

living with energy

IN IOWA

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JANUARY 2019

Win a sous vide cooker with Wi-Fi! ▶ See Page 5

**New year,
new legislature,
new opportunities**

**Rural dentistry –
Something to
smile about!**

**Proactively reducing
outage causes**

**Recipes for
healthy eating**

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for an easy way to make your home cozier? Try using an area rug to increase the insulation levels of your floors. Area rugs are stylish and can keep cool air from entering through your floors. Your toes will thank you!

Source: energy.gov



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ON THE COVER

Justin Bossard (*left*) and Ryan Romanco, apprentice linemen with Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., based in Albia, work on installing a new electric service. Throughout the year, linemen work in all types of weather extremes – including cold winter weather – to ensure the delivery of safe and reliable power to electric cooperative members. ⚡



New year, new legislature, new opportunities

BY KEVIN CONDON

As the calendar flips to a new year, so too begins a new Congress and Iowa General Assembly. Those of us who live and breathe politics and public policy have been preparing for the new year and the debates that will happen in our state and federal capitol buildings.

While Iowa doesn't have defined term limits in place for elected officials, legislators retire from service in one of two ways – by their own choice or by the voters. The November 2018 election yielded a little bit of both as Iowa will have two new members of Congress and 29 new legislators out of 150 state house and senate positions.

A 33 percent turnover in our federal delegation and a nearly 20 percent turnover at the Statehouse is an opportunity for Iowa's electric co-ops. We can educate these newly elected officials about how we power lives and empower communities. Some new officials might not know the similarities and differences that exist between electric co-ops, municipal utilities and investor-owned utilities.

The grassroots arm of Iowa's electric cooperatives is the Iowa Rural Power program. Through this program, we work to engage employees and members of electric co-ops to reach out to legislators on issues that are important to them. We begin our work when Iowa's General Assembly begins by bringing co-op advocates together with legislators for a "Welcome Back" reception. At various times, individual electric co-ops also travel to the State Capitol to meet with their legislators to discuss priorities. Also, scores of Iowa Rural Power advocates will make the journey back to Des Moines for our annual

REC Day on the Hill event to discuss issues and share information about how rural electric cooperatives (RECs) are investing in their communities.

At the federal level, in addition to seeing our iconic green Rural Power shirts in the crowd at hometown forums, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives takes 40-50 advocates to Washington, D.C., in the spring as part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual legislative conference. Before Mother's Day rolls around, Iowa's electric co-op advocates will have reached out to their elected officials many times.

As state legislators prepare to

return to the Capitol or be sworn-in for the first time, Iowa's electric co-ops will be there greeting them and making sure that they understand the cooperative principles we stand for and the investments we've made in our regional communities. We all have a responsibility to ensure our elected leaders are informed and aware of how their decisions impact electric co-ops and their member-owners. Candidates for office worked hard to earn your vote in November, and our civic duty shouldn't end on Election Day. In this new year, let's all resolve to stay informed and engaged while we advocate on behalf of the cooperative family. ⚡

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



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

During the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative’s Annual Meeting in December, Phil Irwin, president and CEO of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, talked about the inherent danger when working with electricity.



“We often think about electricity as dangerous, when actually it is quite predictable. We know what to do to protect ourselves from that danger. What we really need to remember is that electricity is unforgiving.”

Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange is committed to working with its members to provide superior, value-oriented insurance programs with a focus on safety, service and stability.

COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

Gov. Reynolds visits Corn Belt Power



Raccoon Valley Electric CEO Jim Gossett met with Gov. Kim Reynolds on Thursday, Dec. 13 at Corn Belt Power in Humboldt.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg visited Corn Belt Power Cooperative in Humboldt on Thursday, Dec. 13. The pair’s visit was part of a larger tour to touch base with rural constituents following their November general election win.

Corn Belt employees, board members and distribution managers

briefed Reynolds and Gregg on issues including power supply, the cooperative difference, economic development, electric vehicle charging stations, vegetation management and energy efficiency. Reynolds praised the state’s economic development efforts and said low-cost power is a big part of its success. ⚡

POWERFUL IMAGE

Hats off to Iowa’s electric cooperatives

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives’ office in Urbandale, a new wall display exhibits cooperative unity. Signage next to the caps reads as follows:

“These baseball caps represent the members of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. May this wall remind us of our vision to unify and strengthen the voice of our members in an evolving industry through leadership, integrity and expertise centered around the cooperative principles.” ⚡



Co-op survivor advocate gets personal in opioid fight

The weapons in Rex Butler's arsenal to bring awareness to America's growing opioid epidemic are personal: an open heart and a compelling story.

