

● OCTOBER 2021

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Balancing
reliable, affordable,
environmentally
responsible energy

Win \$25 by
using SmartHub

Flavorful pork recipes

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ON THE COVER

Congratulations to Marty Hulsebos, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. See Page 14 for details on submitting cover images.

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR COOPERATIVE HERITAGE

BY CHUCK SODERBERG



You probably noticed that this magazine has a new name and a new look this month! It is my pleasure to introduce you to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*,

the magazine for member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives. The content and local co-op news you've come to appreciate in the pages of *Living with Energy in Iowa* remain the same, but we've updated our name to incorporate our cooperative heritage.

When we were planning the debut of our rebrand, it seemed most appropriate to time it with National Co-op Month in October. As we strategized on a new title, it was important to include "cooperative" in the name because it's essential to who we are and what we do. Electric cooperatives are proud to be owned and governed by the local members we serve.

Core values remain constant

Our cooperative values are core to our existence and legacy. Many electric cooperatives were formed across the Midwest in the 1930s and 40s because investor-owned utilities at that time saw no profit in building infrastructure into rural areas to serve sparse populations. So, farmers and ranchers decided to form their own locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives so they could gain access to safe, affordable and reliable power. And we're still here more than 80 years later delivering on that original mission to improve the quality of life for our members.

In fact, cooperative organizations around the world adhere to the same set of core principles and values. These seven cooperative principles are a key reason why electric

cooperatives operate differently from other types of electric utilities. We put the needs of our members first.

Information and education guides success

One of our key cooperative principles – Education, Training and Information – really explains why your local electric cooperative invests in this magazine. It's important to educate and train our cooperative members, elected directors and co-op employees so they can effectively contribute to the development and success of the cooperative. We believe informed members like you make better decisions.

Thank you for taking time every month to read this publication. We make it a priority to keep you

informed on regional electric cooperative news, the latest trends in the electric industry, energy efficiency tips that can save you money and safety information to protect your family. We also enjoy sharing member photos and member recipes with you each month. Make sure to bookmark our updated website at www.ieclmagazine.com where you can enter our monthly Editor's Choice Contest for a chance to win a great prize!

We believe our new name and updated design will help us connect with our greatest cooperative asset – our members.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an Instant Pot!

This Instant Pot Pro is a pressure cooker, sous-vide cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker, food warmer, yogurt maker, cake maker, sauté pan and steamer. The generous 8-quart capacity cooks up to eight portions – ideal for families, meal prep and batch cooking. An essential machine for every kitchen, this Instant Pot has an upgraded steam release switch with a noise-diffusing cover plus easy-grip handles on the inner pot, a large LCD screen and an auto-sealing lid.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 31, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Breville Panini Press from the August issue was Melvin & Kay Hauf from Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV. 7	Daylight Saving Time
NOV. 25	Thanksgiving
NOV. 25-26	Office Closed
DEC. 6	Fall Legislative Summit
DEC. 7	Member Advisory Committee Meeting
\$25 drawings for SmartHub users in October, November and December	

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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BALANCING RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE, ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE ELECTRICITY

BY MARK VIGUET



In an unpredictable year for energy companies, the leadership at Access Energy Cooperative and our power supplier Associated Electric Cooperative continues to focus on reliable and efficient electricity. Access Energy Cooperative is one of the 51 local distribution cooperatives that is served power by Associated, all who work together for the 2.1 million people who receive electricity from our three-tiered system.

Associated was created by members in 1961 to ensure member control of electric supply. Throughout its history, the goals of Associated and its member-owners haven't changed.

"Our mission, to provide economical and reliable power supply, has served us well throughout decades of change in the power generation industry," says John Killgore, a board member for United Electric Cooperative and vice president of Associated's board of directors. "We never forget that focus."

Climate change proposals won't change member focus

Evaluating federal climate change proposals to reduce or eliminate carbon is among Associated's top priorities as the Biden administration seeks to quickly and fundamentally

change how energy companies generate electricity. The current administration's goals propose to reduce carbon from electric generation 50% by 2030 and envision net zero carbon by 2035.

As our nation continues to debate, one thing is clear: Associated's member-led board of directors and staff believe in putting members and their needs first.

