

● NOVEMBER 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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### ON THE COVER

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



# THE POWER OF FACE-TO-FACE ADVOCACY

BY ETHAN HOHENADEL



It's not just what you say, but how you say it. Delivering a message in person, rather than by phone or email, can have a profound

impact on how the message is received. One way the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) achieves this goal is by coordinating legislative fly-ins to Washington, D.C., twice a year.

Each spring and fall, a group of directors and senior staff from Iowa's electric cooperatives journey to our nation's capital to meet with Iowa's congressional delegation and their staff. These face-to-face meetings provide us with valuable opportunities to discuss priorities and issues facing the rural Iowa members and communities we serve.

## Fly-in facilitates important conversations

During our recent September fly-in, our group of 20 Iowa co-op advocates met with all six members of Iowa's congressional delegation. We voiced our concerns about recent cuts to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDLG) program and how vital these funds are to retaining and creating jobs in rural Iowa.

Iowa's electric co-ops lead the nation in utilizing the REDLG program to spur economic development in the small towns and rural areas we serve. We encouraged our senators and representatives to support efforts to restore REDLG funding in 2025 with intentions to maintain optimal funding levels in 2026.

We also asked our elected officials to support reasonable permitting reform to allow utilities to build sorely needed electric transmission

capacity more quickly. Finally, we shared our objections to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new power plant rules, which threaten the reliability and affordability of electricity for the Iowans we serve. We join America's electric cooperatives in opposing the EPA's power plant rules on the grounds that they are unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable.

## In-person meetings make a powerful impact

Investing time and resources to meet with our elected officials in person makes a powerful impact. They appreciate face time with constituents, and we value the opportunity to talk with them and their staff in-depth about energy and economic issues. As the trade association for Iowa's electric cooperatives, IAEC is actively involved in educating our state and federal legislators on energy issues.

## How you can join our grassroots efforts

We also engage with our legislators and policymakers on the grassroots level through our Iowa Rural Power advocacy efforts. As a member-consumer of an Iowa electric cooperative, we invite you to join this group and receive updates on rural Iowa energy and economic issues that may impact your community. Learn more at [www.IARuralPower.org](http://www.IARuralPower.org) or search for "Iowa Rural Power" on social media.

Iowa's locally owned and governed electric cooperatives are committed to our mission of powering lives and communities. Maintaining positive relationships with our elected officials and policymakers is just one way we work hard to ensure safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity.

*Ethan Hohenadel is the director of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN AN iROBOT ROOMBA VAC!

Your chore list just got shorter. The Roomba Vac Essential robot is a vacuum loaded with cleaning essentials and powered by iRobot OS. Its cleaning system has three levels of powerful suction for a custom clean on carpets and hard floors.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Nov. 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 Toro Leaf Blower from the September issue was **Norman Harrison**, a **Consumers Energy** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| NOV. 21    | Board meeting                                     |
| NOV. 28-29 | Office closed for Thanksgiving                    |
| DEC. 16    | Bill credit drawing for member information update |
| DEC. 18    | Member Advisory Committee meeting                 |
| DEC. 19    | Board meeting                                     |
| DEC. 24-25 | Office closed for Christmas                       |
| JAN. 1     | Office closed for New Year's Day                  |

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://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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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

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## UPDATED PROCESS FOR IDLE SERVICES

BY KEVIN WHEELER



In the new year, Access Energy Cooperative will update our idle service process. Idle services are facilities or equipment owned by Access Energy Cooperative that are located on a member's property and have not used electric service for 12 consecutive months.

Members with an idle service are charged a service fee to retain the facility or equipment on their property. This idle service fee covers costs incurred by the cooperative for inspections, maintenance, insurance and property taxes for that equipment or facilities since the cooperative incurs these expenses, whether the service is active or idle. Currently, members who have an idle service are billed on an annual basis.

### Idle service accounts will receive monthly statements

Beginning Jan. 1, 2025, members with an idle service will receive a monthly statement for the \$25 idle service fee plus tax. If the member also has an active service, the idle

service will be a sub-account of their active service account.

If you choose not to pay the monthly idle service fee, Access Energy Cooperative may remove the cooperative-owned facilities or equipment on the property at a time convenient for our workload without further notification.

