

# living with energy

IN IOWA

Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperatives of Iowa  
www.touchstoneenergy.coop



APRIL 2019

Win a KitchenAid<sup>®</sup> Stand Mixer ▶ See Page 5

## Spring safety tips



Tackling  
6 energy-  
saving claims

Creating beautiful  
and edible gardens

Health care –  
Heartbeat  
of communities

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

*Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) 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 **Living with Energy in Iowa** 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. E-mail address: editor@livingwithenergyiowa.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length before publication. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

**Website:** www.livingwithenergyiowa.com

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Living with Energy in Iowa* 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. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2019, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.

**ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG**



**IOWA 811 ONE CALL** SM

**800-292-8989**

## Features

### 6 Creating beautiful and edible gardens

Edible gardening is making a comeback. A new twist is rethinking the concept of a vegetable garden by tucking edibles into the existing landscape.



### 8 Soups for spring

April showers bring healthy soups! Rain or shine, these soups are tasty favorites. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



### 10 Health care – Heartbeat of communities

Iowa's electric cooperatives have a long and rich history of supporting the expansion of medical facilities and health care services in Iowa.



## Favorites

### 3 Statewide Perspective

Be aware of dangers this spring

### 14 Energy Efficiency

Breaking down 6 energy-saving claims

### 5 Editor's Choice Contest

Win a KitchenAid® Stand Mixer

### 15 Out Back

Dreaming of tulips

## ON THE COVER

Our cover photo was taken last spring by Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) Meter Technician Justin Ott at NIPCO's Logan Substation, which is north of Ida Grove. Fellow NIPCO employee and Heavy Equipment Operator Roger Armstrong is posing with the fawn. The fawn had been hidden in the grassy location by its mother, who came back to retrieve it. Electric cooperative employees encounter some pretty spectacular moments with the environment we all share with the local wildlife. Being environmentally responsible is undoubtedly a part of what electric co-ops do throughout every season. ⚡



# Be aware of dangers this spring

BY JOHN DVORAK

Spring weather will come our way eventually, and when it does arrive, there are some specific things to look out for regarding electric safety. Remember, you can't see, smell or hear electricity, so it's very important to take these precautions seriously.

## Call before you dig

Spring is prime time for landscaping projects and "honey do" lists around the home. Remember to contact Iowa One Call at least two business days before you dig to any depth so underground utilities can be properly located. It's the law, and it could just save your life! Buried utility lines are everywhere, and an underground utility line is damaged every six minutes in the U.S. because someone decided to dig without calling 811 first.

## Safety in the field

As you head into the fields to plant, always make sure to keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If equipment comes into contact with a power line, assume the line is energized and deadly. The operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, he or she will become a path for electricity. Instead, the operator

should stay on the equipment and contact the local electric utility or 911 immediately to report the incident so electricity can be shut off safely before exiting.



## When thunder roars, go indoors!

Spring storms will be here soon, so remember that there is no safe place from lightning when you're outside. It's important to be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms as lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately because it indicates lightning is within 10 miles of you. Safe shelters include inside a building or in an

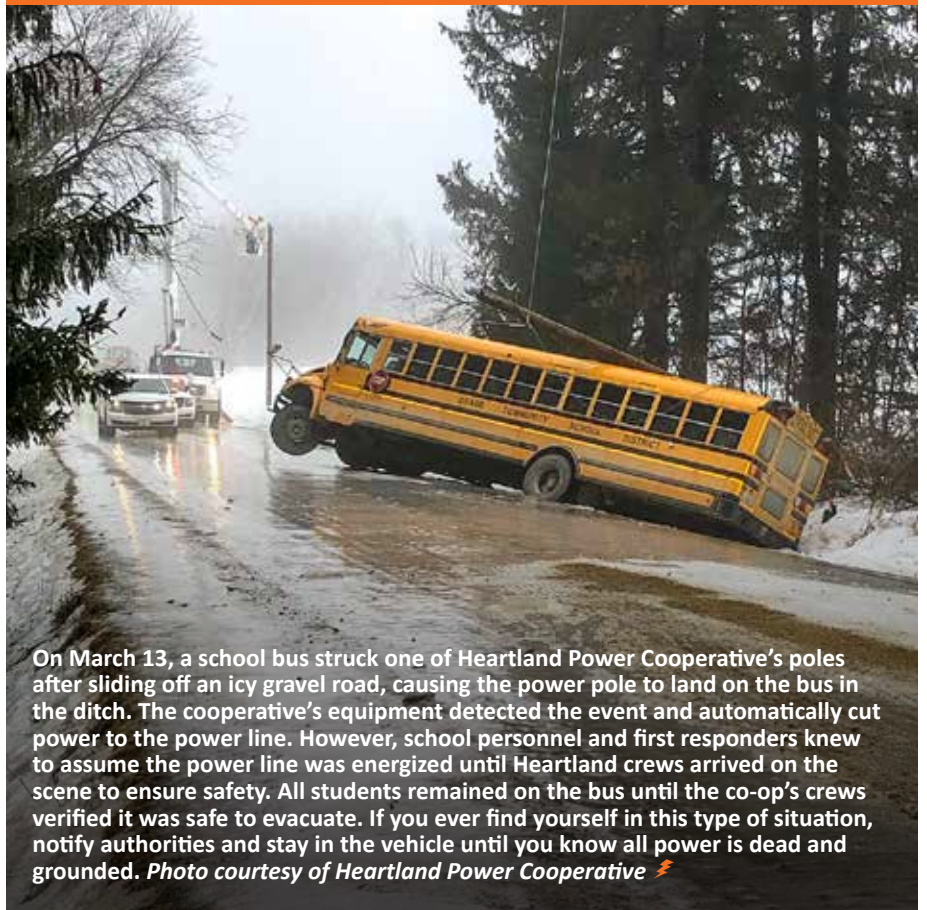
enclosed metal-topped vehicle. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder is heard.

