

# living with energy

IN IOWA

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SEPTEMBER 2021

Win a Keurig K-Classic Coffee Maker ▶ See Page 3



INTRODUCING  
**THE 3**  
WINNING  
VOLUNTEERS



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

Learn about Iowa's Youth  
Leadership Academy

Magazine change  
coming in October

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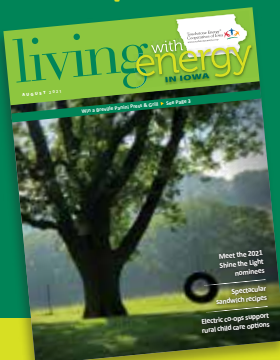
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On Pages 10, 11 and 14 of this issue, meet the three individuals featured on this month's cover. Each is a shining light in their communities. ✨

# What's in a name?

BY ANN THELEN



Styles come and go, trends evolve and change, but one thing that never goes out of style is what it means to be part of an electric cooperative. Since

locally owned electric cooperatives first brought power to rural Iowans in the 1930s, the momentum fueled by the cooperative spirit has only strengthened.

A business model that has endured the test of time sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. Your electric cooperative adheres to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community. Owned by the member-consumers we serve, Iowa's community-focused electric cooperatives power the lives of 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties and are committed to delivering safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power.

## Sharing what it means to be an electric cooperative member

Each month, through the pages of this magazine, we share what it means to be an electric cooperative member. We embrace with pride the opportunity to tell the stories of community volunteers, such as our Shine the Light winners in this issue; to highlight economic development success stories helping communities prosper; and encourage youth to become engaged in the future success of the electric cooperative industry.

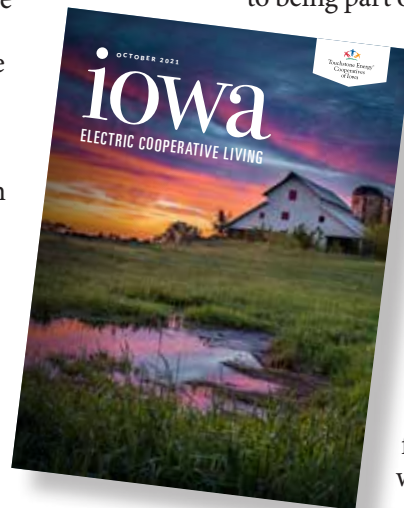
Since this publication began in 1948, it has undergone six name changes while keeping to the central mission of keeping co-op member-consumers informed. From starting as a newsletter to becoming a magazine 61 years ago, each change was meant to further illustrate what it means to be an electric cooperative member.

## Magazine name change coming in October

With the October issue of this publication, we're excited to unveil a name change that we believe even more clearly describes the magazine. Your statewide publication will now be called *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. On behalf of the team, I'm excited for the magazine's name to fully reflect who we serve – you the members – and who we are – Iowa's electric cooperatives.

This magazine's name should identify us, be unique to us and tell readers what to expect inside. We are confident that *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* will do all these things and more.

Based on our 2020 readership survey and years of research by the



National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, we know that member-consumers have a strong affinity to being part of a cooperative. It

makes sense to have "cooperative" as part of the magazine's name.

To the left, we're giving you a sneak peek at what the cover of the October issue will look like so that you know what to expect when you open your mailbox. Inside, you'll find fresh designs paired with familiar favorites – energy efficiency tips, information

on technology and innovation, economic development features, and of course, recipes!

Once the October issue comes out, we'll be anxious for your feedback! ⚡

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Keurig K-Classico Coffee Maker!

Wake up to amazing coffee with this Keurig single-serve coffee brewer. Select from 6, 8 or 10 ounces for each brew. A 48-ounce water reservoir allows users to brew 6+ cups before having to refill, saving you time and simplifying your morning routine. An auto-off feature is easily programmed to turn off the coffee maker after it has been idle for 2 hours, helping to save energy. ⚡



### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Sept. 30, 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 \$100 home improvement gift card from our July issue was John Evans from North West REC.

*“Investing in our energy infrastructure is vital to ensuring that electric cooperatives can continue to do what they do best: provide reliable, affordable power to 42 million Americans. Passage of this bill is a great start. We’ll continue to work with Congress to press for more co-op priorities to be included in the bigger infrastructure packages that lawmakers are expected to take up later this year.”*

Louis Finkel, senior vice president of government relations, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, speaking about a bipartisan infrastructure bill, approved by the U.S. Senate in early August. ⚡

## Celebrating electric cooperatives during the Iowa State Fair



Thank you to electric cooperative member-consumers who visited the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa booth at the Iowa State Fair.

