

# living with energy IN IOWA

JANUARY 2021



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Access Energy Cooperative annual meeting election information ▶ See Page 12

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

\$9,000 in scholarships  
available to Access Energy  
Cooperative seniors

On the road with  
co-op-served companies

Cozy up with  
soup recipes

**EDITOR**  
Ann Thelen

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Joel Clifton

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**  
Chuck Soderberg

**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**  
Erin Campbell

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
 Steve Seidl, District 5 – President  
 Don Shonka, District 2 – Vice President  
 Roger Solomonson, District 3 – Secretary/Treasurer  
 Darrell Jensen, District 4 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer  
 Gordon Greimann, District 6  
 Neal Heldt, District 7  
 Kenneth VandenBerg, District 1  
 Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative  
 Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

*Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase *Living with Energy in Iowa* is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

**Editorial Office:** 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350. E-mail address: editor@livingwithenergyiowa.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length before publication. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

**Website:** www.livingwithenergyiowa.com

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

**Change of Address:** Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2021, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.



# living with energy IN IOWA

Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives of Iowa  
www.touchstoneenergy.com

## CONTENTS

JANUARY 2021

### Features

#### 6 On the road in Iowa

Many different types of vehicles are manufactured right here in Iowa. As a bonus, some of the vehicle manufacturers are served by Iowa's electric cooperatives.



#### 8 Cozy up with soups

Soups are the ultimate comfort food for Iowa's cold winter days. You'll love these recipes from Iowa's co-op cooks. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



#### 10 A diverse fuel mix ensures reliability

Find out how electric co-ops carefully balance traditional fuel sources and renewable energy resources to ensure member-consumers receive a reliable supply of electricity.



### Favorites

#### 3 Statewide Perspective

Co-op advocacy in the new year

#### 3 Editor's Choice Contest

Win a Fitbit Charge 4 Fitness Activity Tracker

#### 14 Energy Efficiency

Organize your energy

#### 15 Out Back

The lure of the sale barn

### ON THE COVER



Congratulations to Bea McDowell, an Access Energy Cooperative member from Mt. Pleasant, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue! To have your photo considered for a future cover, email high-res images to editor@livingwithenergyiowa.com. If we select your photo, you'll be awarded with \$100. 🎉

# Advocacy in the new year

BY KEVIN CONDON

For Iowa's electric co-ops, our cooperative principles guide us in good times and bad – even during derecho storms and global pandemics. Your local electric co-op strives to power your family and community no matter what may come our way.

Advocating with lawmakers and elected officials with a unified co-op voice during policy debates impacts how your co-op provides safe, affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible power.

While COVID restrictions have changed how we advocate, it has not changed *why* we advocate. We focus on advocacy because we care about our consumer-members. We know that when our communities are strong, the co-ops are strong. When the pandemic hit, Iowa's electric co-ops supported policies that helped our rural agribusiness members, including biofuels, food processing and small manufacturing. While we will continue advocating on behalf of member industries, as well as issues like renewable energy, safety, economic development and taxes, we'll likely be starting the new legislative session much like the last one ended – with limited physical access to the Statehouse.

Because the co-op mission of powering lives and empowering communities remains constant, we will always find ways to adapt to challenges. Virtual advocacy is not the same as talking face-to-face, but it is still essential. When possible and appropriate, your co-op engages with lawmakers directly. When that's not possible, we reach legislators through phone calls, emails, social media or whatever pathways materialize.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives manages our grassroots advocacy efforts through the Iowa Rural Power initiative.



We recently updated our advocacy website at [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org), which now includes our Voter

Activation Center and a new “Bill Tracker” feature to help electric co-op member-consumers stay informed about legislation important to rural electric cooperatives.

As Iowa's electric co-ops look back on 2020, we reflect on the August 10 storm that hit our state with little advanced warning. The devastating derecho storm that swept through Iowa with the force of a Category 4 hurricane caused thousands of power outages and left a path of destruction that required an extensive restoration effort.

While stopping the derecho was beyond our control, we can limit the damage of these powerful storms and restore power faster by keeping trees and other vegetation away from power lines. Vegetation management is an important part

of protecting the electric grid and ensuring reliable service. But in some instances, prescriptive easements prevent utilities from adequately clearing vegetation that can cause outages and create safety concerns. Iowa's electric cooperatives support plans that would allow utilities a specified vegetation management clearance to maintain reliable service and minimize outages.

A few years ago, Iowa's electric co-ops attempted to pass legislation to gain vegetation management clearances but were opposed by groups who claimed that the legislation infringed on property rights. With the memory of the derecho still fresh in our minds, we hope those groups and lawmakers will consider the rights of the member-consumers down the line who want to keep their lights on. ⚡

---

Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Fitbit Charge 4 Fitness Activity Tracker

Make keeping those New Year's exercise resolutions easier with a Fitbit Charge 4 Fitness Activity Tracker! Take your goals further with a health and fitness tracker that packs built-in GPS for pace and distance, 24/7 heart rate tracking and more into a comfortable wristband. *The winner will be able to select from four available colors.* ⚡



#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Jan. 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 Cuisinart® Extra-Large Rotisserie Fryer and Steamer from the November issue was Shirley Babcock, Butler County REC.