### Contact our office if an idle service is no longer required

If you no longer wish to retain an idle service or no longer own the land where an idle service was located, please notify our office. Your prompt response will assist us in updating our records and ensure we provide accurate information to the correct recipients.

It is essential to note that if you request restoration of services after the removal of equipment, you may be required to cover the costs associated with replacement before construction begins.

If you have questions, please contact us at 866-242-4232 or email [contactus@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:contactus@accessenergycoop.com).

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

## SAFETY DIRECTOR BECOMES CERTIFIED LOSS CONTROL PROFESSIONAL

Congratulations to Kurt Lowenberg, safety director/assistant operations manager for Access Energy Cooperative, who completed an intensive electric utility safety and loss control training program. The Certified Loss Control Program is a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in conjunction with the National Utility Training & Safety Education Association. This program is designed to instruct participants in many areas related to electric utility industry safety.



Kurt Lowenberg (left) receives his certificate from Kevin Wheeler, general manager/CEO of Access Energy Cooperative.

# USDA REVOLVING LOAN FUND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

BY KIM DAVIS



Access Energy Cooperative established its Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program to help improve the quality of life in

the communities in our service area by contributing to long-term local economic improvement.

The RLF program was created by matching grants initially obtained through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program to assist local nonprofit projects. The grants were loaned to the initial projects, and once paid back to the cooperative, the funds became available to re-loan to other local economic development projects.

The goal of the RLF program is to provide low- or no-interest loans for local expansions or new business projects. The priorities of this program include job creation and retention, diversification of the local economy, improving the skills of our workforce, and upgrading public infrastructure

to improve the health, safety and/or medical care of residents. Access Energy Cooperative's board of directors administers and manages this fund.

Since the first RLF – awarded in 2000 to the Henry County Industrial Development Corporation for a speculative building (which is now the Bar-S building in the Mount Pleasant Industrial Park) – Access Energy Cooperative has sponsored 29 loans in our communities. We have also sponsored five pass-through loans, which are loans given to recipients via the cooperative.

Combined, the initial grants from USDA totaled \$1.8 million. These two programs have allowed more than \$9.5 million in loans for businesses and organizations throughout our communities. Access Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity employer, provider and lender.

*Kim Davis is the director of member services/public relations for Access Energy Cooperative.*

## SAFETY TRAINING PROVIDED FOR LOCAL EMERGENCY STAFF

Access Energy Cooperative recently provided safety training for area local emergency management professionals and fire chiefs at the cooperative's office in Mount Pleasant. The training included safety information for emergencies involving downed power lines and a 7,200-volt live line display unit. This program is designed to give individuals who serve our communities the knowledge and skills to stay safe around electricity. We are committed to fostering a culture of safety and promoting awareness about electrical hazards.



# UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A  
\$50 BILL CREDIT

Deadline Dec. 15



Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

If you have an email account with Google or Yahoo and you have not used your account for 12 months, it may no longer be active. Please update your email address.

### TO SUBMIT AN ENTRY FOR THE DRAWING

- Return this form with your bill
- Mail it to:  
Access Energy Cooperative  
Info Update  
P.O. BOX 440  
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641
- Email it to:  
contactus@accessenergycoop.com
- Use the SmartHub app:  
Click on *Contact Us* to request a change to your personal information
- Call our office:  
1-866-242-4232

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



## HELP OTHERS BY CONTRIBUTING TO RECare

RECare is a program where members help other members in need.

You may make a one-time monetary contribution to the RECare program or enclose an amount each month with your monthly electric bill.



The amount collected for contributions July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, was \$5,225.68. We thank those members who have given to help others. This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines.

**You can use SmartHub to have a monthly amount included on 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) \_\_\_\_\_

# ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Access Energy Cooperative is offering \$9,000 in scholarships to high school seniors! This includes six \$1,500 awards, with at least one in each of the cooperative's three districts.

Applicants must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative. More details can be found on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

#### Applications can be found:

- On our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). Complete the application online; or download it and fax, mail or bring it to our office. Instructions are on the form for submitting.
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative office in Mount Pleasant at 866-242-4232.