Fairgoers who took a quick survey via iPads stationed within the booth were automatically entered into a drawing. After the fair, three lucky winners were randomly selected from all who participated in the survey to choose one of three prize options:

- Roomba 614 Robot Vacuum
- DEWALT 20V MAX XR Blower
- Breville Smart Oven Pro

Winners from the Iowa Shine the Light community volunteer recognition contest were also announced during the fair. Iowa electric co-op member-consumers and employees had an opportunity to nominate local community volunteers for the contest in June. Three deserving volunteers each received a \$1,500 donation for their charity as Iowa electric cooperatives celebrate the individuals’ commitment to community. You can find the winners on Pages 10, 11 and 14 of this issue. ⚡

### Congratulations to this year’s winners:

- Dana Kilmer of Brooklyn, T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative
- Lynn Poen of Lake City, Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association
- Verle McCutcheon of Dow City, Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

## Iowa Energy Center Board awards \$2.8 million in energy grants

The Iowa Energy Center (IEC) recently announced \$2.8 million in grants to 12 projects. The IEC Grant Program is funded by Iowa ratepayers, customers who pay for an electric or natural gas utility service through a local electric and/or gas utility. These funds enable eligible applicants to pursue projects that align with one of the seven key focus areas of the Iowa Energy Plan.

“Out of an exceptional group of applicants, the Iowa Energy Center Board is proud to lend grant support to this round of projects, each of which addresses an energy need or opportunity in an innovative way,” says Board Chair Troy DeJooode of the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities. “This year’s grant recipients span the public and private sector and represent a diverse mix of energy resources, creating

an individual and collective positive impact on Iowa’s energy economy.”

The grants will fund 12 projects, including:

- Constructing a mobile power system to operate mobile wastewater treatment trailers in rural locations
- Refurbishing and repurposing used batteries for second-life value and grid storage applications
- Developing a pilot-scale business model for monetizing carbon capture on solar energy farms

A total of 37 projects completed the full application with requests totaling more than \$10 million. Applications were reviewed and scored by a committee comprised of IEC board members. The scoring rubric was based on alignment with the Iowa Energy Plan,



the ratepayer benefit provided, project goals, programmatic capabilities of the applicant and collaboration efforts with other eligible applicants, among other criteria.

The IEC is managed by the Iowa Economic Development Authority and overseen by a governor-appointed board composed of representatives from academia, state government and the utilities. For more information on the IEC and to view a list of current IEC board members, visit [iowaeda.com/energycenter](http://iowaeda.com/energycenter). ⚡

# Iowa electric cooperative hits a home run at historic Field of Dreams game

In 2016, Anamosa-based Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC) launched MVlink, its fiber internet service. At the time, the co-op did not know that it would supply internet to one of the most anticipated (and watched) baseball games in recent history a mere five years later.

For the inaugural game at the Field of Dreams in Dyersville on Aug. 13, BaAM, the production company that built the infrastructure for the big game, relied heavily on MVlink's services. Through MVlink's 10 gigabit network, BaAM provided services to FOX Sports for production. MVEC also facilitated connections that carried all voice connections for the event and also served an 8-gigabit connection to a temporary cell tower erected to handle the influx of fans.

"Due to the size of the production and Dyersville's rural location, this project posed several challenges for event organizers. MVEC's fiber, technical services and information technology teams worked diligently and innovatively to design and deploy a rock-solid fiber internet network capable of serving extremely high-volume usage. The result was the MVlink network performed flawlessly, as expected," says Jeff Geistkemper, MVEC fiber plant manager.

The entities responsible for this high-visibility project were complimentary of the quality of the network connection and customer service MVEC provided. Organizers said putting this game on in such a rural area was one of the most challenging things they have done, but one thing they did not have to worry about was MVEC's piece.