## Congratulations

to Bea McDowell, an Access Energy Cooperative member from Mt. Pleasant, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine!



### UPCOMING EVENTS



- March 15** Scholarship deadline

---

- March 16** Welcome Back Reception for legislators

---

- March 17** REC Day on the Hill

---

- March 31** 2022 Photo Contest deadline

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.

**Office:** Access Energy Cooperative  
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  
**Facebook:** facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop  
**Twitter:** twitter.com/AccessEnergyC  
**E-mail:** 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:**

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### IN THE NEWS

## Electronic newsletter is now available!

Along with providing you – the members of Access Energy Cooperative – with pertinent information regarding what is happening at your co-op and in the utility industry, we are required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide you with certain publications and educational information throughout the year. The member newsletter is the most economical tool available for us to communicate with our members.



Therefore, we are required to provide you with *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine in one format or the other each month. **We are happy to announce that you can now choose whether you prefer to receive it as a printed magazine, an electronic copy – or both.**

- If you wish to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter, all you have to do is set up a SmartHub account. SmartHub is available on our website or as an app to download on your mobile device. Once you have a

SmartHub account, you will automatically receive an electronic version of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine emailed to you at the address you provide in your SmartHub account.

- We will not automatically remove you from the list to receive a printed copy if you sign up for SmartHub. If you are signed up for SmartHub and no longer wish to receive a printed copy of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, please call us at 866-242-4232 or send an email to us at [mktg@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com).
- If you are already a SmartHub user and do not wish to receive the electronically mailed monthly magazine, simply check the box in your SmartHub account in the On Demand Notifications, indicating that you do not wish to receive it emailed. This cannot be done with the mobile app. You will continue to receive a printed copy.

Please continue to enjoy reading the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine in the format you choose! ⚡

# Use your mobile device to monitor energy usage

iOS

Android

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). ⚡

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

# Let's connect

BY KEVIN WHEELER

When we say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology, like smartphones. But when you're a member of an electric co-op (that's you!), there's so much more to being part of our connected co-op community.

As a member of Access Energy Cooperative, you help to power good in our local community through initiatives like RECare that helps our community's most vulnerable.

We'd like to help you maximize the value you can get from your connection with Access Energy Cooperative through a variety of programs, products and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our free online energy audits and rebates on heat pumps, mini-split units, programmable thermostats and energy-efficient home improvements. Download our SmartHub app, and you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online and access a menu of additional options for potential energy savings.

By following Access Energy Cooperative on social media, you can stay up to date on power restoration efforts, tree trimming planning, co-op director elections, giveaways and more. You'll also see photos of our line crews in action and our employees helping with community service projects – and who doesn't enjoy



seeing good things happening in our community?!

You can sign up for text or email alerts to receive advance notices on outage and restoration information, billing updates, and changes to Access Energy Cooperative event details.

By connecting with us, you can get real-time updates from your co-op. That's why we want to make sure we have your most current contact information on hand.

Access Energy Cooperative relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations; so, up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure that we can provide the highest level of service that you expect and deserve.

Updated contact information can even speed up the power restoration process during an outage. That's because when you call to report an outage, our automated system can match your phone number with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage-management system predict the location and the possible cause of an outage, making it easier for Access Energy Cooperative crews to correct the problem.

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can – whether that means attending our annual meeting, providing feedback on a recent visit or call with our employees, or simply downloading our SmartHub app.

To update your contact information or learn more about co-op products and services that can help you save, visit <https://www.accessenergycoop.com>, call 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232, or stop by our office at 1800 West Washington Street in Mount Pleasant.

We look forward to connecting with you! ⚡

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

## Account information updates

If you have a change in phone number, email or mailing address, or any other information on your account, please let us know right away. We use this information for billing, communications and outage restoration.

Thank you for keeping your account information up to date!

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Return with your bill or mail to:

Access Energy Cooperative  
Info Update  
P.O. Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641

### Email to:

[contactus@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:contactus@accessenergycoop.com)

### SmartHub app:

Click on *Contact Us* to change your personal information

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.



# On the road in Iowa

Ambulances, campers, dump trucks and tankers

BY KAY SNYDER

Our family outings have turned to exploring Iowa's parks and recreation spots during these past few months. Settled in the passenger seat on our last road trip, I was poised to pass the time with my iPad and phone. Instead, I decided to put the devices down and enjoy the destination and the journey as well.