In 2006, Butler, manager for environmental and safety for Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), lost his brother, Bill, to an accidental overdose of methadone, a painkiller prescribed after a call to his doctor one evening for excruciating, chronic back problems. Without a thought, he took it as he did the hydrocodone he had been prescribed earlier. He felt the hydrocodone wasn't masking his pain. Hours later, he was dead. Bill had been scheduled for back surgery just two weeks after his death. Had he known how methadone metabolizes, he might still be alive today.

That is when Butler's fight began. Now, it's a fight that recently earned him recognition by the National Safety Council (NSC). In 2008, Butler became one of the inaugural members in the Survivor Advocate Opioid Focus Program developed by the NSC to help raise public awareness of the growing national problem, opioid addiction and related deaths.

Butler has shared his story in webinars and presentations across the state. It was also published in the *Wall*



Street Journal, the *Financial Times*, and locally by the Iowa Association of Business and Industry.

Butler would be the first to tell you that while his story is painful for him and his family, many families are suffering. Today one in three households deals with an addiction problem according to The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. In 2014, opioid deaths moved ahead of car accidents as a leading cause of accidental death, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

When Butler recently was in Houston speaking at the NSC's Congress and Expo, representing the Survivor Advocate Opioid Focus Program, he shared Bill's story. Others were there telling their stories from the workplace, along with notables such as Sen. Ted Cruz who lost a sister to the crisis (pictured above).

Butler is available to speak to various organizations. He can be reached at (515) 362-7651 or Rex. Butler@cipco.net. He's always looking for an opportunity to talk about the battle of opioid crises to one person at a time.

"If it saves one life, it makes a difference." ⚡

Win a Sous Vide Cooker with Wi-Fi!



Once the well-kept secret of professional chefs, this smart sous vide precision cooker makes it easier than ever for home cooks to prepare a perfect meal. Designed to work with any pot in your kitchen, the cooker features a full-service app that includes time and temperature guides, 1,000+ recipes, and allows you to start, stop and monitor your cooking from your mobile device. For details, visit www.williams-sonoma.com and enter 6561828 in the search bar. The retail value is \$200.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest for the Sous Vide Cooker with Wi-Fi by visiting the *Living with Energy in Iowa* website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than Jan. 31, 2019. 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 winners of the \$100 gift card in the November issue were Harold & Sue Krogman, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc. ⚡

SPOTLIGHT ON IOWA

Iowa electric co-op featured in national podcast



The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association recently launched the third episode in its podcast series, titled "Along Those Lines," which looks at the health of rural America and the role that electric cooperatives are playing in their rural communities. The episode features Norm Fandel, business development vice president for Midland Power Cooperative in Jefferson, Iowa. Norm discusses community development and revitalizing small towns.

On the podcast, Norm walks through projects and programs that his co-op runs to strengthen their community of an estimated population of 4,150 people.

To listen to this podcast and others in the series, visit www.electric.coop/podcast. ⚡

Going out on a limb to reduce outages

BY ANN THELEN

In Iowa, beautiful trees and vegetation dot the rolling hills of the landscape. We also have ever-changing seasons, which bring sunny skies, windy days, thunderstorms, ice storms and an array of weather patterns. During a strong thunderstorm, trees whip around and branches crack. It can be Mother Nature's angry way of pruning trees.

Trees and plants provide many benefits, but poorly placed trees can lead to big problems. Fallen limbs, branches and trees are a top cause of power outages in Iowa. When this happens, electric power restoration can be timely, costly and inconvenient for electric cooperative members. A proactive and strategic approach to keeping trees away from power is vital to providing you with safe and reliable electric service.

Why tree trimming is necessary

In 2003, the Northeast U.S. suffered a power outage that was the second most widespread electrical power outage in U.S. history. More than 10 million people in Canada and 45 million people in the U.S. were affected. The blackout was caused when high-voltage power lines came in contact with overgrown trees. The cascading effect forced the shutdown of more than 100 power plants. It only took nine seconds for the grid to collapse. Federal regulations for vegetation management by power providers soon followed to prevent a similar situation from happening again.

"In northeast Iowa, we are blessed with a lot of trees. Proper vegetation management has always been an important priority for our cooperative members," says Paul Foxwell, executive vice president/general manager at Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ACEC). ACEC provides electric power to more than 9,900 members on 2,508 miles of



line throughout eight counties.

Vegetation management is a preventative process to keep trees and brush from coming into contact with power lines. The area – typically 25 feet in each direction of the power line – is known as the utility right of way. This process is important for electric service reliability and more importantly for safety. If a child is climbing a tree with branches that are in contact with energized power lines, it could be fatal for the child. When a limb brings down a power line in a storm, the line remains energized and dangerous until the cooperative can safely de-energize it.