"We had a vision for MVlink several years ago and invested in smart grid technology to improve our electric service to members. Because we invested in this technology, it has allowed us to



extend our service to fiber internet, providing members in rural Iowa with the fastest internet speeds available. The Field of Dreams project was another opportunity to showcase MVlink's capabilities. I am really proud of our whole team's effort to provide flawless service in

a challenging environment. Event organizers built an 8,000-seat baseball stadium in the middle of an Iowa cornfield, and MVlink made their jobs a little easier. Once again, we were able to step up and meet the needs of those we work for," says Jeremy Richert, MVEC CEO. ⚡

## CO-OP CULTURE

### How the pandemic elevated the value of soft skills at co-ops



The concepts of emotional intelligence and soft skills in the workplace have been around for a long time, but the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic brought them to the forefront. Studies have shown the companies that fared best during this difficult time were those whose leaders showed concern for employees, quickly adapted to online work and actively invited new ideas from their teams.

As electric cooperatives assess how they managed the pandemic, how will the lessons learned inform business practices going forward? Listen to a perspective from Charlie Dunn, CEO of Farmers Electric Cooperative in Greenfield, Iowa: <https://bit.ly/co-opsoftskills>. ⚡

# IOWA YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

We're looking for high school students who are interested in public service and leadership

Students who attend our Zoom sessions in October will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship!



For decades, Iowa has been sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital as part of the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trip was canceled in 2020 and 2021, but is scheduled to return in 2022.

To bridge the gap in not having a Youth Tour for the past two summers, Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to offer a new opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model. The **Iowa Youth Leadership Academy** will be held as a three-part webinar series in October and is open to any high school student in the state. Students can register at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com).

## Who should attend?

This new program is geared for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership or government. The goal of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is to raise students' awareness of the role electric cooperatives have in their local communities. In addition, participants will learn about electric cooperative careers.

## Zoom sessions in October

Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic.

## Zoom Sessions

- **Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.**  
Cooperative Business Model
- **Thursday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.**  
Rural Iowa Advocacy
- **Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.**  
Civic Involvement & Leadership

During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our speakers and presenters while learning about advocacy and leadership. Attendees will also hear from former Iowa Youth Tour students who pursued their passion for government service and leadership after attending the weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. ⚡

## Featured speakers



**Haley Moon**  
Advocacy and Political  
Action Manager  
Iowa Association of  
Electric Cooperatives



**Adam Schwartz**  
Founder & Principal  
The Cooperative Way



**Kathleen Riessen**  
Leadership Expert  
Kathleen Riessen &  
Company



# Details released for Iowa Home Energy Assistance Program



## Opportunities to win

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship

## Save the date

The 2022 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is slated for June 18-24.

“Students really need to take advantage of all the opportunities that the Iowa Youth Tour provides – not only what participants see and do while in D.C., but also for the lifelong opportunities. The activities are great networking events with electric cooperatives and peers from around the state. I’m constantly running into people I met. Even today, through my job, I interact with people that went on the Iowa Youth Tour.”

Jacob Holck  
(2016 Iowa Youth Tour participant)  
Communications Specialist  
Office of Iowa Secretary of State

Learn more at [www.iowaYouthTour.com](http://www.iowaYouthTour.com) or contact your local co-op for more information.

The 2021-2022 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 19 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

If you’re a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you’re self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you’re on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Family Investment Program (FIP), Veteran’s Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days. For FIP recipients, bring your current DHS Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable

document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2021, through April 30, 2022. The start date is Oct. 1, 2021, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you’re not sure where to apply, visit [humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply](http://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply). to contact your local community action agency, call 2-1-1 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319. 📧

### Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,320

**Note:** For households with more than eight members, add \$9,080 for each additional member.

# Chicken

## RECIPES



## Bruschetta Chicken Bake

- 1 **pound chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces**
- 1 **tablespoon olive oil**  
**salt and pepper, to taste**
- 6 **ripe Roma tomatoes, chopped**
- 1 **teaspoon dried oregano**
- 3 **garlic cloves, chopped**
- 2 **tablespoons balsamic vinegar**
- 1 **cup shredded mozzarella cheese**  
**fresh basil**  
**noodles or rice, optional**

Place oil in a skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken and season with salt and pepper. Cook until golden on both sides and almost cooked through. Place chicken in a sprayed 8x8-inch dish then add tomatoes, oregano and garlic (optional, replace fresh tomatoes with 15 ounces canned diced tomatoes). Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake uncovered at 375 degrees F for 18-20 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Remove and let sit for 5 minutes, top with fresh basil. Can be served on your choice of noodle or rice.