As I started paying attention to all the vehicles on and off-road, it got me thinking, and I did have to Google a couple of quick facts. Iowa has approximately 115,000 miles of roads, ranking No. 14 in the nation for Total Public Road Length. I noticed some unique vehicles in the sea of cars – including SUVs, pickup trucks and tractor trailers – and many are manufactured in Iowa. When you think of Iowa-manufactured vehicles, two companies likely come to mind – John Deere and Winnebago. However, there are many others that you can be on the lookout for as you venture out in 2021, including these featured in this article. As a bonus, the manufacturers are often served by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

## Countryside Tank Company – Osceola

Served by Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Have you ever wondered what's inside the huge tanker trucks that crisscross the country and how the contents are kept safe? Countryside Tank Company has an answer. The company has more than 40 years of experience in steel fabrication. It produces tank transport trailers that can haul up to 17,500 gallons of a wide variety of substances, safely and in full accordance with the latest specifications and requirements. In 2018, Countryside Tank leveraged its pressure vessel building experience and started manufacturing bobtail bottles, which go on truck chassis. These versatile vehicles are primarily



used in residential propane delivery where a transport trailer isn't practical. If you have a propane tank, check out your next delivery to see if it is transported in a Countryside Tank Bobtail. For more information, visit [countrysidetank.com](http://countrysidetank.com).

## Life Line Emergency Vehicles – Sumner

Served by Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Ambulances may be something you don't think about until one whizzes past you on the highway, or you or a family member are in one. A leader in manufacturing emergency vehicles is employee-owned Life Line Emergency Vehicles, located in Sumner. For over 30

years, it has been committed to making the safest, most efficient vehicle possible. Life Line offers several models to accommodate everything from hospital-to-hospital transport, compact body designs to navigate metropolitan areas, EMS and fire departments, and critical care vehicles. Life Line prides itself on innovation, offering proprietary aluminum extrusions that add strength and improve stability. It was the first to offer Labyrinth-style door construction, a double aluminum insulated floor and a two-piece aluminum crash rail. Life Line is also known for its state-of-the-art Elite electrical system. Customers say it is all the hidden details that set Life Line ambulances apart from others.



For more information, visit [www.lifelineambulance.com](http://www.lifelineambulance.com).

### Camp365 – Albia

Served by Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

There is a newcomer on the road that will catch your eye. It is CAMP365, the world’s first fold-out cabin. This new company, with its manufacturing facility in Albia, was named to the 2020 Top RV Debut of the Year by *RVBusiness* magazine. Camp365 is 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep, with more than 7 feet of headroom. It is insulated and has heating and cooling to make it usable in any weather. The camper folds down, easily fits in a standard garage and can be pulled by a Toyota Prius or any vehicle rated for towing 1,500 pounds. Setting up the camper takes less than 10 minutes, requires no tools and boasts that the “lift-assist” feature makes it very easy. Referencing that, if you can push a vacuum cleaner, you can level out your Camp365 cabin. Keep an eye out for these new and innovative campers as they continue to hit the road in 2021 and beyond. For more information, visit [Camp365.com](http://Camp365.com).

### SmithCo – Le Mars

Served by North West REC

The next time you pass a construction site, see if side dumping trailers are being used. SmithCo builds a variety of side dump trailers to haul all types of cargo. As its name indicates, side dump trailers tilt to the side, along the trailer’s full length to dump the contents instead of lifting the whole trailer and dumping out the back. The benefits of a side dump trailer are superior stability, easier unloading and faster cycle times. Unloading can even take place as the vehicle is moving. Agriculture, construction, demolition, mining

and waste industries often use side dump trailers. SmithCo has been in operation for over 25 years and has stayed true to manufacturing only side dump trailers, which it custom designs and manufactures to meet state and federal laws. For more information, visit [sidedump.com](http://sidedump.com).

Advanced manufacturing is Iowa’s largest industry, accounting for more than 17% of our state’s total Gross Domestic Product. Nearly 6,000 manufacturers produce everything from food products and medical devices to aerospace products and construction machinery. Industry-leading companies are producing phenomenal products right here in Iowa.

To put a more personal face on these economic impact numbers, there was an average of 223,000 manufacturing employees in Iowa in 2018, many of whom live in rural communities across Iowa. Iowa’s rural electric cooperatives play a vital role in supporting these employees, businesses and the communities in which they live and work.