## Move over or slow down on the road

We need your help in keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road; their jobs are hazardous enough already. ⚡

John Dvorak is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

## POWERFUL IMAGE



On March 13, a school bus struck one of Heartland Power Cooperative's poles after sliding off an icy gravel road, causing the power pole to land on the bus in the ditch. The cooperative's equipment detected the event and automatically cut power to the power line. However, school personnel and first responders knew to assume the power line was energized until Heartland crews arrived on the scene to ensure safety. All students remained on the bus until the co-op's crews verified it was safe to evacuate. If you ever find yourself in this type of situation, notify authorities and stay in the vehicle until you know all power is dead and grounded. *Photo courtesy of Heartland Power Cooperative* ⚡

“Electric cooperatives have built a rare kind of credibility that’s grounded in the cooperative principle of “Concern for Community” through services to consumer-members far beyond power lines. That includes job training, continuing education, community development, broadband internet access, health fairs, scholarships, veterans programs, Youth Tour, food banks and Operation Round-Up. Electric co-ops are in the quality-of-life business. We take that responsibility seriously, and that’s what makes us different.”

- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jim Matheson, speaking to thousands of electric co-op leaders March 11 at NRECA’s 77th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.

# CIPCO raises the safety bar!

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) set a new high bar for safety standards, exceeding its all-time safety record. As of Feb. 13, 2019, CIPCO employees broke the long-time record of 1,946,292 hours worked without a lost-time injury. The co-op is well on its way to achieving a major milestone of 2 million hours without a lost-time injury in 10 years. Like the rest of the electric cooperative industry, CIPCO’s priority is safety, and the dedication of employees to this commitment has led to its success.

“Our employees have a right to a safe work environment,” says Rex Butler, CIPCO safety and environmental manager. “Everyone does an excellent job of ensuring safety is our top priority and understanding its impact throughout our company and the delivery system.”

Achieving this milestone, a unique



accomplishment for an organization of 100 employees, demonstrates the commitment CIPCO employees have to safety. This is driven from a focus on continuous training from day one, creating a culture of safety that is essential throughout the cooperative.

“Safety not only matters to our employees, but it matters to our cooperative members. Our employees are dedicated to safety throughout our electric system, for each other and the members. That makes a difference every day,” says CIPCO CEO Bill Cherrier. “Generation and transmission work are inherently dangerous, and our employees, like everyone else, want to go home at night to their families. When we commit to safety, everyone wins.”

“Our employees understand there is nothing so urgent that safety should be forgotten, and there is no piece of equipment that CIPCO owns that is so expensive an employee should put themselves in harm’s way to protect,” adds Dan Burns, vice president, utility operations.

Through its 13 member distribution co-ops, CIPCO’s focus is on delivering safe, reliable, cost-effective electricity to more than 300,000 Iowans in 58 Iowa counties. Focusing on a culture of safety is critical to meeting those goals.

**Congratulations to CIPCO on this major achievement! ⚡**

POWERFUL IMAGE



Chuck Soderberg (right), IAEC executive vice president, presented with NRECA CEO Jim Matheson at NRECA’s annual meeting in March. The duo talked about the importance of grassroots advocacy in today’s polarized political environment. ⚡

# Co-ops fuel economy

Electric cooperatives have a broad financial impact on the U.S., directly or indirectly supporting nearly 612,000 jobs each year and contributing hundreds of billions of dollars to the economy over a five-year period, according to a new analysis. The study, “The Economic Impact of America’s Electric Cooperatives,” was commissioned by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the National Cooperative Services Corporation, an affiliate of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance



Corporation (CFC) and conducted by FTI Consulting Inc. It used

data from generation and transmission cooperatives as well as distribution co-ops.