In the early 1990s, ACEC commissioned a study to put a structure behind their vegetation management program. With roughly 40 percent of the co-op's outages caused by trees, it was a wise investment.

"The study was extremely helpful in identifying how often we needed to be cutting, trimming or spraying vegetation," Foxwell says. "We work hard to adhere to what we learned in the study and spend approximately

\$750,000 per year on vegetation management. It's a significant amount of money going toward maintenance, but it's essential."

Based on the study, ACEC learned that woody vegetation increases in biomass at a rate of 14 percent per year. While that may not be significant on a twig, the exponential growth on a 10- or 20-foot tree can create big problems.

Like all electric cooperatives in Iowa, ACEC is on a well-prescribed cycle of managing the vegetation process on annual rotations.

"We are on a 7- to 10-year rotation of trimming and cutting in certain years and using mid-rotation herbicide applications – either just on the base of the tree or careful foliar applications," Foxwell explains. "If you don't stay on top of it, your costs go up because it becomes that much more difficult to manage as the vegetation becomes larger and larger."

To maintain 2,500 miles of line, two certified arborists are on staff – and shared with nearby MiEnergy Cooperative and Heartland Power Cooperative – to manage the program



and ensure adherence to state and federal guidelines.

Contractors are used for the work out in the service territory and are well-trained and skilled in their roles. They are all certified applicators – meaning they have undergone specific training to properly apply any type of herbicide that is used to control vegetation. Sprays are carefully designed to only kill woody growth, for example, while keeping grass and other non-troublesome plants alive. Herbicide applications are much more cost-effective than going in and trying to clear everything with chainsaws and mechanical tools.

“We are creating rights of way restoration by developing habitat-friendly environments with grasses and low-growing brush,” Foxwell says.

For members who may be concerned about spraying – perhaps they have an organic farming operation – ACEC is mindful of the members’ wishes.

Safety and reliability are paramount

In southern Iowa, Access Energy Cooperative and Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc. take similar approaches to vegetation management.

Kevin Wheeler, general manager/CEO, Access Energy Cooperative, says their top priorities are safety – first and foremost – and reliability.

“We are proactive because we don’t ever want someone hurt due to a vegetation problem,” he says. “When you have a robust plan, your outages will decrease significantly. In November, we had an early winter storm and our vegetation management process made a huge difference. Where there were blinking lights, it was in areas we hadn’t trimmed yet as part of our 5-year cycle.”

In its 10-county southeast Iowa service territory, Access Energy

Cooperative has 2,200 miles of lines, which means 430 miles are managed each year.

“We work to maintain a 20-foot clear zone on each side of the power lines,” Wheeler says.

“Trimming is a necessity of having safe, reliable power.”

Bryon Stilley, general manager of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc., which serves seven counties in southern Iowa, emphasizes the member benefits of being proactive with vegetation management.

“Safety is the main reason we have a robust program in place; however, it’s also made a big difference in system reliability,” Stilley says. “When I came to Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative 11 years ago, we would have line crews working all night from a storm that had 20 mph winds.”

Across the co-ops, member education and notification of vegetation management plans are communicated through newsletter articles, bill stuffers, door hangers and even personal visits by the staff or crews who are performing the work.

“We try to go above and beyond to make sure our members are well-informed and satisfied,” Stilley says. “If a member doesn’t want a tree trimmed or removed and we need to do it, we give them a selection of new trees to pick from. These trees are ones that will grow within a safe distance, and we’ll plant one or two at no charge.”

Contact your local electric cooperative if you have questions about proper vegetation management or where to plant trees. If you have a tree or other vegetation that is in contact with a power line, never attempt to prune it yourself. Contact your electric cooperative for assistance. ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.



Before trimming vegetation



After trimming vegetation

Healthy Recipes

for the New Year!



Combining good nutrition with physical activity can lead to a healthier lifestyle. USDA's ChooseMyPlate.gov offers these tips.

TIP

MAXIMIZE NUTRIENT-PACKED FOODS

Give your body the nutrients it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed food, including whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Eat less food high in solid fats, added sugars and sodium (salt).

Grilled Zucchini Creole Style

- 3 small zucchinis
- 2 medium carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- ¾ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup cauliflower
- 1 cup broccoli
- ½ pound mushrooms
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon basil
- ¼ teaspoon thyme
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup water

Slice zucchinis into ¼-inch pieces. Cut carrots and celery lengthwise into matchstick thin strips. Cut cauliflower and broccoli into 2-inch pieces and cut mushrooms in quarters. In a large bowl combine all ingredients, toss gently with fork. Wrap in heavy aluminum foil. Place on grill and cook over medium heat for 25 to 30 minutes, until the zucchini is tender crisp turning occasionally. Serve hot immediately.

