

# living with energy

IN IOWA



MARCH 2019

Access Energy Cooperative appoints new safety director ▶ See Page 5

## Weather, critters and reliability



Brunch favorites

Win an electric weed trimmer!

Access Energy Cooperative meets with lawmakers at the Capitol

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**March 13 Blood Drive**

**March 15 Scholarship Deadline\***

**March 5 Youth Tour Interviews**

**March 20 REC Day on the Hill**

**March 31 Photo Contest Deadline\***

**April 8 National Lineman  
Appreciation Day**

\* Visit [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) for complete details on these programs.

When the office is closed, you can call us 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 866-242-4232 or use our SmartHub App – for answers to billing and account questions, paying your bill and service interruptions.



*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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1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

**Phone:** 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232

**Fax:** 319-385-6873

**Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):** 8-1-1

**Website:** [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop](https://facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/AccessEnergyC](https://twitter.com/AccessEnergyC)

**E-mail:** [contactus@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:contactus@accessenergycoop.com)

**Office Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

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

**General Manager/CEO:** Kevin Wheeler

**Editor:** Kimberly Davis

**Assistant Editor:** Cherity Wibben

**Officers and Directors:**

David Hollingsworth	District 1	President
Marvin Newton	District 3	Vice President
Robert P. Smith	District 2	Secretary
Fred Hickenbottom	District 1	Treasurer
Marvin Larson	District 1	Director
Jerry Barker	District 2	Director
Larry White	District 2	Director
Robert Chesnut III	District 3	Director
Marvin Holtkamp	District 3	Director

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# Farm Bill provisions support rural economic development

BY KEVIN WHEELER

As you may know, the 2018 Farm Bill was signed into law in late December, providing some certainty and stability for the years ahead. We want to recognize the efforts of Sen. Joni Ernst, who served on the 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee, for her tireless work in securing key provisions which will boost Iowa's ag industry. We are also thankful to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association for their advocacy efforts on our behalf.

There are several provisions within the \$867 billion Farm Bill that are very helpful to electric cooperatives as we work to modernize rural communities. In particular, funding for economic development efforts has been secured which will help electric co-ops across the country retain and create jobs in rural areas. Iowa's electric co-ops have been working with the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, often referred to as REDLG, for decades to support economic development and job growth in rural Iowa. The REDLG program provides funding for rural projects through zero-interest loans to local electric cooperatives which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The local businesses repay the lending co-op directly, and the co-op is responsible for repayment to USDA.

Before passage of the bill, future funding for the REDLG program was in question. With the 2018 Farm Bill now signed into law, REDLG funding has been secured so electric co-ops can continue to provide financing for job growth projects within and beyond our service areas. After the current formula for REDLG

funding expires in 2021, the \$5 million of mandatory funding that Sen. Ernst helped secure will kick in. These funds will be in addition to the traditional discretionary funds that are typically appropriated to the program, ensuring Iowa's electric co-ops can help fuel economic development well into the future.

This is great news for Access Energy Cooperative and the Iowa Area

Development Group, the business and community development organization for Iowa's electric cooperatives, which provides technical assistance and development services to Iowa businesses and communities. The REDLG program has allowed Access Energy Cooperative to spur economic growth in our service territory for over 20 years. This program is responsible for creating hundreds of jobs in southeastern Iowa. Access Energy Cooperative manages a REDLG loan portfolio of more than \$2 million. Participating in the REDLG program is a major component of our core cooperative principle of investing in the communities we serve. To learn more about REDLG eligibility and economic development services in our area, contact Kim Davis at 319-385-1577 or [kdavis@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:kdavis@accessenergycoop.com).