The analysis also found that, from 2013 to 2017, co-ops contributed \$440 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP), \$881 billion to U.S. sales output and \$200 billion to the nation’s labor income. In addition, people employed directly and indirectly by co-ops paid more than \$52 billion in federal taxes and nearly \$60 billion in state and

local taxes over the five-year period, the analysis estimates. ⚡

EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22

# 10 ways to celebrate Earth Day, every day!

1. Conserve water by taking showers instead of baths.
2. Take a shorter shower and use a water-saving shower head.
3. Turn off all lights when you leave a room.
4. Turn off and unplug electronics you’re not using, including the computer at night.
5. Run your dishwasher only when it’s full to save water and energy.
6. Bring your reusable bags to the market and other stores when shopping.
7. Go paperless. Pay as many bills as possible online.
8. Ditch the car and walk when possible.
9. Lower the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees.
10. Grow your own garden or join a farm-share group.



### Energy efficiency adds up

Iowa’s electric cooperatives practice environmental stewardship in a variety of ways, including making investments in energy efficiency. In the most recent five-year period, Iowa’s electric cooperatives invested more than \$76 million toward energy efficiency, including education, energy audits, incentives and rebates. Incremental annual savings amount to more than 300 million kilowatt-hours per year! Lifetime savings for the energy efficiency measures that were adopted by co-op members during this same period amount to a savings of more than 3.7 billion kilowatt-hours. Considering that the average household in Iowa uses roughly 11,000 kilowatt-hours per year, that adds up to a lot of savings! ⚡

## Win a KitchenAid® Stand Mixer!



The Kitchen Aid® Classic Series 10-speed mixer with tilt-up head is powerful enough for nearly any task or recipe, whether you’re stirring wet and dry ingredients together, kneading bread dough or whipping cream. The 4½-quart bowl holds enough capacity to mix up to 6 dozen cookies, 3 loaves of bread or 6 pounds of mashed potatoes in a single batch! Three handy accessories: flat beater, wire whip, and dough hook come with the mixer.

The winner will get to select their mixer color.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month’s contest for a Kitchen Aid® Classic Series 10-speed mixer by visiting the *Living with Energy in Iowa* website at [www.livingwithenergyinowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyinowa.com) no later than April 30, 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 winner of the four Wi-Fi Smart Plugs from the February issue was Mark Skarhus, North West REC. ⚡

# Gardens that look as good as they taste

BY GEORGE WEIGEL

Somewhere along the path to modern American landscapes, gardeners got the idea that flowers are pretty and edible plants are not, so no respectable gardener should ever mix the two.

“Ugly” vegetable plants not only got segregated to the vegetable garden but relegated to back corners, as far away from view as possible. Then, when busy generations found it easier to buy produce at the grocery store, vegetable gardens often disappeared altogether.

However, edible gardening is making a comeback. Fueled by new interest in fresh, non-sprayed produce, home-grown vegetables are chic again. And they’re being grown in pots, fabric bags and straw bales as well as in the ground.

A new twist is rethinking the whole concept of a “vegetable garden” and instead tucking edibles into the existing landscape.



These kale plants add both color and textural interest to this flower bed.

## Better-looking veggie gardens

Option one is keeping the edibles together but dressing them up in a more decorative way. Think “kitchen garden,” a style that includes all sorts of useful plants – herbs, cut flowers, edible flowers, berries and vegetables.

Rather than planting in long, singular rows that harken back to farming, an alternative is planting in mix-and-match blocks in wider rows and raised beds. This style makes better use of space, is easier to tend, and ensures that soil is loose and well-drained.

It also gives better ability to arrange plants by how they look together – just as in flower gardening.

For example, instead of planting a row of cabbage next to a row of lettuce, why not interplant the two? The ruffled form of leaf lettuce pairs nicely with the rounded shape of cabbage. If you use colorful versions of those plants, such as red lettuce and purple cabbage, the combination

is even more striking.

When you think about it, edible plants have ornamental characteristics, too. Carrots have frilly foliage and kale has corrugated, colorful leaves. Hot peppers have fruits that ripen in all sorts of bright colors and shapes. And, rhubarb has both red stems and huge, tropical-looking foliage that’s impressive enough to make a garden centerpiece.

## Succession planting


A downside to “landscaping” with edibles is that you’ll have regular holes in the design as you pick crops to eat. The solution is “succession planting,” meaning that as soon as one crop is harvested, another one is planted to take its place.

Radishes, for example, could lead off an area in early spring, then beans could take their place in summer, then lettuce could follow the beans for a fall harvest.

Tuck a few annual flowers into



Purple basil and a few marigolds add color to this edible garden.



Edible gardens aren't all "ugly" and deserving of being hidden in a back corner of the yard.

edible plantings to give extra color and season-long interest. Some of the best are ones that can be direct-seeded into the garden, such as marigolds, dwarf zinnias, cosmos and sunflowers.

### Edible landscaping

If you can't or don't want to dig up space for a dedicated edible garden, look for places in existing beds to sneak in a few favorite herbs and vegetables.

Edibles with the most ornamental value make sense in landscape settings – select edibles based on how their ornamental traits match existing neighbors.

Chives, for example, make a good

edging plant in front of evergreens with their short, spiky leaves and pink, ball-shaped spring flowers. Purple basil pairs nicely with pink shrub roses. Pepper plants fit seamlessly into a hot-colored perennial garden of black-eyed susans, mums and daylilies.

