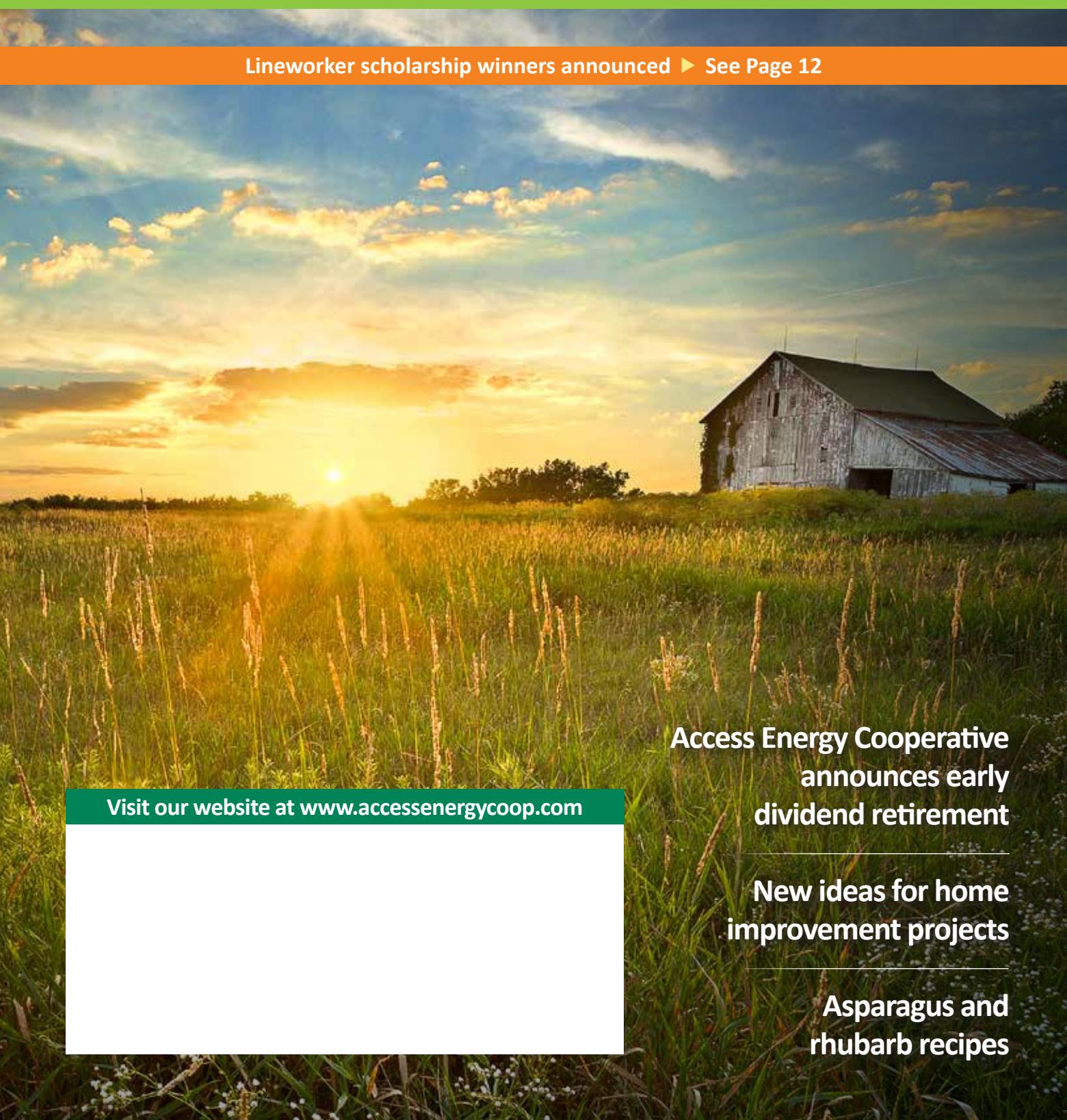


# living with energy IN IOWA

MAY 2021



Lineworker scholarship winners announced ► See Page 12



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

Access Energy Cooperative  
announces early  
dividend retirement

New ideas for home  
improvement projects

Asparagus and  
rhubarb recipes

Volume 74 • Issue 5

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# living with energy IN IOWA



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Congratulations to Marty Hulsebos, an Access Energy Cooperative member, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine! 