Rush to renewables creates concerns

"As a member-owned and governed wholesale power generation cooperative, we are alarmed by a rush to renewables without technologies available today to ensure reliable power at affordable prices," says David Tudor, Associated's CEO and general manager. "Member-owners clearly prioritize reliability and affordability in the electricity they depend on. We cannot sacrifice reliable electric supply or affordable rates."

Associated's generation sources have evolved through the years. The primary way Associated preserves reliability and affordability for members is with a balance of generation sources. By maintaining a diverse mix – coal, natural gas, wind and hydropower – the cooperative has

options to ensure reliable power at a competitive cost.

Member reliability is not for sale

Aggressive climate change proposals from Washington, D.C., challenge Associated's balanced strategy.

"Today, there are attempts to get energy companies like ours to take a deal for money and agree voluntarily to close fossil fuel plants and replace them with renewables," Tudor says. "We don't see that as a path that preserves reliability, so we cannot support that approach. Our members' reliability is not for sale."

Tudor points out that since 2005, Associated's carbon emissions have been reduced more than 33%. "We take generating electricity in responsible ways seriously. Safeguarding the environment is not a recent development for us," he says. "Reliability and affordability co-exist with responsible generation at our cooperative and have for a long time."

A key part of Associated's member-focused power strategy includes significant wind energy and hydropower as part of its generation mix. In 2020, Associated added generation from two more wind farms, bringing its total to eight farms and 1,240 megawatts of energy. Those additions continued a legacy of leadership: the power generation cooperative brought the first utility-scale wind power to their region with wind farms starting in 2007. Hydropower from lakes and dams provides another 478 megawatts of renewable power.



"We value the land, air and water, and everyone in our cooperative network depends on it. That's why our power generation always considers how best to generate reliable and affordable power in a way that preserves our natural environment," Killgore says.

Technology, transmission and time key to transition

The technology does not exist today to replace all fossil fuel plants with renewable generation and battery storage. Reliability will suffer and prices will go up. While adding large volumes of generation like wind and solar, which are not constant, to replace 24/7 year-round generation like coal and natural gas may sound good, adding too much too quickly will have reliability consequences.

The current transmission system has been designed and used for years to manage member energy load, not for a future where energy from intermittent sources like renewables displaces consistent electricity from coal and gas.

"Trying to force climate-change initiatives by 2030 or 2035 will not work. In fact, that's a reckless approach. Time is needed to thoroughly think through realistic options," Tudor says. "I'm concerned when all the attention is on quickly eliminating coal and natural gas power plants, with no technological solution for their replacement."

The historic 2021 winter storm, when our three-tiered system kept the lights on while many other utilities were forced into blackouts, demonstrates the value of a balanced electric generation strategy for member-owners and the nation.

"We will continue to make sure our members' needs come first. It's a time-tested and proven strategy that has resulted in real benefits," Killgore says.

For more information about Associated Electric Cooperative and its responsible generation efforts, visit www.aeci.org.

Mark Viguet is the senior manager of corporate communications for Associated Electric Cooperative.

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.

The amount collected for contributions July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, was \$4,279. We thank those who have given to 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) _____



SMARTHUB IS AN EASY WAY TO REPORT A POWER OUTAGE

Enroll for a chance to win a \$25 bill credit.

While managing your account online is one feature of our SmartHub app, reporting outages is another option available at your fingertips. With a few easy clicks, you can report an outage on SmartHub.

To encourage members to try the app, Access Energy Cooperative will enter everyone who is signed up to use SmartHub in a monthly drawing in October, November and December.

To sign up:

- 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 allows members to:

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

Don't let the next storm keep you in the dark – enroll in SmartHub today!

Already using SmartHub?

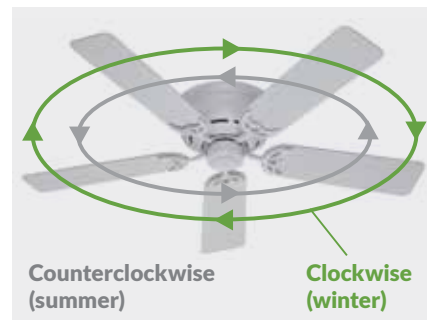
You are automatically entered in the drawing!