A side benefit is the pigments that add more color to edible plants are generally ones with higher levels of antioxidants and nutrition.

It's all a good reason to give new meaning to the term "tasteful garden." ⚡

---

George Weigel is a horticulturist, garden consultant, author and newspaper garden columnist.



Blueberry leaves turn brilliant shades in the fall.

## 10 plants that look as good as they taste

- Blueberries make an excellent border hedge and turn brilliant shades of red, orange or burgundy in fall.
- Underplant a bed of red daylilies with a groundcover of golden oregano.
- Silver thyme is a salt- and drought-tough creeper that makes a nice edging plant along a sunny driveway.
- Hot peppers produce all summer and mature brightly enough for use in sunny foundation beds.
- Red or purple kale adds colorful upright contrast when interplanted with rounded shrubs, such as boxwoods or abelia.
- Eggplant makes a good centerpiece in a sunny spot surrounded by pink petunias.
- Interplant frilly-leafed parsley with rounded perennials, such as hostas or coralbells.
- Grow cherry tomatoes up a trellis between shrubs in a south- or west-facing foundation bed.
- Flank pink shrub roses with purple or tricolor sage.
- Grow sweet potato vines out of hanging baskets or window boxes.



## Ways to dress up an edible garden

- **Go with a geometric pattern.** Vegetable gardens don't have to be rectangles. They can be built in more interesting circles, or in picket-fenced collections of blocks of varying sizes, or as early German settlers liked to do, in four-square layouts with a centerpiece bed in the middle.
- **Add hardscaping.** Define the garden with permanent features, such as stone paths between the beds, walls or fencing around the perimeter, and maybe a vine-covered arbor at the entrance.
- **Add accessories and focal points.** Instead of plain wooden tomato stakes and utilitarian vine netting, switch to more ornamental trellises or build attractive bamboo teepees. Finish the garden with an eye-grabbing object or two, such as a statue, bird feeder or favorite antique.

Vegetable gardens don't have to be rectangular. This design is a traditional German four-square layout.

# SOUPS FOR SPRING



## Slow-Clucker Delight

- 3 pounds chicken (dark meats preferred)
- 1 cup raisins
- 5 cups beef, chicken or vegetable broth
- 1½ teaspoons turmeric
- 2 teaspoons curry
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- ¼ cup chopped garlic
- corn starch, as needed
- 1½ cups carrots, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped (approx. 2 large stalks)
- 8 ounces pearl onions
- 2 cups mushrooms

Combine chicken, raisins and spices in slow cooker, cover with broth. Cook on high heat 4-6 hours or until the chicken shreds easily. Remove skin and bones. Break chicken up into bits. At this point, thicken the broth with corn starch, as the vegetables will thin it out. Add vegetables and cook another 2 hours (if chopped onions instead of pearl onions are used, add only in the last hour of cooking). Soup is ready when the vegetables are still slightly crunchy.

Aaron Kruse • Donnellson • Access Energy Cooperative

## Italian Sausage & Kale Soup

- 1 pound bulk hot Italian sausage or mild sausage
- 6 cups chopped fresh kale
- 2 25.5-ounce cans great northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 4 large carrots, finely chopped (about 3 cups)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 5 cups chicken stock
- grated Parmesan cheese

In a large skillet, cook sausage over medium heat 6-8 minutes or until no longer pink, breaking into crumbles; drain. Transfer to a 5-quart slow cooker. Add kale, beans, tomatoes, carrots, onion, garlic, seasonings and stock to slow cooker. Cook covered, on low 8-10 hours or until vegetables are tender. Top each serving with cheese. Yield: 8 servings (3½ quarts).

Mrs. Vernon Harrington • LeMars • North West REC

## Favorite Lentil Soup

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 3 carrots, coarsely grated
- ¾ teaspoon marjoram, crumbled
- ¾ teaspoon thyme leaves, crumbled
- 1 28-ounce can coarsely chopped tomatoes, with their juice
- 7 cups broth (beef, chicken, or vegetable)
- 1½ cups dried lentils, rinsed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 6 ounces dry white wine
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh parsley
- OR
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, grated

Heat oil in a large saucepan. Sauté and stir onions, carrots, marjoram and thyme for about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, broth and lentils. Bring soup to a boil, reduce the heat, cover the pan and simmer the soup for about an hour, or until lentils are tender. Add salt, pepper, wine, and parsley. Simmer soup for a few minutes. Serve with cheese sprinkled on each portion.

Jean Thomson • Mt. Pleasant  
Access Energy Cooperative

### TASTE OF SPRING

Soup is the ultimate comfort food. As temperatures begin to inch up from winter's deep freeze, soup is a perfect meal option. It offers a bit of warmth and reminds us that spring temperatures are around the corner. Savor the flavors!

