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AUGUST 2021

Win a Breville Panini Press & Grill ▶ See Page 3

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Meet the 2021
Shine the Light
nominees

Spectacular
sandwich recipes

Electric co-ops support
rural child care options

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ON THE COVER



Congratulations to Karleen Stanley, a member of North West REC in Orange City, for submitting this month's cover image. She captured this beautiful photo while sitting on her front porch in Plymouth County. ⚡

Thank you for shining the light on local volunteers

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



Earlier this summer, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives had an opportunity to try something new. Following last year's pandemic

precautions and derecho destruction, we thought the timing was right to shine the light on positive efforts in our state. The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa started the Shine the Light contest to honor the unsung heroes in our communities who volunteer their time and talents.

In the pages of this magazine and through your electric co-op's social media posts, you were invited to nominate a local volunteer in June. Because this was our first year managing the statewide contest, we didn't know what kind of response to expect. We are thrilled to share that 39 people from 19 of Iowa's electric cooperatives nominated a local volunteer through our contest website.

We received the email confirmation messages as nominations were submitted. It was truly a blessing to read each entry as they popped into my inbox. I looked forward to learning about incredible Iowans as the month went on; it was a delight to read the heartfelt essays from the nominators.

Our judging panel is now working on the difficult task of sorting through the entries to select three winners who will each receive \$1,500 for their local charity or community organization of choice. We will feature the three winners in next month's issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, and we have already identified several other nominees that we may highlight in future issues.

On behalf of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, I want to

thank the Iowa electric cooperative member-consumers and employees who took the time to submit a nomination this summer. You have truly helped us in our cooperative effort to shine the light on community heroes. Thanks to you, our new contest is off to a great start, and we are already looking forward to being inspired by next year's nominees!

On Pages 10-11, you will find the list of our 39 nominees, in alphabetical order by last name. We want to honor each and every one of them for their commitment to their communities – it's the same guiding principle that drives your electric cooperative every day. ⚡

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Breville Panini Press & Grill!

Make spectacular sandwiches at home with a Breville Panini Press & Grill. The versatile appliance is perfect for quick weeknight meals and casual entertaining, doing double duty as an indoor grill and sandwich press. With a large surface area, this family-friendly machine accommodates up to four sandwiches at once. ⚡



Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than Aug. 31, 2021. 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 Cuisinart smoker from our June issue was Jeanie Hall, Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

USDA announces significant investments in rural Iowa

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced it is investing



\$413,200 to equip, rebuild and modernize essential services in rural areas throughout Iowa. The investments will benefit nearly 30,000 rural residents.

USDA is investing in eight projects in Iowa through the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program to ensure residents in rural areas enjoy the same quality of life and services as those in urban areas. The projects include:

- Southwest Iowa Families, Inc. is receiving a \$50,000 grant to purchase furnishings and equipment for a public use facility that provides essential medical services for nearly 4,500 rural residents.

- The City of Manson is receiving a \$36,400 grant to purchase a new law enforcement vehicle. Funds will also be used to purchase an emergency generator to ensure continued service during severe weather.
- The City of Maquoketa is receiving a \$56,600 grant to purchase new protective turnout gear for the city's 35 volunteer firefighters. The additional protection will help keep the firefighters safe from toxic carcinogens during emergency rescue calls.
- The Corning Opera House Cultural Center is receiving a \$24,900 grant to build gutters on the exterior of the building to ensure that the restored historical facility remains structurally sound for public use.
- The Cardinal of Eldon Community School District is receiving a \$42,000 grant to

purchase a new school bus to replace a vehicle in its existing fleet that is no longer serviceable.

- The Shenandoah Medical Center is receiving a \$50,000 grant to purchase a new four-wheel-drive ambulance to replace a vehicle in the existing fleet with high mileage.
- The City of Atlantic is receiving a \$26,300 grant to purchase new flooring, computer tables, a standing computer table and new computers and printers for the public library.
- The City of Sabula is receiving a \$127,000 grant to purchase a new street sweeper.

