

living with energy

IN IOWA



FEBRUARY 2018

Looking for information on our youth programs or photo contest? ▶ See pages 12 and 13



YEARS
OF THE YOUTH TOUR

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

Access Energy Cooperative discusses issues at annual legislative reception

UPCOMING EVENTS



- Feb. 26 Youth Tour application deadline**

- March 6 Youth Tour Interviews**

- March 14 REC Day on the Hill**

- March 15 Scholarship application deadline**

- March 30 Office closed for Good Friday**

- March 31 Photo Contest deadline**

For information on programs and deadlines listed here, please call our office at 866-242-4232 from 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Monday-Thursday or 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on Friday. You also can find details on youth programs such as Youth Tour and scholarships by visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com.



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

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Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays

Payments can be placed in dropbox under flag pole. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Electric cooperatives discuss important issues at legislative reception

The Access Energy Cooperative board and general manager/CEO Kevin Wheeler – along with representatives from other Iowa electric cooperatives – discussed priorities with state legislators and policy makers on Jan. 9 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception at the State Historical Building in Des Moines. Other guests of honor included: Gov. Kim Reynolds, Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg, Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, Auditor of State Mary Mosiman, Attorney General Tom Miller, Iowa Utilities Board member Nick Wagner and Iowa Department of Economic Development Director Debi Durham. The annual event was hosted by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance and the Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores of Iowa.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including items central to Iowa's rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, electric co-op directors, managers and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues allowing Iowa's member-owned electric cooperatives

to continue providing safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans.

Access Energy Cooperative representatives will return March 14 to visit with their legislators once again during the annual REC Day on the Hill at the Iowa State Capitol. ⚡



Access Energy Cooperative board member Jerry Barker (right) talked with Gov. Kim Reynolds.



Attending the Welcome Back reception were (from left): Rep. Jerry Kearns and co-op directors Fred Hickenbottom and Marvin Newton.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Power quality workshop offered

Last month, Access Energy Cooperative brought in Greg Starks, a professional engineer from College Station, Texas, to conduct a power quality workshop for employees and key accounts on the cooperative's system. This one-day event was offered to educate members on problems and solutions related to power quality and common disturbances – and their effects on equipment. ⚡



Proactively providing safe and reliable service is what we do best

BY KEVIN WHEELER

When electric cooperative member-owners are asked what they value most about their electric service, one of the things that consistently ranks near the top is reliability. With an annual average reliability rate of 99.9786 percent, we know reliability doesn't happen by chance. It takes constant effort to maintain systems, improve where necessary and anticipate our member-owners' increasing needs for electric service.



During the winter months, reliability is under greater scrutiny from our member-owners. Old Man Winter's fury of snow and ice storms, combined with strong winds, can put our systems to the test in a significant way. When outages occur, the most frequent cause is trees or other vegetation coming into contact with power lines. These types of outages not only are inconvenient for our member-owners, but also are costly to your cooperative's bottom line – which impacts affordability over the long term.

We know that vegetation and trees are valued parts of our landscape. Beyond enhancing the beauty of an area, they provide important functions such as cool shade, noise barriers, supplying vital oxygen to the atmosphere and providing a habitat

for many animals. But trees also grow, which can cause problems with power lines if they're not properly planted or if volunteer trees rise in unintended areas.

When branches and limbs break off, they often land in roadways or bring the power lines down with them – posing a safety risk to cooperative employees and the public. Because our distribution system connects thousands of people across our service territory, one tree coming in contact with a power line may impact your neighbors near and far.

The Iowa Electrical Safety Code requires electric utilities, including cooperatives, to have a schedule and procedures for regular tree trimming and vegetation management, which is critical in minimizing these instances. Both state and federal policies require that vegetation must be cleared from power lines as a safety measure for member-owners and our employees. These groups also have strict guidelines, including prohibiting trees from being planted certain distances from power lines.

Under our vegetation management program – which means that trees and other vegetation are inspected and trimmed on a 5-year cycle – maintaining line clearance is our

primary objective. We do this while ensuring we trim vegetation in an environmentally responsible manner. The tree trimming process has two purposes: to remove elements that may already be coming into contact with utility equipment (such as wires and conductors) and to create a clearance that will provide hazard-free operation of electric service for at least 2 years.

Using established standards as a guide, we also know that a methodical, proactive approach is important to ensure the safe, reliable, efficient and environmentally responsible delivery of service. Like many things in life, preventative maintenance is a key to health – oil changes are vital to the longevity of a vehicle, regular dental visits are important in cavity prevention, and annual inspections and maintenance will likely extend the life of your furnace.

Left to chance – rather than being proactive – your vehicle, teeth or furnace would likely suffer. The same is true with your cooperative's electric system. By proactively clearing vegetation before it reaches power lines, Access Energy Cooperative will be less impacted during severe weather and we'll avoid longer, more costly outages. ⚡

Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/CEO of Access Energy Cooperative.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a soil-free indoor garden!

If you have an extra foot or so of counter space in your kitchen, you have enough room for a soil-free Miracle-Gro AeroGarden to grow fresh herbs, lettuce and other greens – plus you can start your favorite veggies or flowers for spring planting. The \$200 Classic 7 AeroGarden we're giving away this month includes an energy-efficient LED grow light, nutrient mix and a selection of seven seed pods for gourmet herbs. Visit aerogarden.com for more details.