TIP



## Turkey & Barley Soup

- 1 **tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 **medium onion, peeled and diced**
- 2 **medium carrots, diced (about 1½ cups)**
- 2 **stalks celery, diced**
- 8 **ounces sliced mushrooms**
- ½ **cup quick-cooking barley**
- 4 **cups fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth**
- 2 **cups water**
- 2 **cups shredded or diced cooked turkey breast**
- ½ **teaspoon salt**
- ½ **teaspoon ground black pepper**

Add the olive oil to a soup pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrots, celery and mushrooms to the pot. Sauté 8-10 minutes or until the onions start to turn clear. Add the barley, broth and water. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Add turkey. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until turkey is heated.

Joanne Zieser • Guthrie Center • Guthrie County REC

## Vegetable Beef Soup

- 1½ **cups sliced carrots**
- 1½ **cups sliced celery**
- 1 **chopped onion**
- 2 **cups water**
- 1 **tablespoon brown sugar**
- 1½ **pounds ground beef, browned and drained**
- 1 **teaspoon salt**
- 1 **teaspoon pepper**
- 5 **cups tomato juice**
- 16 **ounces frozen green beans**

Combine carrots, celery, onion and water in a microwave bowl, cover. Microwave on high 20 minutes. Place vegetables and water in slow cooker. Add the remaining ingredients. Cover and cook on low 6-8 hours.

Monica Wuebker • Rockwell City  
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

## Chicken Orzo Soup

- 2 **tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 **white onion, chopped**
- 4 **medium carrots, chopped**
- 4 **celery stalks, chopped**
- 4 **cloves garlic, minced**
- 1½ **pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, diced (uncooked)**
- 8 **cups chicken broth**
- 1½ **cups dry orzo pasta**
- 2 **lemons, freshly squeezed**
- 2 **tablespoons parsley, chopped**

In a large stock pot, add onion, carrots and celery along with olive oil. Sauté for 5 minutes over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté for 2 minutes. Add diced chicken, broth and dry pasta. Bring soup to a boil and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the chicken and pasta is fully cooked. Remove from heat. Add lemon juice and parsley.

Kassie Wernimont • Carroll  
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

## Beef Barley Soup

- 1 **pound ground beef**
- onion, to taste**
- 6 **cups water**
- 1 **30-ounce can whole tomatoes (can be pureed)**
- 1 **14.5-ounce can stewed tomatoes**
- ½ **cup old fashioned barley**
- 2 **teaspoons salt**
- ¼ **teaspoon pepper**
- 6 **medium carrots, diced**
- 1½ - 2 **cups cabbage, diced fine**
- celery, optional**

Brown ground beef and drain off grease. Prepare all vegetables. Place all ingredients in large pan. Bring to a boil, then turn down to medium. Cook for 1½-2 hours until carrots are done. Can simmer several hours until ready to serve.

Norma Pecinovsky • Cambridge • Consumers Energy

## Wanted: Recipes for Late Summer Produce The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

August will be here before we know it! Many gardens will still be overflowing with goodies. Share your favorite recipes for using up that garden produce! 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](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com).

The deadline is April 30, 2019. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

**EMAIL:**  
[recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

**MAIL:**  
**Recipes**  
*Living with Energy in Iowa*  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

**FREEZE SOUP FLAT**  
Leftover soup will typically last up to three days in the fridge or up to one month in the freezer. To freeze – lay bags of soup flat in a single layer in the freezer. After the soup is frozen, stack bags to save space!

**TIP**

**LIQUID ASSETS**  
The liquid you use for the base will make or break your soup, so always use good stock or broth. Stock is made by simmering water with bones, and broth takes stock a step further by adding meat and more seasonings.

**TIP**

**SAVE THE RINDS**  
Parmesan cheese rinds add robust flavor to minestrone, bean or hearty vegetable soups. Save rinds in the freezer and toss one in when the soup is simmering. It will add saltiness, so taste before adding more seasonings.

**TIP**

# Health care – Heartbeat of communities

BY KAY SNYDER

Seven key principles guide your electric power cooperative. The principle “Concern for Community” is demonstrated in the ways co-ops contribute to community vitality by supporting business growth and job creation, assisting with community facilities and infrastructure projects, volunteering, and providing technical assistance and funding to support projects that improve quality of life.

Hospitals are often one of the largest employers in rural areas, and these institutions are essential to the economic vitality of rural communities. Access to good health care consistently ranks among the top priorities for firms when deciding where to relocate or expand and when people consider where they want to live.

Iowa’s electric cooperatives have a long and rich history of supporting the expansion of medical facilities and health care services in Iowa. Here is a look at four recent cooperative-supported projects that secured federal funding for hospital expansion projects.

## Iowa Specialty Hospital

In October 2018, Iowa Specialty Hospital broke ground on a new 8,000-square-foot integrated care clinic in Garner. Hancock County is considered a medically underserved area. This new hospital will fill this critical need for Garner and the surrounding area, offering family medicine, occupational medicine, weight-loss management, women’s health and orthopedics, as well as counseling and therapy through primary care, mental health providers.