**Applications are due in our office March 15, 2025. Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.**

## 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**



# SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS: WIN A FREE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Access Energy Cooperative will send up to two students on an all-expense-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2025!

At Access Energy Cooperative, one way we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders is by participating in the national electric cooperative Youth Tour program. We're looking for high school juniors or seniors to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital.

Two students will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the Youth Tour from June 15-21, 2025. Participants will learn more about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums and historical landmarks. Students who go on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!



**Students can apply now for a trip to Washington, D.C., from June 15-21!**

Sophomore or junior students are encouraged to apply, especially those interested in government and public service.

## Application details

**We are accepting Youth Tour applications through Feb. 28, 2025.** Students must attend a school in southeast Iowa in one of the 10 counties served by Access Energy Cooperative. Applications can be found on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). Personal interviews to choose our student representatives will be held at our office in March. You must be able to participate in an interview on that date to apply.



## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE LINEWORKER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Up to two \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded per year to students enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a one- or two-year electric lineworker program, such as the Northwest Iowa Community College Powerline program in Sheldon or the utilities/lineman program at State Technical College in Linn, Missouri.

### 2025 timelines

- March 15 – Application deadline
- April 30 – Awards announced
- Award recipients have until March 31, 2026, to apply for initial scholarship payment

### Eligibility requirements

- Must be a high school graduate
- Must maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or above

- Must reside in southeast Iowa in the general Access Energy Cooperative service area (not limited to Access Energy Cooperative territorial boundaries)

### APPLICATION PROCESS

#### Find an application:

- By visiting our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative office in Mount Pleasant at 866-242-4232

Complete details can be found at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).



THANKSGIVING

SIDE  
DISHES

## APPLES &amp; YAMS

- 2 large yams
- 2 apples
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon corn starch
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup orange juice
- 3 tablespoons pecans or walnuts, chopped water

Fill a large saucepan with water and boil unpeeled yams for 30 minutes, until tender but firm. Cool yams enough to handle, then peel and slice crosswise, ¼-inch thick. Core and slice apples ¼-inch thick. In a shallow 1-quart baking dish, overlap the apple and yam slices. In saucepan, combine brown sugar, corn starch and cloves. Add orange juice and blend. Cook over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves and sauce thickens. Pour sauce over apples and yams. Sprinkle with nuts and bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes.

Karen Caldwell • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CORNBREAD BAKE

- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 can cream style corn
- 1 can whole corn, undrained
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 small box cornbread mix

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl. Pour mixture into a lightly greased 9x9-inch pan or baking dish. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 55-60 minutes. Serve warm. Serves 8

Kristine Frakes • Melrose  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## SCALLOPED CHICKEN DISH

- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 13 ounces evaporated milk
- 1 quart chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 chicken, cooked and boned
- 2 cups celery, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cups croutons
- 2 teaspoons sage
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Mix eggs, soup, milk, broth and butter. Add chicken, celery, onions, croutons and seasonings. Bake covered at 375 degrees F for 1½ hours. Serves 15

Jana Overholtzer • Russell  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CREAM CHEESE MASHED POTATOES

- 5 pounds potatoes
- 1-2 cups sour cream
- 6-8 ounces cream cheese
- 2 teaspoons onion salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- shredded cheese, optional

Peel, cube and cook potatoes. Mash potatoes and add remaining ingredients, mix well. If potatoes are too stiff, add a little milk. Shredded cheese can be mixed in or put on top. Freezes well. Serves 8

Ranita Gehman • North English  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative



## SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE WITH PRALINES

- 6 cups sweet potatoes
- 1½ cups sugar
- 3 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- 2 sticks butter, softened, divided
- 2 eggs
- 1¾ cups brown sugar
- 2 cups pecans, chopped
- 1 cup flour

Cook, drain and mash sweet potatoes. Mix with sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 1 stick butter and eggs. Spread in greased 9x13-inch pan. Mix brown sugar, 2 teaspoons vanilla, pecans, 1 stick butter and flour. Sprinkle on top of casserole. Cover with foil and bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 15-25 minutes, until heated through and topping is browned. *Serves 12-24*