# State programs provide financial assistance with mortgage, rent and utility bills due to COVID-19

BY REGI GOODALE

Many households and businesses have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to the communities we serve, and we want to share some new state resources with our readers.

In late March, Gov. Kim Reynolds announced two new programs to assist eligible Iowans who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and need financial assistance: The Iowa Homeowner Foreclosure Prevention Program and the Iowa Rent and Utility Assistance Program. Both programs are administered by the Iowa Finance Authority.

## Iowa Rent and Utility Assistance Program

Funded by the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, this program will provide rent and/or utility assistance for up to 12 months. Eligible renters can receive financial assistance with past due rent, electricity, gas, propane, fuel oil, water, sewer and/or trash removal bills incurred no earlier than March 13, 2020.

Utility payments through the program will be made directly to utility providers and applied to the applicants' accounts. If you need assistance with electric bill documentation for your application, please contact your local electric cooperative.

Eligible households must be current renters earning no more than 80% of their county's area median income. One or more individuals in the household must have either qualified for unemployment benefits or have experienced a documented financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the household can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability,



which may include a past due utility or rent notice or eviction notice.

Full eligibility details are available at [www.IowaHousingRecovery.com](http://www.IowaHousingRecovery.com). The website includes an eligibility precheck and answers to frequently asked questions. You can also call Iowa's Utility Recovery Hotline at 515-348-8976 or 877-463-3269 for more information about this program.

## Iowa Homeowner Foreclosure Prevention Program

This program reopened in late March to provide mortgage payment assistance for income-eligible homeowners impacted by COVID-19 who are at risk of foreclosure.

Eligible homeowners can receive mortgage assistance for up to four months (including up to two months in arrears), beginning with an April 1, 2020 mortgage payment.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# Win 10 shade trees

Shade trees can help lower summer energy bills. To help you get started, we're giving 10 lucky electric co-op members 10 free shade trees up to a foot tall. The winners also will receive a one-year membership to the Arbor Day Foundation, which includes a subscription to the organization's bimonthly newsletter, a copy of *The Tree Book* and discounts on future tree and shrub purchases. 



## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwiththeenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwiththeenergyiniowa.com) no later than May 31, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Home Technology Package from the March issue was Larry Heitmeier from Access Energy Cooperative.

There is a maximum assistance per household of \$3,600.

This short-term program will be available until funds are exhausted or a new federal program is launched. Program funding is provided through federal CARES Act funds. Complete eligibility details are available at [www.IowaHousingRecovery.com](http://www.IowaHousingRecovery.com) or by calling the Housing Recovery Line at 855-300-5885 or 515-348-8813.

At [www.IowaMortgageHelp.com](http://www.IowaMortgageHelp.com), you can also learn more about Iowa mortgage help, which offers free, confidential mortgage counseling to Iowa homeowners at risk of foreclosure.

If you are at imminent risk of foreclosure and need legal assistance, Iowa Legal Aid may be able to assist you at no cost. Call 800-532-1275 or visit [www.IowaLegalAid.com](http://www.IowaLegalAid.com). 

Regi Goodale is the director of regulatory affairs for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>May 9</b>    | <b>Mother's Day</b>   |
| <b>May 31</b>   | <b>Office closed for Memorial Day</b>                                       |
| <b>August 3</b> | <b>Annual meeting election announcement at 7 p.m.; no in-person meeting</b> |

Even when our office is closed, you can call us at 866-242-4232, 24 hours a day, seven days a week 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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**Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):** 8-1-1

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Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

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## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# We're ready for storm season. Are you?

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Now that spring's in full swing, like many of you, I welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the warmer weather.

But the spring and summer months also make conditions right for dangerous storms. These potential weather events can cause destruction to our electrical system, but I want you to know that Access Energy Cooperative crews are ready and standing by to respond should power outages occur in our area.

When major storms knock out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. I encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials.
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies, including towelettes, soap, toilet paper, diapers and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and current prescriptions.
- Include flashlights, batteries, manual can opener, portable battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power

outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from a power surge and will also help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. Leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check Access Energy Cooperative's website or Facebook page for power restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings and save our website address: [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) to stay abreast of power restoration efforts and other important co-op news and information.

I hope we don't experience severe storms this summer, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Access Energy Cooperative, we recommend that you act today because there is power in planning. We hope you have a safe and wonderful summer. 