Visit the *Living with Energy in Iowa* website at www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com to enter the contest no later than Feb. 28, 2018. ⚡



ANNUAL MEETING

Save the Date!



Aug. 7, 2018 @ 5 p.m.

**Access Energy Cooperative
Annual Meeting of
Members**

Everything is FREE!

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Scholarships totaling \$9,000 are available

There will be six \$1,500 awards, two in each of the cooperative's three districts. Students applying for scholarships must be high school seniors receiving post-secondary education, and their parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative.

Here's where to obtain an application:

- At all area high school guidance counselor offices;
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mt. Pleasant at 866-242-4232; or
- By visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, downloading the application, and either faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office. You also may submit the form online.

Applications are due in our office March 15, 2018. Winners will be announced at their senior awards ceremonies.

Five hundred dollars of each scholarship will be awarded to recipients at the completion of their first semester of post-secondary education, with proof of enrollment for the second semester. The remaining \$1,000 will be awarded after completion of the third semester, with proof of enrollment for the fourth semester. ⚡

HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

Board appoints Nominating Committee for election of Directors

Your Board of Directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative, and a Nominating Committee has been appointed to begin the process of selecting nominees to run for the three seats that will be up for election. Each of these three districts will elect a Director to fill a position for a term of 3 years.

Here are the members that have been appointed to the 2018 Nominating Committee.

District 1

Brandon Ledger, 11398 Spruce Ave., Stockport

Kenneth Whitham, 1594 Hemlock Ave., Fairfield

Susie Greiner, 12741 Hwy. 16, Douds

District 2

Bob Wilson, 1729 Oakland Mills Rd., Mt. Pleasant

Randy White, 1559 Oakland Mills Rd., Mt. Pleasant

Bob Scarff, 2164 Jewell Ave., Mt. Pleasant

District 3

Myrna Folker, 1399 190th St., Donnellson

Tim Myers, 3264 New London Rd., New London

Dean Mabeus, 1664 Green Bay Rd., Wever

In order to serve on the Access Energy Cooperative Board of Directors, you must be a member of the cooperative and a bona fide resident of a premise served by the cooperative. Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the Nominating Committee. You can find more information on the board election process by visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com. ⚡

These Directors' terms will expire at this year's Annual Meeting, which will be held Tuesday, Aug. 7.



District 1—
Joe Heckethorn



District 2 —
Larry White



District 3 —
Victor Pierrot

IN THE NEWS

Win \$50 in our Photo Contest!

The annual photo contest is in progress at Access Energy Cooperative. Selected entries will be used in the 2019 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Fifty dollars will be awarded to each photographer whose entry is selected as one of the 13 featured photos.

Submit all entries by March 31, 2018, to:



Photo Contest
c/o Access Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 440
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for rules and more information. ⚡

Access Energy Cooperative is looking for the next generation of leaders

What do 1,800 high school students, our nation's capital and electric cooperatives have in common? The answer is the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, of course! Youth Tour was established with one thought in mind: to inspire our next generation of leaders. Since 1964, more than 50,000 young Americans have taken advantage of this special opportunity offered by their electric cooperatives.

It all takes place June 8-14, 2018, when hundreds of electric co-ops across the country send students to Washington, D.C., for a chance to learn about the cooperative business model and enjoy a full week of sightseeing. While in D.C., participants will meet with their elected officials and discuss issues that are important back home. Without a doubt, Youth Tour has grown into an invaluable program that gives young Americans an experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Access Energy Cooperative sends two students each year. If you're a high school sophomore or junior interested in traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience a once-in-a-lifetime trip, check our website at www.accessenergycoop.com to download or submit an application – or call the co-op's office at 866-242-

4232. You'll also find applications at your guidance counselor's office.

Applications are due in our office Feb. 26, 2018. Personal interviews to choose the two student representatives will be held at our office March 6, 2018. You must participate in an interview on that date to be considered. ⚡



SAVING ENERGY

Is it time to update your heating system?

No matter what kind of equipment heats your home, one thing is certain: The more energy efficient the heating system is, the lower your utility bills will be. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, the combination of a tight, well-insulated home, a properly maintained, high-efficiency heating system and reasonable thermostat settings can cut your heating bill in half.

If you've lived in your home for several years – and the heating system was in place when you bought the house – it may be hard for you to determine if you've gotten your money's worth out of your current equipment. But consider this: Energy Star® recommends replacing a furnace or boiler that's more than 15 years old (or a heat pump or air conditioner

that's more than 12 years old) with a new, high-efficiency unit.

Here are some other clues that it's time to go shopping for a new heating system:

- Your heating bills are going up because the system is using more energy than in past years.
- The equipment needs to be repaired frequently – often for a different reason each time.
- Some of the rooms in your house are too hot or too cold, no matter how you adjust the airflow through the ducts.
- The system just doesn't seem to be working properly, even after a recent service call.
- The air in your home is exceptionally dry during the heating months.



Unfortunately, you often can't see what causes a heating system to waste energy. Beyond obvious clues such as a sagging duct that blows heated air into the basement, a noisy fan motor on a forced-air furnace or a leaking fuel line on a boiler, most of the energy-wasting problems will be hidden from view – so call a professional technician for an expert analysis. ⚡