REVERSE THE SPIN AND SAVE

Ceiling fans can cut your electric bills year-round! Before you buy one for every room, it's important to understand how fans can help you save energy.

If you install a ceiling fan and don't adjust your thermostat settings accordingly, you may be more comfortable – but you also could be increasing your monthly electric bills.

During winter, flip the small switch on the side of the ceiling fan to set the blade rotation to clockwise. Run the fan on low speed so it creates a gentle upward breeze away from people in



the room. This will push the warm air at the ceiling back down into the room, where it's needed. Then set your furnace a few degrees lower to save electricity.

PROUD SUPPORTER OF HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Access Energy Cooperative is proud to support our communities in projects that help people. We have been supporters of the Henry County Habitat for Humanity program by contributing water heaters to the homes that are built, and this year the home was in Wayland. In addition, your co-op also works with the Jefferson County Habitat for Humanity program by assisting with energy efficiency education.



Alan Raymer and Jay Prichard deliver a water heater to the house.



MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN

Help us keep line workers 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!

TIPS FOR A SAFE HARVEST

BY ABBY BERRY

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, there are collisions where tractors and other farming equipment accidentally collide with utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery.

If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.



Photo: Linda Smith

- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 9-1-1 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it), and move away to safety.
- Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle. Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

Practicing safety on the farm year-round is important. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, we hope you'll remember these safety tips.

Abby Berry is the senior communications resources manager at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

EMPLOYEE CHANGES

Congratulations! Access Energy Cooperative is pleased to announce the promotion of two employees.



Kurt Lowenberg is our new district foreman. Kurt has been with the cooperative since May

2012, most recently serving as crew foreman.



Colton Stephens has accepted the position of crew foreman. Colton has been with the cooperative since April

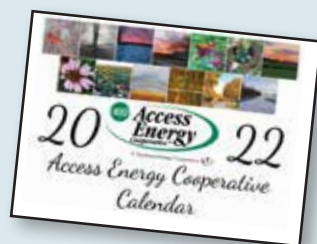
2019, most recently serving as journeyman lineman.

Thank you both for your dedication to the members of Access Energy Cooperative.

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

The annual photo contest is now open for the 2023 Access Energy Cooperative calendar.

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, they will receive an additional \$25 bill credit!

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



Flavorful

PORK

RECIPES

SEASONED PORK LOIN

- 1 cup brown sugar, divided
- ½ cup and 2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 8 cups water, divided
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 handful peppercorns
- 1 4-5-pound pork loin
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- liquid smoke

Combine ½ cup brown sugar and ½ cup salt in 6 cups water, bring to a boil. Stir until dissolved and then add bay leaves and peppercorns. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off heat and allow brine to cool completely to room temperature. Add pork loin and brine to a zip-top bag, squeeze out as much air as possible and seal. Put sealed bag into a large pot or bowl and refrigerate for at least 12 hours, up to 24 hours. Mix ½ cup brown sugar, 2 teaspoons salt, smoked paprika, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, black pepper and cayenne pepper to create a pork rub. Remove pork loin from brine and generously apply rub to all sides of the loin. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Remove from fridge and remove plastic wrap. Place on a wire rack over a sheet pan with sides. Place 2 cups water and liquid smoke in the pan. Bake at 400 degrees F for 45 minutes, then turn down to 250 degrees F for 7 hours or until internal temperature is 190 degrees F. Turn off the oven and let pork rest in the oven for 1 hour. For pulled pork, shred after removing from the oven or for pork loin slices, wrap in foil and slice the next day.

Lisa Stuck • Dows • Prairie Energy Cooperative

ZESTY PORK LOIN

- 1 4-pound pork loin roast
- 1 package Hidden Valley Ranch mix
- 1 package au jus mix
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 1 16-ounce jar sliced pepperoncini, drained

Trim excess fat from pork loin and place roast in slow cooker. Sprinkle ranch mix on roast and then sprinkle au jus on top. Cut butter into pieces and place on top. Put pepperoncini on last. Cook on low for 5 hours. Serves 8

Donna Faga • Adair
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

PORK CHOP BAKE

- 4 pork chops
- 4 potatoes, sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ can milk (use soup can)
- cheese, grated