These investments are in coordination with USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Justin Maxson's recent announcement that USDA is investing \$185 million to equip, rebuild and modernize essential services in rural areas of 32 states, including Iowa. 🌱

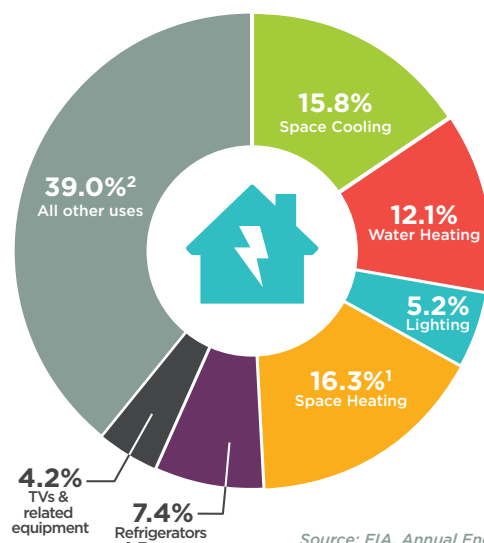
QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Iowa has done such a great job in wind energy, one of the key renewables. As we make progress in dealing with generation of electricity, it becomes more and more important to make huge progress in the area of transportation."

Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller speaking at a news conference and discussing how electric vehicles and the infrastructure to support them are the next step in Iowa's clean energy efforts.

How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020
¹Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.
²Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

CIPCO CEO testifies before Congress and promotes generation diversity



Electric generation and transmission cooperatives working to boost their use of wind and solar energy need direct-pay incentives from

the federal government to put them on a level playing field with for-profit utilities that receive federal tax breaks, Bill Cherrier, CEO of Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) told a Senate subcommittee on June 22.

CIPCO has continued to diversify its generation assets over the past decade to ensure safe, reliable and cost-effective power for its member systems. However, not-for-profit cooperatives and municipals are at a disadvantage for building and operating wind and solar projects due to the current federal structure of tax incentives.

“It’s important for policymakers to note that the current federal tax-credit structure prevents not-for-profit electric cooperatives like CIPCO from taking advantage of the tax benefit to directly build and own wind and solar generation assets,” he told members of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy.

“This requires cooperatives to work with third-party providers on long-term contracts to bring this energy onto the system to benefit our member systems and those served at the end of the line. This unworkable incentive structure impedes the ability of cooperatives to adopt new technologies in a cost-effective way.”

He also urged senators to pass the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act, which the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has estimated would save co-ops more than \$10 billion by allowing them to refinance their federal loans at current low interest



rates without penalty.

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is a key partner for long-term success for CIPCO and cooperatives across the country. Over the last 30 years, RUS has supported CIPCO with more than \$500 million in secured, long-term financing.

“Recently, low interest rates have allowed utilities with commercial loans to refinance to lower interest rates, providing needed savings, particularly during the pandemic,” he said. “Unfortunately, this is not a

current option with RUS loans.”

CIPCO would save more than \$21 million with refinancing of its RUS loans, Cherrier said.

“As a not-for-profit electric utility, the interest savings would assist with rate stability, support additional infrastructure improvements and growth, and ultimately could be returned to members as additional patronage,” he said. “Investments we make today will continue grid viability and system success into the future.” ⚡



AVOID UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers will threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.
- If you think you've been contacted by a scammer falsely representing the co-op, please let us know as soon as possible.

Child care options expand with rural utility support

BY KAY SNYDER



Child care has joined workforce and housing as one of the most critical needs across Iowa. According to a report from the Iowa Department of Human Service's Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, 28% of Iowa communities are considered child care deserts. A child care desert is defined as a city with more than 50 children in the community and more than three children per child care slot.

Child care shortages are complex issues that must be addressed at different levels. As communities tackle this issue, it is no surprise that Iowa's rural utilities are engaged and supporting long-term solutions.

Stanton: Need for child care spurs additional development

Stanton has many projects focused on adding to the community's quality of life while attracting technology companies and new citizens. One key project is the expansion of the Stanton Child Resource Center (SCRC).

Two to three years ago, the community began initial conversations to expand and renovate the existing SCRC facility. But with new considerations due



to COVID-19, the planning group began exploring options for a less-expensive facility and one that could accommodate pandemic-related guidelines. These factors led to the decision to build a new SCRC facility in a different location.