Peggy Sue Haley • Keswick • T.I.P. REC

Best-Ever “Healthy for You” Bars

- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup coconut oil
- 1 cup chunky peanut butter
- 3 cups quick oats
- 1 cup Angel Flake coconut
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup mini chocolate chips

Place honey, coconut oil and peanut butter in a microwave safe bowl and heat for 30-60 seconds, just until melted. Stir well. Add quick oats and coconut, mix well. Add a combination of any or all the remaining ingredients. Mix well and form into bite-size balls or press into a 9x13-inch ungreased pan. Keep covered in the refrigerator. Will keep for weeks.

Mary Ann Goebel • Granville • North West REC

Easy Salsa

- 2 14½-ounce cans petite diced tomatoes
- 1 diced onion
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
- ⅓ cup minced pickled jalapenos
- Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients. Stir well.

Marci Domnick • Rock Rapids • Lyon REC

Low-Carb Goulash

- 1 pound ground sirloin
- 4-5 stalks celery, finely chopped
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- Salt, pepper and garlic salt, to taste
- 28-30 ounces canned tomatoes
- ½ package coleslaw

Brown the ground sirloin, celery and onion with salt, pepper and garlic salt. Add tomatoes and coleslaw. Simmer until coleslaw is softened. Only 14 carbohydrates per serving.

Jennie Dawson • Indianola
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Basic Hummus

- 15½ ounces chick peas, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons Tahini (ground sesame seeds), optional
- 1 garlic clove
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- Fresh ground black pepper, to taste

Combine the first five ingredients in a blender, then with the machine running add olive oil and water. Top with pepper and drizzle with additional olive oil.

Marissa Hartter • Rock Rapids • Lyon REC

Strawberry Slush

- 3 cups frozen strawberries
- 2 cups apple juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon or lime juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Honey, to taste

Combine ingredients in blender, blend until smooth. Serve immediately.

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids • Lyon REC

No Bake Peanut Butter Bars

- 1½ cups almond flour
- 1½ cups unsweetened, finely shredded coconut
- ¾ cup powdered sweetener
- 2¼ cups natural peanut butter, divided
- ¼ cup butter
- 9 ounces sugar-free chocolate chips or 85% chopped chocolate bar
- 2-3 tablespoons cream
- 1 pinch salt
- Sweetener of choice, to taste

In a large bowl, combine the almond flour, coconut and sweetener. Over medium to low heat, melt and stir together 2 cups peanut butter and butter. Once melted, add to the dry ingredients and mix well. Press the mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Over medium to low heat, melt ¼ cup peanut butter and the chocolate. Stir in sweetener. Once melted, pour over the bars and smooth out the top. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Cut into 24 bars. Store in the refrigerator.

Leah Sommers • Cincinnati
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

TIP

DON'T FORGET DAIRY

Foods like fat-free and low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt and fortified soy beverages (soymilk) help to build and maintain strong bones needed for everyday activities.

TIP

VARY YOUR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Get the nutrients your body needs by eating a variety of colors, in various ways. Try blue, red, or black berries; red and yellow peppers; and dark greens like spinach and kale. Choose fresh, frozen, low-sodium canned, dried or 100 percent juice options.

TIP

MIX IT UP WITH PLANT PROTEIN FOODS

Variety is great! Choose beans and peas (kidney, pinto, black or white beans; split peas; chickpeas; hummus), soy products (tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers) and unsalted nuts and seeds.

Wanted: Best Beef Recipes!

The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

May is Beef Month! Let's join Iowa's cattle farmers in celebrating the month and enjoying the high-quality, mouth-watering beef that Iowa is known for around the world. Share your favorite recipe that includes beef. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is Jan. 31, 2019. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL:

Recipes

Living with Energy in Iowa magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

Dentists “FIND” their way to rural Iowa

BY KAY SNYDER



Dr. Alison Shields shown in her practice.

It is said, your mouth is a window to what's going on in the rest of your body. An unhealthy mouth, especially if you have gum disease, may increase your risk of serious health problems such as heart attack, stroke, poorly controlled diabetes and preterm labor. The best way to maintain a healthy mouth is through preventative care and procedures provided by a dental professional.

Shortage of dentists in rural areas

Having easy access to a dental professional is a challenge many rural Iowans face. Nearly 40 percent of the state's counties are home to just four or fewer private-practice dentists, and 10 percent of the counties have only one dentist. If you live in rural Iowa, or anywhere across much of rural America, chances are your community is considered a dental health professional shortage area.

