

● SEPTEMBER 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Election results and  
report on annual meeting**

**Legislation threatens  
electric reliability**

**Tailgating recipes**

**Know the facts about a solar lease ▶ See Page 4**

# CONTENTS



5



8



15

VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 9

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Fall into safety this season

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a cordless leaf blower

10

IN THE COMMUNITY

Shine the Light Winners

15

SAFETY MATTERS

Preparing for safe harvest

**EDITOR**  
Ann Foster Thelen

**DESIGNERS**  
Megan Walters  
Bree Glenn

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS**  
Erin Campbell

**IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**  
Leslie Kaufman

**IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
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Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative  
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

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8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

**Email Address**  
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Nicole Meyer, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!



# FALL INTO SAFETY THIS SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



The kids are back in school and harvest season is almost here. Now is an ideal time to review some important safety precautions for fall.

## Safety in the field

As you head out to the fields during harvest, always keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If your equipment comes into contact with a power pole or power line, stay in the cab and call your local utility or 911 to report the contact. Keep others away from you or from touching the vehicle. Do not exit the vehicle until an authority tells you the line has been deenergized. If your equipment is on fire and you need to exit, jump clear of the cab with both feet together and shuffle step with both feet on the ground until you are 50 feet away to avoid electrocution.

## Look up and live

Cleaning gutters or working on the roof this fall? Always choose a non-conductive ladder made of wood or fiberglass for utmost safety. Pick a safe route to carry the ladder to the work area, and then carry it horizontally rather than upright. Be aware of electrical lines and tree branches in the area where you are working. When using an extension ladder, tie off the top of the ladder whenever possible.

Use the 1:4 lean ratio – the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet the ladder rises – to ensure a stable working platform.

## Move over or slow down

We need your help in keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road to work safely; their families thank you!

## Test your portable generators

Take advantage of the nice weather to run and test your portable

generators before a potential winter power outage. Operate your generator on a stable, dry surface and avoid rainy or wet conditions. Do not use a generator in an enclosed area; make sure the space is well-ventilated and be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be deadly. Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator, and always allow the generator to cool before refueling. Finally, never plug your portable generator into your home as it can back feed onto the electric grid and endanger our lineworkers.

*Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A TORO CORDLESS LEAF BLOWER!

The leaves will soon be falling, and a leaf blower is a must-have tool for your yard. This brushless leaf-blower tool provides powerful air speed and 70 minutes of runtime on a single charge. It comes with a 2.0-Ah battery and a Toro battery charger.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Sept. 30. 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 July issue was **Jennifer Meier**, a **T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPT. 19	Board meeting
OCT. 17	Board meeting

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*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 240  
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

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

**Fax:** 319-385-6873

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

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

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

**Office Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

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

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

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

**General Manager/CEO:** Kevin Wheeler

**Editor:** Kimberly Davis

**Officers and Directors:**

**Marvin Larson**, District 1, President  
[mlarson@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mlarson@accessenergycoop.com)

**David Hollingsworth**, District 1, Vice President  
[dhollingsworth@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:dhollingsworth@accessenergycoop.com)

**Michael Holtkamp**, District 3, Secretary  
[maholtkamp@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:maholtkamp@accessenergycoop.com)

**Robert P. Smith**, District 2, Treasurer  
[rsmith@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:rsmith@accessenergycoop.com)

**William Benjamin**, District 3, Director  
[wbenjamin@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:wbenjamin@accessenergycoop.com)

**Jerry Barker**, District 2, Director  
[jbarker@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:jbarker@accessenergycoop.com)

**Fred Hickenbottom**, District 1, Director  
[fhickenbottom@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:fhickenbottom@accessenergycoop.com)

**Marvin Newton**, District 3, Director  
[mnewton@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mnewton@accessenergycoop.com)

**Larry White**, District 2, Director  
[lwhite@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:lwhite@accessenergycoop.com)

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# LANDOWNERS: KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE SIGNING A SOLAR PROJECT LEASE

BY TYLER THEIN, P.E.