As you travel the state throughout the year, be on the lookout for these vehicles, and become curious about others you see. You never know; they just might be made in Iowa! ⚡

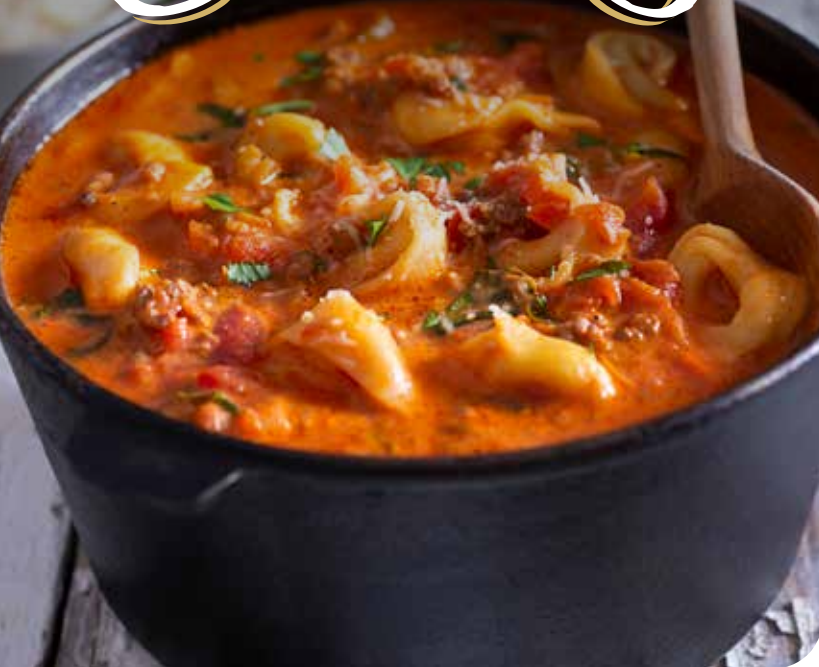
---

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



COZY UP WITH

# SOUPS



## Hearty Tortellini Soup

- 1 pound Italian sausage
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 30 ounces canned tomatoes, chopped
- 1 quart V-8 juice
- 1 quart beef or chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried basil, chopped
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 package frozen three-cheese tortellini, cook per instructions and drain
- Parmesan cheese, shredded or grated

In 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, cook sausage and drain. Add veggies, liquids and seasonings. Soft boil until veggies are tender, about 30 minutes. Add tortellini and stir gently. Cook an additional 5 minutes. Discard bay leaf and serve with Parmesan cheese. *Servings: 10-12*

**Belinda Fink • Cambridge • Consumers Energy**

## Buttery Onion Soup

- 2 cups onion, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups Swiss cheese
- salt and pepper, to taste
- seasoned croutons

Sauté onion in butter until tender. Blend flour into sautéed onions. Gradually add broth and milk. Cook over medium heat until bubbly. Add cheese and stir until melted. Season to taste and serve with seasoned croutons.

**Ramona Harken • Ackley  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Broccoli Cheddar Soup

- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 cups milk
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 10 ounces frozen broccoli, cooked, drained and chopped

Sauté onion in butter. Blend in flour and salt; gradually add milk and cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Add cheese and broccoli, stir until cheese is melted. *Servings: 6 (1 cup each)*

**Linda Cox • Leon  
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Ham n' Swiss Soup

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups frozen broccoli, chopped
- 4 teaspoons onion, chopped
- 2 cups fully cooked ham, cubed
- 1 cup whipping cream
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- dash salt
- dash pepper
- 1½ cups Swiss cheese, shredded

In large saucepan, melt butter then whisk in flour until smooth. Gradually add broth and bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Add broccoli and onion then cook until crisp-tender. Add ham, cream and seasonings. Heat thoroughly. Stir in cheese until melted. *Servings: 4*

**Dorothy Carolus • Parkersburg  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

### BRIGHTEN THE BOWL

Fresh herbs, such as parsley, basil or cilantro can quickly lose their flavor if simmered in a hot soup. But when sprinkled on the top of a bowl just before serving, they will add freshness and bright flavor.



# Grandma's Chicken & Rice Soup

- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced

Mix all ingredients and simmer on low for at least 30 minutes. *Servings: 6*

**Cindy Langel • Carroll  
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative**

# Taco Soup

- 1 pound hamburger, browned
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 package powdered ranch mix
- 2 quarts tomato juice
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 large can chili beans
- 1 large can black beans
- 1 quart corn  
toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, corn chips

Add taco seasoning and ranch mix to browned hamburger with a little water. Stir in remaining ingredients. Simmer, stirring often. Serve with cheddar cheese, sour cream and corn chips. *Servings: 10-12*

**Steph Messner • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

# Cabbage Soup

- 1 head cabbage
- 1 link kielbasa sausage, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3-4 potatoes, chopped, optional
- 3 cans cannellini beans
- 4 beef bouillon cubes
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped

Chop cabbage into eight chunks. Add other ingredients to pot. Add water to desired consistency. Bring to boil and then simmer 2-3 hours. Soup can be cooked in slow cooker on low all day, 8-10 hours. *Servings: 8*

