

# living with energy

IN IOWA



SEPTEMBER 2021

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Cooperatives  
of Iowa

INTRODUCING  
**THE 3**  
WINNING  
VOLUNTEERS



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Access Energy Cooperative  
director election results

Learn about Iowa's Youth  
Leadership Academy

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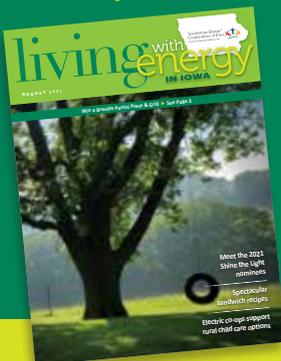
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On Pages 10, 11 and 14 of this issue, meet the three individuals featured on this month's cover. Each is a shining light in their communities. ✨

# What's in a name?

BY ANN THELEN



Styles come and go, trends evolve and change, but one thing that never goes out of style is what it means to be part of an electric cooperative. Since

locally owned electric cooperatives first brought power to rural Iowans in the 1930s, the momentum fueled by the cooperative spirit has only strengthened.

A business model that has endured the test of time sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. Your electric cooperative adheres to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community. Owned by the member-consumers we serve, Iowa's community-focused electric cooperatives power the lives of 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties and are committed to delivering safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power.

## Sharing what it means to be an electric cooperative member

Each month, through the pages of this magazine, we share what it means to be an electric cooperative member. We embrace with pride the opportunity to tell the stories of community volunteers, such as our Shine the Light winners in this issue; to highlight economic development success stories helping communities prosper; and encourage youth to become engaged in the future success of the electric cooperative industry.

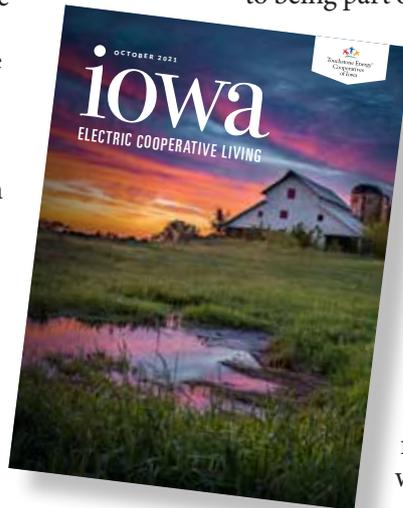
Since this publication began in 1948, it has undergone six name changes while keeping to the central mission of keeping co-op member-consumers informed. From starting as a newsletter to becoming a magazine 61 years ago, each change was meant to further illustrate what it means to be an electric cooperative member.

## Magazine name change coming in October

With the October issue of this publication, we're excited to unveil a name change that we believe even more clearly describes the magazine. Your statewide publication will now be called *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. On behalf of the team, I'm excited for the magazine's name to fully reflect who we serve – you the members – and who we are – Iowa's electric cooperatives.

This magazine's name should identify us, be unique to us and tell readers what to expect inside. We are confident that *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* will do all these things and more.

Based on our 2020 readership survey and years of research by the



National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, we know that member-consumers have a strong affinity to being part of a cooperative. It

makes sense to have "cooperative" as part of the magazine's name.

To the left, we're giving you a sneak peek at what the cover of the October issue will look like so that you know what to expect when you open your mailbox. Inside, you'll find fresh designs paired with familiar favorites – energy efficiency tips, information

on technology and innovation, economic development features, and of course, recipes!

Once the October issue comes out, we'll be anxious for your feedback! ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Keurig K-Classico Coffee Maker!

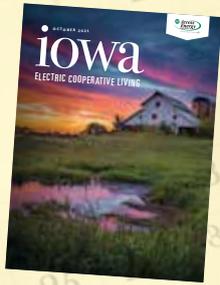
Wake up to amazing coffee with this Keurig single-serve coffee brewer. Select from 6, 8 or 10 ounces for each brew. A 48-ounce water reservoir allows users to brew 6+ cups before having to refill, saving you time and simplifying your morning routine. An auto-off feature is easily programmed to turn off the coffee maker after it has been idle for 2 hours, helping to save energy. ⚡



### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Sept. 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 \$100 home improvement gift card from our July issue was John Evans from North West REC.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



New in October – *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine is changing its name to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* and will have a new look! Access Energy Cooperative's news will now be on Pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 instead of Pages 4, 5, 12 and 13. The October cover will feature a photo by Access Energy Cooperative member Marty Hulsebos.