Layer ingredients in baking dish in order listed, top with cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 2 hours. Serves 4-6

Connie Hoffman • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

PINEAPPLE PORK TACOS

- 1 white onion, thickly sliced
- ½ fresh pineapple, cut into chunks (about 2 cups)
- 1 pound pork tenderloin, thinly sliced crosswise
- 8 corn tortillas, warmed
- ½ cup cilantro, roughly chopped
- lime wedges

Arrange oven rack about 6 inches from the heating element and preheat broiler. Arrange onion and pineapple on a large foil-lined baking sheet and broil 6-8 minutes, stirring once or twice, until softened and browned in parts; transfer to a platter and keep warm. Arrange pork on the same baking sheet and broil 6-8 minutes, stirring once or twice, until cooked through and golden brown; transfer to platter with pineapple and onion and toss gently. Spoon onto tortillas, top with cilantro and serve with lime wedges on the side.

Jamie Zomermaand • Maurice
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

BARBECUED PORK ROAST

- 3½ pound pork roast
- 1½ cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- salt and pepper, to taste
- onion, to taste

Brown roast and put in slow cooker. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over roast. Cook on low all day. Leftovers make good sandwiches. Adjust the ingredients down for a smaller roast.

Janice Schneidermann • Little Rock
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BRUNCH HOT DISH

- 2½ cups herbed croutons
- 2 cups American cheese, shredded
- 1½ pounds pork sausage, browned and drained
- 4 large eggs
- 3 cups milk, divided
- ¾ teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can mushrooms, drained (optional)

Place croutons in a sprayed 8x12-inch baking dish. Top with cheese and then sausage. Beat eggs together with 2½ cups milk and mustard. Pour egg mixture over cheese and sausage. Let set in refrigerator overnight. Before baking, dilute mushroom soup with ½ cup milk and pour over top of hot dish. Sprinkle on mushrooms if desired. Bake at 300 degrees F for 1.5 hours. Serves 8

DeeAnn Paulsrud • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK CHOPS AND CREAMY RICE

- 1½ cup instant rice
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ cup milk
- 1 envelope dry onion soup mix
- 4 pork chops

Heat the canned soups and milk, then stir in rice. Place rice mixture in the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch casserole dish. Lay pork chops on top of rice and sprinkle with onion soup mix. Cover and bake at 325 degrees F for 1.5-2 hours. No need to brown chops first.

Ruth Van Zandbergen • Orange City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SWEET AND SOUR PORK RIBS

- 1 pound pork ribs
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ½ cup ketchup
- ½ cup water
- 2 teaspoons vinegar
- sliced pineapple (optional)

Fry ribs until brown. Mix all other ingredients in a bowl, then coat ribs with sauce mixture. Simmer for one hour. Serves 4-6

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

WANTED:

DATE NIGHT AT HOME



THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Oct. 31, 2021

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES SUPPORT INDUSTRIAL SITE DEVELOPMENT

BY KAY SNYDER

A theme for this year's National Co-op Month is "By the Community, For the Community." Developing industrial property to support business growth and job creation is a perfect example of this in practice.

For three and a half decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have supported the development of **95 industrial parks** totaling more than **7,250 acres** of property. Why is this important? Industrial parks are instruments for attracting business investment and for creating jobs. Established industrial parks generate comparative and competitive advantages that attract innovative businesses, leading to more jobs and a larger tax base.

Serving a growing number of commercial and industrial customers

In 1985, Iowa rural electric cooperatives established Iowa Area Development Group as their economic development organization to lead a concerted effort to grow the business and industrial base in Iowa. The number of commercial & industrial (C&I) customers the cooperatives

are serving is an indicator of this initiative's success.

Here is a snapshot of progress over the last 35 years:

- Large C&I members have grown from 67 in 1985 to 321 in 2020.
- Small C&I members have grown from 4,590 in 1985 to 28,713 in 2020.
- In 1985, C&I sales were 14% of total sales; in 2020 they were 54%.

- In 1985, C&I revenues were 12.6% percent of total revenues; in 2020 they were 45%.

Industrial parks bring unique benefits to the communities and regions in which they are located. Here are three examples from across the state.

