SWIAREC scholarship. This award will help me in my first year of college at Northwest Missouri State University.
-Lexi Clark

I appreciate you supporting me. I will put this scholarship to good use.
-Lydia Hoffman

Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Co-op,

Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of your scholarship. I am honored and grateful for your support and generosity as I continue my education. This will lessen my financial stress. Thank you for believing in me and my future.
Sincerely, Maggie Carlson

Dear SWIAREC,

I want to express my sincere gratitude for awarding me the Southwest Iowa REC Scholarship. Your generosity will lighten my

financial burden and help me to focus more fully on my studies at ISU.
-Meredith Roberts

Dear Southwest Iowa REC,

Thank you for your generosity and for selecting me as a scholarship recipient. I am very grateful for your support. I plan to attend Iowa State University to major in elementary education. This scholarship will help support my future goals. Thank you again for investing in my future.

Sincerely, Mackenzie Fast

Dear SWIAREC,

As I finish my first year of college, I wanted to express my gratitude for selecting me for this scholarship. Thank you for believing in my goals and to help me positively change the lives of others!

Sincerely, Makenna Perkins

Dear SWIAREC,

I am sincerely honored and grateful to have been selected as a recipient of this scholarship. I hope to one day give back and make a positive impact, just as you have done for me.

Sincerely, Mackenzie Maeder

Corning

2248 Avenue of Industries., Corning, IA 50841

Mount Ayr

1502 W. South St., Mount Ayr, IA 50854

Phone Number: (888) 220-4869

Southwest Iowa REC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board of Directors

Marilyn Werner, President Phil Kinser, CEO
Mark Herzberg, Vice President
Kay Fast-Deyoe, Secretary
Jason Smith, Treasurer
Alan Spencer, Adam Boswell, Dana Morgan
Justin Akers, Bonnie Larson, Dale Walkup