## OFFICE CLOSING

Office Closed  
April 19 for  
Good Friday





**MOVE OVER  
SLOW DOWN**

Access Energy Cooperative linemen work on dangerous equipment any time of day and in any kind of weather to keep your power on. The last thing they need to worry about is being hit by an oncoming vehicle. If you see them working on the side of the road, move over to the other lane and slow down. Their families thank you! ⚡

## Mills promoted to Safety Director

Access Energy Cooperative is proud to announce the appointment of Jim Mills to the position of Safety Director. Jim has been with the cooperative since 1991, serving our members as Apprentice Lineman, Foreman, Serviceman and District Foreman. Jim also served our county in the Iowa Army National Guard for 27 years, including deployment overseas on Desert Storm for active duty — 20 years at the local level and 7 years at the Fort Dodge Training Camp. ⚡



### NOTES OF APPRECIATION

All of us at Access Energy Cooperative thank our members for the following notes sent during a recent winter storm.

We sure appreciate the Access Energy guys last night! They had our power back on within an hour!

- Tim & Brandy Myers, Lowell

Please thank the guys that came out to our road late last night and into early morning. We are always impressed with the quick response and we weren't without power very long. It was so cold, and I hope they are OK after working in that weather! Thank you so much again! You guys are awesome!

-Tony & Niki Waterman, West Point

Thank you, guys, for getting the power back on in such a timely manner. I don't think you get a "Thank You" nearly enough!

-Rae Fedler, Lowell

A huge thank you to the crew that restored electricity last night. Know it is part of the job but definitely not given enough recognition for what they do battling the elements. Especially last night under the horrendous conditions. Please let them know how appreciated they are.

-Barb & Ed Overhake, West Point

### EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## Win an electric weed trimmer!



Electric lawn and yard equipment has exploded in popularity over the last few years. Some electric units are even rivaling traditional gas equipment in effectiveness. Weed eaters are the best equipment on the market for snatching up the weeds from your lawn or garden with relative ease. With spring quickly approaching, you could win this BLACK+DECKER LST136 40V MAX Lithium String Trimmer, with the battery. The PowerDrive Transmission delivers more power from the motor to the cutting string so you can get the job done faster. This product is valued at \$150 and easily converts from a trimmer to an edger.

Visit the *Living with Energy in Iowa* website at [www.livingwithenergyinowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyinowa.com) to enter the contest no later than March 31, 2019. ⚡

CAPITOL VISIT

# Access Energy Cooperative visits with lawmakers

Several members of Access Energy Cooperative’s Board of Directors, along with General Manager/CEO Kevin Wheeler and Public Relations Director Kim Davis, visited the Iowa Capitol to talk with legislators about issues affecting the members of our cooperative and the energy industry. Thank you, legislators, for taking time out of your busy schedule to visit with our representatives!



*Pictured left to right: Larry White, Marvin Larson, Marvin Newton, Rep. Jarad Klein, Fred Hickenbottom, Kim Davis and Dave Hollingsworth. Sitting: Kevin Wheeler*



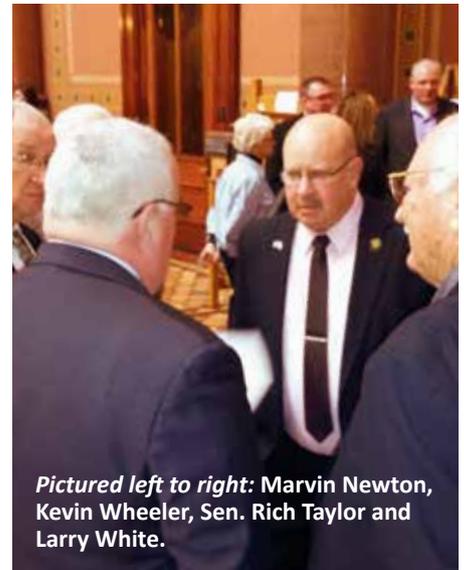
*Pictured left to right: Marvin Newton, Kevin Wheeler, Marvin Larson and Rep. Kevin Kinney.*

During the session, lawmakers have been addressing a multitude of issues, including items central to Iowa’s rural economy. Continuing with this Capitol visit, Access Energy Cooperative representatives have been important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues allowing Iowa’s member-owned electric cooperatives to continue providing safe, reliable, efficient and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans.