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



# Connecting with local lawmakers

Access Energy Cooperative thanks the legislators who were able to join us for a virtual REC Day on the Hill in 2021.

Your co-op is active on the political scene to make sure the cooperative's interests are conveyed to legislators on the federal, state and local levels. The staff and board of directors maintain relationships with our local legislators through frequent visits, emails and phone calls and serve as a resource to ensure they understand the cooperative business model and issues facing the electric industry. Rest assured that local legislators are working on your behalf.

In March, electric cooperatives throughout the state annually converge on the capital to have REC on the Hill. Although our "personal calls" this year were virtual, we still appreciate their time to talk about issues that may impact your cooperative. 



## Use your mobile device to monitor energy usage

Members of Access Energy Cooperative have a tool called the SmartHub App that makes it easy to pay your bill, look up account information, notify you if your power is out and so much more!

Download the SmartHub app on your mobile device and start using it today. You can also use it on your computer through our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). 



## 2021 Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members



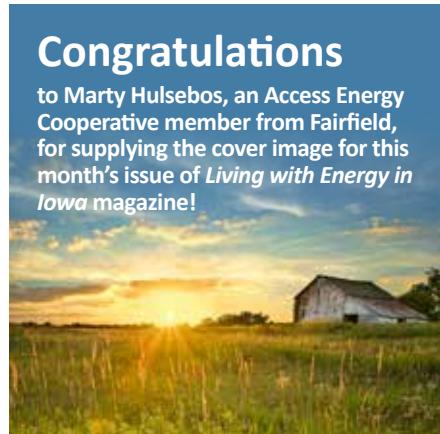
The Access Energy Cooperative board of directors voted to modify the format of the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members scheduled for Aug. 3, 2021, to eliminate the in-person portion of the meeting and conduct the election of directors by mail and electronic voting only.

As everyone is still faced with uncertainties on the safety of gathering in numbers, current information available must be used to make decisions that affect future plans. This decision did not come easy for the board again this year; however, Access Energy Cooperative concluded it is the responsible choice to make.

The cooperative encourages members to take part in the director election. Voting materials and instructions will be mailed July 7, 2021. The election results will be aired as a live Facebook event on Aug. 3, 2021, at 7 p.m. 

## Congratulations

to Marty Hulsebos, an Access Energy Cooperative member from Fairfield, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine!



# Unified efforts power the economic development puzzle

BY KAY SNYDER

The second week of May marks National Economic Development Week, providing an opportunity to highlight the strategic and unified effort that goes into supporting business growth and community vitality across Iowa. As part of its foundational principle of Concern for Community, your electric cooperative works with numerous partners to foster a thriving business climate in your area.

Economic development means different things to different people. On a broad scale, anything a community does to foster and create a healthy economy can fall under the umbrella of economic development. Most of the time, economic development focuses on promoting investment, creating jobs and improving the quality of life for residents. Economic development is truly a puzzle, with a diversity of essential players coming together to address dozens of core activities accomplished by accessing many programs and resources.

Recognizing the benefits of a unified effort to power the “puzzle of economic development” and fit these pieces together, Iowa’s electric cooperatives created the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) to serve as its economic development organization. For decades, IADG staff has been immersed in statewide economic development, compiling the network of partners, knowledge of programs and project experience needed to support this vital business initiative. IADG focuses on business attraction, existing business expansion, entrepreneurship and community development projects.



There are hundreds of examples of electric cooperative-inspired economic development success stories across Iowa, including the following two recent examples.

## Powering business growth

The Butler Logistics Park, located in rural Butler County near Shell Rock, provides a perfect example of how an industrial park can spark incredible regional growth through business location and job creation. Butler County REC, Butler-Grundy Development Alliance, Iowa Northern Railway Company (IANR) and Central Iowa Water Association are vital partners in developing this 230-acre and expanding industrial park.

Through active marketing, Trinity Industries became interested in the property as a location for the \$60 million TrinityRail Maintenance Services facility, which purchased the entire park. Local players came together to work through the company’s requirements. Butler County REC secured a \$2 million pass-through loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support installing nearly 8,000 additional feet of rail to the IANR main track, necessary to meet the company’s requirements.

“With any project such as this, there are numerous parts that have to come together, including the work of many individuals,” says Craig Codner, CEO of Butler County REC. Our staff put in many hours toward this project and continues to be engaged as the park expands. We have a tremendous working relationship with the Butler-Grundy Development Alliance, who was instrumental in attracting the plant to the park.”