**Jenny Hall • Woodbine  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**

# Potato Spinach Soup

- 1 cup onion, diced
- 3 tablespoons parsley (fresh or dried)
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2-3 medium baked potatoes, diced with skin
- 1 bag fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 quart chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup fat-free half and half  
topping: fried bacon pieces  
optional seasonings: 1 tablespoon basil (fresh or dried), pinch of nutmeg  
optional meat: small cubes of baked ham or sausage

Sauté onions and parsley in butter until tender. In saucepan, add potatoes, spinach, chicken broth and seasonings. If substituting frozen spinach, thaw and drain before adding. Simmer soup until hot and bubbly, stirring often. Add cream (for a thicker soup ½ cup dried potato flakes can be added). Top with fried bacon pieces. *Servings: 8*

**Julie Flory • Pella • Pella Cooperative Electric Association**

## PUT CHEESE RINDS TO WORK

Save your Parmesan cheese rinds; they add delicious flavor to minestrone, bean or hearty vegetable soups. Keep rinds in the freezer and toss one in when you simmer the soup. It will add some saltiness, so taste before seasoning at the end. Remove the rind before serving the soup.

S O U P E R S O U P

## BROWN OR SEAR THE MEAT

If you are adding meat to a soup, sear or brown it in a sauté pan before you add it to the soup. This adds a deeper savory flavor to the entire soup.

S O U P E R S O U P

## CHOP IN SPOON SIZES

When chopping vegetables, consider how big you want them to be on the spoon. Even hearty soups should have well-chopped, perfectly portioned vegetables.

S O U P E R S O U P

## Wanted: Rhubarb or Asparagus Recipes! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Spring showers bring rhubarb and asparagus! These spring foods are a sure sign that warm and sunny days are on the horizon. Share your favorite recipes, and if we run yours 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 Jan. 31, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **NEW: Please also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

**EMAIL:**  
[recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

**MAIL:**  
**Recipes**  
*Living with Energy in Iowa*  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

# A diverse fuel mix ensures

How co-ops keep electricity reliable – the traditional way and the digital way

BY PAUL WESSLUND

“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

It’s a familiar saying, and believe it or not, that age-old piece of wisdom is used by electric utilities to make sure you receive a reliable supply of electricity.

Michael Leitman, senior analyst at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, translates that saying into utility-industry terminology this way:

“You don’t want to be too reliant on any one energy source,” says Leitman. “The goal is if one resource becomes constrained, others are there to fill the gap and keep the lights on – it’s about managing risk and priorities.”

Following that advice has been pretty straightforward for decades. A mix of four energy sources provide nearly all generated electricity: coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric power.

## Mind-boggling energy changes.

But these days, there are a lot more options – the variety of electricity generation is higher than it’s ever been and not just because of more renewable energy sources like wind and solar. While the technology still has a long way to go for large-scale deployment, batteries are getting cheaper and powerful enough to supplement wind turbines during calm weather and solar when the sun’s not shining. Energy load-control programs can shut off water heaters for short periods during times when electricity use is highest. Rapid technological advances across the power industry have also been key for unprecedented opportunities, allowing utilities to manage the electric power systems in ways that make energy resources more useful.

While a broader mix of fuels



could potentially bring even greater reliability to your electric service, coordinating all the new and old equipment of the nation’s electric grid requires new skills and careful management.

For years, the electric utility industry’s main fuel source has been coal. Coal traditionally provided about half the electricity in the country because it was reliable, plentiful and relatively inexpensive. That backbone was supplemented by nuclear power, hydroelectric power and natural gas.

## But that’s changed radically over the last 15 years.

The supply and price of natural gas fell dramatically with fracking and other drilling technologies. Natural gas plants can be built smaller, faster and cheaper than coal stations, and they can be controlled more quickly as power demand changes from day to day. Coal costs rose with environmental regulations, and renewable energy sources received more attention because of their benefits to the environment.

# reliability



As a result, by 2016, natural gas replaced coal as the largest source of electricity. In 2019, natural gas made up 38% of the electric utility fuel mix; coal, 23%; nuclear, 20%; and hydroelectric power, 7%. The non-hydro renewable energy share of electricity production has risen from almost nothing 10 years ago, to 7% for wind and 2% for solar – and both continue to increase rapidly.

## Those statistical trends hide two revolutionary changes.

One is that renewable energy doesn't act like the more traditional power plants. A coal plant can run all the time, while wind and solar shut on and off as Mother Nature makes changes every hour – meaning the wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine. But with the second revolutionary change – the smart grid – the use of these complex renewable energy sources can be managed better.

## The smart grid arrives.

The digital transformation began more than two decades ago, and disruptive forces have had an impact on the power sector ever since. Electric utility dreamers foresaw a shift from an analog network of levers and switches to a digital system that includes automated power management and new ways to manage the flow of electricity.