Amber Wetzel • Linden  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

## SWEET POTATO CRANBERRY CASSEROLE

- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 2 17-ounce cans yams, drained  
or 4 cups sweet potatoes, peeled, cut and cooked
- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- mini marshmallows, optional

Combine flour, oatmeal, brown sugar and cinnamon. Cut in butter (can substitute margarine). In a large bowl, combine yams (or sweet potatoes) with 1 cup of the crumb mixture and cranberries. Place in 2-quart casserole dish. Top with remaining crumb mixture. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 35 minutes. If desired, uncover and top with marshmallows and cook an additional 5 minutes or until marshmallows are browned.

Laurie Thompson • Parnell  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## BEANS ROYALE

- 1 21-ounce can pork and beans
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ⅛ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon minced onion
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 14.5-ounce can chopped tomatoes

Combine all ingredients in a 2-quart casserole dish. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. For more tang, substitute dry mustard with liquid mustard. *Serves 6-8*

Joanne Fox • Sioux City  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## SCALLOPED POTATOES WITH MUSHROOMS

- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 can water (using coconut milk can)
- 1 cup raw cashews
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon Maggi seasoning sauce
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- 6 potatoes, peeled, thinly sliced
- 1 can mushrooms, chopped small
- 1 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes

In a blender, add the first seven ingredients and blend until smooth, creating a sauce. Pour ⅓ of the sauce in bottom of a 9x11-inch pan. Layer half the potatoes, mushrooms and onions in pan. Cover with ⅓ of the sauce. Layer remaining potatoes, mushrooms and onions. Cover with remaining ⅓ of the sauce. Sprinkle parsley flakes on top. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, until potatoes are tender. The thinner the slices, the quicker they will cook. Uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes or until the top is light golden brown. *Serves 6*

Jacque Minikus • Pisgah  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

## SEAFOOD RECIPES

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

Deadline is Nov. 30

Submit your **favorite recipes using seafood**. 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



# BEST SMART HOME TECH ON A BUDGET

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

With all the buzz around smart technology, you may be asking yourself how to get the most bang for your buck. Smart technology can make it easier to save energy by simplifying or automating tasks. It can also optimize energy use to reduce waste and improve efficiency.

When upgrading to smart technology at home, consider the purchase cost and long-term savings. For example, you may pay a little more for a product with the latest technology, but it could result in significant savings each year and over the lifetime of the appliance.

Consider these smart devices that will take the work out of saving energy.



## Smart thermostats

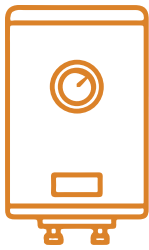
Smart thermostats save energy by automatically adjusting

your heating or cooling system. For example, you can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling costs by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight

hours a day, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

You can program a smart thermostat to change the temperature while asleep or away or use a smartphone app to adjust the settings. Some models use artificial intelligence to maximize efficiency by learning your patterns and preferences. Prices range from \$80 to \$250, depending on features. Smart thermostats do not work with all heating and cooling systems, so check compatibility before you buy.





### Water heaters

Your water heater can also be controlled for energy savings. According to the DOE, installing a timer on your electric water heater can

save 5% to 12% of the energy it uses by turning it off at night and when you don't need to use hot water.

If you are already planning to replace your electric storage water heater with a heat pump water heater, consider a model equipped with smart technology features, including Wi-Fi capabilities for controlling it remotely or during peak demand times, viewing the amount of hot water available and tracking energy use. There are a variety of modes, including vacation, efficiency, and high demand, which produces more hot water. Some models can notify you or shut off if a leak is detected. Depending on the manufacturer and size of the unit, a smart heat pump water heater may only cost a few hundred dollars more than a standard heat pump water heater.



### Smart lights, switches and plugs

Smart lighting gives you the power to remotely control lights in your home or set a lighting schedule

that fits your lifestyle. This can be beneficial for energy savings and provide home security benefits. If you or other household members are notorious for leaving lights on, smart lighting can help. Numerous features are available, including dimmable bulbs and color-changing effects.

Smart light switches are another budget-friendly way to control lighting. They're priced from about \$10 to \$50. Smart switches with dimmable options are available and can also control ceiling fans. Some have occupancy sensors that turn lights off when no movement is detected in a room.

A smart plug fits into any outlet to control whatever is plugged into it. Set it to automatically turn off and

on or control it using a smartphone app. Prices range from \$8 to \$25.



### Smart controls

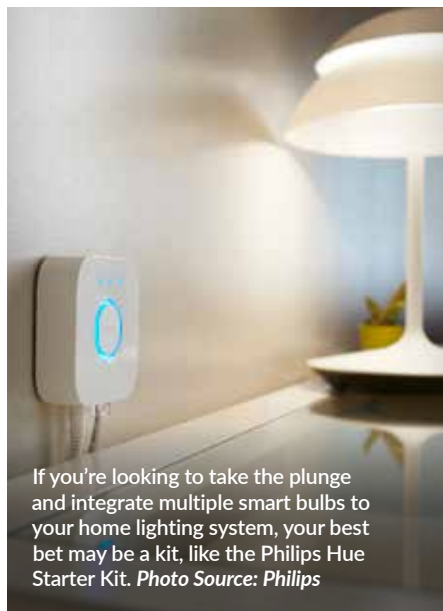
A wide variety of smart shades, curtains and blinds are available, including styles with integrated controls. You can also

add smart controls to your existing blinds or curtains. Both options allow you to adjust the tilt of blinds and open or close curtains. Set a schedule, control them remotely or use a voice command paired with a voice

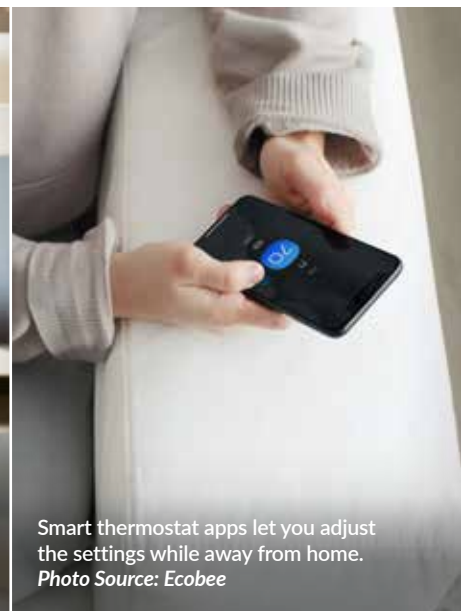
assistant, such as Alexa or Google Home. This allows you to reduce cooling needs in the summer and heating needs in the winter. Smart controls start at around \$70. To save the most energy, prioritize windows with the most incoming light.

Upgrading to smart home technologies can make using less energy at home easy. Choose options that make the most sense for your lifestyle to optimize savings.

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



If you're looking to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs to your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit, like the Philips Hue Starter Kit. *Photo Source: Philips*



Smart thermostat apps let you adjust the settings while away from home. *Photo Source: Ecobee*



Smart heat pump water heaters have automation features that help you use less energy. *Photo Source: Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance*

# FIND HIDDEN ENERGY SAVINGS AND EXTRA STORAGE IN YOUR ATTIC

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

If you're looking for hidden energy savings in your home, start at the top. A common hiding spot for energy savings is the attic. It is also a common location for storing holiday decorations and sentimental items that aren't frequently used.

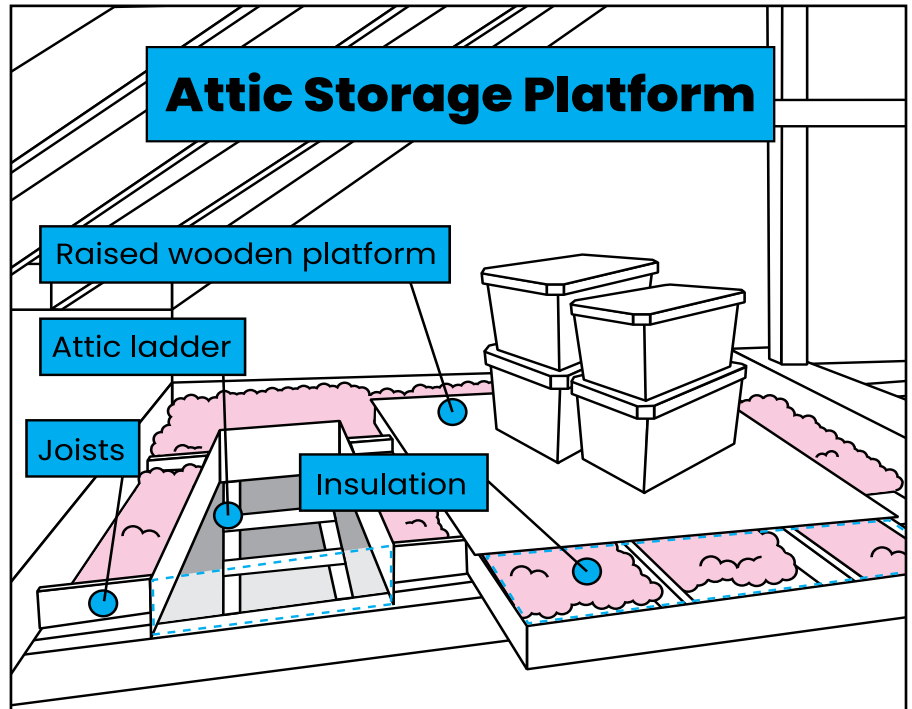
Yet, using your attic for storage can be problematic when trying to maximize your home's energy efficiency. Let's explore how you can improve insulation levels and properly store items in your attic.

## Year-round benefits

Attic insulation is one of the best low-cost ways to make your home efficient. People often associate insulation with keeping your home warmer in the winter, but it also provides benefits in the summer. Insulation reduces heat transfer from the attic to the house, which lowers energy bills for air conditioning and makes your home more comfortable.

Attic insulation is measured in R-value, which is a measurement of how well a material resists the flow of heat. For attic insulation, thicker is better. The recommended R-value is typically between R-38 and R-60, depending on your climate. For attics without insulation, R-60 is recommended for Iowa. If you already have 3 to 4 inches of insulation, then R-49 is recommended. In most homes, the ceiling joists are buried in insulation to achieve the recommended R-value.

The problem with attic storage is it typically doesn't offer enough space for the recommended R-value. Often, plywood or boards are placed directly on top of the ceiling joists, which doesn't allow enough space for the insulation. Insulation can get compacted by people moving items in or out, reducing the effective R-value.



## Ideas for attic storage without comprising insulation

Ideally, the attic would not be used for storage so that it can be properly insulated, but that's not feasible for everyone. Here are some strategies for maintaining attic storage and recommended insulation levels.

The best location for attic storage is over an unconditioned area of your home, such as the garage. You don't need insulation in attic spaces over a garage or unconditioned area because you are not heating or cooling the space below. This makes it the perfect spot to tuck away items for storage.

If that isn't an option, consider minimizing the number of stored items or the storage area's footprint. A great way to do this is by building an attic storage platform. A raised platform allows the space underneath it to be fully insulated.

These platforms are available in ready-to-install kits, or you can buy materials and build them yourself.

Allow enough space underneath the platform to achieve the proper R-value. Use lumber to build a frame perpendicular to the existing joists and cover it with plywood or oriented strand board. Once your storage area is set up, add insulation inside the platform to bring the R-value up to the proper level.

Your attic might also have trusses that allow you to build shelves and maximize space by storing items vertically.

Always wear a dust mask or respirator when working in the attic. Don't forget to weatherstrip the attic hatch to ensure a tight seal.

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



# WELCOME HOME SOLDIER HONORS ALL VETERANS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

*"Amidst the uncertainties of war, every soldier is entitled to one certainty. That he or she will not be forgotten or abandoned." - Unknown*

The sacrifice of all veterans has shaped America into the greatest nation on Earth. Each has selflessly served to protect the freedom and values our nation's flag represents. Veterans deserve recognition every single day, which is the goal of the awe-inspiring Welcome Home Soldier memorial.

Located just outside the city limits of Albia, it is a peaceful and honorable place where all soldiers are welcomed home. It is carefully designed to represent the ideals and values of the nation and create a setting where friends, family and visitors can honor veterans for their service.

