

APRIL 2015



# Highline Headlines

Volume 37  
Issue 4

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Access Energy Cooperative is dedicated to exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable, efficient service while being a good citizen in our communities.



**For after hours emergencies call**  
**800.452.7819**  
**or 319.385.1580**

Visit our website to learn about the 2015 Annual Meeting of Members

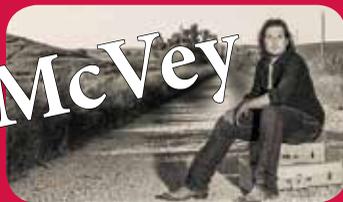
**About**  
Annual Meeting  
[www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)



Thank you members who attended the **member** advisory meeting on March 5th and shared a very valuable discussion with Access Energy Cooperative board and management. After a wonderful meal catered by Soni Scott, the members were given a presentation of what is happening at the cooperative now and into our future. The members who attended the meeting in response to an invitation that was sent to a randomly selected list of our membership, then shared their concerns and questions. This year was a very interactive discussion, and greatly appreciated by the cooperative to help direct us in leading our focus for the cooperative.

**Annual Meeting of Members**  
**August 4, 2015**  
Come listen to this year's entertainment!

**Jake McVey**



## National Lineman Appreciation Day

America's electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

On April 13, 2015, and every day, Access Energy Cooperative will honor the hard working men who often work in challenging conditions to keep the lights on.

Linemen **leave** their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on. They work 365 days a year under dangerous and life threatening weather conditions to build, maintain and repair our electric infrastructure. Our linemen get the power back on and make things safe for all after storms and accidents. There would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen.

"Electric linemen do not often receive the recognition they deserve," said Robert Swindell, General Manager/CEO. "They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions away from their families, going above and beyond to **restore** power to their communities. Our linemen, as well as linemen from across the **nation**, truly deserve this special day of recognition."

Access Energy Cooperative invites you to take a moment to thank a **lineman** for the work they do. Use #ThankALineman to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.



## REC Day at the Capitol

Over 200 cooperative supporters, including representatives from Access Energy Cooperative traveled to Des Moines on Monday, March 16 to advocate for electric cooperatives and meet at the Capitol with our local elected officials.

The co-ops focused on educating **legislators** about five issues important to the electric cooperatives: the inclusion of geothermal for renewable energy tax credits, legislation encouraging utility-owned **solar**, accountability for the Iowa Energy Center, policies supporting a skilled workforce in the state and **EPA** proposed rules regarding the Clean Air Act. Many cooperatives developed booth displays that provided information on topics such as: community solar, rural broadband, load management, storm recovery, lineman equipment costs and energy efficiency.

This annual visit to the Iowa Capitol is an excellent opportunity to personally visit with our elected officials and provide them with a co-op perspective on issues that are important to our business.



## Manager's Corner



**General Manager/CEO  
Robert Swindell**

For more than 45 years, Earth Day has been celebrated to bring attention to the ways that working together (whether it's across the world, across Iowa, or in our homes and business) can save energy and resources. On April 22, we'll join with the nation's electric cooperatives and citizens around the world to celebrate the work being done to protect our environment. We also know that being

responsible environmental citizens is a commitment that extends to every day and hour of the year.

### HELPING YOU SAVE ENERGY

We are committed to helping you use energy wisely as we work to provide power that is affordable, reliable, safe and environmentally responsible. We offer free energy audits which identify ways for you to save energy. Along with identifying ways for you to save, we offer rebates for insulation, windows, doors, water heaters and efficient heating and cooling systems. In addition, we can provide affordable financing, with approved credit, for most of these energy saving improvements.

### CLEAN POWER

Our generation mix is getting cleaner too. Along with improvements to our coal power plants which have significantly reduced their emissions, we have also invested in natural gas generations which produce fewer emissions. We also produce roughly 12% of our energy from renewables, consisting of wind and hydro power. For members that wish to have more of their power from renewables we offer our "Access to Green Energy" program which

allows you to purchase 100 kilowatt-hour blocks of energy from renewable energy. Currently the 100 kilowatt-hour blocks cost an additional \$3.50 monthly. You can get more information on these programs at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) or by calling our office at 866-242-4232.