**Arie Schiller • Donnellson**  
Access Energy Cooperative

## Chicken Casserole

- 1 **pouch dry onion soup**
- 8 **ounces pineapple and apricot preserves**
- 8 **ounces Thousand Island salad dressing**
- 6 **whole chicken breasts, skinned and boned**  
**rice**

Mix dry onion soup, preserves and dressing together. Put a small amount of sauce in a 9x13-inch pan. Split chicken breasts in half and place on sauce in pan. Spoon remaining sauce on top of chicken. Bake at 325-350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes. Baste a couple of times while baking. Serve with rice. *Serves 6-8*

**Darla German • Rhodes • Consumers Energy**

## Crispy Chicken

- ½ **cup breadcrumbs**
- ½ **teaspoon basil**
- ½ **teaspoon oregano**
- ⅛ **cup Parmesan cheese, shredded**
- ⅛ **cup mayonnaise**
- 1 **tablespoon milk**
- ½ **pound boneless chicken breast**

Combine breadcrumbs, basil, oregano and cheese in a shallow bowl. Mix mayonnaise and milk in a separate shallow bowl. Dip chicken into mayonnaise mixture and then into breadcrumbs. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken reaches 165 degrees F. *Serves 2*

**Donna Stoll • Hospers**  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## Chicken Pasta Salad

- 1 **cup mini bow tie pasta**
- 1 **cup mayonnaise (don't substitute)**
- 3 **tablespoons sugar**
- 2 **cups chicken breast, cooked and cut into 1/2-inch pieces**
- 1 **cup celery, thinly cut**
- 1 **cup red grapes, washed, drained and cut in half**
- ¼ **cup whole cashews**

Cook pasta until just tender then drain, rinse and cool. Mix mayonnaise and sugar, set aside. Combine cooled pasta, chicken, celery and grapes. Stir in mayonnaise and sugar mixture, then refrigerate. Add cashews just before serving. *Serves 6-8*

**Jennifer Judson-Harms • New Hampton**  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

**Chicken Facts**  
Source: U.S.  
Department of  
Agriculture, National  
Chicken Council

### LEAN PROTEIN

Chicken breast is a great source of lean protein. A 3-ounce, boneless, skinless breast offers 26 grams of protein in just 128 calories.



# BBQ Chicken Quesadillas

- 6-8 flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar or Mexican blend cheese, shredded
- 1 cup cooked chicken, shredded
- ½ cup barbecue sauce

Divide cheese between tortillas, spreading cheese evenly over half of each tortilla. Top each with chicken and barbeque sauce. Fold each tortilla in half and place on lightly greased large baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5-6 minutes until cheese is melted, tortillas are lightly browned. Cut tortillas in half and serve. *Serves 6-8*

Nichole Blankespoor • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

# Barbecue Bacon Chicken

- 12-15 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 12-15 slices bacon
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 16 ounces ketchup
- ⅓ cup vinegar
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- colby jack cheese, shredded

Grill chicken about 5 minutes per side, doesn't need to be fully cooked. Cook bacon until mostly done but still limp. Wrap one bacon strip around each chicken breast. Place on a large baking pan, bacon-seam side down. Heat brown sugar, ketchup, vinegar, butter and Worcestershire sauce on stovetop until butter melts. Pour over chicken. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1-1.5 hours, until chicken is completely cooked through. Top with shredded cheese. *Serves 12-15*

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative



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

[www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes)

# Baked Chicken Fajitas

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes with green chilis
- 1 large bell pepper, sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 3 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 12 tortillas
- avocados, optional

Mix chicken, diced tomatoes with green chilis, bell pepper and onion in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Mix oil and seasonings in a small bowl (optional, replace seasonings with one fajita seasoning packet). Drizzle over the chicken mixture, toss to coat. Cover and bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken is cooked and veggies are tender. Serve on warmed tortillas. Top with sliced avocados if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcy Gherian • Alvord  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

**Wanted:**  
**Slow Cooker Recipes**  
**The Reward:**  
**\$25 for every one we publish!**

You can't beat the convenience and versatility of a slow cooker! From dips and casseroles to stir fries and soups, we want your favorite recipes prepared using a slow cooker. 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 Sept. 30, 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@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto: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  
Urbandale, Iowa 50322

## HORMONE-FREE

No hormones are ever used in U.S. chicken production.