Stanton Technology Park

Stanton recently broke ground on the 22-acre **Stanton Technology Park** located on the city's northeast side at the intersection of U.S. Highway



Stanton Technology Park

34 and Halland Avenue. Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) will provide robust technology and connectivity capabilities to the park, which is necessary to attract high-tech companies looking to locate in a rural area. The Stanton Child Resource Center will be the first business to locate in the park. Onsite day care is a perfect amenity to attract companies to the park. Both **Southwest Iowa REC** and **FMTC** have provided financial support and will serve the park's electric power and technology needs.

Calhoun County Business Park

In early June, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to recognize the start of construction on the **Calhoun County Business Park**. This is the county's first business park and is strategically located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and Highway 4 north of Rockwell City. The 16.5-acre first phase is currently under development. When all four phases are complete, the park will provide 115 acres of industrial space. Top prospects for the park include cold storage, warehouse, distribution and logistics companies. **Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association** and **Corn Belt Power Cooperative** are partners in the park and are joined by **Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative** and **Butler County REC** in providing financial support for development.

Butler Logistics Park

The **Butler Logistics Park** is a prime example of the significant

development that can happen as a result of available industrial space. Since the creation of the 92-acre first phase in 2014, the park has seen phenomenal expansion and success. Phase one is now home to **POET** ethanol plant, **American Colloid** and **Zinpro**, as well as a rail classification yard serving up to 150 cars for **Iowa Northern Railway**.

In 2019, the 230-acre second phase was quickly purchased by **TrinityRail**, a \$60 million facility for rail repairs, maintenance and modifications. This project created approximately 250 jobs. Also in 2019, **Valor Victoria**, **Iowa Northern Railway Company (IANR)**, **Watco Companies** and **Union Pacific (UNP)**, launched an internationally focused intermodal service through the newly developed **Butler Intermodal Terminal** at the **Butler Logistics Park**. This service provides an alternative to larger Midwest rail hubs and provides shippers with a cost-competitive solution that reduces long-haul trucking miles.

"Iowa Northern is thrilled to be part of this remarkable new service product for Iowa industries seeking strategic solutions to maintain a competitive global presence in the marketplace," says **Daniel Sabin**, president of **Iowa Northern Railway**.

In 2021, **Shell Rock Soy Processing**, a new start-up venture, purchased approximately 100 acres in the park's third phase to construct a soy processing facility. Scheduled to open

in 2022, this facility will employ 50-60 workers and is expected to crush 38.5 million bushels of soybeans annually.

Currently, 60 acres are available on the south side of the park for additional development. This is truly a "build it, and they will come" story made possible through important partnerships between **Butler County REC**, local, regional, state and federal partners.

Additional industrial and business parks in various stages of development are located across Iowa, including **LeMars**, **Estherville**, **Algona**, **Humboldt**, **Marion** and more. Visit www.IADG.com/sites-buildings to view available properties.

By the community, for the community

Electric cooperatives' active community involvement ensures a firsthand understanding of local priorities and enables them to make informed decisions on long-term investments.

While the theme "By the Community, For the Community" can take on a variety of meanings, it applies perfectly when recognizing the contributions electric cooperatives have made in generating business and industrial growth, which then create jobs and wages that support the people and communities they serve.

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




Calhoun County Business Park



Butler Logistics Park

THE PROS AND CONS OF APP-ENABLED LIGHTING

BY MARIA KANEVSKY



Smart light bulbs are available in a variety of colors and dimming options that can help to set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light.

Photo Credit: Cree



Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, smart lighting is one of the easiest and most affordable technologies to integrate into your home.

Photo Credit: Philips

Out of all the smart home technologies available on the market, smart lighting is one of the easiest technologies to integrate into your home. Smart lighting can be controlled by voice command, through your smartphone or a smart home hub (like Amazon Alexa), making it relatively easy to control. It is also among the most affordable smart home devices, starting at about \$10 per bulb.

Remote control, scheduling benefits

One of the most useful aspects of smart lighting is the ability to control the lighting while you're away from home. For example, if you leave for work and forget to turn off the lights at home, you can easily turn them off with a few taps on a smartphone app.