Research by the University of Iowa's Public Policy Center found that only 36 percent of dentists work in rural communities, compared to 49 percent just 20 years ago. Combined with the fact that nearly half the dentists in Iowa today are more than 50 years old and nearing retirement, access to dental care in rural Iowa will continue to be a challenge.

Iowa's rural utilities help to satisfy the need

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives and independent telecommunication companies actively provide funding and assistance to develop the physical infrastructure of dental practices across rural Iowa. Since 2006, nearly \$5 million in U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDL&G) funds have been secured by 15 Iowa rural electric cooperatives or independent telecommunication companies. They then provided pass-through loans or revolving loan fund

dollars to the dentists to help establish their practices or expand services in rural Iowa.

In 2008, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) provided a REDL&G pass-through loan to support the purchase and renovation of an existing building in Corning, which would become Fuller Family Dental. It was at the Fuller open house that conversations began about developing a tuition assistance program – later to be named FIND (Fulfilling Iowa's Need for Dentists).

Creation of the FIND program

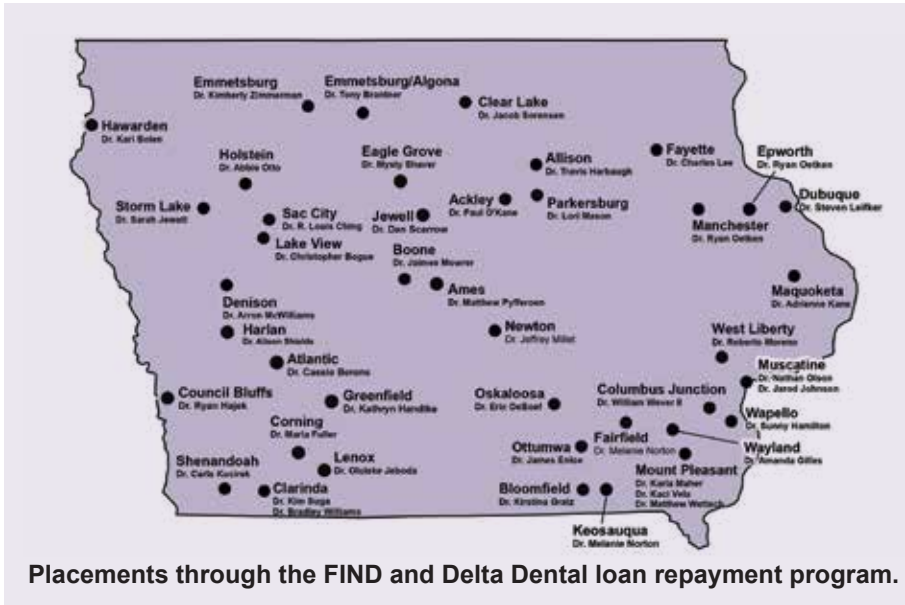
The FIND initiative was developed to address the state's shortage of practicing dentists and bring dental care closer to home for all Iowans. Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) became a partner in this initiative nearly a decade ago. FIND can provide up to \$100,000 in dental education financial assistance to new dentists dedicated to practicing in under-served areas of Iowa. FIND project partners include Delta Dental of Iowa, Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, IADG, The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics, Iowa Department of Public Health and the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, as



A ribbon cutting was held for Jewell Family Dentistry.



Maureen Elbert of the Kossuth/Palo Alto Economic Development Corporation, Jed Skogerboe of Iowa Lake Electric Cooperative, Dr. Tony Brantner and Jim Vermeer of Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



in rural Iowa as a result of the FIND program or loan repayment support through Delta Dental. Four additional FIND recipients will be announced during the first quarter of 2019.

FIND and GROW

The support to dental students goes far beyond the initial FIND program. The effort has evolved to FIND and GROW. The GROW aspect is where IADG staff hold monthly office hours at the University of Iowa and guide dental students throughout their four years of dental education. Each year allows for planning and a step-by-step process that will ultimately lead to a final placement decision – hopefully, a practice in rural Iowa. 🌱

well as numerous local organizations. In many cases, electric cooperatives have provided the first contribution toward the local community match necessary for the FIND tuition repayment program. The Iowa Area Development Group Community

Foundation can match the rural electric cooperative contribution, which typically generates enough momentum for the community to secure the rest of the needed funding for the community match. To date, 44 dentists are practicing

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group, which provides business and community support on behalf of nearly 220 Iowa electric and telecommunications utilities.