If you're a landowner in rural Iowa, you may have received solicitations offering land lease options for proposed solar projects. Often, these letters offer attractive per-acre rental payments for various phases of a long-term proposed project, promising steady and predictable income. However, like with all contracts, the devil is in the details. Before signing an agreement, we encourage you to do some homework and seek legal counsel to protect your rights.

Most of these letters are coming from companies outside of Iowa looking to lease land for future solar projects. We have noticed that many of these letters refer erroneously to Iowa law, referencing legislation (Senate File 2356) that did not pass last session.

Some solicitations falsely claim local support for their solar initiative or that the electric output would somehow benefit your neighbors or the local electric cooperative. We have also seen letters that deceptively include endorsements attributed to the Iowa Farm Bureau (IFB). IFB's legal team is working to remove these perceived endorsements.

Please consult your legal counsel before signing any agreement or contract. Your legal counsel can help explain the benefits and disadvantages of these agreements, answer any questions you have, and help negotiate fair and equitable terms. These long-term agreements can give the solar company exclusive options and control of your land for decades. Spending some extra time upfront to better understand the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement can save you significant time, money and headaches in the future.

*Tyler Thein, P.E., is the director of engineering for Access Energy Cooperative.*

## THANK YOU SUMMER HELP

Access Energy Cooperative appreciates the dedication and hard work of our summer help employees and summer intern in the engineering department this year.

- Jahmal Dodson, summer intern in the engineering department
- Nate Peiffer, summer help
- Sheldon Kruse, summer help



We wish these students good luck with their education plans this fall!



# PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

“At Access Energy Cooperative, we exist simply to provide for our members’ needs. It is people who make the difference – the cooperative difference for safe, reliable, efficient service,” stated Kevin Wheeler, general manager/CEO, during his report to the members of Access Energy Cooperative at the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members at McMillan Park in Mount Pleasant on Aug. 6.

Jennifer Lynn Handling and Revolution put on a great show for the evening. Mount Pleasant Hy-Vee served a delicious meal, accompanied by homemade ice cream from Hinterland Dairy of Donnellson. Kids enjoyed inflatable activities from Fields of Fun, pony rides by Windy Acres, and Drive-a-Tractor by the Proennecke brothers and Dick McGohan. Henry County Public Health and the Henry County Sheriff’s Office displayed information and interacted with members in addition to cooperative employees providing information on electrical safety, SmartHub, energy efficiency and demand.

“Access Energy Cooperative thoroughly and sincerely appreciates the assistance and participation from every individual and organization who helped make this meeting happen for our members, including those unseen like Quality Equipment, Mount Pleasant VFW, Mount Pleasant Fire Department, Staats, Midwest Old Threshers, City of Mount Pleasant, Lance Refuse, Yotty’s Golf Cars, United Rentals, Printgroup, former employees and spouses of employees,

Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and Associated Electric Cooperative employees who helped,” adds Kimberly Davis, director of member services and public relations for Access Energy Cooperative.

### Election results, prizes and dividends

Following reports from the cooperative officers and Mark Viguet from Associated Electric Cooperative, election results were reported by the cooperative attorney during the business portion of the meeting. Marvin Larson was elected in district one to serve a three-year term. In district two, Larry White was elected for a three-year term, and Jerry Barker was elected for a two-year term. William “Bill” Benjamin was elected for a three-year term in district three.

Drawings were held for prizes, including the grand prize of a \$250 bill credit, won by member Robert Kessel. Dividend checks for 2024 totaling \$1,235,090 were available for members to pick up at the meeting. For those who were unable to make it to the meeting, checks will be mailed the week of Aug. 26.

After the meeting, during the annual reorganizational meeting of the board of directors, the following were elected as the officers of the Access Energy Cooperative board of directors: President Marvin Larson, Vice President David Hollingsworth, Secretary Michael Holtkamp and Treasurer Robert P. Smith.