### SOLAR POWER

We are also exploring the feasibility of offering a solar option to our generating mix. We recently conducted a survey of the membership to gauge your interest. About half of you said you would be interested in seeing more renewables in our mix. But you have also said that you don't want to pay much more than 5 to 10 dollars a month to have more renewables. The Board will be exploring this more in the upcoming months to see if this is a viable option.

In closing this month, I wanted to share that the Nominating Committee met on March 16th to select candidates to run for the Board Directors to be elected at this year's annual meeting. At this time they are still in the process of finalizing the candidates. Please look for more information in next month's HighLine HeadLines.

## You Own Your Co-op

Every cooperative, whether it's Access Energy Cooperative, or your credit union, follows the basic principle of one member, one vote. At Access Energy Cooperative, you are asked to vote and elect individuals that will represent you on our board of directors. These board members are your friends, neighbors and fellow residents of your community. Every member in good standing of the co-op may run for the board and vote in the elections. This is one of the key differences between

a co-op member and a customer of an investor-owned utility (IOU). Here are a few terms that may help you determine the differences:

- **OWN** Refers to each member truly believing and feeling that you do indeed share in the ownership of the co-op. This can come from attending the annual meeting, voting, receiving a dividend check or participating in other co-op events.
- **USE** For you, the member/owner,

this means that you use the co-op's resources wisely (after all, you are an owner of those resources). You utilize the free energy audits we offer. You use energy-efficient appliances, weather strip windows and doors, use LED or CFL lights – and you turn them off when you leave the room.

- **SERVE** If you are successful with "own" and "use," perhaps you would like to serve your co-op – as a board member.

## Leveraging New Technology and Habits to Improve Reliability

It's a simple premise: when you flip the switch at home, the lights should come on. And at Access Energy Cooperative, we work hard to ensure you have electricity every hour of every day. It's what we do; we're here for you, our member-owners.

Even as we upgrade the distribution system to improve reliability, we face continual threats, like a tornado or ice storm. Maybe a neighbor forgets to call before he digs up his backyard. Maybe someone would slide off the road and hit a utility pole.

With 2200 miles of electric distribution lines, we have a lot of ground to cover. So when the lights go out, we cover it as quickly as possible. Not too long ago, our only option was linemen driving throughout

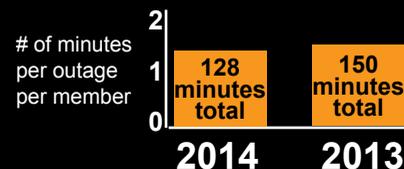
large areas to investigate a problem. Since then, we have invested in smart technologies that allow us to monitor our system remotely and pinpoint problems more quickly and accurately as they occur.

We also have great employees with tremendous expertise in maintaining and repairing our infrastructure. As your locally owned and operated not-for-profit utility, we deeply care about the areas we serve. We evaluate and deploy cost-effective system upgrades and preventive maintenance strategies across our 10 counties. And, we work hard all year to keep trees away from power lines to prevent outages.

This combination of expertise, technology and our local focus helps us meet new challenges and exceed your expectations.

In 2014, the major categories for outages were power supplier interruptions, major storms and scheduled maintenance.

### Our Reliability



Our pole testing reports in 2013 showed a 0.8% rejection rate of poles needing replaced, 2014 was 1.4% When we find a pole that does not meet inspection, it is replaced as soon as possible.

## COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

**Access Energy Cooperative**  
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**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday  
(closed Saturday, Sunday,  
& Holidays)  
Office: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Billing & account information can be accessed 24/7 by calling our office or by visiting our website.

Payments can be placed in the dropbox under the flag pole.

Visa and Mastercard accepted.