“We need community services, such as quality health care to keep and attract people to rural areas,” says Tim Marienau, CEO of Prairie Energy Cooperative. “The new hospital in Garner will definitely have a positive impact on our region.”

Prairie Energy Cooperative and



Corn Belt Power Cooperative each secured a \$1 million pass-through loan from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDL&G) program to support the \$2.5 million new Garner hospital.

“Corn Belt Power supports our member cooperatives and the projects in their communities by partnering together with them to make a larger impact and enhance the rural economy,” says Brittany Dickey, development finance director for Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



Photo: Humboldt County Memorial Hospital

## Humboldt County Memorial Hospital

The Humboldt County Memorial Hospital (HCMH) is in the process of a \$19 million expansion and renovation at its campus in Humboldt. This new 40,000-square-foot, two-story addition is being driven by

growth in the hospital’s outpatient service area and the need to provide an expanded, updated clinic setting.

“We are moving toward a consumer-driven environment,” says Michelle Sleiter, CEO for HCMH. “This will allow greater collaboration among our health care providers and better access to all services for our patients as we continue to support their health and wellness.”

The new addition will include space for primary care medical providers through the relocation of the UnityPoint Clinic, inside the hospital. The area will also include outpatient specialty services, rehabilitation services, cardiopulmonary services, diabetic education, dietary support, a patient education area and a new conference center.

“You want to talk about an asset for our community – access to health care in rural Iowa is a big issue,” says Humboldt City Manager, Travis Goedken. “Having a hospital to provide excellent care to our residents is a major benefit.”

Midland Power Cooperative provided a \$1 million pass-through loan from the USDA REDL&G program to support this hospital expansion. Corn Belt Power Cooperative also secured \$300,000 through the USDA REDL&G

Monroe County Hospital & Clinic proposed design



program and provided a \$60,000 match. The repayment of the \$360,000 will go into Corn Belt Power Cooperative's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to support future projects.

### Monroe County Hospital & Clinic

Monroe County Hospital & Clinic (MCHC) in Albia is in the process of a \$20 million expansion project to upgrade its facilities, allowing for better access to specialized care and outpatient services and providing a safer and more organized environment. The project includes a more accessible waiting room, new parking, covered entrance, and expanded space for consultations, wellness visits and specialty clinics, as well as an updated pharmacy and specialty services area.

"We are excited to partner with Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) for this expansion and remodel project," says Veronica Fuchs, CEO for MCHC. "Their forward thinking to bring these federal USDA dollars into the community to support this project and then be repaid into the CVEC revolving loan fund to support future projects is a real win for all involved."

CVEC and Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative (Northeast Power) contributed substantial financial support through the USDA REDL&G program for this project.

"CVEC appreciates the opportunity to partner with the Iowa Area Development Group, USDA and Northeast Power to bring \$4.72 million at 0 percent interest financing to the MCHC project," says Bryon Stilly, general manager of CVEC.



Photo: Henry County Health Center

### Henry County Health Center

Henry County Health Center (HCHC) in Mount Pleasant recently held an open house to showcase its newest renovations to their Orthopedic & General Surgery Clinics, Physicians & Clinics of HCHC – Mt. Pleasant and the Maternity Services Department.

Access Energy Cooperative has provided support for several HCHC projects in recent years through both the REDL&G program and Access Energy Cooperative's RLF.

The co-op's most recent support is

\$360,000 to help with the purchase of a new ambulance for emergency services, the installation of new X-ray equipment – used extensively by the Emergency Department – and technology improvements and upgrades to the electronic medical record system.

"Access Energy Cooperative is excited about the opportunity to work with the Henry County Health Center through the USDA program on yet another project to enhance medical services provided for southeast Iowa," says Kim Davis, director of member services and public relations for Access Energy Cooperative.

Northeast Power, power provider to Access Energy Cooperative, also secured a \$300,000 grant through the USDA REDL&G program and provided a \$60,000 match. Loan repayment will go into each respective RLF, providing an ongoing source of project support.

The REDL&G program has become a tremendous tool that utility partners bring to the table for business and community development. IADG is proud to write the grant applications on behalf of its utility partners for these funds. IADG partner utilities have secured 328 awards – generating \$79 million in loans and \$51 million in grants – and established 62 RLFs capitalized at \$62 million.

"We are excited to be a partner in these projects," says Grant Menke, USDA rural development state director in Iowa. "Helping rural communities provide easy access to quality health care is an important emphasis. Projects like these only come together through partnerships, dedication and the coordinated efforts of many people working toward the same goal." ⚡



Monroe County Hospital & Clinic groundbreaking

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.



# Let there be light

## Carroll Kotouc remembers rural electrification

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

It's easy to reminisce about the good old days, but the realities of yesteryear are often not quite as delightful, especially with Iowa farm life in the pre-electricity era.

"We relied on Aladdin lamps in the house and kerosene lanterns in the barn for light," says Carroll Kotouc, 85, who grew up on farms in east-central Iowa. "We kept food in an icebox, pumped water by hand and used a corncob-fueled cookstove where water could be heated in the stove's reservoir. Then we'd use that water to take our weekly bath."