# 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 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) \_\_\_\_\_



# ELECTRIC RELIABILITY UNDER ATTACK BY GOVERNMENT RULES

BY MARK VIGUET

During previous winter storms and summer heat waves, many electric cooperatives set records for seasonal electricity demand. Through the extreme conditions, Associated Electric Cooperative (Associated) – the power generator for electric cooperatives in southeast Iowa, Missouri and northeast Oklahoma – and its six transmission cooperative member-owners kept the power flowing reliably using a balanced portfolio of generation sources, including coal and natural gas power plants, hydropower, wind and a resilient transmission system.

While other utility companies resorted to rolling blackouts during the harsh weather, Associated kept power flowing, thanks in large part to the 24/7 coal power plants and natural gas generation designed to work when they are most needed, regardless of weather conditions.

## The future is cloudy

But the potential for a less reliable electric system looms. Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a new rule targeting existing coal-fired and new gas-fired

power plants with the goal of shutting down all fossil fuel power plants. This controversial rule will have devastating effects on the reliability of the electric grid by speeding up the retirements of coal and natural gas plants, which produce 60% of the energy in the U.S.

Reliability is not a concern of the EPA. The result for electric cooperatives is less reliable and more expensive electricity for their members. For those reasons, the EPA has been challenged in multiple lawsuits by a coalition of utilities in 27 states.

## Fossil fuel generation delivers unmatched reliability

Associated's diverse mix of generation resources keeps reliability and affordability as the top priorities for the electricity generated and delivered to members. As pressure from the EPA causes more reliable fossil fuel plants to shut down prematurely, what energy source will fill the gap? Coal and natural gas plants are the backbone of reliable and affordable power for electric cooperatives because they are available when needed 24/7. Renewable sources, such as wind and solar, cannot provide

power with that same reliability.

When coal plants and natural gas generators are replaced by weather-dependent, intermittent sources like solar and wind, reliability will suffer while prices increase. Until there is a proven alternative with equal reliability, fossil fuel generation is a key part of keeping the lights on.

## Cooperatives invest in a cleaner environment

Those who rely on the land, air and water for their livelihoods are deeply invested in taking care of the environment they depend upon. For electric cooperatives, safeguarding rural communities is a foundational value demonstrated through a history of proactive stewardship and compliance with state and federal regulations.



# WINTERIZE FOR SAFETY BEFORE THE COLD WEATHER HITS

Each year, winter poses a very real threat to homeowners. The consequences of being unprepared for extreme weather can be long-lasting, leaving many homeowners to deal with the financial fallout into spring and beyond. By winterizing your home, you can protect yourself from potential consequences when freezing weather and winter storms strike.

Check these key aspects of your home before cold weather arrives to ensure you are ready for winter.

**Insulation.** Freezing weather can lead to pipes leaking or bursting, and plummeting temperatures can cause discomfort to your household. Help make your house safe and comfortable by insulating walls and

attics, installing weatherstrips on doors and windows and using insulation sleeves on water pipes. Consider an insulated blanket for your house's water heater.

**Roofing.** Is your roof prepared for heavy snow? A contractor can conduct an inspection to ensure it can withstand excessive snowfall and check for areas that need repairs to help keep the roof over your head leak-free. To prevent ice dams, a water-repellent membrane can be installed under your roof covering.

**Furniture.** It's important to keep heat circulating in your home during winter. Make sure furniture does not block heating vents and that the flue to your fireplace (if you have one) is

closed when not in use. During extreme cold spells, it may be helpful to keep cabinet doors open, allowing warm air to circulate around pipes in kitchens and bathrooms.

**Insurance.** Review your homeowner's insurance policy to know what it covers in the event of inclement weather. Determine if it covers common wintertime claims, such as burst pipes or roof damage from ice dams, and to see if you may benefit from additional coverage.





“Given that clean air, water and land resources mean so much to the electric cooperative members we serve, our commitment to the environment is not just talk, but put into action,” says Buster Geisendorfer, board president of Associated. “Cooperative member-ownership and leadership of our cooperative ensures our values reflect those who use our electricity.”

