

● NOVEMBER 2021

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Win \$25 by
using SmartHub

Get charged up about
electric vehicles

Cozy up with soup
and stew recipes

Do we owe you money? Check out the Treasure Hunt list ▶ Pages 6-7

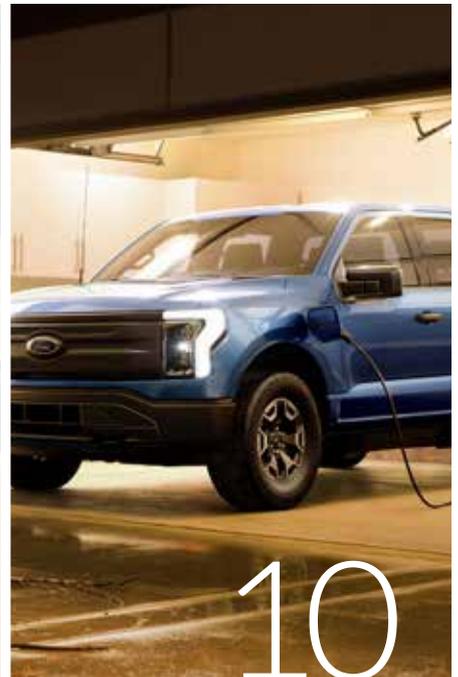
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ON THE COVER

Congratulations to Dawn Joerg, a Harrison County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

THE BEST TIME TO ADVOCATE IS ALWAYS

BY KEVIN CONDON



Have you ever talked to your lawmakers about a specific issue? Your county supervisor? Have you ever spoken up on behalf of your fire department? If so, then you've

advocated for something before, perhaps without even realizing it.

As part of larger electric cooperative family, I hope you'll consider standing up on behalf of your co-op. The next decade will be critical for the electric industry as policies and regulations that come from federal and state governments will impact how your cooperative provides power. The time to start educating has begun, and your statewide association wants to help you to make informed decisions about how your co-op will adapt to a changing energy industry.

Proposed federal policies

Currently, Congress is debating what is referred to as the Build Back Better Act (BBBA) under a budget-setting process called reconciliation. When this magazine went to press, the U.S. Senate still had not announced provisions they could agree on for the U.S. House-passed version. Regarding the energy industry, the "carrots and sticks"

approach included in the House version has caused concern for electric utilities, including co-ops. To be clear, there are positive attributes contained in the bill, including:

- Direct-pay tax incentives for cooperatives to use for renewable energy and carbon capture projects.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture-administered funds that will help rural electric cooperatives increase clean energy and reduce carbon emissions.
- Expansions of projects to increase support for much-needed transmission infrastructure.

While the Senate Majority appears to not have the required amount of support, the proposed Clean Electricity Performance Program (CEPP) concerns cooperatives due to the punitive measures in the plan. The \$150 billion program would reward utilities that increase their use of clean energy by 4% annually but would penalize those that don't without consideration for whether that percentage threshold affects the reliability and/or affordability of power for member-consumers.

Recently, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jim Matheson told federal lawmakers in a letter that the program's 10-year

timeframe to achieve the bill's mandates is "is unrealistic because of longer-term existing contractual obligations." He also called the clean energy targets "too aggressive," adding that "a year-over-year 4% increase in clean electricity deployment is not attainable for many of our members."

Further, the CEPP "makes a significant mistake by requiring compliance on load-serving entities," Matheson says. "Many electric cooperatives are relatively small distribution entities that own little, if any, generation."

Balanced power generation

Iowa's electric cooperatives support the inclusion of clean energy through a balanced and responsible "all-the-above" power generation strategy. When the battery storage puzzle pieces fall into place, intermittent wind and solar will see an increase in their reliability score, but the technology isn't yet there. Policy or regulatory efforts to prematurely close baseload generation facilities ahead of those developments fails to appreciate your cooperative's responsibility to provide you with affordable, reliable and efficient power.

Make your voice heard

Making sure the co-op perspective is heard and understood is why we advocate. Most lawmakers have never worked for or belonged to an electric cooperative. We must continue to put into practical terms how laws and regulations will actually impact member-consumers.

Now is the time to get involved and educate yourself on these issues. Contact your cooperative or your District Board Director to better understand the positions of the co-op. Your cooperative takes pride in being part of your community, and you are the co-op. Help your co-op advocate for you!

For more information, visit www.iaruralpower.org.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a \$100 gift card

Just in time for holiday shopping, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. It will be good for 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 at www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Nov. 30, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Keurig from the September issue was David Foelske from Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative.



UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV. 25-26	Office closed for Thanksgiving
DEC. 6	Fall Legislative Summit
DEC. 7	Member Advisory Committee Meeting
DEC. 1 and JAN. 3	\$25 drawings for SmartHub users

You can access your account information 24 hours a day, every day, on our website or through our SmartHub app for mobile devices. You can also call our office to report service interruptions and request account information at 866-242-4232. ⚡



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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MAKING CHERISHED HOLIDAY MEMORIES

BY KEVIN WHEELER



There is an old saying the days are long and the years are short. This really hits home when you have young children growing up and also while progressing through your vocation. As I am ready to begin my seventh year at Access Energy Cooperative, it seems like yesterday when I walked through the door in January 2016.

This time of year is about spending time with your family, friends and reminiscing. Every holiday season, we gather with family members and friends to share fellowship and make new memories. Memories can never be taken away; they only become more cherished. As I grow older, memories become extra special, whether they are new or old ones from my childhood.

As the holiday season approaches, preparations begin with shopping for gifts and buying necessary items for the perfect dinner. Remember that the biggest gift that can be given is your time with a loved one or someone who just needs company. There is no greater gift than the time you can

spend with someone. No amount of money can replace the time spent together, and the memories made will last forever.

My best holiday memories are from my childhood when I went to my Grandpa and Grandma's house. The homemade egg noodles, deviled eggs and hugs were the best. They have both been gone for more than 25 years, but every holiday season, I still vividly remember family gatherings with them. The food and conversations, but most importantly, I remember the love for their family. I'm sure most of you can relate to emotions and memories like this.

This holiday season, I hope you take time to cherish the moments you have with your loved ones. Enjoy the holidays and tell stories. You are making new memories and stories that your loved ones will tell each and every year.

I want to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. It has been a true pleasure to work for the members, board and employees at Access Energy Cooperative, and I look forward to many more years to come.

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

ACCESS ENERGY HELPS FUND THE IOWA ENERGY CENTER AND CGRER

Each year, Access Energy Cooperative contributes a portion of its gross revenues to the Iowa Energy Center at Iowa State University and the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research (CGRER) at the University of Iowa.

The Iowa Energy Center helps to promote, develop and advance energy efficiency programs



and renewable energy research.

In addition, it is available to answer questions on a variety of energy issues for the citizens of Iowa.

Access Energy Cooperative paid \$36,387 in 2021. This is one-tenth of one percent of gross operating revenue for electric service. We are proud to help fund these two centers.

SMARTHUB IS THE EASY WAY TO ENSURE BILLS ARE PAID ON TIME

United States Postal Service standards have recently changed and may add delivery time for important documents and payments. Please keep this in mind for anything we send to you, or that you may send to us via mail, including monthly statements and payments.

To help ensure bills are paid on time, members can use SmartHub as an option to receive online statements, pay your bill, or schedule bills to be paid when you want.

To encourage members to try the app, we will enter everyone who has a SmartHub account in a monthly drawing for a \$25 bill credit. Don't have a SmartHub account? Simply:

- Look up your account number
- Go to www.accessenergycoop.com
- Click "Access Account Online" in the banner at the top
- Find "New User?" and click the link to enroll



The app is also available from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

SmartHub also allows you to:

- Access account information
- Monitor electric usage
- Check balances and make payments

Members who already have a SmartHub account are automatically entered in the drawings. Drawings will be held Dec. 1 and Jan. 3 and will be announced on Facebook as a live drawing.

Enroll for a chance to win \$25 bill credit

Faster power restoration...

UPDATE

...relies on us having your current information.

Account #: _____
 Name: _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Home Phone #: _____
 Cell Phone#: _____
 Email: _____

Return with your bill or mail to:

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

OR

Email to:

contactus@accessenergycoop.com

OR

SmartHub app:

Click on *Contact Us* to change your personal information

WIN \$25 IN OCTOBER, NOVEMBER & DECEMBER FOR BEING A SMARTHUB USER

SmartHub is your access to all of your account information. If you are not signed up, go to our website accessenergycoop.com and click on Access Account Online



For more details, visit www.accessenergycoop.com



CONGRATULATIONS, STEVE!

Steve Hyde retired from Access Energy Cooperative this month with 33 years of service. Steve's dedication to the members of the cooperative is greatly appreciated! We wish him all the best with his plans for retirement.



Help us keep them safe. If you see workers on the side of the road, move over to the other lane and slow down. You might not hear them, but they are thanking you!

TREASURE HUNT: DO YOU KNOW ANY OF THESE PEOPLE?

We are searching for these 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 by calling 866-242-4232.

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| AT & T Corp | Columbus OH | Dalarna Farms | New London IA | Hayward, Frank E/Janet | American Fork UT |
| Adam, Becky | Fairfield IA | Davis, Angela/Hutson, Chad | Mt Pleasant IA | Heston, Leonard/Garnet | Agency IA |
| Agnew, Jon | Malvern IA | Davis, Donald A | Santa Barbara CA | Higdon, Stephen M/ | |
| Ahluwalia, Tierney | Brighton IA | Dawson, Kelly | Mt Pleasant IA | DeAnna M | North Liberty IA |
| Alexander, Betty J | Burlington IA | DeVore, Clint L | Jay FL | Hodson, Patrick L/Kim | Donnellson IA |
| Allen, Douglas G | Riverside IA | Degen, Robert/Ila Jane | Ft Madison IA | Hoffeditz, Vera K | Ft Madison IA |
| Allison, Tammy/Roger | Burlington IA | Dill, George P/Lindsay | Fairfield IA | Holden, Paul S/Barbara | Louisville CO |
| Anderson, April L/ | | Dillman, David E | Batavia IA | Holden, Tom | Keosauqua IA |
| Waddle, William | Burlington IA | Douthart, Stephanie | Fairfield IA | Holland, Samuel | Corpus Christi TX |
| Andrews Pallet Company Inc | Story City IA | Dowell, Mindy (Estate) | Wever IA | Holmes, Donald R (Estate) | Ruthven IA |
| Baker, V Lorean | Ft Madison IA | Ebert, Betty J | San Tan Valley AZ | Hungerford, Mark/Anneta | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Barker, Debbie | Bonaparte IA | Edminster, Julie L | Chillicothe IL | Hunter, Melissa | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Barton, Clara | Mt Pleasant IA | Eisenbraut, Jeff F/Julie D | Hillsboro IA | Hurley, Steve | Bend OR |
| Bittner, Tracie E | Mt Pleasant IA | Experian | Long Island City NY | IES Utilities | Burlington IA |
| BJ's Four Corners | Morrison IL | Farm Credit/ | | Iris City Antique Mall (Seager) | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Blow, Scott L | Burlington IA | New London Dairy | New London IA | Iris Motel Von LTD | New Paltz NY |
| Blunk, Michael R/Susan D | Winfield IA | Farrington, John H II | Centerville IA | Jackson, Holly | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Blythe, Cindy L (Estate) | Mt Pleasant IA | Fleming, Robert | Burlington IA | Johnson, David R/Jenna | Brighton IA |
| Boatman, Miles/Rebecca | Russell IA | Foreman, Rodger W | Albia IA | Johnston, Gregg/Jana | Lucas IA |
| Boyd, Erin | New London IA | Fox, Thelma M | Riverside IA | Jones, Dale/Patricia A | Hawkeye IA |
| Boyer's Machine Works | Ankeny IA | Franke, Bruce | Fairfield IA | Katz, David E/Joann | Fairfield IA |
| Brendel, Peter/Celesta | Riverside IA | Frazier, Alma | Marion IA | Keomala, Phouphane K/Vuavanh | Salem IA |
| Brown, Clifford F (Estate) | Birmingham IA | Frisbee, Brian D | Fairfield IA | Kern, Phillip H/Jean | Fairfield IA |
| Brown, Kevin V/Margie S | Newton MO | Fritz, Kevin | Wellman IA | Ketterhagen, Ken J (Estate) | Fairfield IA |
| Bueker, William B/Tammy | Donnellson IA | Gardner, Jay/Karlin | Colorado Springs CO | Kevin Inc | Clinton IA |
| Bugg, Patricia L/ | | Garles, Gary/Geraldine | Fairfield IA | Kirk, Julie M | Burlington IA |
| Henry D (Estates) | South Jacksonville IL | Garner, Kevin W/Haley | Wayland MO | Konhaus, John C/Sara | Casper WY |
| Butler, Amber/Mark | Mt Pleasant IA | Garrels, Miles (Estate) | West Des Moines IA | Krebsbach, Joel/Tina | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Casteel, Dennis L/ | | Garretson Equipment Co | Huntley IL | Krekel, Gene R | Burlington IA |
| Hachey, Carol C | Birmingham IA | Garrett, Sherri A (Estate) | Fairfield IA | Kumle, John G/Merilee | Burleson TX |
| Celestica Inc | North York Ontario | Gegner, W D | Brighton IA | Lambert, Darrell | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Chance, Jason/Deb | Ottumwa IA | Gore, Susan | New York NY | Lampe, Kim/Douglas, Tracy | Thayer MO |
| Church, Samantha/Juhl, Dave | Mt Pleasant IA | Gregory, Winn H | Hermiston OR | LeMaster, Jody G | Reeds Spring MO |
| Clear Channel Communications | Burlington IA | Grochowski, Kenneth R | Cape Coral FL | Ledger, Mark | Washington IA |
| Companions of St Luke | Shreveport LA | GTE Mobil Net | Schaumburg IL | Leffler, Ira/Jacqueline | Lockridge IA |
| Contreras, David/Dorene | Oconomowoc WI | GTE Telephone Operations | Irving TX | Lieberg, Robert (Estate) | Galesburg IL |
| Cooke, Jeff | Fairfield IA | Guinther, Kenneth W | West Point IA | Lisanis, Bruce | Seattle WA |
| Coulter, John/Janet | Burlington IA | Hammer, William D/Teresa L | Brainerd MN | Livestock Placement | Salix IA |
| Craycroft, Frank | Fairfield IA | Harkers Distribution Inc | Le Mars IA | Longview Cable & Data LLC | Reston VA |
| Crouse, Bryan | West Point IA | Harris, Kimi | Birmingham IA | Lopez, Jessica J JR/ | |
| Curtis, Dawn | Washington IA | Hart, Todd/Bobbie | Agency IA | Marlin, William C | Overland Park KS |
| | | Hawthorne, Timothy R | Fairfield IA | | Mt Pleasant IA |

WIN UP TO \$100 IN THE ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE PHOTO CONTEST!

We will award \$75 to each photographer whose entry is selected as one of the 13 featured photos for the calendar. If the winning entry is submitted by a member of Access Energy Cooperative, the winner will receive an additional \$25 bill credit!



Horizontal photos work best so that artwork does not need to be cropped to fit on a calendar page. Entries should be high-resolution files so they can be enlarged correctly, and judges give preference to full-color photos.

Submit all entries by March 31, 2022, to mktg@accessenergycoop.com.

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.

We're looking for photos of rural settings in southeast Iowa, including landscapes, animals, buildings or people in any season of the year.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Marsh, Byron/Nichole | Renton WA | Rowe, Troy E/Parker, Cherish | Winfield IA |
| Martin, Gary/Vicki | Burlington IA | Russell, James L | Burlington IA |
| Martindale, James/Nancy | Donnellson IA | Ryder, Jay/Melissa | Stockport IA |
| McAtee, Ann | Ames IA | Sammons, Lawrence | Mt Pleasant IA |
| McBride, Chester | Des Moines IA | Sanders, William H | Donnellson IA |
| McComb, John H | Fox Lake IL | Shaner, Mark/Jan | Fairfield IA |
| McConnell, Lawrence W | Burlington IA | Shelman, Diane | Mt Pleasant IA |
| McCurren, Debra K | Washington DC | Shepherd, Mark/Amy | Burlington IA |
| McDonald, Douglas E | Mt Pleasant IA | Shier, Steven/Erika K | Fairfield IA |
| McDowell, Deryl D/Marcella | Vancouver WA | Shull, Delores S | Hedrick IA |
| Meardon, Kathleen W | Ft Madison IA | Skopec, Paul A/Holly | Arnolds Park IA |
| Melloy, Michael/Kayla | Mt Pleasant IA | Smith, Charles A | LaGrange NC |
| Mertens, Joseph P | Ft Madison IA | Smith, Fern | Fairfield IA |
| Meyer, Karry D | Cullman AL | Smith, Kristina | Fairfield IA |
| Mid America Constr Co | Iowa City IA | Smith, Matthew J/Christina | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Miller, Jeff/Kith | Jerome ID | Smith, Robert D/Nancy | Coon Rapids IA |
| Moeller, Chris A | Farmington IA | Southeast Wireless Inc | Danville IA |
| Moeller, Ray/Kathy (Estates) | Cotopaxi CO | Sp Grove Mobile Homes | Burlington IA |
| Moore, Mrs. J Brown (Helen) | Mt Union IA | Stakland, Steven K | Saint George UT |
| Morrison, Joyce | Ft Madison IA | Steve's Rome Tap | Winfield IA |
| Morrow, David R/Toni | Crown Point IN | Stoermer, Larry G (Estate) | Davenport IA |
| Murray, Raymond B/Diana | Palmyra MO | Stortz, Willard D | South English IA |
| Neuendorf, Larry T (Estate) | Donnellson IA | Sweeney, Peder/Kelly | Asheville NC |
| Newpath Communications | Des Moines IA | Swenka, Tammy | Belmond IA |
| North, Susan | Fairfield IA | Templeton, Scott/Eleanor K | Donnellson IA |
| Otto, Nathan/Malak | Boulder CO | Terry, Martin/Twyla | Apple Valley CA |
| Palmer, Stephen P/Pamela | Newton IA | Thompson, Dan R/Susan M | Batavia IA |
| Patton, Lisa G/Burton, James C | Cleveland TX | Underwood, Virginia F (Estate) | Keosauqua IA |
| Peters, Thomas K/Debra | Ft Madison IA | VanNieuwaal, Randy/Chi | Burlington IA |
| Philips Pallets Inc | Chuluota FL | Vantiger, LaVon J | Burlington IA |
| Pilcher, Brian/Melinda | Owatonna MN | Vela, John R/Charlotte | Burlington IA |
| Piper, Charles | Wever IA | Wagler, E Jean | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Polton, Edward M (Estate) | Mt Pleasant IA | Wagner, Paulina M | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Pool, Steven B/Sheila | Fairfield IA | Walrod, Bob E/Leona | Savannah MO |
| Pratt, Brian/Christina | Cedar Rapids IA | Watson, Linda | Stockport IA |
| Prechtel, John H | Fairfield IA | Watson, W B/Marilyn | Columbia MO |
| Progas LP & Supply | Wever IA | Weber, David L | Clive IA |
| Pumphrey, Steve/Scotton, Jodi | Fairfield IA | Wenig, Rev N | Plano IA |
| Quinton, Carmen M | Fairfield IA | Wharton, William R (Estate) | Batavia IA |
| Rains, Lewis/Reena | Aledo IL | White, Betty J (Estate) | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Ran/Kel Farms LLC | Wayland IA | White, Cathy A (Estate) | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Ravey, Tom/Diane | Fairfield IA | White, John/Cathy S | Mt Pleasant IA |
| Rice, Lois | Austin TX | Williams, Aimee | Nauvoo IL |
| Richardson, Robert | Fairfield IA | Williams, Larry W/Maranna | Pershing IN |
| Riffel, Barbara E | Burlington IA | Williams, Ruth W (Estate) | Danville IA |
| Riley, Richard/Shannon | Packwood IA | Winfrey, Jeff J | Gainesville MO |
| Riley, Richard D/Rose A | Wever IA | Woodruff, Stephen W/Rita L | Milton IA |
| Riverside Paper | Mt Pleasant IA | Yoder, Edward H/Brenda | Wayland IA |
| Rockin M Ranch | Bloomfield IA | Young, Mark L | Kalona IA |

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. Just one dollar a month will help others.

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



To have an amount deducted from your monthly bill, send the form below to:

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

MEMBER 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) _____

SOUP & STEW

RECIPES

RIBOLITA SOUP

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 onion, minced
- 3 stalks celery, minced
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 large potatoes, peeled and diced
- pinch of dried sage
- 1 bunch kale, washed, stemmed and shredded
- 1 small head green cabbage, chopped
- 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 3 cans kidney or navy beans, rinsed
- 8 cups water or chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- salt and pepper to taste
- 8 thick slices French bread, toasted
- Parmesan cheese
- olive oil
- parsley, chopped

In a very large pot, heat olive oil. Add garlic, onion, celery and carrots. Cook until the onion is transparent, stirring constantly. Add potatoes, sage, kale, cabbage, tomatoes, beans and water or stock. Bring to a boil and add oregano and basil. Simmer 30 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Add more water or stock if the soup seems too thick. Season with salt and pepper. Put the toast in the bottom of a big soup bowl, drizzle with olive oil and ladle soup over the toast. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and parsley to serve. **Soup secret:** Use Swanson's chicken stock diluted with 50% water. Don't use bouillon cubes or paste as they are too salty. Serves 8-10

Linda Coats • Mount Pleasant
Access Energy Cooperative

CREAMY TORTELLINI SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 8 ounces cheese tortellini
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese
- 10 ounces spinach, chopped
- salt and pepper, to taste

Melt butter over medium heat, add onion and cook 5-7 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute. Add flour and cook 1 minute more. Add broth, diced tomatoes, tomato paste and tortellini; bring to boil. Simmer on low heat 10 minutes or until tortellini is tender. Add Parmesan and let melt. Add spinach and let wilt. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and serve. If desired, garnish with more Parmesan and fresh spinach, sliced small. Yields 8 cups

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

'EPIC FAILURE'

BY ROBERT BRYCE



TEXAS BLACKOUTS A CAUTIONARY TALE FOR MISSOURIANS

This past February, residents of Texas suffered through rolling blackouts during a period of unprecedented extreme cold. While power went out there and elsewhere across the Midwest, it continued flowing for members of electric co-ops served by power suppliers Associated Electric Cooperative and Wabash Valley Power Alliance, including Access Energy Cooperative. This article from energy expert Robert Bryce serves as a cautionary tale. For this reason, we are reprinting it this month with his permission.

As the postmortem of the blackouts that slammed the state back in February continues, it's apparent that Texans narrowly averted a catastrophe that could have resulted in what biologists call a mass mortality event.

At about 2 a.m. on Feb. 15, the Texas grid came within four or five minutes of a systemwide failure that could have plunged nearly the entire state into a blackout at a time when temperatures were plunging, it was snowing sideways and the roads were impassable. Recovering from such a failure and executing what's known as a "black start" could have taken the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) days or even weeks. Had that occurred, Winter Storm Uri would have killed thousands, even tens of thousands, of people.

As it was, the February snowpocalypse likely cost the state some \$200 billion, according to estimates by economist Ray Perryman, and the final death toll, according to an analysis by BuzzFeed News, could be as high as 700.

The February blackouts should have been a neon-bright wake-up sign for the state's politicians and regulators that the structure of the Texas energy grid is deeply flawed and



that fundamental changes are needed. Alas, the Legislature and Gov. Greg Abbott have largely kicked the electric can down the road. That's a mistake.

The electric grid is the Mother Network. Our most important networks, including food delivery and storage, communications and GPS, depend on the electric grid to deliver cheap, abundant and reliable flows of energy 24/7/365. A prolonged electricity outage due to extreme weather, or malicious actors, would have dire effects on Texas, and because the state provides much of the country's food and fuel, it would also short-circuit much of the American economy.

I've been obsessing about ERCOT and the causes of the blackouts since February when my wife, Lorin, and I, who live in central Austin, were blacked out for about 45 hours. The government failed us, and there are three things the government needs to do to assure that the state has reliable and affordable electricity.

Before going further, a caveat: The blackouts were the result of several interconnected factors and failures. Thus, there are no simple or quick solutions, particularly when it comes to a system as complex as the electric grid. That said, the blackouts were caused by flaws in the way the state's electricity market was designed

and how it has evolved since it was deregulated two decades ago. And that leads to my first point.

The blackouts were due to government failure of epic proportions. The most obvious example of government failure was the decision by the Public Utility Commission to set the clearing price of electricity in ERCOT at \$9,000 per megawatt-hour — and to leave it at that extremely high level for several days despite the fact that it did not bring more generation into the market.

The result of that blunder: Texas electricity consumers were overcharged by roughly \$26.3 billion. The burden of paying for those costs will fall most heavily on regular Texans, who will see surcharges on their utility bills for years to come to pay down the bonds the state is issuing to spread out the cost of those overcharges.

Second, deregulation wasn't a boon for consumers. That conclusion is controversial, but studies have shown that Texans paid more for the electricity they used than they would have in a regulated market. A recent Wall Street Journal analysis estimates that Texans paid \$28 billion more for home electricity in the 20 years of deregulation than they would have, if they had only been charged the average regulated rate for the rest of the country.

The deregulation of the Texas electricity sector opened up the utility sector — an industry that is at root, a power-plant-poles-and-wires business — to “retail electric providers.” In a flash, entrepreneurs could get into the electricity game, with no hard assets or knowledge of how the electric grid works required.

One hundred and forty years ago we had Thomas Edison. Deregulation gave us Griddy.

The deregulation of the electricity sector resulted in a market in which the buck doesn't stop anywhere. Under the old regulated utility model, when big companies owned all of the components of the grid, there was accountability. After the blackouts, all we've seen is finger-pointing. That's not a bug; it's a feature of a market that's so complex that no one understands how it really works. As Ed Hirs of the University of Houston has noted, “The 1,876 pages of regulations and rules contained in the ERCOT Nodal Protocols apparently mean nothing.”

Deregulation distorted the type of generation that was added to the ERCOT grid. Over the past two decades, the generation capacity added to the grid wasn't built for reliability or resilience, it was built to collect subsidies.

Since 2006, about \$66 billion was spent building wind and solar capacity

in Texas. Over that same time period, according to a recent report by Bill Peacock of The Energy Alliance, Big Wind and Big Solar collected roughly \$22 billion in subsidies of one kind or another, including state tax breaks and federal tax credits. But when the ERCOT grid was on the brink of collapse on Feb. 15, that \$66 billion was worth next to nothing. There was no solar production, and of the 31,000 megawatts of wind capacity installed in ERCOT, only about 5,400 megawatts, or roughly 17% of that capacity, was available when the grid operator was shedding load to prevent the state's grid from going dark.

The \$66 billion spent on wind and solar resulted in big changes in the state's generation capacity. Between 2006 and 2020, the amount of electricity generated with wind went up by about 20% and coal-fired generation fell by about the same amount. Meanwhile, thanks to booming population growth and increased electricity demand in the Permian Basin, electricity use was soaring.

Over that same time, according to the Energy Information Administration, electricity use in Texas jumped by

about 67 terawatt-hours per year, far more than any other state in the country. (For comparison, North Dakota, which had the second-largest demand growth over that time frame, saw electricity use rise by about 10 terawatt-hours per year.)

The surge in electricity demand put more strain on the ERCOT grid, which was not maintaining enough reserve generation capacity, that is, standby generation that can be utilized during peak times. Making matters worse, no new dispatchable capacity is being built. Instead, ERCOT is adding more weather-dependent generation. About 24,000 megawatts of solar and 11,000 megawatts of wind capacity are slated to be added to the ERCOT grid between now and 2023. Thus, over the next two years, the amount of renewable capacity in Texas will nearly double.

So what must happen to assure reliability and resilience?

First and foremost, the state must step up its oversight and regulation of the energy sector. The electric grid and natural gas grids have merged. The February blackouts proved, again, that the electric and gas grids are deeply

intertwined and interdependent.

Since 2001, when Enron went bankrupt, the amount of natural gas consumed by the U.S. electric sector has more than doubled. Despite that fact, the two grids are not being regulated to assure that they are singing from the same hymnal. During the February blackouts, some gas infrastructure froze. Some gas processing plants and pipelines had their electricity cut off. That, in turn, reduced the amount of fuel available to produce power when electricity was needed the most.

In the wake of the 2011 winter storm, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation issued a report that warned about the "interdependency of the electric and natural gas industries" and urged "regulatory and industry bodies to explore solutions to the many interdependency problems which are likely to remain of concern in the future." It's well past time for state regulators to heed that warning.

Second, the lavish federal tax incentives for wind and solar

When the ERCOT grid was on the brink of collapse on Feb. 15 ... there was no solar production, and of the 31,000 megawatts of wind ... only about 5,400 megawatts, or roughly 17% of that capacity, was available.

energy production — the production tax credit and the investment tax credit — should be eliminated immediately. Between 2010 and 2029, those tax credits will cost the federal treasury about \$140 billion.

Designed to stimulate nascent industries, the production tax credits and income tax credits have become blatant examples of the crony corporatism that is undermining the integrity of the electric grid. The subsidies reward weather-dependent generation at the cost of dispatchable generation. In 2015, Congress agreed on a five-year phaseout of the PTC. After that deal was struck, Sen. Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican and alleged deficit hawk, said, “As the father of the first wind-energy tax credit in 1992, I can say that the tax credit was never meant to be permanent.”

But the PTC keeps getting extended, including yet another extension granted recently by the Internal Revenue Service. For years, Big Wind and Big Solar have claimed that they can produce the cheapest electricity. It’s time for them to prove it.

Third, the Texas Legislature will have to pass measures that incentivize companies to build and maintain plants that can be dispatched during times of peak demand. Those incentives should include provisions for on-site fuel storage at power plants. This was one of the recommendations put forward by ERCOT in its 60-item “Roadmap to Improving Grid Reliability” report that was released on July 13.

During the February disaster, the most reliable power plants were the ones that had on-site fuel: the coal and nuclear plants. Thus, the state should give incentives for fuel storage near power plants. For instance, diesel fuel can be stored easily and relatively cheaply. That fuel could be used in turbines or quick-start reciprocating engines like the ones made by outfits like Caterpillar, Cummins and Wärtsilä.

In summary, the mistake made by Texas regulators was to treat electricity as a commodity. That’s wrong. Electricity isn’t like sneakers or hot dogs. Electricity is a critical service. The grid is the backbone of modern society, a complex and delicate machine that connects all of our homes and businesses to each other. Without reliable power, modern society falls apart.

The February blackouts were the result of a government failure to properly manage our most important network. If Texas’ elected officials don’t fix the problems in ERCOT, more blackouts, and even cost burdens for low- and middle-income Texans, are certain.

Bryce is a Texas-based author, journalist, podcaster, film producer, and public speaker who often writes about energy issues. This story first appeared Aug. 1 in the Dallas Morning News and is reprinted with permission.



In summary, the mistake made by Texas regulators was to treat electricity as a commodity. That’s wrong. Electricity isn’t like sneakers or hot dogs. Electricity is a critical service.

PEANUT SWEET POTATO SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon chili pepper
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 14.5-ounce can chicken broth
- ½ cup corn
- 3 tablespoons peanut butter
- chopped peanuts, garnish

Sauté vegetables (except corn) and seasonings in butter, adjusting seasonings to taste. Add broth and corn. Simmer until vegetables are tender. Stir in peanut butter. Garnish with chopped peanuts. *Serves 4*

Chris Daniels • Casey
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CHEESY VEGETABLE SOUP

- 1 quart water
- 5 chicken bouillon cubes
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 2 cups potatoes, cubed
- 1 20-ounce package frozen broccoli and cauliflower
- 1 pound box Velveeta cheese
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup

Simmer all ingredients (except cheese and soup) until vegetables are tender. Add cheese and cream of chicken soup; simmer until cheese is melted. Be careful not to scorch. *Yields 1 gallon*

Phyllis Bosma • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CORN CHOWDER

- 1 pound sausage
- ¼ cup onion
- 1½ cups potatoes, chopped
- ½ cup carrots, chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1 12-ounce can evaporated milk
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 can creamed corn

Mix sausage and onion. Add potatoes, carrots and water, cook until done. Add evaporated milk, soup and creamed corn. Heat together until hot. *Serves 6*

Glenda Jager • George • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK & BEAN SOUP

- 3 or 4 medium potatoes, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 15-ounce cans pork and beans
- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 14.5-ounce can beef broth
- 1 pound hamburger, browned
- salt and pepper, to taste

Place potatoes and onion in pan and almost cover with water. Boil until tender. Add pork and beans, tomatoes, beef broth and hamburger. Season to taste. Heat thoroughly and serve. *Serves 8-10*

Norma Skogman • Hawarden
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

CREAMY CHICKEN & WILD RICE SOUP

- 1 6-ounce package chicken and wild rice mix
- 5 cups water
- 2 medium carrots, shredded
- 2 tablespoons dried minced onion
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cubed
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and cubed

In a large saucepan, combine packaged rice and seasonings with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 10 minutes. Stir in carrots and onion. Cover and simmer 5 minutes. Stir in cream cheese, soup and chicken. Cook until heated through. *Yields 6 bowls*

Elizabeth Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

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GETTING CHARGED UP ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN



Photo Credit: Ford

Ford, Hyundai, Kia and Volkswagen will be offering EVs in 2022 that can potentially power your home during a prolonged power outage.



A variety of new EV models will be available to drivers soon, including the 2022 Ford Mustang Mach-E.

Photo Credit: Ford



This JuiceBox L2 EV charging station connects to Wi-Fi and includes smartphone app capabilities.

As the buzz continues to grow around electric vehicles (EVs), it's important to think about how they will be charged. This includes understanding the basics on batteries and charging options.

Batteries, like the vehicles they power, come in different sizes that provide different mileage ranges. Most people charge their EVs at home, but if you take a cross-country trip, you can charge your EV at one of the rapidly growing number of charging stations around the country. The Department of Energy estimates there are currently 50,000 EV charging sites in the U.S.

EVs will tell you how many miles are remaining before a charge is needed, and many models offer in-car navigation to the next charger. For EVs without this feature, there are many smartphone apps available to help you navigate to the next charging site.

Understanding charging levels

We often refer to three levels of EV charging.

A new EV comes equipped for **Level 1 (L1)** charging, which simply plugs into a regular electrical outlet. This is the slowest option for charging, but if you don't travel many miles per day or your EV is a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) with a small battery, L1 charging will likely meet your needs.

L1 requires less than 1.5 kilowatts, which is about the same as a hair dryer, and will give the battery 3 to 5 miles of range per hour of charging. If you drive your car 40 miles or less during

the day and can charge it for 10 hours every night, this method should work for your daily driving needs. But if you have an all-electric EV with a 60-kWh battery, it would take more than 40 hours to fully charge with L1.

Level 2 (L2) is the most common type of charging because it operates on 240-volt power, which nearly every home has. L2 can supply roughly 6 to 19 kW of power, depending on what your vehicle can accept and your electric circuit's amperage. L2 can provide 100 miles of charge in several hours, and fully charge a large battery in 8 to 10 hours. You may need to install a new circuit if there isn't a 240-volt circuit near the area you park. L2 is the most common type of charging at public sites, like grocery stores, libraries and workplaces.

Level 3 (L3) chargers, often called DC Fast Chargers (DCFC), require much more current and are not installed in homes. L3 chargers are typically seen at specific EV charging sites and some gas stations. These chargers have power levels from 50 to 350 kW, depending on the charging station. Some new EVs can accept 250 kW or more and charge a battery from 10 to 80% in less than 20 minutes. Some older EV models may take an hour or more to achieve 80% at 50 kW. When selecting an EV, the charge time from 10 to 80% can be an important factor if you regularly head out on road trips.

Charging considerations

"Vehicle to home" is an exciting new technology that enables EVs to power



a home or shop during a power outage. Ford's upcoming F-150 Lightning Pro (2022), Hyundai's Ioniq5 and Kia's EV6 crossovers, and the 2022 Volkswagens are slated to offer this option.

Another important decision is when to charge your EV. Your local electric co-op may offer special rates if you charge your EV at night when energy demand is lower, which can help keep electricity costs down. Electric co-ops around the country are working on programs to prepare for more EV home charging, so reach out to your co-op if you have questions about EVs, charging or specific programs and rates.

EV charging infrastructure is currently being built across the country. You may not see them in your area yet, but they're coming, so get charged up about EVs!

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

HOW IS IOWA CHARGING UP?

According to Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Iowa Economic Development Authority, 5,880 EVs and hybrids are registered in Iowa.

Polk, Dallas, Linn, Johnson and Scott are the top five counties for EV registration.

Anyone with an EV in Iowa must pay a special registration fee in addition to the annual vehicle registration fee to the Iowa

DOT. Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, the battery electric (BEV) fee is \$130 and the plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) is \$65.

Plugshare is one of the most accurate EV charging station maps. Drivers can download a free app or visit [plugshare.com](https://www.plugshare.com) to find charging stations, leave reviews and connect with other plug-in owners.



HOW WILL WE CHARGE ALL THE NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLES?

BY PAUL WESSLUND



Electric vehicles (EV) need a nationwide network of charging stations to overcome American drivers' fears of running out of juice on long trips.

Or maybe that's not true at all.

There are already nearly one-third as many charging sites in the U.S. as gas stations. And that doesn't even count the "refueling stations" found in the electric outlets of every home. Plus, the range of EVs already exceeds how far most people drive in a day. It's estimated 90% of Americans drive less than 45 miles a day, and the average range for EVs is 250 miles.

The ballyhoo over charging stations has created a powerful conventional wisdom that they're a necessary step toward overcoming "range anxiety." President Biden's American Jobs Plan proposes a national network of 500,000 charging stations by 2030, up from the Department of Energy's current count of 50,000.

But the conventional wisdom masks a different road ahead.

Concerns beyond range anxiety

Range anxiety may be the least of the

reasons there aren't more EVs on the road, says Brian Sloboda, director of consumer solutions for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"There are people who argue we need the charging network for the electric vehicle market to be successful. They might be right, but I'm not one of those people," says Sloboda. "Let's say your electric vehicle is only used for commuting and you're just driving it from your home to the grocery store to work. It is very likely that you would never even use public charging stations because you can charge your EV at home for a very reasonable price."

Sloboda is quick to list the advantages of EVs, from how they affect the environment to their lower maintenance costs to the fact that you can wake up every morning with a full tank of "gas." But he sees bigger issues than a lack of charging stations standing in the way of greater acceptance.

"You have limited model availability, limited body styles, limited manufacturers, high prices and most people are unfamiliar with the technology," he says.

But Sloboda sees those problems as solvable. Right now, you'll pay about \$10,000 extra for an electric model. But those costs are coming down as batteries get cheaper and more powerful.

And competition is heating up. Every major car manufacturer has high-profile plans for electric models. Although EVs make up less than 4% of the auto market, that's doubled from just one year ago.

Supporting public charging

Even if charging stations are not the most important determiner of the future of EVs, they are a growing part of the landscape. To find the nearest charging station, a variety of apps will guide you. Many electric co-ops are also responding to the rising interest.

"Co-ops are looking at what they can do to support public charging," says Sloboda. "They do it to meet the needs of their members, but they also do it as economic development to bring tourists into the community to support local businesses like hotels and parks."

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

THE COOPERATIVE MODEL BENEFITS RURAL AND URBAN IOWANS

BY DAVE HOLM, CHUCK SODERBERG AND MURRAY WILLIAMS

For more than 200 years, Americans have worked together in cooperatives to meet challenges that are too big to solve individually. People often think of agriculture when they hear the word co-op in Iowa. In reality, more than one out of every three Iowans is a member of a co-op through industries like rural electric, credit unions, rural telephone, farm credit, petroleum and more.

What is a co-op exactly? Co-ops are not-for-profit organizations that are owned and democratically controlled by their members. They exist to benefit the people who use the co-op's services rather than generate profits for outside investors. Members elect their board of directors from within the membership.

As part of National Co-op Month, Gov. Kim Reynolds declared October as Co-op Month in Iowa. While co-op month is traditionally celebrated in October, the positive economic impact these organizations have in our state is something to be celebrated every day and month of the year.

Co-ops benefit both rural and urban Iowa, serving more than 1.4 million members throughout the state. In rural communities alone, co-ops pay approximately \$41 million in property taxes and help support critical infrastructure.

1 OUT OF 3 IOWANS IS A MEMBER OF A CO-OP

CO-OPS PAY APPROXIMATELY \$41 MILLION IN PROPERTY TAXES AND HELP SUPPORT CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

CO-OPS SERVE MORE THAN 1.4 MILLION MEMBERS THROUGHOUT IOWA

CO-OPS EMPLOY MORE THAN 11,000 IOWANS

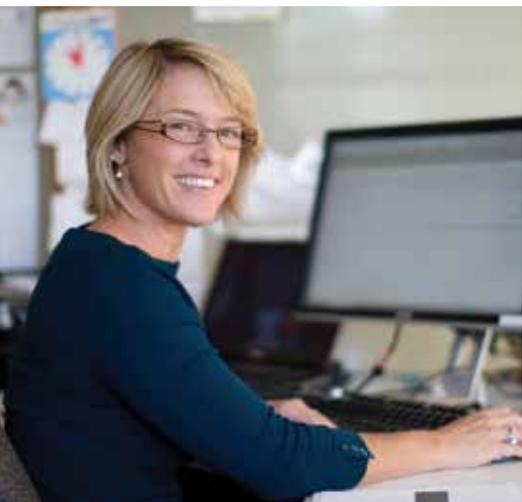
More than 11,000 Iowans are employed by co-ops, which often provide first-class benefits like health care, benefit programs, 401(k) plans, life insurance, paid time off, continued education incentives and even wellness plans. In fact, if these cooperative employees were grouped together, cooperatives would be in the top 10 largest employers in Iowa. Visit www.iowacooperatives.com to learn more about how cooperatives are critical to Iowa's economy.