“I also cannot say enough about



the IANR team. This was a true partnership with everyone's goal the same, to bring the plant to the Butler Logistics Park," Codner adds.

The impact of the 230-acre rail maintenance facility is the creation of more than 250 career opportunities for current residents and those attracted by these positions, and an overall boost to the local economy.

Spurring additional growth, in October 2020, Mid-Iowa Cooperative, a farmer-owned cooperative based in east-central Iowa, broke ground on Shell Rock Soy Processing, a \$270 million soybean crushing plant located on an expansion of the Butler Logistics park. The facility is expected to create 50 high-quality jobs when operational in 2022.

### **Powering community services and entrepreneurship**

Concern for Community and Cooperation among Cooperatives are two of the cooperative principles that shine in this community

development project spotlight.

818 Forward with Faith (FWF) is a non-profit dedicated to building homes where adults with disabilities can lead lives of dignity while their specialized physical, emotional and social needs are met. FWF was founded by Jerry and Judy Fynaard, whose son Caleb was born with cerebral palsy. It was right after high school when Caleb was involved in an automobile accident, and the special care he needed became more than his current living facility could provide. That is what spurred the Fynaards to found FWF with the mission of providing homes for adults with disabilities that are an extension of their childhood home and a safe haven for the residents and their families.

Pella Cooperative Electric Association and Southwest Iowa REC provided \$300,000 from their Revolving Loan Funds to support the FWF home construction, which opened in Pella in November 2019.

With the goal of "one Faith House at a time," FWF is working toward constructing a home for women also to be located in Pella.

"Pella is a small community where we step up to take care of each other and work to support those in need. Pella Cooperative Electric and Southwest Iowa REC were honored to use our resources to help Forward with Faith develop a solution for a need in our community," Pella Cooperative Electric CEO Jon Miles says.

While just two projects were highlighted in this article, examples of large and small "wins" are frequently included in your local newspapers, electric cooperative and chamber newsletters, and *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

Rural utilities have an important presence in local communities. Throughout the past several years, the local ownership of businesses in rural communities continues to trend downward. So does the pool of stakeholders willing and able to invest, engage and support local business and community development efforts. Your electric cooperatives actively participate and contribute to business and community initiatives across the state.

We're grateful that electric cooperative staff, and their members, volunteer time and talents to support local communities across Iowa. Every one of these roles is a vital piece of powering economic development. 



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



# RHUBARB & ASPARAGUS RECIPES

Fresh Facts Source:  
Iowa Department  
of Agriculture and  
Land Stewardship

**MEDICINAL  
ROOTS**  
Rhubarb is a very old plant that dates back to ancient China in 2700 BC. At that time, it was used for medicinal purposes. The roots of the Chinese variety are still used in medicine today.

## Rhubarb Surprise Pie

- 1 cup flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 3 cups rhubarb, diced
- 1 package strawberry Jell-O (3 ounces)
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ cup butter, melted

Sift together 1 cup sifted flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in 2 tablespoons butter, add egg and milk then mix. Press into a greased 9-inch pie pan. Arrange rhubarb in pie pan and sprinkle with Jell-O. Combine ½ cup flour, sugar, cinnamon and ¼ cup melted butter and sprinkle on top of pie. Bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes or until rhubarb is tender. Serves 6

Lea Bradley • Mount Pleasant  
Access Energy Cooperative

## Creamy Rhubarb Dessert

- ½ cup butter
- 1½ cups plus 2 tablespoons flour, divided
- 1 cup pecans, chopped, divided
- 4 cups rhubarb
- 1 cup plus 3 tablespoons sugar, divided
- 16 ounces cream cheese
- 2 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1½ cups sour cream

Cut together butter and 1½ cup flour. Add ½ cup pecans and press into 13x9-inch pan. Mix rhubarb, ½ cup sugar and 2 tablespoons flour. Spoon over crust and bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes. Mix together cream cheese, ½ cup sugar and 1 teaspoon vanilla until smooth, then add eggs. Pour over hot rhubarb and bake at 350 degrees F for 30-35 minutes. Cool 10 minutes. Mix sour cream, 3 tablespoons sugar and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Spread over hot cheesecake, sprinkle with ½ cup pecans. Cool 1 hour then refrigerate. Serves 12-16