Since 1993, Associated and its member-owners have spent more than \$1.1 billion to reduce air emissions by 90% at its coal power plants. The improvements, which included a milestone conversion to cleaner low-sulfur coal, were the leading edge of Associated’s proactive environmental work.

### Protecting water and air resources

Since 2015, Associated and its members have invested more than \$202 million to meet coal and water mandates issued by the EPA, funding coal ash and water quality projects, including pond closures, water systems and groundwater quality monitoring. Part of that total includes \$69 million in recent projects for both New Madrid Power Plant and Thomas Hill Energy Center to remain compliant.

### Make your opinion known today

Meeting reliability and environmental responsibilities is an ongoing commitment made more challenging and costly by recent EPA rules. Today more than ever, reliable and affordable power is at risk.

You can help. Send a letter to your members of Congress telling them to support reliable power by halting the EPA’s unrealistic, unnecessary and expensive rules.

*Mark Viguet is the managing director of corporate communications for Associated Electric Cooperative.*

### Cleaner energy

Associated Electric Cooperative’s long-term commitment to a healthy environment includes the following.

#### Carbon cut

From 2005 to 2023, Associated has reduced its carbon emissions rate by nearly 25%.

#### Wind power

The addition of eight wind farms since 2007 has lowered carbon emissions.

#### Natural gas generation

Associated has added cleaner-burning natural gas plants, which results in carbon reduction.

#### Greenhouse gas drop

Since 1994, Associated has reduced total greenhouse gas emissions by 90%.

#### Environmental investments

Since 2015, Associated has invested more than \$202 million to meet coal and water mandates issued by the EPA.

*“Given that clean air, water and land resources mean so much to the electric cooperative members we serve, our commitment to the environment is not just talk, but put into action.”*

– Buster Geisendorfer  
Associated Electric Cooperative board president

## TIPS FOR INTEGRATING SMART HOME TECH

If you’re new to smart home technologies, keep the following tips in mind as you explore home automation options.

- 1. Define goals.** Determine the areas in your home you want to make smart, like lighting, security and entertainment systems.
- 2. Choose compatible devices.** A smart hub can make integration easier with a central device to control multiple smart technologies.
- 3. Check Wi-Fi strength.** Smart home technologies require a stable internet connection to function properly, so consider factors like router placement and signal strength.
- 4. Prioritize security.** Set strong, unique passwords for your Wi-Fi network, set devices to update automatically and limit personal data collection.





# TAILGATE BITES

## STUFFED HOT PEPPERS

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- ½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 6 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder

15-20 mini sweet peppers or hot peppers

Mix all ingredients except peppers. Cut peppers in half lengthwise and remove seeds. Spread cheese mixture in pepper halves. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-30 minutes. If using sweet peppers, add some chopped hot peppers to the cheese mixture if desired.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## RANCH CHICKEN

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs  
Lawry's Seasoned Salt, to taste
- 1 cup ranch style dressing
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Trim excess fat off chicken. Season with Lawry's and place in bowl. Pour ranch dressing over chicken and sprinkle with pepper. Allow to marinate for 1-2 hours or cook immediately. Grill on a wood pellet grill until internal temperature is 165 degrees F. Serves 4-6

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## SIMPLE CHEESE DIP

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 block cheese
- 1 can pizza sauce
- tortilla chips

Cook ground beef, then combine with cheese and pizza sauce in a slow cooker. Heat until melted. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 12

Rebecca Hancox • Plano  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## GRIDIRON GUACAMOLE

- 3 avocados, pitted
- 1 small jalapeño, finely chopped, remove seeds if desired
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped plus more for serving
- ¼ cup small white or red onion, finely chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, optional
- tortilla chips

In a large bowl, mix avocados, jalapeño, cilantro, onion, lime juice, salt and nutritional yeast, if desired. Slowly turn bowl as you run a fork through the mixture to ensure guacamole stays chunky. Continue until desired consistency is reached. Top with additional cilantro and serve with tortilla chips. Serves 6

Jeffrey Hedquist • Fairfield  
Access Energy Cooperative



## CHILI SAUCE FOR HOT DOGS

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 can kidney beans

Brown ground beef, onion and garlic, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until heated. *Serves 16-20*

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## TAILGATE PARTY MIX

- 4 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 4 cups Corn Chex cereal
- 2 cups cheese crackers
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 4 cups cheese popcorn

Mix cereal and crackers together. Melt butter and add taco seasoning, stir well. Pour over cereal and stir until evenly coated. Microwave 3 minutes. Cool for 30 minutes, then stir in popcorn. Store in air-tight container.