That smart grid has arrived. Power outages can be detected more quickly, and you can even track the repair process on your smartphone. Digital software can more effectively manage the output of rooftop solar panels, sending electricity back to the utility when the homeowner isn't using all the electricity they produce. The smart grid can also make solar and wind energy more useful through the use of batteries. It's a lot

of technology that helps factor into the quality of electric service.

## Managing the smart grid brings improvements, as well as requirements for new ways of doing business.

“The smart grid brings new opportunities to enhance quality of service, reliability and resiliency, but it has to be more actively managed,” says Leitman. “You’ve still got to have folks who know how to climb utility poles, and now we need those who also understand programming and how to work with computers and control systems.”

The need for that new expertise will benefit electric cooperatives and their consumer-members. New skill sets will be needed, and that will create additional job opportunities in the local communities served by electric co-ops. ⚡

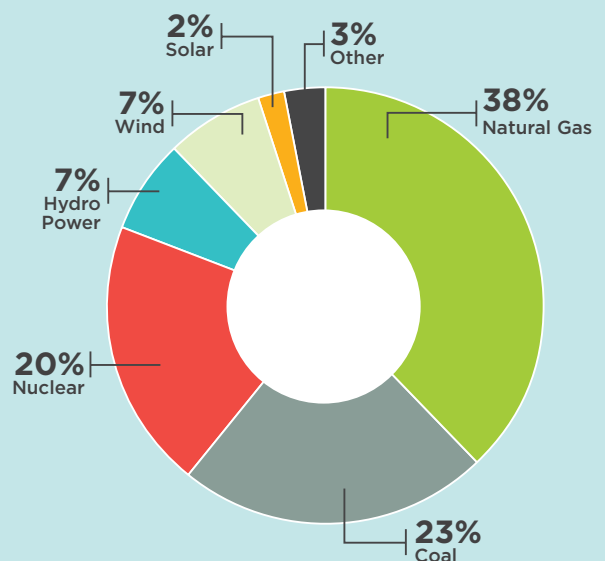
Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



## Powerful Energy Sources

Nationally, electric cooperatives and other utilities use a variety of fuels to power American homes and businesses. This diverse fuel mix supplies co-op members with the safe, reliable and affordable power they depend on.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (2019 data)



STUDENT LEADERS

# Access Energy Cooperative Scholarship Program

\$9,000 in scholarships is available to high school seniors. Six \$1,500 scholarship awards, two in each of the cooperative's three districts.

Applicants must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education, and their parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative.

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
- By visiting our website
  - Download the application and either fax, mail or bring it to our office; or
  - Submit the form online.
- Applications are due in our office March 15, 2021.

Winners will be chosen, and announcements made at senior award ceremonies.

For more information, and applications, visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

# 100 years of service honored

Congratulations to the following employees who were honored for years of service. Thank you for your dedication and service to the members of Access Energy Cooperative! ⚡



**Korbin Johnson**  
5 years



**Courtney Williamson**  
15 years



**Tony Adams**  
20 years



**Bill Simon**  
25 years



**Tammy Snavelly**  
35 years

SAFETY MATTERS



If you see them working on the side of the road, move over to the other lane and slow down.

You might not hear them, but they are thanking you!



**MOVE OVER**  
**SLOW DOWN**

HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

# Who is up for election?

Your Board of Directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative. Three seats are up for election in 2021, one in each of the three districts. Each board member is elected to a term of three years. Terms that will expire with the 2021 annual meeting to be held Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2021, are:

- **District 1** – Marvin Larson
- **District 2** – Larry White
- **District 3** – Robert Chesnut III

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.



**Marvin Larson**



**Larry White**



**Robert Chesnut III**

The Board will be appointing a Nominating Committee who will select candidates to run for the expiring terms. Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the Nominating Committee, which will be posted in our office, on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com), and in the newsletter; or you can call our office at 866-242-4232. ⚡

# How do you qualify to run for the board of directors?

Pertaining to provisions set forth in RUS Bulletin 1790-1, we are providing you with a summary of the following prior to a meeting of the 2021 Nominating Committee.

## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE BYLAWS. ARTICLE III.

**Section 2(a). Election and Tenure.** The members of the Board of Directors shall be elected from three Districts, numbered One (1), Two (2) and Three (3). The geographic areas of the three Districts shall be established by the Board of Directors and described in the By-Laws. The Districts shall be apportioned, and reapportioned as necessary, by the Board of Directors, so that the Districts contain as nearly as possible an equal number of members.

At each Annual Meeting of Members, one, and only one, Director from each of Districts One (1), Two (2) and Three (3), shall be elected for the term of three years, and until their respective successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Members attending and voting at an Annual Meeting or voting by mail or other electronic means as approved by the Directors as provided in the Articles of Incorporation shall vote only for candidates from the district in which they reside. The election of directors shall be by ballot, and each voting member shall be entitled to cast one vote for each director to be elected from that member's district.