**After Hours Emergencies call:**  
319.385.1580  
or 800.452.7819

**General Manager/CEO:** Robert Swindell  
**Editor:** Kimberly Brumbaugh  
**Assistant Editor:** Cherity Wibben

### Officers and Directors:

Jerry Barker	District 2	President
Fred Hickenbottom	District 1	Vice President
Joseph Heckethorn	District 1	Secretary
Marvin Newton	District 3	Treasurer
David Hollingsworth	District 1	Director
Larry White	District 2	Director
Ronald Campbell	District 2	Director
Marvin Holtkamp	District 3	Director
Victor Pierrat	District 3	Director

Highline Headlines is published by Access Energy Cooperative, 1800 West Washington Street, P.O. Box 440, Mount Pleasant, IA 52641, Phone: 319.385.1577  
Highline Headlines (ISSN 1066-7989) is published monthly for \$2.04 per year, per member by Access Energy Cooperative, 1800 West Washington Street, P.O. Box 440, Mount Pleasant, IA 52641 and at additional offices. Periodical postage paid at Mount Pleasant, IA.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to HIGHLINE HEADLINES, P.O. Box 440, Mount Pleasant, IA 52641-0440.

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## If It's Not in Use, Turn Off the Juice

Reducing household energy use doesn't mean doing without. It doesn't require walking around your house wearing extra sweaters and earmuffs in the **dead** of winter, or stripping down to the bare essentials in the summer. It means being smarter about how you manage the energy you do use. Consider Access Energy Cooperative your trusted **resource** for exploring energy-saving strategies. Not-for-profit, member-owned electric co-ops want to help their member owners. Sometimes that involves lowering their members' bills, and other times it involves increasing efficiency options to reduce operating costs.

Energy efficiency means performing the same job and getting a similar outcome, using less energy. This efficiency is often achieved through a mechanical change, such as replacing an older, less efficient appliance or mechanical unit with a new model, but sometimes a minor change of habit is all that's needed. Examples could include dimming lights, turning down the thermostat or washing clothes in cold water instead of hot.

### THE BENEFITS OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION

So why are energy conservation and energy efficiency more important than ever to our members? What are the benefits of efficiency and conservation? The short answer is that energy reduction in your home 1) saves you money; 2) improves our economy by enabling consumers and businesses to spend and invest in other areas; and 3) reduces the amount of pollution emitted from power generation.

The more complex answer is that modern life means we are placing increasing demands on all forms of energy. For example, consumers are more reliant on devices, computers, phones (with charging stations), sophisticated media/home entertainment and video gaming systems, and "smart" technology that all rely on electricity. The wide array of new electronic devices is improving our quality of life, and electric co-ops are promoting efficiency to bring new conveniences at a lower cost.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY: THE "FIRST FUEL"

In this period of rapidly changing technology, Americans are increasingly aware of the **need** to reduce energy consumption. Many now call energy savings the "first fuel", because the easiest way to reduce fuel cost and carbon emissions is to save energy. Energy is a valuable commodity, and while the discussions over climate change and carbon footprints continue, we must all do our part to conserve this precious resource. Protecting and preserving the quality of water and **air** is also our shared responsibility. Using less energy may even boost the economy by relieving the ever-tightening family budget, allowing dollars to be spent on more tangible goods.

### ELECTRIC CO-OPS CAN HELP YOU USE LESS ELECTRICITY

Electric co-ops are a great local resource for helping consumers develop individual plans tailored to their **needs**. Our employees understand better than most that every household has its own complex energy system.

Access Energy Cooperative offers FREE energy audits, and energy saving tips. The first step in this process is easy – simply reach out to us for help with taking control of your own energy use, and you'll be well on your way to achieving the ideal balance of efficiency and conservation. In turn, you will be helping yourself, your community and the environment – and that benefits all of us.

For information on how you can be more energy efficient, contact us at 1.866.242.4232 or visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

Source: Anne Prince, NRECA

## The Big Green Box

They're big. They're often green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some families don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences, or flower beds. But stay clear: even small additions around pad-mount transformers create hazards.

To improve aesthetics of new neighborhoods, developers often **route** powerlines underground. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately some homeowners, concerned about curb appeal, attempt to screen pad-mount transformers from view—creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including Access Energy Cooperative lineworkers.