Cindy Bru • Marshalltown  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

## Chicken Asparagus Casserole

- 4 chicken breasts
- 1½ teaspoons seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 20 ounces frozen asparagus
- 10½ ounces cream of chicken soup (1 can)
- ½ cup mayonnaise or sour cream
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon curry powder
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, grated

Cut chicken into bite size pieces and season with seasoned salt and pepper. Sauté chicken in oil for 5-6 minutes until white and opaque. Remove and drain on paper towels. Cook asparagus as directed on package. Drain and place in greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Add chicken pieces. In a separate bowl, mix soup, mayonnaise or sour cream, lemon juice and curry powder. Pour over chicken and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Serves 8

Linda Terlouw • Pella  
Pella Cooperative Electric Association

# Cherry Rhubarb Crunch

**2½ cups oatmeal  
¾ cup flour  
¾ cup brown sugar  
¾ cup oleo  
1 cup sugar  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1 cup water  
1 can cherry pie filling  
4 cups rhubarb, diced  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

Combine oatmeal, flour, brown sugar and oleo. Cut together to make crumbs. Save ¼ cup crumbs for top and spread the rest in 9x13-inch pan. In saucepan, combine sugar, cornstarch and water; cook until thick. Remove from heat and add pie filling, rhubarb and vanilla extract. Pour over crumb crust and sprinkle with remaining crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40 minutes.

**Barbara Dather • Melvin  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

# Ham and Asparagus Roll-Ups

**30 fresh asparagus spears  
15 ham slices  
8 ounces cream cheese**

Trim asparagus to length of ham slices. Wash the asparagus and blanch briefly for 2 minutes in boiling water. Remove stalks and put in bowl of ice water. Spread cream cheese on ham slices then add two asparagus spears and roll them up. Keep refrigerated until served. *Serves 15*

**Ann Clark • Panora  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

# Wanted: Chicken Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Winner, winner, chicken dinner! A versatile protein, chicken is a recipe favorite. Whether it's grilled, baked, fried or in sandwiches, salads or casseroles, the possibilities are endless. 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 May 31, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

# Rhubarb Dump Cake

**1 pound rhubarb, chopped (3-4 cups)  
1 cup sugar  
1 package strawberry Jell-O (3 ounces)  
1 package yellow cake mix  
1 cup water  
1/4 cup butter, melted**

Spread rhubarb evenly over bottom of a greased 9x13-inch cake pan. Sprinkle sugar over the rhubarb, then the dry Jell-O, then the cake mix. Pour water and melted butter over the top. Do not stir. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes or until rhubarb is tender. This comes out like a cobbler.

**Kathy Carter • Williams • Prairie Energy Cooperative**

# Asparagus Bacon Quiche

**1 pound fresh asparagus  
6 bacon strips  
1 9-inch baked pastry crust  
3 eggs  
1½ cups half and half cream  
1 cup grated Parmesan, divided  
1 tablespoon green onions, sliced  
1 teaspoon sugar  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
1 pinch ground nutmeg**

Trim asparagus and cut into 1-inch pieces, then cook and drain. Cook and crumble bacon. Arrange bacon and asparagus in pastry crust. In a bowl, beat eggs, then add cream, ½ cup cheese, onions, sugar, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Pour over asparagus and bacon. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake at 400 degrees F for 10 minutes. Reduce to 350 degrees F and bake for 23-25 minutes longer.

**Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**



**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

## ONLY EAT THE STALKS

Rhubarb is a perennial plant that is usually eaten fresh and harvested in the spring when the stalks are tender. Only the stalks (petioles) should be eaten because the leaves contain moderately poisonous oxalic acid.

FRESH FACTS

## THREADED ON STRAW

Strawberries are thought to have originated with the Romans, maybe as far back as the Greeks. The name "strawberry" may have resulted from children in the 19th century, who threaded the berries on straw and sold them.

FRESH FACTS

## PACKED WITH VITAMIN C

Strawberries contain vitamin C, folic acid, potassium and fiber. Eight fresh strawberries provide approximately the same amount of vitamin C as an orange.

FRESH FACTS

# Trending now: Home improvement

## Tips for making environmentally friendly and cost-effective choices

BY JULIA ROBINSON

With ongoing pandemic concerns and expanded remote working options, many of us are not only spending more time at home, but we're also considering a home office upgrade, creating a music room or enhancing an outdoor space. Mischa Fisher, chief economist for HomeAdvisor, says the growth in home improvement in 2020 was huge: "We nicknamed it the year of the home."