Meet some of the dentists who have received support from Iowa's electric cooperatives:



Dr. Alison Shields acquired Harlan Dental from the retiring owner. Nishnabotna Valley REC contributed to the community match necessary to meet the requirements of the FIND program. In addition, Farmers Mutual Cooperative Telephone Company secured funding through the USDA REDL&G program to support the construction of a 3,100-square-foot new home of Harlan Dental.



Dr. Dan Scarrow received support from Midland Power Cooperative and Corn Belt Power Cooperative to help meet the community match required by the FIND program. He now operates Jewell Family Dentistry, which is located in a renovated historic building in Jewell, Iowa.



Dr. Tony Brantner, Louscher Family Dentistry, is practicing in Algona and Emmetsburg and is a recipient of the FIND program. Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Midland Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative contributed to the local match necessary to satisfy the FIND criteria.

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative secured USDA REDL&G funding to support the renovation of a 1,200-square-foot vacant and distressed building on Main Street in Lake View, which will become the new home of Lake View Family Dentistry. **CIPCO** recently secured two loans through the REDL&G program to support Iowa dental practices. One is for Southwest Iowa Dental Associates' construction of a new 5,000-square-foot building in Shenandoah. The second is to support the acquisition and transition of existing dental practices in Sigourney and Williamsburg for Smiles Family Dentistry.

An outlet for energy savings

BY KALEY LOCKWOOD

Does the ebb and flow of your energy bill have you searching for an affordable way to reduce or better control your use? If you answered yes, energy-saving outlets are a practical and affordable device that allows you to better manage your home's energy use.

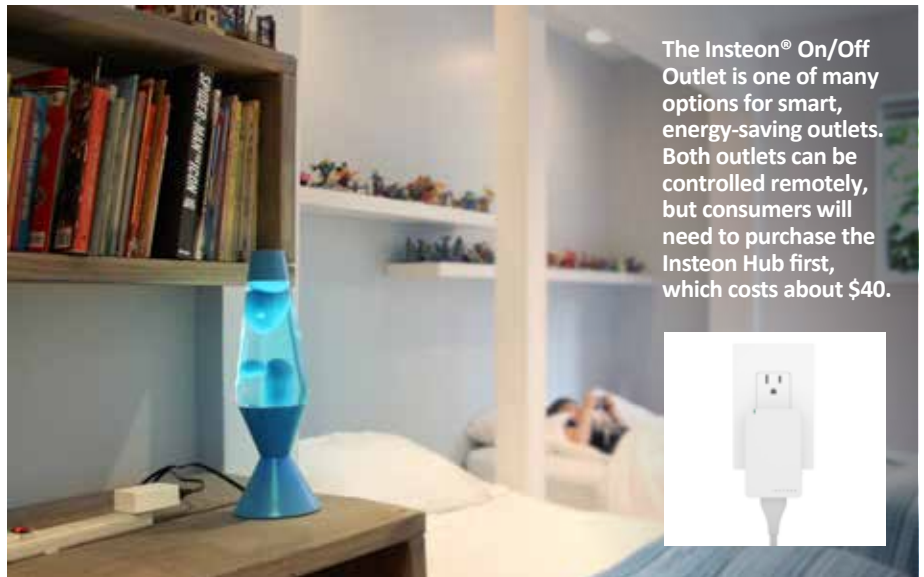
These next-generation devices afford the same surge protection as their predecessors, but also tie in the smart functionality of an internet-connected device.

There are several different kinds of energy-saving outlets available, but there are two factors you should consider. First is size; many different sizes range from a single external outlet to a power strip with multiple sockets. The second thing to consider is Wi-Fi connectivity; internet-connected outlets, commonly known as smart plugs, may enable you to fully realize the potential of these energy savings. You'll have greater remote control of the outlet through your smartphone, tablet or home assistant (like Google Home or Amazon's Alexa).

You'll also want to consider where and how you'll be using the energy-saving outlet.

Click, swipe and save

With smart plugs or smart power strips, a few clicks and swipes on your smartphone will enable you to fully shut down the electrical currents to your high-powered devices to prevent them from consuming electricity even



The Insteon® On/Off Outlet is one of many options for smart, energy-saving outlets. Both outlets can be controlled remotely, but consumers will need to purchase the Insteon Hub first, which costs about \$40.



Photo credit: Insteon®

when switched off. Several devices found inside your home are “parasitic loads,” “phantom loads” or “energy vampires.” Most entertainment systems consist of several parasitic loads, such as televisions, DVD players and video gaming consoles. These outlets can potentially curb those loads, which can cost the average household an extra \$200 per year.