As additional people were brought into the planning conversation, an opportunity arose to tap into property in a 22-acre section of land owned by the Stanton Area Industrial Foundation and create a master plan for development of the Stanton Technology Park.

The new 11,000-square-foot SCRC facility will accommodate up to 130 children, which is 50 more than the current facility. It will be the first business in the new Stanton Technology Park, which is the perfect amenity for future businesses and

employees in the area.

"A lot of people are looking at getting out of the cities. They'd like to raise their children in a rural setting, but they need good jobs, housing and reliable day care," says Kevin Cabbage, CEO and general manager of Farmers Mutual Telephone Company. "We will start with the day care and then build around it. This is just one component of an answer to growing southwest Iowa."

The project is currently in the fundraising stage and dirt work will be completed this fall. The new SCRC is expected to open in Spring or Summer 2022. Southwest Iowa REC, Central Iowa Power Cooperative and Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, support this effort, which will provide electric power and telecommunications to the day care and future technology park.

"Southwest Iowa REC is pleased to support the Stanton Child Resource Center and Stanton Technology Park," says Phil Kinser, CEO of Southwest Iowa REC. "Local families are well-served by the center, and the need to serve more children and families is critical to area development."



Glidden: New child care center coming soon

Conversations and planning for a child care center in Glidden began several years ago. These discussions led to the development of Lil Wildcat Education Center, Inc. in 2020, which will construct and operate a child care facility in the community.

Fundraising is in full swing for this new 5,327-square-foot child care facility that will be located next to the Glidden-Ralston School building. The new day care will be a licensed child care center with rooms for infants through five-year-olds, plus a before- and after-school program. Though the education center will be located near the school, it will operate year-round to provide consistent opportunities for families who need day care throughout the year.

Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is supporting the new child care facility in several ways through its contributions and also by coordinating funds from Basin Electric Cooperative and CoBank. RVEC also secured funds through the U.S. Department of Agriculture

(USDA) Revolving Loan & Grant Program to provide a \$360,000, 10-year, 0% interest loan from its Revolving Loan Fund when approvals for additional funding and a land sale are cleared this summer.

If all goes as expected, construction will begin within the next few months, with the opening in Spring 2022.

Panora: Little Panther expands to meet demand

Little Panther Daycare & Preschool in Panora has recently broken ground on a 1,440-square-foot expansion of its existing building. This addition will allow the facility to accommodate 15 more children and two additional full-time employees.

Currently, Little Panthers has a three-year wait for its classrooms. Page Arganbright, director of Little Panther, recognized two local cooperatives that stepped up to provide 0% interest loans to support the expansion and speed the path to construction. Cozy Nelsen, CEO of Guthrie County REC, says Little Panther was one of the first projects

funded through Guthrie County REC’s Revolving Loan Fund.

“Little Panther Daycare is an invaluable asset for Panora and the surrounding area,” says Nelsen. “Guthrie County REC is proud to continue to support this much-needed expansion.”

The Panora Telco leadership was similarly enthusiastic. General manager Andy Randol says they have also supported Little Panther from the beginning because they know the critical role day care provides in the community.

As with most challenges, there are many answers to help alleviate child care needs in Iowa and the results may be slow to recognize. Iowa’s rural utility partners continue to demonstrate their commitment to community by providing technical and financial assistance to support impactful community initiatives, including child care facilities across the state. 🌱

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



Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) has been helpful to many utility partners and communities as they have collaborated to support solutions for child care and other challenges. For more information, contact your rural electric cooperative or IADG at www.iadg.com.

SPECTACULAR Sandwich RECIPES



Oven-fried Pork Tenderloin Sandwiches

- 2 tablespoons light olive oil
- ½ cup flour
- seasoned salt, optional
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup milk
- ¾ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 pork loin slices (4 ounces each), tenderized
- 4 hamburger buns

Line a 9x13-inch sheet pan with oven-safe parchment paper. Drizzle olive oil over parchment paper and set aside. Place flour in a shallow bowl or pie plate, add seasoned salt if desired. In a second shallow bowl, beat egg and milk together. In a third shallow bowl, combine panko breadcrumbs, salt and pepper. Dredge both sides of pork slices in flour, then the egg mixture, then the seasoned breadcrumbs. Place loin slices on sheet pan with oil. Bake at 400 degrees F for 20-25 minutes turning halfway through, internal temperature should be 145 degrees F. Serve on buns. *Serves 4*

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

Spinach Sandwiches

- 3 cups fresh spinach
- ½ cup celery, diced
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- mayonnaise
- salt and pepper, to taste
- white or wheat bread

Shred spinach then add celery, onion and eggs. Add mayonnaise until mixture reaches a spreading consistency. Season to taste. Chill until ready to eat. Spread between slices of bread.