**Section 2(b). District Boundaries.** Directors shall be elected from districts beginning with the election held at the 1990 Annual Meeting and as scheduled in the Articles of Incorporation. The three (3) districts will be comprised of the following territories:

District I: DAVIS: Salt Creek Twp; JEFFERSON COUNTY: Blackhawk, Buchanan, Cedar, Center, Des Moines, Liberty, Locust Grove, Penn, Polk and Walnut Twp; KEOKUK COUNTY: Steady Run Twp; VAN BUREN COUNTY: Bonaparte, Cedar, Farmington, Harrisburg, Henry, Lick Creek, Union, Village and Washington Twp; WAPELLO COUNTY: Competine, Pleasant and Washington Twp; WASHINGTON COUNTY: Brighton and Franklin Twp.

District II: HENRY COUNTY: Center, Jackson, Jefferson, Marion, Salem, Scott, Tippecanoe, Trenton and Wayne Twp; JEFFERSON COUNTY: Lockridge and Round Prairie Twp; LEE COUNTY: Cedar, Marion and Pleasant Ridge Twp; LOUISA COUNTY: Elm Grove Twp; WASHINGTON COUNTY: Marion and Washington Twp.

District III: DES MOINES COUNTY: Burlington, Concordia, Danville, Pleasant Grove, Union and Washington Twp; HENRY COUNTY: Baltimore, Canaan and New London Twp; LEE COUNTY: Charleston, Denmark, Franklin, Green Bay, Harrison, Jefferson, Van Buren, Washington and West Point Twp.

**Section 3. Qualifications.** No member shall be eligible to become or remain a Director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is not a bona fide resident of premises

served by the Cooperative, or who is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members, or who within two (2) years preceding a director candidate nomination was an employee of the Cooperative, or who within seven (7) years preceding a director candidate nomination has received benefit from any collective bargaining agreement with the Cooperative, or is a close relative of a director or employee of the Cooperative, with close relative being defined as: spouse, cohabitant, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and natural, step, and adopted children, or within fifteen (15) years preceding a director candidate nomination been convicted of a felony whether by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, plea of guilt, or plea of nolo contendere, or who is or becomes the full-time employee or agent of another director or employee, or who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of another director, and no person shall take or hold office as a Director who is the incumbent of or candidate for an elective public office other than on a school board, board of supervisors, township trustee, township clerk, or member of the State legislature; provided, however, that nothing in this Section contained shall, or shall be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors. When a membership is held jointly, either one, but not both, may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless both shall meet the qualifications herein above set forth. Before the meeting of the committee on nominations for directors each year, the Board of Directors shall determine whether any director has ceased to be a bona fide resident of premises served by the Cooperative, and any director found by a two-thirds vote of all directors not to meet the residence requirement or any other qualifications of this Section, may continue to hold office only until the next annual meeting at which time the vacancy shall be filled by the members.

**Section 4. Nominations.** It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than one hundred sixty (160) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which Directors are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of three members from each District from which a Director is to be elected. No member of the Board may serve on such committee. The committee shall prepare and post, at the principal office of the Cooperative, at least ninety (90) days before the meeting, a list of these candidates nominated for Director from each District from which a Director is to be elected, and the list shall include at least two candidates

for each Director to be elected. Any fifteen or more members from a District from which a director is to be elected, acting together, may make other nominations for Director from their District by petition not less than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting, and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Secretary shall mail with the notice of the meeting, or separately, but at least ten days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Directors to be elected from each District, and the names and addresses of the candidates from each district, specifying separately the nominations made by the committee and the nominations made by petition, if any. The ballots to be used for the election of Directors shall list the names of the candidates from each District nominated by the committee and the names of the candidates from each District nominated by petition, if any. The names of nominees shall be posted and listed on the ballots by District in alphabetical order.

The statement mailed by the Secretary shall also inform the members of the manner in which they may vote by mail or other electronic means as provided in this Section. Any member may cast their vote in person, by mail or by other electronic means, as may be approved by the Directors, for directors. A member voting shall mark the ballot in the manner instructed, selecting a number of candidates equal to the number of directors to be elected from that member's district. Upon completion, the ballot shall be delivered to the Cooperative or its representative in the manner instructed. When such ballot is received from any member in advance of the meeting, or at the meeting if voting in person, it shall be accepted and counted as a vote for directors by ballot of such member at such meeting. The provisions of this Section shall not be mandatory in the case of a recall of one or more directors as provided in Section 6 of Article IX of the Articles of Incorporation. 🌿

## ANNUAL MEETING



# Save the date!

## Aug. 3, 2021

### Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members

# This year, organize your energy

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

With a new year, it's a perfect time to begin new projects and set goals for the months ahead.

If you're looking for ways to save energy at home and lower your monthly bills, these simple steps can help you get organized and start an achievable path to saving energy.