Energy-saving outlets are affordable for most folks who are looking to trim their use. The average smart outlet costs around \$10 to \$20 on Amazon.com and has the potential to pay for itself within two years or less depending on how often you use it.

Convenience is also a significant factor to consider when thinking about your next efficiency upgrade.

Smart plugs typically come with simple instructions to download an accompanying app on your smartphone and connect the plug to your home's Wi-Fi. Advanced smart plugs and smart plug apps can automate the use with your schedule and even your presence in the home.

Set a time to turn off devices

You can turn off large-load devices at a set time each night and turn on every morning when you're ready to use them. If you want to use your television, at a time that's outside of the preset hours, you can easily switch the device on through the smartphone app. Through automation, you can power down these energy-intensive devices and prevent unnecessary energy use.

For folks who are looking to optimize their energy use and eliminate vampire loads, smart plugs may be your best option. For others who want more of a hands-off option to save additional dollars, energy-saving outlets and power strips without the Wi-Fi connection may be a better choice. ⚡



Shown here is the modlet (or modern outlet), which can be controlled remotely and even adjust to your personal schedule

Photo credit: ThinkFico

Kaley Lockwood writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Plans for Iowa's largest solar project announced by Central Iowa Power Cooperative

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) has announced plans to partner with Clēnera LLC to develop the largest solar project in Iowa and one of the largest in the Midwest. CIPCO will purchase 100 percent of the energy and capacity output for 25 years from Wapello Solar, a 100-megawatt solar facility to be located on approximately 800 acres in Louisa County. This area is served by Eastern Iowa REC, a local distribution co-op which receives power generated and transmitted by CIPCO.

The project will incorporate the latest in solar array technology to provide cost-effective, clean electric energy. Cutting-edge solar panel technology will be paired with efficient solar inverters and a single-axis tracking system to maximize energy generation. Clēnera, based in Boise, Idaho, will develop and operate Wapello Solar with the facility retaining all associated renewable energy credits. The completion date for Wapello Solar is expected to be December 2020.

"We are thrilled to partner with Clēnera to bring low-cost, clean energy to our members," says CIPCO CEO and Executive Vice President Bill Cherrier. "This is a milestone project as we look to strike a meaningful balance with energy cost, reliability and stewardship for our members. Energy produced by the sun provides an excellent complement to wind energy. Energy from Wapello Solar will be produced during our daily and seasonal peak demand times. This is an innovative way for us to offer reliability and efficiency to CIPCO's energy portfolio."

The Wapello Solar project meets Clēnera's mission of adding low-cost solar energy to the grid, according to Co-Founder and CEO Jason Ellsworth.



"Solar technology is powering huge cost savings and incredible environmental benefits for communities. The future for renewable energy projects is bright," he says.

This is the second major generation project announced in as many months by CIPCO, as the cooperative recently announced a 60-megawatt project to repower the Summit Lake Generating Station in Creston. The project includes demolition of its 70-year old steam plant and installation of efficient natural gas-fired reciprocating engines by late 2022.

In addition, CIPCO is purchasing 100 percent of the energy produced by the 103.5-megawatt Heartland Divide Wind Energy Center, making it CIPCO's largest wind energy project to date.

These announcements come on the heels of actions last summer by NextEra Energy Resources and Alliant Energy who petitioned the

IUB to close the Duane Arnold Energy Center (DAEC) in Palo in 2020, 14 years before the plant's operating license would expire. CIPCO is 20 percent owner of the nuclear plant and receives 20 percent of its generating capacity from DAEC.

"We're pleased to add these cost-effective energy projects to our portfolio," Cherrier says. "Our members and their member-consumers benefit from advantageous pricing on these next generation resources. Not only do members insist on cost efficiencies, they also demand reliability. It's exciting to provide both through complementary generation projects powered by the wind and the sun."

Central Iowa Power Cooperative

CIPCO is a generation and transmission electric cooperative. CIPCO and its 13 members serve more than 300,000 Iowans in 58 Iowa counties. ⚡

Keeping home heating affordable

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

If your winter energy bills are particularly high, it may be time to assess or upgrade your system.

A good first step, before making major changes to the heating system, is to look at the area you are heating. The amount of heated space and the efficiency of that space determine how large of a heating system you'll need. Air leaks and inadequate insulation might be a major cause of higher bills and correcting these problems might enable you to install a smaller heating system.

An energy audit will provide the answers you need and give you an idea of how much you can save from weatherization measures and a more efficient heating system. Contact your local electric cooperative first to see if they offer energy audits or if they can recommend an auditor.

Heating systems

Propane furnaces are expected to last 15 to 25 years, but well-maintained furnaces may last longer. Even if your furnace is still running well and has some life left in it, it may not be efficient.