**Penny Sue Haley • Keswick
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

Tuna Burgers

- 1 can tuna, drained
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- ½ cup American cheese, cut up
- 1 small onion, minced
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- salt and pepper, to taste
- buns

Mix together tuna, celery, cheese, onion, mayonnaise, salt and pepper. Put tuna mixture on buns. Wrap buns in aluminum foil and place on baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes.

**Annalee Buffington • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy**

Cheese Salad Sandwiches for a Crowd

- 10 pounds American cheese, grated
- 2 cups sweet pickle relish
- 2 4½ -ounce cans pimento
- 2 dozen hard-boiled eggs, peeled and grated
- 3 quarts Miracle Whip
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- evaporated milk, optional

Mix all ingredients together, adding additional Miracle Whip if needed. May also thin with some evaporated milk. Spread on bread, buns or crackers. This recipe can be divided in half for 75 people, or by 10 for 15-18 people. *Serves 150*

**Mabel L. Fisher • Sigourney
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

Source:
Sandwich America

THE EARL OF SANDWICH

The man credited with creating the first sandwich is John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich. Legend suggests he was unwilling to free up his hands during gambling events, so his servants brought meat between two slices of bread that he could hold with one hand.

Jazzed-up Ham and Cheese Sandwiches

- 24 sweet Hawaiian rolls
- 2 pounds smoked ham
- 1 pound pepper jack cheese
- 1 pound cheddar cheese
- 1 cup butter
- 4 tablespoons dried minced onions
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons mushrooms, chopped (optional)

Slice rolls in half. Put bottom half in greased 9x13-inch pan. Layer ham and cheese. Put top half of rolls on top. Melt butter with remaining ingredients and spread over top of buns. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-30 minutes.

Steph Messner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Favorite Chicken Salad Sandwiches

- 1 12.5-ounce can white meat chicken
- 1 8-ounce can water chestnuts, finely chopped
- dill or sweet pickle relish
- mayonnaise
- bread

Mix chicken and water chestnuts together. Add relish and mayonnaise to taste. Spread on your favorite bread and enjoy.

Sandy Slaymaker • Victor
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Grilled Cheese Taverns

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 can tomato soup
- ½ can water
- ¼ cup ketchup
- ½ teaspoon mustard
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- salt and pepper, to taste
- bread
- butter
- American cheese slices
- dill pickle sandwich chips

Brown ground beef with onion, drain grease. Stir in soup, water, ketchup, mustard, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, sugar, salt and pepper. Simmer on low for 1-2 hours, stirring frequently. Heat griddle to 350 degrees F. Butter one side of bread slice and place buttered side down on griddle. Top with a slice of cheese, enough tavern meat mixture to just cover the bread, dill pickles and another slice of bread, buttered side up. Grill 2-3 minutes on each side or until bread is browned and crispy. Let cool a bit before slicing in half diagonally. Tavern meat mixture freezes well for later use.

Joni Rus • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative



Search our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's rural kitchens.

www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com/recipes

Wanted: Christmas Morning Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

With good tidings and great joy in mind, we want your favorite Christmas morning recipes! No matter if your dish is savory, sweet, simple or extra special, breakfast gathered around the Christmas tree is sure to be a treasured holiday tradition. 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.livingwithenergyiniowa.com.

The deadline is Aug. 31, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

EMAIL: recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.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
Urbandale, Iowa 50322

KIDS LOVE THEIR PB&Js

The average American child eats about 1,500 PB&J sandwiches by the time they graduate high school.

SANDWICH BITES

SANDWICHES BY THE MILLIONS

Americans eat about 300 million sandwiches every day, and National Sandwich Day is celebrated on Nov. 3.