Access Energy recommends leaving at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount transformers. Linemen repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure lineman stay safe, they use an 8-foot fiberglass hot stick that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in front of the access panel.

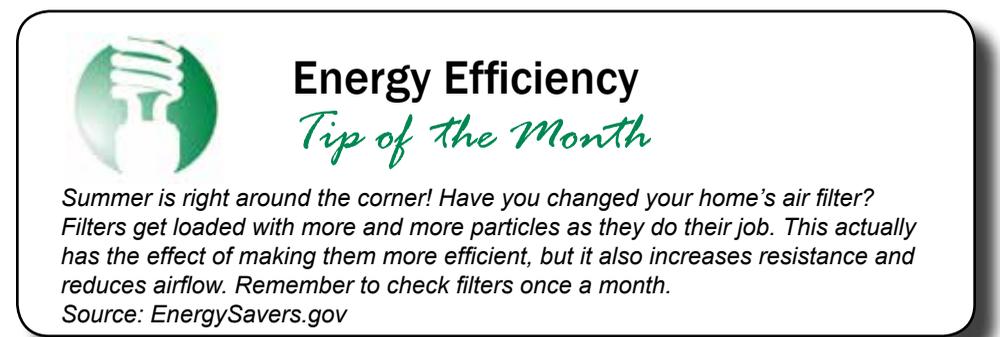
Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is compromised. Allow at least three to four feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

Members should also be aware that plantings along rights-of-way—strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires, and other equipment like pad-mount transformers—could be damaged by co-op vehicles.

### CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 811 to find out where cables are buried.

To learn more about how you can safely beautify the area around your transformer, contact Don Roach at [droach@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:droach@accessenergycoop.com).  
Source: Megan McKoy-Noe, NRECA



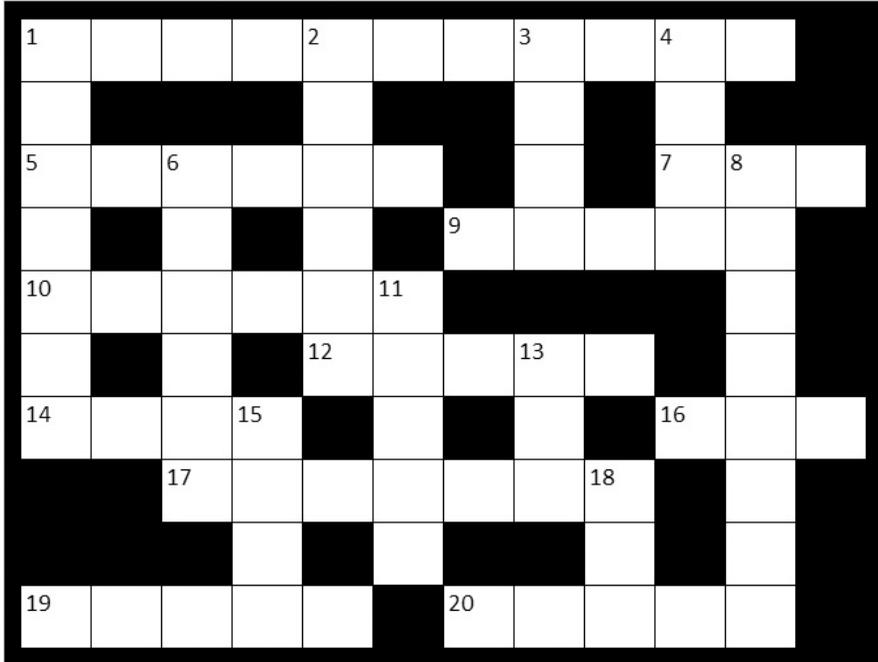
**~BLOOD DRIVE~**  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY  
REGIONAL BLOOD CENTER  
*How life flows through our community.®*  
**Save the Date**  
Thursday, May 28  
3:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
Access Energy Cooperative Meeting Room  
Sign up by calling 319.385.1577.