"In past years, there was a significant focus on return on investment," Fisher says. "People do a project because they're planning on selling their house." Last year was different because 41% of people said they planned upgrades specifically to make their homes better suit their lifestyle. It's a trend that's continuing in 2021.

No matter what project is on tap, it's essential to start with basic improvements that ensure your energy needs are met safely and efficiently. HomeAdvisor, a digital marketplace that aims to connect clients with prescreened local service professionals, found home maintenance budgets doubled in 2020 compared to previous years. Simple updates to infrastructure can make every home kinder to the environment and safer, with the added benefit of trimming electric bills.

### Green building with simple improvements

Simple improvements based on a home's current condition can go a long way toward improving energy efficiency. "Often improvements are more beneficial than investing in newer technology, such as solar panels," says Peter Pfeiffer, president of an architecture firm and an early advocate for the ENERGY STAR® program, which encourages energy-efficient appliance purchases.

He recommends that homeowners plan their improvements based on



Make sure your music room has plenty of outlets for your instruments, microphones and amplifiers, and that all are connected to the same circuit to avoid a ground loop buzz.

increasing overall energy efficiency, beginning with modest repairs. The next step involves pricier improvements like replacing windows and upgrading to more efficient appliances. The most advanced improvements center on renewable energy generation and storage.

Pfeiffer suggests homeowners start by eliminating energy-wasting gaps in the home's structure and shading windows and walls.

### STEPS TO ELIMINATE ENERGY-WASTING GAPS

#### ① Audit energy use

To find your home's trouble spots, engage a professional for a home energy audit. Your electric co-op offers advice on audits, which likely includes a review of your electric bills and a thorough examination of your home.

Auditors will inspect the quality of insulation, test for electrical

hazards, make a thermographic inspection with infrared scanning, and conduct a blower test that measures the quality of air sealing around ducts, doors and windows.

The auditor then prepares a report detailing their findings and recommendations. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the average home has enough air



A good energy audit will use a blower door test to establish the baseline airtightness of your home. After repairs are made a second blower test will show improvement.

# projects

Replacing regular window screens with solar screens can keep your home 10-15 degrees cooler in the summer by blocking the sun's rays that can heat the inside of your home.

leakage to add up to a 2-square-foot hole that remains open 24 hours a day. Fortunately, simple remedies can save up to 30% on utility bills. With your co-op's guidance, an energy audit will help you prioritize fixes for tightening your home and using shade to your advantage.

## ② Keep outside air outside

Managing the infiltration of outside air can affect homes year-round. Common recommendations are to update weatherstripping and caulk around doors and windows, clean filters and vents, and seal leaks in your ducts. Pfeiffer points out that leaky ducts are more wasteful than an inefficient air conditioner. It's more important to make sure you have an airtight heating, ventilating and air conditioning system before upgrading to a new air-handling system.

## ③ Prevent radiant heat

Radiant heat is absorbed from sunlight and can be transmitted through roofs and windows into the home. Pfeiffer advises using roof overhangs, awnings or planting trees and landscaping to shade west-facing windows to prevent the sun's rays from hitting the windows directly. Thermal drapes and window coverings can also deflect heat from sunny rooms. Radiant barriers in an attic can prevent heat from the roof from transferring to the attic floor and warming the rest of the house in the summer, saving money on cooling bills.

## ④ Add insulation

Adding insulation to a home's attic, basement, walls or crawl spaces will improve



With good planning, adding insulation to your home can be a successful DIY project.

energy efficiency. Pfeiffer says that optimal roofing materials combined with shade will prevent radiant heat from leaking into the home in the first place. Sealing basements and crawl spaces and wrapping your water heater in a thermal blanket also improve energy efficiency.

## ⑤ Upgrade lighting

Efficient lighting and lighter colors are key considerations when adding a home office or hobby space.

Replace lightbulbs with energy-efficient CFLs or LEDs to decrease energy consumption. An Energy-Star qualified CFL uses about one-fourth of the energy and lasts 10 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs, and Energy-Star-qualified LEDs last 15 to 25 times longer. Light fixtures should hang close to the work or hobby space without getting in the way.

"The color of the horizontal reflecting surfaces in the room makes a big difference in how much energy you use," Pfeiffer says. "You need about three times as much lighting if you've got dark countertops compared to light-colored countertops."