SANDWICH BITES

HAM REIGNS SUPREME

The most popular sandwich in America is the standard ham sandwich with ham, cheese, mustard and mayonnaise. It is followed in popularity by the BLT.

SANDWICH BITES

NO. 1 SANDWICH ON THE MENU

Sandwiches are on the menu more frequently than any other type of entrée at restaurants.

SANDWICH BITES

Shine the Light contest nominees

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



2021 SHINE THE LIGHT NOMINEES

Brad Arndorfer from Bancroft was nominated by **Richard Arndorfer of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Bancroft Volunteer Firefighter's Association**.

Suzanne Asklesen from Cambridge was nominated by **Carol Gilbert of Midland Power Cooperative** for her work with the **Ballard Education Foundation**.

Helen Beneke from Pocahontas was nominated by **Parker Aden of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Pocahontas County Foundation**.

Barb Brennan from Emmetsburg was nominated by **LuAnn Opheim of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for her work with **Unity Lutheran Ministries**.

Lynn Buth from Danbury was nominated by **Clem & Kay Wessling of North West Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with **Danbury EMT**.

Catherine Burkman from Albia was nominated by **Aimee Campbell of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.** for her work with the **Albia Victorian Stroll**.

Cathy & Denny Carlson from Hampton were nominated by **Karen Ringleib of Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative** for their work with **Carlson Tree Farm**.

Sandy Carson was nominated by **Alexis Carson of Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.** for her work with the **Clarke Athletic Booster Club**.

Judy Combs from Bloomfield was nominated by **Joye Lore-Lawson of Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Davis County Tourism Board**.

Karen Conrad from Epworth was nominated by **Janet Berger of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Epworth Community Food Pantry**.

Jim Davies from Hampton was nominated by **Christy Mason of Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Windsor Theatre Development Corporation**.

Gary Doehrmann from Waverly was nominated by **Anne Sesker of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Waverly Fire Department**.

Skott Gent from Monmouth was nominated by **Nancy Miller of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Maquoketa FFA Alumni**.

Hayden George from Albia was nominated by **Roger George of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.** for his work with the **CJ3 Foundation**.

Michael Goodin from Schleswig was nominated by **Leroy Hight of Western Iowa Power Cooperative** for his work with **Under the Son Childcare**.

Dawn Hamilton from Malcom was nominated by **Marna Montgomery of T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Malcom Food Pantry**.

The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa are driven by our commitment to community. To celebrate local volunteers this summer, we launched the Shine the Light contest. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

Three winners will be awarded a \$1,500 donation to their charity or community organization of choice and featured in the September issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

Please join us in congratulating and thanking these nominees for their outstanding commitment to community. Learn more at www.IowaShineTheLight.com. 🌟

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Arika Hammond from Cherokee was nominated by **June Hammond of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Puppy Jake Foundation**.

Robert Hantsbarger from Arthur was nominated by **Twyla Godbersen of North West Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Schaller Volunteer Fire Department**.

Patti Hastings from Harpers Ferry was nominated by **Hollee McCormick of Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **American Legion Auxiliary**.

Ronda Hughes from Lime Springs was nominated by **Jason Passmore of MiEnergy Cooperative** for her work with the **Lime Springs Betterment Foundation**.

Jodi Irlmieir from Anita was nominated by **Lorilyn Schultes of Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association** for her work with **Anita Town & Country**.

Chris Jensen from Hamlin was nominated by **Gail Petersen of Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association** for her work with the **Caring and Sharing**.

Barry Johnson from Hampton was nominated by **Garrett Thompson of Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Harriman-Nielsen Historic Farm**.

Margaret (Margie) Kenyon from Dallas Center was nominated by **Carolyn Snyder of Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association** for her work with the **Minburn Community Betterment Group**.

Cynthia (Cindy) Loots from Pomeroy was nominated by **Nancy Bruns of Calhoun County Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Pomeroy Area Veteran's Park**.

Erica Luebbers was nominated by **Amanda Petersen of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Royal Family Kids Camp**.

Steve Mixer from Burlington was nominated by **Gina Hardin of Access Energy Cooperative** for his work with the **Des Moines County Community Emergency Response Team**.

Dwight Morenz from Lake City was nominated by **Darcy Maulsby of Calhoun County Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with **Central School Preservation**.

Linda Muhlbauer from Manilla was nominated by **Jean Voegel of Western Iowa Power Cooperative** for her work with **Main Street Manning**.

George North from Allison was nominated by **Deb McWhirter of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with **Allison Wilder Park**.

Dan & Carol Patterson from Marengo were nominated by **Nancy McMann of T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** for their work with **Marengo Food Distribution**.

Stacy Pippitt from Missouri Valley was nominated by **Lori Clark of Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with **St. Paul Community Table**.

Larry Rapagnani from Marcus was nominated by **Jolene Deichmann of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for his work with **Community Ministries**.

Lori Roose from Waverly was nominated by **Sandi Miller of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Little Lambs Preschool**.

Todd Ross from Denmark was nominated by **Renae Welborn of Access Energy Cooperative** for his work with **Denmark Fire & Rescue**.

Marianne Sjaarda from Sioux Center was nominated by **Jen Sandbulte of North West Rural Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **HOPE Food Pantry**.

Beth Thole from Sibley was nominated by **Don & Cindy Thole of Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.** for her work with the **McCallum Museum/Farm Shed**.

Matthew Turack from Griswold was nominated by **John Turack of Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative** for his work with the **Pregnancy Center of Southwest Iowa**.

Marlene Walthart was nominated by **Dawn Eveleth of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** for her work with the **Emmet County Animal Shelter**.

We'll announce the three winners during the 2021 Iowa State Fair. Visit the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa booth in the Bruce Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building.

When to DIY and when to hire a pro

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

If you're handy or like taking on a challenge, do-it-yourself (DIY) projects can be rewarding. There's something rewarding about rolling up your sleeves and seeing the result of your hard work. But when it comes to home improvement, some projects – including energy efficiency improvements – are best left up to the professionals.

Weighing the DIY option

When it comes to home energy efficiency projects, there are a variety of reasons you may want to try DIY. One reason is if you're convinced you can do a better job than a contractor. Naturally, this depends on the scope of the project and how knowledgeable you are about the work. Here are some reasons for tackling a project on your own:

- You're unable to find a contractor that is available and reasonably priced.
- You need the work completed in a tight time frame or during odd hours.
- You're certain you can save a lot of money.
- The job is one you'd really enjoy doing yourself.



Solar panel installation is a project that's best left to the professionals.

Photo Credit: EE Image Database

Deciding to hire a contractor

On the flipside, there are also several good reasons to hire a contractor:

- Specialized equipment is required. For example, some contractors use an infrared camera to review wall framing and air leaks.
- Specialized materials are needed. Attics need proper ventilation, and contractors might have easier access to attic insulation baffles or roof vents.
- There's a safety issue or risk.
- Tackling the project yourself will save little or no money. I discovered years ago that some contractors could install insulation cheaper than I could buy it.



Any handy homeowner can tackle sealing leaks and cracks where air can escape. Caulk is just one of many products that are most effective, depending on where the leak is located.

seem simple, but beware, some of these videos are aimed at other experts and not DIY homeowners.

To ensure you're getting technically sound information, visit the ENERGY STAR® website (www.energystar.gov). Also, energy auditors can be another great source of information. They can provide specifics about the materials you'll need as well as information about local contractors and suppliers.

We don't recommend tackling energy efficiency projects yourself unless you've done thorough research. Another benefit of doing research upfront is that it will help you even if you decide to hire a contractor. You'll be able to identify a knowledgeable contractor and recognize a quality job. ⚡

Research energy efficiency projects upfront

As you consider whether to do the job yourself, be sure to research the tools and supplies you'll need. Fortunately, there are amazing resources online.

When you search for information like "how to insulate an attic" or "how to air seal a home" online, you'll find fact sheets and video tutorials from contractors, home improvement shows, big box suppliers and material manufacturers. YouTube videos often show experts making projects



Some do-it-yourselfers are comfortable tackling an attic insulation project. The steep pitch of this roof and the plywood decking this person is kneeling on makes this project appear easy, but in most homes, you'll only be able to stand on the floor joists or rafters.

Photo Credit: The EnergySmart Academy

Managing rights of way from top to bottom

BY DERRILL HOLLY

There's more than one way to look at vegetation management. The work electric cooperatives and their contractors do to help keep electric lines and other equipment separated from plant overgrowth plays a major role in service reliability.

From mowing and brush work at ground level to tree trimming near or above power lines, Iowa's electric co-ops regularly inspect and manage the landscape in and around their equipment. Vegetation management is an effective way to prevent outages, minimize the threat of fire damage and maintain access and serviceability.

Utility providers, including electric cooperatives, have worked with local, state and federal foresters to develop integrated vegetation management (IVM) practices aimed at reducing the need for chemicals, costly manual and mechanical control measures and controlled burning.

Ecosystem benefits

IVM techniques establish low-growing vegetation that out-compete taller-growing species, according to experts at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA worked with utility industry associations and other federal agencies to develop these practices.

The integrated approach can help create sustainable ecosystems such as a meadow transition habitat. Used for both roadside and cross-country rights of way, these techniques encourage the growth of native plant species and increase plant diversity. They also create or restore habitat for local and migrating wildlife, including insects, birds and mammals.

"Trees and other vegetation grow relentlessly," says Randall H. Miller, a vegetation management consultant based in Des Moines.

Proactive ongoing maintenance

While weather conditions can



affect seasonal activities related to right-of-way work and vegetation management, electric co-ops and other utilities regularly conduct maintenance to mitigate risks.

"Vegetation management that is deferred one year has to be done in the future, and the cost accrues much faster than inflation," says Miller, who serves on the ROW Stewardship Council. "As biomass develops due to growth and trees encroach or engulf power lines, they become increasingly more difficult and less safe to manage."

While some of the work might be done with brush hogs, mowers and chain saws, electric co-ops also rely heavily upon planning, seeding and strategic plantings, often supported by member-consumers and other stakeholders. Youth and community groups often work with co-ops to enhance or adapt rights of way to support and sustain wildlife or provide forage and habitat for migratory species.

Iowa's electric co-ops regularly share information and updates on local vegetation management efforts to keep the public safe and communicate

how tree and plant growth trimming increases service reliability.

"Communication is indispensable to successful vegetation management programs," says Miller. "Stakeholders need to understand how vegetation management will benefit them, and that includes education on how a vegetation management program minimizes the risk of tree-caused power outages."

According to industry research, about 20-30% of all power outages are vegetation related. Removal of tall trees and limbs near power lines also reduces the risks of injuries caused by accidental contacts with energized power lines.

"It should include the concept of 'right tree, right place' and there is no room for tall trees to develop under power lines," says Miller. "Planting the wrong tree under a powerline means the tree cannot reach its full potential and will have to be either removed or continually pruned to keep clear of the conductors." ⚡

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Working together to combat cyber attacks

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Computer hacking is a top news story these days, and for years, electric cooperatives have focused on blocking cyber threats from interfering with the nationwide electric grid that keeps our lights on. You can also help defend against that electronic mischief – and you should!

Protecting the “smart grid”

The network of power lines, transformers and substations adds up to an incredibly complex system that reliably brings us conveniences of modern life. That network is transforming into a “smart grid” that does an even better job of delivering electricity.

It’s adding renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, which calls for sophisticated software to keep power flowing at night or when the wind isn’t blowing. Computer algorithms make plans for the most efficient and reliable operations when forecasts call for storms, wildfires or times of high-power use.

Making such modern miracles happen means joining with another dominant part of today’s world – the internet.

The blink-of-an-eye speed of balancing the generation of electricity with the flip of a light switch relies heavily on the electronically connected world. The internet is incredibly useful, but also a target of troublemakers from lone, self-taught experts to international crime rings. Electric utilities know this and work every day through their own offices and national organizations on cyber safety.

You can take smart steps, too, to protect yourself and the electric grid. Because the power grid uses the internet, that means that any of your internet-connected devices

are also part of the grid: computers, security cameras, printers, smart TVs, health monitors – even cars and lightbulbs can be connected to the internet.

Four ways to be cyber secure

Here are the top tips experts advise to defend against hackers:

- 1 Lock the front door.** If you have wireless internet in your home, the traffic comes in through the router. If you take just one step, create a strong password for that router, and set a reminder to change the password regularly.
- 2 Use a secret code.** Weak passwords make things easier for hackers. A study found the most-used password in 2021 was “123456.” A more secure option uses combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters, combined with numbers and special symbols like “&” or “!” Be aware that every major internet-connected appliance comes with its own factory-installed password you should change right away.

3 Stay vigilant. If you receive an email with an attachment you weren’t expecting, don’t open the attachment. If you get a message with a link you didn’t know was coming, don’t click it. Even if it’s from a friend, call them and ask if they sent it – hackers can send messages using your friend’s address.

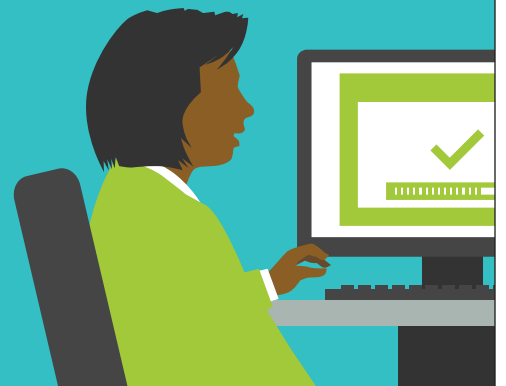
4 Stay state-of-the-art. Your computer and other devices will regularly offer updates – install them. They often contain security updates to protect against the latest cyber threats. And they will come to you directly through your computer, phone or printer.

National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is in October, and the Department of Homeland Security has titled this year’s theme, “If you connect it, protect it.” That’s good advice for your home – and for the electric grid! ⚡

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Four Ways to Combat Cyber Threats

- 1.** Periodically change the password for your Wi-Fi router.
- 2.** Use unique codes or phrases to create stronger passwords.
- 3.** Do not click links or open attachments from unknown senders.
- 4.** Update software regularly.



School clothes shopping showdown

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

When our three boys were at home, one of my least-favorite chores of the year was determining what clothing fit after a long summer of what always seemed to be unprecedented growth. As August rolled around, I would haul out the contents of their closets for the annual “try-on.”

This was met with great resistance by the male contingent. I don’t know if girls would have been any easier, but each of my sons swore the clothing in their closet was just fine, even though I had seen inches of ankle showing in the blue jeans and bulging seams on the T-shirts over the summer.

The final showdown usually came the night before the scheduled shopping trip, when they were forced to try everything on so I could make notes. They would rip items on and off with a speed I couldn’t have purchased on a school day, so my notes were usually perfunctory and illegible.

Dressing room drama

It was a challenge to do the shopping day with all three boys, but I didn’t have the time or energy to take them one at a time. We would set off in fairly high spirits, but ultimately, we always found ourselves in the same situation – the boys inside a men’s dressing room with me standing outside the entrance, trying to get them to try things I was bringing in.

Any one of the three would hiss, “Mom, get OUT OF THE MEN’S DRESSING ROOM!”

“What’s the big deal? Everyone is curtained off,” I’d reply. As I looked around, I realized the only other dressing room occupants were other mothers trying to get a glimpse of



whether the jeans on their own child were too tight or too long.

I added, “If you won’t come out into the store so I can see what you’re wearing, I have to come in.”

“I am NOT coming out there,” a son would growl.

“Okay, your choice,” I’d blithely chirp, ripping the curtain open.

No matter how an item of clothing fit, my sons would pronounce it “fine.” Too big, falling off the shoulders, stomach showing, pants squeezing, hems dragging . . . it was all “fine.” It took the persistence of a sleuth to get a true picture of what fit and what didn’t.

We’d arrive home, crabby, tired and hungry.

Foiling mom’s plans

I thought I arrived at a great solution the year the boys were old

enough to drive themselves. I sent them shopping with a list and some money and told them to come home with what they needed. Our youngest son returned with a bag of socks and three video games. He determined he didn’t need anything else to wear. Plot foiled.

My husband Kent was in a dressing room trying on jeans recently, when he overheard a conversation a man and his son were having next to him. The father instructed, “When mom comes over, tell her you love it. If you say it’s ‘fine,’ she’ll make you go out and show her.”

It seems they’re on to us, moms. 🚀

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, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter.



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