\$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.*

**Office:** Access Energy Cooperative  
1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641  
**Phone:** 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232  
**Fax:** 319-385-6873  
**Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):** 8-1-1  
**Website:** www.accessenergycoop.com  
**Facebook:** facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop  
**Twitter:** twitter.com/AccessEnergyC  
**E-mail:** contactus@accessenergycoop.com  
**Office Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

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## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# Our commitment to renewable, and responsible energy

BY MARK VIGUET



This concrete tank allows fly ash to be recycled and water reused at the Thomas Hill Energy Center.

From the White House, a proposed plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and create a carbon-free power sector by 2035 means power generators like Associated Electric Cooperative, which supplies power for Access Energy Cooperative, must intensify efforts to maintain reliability and affordability with responsibly generated electricity.

Associated is owned by and provides wholesale power to six regional transmission cooperatives who provide that power to 51 local electric distribution cooperative systems in Missouri, southeast Iowa and northeast Oklahoma, which serve 2.1 million member-consumers. Their priorities are clear.

“Our mission mirrors the priorities of the member-owners served by our system, who want reliable, low-cost electricity,” says David Tudor, Associated’s CEO and general manager. “We have successfully navigated many changes in presidential administrations, policies and regulations over many years and will continue to do the right things, for the right reasons, at the right times.”

## Renewable leadership

A cornerstone of any plan to reduce carbon includes increasing renewable power sources like wind, which are

variable, not reliable – only available when the wind is blowing or, in the case of solar power, when the sun is shining. Today, no battery technology exists that duplicates the reliability of traditional generation like nuclear, coal or natural gas plants.

Associated has been a renewable power leader for Missouri, bringing the first utility-scale wind farms to the state in 2007 by contracting to buy all the power produced by the wind farms. Since then, Associated has increased its total to eight wind farms. The two most recent wind farms were added in 2020. Hydropower is another Associated renewable resource, purchased through a long-term contract with the federal government.

## Reliability concerns

“Associated’s renewable resources have been carefully located and integrated into our owners’ transmission systems so they can be supported with reliable coal and natural gas plant resources,” Tudor says. “You can find no greater example of the value of those 24/7 power sources – coal and natural gas – than the February winter storm in Texas, where cooperatives avoided rolling blackouts as utilities all around our system put customers in the dark.”

# affordable

## Affordability a key member priority

Rural America needs affordable power supply for their homes, farms and businesses. That much is clear from triennial survey results where members say it's one of their top priorities – and concerns. Associated ranks among the lower cost wholesale power suppliers in the country and that is by design, not accident.

“When we make decisions, cost is near the top of the list. We always ask, ‘Does this make good economic sense for our members?’” Tudor explains. “By keeping that goal prominent, we’ve delivered power that is affordable while also generating responsible power with a balanced resource mix.”

## Implementing a realistic plan will take time and money

Associated is working hard to preserve member benefits in a changing industry with increasing challenges. The cooperative has been educating state and federal legislators about the realities of an overly aggressive White House plan and the choices power generation companies face.

“Technology that doesn’t exist today must be developed to store renewable energy effectively and affordably, while high-voltage transmission networks need upgrades to handle the changing generation mix reliably,” Tudor says. “Both of those key elements will take time and money, and lots of both. We are working to make sure our legislators understand this.”

For more information about Associated Electric and its responsible generation efforts, visit [www.aeci.org](http://www.aeci.org).

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

# 2021 Annual Meeting of Members

Members of Access Energy Cooperative celebrated “20/20 Focus 24 x 7 x 365” as the theme of the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 3 in a unique virtual format.

The decision to once again not hold any in-person activities was one the board did not take lightly. Because planning for the annual meeting of members starts in January, information available at that time was used to make the decision. With so many uncertainties regarding large gatherings, the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members was held as a virtual live broadcast on Access Energy Cooperative’s Facebook page on Aug. 3 at 7 p.m.

The only business conducted was the election of directors. Facebook Live was used to share the election results with members. The video has been saved to the Access Energy Cooperative Facebook page for members who are interested in watching the meeting.

Marvin Larson was re-elected to represent District 1, Larry White was re-elected to represent District 2 and Bob Chesnut III was re-elected for District 3. At the board reorganizational meeting after the election, the following were

## Re-elected directors

### District 1



Marvin Larson

### District 2



Larry White

### District 3



Bob Chesnut III

approved as the officers of the board: President Marvin Newton, Vice President Marvin Larson, Secretary Bob Chesnut III and Treasurer David Hollingsworth.