## ⑥ Take additional steps to reduce demand

Once you've invested some time and a little money into making basic improvements, Pfeiffer advises implementing additional energy-saving measures. Replacing older appliances and windows with ENERGY STAR®-rated and e-coated products will save energy over the lifetime of your home. Solar panels can help you create your power, but they won't have as big of an impact unless you first address your energy demands.

"Before you go to the sexy things like solar on the roof, or things that you can talk about at a cocktail party, let's reduce the demand of energy first," Pfeiffer says.

## Make safety a priority with home improvement projects

Rewiring your lights and adding new electrical systems to your home are complex and hazardous tasks that are best left in the hands of a licensed electrician.

Replacing old electrical outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets, while not a cost-saving improvement, is a necessary safety upgrade for outlets around water. GFCIs protect against shocks by breaking the flow of electrical current if they detect a fault. They are required in new construction, but the Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates 40 million homes do not have these lifesaving outlets in all "wet" rooms.

In addition, consider having an arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) breaker professionally installed. AFCIs protect against fire-causing arcing that is commonly caused by damaged or worn wiring.

## SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

## Access Energy Cooperative announces lineworker scholarship winners

Congratulations to Dalton Gardner and Gavin Thompson, who will each receive a \$2,000 scholarship to enroll in an electric lineworker program.

**Dalton** is currently a high school senior at Mt. Pleasant Community High School and plans to enroll at Northwest Community College (NCC) in the Powerline program next May.



**Gavin** is a graduate from Danville High School and will begin classes in the Powerline program at NCC this month.



The lineworker scholarship is a new program launched at Access Energy Cooperative this year. We are pleased to be able to award this financial assistance to such deserving and ambitious potential future linemen. 

## MEMBER SERVICE

## How to address service concerns

Access Energy Cooperative strives to exceed members' expectations for service, including resolving issues and complaints promptly and courteously. Our employees who receive telephone calls and office visits from members are qualified and trained in screening and resolving complaints. They also will provide identification to the caller so that they can reach the same employee again if needed.

Access Energy Cooperative is required to notify its members of the address and telephone number below where a cooperative

representative qualified to assist in resolving the complaint can be reached for assistance available from the Iowa Utilities Board.

If a member complaint is related to service disconnection, safety or engineering standards, or renewable energy and Access Energy Cooperative is not able to resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321, or toll-free 877-565-4450, by writing to 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069, or by email to customer@iub.iowa.gov. 

## MOTHER'S DAY



## HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

## Statement of non-discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Program information may be made available in language other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form, AD-3027, *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, which can be obtained online at <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of the alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **Mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary  
for Civil Rights 1400 Independence  
Avenue, SW Washington, D.C.  
20250-9410; or
2. **Fax:** (833) 256-1665 or  
(202) 690-7442; or
3. **Email:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)  
USDA is an equal opportunity  
provider, employer, and lender. 

## Members helping members

RECare is a program where members help other members in need. Access Energy Cooperative is proud that even during the COVID-19 pandemic our members have stepped up to help others in need. We have seen an increase in voluntary donations to the RECare program and helping other members with financial difficulties.

In the RECare program, we can accept a one-time contribution to help others, or you may enclose an amount each month with your monthly electric bill. Just \$1 a month helps someone in need. This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines. Funds are used to assist people in southeast Iowa.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting fellow co-op members! 



## SAFETY MATTERS



**MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN**

Access Energy Cooperative lineworkers work on dangerous equipment, keeping 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. Give them room to work – we all thank you!

## Early retirement of dividends to members

The Access Energy Cooperative board of directors voted to return patronage dividends early to members this year. Payments are distributed to members based on the amount of dividends in their account for the years being paid in 2021 and will be available mid-June.

Dividends owed to members that are less than \$25 will be paid in the form of a credit on the member's bill. Dividends owed greater than \$25 will be mailed to the member as a check. Members can request that their dividends be paid as a bill credit, regardless of the amount, by returning the information below, calling us at 866-242-4232 or contacting our finance department by email: [finance@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:finance@accessenergycoop.com). The due date for the 2021 dividend payment to be applied as a bill credit is June 1, 2021.



Accounts with dividend payments due of less than \$5 will continue to accumulate and will be paid in the year they reach or exceed \$5.