While many Iowa farmers were used to this lifestyle, it was a tougher adjustment for Kotouc's father, who had grown up with electricity. Born in the former Czechoslovakia, Rudolf Kotouc came to America in 1911 at age 3 with his family. While the Kotoucs settled in Chicago, the onset of the Great Depression made it nearly impossible for young men like Rudolph to find work.

"My dad's older brother, Chuck, had come to Dysart, Iowa, so my dad relocated there and worked for local farmers," Carroll Kotouc says.

In 1930, the hardworking Rudolph Kotouc married Ella Ohlsen. The young couple began renting a farm northeast of Dysart where Carroll was born on Sept. 12, 1933. By 1936, the Kotouc family purchased 100 acres of farmland in Big Grove Township in Benton County. This occurred around the time of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, which provided federal loans for the



Photos: NRECA

installation of electrical distribution systems to serve America's isolated rural areas.



"My dad was a self-taught electrician, so he wired all the buildings on our farm for electricity," says Kotouc, who remembers milking cows by hand.

The Rural Electrification Act was just the first step in a long process to bring power to rural Iowa. "Everyone wanted electricity at the same time," Kotouc says. "My dad knew how to grease the skids, though. He butchered a beef cow and gave the Rural Electrification Administration

guys a quarter of beef. They didn't complain, and we got electricity sooner rather than later."

That was 1941. "As soon as we got electricity, my dad put a little electric motor on the washing machine," adds Kotouc, who notes that his family got their first refrigerator when they moved to a 160-acre farm with electricity near La Porte City in 1945.

"Rural electrification was important," emphasizes Kotouc, who now lives in Nevada. "Without it, rural areas wouldn't have progressed." ⚡

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives on a farm near Lake City and is the author of several non-fiction Iowa history books. Learn more at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).

# Monarchs on the rise

## Conservation efforts in Iowa contribute to long-term recovery

The World Wildlife Fund recently released its 2018-2019 overwintering monarch population report. Adult monarch butterflies covered approximately 15 acres of forest canopy in Mexico, a doubling of last year's population, and a level not seen in the last 10 years.

The report provides hope, say leaders of the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium.

"Although the number of monarch butterflies overwintering in Mexico has rebounded considerably, turning this encouraging one-year population response into a consistent long-term trend depends on advancing conservation efforts that are critical to help monarchs survive and reproduce in Iowa and the Upper Midwest," says Steve Bradbury, professor of natural resource ecology and management at Iowa State University.

Monarch butterflies face many challenges, including the loss of milkweed and nectar plant habitat in its spring and summer breeding ranges. Female monarchs lay eggs exclusively on milkweed plants. National and state efforts focus on the establishment of new milkweed habitat to reach conservation goals.

"This year's high watermark is very encouraging, and Iowa has a critical role to play in providing summer breeding habitat for the monarch for years to come," says Bruce Trautman, acting director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "We have a really strong group with broad expertise working together to support the monarch recovery in Iowa and beyond."

Habitat plantings include milkweed and a diverse array of blooming species to provide nectar for adult monarchs throughout their life cycle and seasonal migrations. The current Iowa Monarch Conservation Strategy seeks to establish approximately 480,000 to



Iowa's electric cooperatives are members of the Iowa Monarch Consortium through their affiliation with the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. Visit the Living with Energy in Iowa website ([www.livingwithenergyiowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com)) and type – How Iowans are helping monarchs – into the search bar to learn how Iowa's electric cooperatives are making a difference for monarchs. To learn more about the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, visit [www.iowamonarchs.info](http://www.iowamonarchs.info).

830,000 acres of monarch habitat by 2038. Iowa's strategy, combined with those of neighboring states, is designed to consistently maintain a yearly population of 225 million adult monarchs, or about 15 acres of occupied forest canopy.

"The monarch butterfly population numbers are encouraging and serve as a reminder of the importance and impact of our ongoing conservation efforts," says Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. "Iowa's long-term strategy includes expanding habitat for monarchs on our agricultural land, urban areas, roadsides and other public land."

The Iowa consortium is a group of 50 organizations, including agricultural and conservation associations, agribusiness and utility companies, universities, and county, state and federal agencies. Roughly 40 percent of all monarch butterflies that overwinter in Mexico are estimated to come from Iowa and

neighboring Midwestern states. Expanding monarch habitat in Iowa will play a major role in the recovery of the species.

"Progress always starts with good science, and our researchers continue to make strides to understand what it takes to improve and increase monarch habitat through a deeper understanding of biology and the environment," says Daniel Robison, endowed dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University.

The Iowa strategy — developed by consortium members — guides the implementation and documentation of voluntary, statewide conservation efforts based on the best available science. Their approach fosters habitat improvements in rural landscapes that do not conflict with agricultural production, are sufficient in scale to support improved monarch breeding success and strive to complement other conservation programs. 🌱

# Breaking down 6 energy-saving claims

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

When it comes to saving energy, it can be confusing to figure out what works and what doesn't. Let's break down some common energy-saving claims.