Mary Gropper • Chelsea  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## TAILGATE BRUNCH ENCHILADAS

- 2 cups ham, fully cooked and cubed
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 10 8-inch flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt

Combine ham and onion. Place about ½ cup of mixture down the center of each tortilla. Top each with 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up tortilla and place seam side down in a greased 9x13-inch pan. In a bowl, combine flour, milk, eggs and salt. Stir well, then pour over tortillas. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes. Sprinkle with any remaining cheese and bake 3 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 10*

Mary Beth Peiffer • Cedar Rapids  
Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative

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and search our online archive  
of hundreds of recipes in  
various categories.



## SLOW COOKER SHREDDED CHICKEN NACHOS

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 1-ounce packet taco seasoning
- 1 15.5-ounce can corn, drained
- 1 15.5-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup salsa
- ½ lime, juiced
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced for garnish
- tortilla chips or cooked rice

Place chicken breasts in bottom of slow cooker. Season the tops of the chicken with half of the taco seasoning. Pour the corn, beans, salsa and remaining taco seasoning on top of the chicken. Cook on low for 6-8 hours, or until chicken is cooked through and the internal temperature has reached 165 degrees F. Remove the chicken to shred, then return to slow cooker. Stir in the lime juice and garnish with fresh cilantro. Serve immediately over tortilla chips or a bed of rice. *Serves 4*

Theresa Hays • Redfield  
Guthrie County REC

WANTED:

## BREAD WINNERS

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

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



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

MAIL: Recipes  
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322



# MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

Judy Hess is pictured second from the left.



## COMMUNITY BEACON

JUDY HESS AND THE MAGS REVITALIZE FONDA

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their fourth-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

The judging committee reviewed essays from 75 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Judy Hess**, who is recognized for community dedication and innovation through Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc.; **Doug Pralle**, who is recognized for his generous efforts through Compassion Flights; and **Beth Thole**, who is recognized for her commitment to preserving the area's agricultural heritage.

These three winners have been awarded a \$3,000 donation to their charity. The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities.

Learn more at [www.iowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.iowaShineTheLight.com).

When Kerry Noethe heard about the Shine the Light contest, one name stood out instantly: Judy Hess. As the vibrant founder of Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc. (MAGs), Hess represents the heart and soul of community dedication and innovation.

"I've always admired the group's dedication," Noethe shares. "Judy has always been a good leader. I've been part of volunteer programs in the past, and I know how important it was to me when my children were young. Keeping people aware of the community and showing it's a good place to live is valuable even though we're a bedroom community.

Judy is always looking for new ideas, and she's just a great motivator."

Amanda Johnson, a dedicated member of MAGs, highlights the group's profound connection to their hometown.

"I think we have a lot of pride about our hometown of Fonda," Johnson says. "Our kids and our grandkids are really important to us, so it's just a no-brainer to do things that benefit our community and our kids."

For Noethe, now a grandmother herself, the value of a thriving community is deeply personal.





“My grandchildren are 16 and 13, and they have been coming to Fonda since they were babies,” she explains.

“Our little towns are just dying out. We want to keep Fonda a place where our kids can play and enjoy our town, keeping it a community where people want to live and raise their families.”

**Maintaining community spirit and vitality**

Hess launched MAGs in 2018, and the group’s momentum has been unstoppable ever since.