Patronage dividend checks are normally distributed at the annual meeting of members in August, and checks not picked up are mailed out after the meeting. This year, due to the continued uncertainty still surrounding restrictions and requirements of large groups to gather in the coming months, the board of directors approved to modify the format of the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members to eliminate the in-person portion of the meeting and conduct the election of directors by mail and electronic voting. The election results will be announced live on Facebook at 7 p.m. on Aug. 3. No other business will be conducted. 

### DIVIDEND BILL CREDIT REQUEST FORM

I wish to have all dividend payments earned for my account(s) be paid in the form of a bill credit. The due date for the 2021 dividend payment to be applied as a bill credit is June 1, 2021.

Member name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Account number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

#### Return this form to:

Finance Dept  
Access Energy Cooperative  
PO Box 440  
Mt Pleasant IA 52641



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

# New contest shines the light on community volunteers



Iowa's electric cooperatives are excited to announce a new statewide contest, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. Called **Shine the Light**, the contest will accept nominations in June and award three winners with a \$1,500 check to their local charity or community organization.

"We're excited to launch this cooperative effort to shine the light on local volunteers," says Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. "So many people throughout the areas served by Iowa's electric cooperatives deserve to be recognized for making a positive impact."

Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the Shine the Light contest will accept contest entries online during the

month of June. The three winners will be announced during the Iowa State Fair in August. In addition to receiving a \$1,500 donation for their charity or nonprofit of choice, the winners will also be featured in the September issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

## How to nominate

Member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers. If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative in Iowa, you're a co-op member-consumer and invited to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-consumer. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians. 

### Step 1:

Go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) from June 1-30 to make a nomination and to review the contest rules.

### Step 2:

As a nominator, provide your contact information and answer the following question in 500 words or less.

**How has your nominee made a positive difference in the community, and why do they deserve to be recognized?**



# Gardening genes don't grow here

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Once spring quits messing around and gets into high gear, all those garden-minded folks will be out staking, planting and cleaning out old beds. I have great respect for them. They are feeding their families and their neighborhoods. They are enjoying nature and providing beautiful bouquets.

I do not appear able to scale their ranks.

## Skipped by the gardening gene

Somehow the gardening gene skipped me. My grandparents had lovely spreads beside their houses. My mother's flower garden includes heirloom blooms from her great-grandmother. My dad enjoys planting a few beans and peppers. Together, they can and freeze apples, pears and peaches. My uncle, for many years, owned a huge truck farm and sold at markets all over central Iowa.

I have some irises in front of my house.

Oh, it's not that I didn't try. When we moved into our present home 20 years ago, I was determined to have a little bed behind our house. It was a gush of optimism – new home, fresh dreams of the Becky Home-Ecky in me coming out. Even then, I'm not sure what made me think it would work. When Kent and I lived in Pammel Court at Iowa State University, we rented a small garden allotment from the university. Despite a brave start, the result was a complete disaster, with the rabbits eating most of what we had grown. In retrospect, I think we were the trashy allotment, the one the neighbors despised of. We didn't renew the next year.

## Putting faith in peas and zinnias

However, going forward, I bravely put my faith in pea pods and zinnias. My 15-by-15 foot garden seemed so



small when I started. I'd be able to fill it up immediately! That was before I reckoned with our property's extreme clay soil. I clawed the seeds into the ground where they stayed, a pathetic patch of doomed dreams and a real pain to mow around. In desperation, I put out some mint plants, which immediately took over the entire area. Even today, when I mow, the scent of chocolate mint wafts up.

Over the years, I've half-heartedly tried a few things. Tulip bulbs were dug up by the voles and squirrels in the area. My dependence on perennials and thinking they'll come back every year, and I won't have to do anything, met a quick death when they bloomed one year and refused to, well, perennial. The weeds in my little

flower patch quickly get ahead of me unless I'm incredibly determined. My one glory are my irises, which seem to like our difficult soil and my glibly negligent care.

I have resigned myself to being the broken link in a family line of green thumbs, although that trait seems to have passed itself to my middle son, who has a new sunroom full of plants and a yard with lots of bulbs that seem undisturbed by wildlife, neighbor dogs or little kids.

I hope things work out for him. If not, I'll lend him a few irises. ↗

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.



# WE FOLLOW OUR DREAMS

Join Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in celebrating  
the power of human connections.



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Cooperatives  
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