## Step 1: Gather information

Begin by reviewing your 2020 energy bills. Knowing *how* and *when* you use energy can help you decide how ambitious your plan should be. If you have questions about your past bills or energy use, give your electric co-op a call – they're available to help you understand your energy bills. Your co-op may also offer a free app that can show you exact data about your home energy use.

Next, visit your electric co-op's website to see if it offers additional assistance, like energy improvement rebates, free energy audits or other special rates and programs. Because of COVID-19, some restrictions may apply to in-home visits, so you can also try an online energy audit like energystar.gov's Home Energy Yardstick.

## Step 2: Develop a plan

With the information gathered, it's important to develop a plan. If your priority is cutting energy costs, you can select the measure that will



A programmable thermostat can help you reduce energy use when you don't need to be heating or cooling your home.

Photo Credit: Consumers Energy

deliver the most savings. Maybe you're already planning to do work on your home, such as roofing or renovating, and you can incorporate energy efficiency strategies into that project. To complete your plan, you'll likely need to check with local contractors or suppliers about costs.

## Step 3: Take action

Now that your planning is done, it's time to take action. If you're tackling any major energy efficiency projects that require a contractor, remember to do your research and hire a licensed, reputable professional.

In addition to energy efficiency projects and upgrades, there are other ways you can get organized to save energy:

- **Replace filters regularly.** A clean filter can improve the performance of your heating and cooling system, and reduce the electricity needed to pump air through your ductwork. Filters should be replaced every month if you're using an inexpensive filter, or every three months if you're

using a higher-quality filter. A better filter will do a better job and last longer.

- **Program your thermostat.** Heating and cooling your home account for the most energy use, so setting your thermostat to match your lifestyle can make a major difference. If you don't have a programmable or smart thermostat, get in the habit of manually adjusting your thermostat throughout the day or setting it to the most energy efficient setting when you're away.
  - **Label the circuits in your breaker box.** It may not reduce your energy use, but it's an easy way to get organized and will save a lot of headaches down the line!
- We hope by taking a little time to complete these steps, you'll be well on your way to a more energy efficient 2021! ⚡



Photo Credit: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write about energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

# The lure of the sale barn

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Kent and I drove past a former sale barn in eastern Iowa the other day. The building was dilapidated and deprived of paint with its grayish, weathered exterior bravely standing against the Iowa elements. You'll find them in all parts of the state – some still open, but many of them closed as livestock farming has moved from a single farmer taking 20 hogs to market to thousands of hogs going to much larger facilities.

Pella had a sale barn on the north end of town. It's long gone now, but Thursday nights were a highlight of the week for my sister and me as we tagged along with our dad to the sale. I don't really remember whether it was hogs or cattle that were being sold, but that wasn't the important part to us anyway. With strict instructions to stay out of the sorting and penned areas in the back where animals were "staged" for the sale, we were free to explore all the other nooks and crannies of the old barn.

We took full advantage of that. The barn was ringed, as most sales barns are, with tiered seating on three sides and the auctioneer on the fourth, with the sawdust-covered ring in front of him. At the very top of the seats were ancient and none-too-clean couches that were beyond usable, but we'd plunk ourselves on them, sometimes with other kids who had come to the sale.

My memory is that there was always, always, a box of kittens up there with a harried mother cat who really didn't appreciate everyone picking up her offspring. They weren't for giving away as much as to keep around the barn to quell the mouse population.

We soon tired of the sale barn itself and headed for the adjoining restaurant. Everyone knows that sale barn restaurants have the best food anywhere. My dad would let us put



anything we wanted on the tab and stop in at the end of the night to pay off our tally of pop, candy, chips and the occasional greasy cheeseburger. Those who came to eat dinner could have home-cooked Iowa specialties like hot beef sandwiches with real potatoes and gravy or pork chops with all the sides.

I'm sure we were more than a pest. The restaurant had a bathroom off one side, and I distinctly remember my sister Amber stepping on the exposed water pipes that ran parallel to the floor, about a foot up. As the bossy older sister, I told her to stop doing that, but in true kid fashion, she had to jiggle up and down on it once more. The pipe broke, water bursting everywhere. And also true to kids' natures everywhere, we took

off, not telling anyone.

Kent and I were in Ireland several years ago and stopped at a sale barn that had sheep selling that day. We commented that other than the farmers' caps, which were flat "newsboy" type hats, this scene could have taken place in Iowa. It seems a sale barn is a sale barn, no matter where you are in the world.

If you get the chance, stop by a sale barn on an open day and take a look. Look up the kittens. Have a piece of homemade pie. Stay off the water pipes in the bathroom. 🌩

---

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 and two incredibly adorable grandsons.



# WE NEVER FORGET WHERE WE CAME FROM

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

Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperatives of Iowa  
[www.touchstoneenergy.coop](http://www.touchstoneenergy.coop)