“We put the group together in 2018, setting up the pool. We put everything toward the youth,” Hess explains. “We gave them a freezer and refrigerator to use. We added a slide, lawn chairs, a water filler and a drinking fountain in the park. We’ve organized various fundraisers for the group.”

Every MAGs project relies on volunteer efforts, donations and grants.

“I got some people together,” Hess recalls. “Everyone was excited about it, and we started doing fundraisers. We have Chicken Bingo, and we’ve organized different community events and hosted a father/daughter dance.”

Other fundraising events feature a variety of activities, including festive Christmas events, an exciting rodeo and many more community gatherings.

MAGs is raising funds to replace the outdated public basketball court. The new court, projected to cost \$78,000, will feature a regulation-size VersaCourt floor with official markings and new baskets. Hess hopes the project will be completed by 2025.

Hess and MAGs are significantly impacting Fonda, turning it into a more vibrant and welcoming community. Their unwavering commitment ensures that the town remains a cherished place for current and future generations.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



**WHERE HOPE GROWS WINGS**  
**FLYING THE COMPASSIONATE SKIES WITH DOUG PRALLE**

Doug Pralle is pictured with his airplane.

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Doug Pralle has been flying since 2008, but his journey into the skies started much earlier, rooted in an emotional childhood memory.

“When I was a kid, my Dad died at an early age,” Pralle recalls. “I found some of his pilot books. He was training to be a pilot. I think, as an 8-year-old, it kind of tied me to him. Once I got old enough and could afford it, I got my license.”

One particular childhood memory stands out, shaping his future endeavors.

“My Dad was in a hospital in Chicago, and the doctor gave us his limo to take to a Cubs game. As a kid, you remember that stuff. His kindness created a spark in me,” Pralle reflects.

That spark ignited a spirit for giving back. In 2008 and 2009, Pralle flew a local child and his mother to Rochester for cancer treatment.

“Years later, I started thinking about ways to give back and use some of the skills we built over time, so we started Compassion Flights,” he says.

**Wings of hope**

Compassion Flights, a nonprofit organization, offers free flights to those in need of medical care. Pralle and Compassion Flights fly patients from

Iowa to surrounding states, working with other groups for longer trips.

The process of applying for a compassion flight is simple. Those in need or who know someone in need can visit [www.compassionflights.com](http://www.compassionflights.com), fill out an online flight request, and get a response directly from Pralle or his wife.

When Pralle isn’t flying for Compassion Flights, he’s working his day job as a crop duster, spraying fields with an airplane or helicopter, and farming with his brother. The nonprofit operates entirely on donations.

“We are here for everyone,” Pralle emphasizes. “We work 100% on donations. No one takes any wage. My spray business pays for most of the bills, from the lighting and heating. When people donate money, they donate it directly to a flight.”

Each flight costs about \$500, depending on various factors. Despite the costs and the challenges, Pralle remains committed to his mission.

“Our motto is ‘Where Hope Grows Wings,’” he says. “We’re trying to help somebody not think about what’s actually going on in their life. We want to just get them away from everything for a little bit.”

Through Compassion Flights, Pralle offers more than just transportation – he provides a lifeline – a moment of relaxation and a twinkle of hope for those navigating the toughest times of their lives.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



# NAVIGATING SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

BY SCOTT FLOOD

From grocery store shelves to repair parts for vehicles, we've all had firsthand experiences with supply chain issues in recent years. Parts and components electric co-ops use every day are also in short supply, which delays planned upgrades for power reliability and increases the costs of parts and labor.

## Cooperation among cooperatives

Electric co-ops are working together to find innovative ways to address supply chain issues. This year, those efforts resulted in a major win regarding updated federal efficiency standards for distribution transformers, which has co-op leaders breathing more easily.

Electric transformers are critical equipment that help deliver power to consumers. These essential devices adjust electricity voltage, up or down, to enable safe and efficient power flow.