This year's National Co-op Month theme of "Build Back for Impact" will be an ongoing focus for the months ahead. It is a chance to leverage our shared cooperative identity in the face of some of the biggest challenges

we have faced as a state and a nation. Our cooperative industries have been serving members on the forefront of the pandemic, and our most significant impact comes from embracing the values and principles that make us truly unique.

Whether it's the members we serve or the Iowans we employ, our cooperative movement is committed to enhancing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life in Iowa's cities, towns and rural areas.

Dave Holm is executive director of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives. Chuck Soderberg is executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. Murray Williams is president and CEO of the Iowa Credit Union League.



POWERFUL FUN: FIVE COOL USES TO POWER YOUR YULETIDE

BY PAUL WESSLUND



At the end of the year, thoughts of gifts dance in our heads, whether for others or just treating ourselves to the achievement of being able to turn the page on 2021.

Electricity offers one way to brighten gift choices as inventors and innovators keep coming up with new gadgets and gizmos to power our lives with efficiency and fun. Here are five electric ideas to add pizzazz to your holiday shopping list.

- 1 Healthy French fries?** Air fryers aren't really fryers but high-heat convection devices that simulate traditional recipes like chicken tenders, egg rolls, potato chips, fried vegetables and apple fritters. It's a health-conscious way to enjoy the comfort of fried favorites with much less oil. A friend of mine calls his electric air fryer "the greatest invention of all time."
- 2 Hit the road.** "Electric vehicle" doesn't mean just cars and trucks anymore! The sidewalks of college campuses and downtowns are now shared with electric scooters. And if you're having trouble keeping up with a bicycle fanatic, an electric bike might help you scale those
- 3 Walk the talk.** Walkie-talkies are one of those old technologies for staying in touch that still work great for businesses, conference coordination, hiking or camping. They can help keep a caravan of cars and trailers together. Let the kids figure out games like hide-and-seek or scavenger hunts. When shopping, it's helpful to know what you'll use them for because there are both indoor and outdoor models, and range can vary from a half-mile to 20 miles.
- 4 Easy reader.** If being at a computer keyboard seems too much like work and you're tired of squinting at the little screen on your phone,

steep hills. You can go off-road while hunting or bird watching with an electric All-Terrain Vehicle.

And if you were born to be wild, you can head out on the highway on a battery-powered motorcycle. The electric Harley Davidson boasts instant 100% torque, electronic safety features and the ability to use your smartphone for checking battery status and stolen vehicle tracking.

look at tablets. They come in a variety of screen sizes that make it easier to enjoy that magazine, detective novel, streaming movie or TV show or your computer game of choice. Most models come with the ability to write or draw on them.

- 5 Packing power.** A portable charger may seem like one of the least-exciting gifts you can give or get. But you'll be thankful for one when your phone's about to die as you hike over a hill and see a sunset vista to photograph, or you're at a concert and the song you wanted to record comes on! A word of advice: charge it up the day before you expect to use it because the smallest ones for your purse or pocket tend not to hold a charge for several weeks.

Shop carefully and know how you want to use the device because they all come with a variety of features and prices. And be cyber safe by using a strong password because anything connected to the internet can be hacked. Then focus on having some powerful fun!

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

PETEY THE PEACOCK FINDS A HOME

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

A few months ago, a friend of mine on Facebook was wondering where she could find peacocks. She thought they'd be wonderful gracing her yard with their fully furled tails, strutting around.

I let her have her illusions of grandeur, but I know the truth about peacocks.

Fowl farm guests arrive

Twenty-some years ago, three of these creatures showed up at my folks' place, about a half-mile across the pasture from where we live. They comprised a male and female pair and another male. No one was sure where they had come from, but my mom was hoping they'd move along soon.

No such luck. The trio made their nests at the farm and was determined to stay. Watching them was a reminder of the nightmare of junior high politics. The female laid eggs and hatched five of them. She led the peachicks into the cornfield and returned with only one. These three – the mother, father and chick – banded as a group and wouldn't let the lonely male anywhere near them. The old bachelor had a tough time of it, wanting to fit in. We could hear his piteous calls from our house.

The peacock population waxed and waned over the next couple of years. Eggs were hatched, and babies wandered off. Coyotes took some. That left the one bachelor peacock at my folks, a bird my grandsons have dubbed Petey.

The truth about peacocks

Petey's idiosyncrasies are amusing and sometimes barely tolerated at my parents' house. If you've never heard the call of a peacock, it's shrill and loud and grating. Sitting on our deck in the evening, we can hear Petey, no problem. On telephone calls with my mom, he's easily identifiable in the background.

Because peacocks and peahens like to nest up high, they are constantly



flying into trees. Or the rafters of the machine shed. Or on top of your car. And because they have sharp, long talons, they scratch whatever it is they're climbing up.

Maybe you can handle the racket. Maybe you can even tolerate the scratched cars and house siding. But once ensconced in their perches, peacocks provide a constant stream of droppings, drippings, downpours and deluges. Your sidewalks will be a mess. Your movement under any tree where they are roosting had better be brisk or you risk being covered.

Petey becomes a family friend

Since Petey is the lone male now, he doesn't unfurl his tail that often, as there's no female attention waiting to

be sought. But he's become an integral part of our family to my grandsons.

On Father's Day of this year, a tornado ripped through my parents' farm, taking down their pole barn, machine shed and several mature trees. My grandsons' first question was, "Are Grandma and Grandpa okay?" Their second question was, "Is Petey okay?"

Oh yes, Petey is a survivor. If you don't believe it, the truth is in his beady, gimlet eye, where he seems to be warning you to stay away from his tree.

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter.



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IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

November 2021

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