Electric cooperative representatives from all parts of the state will go to the state Capitol to visit with their legislators during the annual REC Day on the Hill on March 20. ⚡



*Pictured left to right: Kevin Wheeler, Rep. Jeff Shipley, Marvin Larson, Marvin Newton and Larry White.*



*Pictured left to right: Marvin Newton, Kevin Wheeler, Sen. Rich Taylor and Larry White.*



*Pictured left to right: Rep. Dave Kerr, Kevin Wheeler, Fred Hickenbottom and Marvin Newton.*



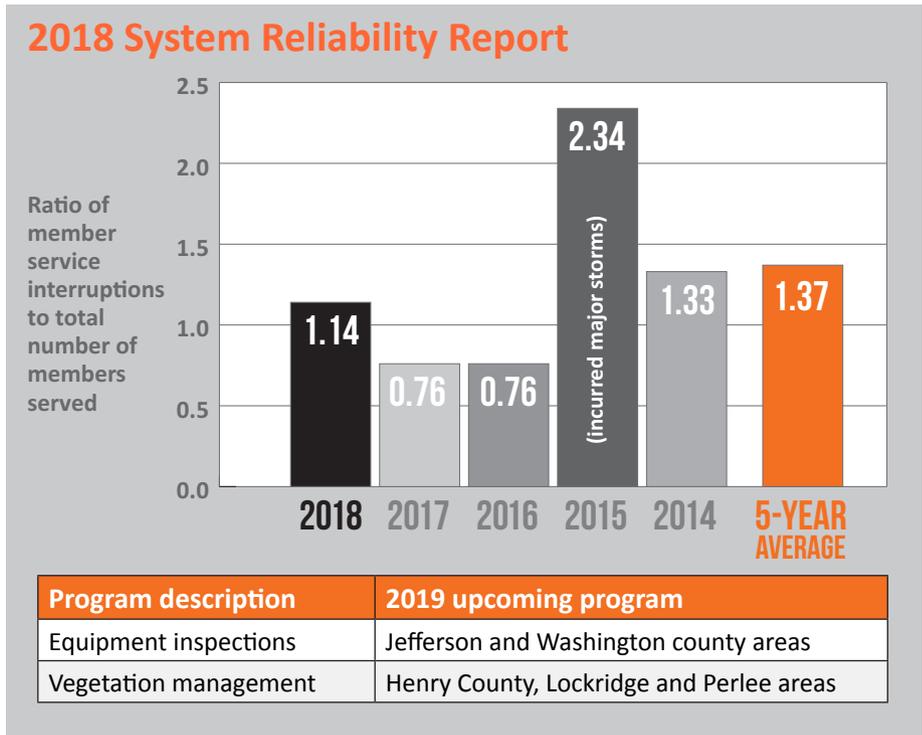
*Pictured left to right: Marvin Newton, Kevin Wheeler, Rep. Joe Mitchell, Dave Hollingsworth, Marvin Larson, Fred Hickenbottom and Larry White.*

# Keeping up with technology keeps the power on

It's a simple premise: when you flip the switch at home, the lights should come on. 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 members. 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 slides off the road and hits a utility pole.

With more than 2,200 miles of electric distribution lines, we have a lot of ground to cover. When the lights go out, we cover it as quickly as possible. Not long ago, our only option was linemen driving throughout large areas to investigate a problem. We have invested in updated technologies allowing 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 genuinely 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.

In 2018, our outage reports showed a slight increase in the number of outages incurred by our members. While this average will always vary with the weather, the average duration of an outage decreased. There were no major storms last year, which helped tremendously. However, our stringent equipment and vegetation

management plans are also doing their job to keep outages down and your power reliable.

Our 2018 reports showed a decrease in the number of poles rejected during inspection for safety over the last 5-year average. We have been exploring new technology for the testing process, which is strengthening our pole testing program for a safer system for you. ⚡

## Summer help wanted

Part-time help is needed this summer in the Access Energy Cooperative operations department. Applicants must have graduated high school by summer 2019 and be enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall. Contact Diane Magnani at [dmagnani@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:dmagnani@accessenergycoop.com).

### ANNUAL MEETING

# Save the Date!

Aug. 6, 2019 at 5 p.m.

## Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members

Hear the band Stumptown from 5-7 p.m.!