CHICKEN FACTS

## COOK IT SAFELY

Chicken should be cooked to a safe internal temperature of 165 degrees F as measured with a food thermometer.

CHICKEN FACTS

## WINGS BY THE BILLION

Americans ate a record 1.42 billion wings during Super Bowl LV in 2021.

CHICKEN FACTS

## PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

Beyond protein, chicken contains under-consumed nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, choline, vitamin B12 and iron.

CHICKEN FACTS

## NO. 1 PROTEIN

The average American consumes more than 98 pounds of chicken in a year. It is the No. 1 protein consumed in the U.S.

CHICKEN FACTS

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners

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



The judging committee had the difficult task of narrowing down from 39 outstanding nominees to select three contest winners.

Congratulations to **Suzanne Askelsen** who is recognized for her enthusiastic support of the Ballard Education Foundation; **Marlene Walthart** who is recognized for her dedication to the Emmet County Animal Shelter; and **Dr. George North** who is recognized for his vision in establishing Wilder Park. These three winners have been awarded a \$1,500 donation to their charity or community organization of choice.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).



Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy (second from right), presents a check to Shine the Light winner Suzanne Askelsen (third from left).



Suzanne Askelsen (far right) presents a check on behalf of the Ballard Education Foundation to teacher JoEllen Wesseleemann, (second from right).



Suzanne Askelsen (center) with Ballard Education Foundation Board Members Sara Hillbrand and John Hilleman.

## BALLARD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

### Suzanne Askelsen enthusiastically supports teachers and students

Ask anyone who knows Suzanne Askelsen to describe her, and you'll hear things like, "She has a big heart!" and "She's an inspiration!" delivered with a big smile.

Askelsen lives by the motto, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." She embodied this belief when launching an education foundation that helps students and teachers in the Ballard Community School District.

"My parents taught me to always lend a helping hand," she says. "To me, life is about making a better place for everyone around you."

Askelsen is the recipient of one of three Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa. The contest awards \$1,500 to a non-profit organization of the recipient's choice and Askelsen chose the Ballard Education Foundation.

Midland Power Cooperative member Carol Gilbert nominated Askelsen, who is a member of Consumers Energy. As Askelsen's

mother, Gilbert showed her daughter how giving time to her community can be a fulfilling and rewarding journey.

"I nominated Suzanne for this contest as a thank you to the person she is and how she lives her life," Gilbert says. "It's been wonderful to watch her grow into the young woman she is today. By her shining example, Suzanne lives out her personal belief daily in 'doing what you can, with all you have, wherever you are.'"

In 2013, Ballard Superintendent Ottie Maxey first approached Askelsen about starting an education foundation. The foundation would supplement the school district's budget for teacher resources. Askelsen agreed and her enthusiasm attracted other community members to get the foundation off the ground.

"Suzanne shows up and get things done," Superintendent Maxey shares. "She was absolutely one of the key reasons why this foundation started."

Officially established in February 2015, the Ballard Education



Winner: Suzanne Askelsen (left)



Winner: Marlene Walthart (right)



Winner: George North (left)

Foundation partners with the school district, alumni, businesses and individuals to identify and meet the needs of Ballard students. Askelsen served as the organization's first president from 2015-2019.

"She led us through those initial grassroots efforts," says Sara Wilson, current president of the Ballard Education Foundation. "When I think about her leadership, I think about mobilizing community action and volunteers. She can connect the dots."

As a Shine the Light contest winner,

Askelsen has directed the money to fulfill grant requests from teachers for resources to enhance the curriculum. Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy, presented the check to Askelsen and the foundation on Aug. 2.

"Consumers Energy is excited to recognize Suzanne's volunteerism in the community," Itzen says. "She has the values I think we all wish we had. Everyone needs a Suzanne in their life."

For those wishing to get involved in their community but don't have time to

volunteer, Askelsen suggests monetary donations to a favorite charity or group can go a long way.

"I believe if you have time in your life to be part of something bigger than you, you will walk away with a full, warm heart and a smile on your face," she says.

To learn more about the Ballard Education Foundation, visit [ballardedfoundation.org](http://ballardedfoundation.org).

Article contributed by Sarah Heggen, Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

## EMMET COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

### Marlene Walthart shares her time and lifelong love of animals

If you ask Dawn Eveleth, there's one person you go to in a pinch when you need a volunteer: her cousin Marlene Walthart.