**Q:** Is it true that turning lights off and on uses more energy than just leaving them on?

**A:** Not true. Turning off lights reduces energy use. Turn off LED and incandescent bulbs every time you leave the room. The situation is a little different with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). Turning them off does save energy but can shorten the life of the bulb. The rule of thumb for CFLs is to turn them off any time they won't be used for 15 minutes or more.

**Q:** Would replacing my old windows with new, more efficient ones really cut my energy use in half?

**A:** No. While replacing inefficient windows with new, energy efficient windows can cut the heat loss through windows in half (or more), windows typically account for only about 25 to 30 percent of your space heating costs. The amount of energy you use for heating and cooling is likely one-third to one-half of your total energy use, so replacing



Washing dishes by hand typically uses more energy than the dishwasher.

your old windows might only reduce your overall energy costs by about 10 percent. When you consider the high cost of new windows, you may not recoup your investment for 15 or 20 years, or even longer.

**Q:** My kids claim using the dishwasher is just as efficient as washing dishes by hand. Are they right?

**A:** Yes – in fact, it's usually more efficient! Properly used dishwashers actually use less water while doing a better job, and as a bonus, they will save you more than 200 hours a year. For maximum energy savings, make sure your water heater is set to about 120 degrees and use the most efficient wash and dry settings.

**Q:** I've heard it's better to heat individual rooms with an electric space heater and keep the doors closed to trap the heat. Is this true?

**A:** It's possible to save money with an electric space heater if you use it only a few hours a day and reduce your home's thermostat setting by a couple of degrees. Space heaters can cause fires, so they need

to be used wisely and should never be left unattended.

**Q:** Should I close the vents in rooms that aren't being used?

**A:** Most experts advise against this because closing supply registers forces your furnace or A/C unit to work harder. They recommend keeping all your vents and doors open. If your system supplies too much heat to some rooms and too little to other rooms, you should talk to a heating and air conditioning professional about modifying your ductwork.

**Q:** Does the age of my home determine how energy efficient it is?

**A:** Newer homes tend to be more efficient because energy codes have improved, but every home can have hidden energy issues, no matter its age. If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your home, it's best to schedule an energy audit with a professional. ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

Photo Credit: Michael Mroczek



Replacing your old windows with newer, efficient ones won't cut your energy costs in half, but it could reduce your costs by about 10 percent.

# Dreaming of tulips

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

After 30 years of teaching writing at a local college, I switched gears a few years ago, becoming the executive director of the Pella Historical Museums, the sponsor of Pella's Tulip Time.

Even though I grew up in Pella and have participated in every Tulip Time since I was born in one capacity or another, I had no idea my life would boil down every spring to three main things: petals, parking and portable toilets.

The second and third are self-explanatory, but Tulip Mania isn't just some 17th-century phenomenon where tulip bulbs were worth their weight in gold. Everything in the months before the festival hinges on whether the tulips will be blooming.

The phone starts ringing around the first of March. Some of these are news stations; others are people from out-of-state who want to know whether they should plan a trip. Still, others are folk with just too much time on their hands.

"We want to come from Colorado ... can you guarantee there will be tulips at Tulip Time?"

*Lady, I'm sitting here on the first of March with three feet of snow outside my window. I can't even guarantee I'll be at work tomorrow.*

"I was at your festival last year and saw this gorgeous yellow tulip in a bed on the south side of the square, kind of a little bed by a bigger bed. I need to know what kind of tulip that is."

*Good grief, we have approximately 50 different golden type tulips. I could just make one up ... she'd never know the difference. Ummm ... I think that's the Big Bird tulip?*

"Could you go outside and measure how far the tulips are out of the ground?"

*No. No, I can't.*



"If they're going to be done blooming by Tulip Time, why can't you just cut off the heads, so they'll bloom again?"

*Sir, you have no idea of the biological constraints of the tulip. It isn't a starfish.*

Several years ago, in response to warmer overall temperatures, the festival was moved from the second weekend of May to the first. But that's no guarantee that everything will be on time. We speak with dread in our offices about Stem Fests and the year – 2013 – when we had Snowmageddon. Perfectly blooming tulips covered with snow.

It's gotten to the point where the City of Pella posts a map on its website, starting around the first of April, showing what's still in bud, what's beginning to bloom and what's blooming. Because we plant early, medium and late varieties of tulips, it's a rare year when something isn't in flower.

We're glad our visitors love our tulips. But please don't call and ask me to measure them. ⚡

---

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.



# WHERE DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT



## YOUR SOURCE OF POWER. AND INFORMATION.

We're not your typical electric company. We don't have customers, we have members. People aren't just our number one priority, they're the reason we're here. We empower our communities and help our members soar.

To learn more about the cooperative difference, visit [TouchstoneEnergy.com](https://www.TouchstoneEnergy.com)



Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa