

OCTOBER 2024

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Powering a brighter
future in Guatemala

Cybersecurity awareness

Family dinner recipes

Does Access Energy Cooperative owe you money? ► See Page 7

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ON THE COVER

The village of Las Peñas, Guatemala, where linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric cooperatives worked to bring electricity to the community for the first time. Read more beginning on Page 10 of this issue.

REFLECTING ON OUR COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



October is National Co-op Month, making it an opportune time to reflect on our cooperative principles. As I look back on my first few weeks

at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, the co-op principles of *cooperation among cooperatives* and *concern for community* really stand out to me for the following reasons.

Rebuilding after the Greenfield tornado

On May 21, severe storms rolled across Iowa, including a strong tornado that tore through Greenfield. We cover this story in more detail on Pages 6-7 and share how it affected employees of Farmers Electric Cooperative, which is based in Greenfield. In the aftermath of the storm, employees of Farmers Electric immediately headed out to help those in need, and neighboring electric cooperatives provided mutual aid to repair damage and restore power in impacted areas.

Powering a brighter future in Guatemala

Also in this issue, you'll read about how linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric cooperatives worked together to bring electricity to a remote village in the Guatemalan mountains. We understand how essential electricity is to powering opportunities and improving quality of life. Electric cooperatives across the country volunteer their time and resources to help those less fortunate in developing countries because it connects us to our legacy and mission back home.

Shining the light on community volunteers

In the August and September issues of this magazine, you read about our Shine the Light contest, which celebrates our cooperative

commitment to community. Thank you for nominating deserving volunteers who make a positive difference in Iowa's communities! Learn more about our 2024 winners at www.IowaShineTheLight.com and make plans to nominate a local hero in June 2025.

October is co-op month

Once again, Iowa's electric cooperatives are teaming up with the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives and the Iowa Credit Union League to raise awareness about the many advantages of the cooperative business model. This month, we'll post videos about the seven cooperative principles and other co-op facts on social media. Visit www.IowaCooperatives.com for more information on how cooperative ownership works and why the co-op business model is effective.

Celebrating cooperative careers

Finally, we will commemorate Careers in Energy Week beginning Oct. 21. Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to provide nearly 2,000 stable careers with excellent benefits in an exciting and fulfilling industry. Many electric co-op employees choose to raise their families in small towns and are actively engaged in their communities. Along with lineworkers, engineers and operations staff, electric co-ops also employ accountants, customer service representatives, IT professionals, human resources staff, communicators, energy advisors, economic development specialists and more. View our latest co-op job openings at www.iowarec.org.

Leslie Kaufman is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A \$100 GIFT CARD!

To celebrate National Co-op Month, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. Your selection can be a restaurant, hardware store, gift shop, grocery store, beauty salon or other local business that's vital to your community.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 31. 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 pressure washer from the August issue was **Dwayne Seeck**, a Guthrie County REC member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT. 17	Board meeting
NOV. 21	Board meeting
NOV. 28-29	Office closed for Thanksgiving

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com or through the SmartHub app for mobile devices. Use SmartHub to report outages to save time and ensure that it goes directly into our system to notify us. You can also call our office at 866-242-4232 for account information or to report service-related concerns.



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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SUPPORTING HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Access Energy Cooperative has been a long-time supporter of the local Habitat for Humanity program in Henry and Jefferson counties. Alan Raymer, member services representative for Access Energy Cooperative, recently delivered a water heater for the Henry County project in Mount Pleasant. Also pictured is Lisa Diener, Habitat for Humanity project coordinator.



CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES

Access Energy Cooperative has established a collection site for local food pantries. If you want to help families in need and share some holiday spirit, we invite you to drop off nonperishable food or personal items in the box in our lobby at 1800 West Washington Street in Mount Pleasant from Nov. 1-Dec. 10.

Items of specific request are nonperishable foods and personal items such as toothpaste, shampoo, laundry items, cleaning supplies and toilet paper.

We thank everyone in advance for considering a donation. We will distribute the gifts to local food pantries in our service area.

Happy holidays and happy giving!



DONATIONS ACCEPTED NOV. 1-DEC. 10

ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

BY KEVIN WHEELER



Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. In today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Access Energy Cooperative wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or a leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share updates on some of the latest utility scams and provide tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

Recent utility scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves – either physically or digitally – as utility employees or representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through various means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage – and what's worse, these pages are often

promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

Spotting a scam

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam. Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone pushes for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam. You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

What Access Energy Cooperative will (and won't) do

Access Energy Cooperative will never call and demand an instant, immediate payment over the phone and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

Access Energy Cooperative will not call and ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email for a payment. We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, SmartHub, scheduled payments, on our website and in our drop box.

Avoiding scams

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be an Access Energy Cooperative employee requesting banking or other personal information. If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, contact us at 866-242-4232.

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

SIGNS OF AN ENERGY SCAM

- High-Pressure Tactics**
 Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.
- Sketchy Payment Methods**
 Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.
- Dodgy Communication**
 Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.

HELP OTHERS BY CONTRIBUTING TO RECare

RECare is a program where members help other members in need. You may make a one-time contribution to the RECare program, or you may enclose an amount each month with your monthly electric bill.

This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines.

You can use SmartHub to enroll in RECare!

To have a monthly amount deducted from your electric bill:

1. Log in to your SmartHub account. Go to the Bill & Pay dropdown on the left. Select RECare, and follow instructions; or

2. Send the form below to:

RECare
c/o Access Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 440
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641



RECare Consumer Authorization Form

I would like to make a (check one):

One-time contribution of \$ _____

Monthly contribution of \$ _____
(That will be added to my bill)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

Account # (if known) _____



HAVE YOU CASHED YOUR DIVIDEND CHECK?

BY TAMMY SNAVELY



Receiving dividends is a benefit of cooperative membership. If you were a member of Access Energy Cooperative during the years 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2022 and/or 2023 and have not signed up to receive your dividend payments as a bill credit, you should have received a dividend check either at the Annual Meeting of Members or in the mail in August.

The checks are dated Aug. 6 and are void after 90 days. We encourage you to cash your check as soon as possible if you haven't done so already.

Members can also elect to receive their dividends as bill credits instead of checks. If you are signed up for this option, instead of sending you a check in August, the credit was applied to your bill.

If you have questions or want to sign up to receive your dividends as bill credits, please contact us at 866-242-4232 or finance@accessenergycoop.com.

Tammy Snavely is the chief financial officer of Access Energy Cooperative.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BILL CREDIT WINNERS

Access Energy Cooperative is pleased to announce the winners of our Sept. 15 bill credit drawings.

Paperless billing drawing

Congratulations to Marty and Kathy Box of Batavia, winner of the \$50 bill credit drawing for being signed up for paperless billing. Any member enrolled in paperless billing by Sept. 15 was entered into the drawing. Members can sign up for paperless billing any time. You must first have an active SmartHub account. Reminder: Members who use a SmartHub account are not required to opt in for paperless billing or for automatic payments in order to use the SmartHub app.

Annual meeting survey drawing

Congratulations to Louis Hull of Mount Pleasant, winner of the \$50 bill credit drawing for completing and submitting the annual meeting survey. Thank you to everyone who turned in their survey, which was included with the August energy bill. Your feedback helps us to evaluate the annual meeting going forward.

2025 PHOTO CONTEST

WIN UP TO \$100!

We are accepting photos for the 2026 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Color and horizontal photos work best for calendar entries. Submissions can be sent to mktg@accessenergycoop.com before March 31, 2025.

Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos. Winners will be awarded \$75, plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.



DO YOU KNOW ANY OF THESE PEOPLE?

We are searching for the following members whose dividend checks did not reach them. If you know the whereabouts of any of these people, please contact our accounting department at finance@accessenergycoop.com or 866-242-4232.

Abolt, Martin J	Donnellson IA	Hart, Gary D	Mt Pleasant IA	Petersen, Wyatt/Janet	Meridian ID
Alexander, Betty J	Burlington IA	Helmick, Dorothy (Estate)	Packwood, IA	Phansopkar, Ashish	Phoenix AZ
Anderson, Art/Annie	Bigelow AR	Higdon, Stephen M/DeAnna M	North Liberty IA	Pilcher, Brian/Melinda	Owatonna MN
Anderson, Paul H/Barbara	Mt Pleasant IA	Hufnagel, Donna L	Henry IL	Polton, Edward M (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
Anderson, Richard L/Jane	Birmingham IA	Hurley, Todd C/Judy A	Libertyville IA	Porter, Ricky L/Rebecca	Chestnut Ridge MO
Anderson, William E (Estate)	Brighton IA	IES Utilities	Burlington IA	Prado, Lori J	Oskaloosa IA
Andrews Pallet Company Inc	Story City IA	Iris Motel	New Paltz NY	Primus Telecommunications	Fairfield IA
Arnold, James II/Monica	Wever IA	Iverson, Deanna	West Burlington IA	Radhakrishnan, Jay	Evans GA
Arsanjani, Ali/Parastoo	Carlsbad CA	Jacob, Daniel	Eugene OR	Rains, Lewis/Reena	Aledo IL
Avery, Shirley	Ft Madison IA	JCH Farms Inc	Sigourney IA	Ran/Kel Farms LLC	Wayland IA
B Bar B Western Store	Denmark IA	Jeffrey, Joyce K (Estate)	Fairfield IA	Rauscher, Joyce M	Lockridge IA
Baccam, Toan	Mt Pleasant IA	Jensen, Dan/Gail	Burlington IA	Ravey, Tom/Diane	Fairfield IA
Baker, V Lorean	Ft Madison IA	Johnson, Kimberly K	Ft Madison IA	Reitz, Barbara	Burlington IA
Batey, Theresa	DeWitt IA	Johnson, Nathan	Ft Madison IA	Richmond, Shawn O/Laura	Farmington IA
Beckett, Lori/Terry	Mt Pleasant IA	Johnston, Don G	Mt Pleasant IA	Ritz, Vicki (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA
Biggs, Bryan J	Fairfield IA	Johnston, Gregg/Jana	Lucas IA	Riverside Paper	Mt Pleasant IA
BJ's Four Corners	Morrison IL	Jones, Dale/Patricia A	Hawkeye IA	Rogers, Todd	Mt Pleasant IA
Boeding, Mark E/Beverly	Wellington CO	Katz, David E/Joann	Fairfield IA	Ross, Katherine R	Quincy IL
Bowen, Ryan/Wendy	Coralville IA	Kelley, Britton (Estate)	Mt Pleasant IA	Ruan, Xingke	Fairfield IA
Boyer, John/Judy	Farmington IA	Kern, Phillip H/Jean	Fairfield IA	Rudy, Thomas/Lori	La Quinta CA
Boyer's Machine Works	Ankeny IA	Ketterer, John J	Ft Madison IA	Ruesch Inc	Mount Vernon IA
Brant, Scott/Janae	Burlington IA	Key Outdoor Inc	Grand Rapids MI	Russell, James L	Burlington IA
Buck, Evelyn	New Port Richey FL	Kirchner, Melodie	Sunrise Beach MO	Ryan Companies Inc	Cedar Rapids IA
Bugg, Patricia L/ Henry D (Estates)	South Jacksonville IL	Kissell, Felicia/Richard	Waupun WI	Samir Corp	Mt Pleasant IA
Burkett, Richard W	Alexandria MO	Knox, Lori A	Fairfield	Sandoval, Jose	Wever IA
Carius, Brant A/Elizabeth	Delaware OH	Krueger, Sallie/Benedict, Jamie	Burlington IA	Schlag, Dana/Yvonne	Burlington IA
Carson, Raymond/June	Wever IA	Lamansky, Chad/Crystal	Birmingham IA	Schmidgall, Brad	Burlington IA
Casteel, Dennis L/Hachey, Carol C	Birmingham IA	Lambert, Darrell	Mt Pleasant IA	Schneider, Candice	Fairfield IA
Chance, Jason/Deb	Ottumwa IA	Lampe, Kim/Douglas, Tracy	Thayer MO	Schwartz, Keith J/Connie	Sperry IA
Chorpensing, Dave	Wayland IA	Lankford, Richard/Cheryl	Batavia IA	Schwendinger, Anthony	Clinton IA
Citicasters Co Inc	Burlington IA	Lawson, David	Maple Plain MN	Seuferer, Kevin/Donna	Osceola IA
Clear Channel Communications	Burlington IA	Ledger, Mark	Washington IA	Shultz, Shirley	Mt Pleasant IA
Companions of St Luke	Shreveport LA	Livestock Placement	Salix IA	Sinn, James R/Vicky	Winfield IA
Conger, Millie M (Estate)	West Point IA	Longview Cable & Data LLC	Reston VA	Slaney, William/Susan	Hedrick IA
Conrad, Constance	Ft Madison IA	Maharishi Spiritual Univ	Fairfield IA	Smith, Charles L JR/Elizabeth	Fairfield IA
Contreras, David/Dorene	Oconomowoc WI	Marlin, William C	Mt Pleasant IA	Smith, Jonathan/Elaine	Fairfield IA
Crabb, Robert/Caves, Valerie	Ormond Beach FL	Martin, Gary/Vicki	Burlington IA	Smith, Matthew J/Christina	Mt Pleasant IA
Crawford, Jennifer	Richland IA	McAllister Ag Corp	Naples FL	Snead, Lou Ann	Mt Morris IL
Crossroad Well	Burlington IA	McComb, John H	Fox Lake IL	Sp Grove Mobile Homes	Burlington IA
Crouse, Bryan	West Point IA	McCurren, Debra K	Washington DC	Spears, William/Samantha	Topeka KS
Daggs, Betty A	Keokuk IA	McLeland, Mark E/Alice J	Lake City MN	Stark, Thomas E	Fairfield IA
Dalarna Farms	New London IA	Meardon, Kathleen W	Ft Madison IA	Steve's Rome Tap	Winfield IA
Davis, Donald A	Santa Barbara CA	Mefford, Dave/Wendy	Ottumwa IA	Stevens, James	Keokuk IA
Dawson, Kelly	Mt Pleasant IA	Meyer, Patricia J	State Center IA	Stoermer, Larry G (Estate)	Davenport IA
DeVore, Clint L	Jay FL	Meyer, Ryan	Mt Pleasant IA	Sue's Home Cookin' Café	Coeur D Alene ID
Dehart, Doug/Martin, Jamie	Mt Pleasant IA	Michael, Pamela	Keosauqua IA	Swanson, Chester/Catherine	Fairfield IA
Dick, Richard W/Shirley	Marion IA	Mid America Advertising	Springfield IL	Sweeney, Peder/Kelly	Asheville NC
Discount City	Wever IA	Midwest Wireless LLC	Mankato MN	Telegroup	Fairfield IA
Durr, Tony	Yarmouth IA	Miller, Jeff/Kith	Jerome ID	Templeton, Scott/Eleanor K	Donnellson IA
Elmore, Sandra S (Estate)	Laquey MO	Miller, Victoria (Estate)	Fairfield IA	Thomas, Josephine	Fairfield IA
Engler, Robert/Teresa	West Burlington IA	Moeller, Ray/Kathy (Estates)	Cotopaxi CO	Townsend, Dee	Fairfield IA
Entsminger, Tim/Vicki	Brighton IA	Moore, Ashley/ Hickenbottom, Dave	Washington IA	Uber, Ronald	Kingston TN
Erickson, Barbara H (Estate)	West Branch IA	Moore, Mrs. J Brown (Helen)	Mt Union IA	Underwood, Virginia F (Estate)	Keosauqua IA
Experian	Long Island City NY	Moore, Sharon J	Danville IA	VanNiewaal, Randy/Chi	Burlington IA
Fedler, Susan M	Wever IA	Morris, Allen (Estate)	Batavia IA	Vela, John R/Charlotte	Burlington IA
Frisbee, Brian D	Fairfield IA	Morrison, Joyce	Ft Madison IA	VerDught, Darcia L	Argyle IA
Fritz, Wanda	Brighton IA	Mt Pleasant Warehouse	Burlington IA	Wade, Todd/Jennie	Danbury TX
G & G Kennels Inc	Libertyville IA	Murray, Raymond B/Diana	Palmyra MO	Waite, Paula	Eldon IA
Gore, Susan	New York NY	Nelson, Pamela	Mt Pleasant IA	Walrod, Bob E/Leona	Savannah MO
Greiner, Joseph B	Richland IA	New London Dairy LLC	New London IA	Weber, David L	Clive IA
Grimes, Theresa/ Shimmebsenning, Gerald	Douds IA	Newpath Communications	Des Moines IA	Wells, Steve/Julie	Dyersville IA
Groenewald, Otto/Collette	West Point IA	Norwood, Neil/Denise L	Prescott AZ	Wenig, Rev N	Plano IA
GTE Mobil Net	Schaumburg IL	Otto, Nathan/Malak	Boulder CO	Whaley Waste Systems	Des Moines IA
GTE Telephone Operations	Irving TX	Oyer, June	Gig Harbor WA	Wilson, Jordan/Kim	Eugene OR
Hammer, William D/Teresa L	Brainerd MN	Parsons, Cheryl	Mt Pleasant IA	Winfrey, Jeff J	Gainesville MO
		Peters, Thomas K/Debra	Ft Madison IA	Worth, Jill/Hoel, Greg	Owosso MI
				Young, Mark L	Kalona IA

Family Dinner FAVORITES

ITALIAN CASSEROLE

- ½ pound ground pork
- ½ pound ground beef
- ⅓ cup onion, chopped
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 1 can tomato soup
- ⅓ cup water
- 2 cups wide noodles, cooked
- ½ pound Velveeta cheese
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (or more cheese if desired)

Brown pork, beef and onion together. Drain. Add seasonings to the mixture. In a large bowl, combine meat mixture with soup, water, noodles and Velveeta cheese. Place in a 9x12-inch casserole dish or a round casserole dish. Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese around the edges of the casserole (or over the entire casserole). Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. You can also freeze prior to baking and bake later. Casserole is great served with bread sticks and a lettuce salad. *Serves 6*

Dianne Riley • Osceola
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BBQ SANDWICHES

- 3 pounds hamburger
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- 3 teaspoons salt
- buns

Brown hamburger with onion, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 20 minutes. Serve on buns. *Serves 30*

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

LOADED BAKED POTATO CASSEROLE

- 1 pound chicken breast, cubed
- 6-8 red-skinned potatoes, cubed
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce, plus more, if desired
- 2 cups cheese, shredded
- 1 cup bacon, crumbled
- 1 cup green onion, diced

Mix the first eight ingredients and bake at 400 degrees F for 55-60 minutes. Top with cheese, bacon and green onion for the last 5 minutes of baking. *Serves 8*

Nancy Hemann • Parkersburg
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative



Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.

CHEESY CHICKEN SPAGHETTI

- 16 ounces dry spaghetti, cooked
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese, cubed
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and chopped
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can RO-TEL tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can mushrooms, drained
- ½ cup water
- 1 small onion, diced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Spray slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray. Combine all ingredients in slow cooker and stir to mix well. Cook on low for 2-3 hours. Stir before serving. *Serves 6-8*

**Arie Schiller • Donnellson
Access Energy Cooperative**

HEARTY HAM CASSEROLE

- 4 cups ham, cubed
- 2 cans corn, drained
- 4 cups potatoes, cooked and diced
- 2 tablespoons onion, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- ⅔ cup flour
- 3½ cups milk
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded

In a large bowl, combine ham, corn and potatoes, set aside. Sauté onion and butter for 2 minutes. Stir in flour and blend. Add milk and pepper, then bring mixture to boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Add to the ham mixture and stir. Transfer to a 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with cheese. Bake 5 to 10 minutes longer.

**Bonnie Boot • Pella
Pella Cooperative Electric Association**

BACHELOR'S PIE

- 2 pounds hamburger
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cans tomato soup
- 2 cans green beans or mixed vegetables, drained
- 6 cups mashed potatoes
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Brown hamburger and onion in large skillet, drain. Combine with soup and green beans or mixed vegetables. Add salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a 9x13-inch baking pan. Spread mashed potatoes on top (like frosting a cake) and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for about an hour or until cheese melts. *Serves 16*

**Joanne Fox • Sioux City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

DEVILED SWISS STEAK

- 1 3-pound beef round steak, 1-inch thick
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 4-ounce can mushroom stems and pieces water
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Cut meat in half for easier handling. Mix mustard, salt and pepper together, then sprinkle over meat. Pound seasonings into both sides of meat. In skillet, quickly brown meat on both sides in hot oil. Drain excess fat. Drain mushrooms, reserving liquid and setting mushrooms aside. Add water to liquid to make ½ cup. Add Worcestershire sauce, then pour liquid mixture over meat. Cover and simmer 1¼ to 1½ hours on low heat or until meat is tender. Add mushrooms and heat through. Transfer meat to platter and pour remaining liquid and mushrooms over meat. *Serves 8*

**Danice Zern • Conrad
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

WANTED:

CHERRY RECIPES

**THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

Deadline is Oct. 31

Submit your **favorite recipes using cherries**. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
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Des Moines, IA 50322

POWERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR THE PEOPLE OF LAS PEÑAS, GUATEMALA

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Have you ever considered how different your life would be without daily access to electricity? Simple tasks like making coffee, taking a hot shower, washing clothes, refrigerating food, cooking meals or lighting a room would become nearly impossible without safe, reliable electric service.

Living without electricity was common in rural America before electric cooperatives were formed in the 1930s and 1940s, even though most people in cities and towns benefitted from the conveniences of power. Many of us are a generation or two removed from those times; however, 14 linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric co-ops were able to experience the fulfillment of powering a brighter future for the rural village of Las Peñas, Guatemala, in June.

Through their respective statewide associations, several electric cooperatives from Iowa and

Minnesota teamed up for a rural electrification project through NRECA International, which is affiliated with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Since 1962, NRECA International has brought electricity to more than 220 million people throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Working in a mountainous terrain

The team's mission was to build primary and secondary electric distribution infrastructure and wire more than 30 homes in the village of Las Peñas, nestled in mountainous terrain at an elevation of 6,000 feet above sea level.

The daily journey from Jalapa, where the linemen stayed in a hotel, to Las

Peñas took over an hour by vehicle via primitive, narrow dirt roads and switchbacks. During the rainy season, the dirt roads quickly become washed out and impassable by vehicles. Near the end of the project, they had to hike the arduous final mile on foot every day.

Las Peñas is only about 15 miles from the bustling city of Jalapa as the crow flies, but lifestyles in these two locations are vastly different.

"Close your eyes for a moment and imagine you're at a campground with the smell of wood burning. Now add the smell of the livestock barns from the county fairgrounds and the smell of tortillas cooking – that's what it was like to be in Las Peñas,"



A villager checks out electrical equipment, which will power her home.



Linemen worked on steep areas to string wire and place power equipment.

Follow the linemen's journey on our public Facebook group: **2024 Powering a Brighter Future in Guatemala**

explains Scott Meinecke, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, who traveled to the village near the completion of the project.

Electricity will allow girls to attend school

Most of the families of Las Peñas farm corn, coffee beans and other crops by hand and raise pigs and chickens. The women and girls stay close to home, cooking food and tending to household chores.

“Without electricity or reliable refrigeration, girls don’t have time to go to school; they are needed at home to help grind corn and cook every day. Bringing electricity to these rural villages is especially transformative for girls because they can now complete food prep chores on the weekends and store a week’s supply of food in a refrigerator, which means they can go to school and receive an education,” Meinecke says.

Building infrastructure by hand

Before the linemen arrived, no power lines were serving the village. Villagers helped the local municipal utility set poles for the team, and they got to work immediately stringing primary wire across 3.5 miles of distribution infrastructure. Without modern equipment like bucket trucks, all the work had to be completed by hand.

Mike Berkenpas of North West REC says many of the spans in the mountains were 1,000 feet or more between poles because of the unbelievably steep terrain. For context, spans between poles in Iowa are set to a standard of approximately 200 feet. Bailey Bautsch of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative was impressed with how the villagers helped the linemen pull up the wire and carried tools during the project.

The rain was challenging throughout the project, prompting the team to be thankful for the maintained roads back home.

“When it rains, you can’t get to the village without walking. The road is only built for tractors, horses and mules, and it was built 3 weeks before we got here,” explains Hunter Venz of Prairie Energy Cooperative.



Linemen from Iowa and Minnesota pose with Las Peñas villagers.

The following **Iowa electric cooperatives** and **linemen** participated in this year’s effort. Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, **Jason Donnelly**; East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative, **Brian Reidy**; Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative, **Andy Koopmann**; Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, **Bailey Bautsch**; Midland Power Cooperative, **Tanner Dreier**; North West Rural Electric Cooperative, **Mike Berkenpas**; Prairie Energy Cooperative, **Hunter Venz**.

When the linemen finished wiring more than 30 homes for electricity, it was time to celebrate.

“June 18 was supposed to be the inauguration and lighting ceremony; however, we finished a few days early, so we loaded up water filters and the things we bought for the villagers to help make their lives easier. We met them about halfway down the mountain since driving on the road was still too dangerous. We had a small ceremony on the road and thanked them for all their help over the past days we were onsite,” shares Brian Reidy of East-Central Iowa REC.

“Their mayor gave a speech, thanking all who were involved in the long process to get power to the village over the past several years. We handed out the things we brought and said our goodbyes, loaded the remaining gear and headed back up and off the mountain for the last time. What a memorable and humbling experience – I’m not sure words could ever articulate what we experienced.”

Electricity is a doorway to opportunity

As the linemen shared photos of the project and the village, a young boy standing outside the doorway of his home as a lineman wires it for electricity is a metaphor for how electricity provides a doorway to new opportunities for the next generation.

Electrification transformed rural America over 80 years ago, and today, it’s happening in remote Guatemalan villages as they gain access to electricity. Electricity provides access to safer cooking and lighting, easier chores, safer food and water, higher-quality education, better healthcare and more. Participating in these international electrification projects connects us even more to our cooperative mission of powering lives and empowering communities.

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



A young boy stands outside as his home is wired for electricity.



Scan the QR code to watch the project video.

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When it rained, linemen had to walk to the job site instead of driving on the dirt road.



Steve Bonner, MiEnergy Cooperative (Minnesota), sits with children in the village.

POWERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE
LA HORTIGA GUATEMALA
JUNE
2024

“Everything you do here is hard. When you’re up in the mountains, they could have a 500-foot climb to get to the main road, but you’ll be constantly going up and down to get to that road. Nothing is easy. You can see the struggle. The teacher only gets in two times a week because it’s hard to get back to these places. The people are happy to see us. They are there, they are helping put stuff in. They are hardworking people.”

—Steve Dvergsten, a lineman from Sioux Valley Energy in Minnesota who participated in the international project



Grant Kulzer, Stearns Electric Association (Minnesota), brings light to a villager’s home.



A primitive road was built just 3 weeks before linemen arrived in the village.



The terrain – a lot of clay and mud – made working conditions challenging.



Without modern equipment like bucket trucks, all the work had to be completed by hand, including climbing poles.

SECURING CONNECTED DEVICES ON YOUR HOME NETWORK

BY RYAN NEWLON

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and while we should always be vigilant of the latest cyber threats and risks, this is a great time to raise awareness about simple steps we can take to make our digital lives more secure.

Every day, we integrate more smart devices into our home networks, often without a second thought. From smart light bulbs to connected kitchen appliances, our homes are becoming increasingly interconnected. While the convenience of controlling our environments with a smartphone is exciting, it brings a host of security concerns that we must consider.

When you bring new connected devices into your home, it's crucial to understand what you're adding to your network and how to do so securely. If you connect devices without understanding the implications, you could be opening the door to potential problems. Remember, manufacturers typically prioritize functionality and profit over security. They deliver the basics of what you need, leaving you responsible for securing the rest.

To navigate this complex landscape, here are a few tips to help you secure connected devices on your home network.

■ Secure your router (or modem).

Your router comes with a default ID assigned by the manufacturer. Consider changing the router name to one that is unique to you. You should also change the router's default password to a stronger one that is at least 12 characters long and includes letters, numbers and symbols.

■ Be smart about passwords.

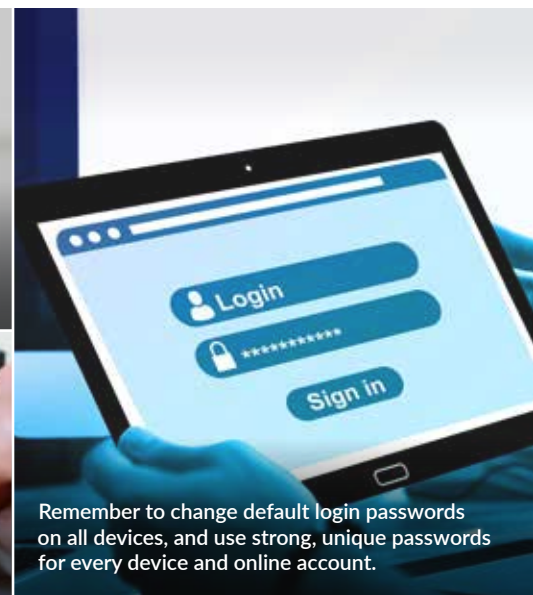
Remember to change default login passwords on all devices and use strong, unique passwords for every



If possible, keep your most critical devices on a separate network from your smart home gadgets to minimize risk.



Change the default device name and password for your modem or router.



Remember to change default login passwords on all devices, and use strong, unique passwords for every device and online account.

device and online account. Avoid reusing passwords, and if you have trouble remembering them, enlist the help of a password manager.

■ **Know what you're connecting to your home network.** Understand the purpose of each device on your network. If possible, keep your most critical devices on a separate network from your smart home gadgets to minimize risk. Many routers allow you to create a secondary (guest) network, which can be used to separate your smart devices from other connected electronics, like your laptop.

■ **Set devices to update automatically.** Most device manufacturers roll out updates to resolve bugs and enhance functionality. You should be able to select an "automatic update" option to ensure your devices include the latest security patches and features.

■ **Feeling overwhelmed? Find a cyber buddy.** Connect with a family member, friend or even a tech-savvy neighbor in your community. You can also check to see if your internet service provider offers support.

Taking steps toward better cybersecurity habits is about ownership, vigilance and proactive measures. Remember: it's a journey, so if you find managing multiple devices cumbersome, consider simplifying your digital surroundings. Being proactive now can prevent cyber issues down the line.

For your local electric cooperative, cyber threats don't stop at our front door, which is why we are deeply committed to staying on top of the latest cybersecurity practices. We belong to a network of hundreds of co-ops, and we work together to learn about the latest risks and share our experiences.

Together, we can secure our digital lives and support each other through the complexities of the modern age. Let's take these steps together and build a safer digital future for everyone.

Ryan Newlon writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2024-2025 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Family Investment Program (FIP), Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days. For FIP recipients, bring your current DHS

Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025. The start date is Oct. 1, 2024, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap. To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums	
Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$30,120
2	\$40,880
3	\$51,640
4	\$62,400
5	\$73,160
6	\$83,920
7	\$94,680
8	\$105,440

Note: For households with more than eight members, add \$10,760 for each additional member.

COME BACK TO SILENCE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Here on the farm, harvest is one of the busiest times of the year. Days are short, to-do lists are long, and it's always a race against time and the weather to get the corn and soybeans in the bin.

Machines provide a constant soundtrack to all this activity. Everywhere you turn, the roar of combines, tractors, semi-trucks and grain dryers never wanes. As much as I love this exciting time of year, my thoughts turn to something I heard a speaker address this past summer.

That young man is a pastor and an avid outdoor enthusiast who cherishes his annual summer trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Located in northern Minnesota, this massive area contains more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes, 12 hiking trails and 2,000 campsites.

"This wilderness offers freedom to those who wish to pursue an experience of expansive solitude," proclaims the U.S. Forest Service on its website.

Hmmmm, expansive solitude. What an intriguing concept.

The young man noted it's illegal to have a motor running in the BWCAW. What a stark contrast to daily life. Nearly everywhere you go, there's a motor running, from the car engine to the hum of the refrigerator or the whirl of a fan.

"For most of human history, people weren't overwhelmed with noise," the young man added. "Our souls aren't designed to be inundated with noise. We need to withdraw from the world periodically and seek more silence."

Turn down the volume

Consider the remarkable phenomenon that transforms people when they spend time in the BWCAW. The newbies seem agitated

for the first few days without all the electronic distractions that dominate modern life. After a couple of days, however, a "wilderness detox" kicks in.

The young man noted that his buddies who go with him to the BWCAW start enjoying life at a slower pace. It's not unusual to see them sitting by the campfire, just watching the flames, mindlessly poking the ashes with a stick. They are content.

"When we learn how to be quiet and listen, something deep inside us awakens," the young man said. "Our spirit is alert and paying attention."

The true power of silence emerges in the space it creates for reflection and understanding. Silence becomes a source of great strength.

Commit to listening

Silence can be uncomfortable, however, because we don't practice it.

Valuing silence also requires you to answer some key questions. Whose voice is the loudest in my life? What voices do I need to turn down? How can I listen for those gentle whispers that matter most?

It's possible to carve out silence, even in our chaotic, noisy world. The young man who savors the silence of the

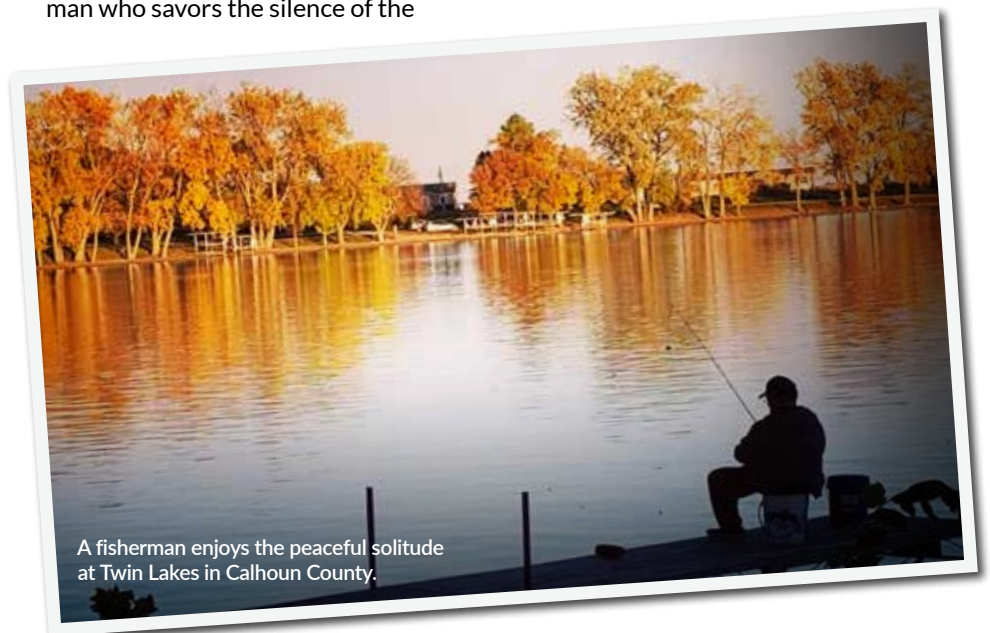
BWCAW urges us to accept one of these three challenges this week:

- 1 Enjoy silence next time you're traveling in your vehicle.** That means no music, phone calls, talk radio or podcasts.
- 2 Seek silence under the stars.** Go outside, and gaze at the night sky. Marvel at the beauty and grandeur of the heavens.
- 3 Carve out 5 minutes for silence each day.** Sit quietly in the morning before your day begins or take 5 minutes in the evening just to breathe, calm down and experience the silence. Set a timer on your phone so you don't have to watch the clock.

While these might seem challenging at first, pick one and give it a try. Once you do, seeking silence will become like water or air – essential to your very existence.

Silence allows us to channel our energies, provides the clarity we need to face challenges and calms our soul. That's a bountiful harvest indeed.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



A fisherman enjoys the peaceful solitude at Twin Lakes in Calhoun County.



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