"I've known her forever," Eveleth says. "For as long as I can remember she's been a volunteer. From the time she was a little kid, up until now, it's kind of been her life. You can ask her anything and if she's available to do it, she's always willing for anyone or any animal."

While Marlene is known to volunteer elsewhere in her Estherville community, she has been selected as a winner in the inaugural Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa for her work at the Emmet County Animal Shelter.

Kristy Henning founded the shelter in 2010. Right away, Marlene saw the shelter as just another way to help her community.

"I wanted to do something with my Girl Scouts to win the silver award badge," Marlene says. "I got in touch with Kristy and started doing things around the shelter. It just went from there."

Henning says she can't count how many times she relied on Marlene and her husband Larry in those early days.

"I don't even know where to start," she says. "They are just invaluable to the shelter. Marlene and Larry were integral.

They spent numerous hours here, I don't even know how we would do that today."

What motivates Marlene?

It's her lifelong love for animals.

"My husband and I believe I am part cat," she says. "All my life I have wanted cats. My dad wanted dogs. I would bring a cat home, and they would say no. I would take it back and cry."

Today, the shelter has grown from a predominately cat rescue to also include a dog section.

"We have the opportunity to save a lot of animals' lives," Marlene says. "We usually have around 100 cats. When I first got in touch with Kristy, she told me about some instances of animal cruelty that I was unaware of."

For the Waltharts, volunteering goes far beyond just loving on animals. The duo set up a non-profit can redemption center adjacent to the shelter. The can redemption center serves as a funding vehicle for the shelter. Marlene takes care of office and bookwork, while Larry can be relied upon for handyman tasks.

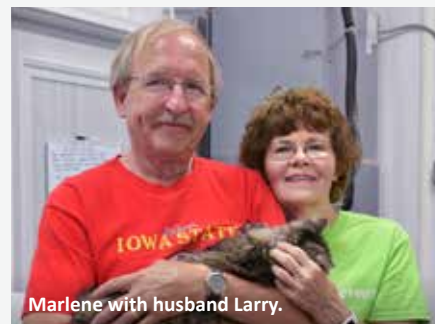
As for how the shelter will use its \$1,500 Shine the Light grant, Henning says expansion is always needed with the mission to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome the unwanted, unloved and the abandoned.

"The need for puppy rescue is overwhelming right now," she says.

"We're going to put an outside run on the intake kennel. If we can run two groups of puppies at the same time, we can rescue more puppies."

To learn more about the Emmet County Animal Shelter or to inquire about adopting a pet, visit [emmetcountyanimalshelter.org](http://emmetcountyanimalshelter.org).

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



Marlene with husband Larry.



Marlene with Kristi Henning, shelter director.

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# Efficient and safe farming technologies

BY MARIA KANEVSKY

Farmers are finding new ways to reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase crop yields through technological advances. The newest trend is precision agriculture, a strategy where farmers use advanced technologies to control growing crops and raising livestock more accurately and efficiently.

As precision agriculture has grown in recent years, the technologies have become even more technical and precise by using data analytics and machine learning. With a whole suite of benefits, such as reduced costs, standardized data and minimized resource waste, it's no surprise that technologies and strategies for precision agriculture are becoming more commonplace.

## GPS revolutionizes farm technology

The initial wave of precision agriculture in the 1980s was made possible by global positioning system (GPS) devices, which were first placed on tractors. GPS-connected devices could control a tractor based on the field's GPS coordinates. This helped reduce any overlap while driving, making farming practices more efficient.

Beyond autonomous tractors, there have been many innovations in farming technologies that are part of precision agriculture. One technology is the crop-monitoring drone, which can take aerial views of



Alexander Frick, Jr., co-owner of Frick Farms, LLC, uses a smart device to review data and plans his customized seed application for the day.

fields and give farmers a bird's-eye view of their land. Connecting the drone to special software and GPS also allows the drone to automatically take photos, making it even easier to use. When combined with geographic information system (GIS), the drone can help analyze geospatial field data in real-time.

## Automation powers precision agriculture

Robotics is another revolution in precision agriculture because it can be applied to many kinds of machines. For example, robotic milking machines automate work that was once done by hand. These machines help farmers reduce their labor demands while also increasing efficiency, freeing up time for farmers to work on other parts of their farm. Since the machines are optimized to

work efficiently, they can also help to remove more milk per cow and give cows more resting time.