In 2022, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) proposed new efficiency requirements for distribution transformers. Among other provisions, the proposal would have required manufacturers of those transformers to switch to amorphous steel within three years in place of the grain-oriented electrical steel (GOES) that has long been used. Amorphous steel is chemically altered in ways that may make transformers more efficient.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is wary of the DOE's expectations for this change in material, especially when transformer manufacturers are already struggling to keep up with demand. Currently, there is only one U.S. producer of this specialty steel.

The availability of federal infrastructure funding is making it possible for co-ops to invest in the capacity, safety and reliability of the systems delivering electricity to



For the foreseeable future, electric co-ops will continue to face challenges in securing the supplies and equipment they need.



Parts and components electric co-ops use every day are in short supply.



Electric transformers are critical equipment that help deliver power to consumers.

co-op communities. That's good for co-ops and their members, but it's increasing pressure on the supply chain.

"The domestic supply chain hasn't caught up with demand, and the industry is going through a learning curve," notes Stephanie Crawford, NRECA regulatory affairs director. "It will take some time for manufacturers to retool their production and for producers to make enough amorphous steel to meet the need."

## Creating a squeeze on supply

While co-op leaders appreciate the significant federal money being made available to update local energy infrastructure, it is also putting a squeeze on supply.

"Amid all the challenges co-ops are already facing, it presents a big problem to ask the industry to make a 100% switch in just three years when the sole supplier only produces enough for about 5% of today's market," Crawford adds.

NRECA and electric co-ops joined others in the power industry to educate key contacts in Congress, the White House and the DOE about supply chain challenges, particularly the requirements for the quick shift to amorphous steel.

"After more than a year of advocacy efforts, the DOE issued its final rule, which allows continued use of GOES in smaller-sized transformers," Crawford explains. "This provides greater certainty with the transformer sizes cooperatives use the most, particularly in the residential segment."

The DOE rule also includes a longer compliance timeframe for shifting to amorphous steel.

"Extending the deadline to 2029 will help manufacturers adapt for the future," Crawford adds.

*Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.*



# FEDERAL TAX CREDITS, INCENTIVES AND REBATES FOR EFFICIENCY UPGRADES

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Tax credits and rebates can help bridge the affordability gap for higher-efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete energy efficiency upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money in years to come.

## Tax credits vs. rebates

Knowing the difference between a tax credit and a rebate is important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the rebate program is set up, it may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that taxpayers can report on their tax documents to reduce the amount of taxes owed. When you file your tax documents, you apply for a tax credit, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than a rebate.

## Tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades

According to ENERGY STAR®, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal tax credits are available for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps. Tax credits for ENERGY STAR-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope – the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside – with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

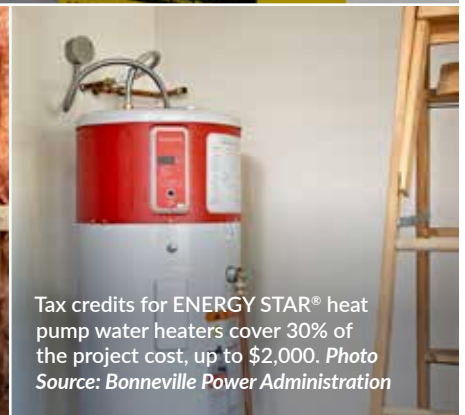
If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the panel upgrade, up to \$600.



When shopping for appliances, look for the ENERGY STAR® logo on the energy guide to identify which products are the most efficient options. *Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources*



You can also improve your home's envelope with tax credits for insulation. *Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources*



Tax credits for ENERGY STAR® heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. *Photo Source: Bonneville Power Administration*

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the U.S., not new construction.

## Rebates for energy efficiency upgrades

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 expanded available funding for many home upgrades. The act allocated \$8.8 million for home rebate programs to be implemented at the state level, and this funding is offered in two different programs. The HOMES program allows up to \$8,000 per home for standard-income households. Higher rebates are available for low-to moderate-income households. The HEAR program offers rebates of up to \$14,000 per home for qualified, efficient electric equipment for low-to moderate-income households.

These programs are designed to bolster existing programs and should be available in late 2024 or early 2025.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, more than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents. These programs can help people save money on electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid.

Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable, helping you save money and improve the overall comfort of your home.

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Beth Thole is pictured in the back row, second from left.

## KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE BETH THOLE IS COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

BY KELLY SLAGTER

*Continued from Page 11*

Gary and Karen Trei, members of Osceola Electric Cooperative, immediately thought of Beth Thole when they read the 2024 Shine the Light contest description in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Thole's enthusiasm and dedication to remembering the past and educating future generations are things to be admired.

"Working with Beth is never dull," explains Karen. "When you volunteer for Beth, you never know which job you'll end up doing or who you'll end up working with."

As a retired teacher, Thole's passion for education lives on in her vision for a pavilion to educate residents of Osceola County about the area's deep agricultural heritage. The Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion on the county fairgrounds began taking shape seven years ago when Thole's research led her to realize the trials and determination of previous generations.

"It's important to keep that history alive and teach the people coming after us what their forefathers did," Thole explains. "The pavilion uses pictures and artifacts from donors to create exhibits that tell stories and trigger memories."

**Bringing the community together**  
Since the Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion began, Thole and the

Agriculture Pavilion board have coordinated several events to unite the community and raise funds for the museum. The success of these events, which were entertaining and educational, is a testament to the integral role of each community member. Fundraisers included an escape room at a historic schoolhouse, cemetery headstone tours with local actors to bring the stories alive, tractor rides, auctions and dinners. Other donations, such as lumber and building materials, have also been abundant.

"When people bring something to donate, they often stick around to help set it up," Thole says.

Her vast knowledge of people within the community has brought together many volunteers, both young and old.

"Osceola Electric Cooperative is happy to contribute to educating the

community on our county's history," says Jeff TenNapel, general manager of Osceola Electric Cooperative.

For one of the exhibits, electric cooperative linemen assembled vintage material to recreate infrastructure, portraying what it looked like when electricity first came to rural Osceola County in the 1940s and 1950s. The display sits out front of the 100-year-old Agriculture Pavilion building as a reminder of how rural electrification dramatically improved the lives of farmers and their families.

Thole and the Agriculture Pavilion board have many ideas for using the \$3,000 donation; among them are purchasing tables for upcoming events and a smart TV to aid in the exhibits.

*Article contributed by Kelly Slagter, customer service representative/communicator, Osceola Electric Cooperative.*





## PREPARE FOR A SAFE HARVEST

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant for safety.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but its impressive size, height and extensions make it particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

### 360 awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to act if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or are concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Access Energy Cooperative first.

### Avoiding electrical accidents

To ensure a safe harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends

the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

## CONGRATULATIONS MIP GRAD



Congratulations to Access Energy Cooperative employee Ricardo Ortiz who recently graduated from the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association's Management Internship Program (MIP).

MIP offers a unique opportunity for cooperative employees to enhance their leadership skills, gain valuable industry knowledge and contribute to the success of their cooperative. Through this program, Ortiz engaged in a comprehensive six-week in-person class and online coursework, dedicating 228 hours to further his professional growth and investment in our cooperative.

We are proud of his hard work and dedication to the members of Access Energy Cooperative.

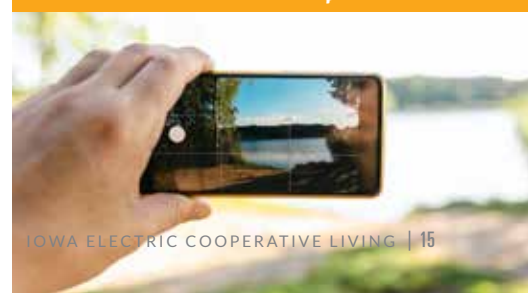
## 2025 PHOTO CONTEST BEGINS

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](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com) before March 31, 2025.

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

Visit [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) for complete rules.

**WIN UP TO \$100!**



## 5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.





IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives.

September 2024

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

A photograph of a man in a blue denim shirt with his hand raised in a meeting. He is wearing glasses and has a beard. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a meeting setting.

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