"The healing that goes on here is unbelievable. We hear stories every day of people visiting and being moved by the experience," says Jim Keller, who originated the project in 2005 and remains involved on the Welcome Home Soldier board.

The seven-acre outdoor monument is of national magnitude. It includes a variety of incredible monuments and statues, such as a Wall of Honor with the names of veterans etched into granite, Humble Hero Hill with 100 American flags, a bronze Iwo Jima statue, a bronze Vietnam War statue, a Korean War statue, a statue of a soldier playing taps and three white marble battlefield crosses. In 2025, a women's monument will be established.

"The three battlefield crosses are especially meaningful. They represent the 21-gun salute, which is the highest honor you can bestow upon a soldier," Keller explains. "They are also in honor of the 125,000 soldiers buried overseas that we will never get to be welcomed home."



## Inspired by a simple thanks

Keller is an Albia native who served a tour of duty in the Vietnam War.

About 30 years after returning from the war, Keller read a book by Gerald Coffee, an American Prisoner of War in Vietnam. The book compelled him to reach out to the author, which led to a face-to-face meeting. Upon introductions, Coffee said: "Thank you for your service and welcome home, soldier."

Keller later realized it was the first time someone had thanked him for his service. That powerful moment inspired him to create a monument where all veterans – living and deceased – would be recognized and welcomed home.

To bring the idea to life, Keller worked with a group of local veterans and an architect to draw up plans for the monument. Monroe County offered the land for the project at

no cost under a 28E agreement, which established an honored place in the heart of Iowa and the nation.

"You've got to have a commitment and love for it; everything else falls into place," Keller says.

Welcome Home Soldier has raised more than \$3.7 million in donations to date. As a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, all donations are tax deductible and the lifeline of the monument. The community has embraced it and it is led by a board of veterans, supported by a diverse advisory board, and professional legal and financial consultants.

## Vision for ongoing community involvement

Currently, organizers ask everyone to consider honoring a veteran by adding names to the granite "Wall of Honor" for a \$200 donation.

*Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.*

From volunteering to fundraising, individuals can support the monument in various ways. To learn how to get involved, visit [www.welcomehomesoldiermonument.com](http://www.welcomehomesoldiermonument.com).

## Tips for a Safe and Efficient Holiday Season

This holiday season, keep energy savings and electrical safety in mind.

### SAVE ENERGY

- Use smaller appliances like slow cookers instead of the oven.
- Lower the thermostat when hosting friends and family.
- Decorate with energy-saving LED lights.

### PRIORITIZE SAFETY

- Never leave unattended candles burning.
- Ensure all smoke alarms are working.
- When decorating, inspect all light strands and cords for damage.



## MINI-SPLITS AT A GLANCE

Mini-split systems, also known as ductless air-source heat pumps, heat or cool a home through an outdoor unit that connects to one or more individual indoor air handlers, which are typically mounted on a wall. Depending on the size of your home and personal preferences, a mini-split system is worth considering when you need to replace or upgrade your heating or cooling system.

### Mini-split system benefits:

- Zone-controlled heating or cooling
- Higher energy efficiency ratings
- Easy to install
- Good for heating or cooling home additions

### Mini-split system considerations:

- Potentially higher upfront cost
- Appearance
- May require electrical upgrades
- Not as effective in large spaces





## BE AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY MVP

Do you have what it takes to be the energy efficiency MVP (most valuable player) in your home? When you take proactive steps to save energy at home, you can help your family save on monthly energy bills *and* help the environment - that's a win-win!

Read the sentences below and unscramble the **bolded letters** to complete the energy efficiency tips.

Check your work in the answer key.



1. Turn off **gllhsit** when you leave a room.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Unplug smaller electronic devices like phone **reahgcsr** when you're not using them.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Reduce your **nesecr** time to save energy and spend more time outdoors.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Turn off the **reatw** while brushing your teeth.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Keep doors and **swdwnio** closed when your home's heating/cooling system is running.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. When it's cold, wear an extra layer of **tohgncil** inside instead of adjusting the thermostat.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answer Key: 1. lights 2. chargers 3. screen 4. water 5. windows 6. clothing



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