Another example of automation is variable rate technology (VRT), which helps farmers optimize crop production. The technology uses a variable rate schedule for fertilizer application or irrigation. VRT consists of a computer, software, GPS and a controller, and it can work in either map- or sensor-based applications. VRT helps farmers save time and maximize irrigation and fertilization efficiency.

## Safety is key to success

When learning to use any new technology, it is important to fully read the manual and understand the instructions before beginning any work. Different types of farm equipment also require different safety precautions. Understanding safety best practices when working with a specific technology is the best way to avoid accidents.

Additionally, since many new farm technologies are digital, the threat of cybersecurity comes into play. Appropriate use of any USB thumb drives and being aware of spear-phishing cyberattacks will help prevent malicious entities from gaining access to confidential data. ⚡

Maria Kanevsky writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



In 2017, Frick and his father began incorporating precision agriculture technology into their farming operation. Their conservation practices include precision agriculture, land leveling and raised bed rows.

# Get charged: Electric trucks and SUVs are coming

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

Electric pickups – like the Ford F150 Lightning – are changing minds about what an electric vehicle (EV) can do. Americans are seeing soon-to-be-released electric pickups and SUVs as innovative, compelling and competitive vehicle options. In fact, today's EV sales are about 24 times higher than they were 10 years ago.

Here are several competitive benefits that are driving EV demand:

- Instant torque from electric motors boosts acceleration.
- Low center of gravity improves handling and reduces rollover risk.
- An electric motor offers superior traction control, which can increase off-road capability and safety in winter.
- The upfront cost of an EV purchase is now more competitive with similar internal combustion models, and most EVs qualify for a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500.
- Operating fuel cost per mile (for electricity) is cheaper compared to gasoline or diesel.

## New pickup models announced

Ford's electric F150 Lightning is scheduled to arrive in Spring 2022, starting under \$40,000 for the commercial trim package and 230-mile range model. A 300-plus-mile battery is an option, and all models are 4x4 with respectable towing and payload capacities. The Lightning is also equipped to provide 9.6kW of home backup power or portable power for a job site.

Tesla has more than a million preorders for the new Cybertruck, which will likely arrive in 2022. The 250-mile range 2WD model starts under \$40,000 and steps up to \$50,000 for the 300-mile range 4WD model. Tesla plans to offer



Ford's all-electric F150 Lightning, arriving Spring 2022, can provide portable power to a job site.



Rivian's R1T all-electric pickup is available later this year.



Tesla is expected to make the Cybertruck available by early 2022.

a 500-plus-mile range version for \$70,000 that can tow more than 14,000 pounds.

GMC has announced a late 2021 release of an electric Hummer with 1,000 horsepower and additional features for off-road performance.

Rivian, a startup backed by Ford and Amazon, is planning to unveil their R1T electric pickup later this year.

## Electric SUVs coming soon

Crossover SUVs (CUVs) are one of the most popular types of vehicles, and a number of manufacturers say they'll have electric models available soon. Ford's Mustang Mach-E is available now with a range up to 305 miles, starting at \$45,000. Volkswagen's ID4 CUV starts at \$40,000 and is available with AWD options. More electric SUVs are coming, including Rivian's R1S,

Nissan's Ariya and Volkswagen's six-passenger ID6.

And it's not just vehicles that are shifting to electric. Electric snow machines and jet skis are arriving soon. Even large construction equipment like excavators, backhoes and heavy-duty trucks will have electrically fueled models.

One remaining hurdle for increased EV adoption in rural areas is fast, sufficient charging for longer trips. Most EV owners charge at home, but more fast-charge stations on rural highways will be helpful.

If you're interested in an EV, talk to your electric co-op. They may offer special EV rates or rebates. ⚡

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners



Dr. George North stands with friend Deb McWhirter, who nominated him for the 2021 Shine the Light contest.



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## WILDER PARK

### Dr. George North establishes a recreational destination for the community

If you drive east of Allison on Highway 3 and look north, you'll find Wilder Park. Those who take the time to stop and drive through don't soon forget it; at least that's what Dr. George North hopes.

Selected as a winner of the Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, North had a vision for the park in the early 1990s. Today, that vision has become a reality. His idea began when the land the park now sits on was gifted from the original property owner.