Propane, gas and oil furnace efficiency is measured by the Average Fuel Utilization Efficiency or AFUE. This is indicated on a label which may still be attached to the furnace. A 20-year-old unit might have an AFUE in the 70 to 80 percent range. A new high-efficiency furnace can have an AFUE rating of over 95 percent,



A common method of delivering electric resistance heat is the electric wall heater.



Energy Guide Labels can be found on any major appliance and include information on energy efficiency. The heat pump described here is ENERGY STAR approved.

Mini-split heat pumps are efficient options for heating and cooling. They are typically installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home.



Photo credit: Bonneville Power Administration

which can reduce the portion of your propane bill that goes toward heating by 15 to 20 percent. The AFUE doesn't account for any heat escaping through poorly insulated or improperly sealed pipes or furnace ducts, so you want those issues taken care of first.

Instead of replacing your old propane furnace with a new one, there are two additional options.

You could install an air source heat pump, which would use your existing ductwork, or a mini-split heat pump, which can heat up to four rooms. In the past decade, the efficiency of heat pumps has greatly improved, even to the point where they are solid options even in colder climates.

If your home is heated with electric baseboards and wall heaters, it's not surprising that your electric bill is high. This is common for inefficient homes that rely on resistance heat using wall heaters, portable heaters or baseboard heaters.

In this situation, there may not be ductwork, which makes the installation of a central heat pump very expensive. Instead, get a quote on a ductless mini-split heat pump. They are efficient for heating and cooling, so if you use a window A/C unit (or two), you can save even more money. Mini-splits are usually installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home. As efficient as the mini-splits are, they might not provide enough heat in a prolonged, extreme cold snap, so leaving a few baseboard heaters connected is a good idea.

Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and the pocketbook for many years. Scheduling an energy audit and considering all your options gives you the best chance of making the right decisions. ⚡

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen are with Collaborative Efficiency.

AN OVERRATED BUCKET LIST

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I gave up the whole “resolution” thing long ago. For me, resolutions were too lofty and too hard to continue once the determination wore off. Instead, I decided to go with a Bucket List approach to life.

It’s occurred to me, though, that the Bucket List is often overrated. So many of the things on it that I’ve finally gotten to experience or achieve haven’t been that stellar. Maybe we’re missing out on the real moments in life because we want to do something huge?

Take, for instance, an adventure that had been on my list for a long time: swimming in the Blue Lagoon in Iceland. Pictures of that geothermal pool, just a few miles from the Reykjavik Airport, look almost otherworldly – the aquamarine waters, the steam rising from the surface of the 100-degree pool and the volcanic outcroppings of rock that surround it.

Kent and I stopped for four days in Iceland en route to the Netherlands last year. Excitedly, I made reservations for the pool, which can sell out quickly. The price was high; I mean really high. “Are you sure you want to pay that kind of money to go swimming?” Kent complained. I totally ignored him. Here’s a guy that doesn’t like water anyway, though the promise of warmth tended to lure him in. “It will be like swimming in a hot tub,” I said.

Though it was May, the island’s weather was cold and rainy with occasional showers of sleet. However, our time slot at the lagoon was a take-it-or-leave-it kind of proposition. We soldiered on to the pool, paid our money and went to the dressing rooms.

As we headed toward the pool itself, we literally couldn’t see



anything out the glass windows. A North Atlantic wind had sprung up and was blowing the steam horizontally. As we entered the water, we could see, dimly, in the distance, the lifeguards were wearing parkas and snow pants.

“How the heck are they going to save us?” Kent pointed out. “They’ve got their backs to us to keep the wind out of their faces!”

We huddled under a bridge in the middle of the lagoon with another family who was determined to have a good time. My eyelashes and hair were frozen. I had to keep myself up to my neck in the water to counterbalance my frost-rimmed lips. We couldn’t see more than 5 feet ahead.

“Isn’t this fun?” I cajoled. “Now, I can cross this off my Bucket List!”

“Your bucket has a hole in it,” Kent grumbled. We spent 20 minutes

in the lagoon before deciding we couldn’t take any more fun.

Perhaps the Bucket List moments of life aren’t the ones worth striving for. Last fall, I sat around a bonfire on a chilly autumn evening listening to my 4-year-old grandson tell me a tall tale about a giant bear in his yard. His earnest little eyes and expansive hand gestures added to the drama. These are the real bucket moments. It’s just up to us to recognize them.

If you’re in Iceland, I’d recommend going to the Blue Lagoon if the weather cooperates. But if the lifeguards are wearing winter clothing, just skip it. 🌿

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.

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