# Win A \$25 Bill Credit

Access Energy Cooperative members can win a \$25 bill credit by completing the crossword. Send your answers in by April 27, 2015, to: Access Energy Cooperative, Attn: Crossword Puzzle, P.O. Box 440, Mount Pleasant, IA 52641. Most of the answers are bold and highlighted elsewhere in this issue of the Highline Headlines. If more than one person answers all of the questions correctly by the deadline, a drawing will be held to determine the winner.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



Last month's crossword winner is **Deb Moore of Mount Pleasant.**

## ACROSS

- 1 Our board and management recently visited with these at the Capitol
- 5 We honor linemen all across this
- 7 Avoid raising this part of a planter near power lines
- 9 Someone could do this off the road, hit a pole and cause an outage
- 10 This advisory meeting helped offer direction for the cooperative focus
- 12 Discussion of this on a utility scale was held at the REC Day on the Hill
- 14 Americans are aware of this to reduce energy consumption
- 16 As a member, you can do this for the board of directors
- 17 Linemen go above and beyond to do this to your power
- 19 We can help you develop energy saving plans tailored to your unique set of these
- 20 Linemen do this to their families to keep your lights on

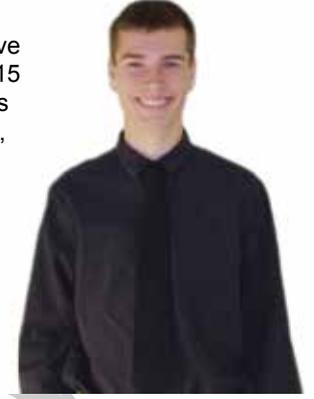
## DOWN

- 1 Take a moment to thank one of these this month for the work they do
- 2 Part of a bicycle wheel
- 3 These kind of antennas can easily come in contact with power lines
- 4 Someone could slide off this and hit a pole, causing an outage
- 6 This non metallic material will conduct electricity
- 8 Consider us this to find energy saving ideas
- 11 Developers do this to power lines underground for aesthetics
- 13 Protecting this is a shared responsibility
- 15 Saving energy doesn't mean wearing earmuffs inside during this part of winter
- 18 Discussion was held at the Capitol on rules proposed by this

# 2015 Youth Tour Winners



Megan Shumaker and Dalton Krum, both of Mt. Pleasant, have been selected to attend the 2015 Youth Tour on June 12-19. The event is an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative.



Megan and Dalton will join approximately 40 other Iowa students and nearly 1,000 students from across the country who have been selected by their electric cooperatives to attend the annual Youth Tour. While on tour they will learn about American history

and government. They will visit historical sights including monuments, museums, the U.S. Capitol, federal agencies and other points of interest. They will also have an opportunity to meet with their legislators in the House and Senate.

Access Energy Cooperative has been a part of the Youth Tour program for more than 55 years and currently selects two students each year to participate in the trip.

# Have a Successful Planting Season Rooted in Safety

As farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, Access Energy Cooperative urges you to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. Operating large equipment near these lines is one of the often overlooked, yet potentially deadly, hazards of working on a farm.

Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a 10-foot clearance minimum from power lines. Sometimes a power line is closer than it looks. Helpful safety steps include using a spotter and designating preplanned routes that avoid hazard areas.

Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors now have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising an arm of planters or cultivators near power lines, and never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

Simply working too close to a power line is dangerous as electricity can arc or "jump" to conducting objects, such as a ladder, pole or truck. Remember,

non-metallic materials such as timber, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call us for help. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground. Even if a line has landed on the ground, there is still potential for the area to be energized. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until help arrives.

If exiting the cab is absolutely necessary because of fire, the proper action is to jump—not step—with both feet together, hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

For more tips and information on how to stay safe this planting season, visit [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

# Members Saving on Prescriptions

In 2014, members saved over \$8000 on their prescriptions.

To find out more on the discounts offered check out our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). It's easy to save—you just have to show your card to participating merchants.

If you own a business and would like to offer a discount for the card, please contact Kim Brumbaugh at [kbrumbaugh@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:kbrumbaugh@accessenergycoop.com) or call our office at 1.866.242.4232.