"My early involvement was with the Boy Scouts, planting trees," says North, who is a retired dentist. "We planted 250 to 300 trees."

Today, the park is full of large, mature trees. It has turned into a recreational destination for people across Iowa, full of activities ranging from camping to fishing to frisbee golf.

Deb McWhirter nominated North for the Shine the Light contest. She says the growth of the park is due in large part to his commitment.

"It was a farm field. They have

turned this into a destination for a lot of campers and people. It has developed over the years," she says. "Dr. North has been the mastermind of the whole project. It takes a lot of volunteers and a person with a vision about what you want to have happen to the future of this park. He's been instrumental in making a plan and following through, making sure things happen."

It all started with getting his Boy Scouts involved with the environment by planting trees. According to North, who turns 92 this year, trees have been a metaphor for what having a vision means.

"Rarely when you plant trees do you get to see the result of that activity," he says. "Trees don't grow that fast. Fortunately, I've lived long enough to see the fruition of the vision. A lot of people have a very difficult time seeing down the road. Seeing what the possibilities are. Seeing what the positives are of having this type of facility."

North knew he wanted more for the park and the area than just having trees.

"Our mission is to create an affordable recreational activity facility," he says. "Except for renting an RV space, all our amenities are free. Everything is based on our mission – affordability. That's caused our level of usage to go way up."

Wilder Park also serves as one of the major outdoor classrooms in the state of Iowa. The park features more than 100 different tree species and is home to an uncommon species arboretum.

North says it's all about giving back to the community. Something he has lived by in all his years.

"I think you're obligated to give back," he says. "Part of life's responsibility is to pay it forward, give back to your community, do what you can to facilitate the growth and ambiance. To me, that's just part of living."

To learn more about the park, visit [www.visitwilderpark.com](http://www.visitwilderpark.com). To reserve a camping spot or cabin, contact the Allison City Hall. 🌿

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.

# Dreaming in color

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I admit to being a “color person.” I like seeing the differences between taupe and ecru, the subtle variances among celery and sage and seafoam. I was a frustrated grade-schooler, being limited by 24 crayons in the box since my mom wouldn’t spring for the larger 64-color supply. And the larger box had its own crayon sharpener! How could she have missed the importance of that?!

Even with 64 choices, I’m not sure it would have been enough for my hue-hungry first-grade self. My mother says that even as a toddler, I was perplexed by the color turquoise. It wasn’t green, it wasn’t blue ... wow.

## “Bluetiful” discoveries

That’s why I read with wonder the discovery of a new color. A team of chemists at Oregon State University inadvertently came up with a new shade of blue, which they dubbed YInMn Blue (pronounced YIN-min Blue) after the elements used to create it. Evidently, this is the first new blue discovery since cobalt entered the world in 1802.

When I heard the news, I immediately had questions. How exactly do you know you’ve discovered a new color? I’ve looked at pictures of this shade, and it looks a lot like wood violet to me, or maybe amethyst. Heck, I had bridesmaids’ dresses of this shade. What makes this discovery a bona fide discovery?

But it must be. This new tint, even with its unglamorous name, has become sensationalized in scientific journals. Harvard Art Museums has added the shade to its Forbes Pigment Collection, a digital resource on the history of color. Even Crayola has annexed this hue of hyacinth to its product, with a



striking crayon called “Bluetiful.” It must be a real thing.

## Expanding palettes

All of this has gone over the head of people like my husband, for whom the basic eight crayons are enough. We’ve been married more than 35 years, and he just added “mauve” to his color lexicon. It drives him crazy when I talk in terms of “eggshell” and “snowfall” when describing white paints. He rolls his eyes when I tell him I’m looking for a couch that’s emerald.

“You mean green?” he says with a here-we-go-again voice.

“Well, yes ...” I hesitate. “But there are so many greens. I don’t want avocado or hunter. I’m looking for a strong, clear emerald green.”

“So, you’re looking for green,” he says again.

“Uh, yeah, whatever.” I give up. The complexities of finding the right shade of emerald are lost on him. My quest continues alone.

Will another color be discovered? Will our mnemonics like “Roy G. Biv” for memorizing the colors of the rainbow change? Will crayon manufacturers be forced to add another layer of pigmentation to their products?

I don’t know. But I do know that no one had better mess with emerald. ⚡

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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