Similarly, many smart lights offer the option for a customizable schedule. Users can schedule lighting to turn on or off at certain times of the day, depending on their preferences. For instance, turning off all the lights at home just before bedtime, or scheduling lights to turn on just before returning home from work.

Many smart light bulbs have motion-detection technology that can sense if a person is in the room or nearby to increase safety at home. This feature can be programmed to send an alert to your phone when the smart lighting detects an unexpected motion, either inside or outside the home.

Color customization adds fun

Beyond the more practical applications, smart lighting can simply be fun to use. Bulbs are available in various colors and dimming options that can help set different themes or moods for the room, from an exciting bright white to a calming dim light.

Various color temperatures can create different moods and also potentially help with winding down at night and improving sleep quality. Blue light, which mimics daylight, prevents the release of melatonin, an important hormone to feel sleepy. Setting smart lights to warmer-colored lights at night can help release melatonin, leading to a better night's sleep.

Potential issues to note

Some smart light bulbs may have

minor technical issues, such as not correctly responding to a voice command. However, sticking with reputable brands should ensure a well-functioning light bulb.

Another factor to consider is that not all smart lighting options are compatible with dimmers since smart bulbs have built-in dimming mechanisms. This could lead to inconsistent lighting between smart and regular bulbs and could cause smart lights to flicker if they clash with the existing dimmer switch. To prevent this, avoid placing smart light bulbs in fixtures that already have a dimmer switch.

Before making any purchases, research which smart lighting options work best for your home. Read several reviews to ensure your purchase is reliable during the entirety of its life span. Choosing the best option will help you make the most of it!

Maria Kanevsky writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

EXPLORE IOWA THIS FALL AND WINTER WITH THE IOWA FARM & FUN PASSPORT

The Iowa Tourism Office has launched the Iowa Farm & Fun Passport, which provides travelers the opportunity to discover farm experiences and family fun across the state while earning the chance to win prizes. The fall/winter edition of the Iowa Travel Guide is also now available for travelers who want to learn more about exploring Iowa.

“Iowa is fortunate to have four seasons of travel,” says Amy Zeigler, state tourism manager for the Iowa Tourism Office. “Our research shows that fall accounts for nearly 30% of visitors. Both the Iowa Farm & Fun Passport and Fall/Winter Iowa Travel Guide provide an abundance of ideas to inspire travel and offer activities over the next several months.”

The Iowa Farm & Fun Passport features two trail options:

1 The **Iowa Dairy Trail** includes homemade ice cream, cheese and all things dairy. Each check-in on the Dairy Trail earns travelers one entry into a monthly sweepstakes drawing through December, courtesy of Midwest Dairy. Prizes include an ice cream maker, smoothie maker, espresso machine and an artisan pizza oven.

Destinations

- Cinnamon Ridge Country Cupboard - Donahue
- Country View Dairy - Hawkeye
- Frisian Farms Cheese House - Leighton
- Hansen's Farm Fresh Dairy - Hudson
- Hinterland Dairy - Donnellson
- Iowa State University Creamery - Ames
- Iowa's Dairy Center - Calmar
- Milton Creamery LLC - Milton
- New Day Dairy GuestBarn - Clarksville
- Picket Fence Creamery - Woodward
- Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor - Le Mars
- WW Homestead Dairy LLC - Waukon

2 The **Fall Fun Trail** features pick-your-own apple orchards and pumpkin patches giving travelers the chance to redeem family deals and discounts. The new passport joins existing programs for state parks, scenic byways, wine and beer. All passports are available at traveliowa.com/passport.

Destinations

- Bloomsbury Farm - Atkins
- Center Grove Orchard - Cambridge
- Colony Pumpkin Patch - North Liberty
- Enchanted Acres - Sheffield
- Flatrack Farms Pumpkin Patch - Garner
- Harvestville Farm - Donnellson
- Howells Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch - Cumming
- Little Sioux Orchard - Okoboji
- Seed Savers Exchange Historic Orchard - Decorah

The free 140-page Fall/Winter Iowa Travel Guide can be ordered online at traveliowa.com, by phone at 800-345-IOWA or picked up at any of Iowa's 13 Welcome Centers. An online version is also available.

Editor's Note: Many of these destinations feature businesses served by Iowa's electric cooperatives. Because Iowa's electric co-ops serve member-consumers in all of Iowa's 99 counties, you'll also be traveling through several cooperative-served communities when visiting the dairy trail and fall fun trail.

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IT'S TIME TO SAVE ENERGY!

Heating season will arrive soon, making it a great time to plan to save energy.

No matter what kind of heating system you have in your house, you can save money and increase your comfort by properly maintaining and upgrading your equipment. But remember, an energy-efficient furnace alone will not have as great an impact on your energy bills as using the whole-house approach. By combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bill while reducing environmental emissions.

7 Heating Tips

- Set your programmable thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter and lower the setpoint when you're sleeping or away from home.
- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as recommended.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting or drapes.
- Eliminate trapped air from hot-water radiators once or twice a season; if unsure about how
- to perform this task, contact a professional.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.
- During the winter, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

Source: energy.gov

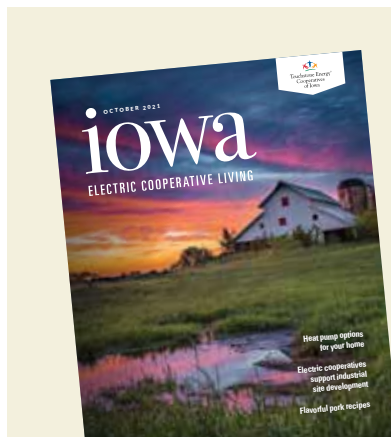


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ADVENTURES IN BULK BUYING

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Iowa has a plethora of bulk grocery stores, many of them operated by the Amish or the Mennonites. There are the more established stores in Kalona and Hazleton, with newer ones popping up in the Albia, Troy and Chariton areas. Each has its own vibe and offerings.

I have long been an avid purveyor at bulk stores. No, that's an understatement. I need to admit my weakness – buying things in bulk makes me a little crazy. Of course, I purchase items that I will actually use, such as dried onions and whole cloves for holiday decorations. But things go haywire when I run across something novel, buy it, and then have no idea what to do with it later.

Novelty doesn't run in bulk

For instance, take a 4-pound bag of marshmallow bits, the kind that come in a favorite breakfast cereal, but just the marshmallows. The best part! My kids would love these! Which was true, for about three days. They snarfed them to a nausea-induced state and then swore off them forever. After several months in the freezer, the marshmallow bits got thrown into a snack mix and were finally consumed.

My most boggling purchase was the 3-pound bag of meringue powder. I have made precisely one meringue pie in my life – lemon – and even my home economics teacher in high school had to admit it was perfect. However, I never again have had the motivation or the time to repeat this feat.

I have no idea how many pies could be made from 3 pounds of meringue powder, but obviously this package was meant for someone manufacturing tarts on an industrial scale. Why I purchased it remains a mystery swathed in the mists of time. After incredulous laughter from my family, my grandma took it off my hands. When she died several



years later, we cleaned out her house and discovered the bag remained unopened in her cupboard.

Mountains of mums

Lest you think I only overbuy at bulk stores, I'm bound to disappoint you. A newer entrant into the bulk sales world is the Amish produce auction, held several times a week throughout the year. Everything is bid on in large lots – 36 peppers, a box of 150 pumpkins or 15 large mums.

Who can resist those mums—colorful and full, lined up in rows, just waiting to be taken home?

And so I bit. My plan was to keep six of them and sell the rest to friends and family. Great idea but transporting them in my cramped Grand Am without crushing them meant a feat of gymnastics unknown to the Olympics. First, the plants were much larger than they looked standing together bloom to bloom. I wedged them into the trunk, tucked them

onto the floorboards, folded them on either side of my legs. It looked as if Shakespeare's Birnam Wood had come to life, driving down the road.

Second, a hitherto unknown problem came hopping to life. Each mum housed at least 9.5 grasshoppers, all of which began jumping around the car – except for the .5, which dropped wings on my lap. Opening the windows sucked some of them out, but the wind also mangled the mums.

After a precarious journey, we arrived home. I kept the best mums and gave the rest away. I didn't have the nerve to charge for them in their diminished condition.

I still buy mums every year, bringing a larger vehicle along. But I've sworn off the meringue powder. I promise.

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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