The election was held by mail-in and online balloting. Each member who submitted a vote, either by mail or online, received a \$10 bill credit. Members should see the bill credit either on their August or September bill, depending on their billing cycle. ⚡



## Board officers



Marvin Newton  
President



Marvin Larson  
Vice President



Bob Chesnut III  
Secretary



David Hollingsworth  
Treasurer

# IOWA YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

We're looking for high school students who are interested in public service and leadership

Students who attend our Zoom sessions in October will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship!



For decades, Iowa has been sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital as part of the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trip was canceled in 2020 and 2021, but is scheduled to return in 2022.

To bridge the gap in not having a Youth Tour for the past two summers, Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to offer a new opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model. The **Iowa Youth Leadership Academy** will be held as a three-part webinar series in October and is open to any high school student in the state. Students can register at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com).

## Who should attend?

This new program is geared for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership or government. The goal of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is to raise students' awareness of the role electric cooperatives have in their local communities. In addition, participants will learn about electric cooperative careers.

## Zoom sessions in October

Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic.

## Zoom Sessions

- **Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.**  
Cooperative Business Model
- **Thursday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.**  
Rural Iowa Advocacy
- **Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.**  
Civic Involvement & Leadership

During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our speakers and presenters while learning about advocacy and leadership. Attendees will also hear from former Iowa Youth Tour students who pursued their passion for government service and leadership after attending the weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. ⚡

## Featured speakers



**Haley Moon**  
Advocacy and Political  
Action Manager  
Iowa Association of  
Electric Cooperatives



**Adam Schwartz**  
Founder & Principal  
The Cooperative Way



**Kathleen Riessen**  
Leadership Expert  
Kathleen Riessen &  
Company

# Details released for Iowa Home Energy Assistance Program



## Opportunities to win

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship

## Save the date

The 2022 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is slated for June 18-24.

“Students really need to take advantage of all the opportunities that the Iowa Youth Tour provides – not only what participants see and do while in D.C., but also for the lifelong opportunities. The activities are great networking events with electric cooperatives and peers from around the state. I’m constantly running into people I met. Even today, through my job, I interact with people that went on the Iowa Youth Tour.”

Jacob Holck  
(2016 Iowa Youth Tour participant)  
Communications Specialist  
Office of Iowa Secretary of State

Learn more at  
[www.iowaYouthTour.com](http://www.iowaYouthTour.com) or  
contact your local co-op for  
more information.

The 2021-2022 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 19 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

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

document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2021, through April 30, 2022. The start date is Oct. 1, 2021, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you’re not sure where to apply, visit [humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply](http://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply). to contact your local community action agency, call 2-1-1 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319. 📧

### Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,320

**Note:** For households with more than eight members, add \$9,080 for each additional member.

# Chicken

## RECIPES



## Bruschetta Chicken Bake

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon olive oil  
salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 ripe Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
fresh basil  
noodles or rice, optional

Place oil in a skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken and season with salt and pepper. Cook until golden on both sides and almost cooked through. Place chicken in a sprayed 8x8-inch dish then add tomatoes, oregano and garlic (optional, replace fresh tomatoes with 15 ounces canned diced tomatoes). Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake uncovered at 375 degrees F for 18-20 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Remove and let sit for 5 minutes, top with fresh basil. Can be served on your choice of noodle or rice.

**Arie Schiller • Donnellson**  
Access Energy Cooperative

## Chicken Casserole

- 1 pouch dry onion soup
- 8 ounces pineapple and apricot preserves
- 8 ounces Thousand Island salad dressing
- 6 whole chicken breasts, skinned and boned  
rice

Mix dry onion soup, preserves and dressing together. Put a small amount of sauce in a 9x13-inch pan. Split chicken breasts in half and place on sauce in pan. Spoon remaining sauce on top of chicken. Bake at 325-350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes. Baste a couple of times while baking. Serve with rice. *Serves 6-8*

**Darla German • Rhodes • Consumers Energy**

## Crispy Chicken

- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- ½ teaspoon basil
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ⅛ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded
- ⅛ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon milk
- ½ pound boneless chicken breast

Combine breadcrumbs, basil, oregano and cheese in a shallow bowl. Mix mayonnaise and milk in a separate shallow bowl. Dip chicken into mayonnaise mixture and then into breadcrumbs. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken reaches 165 degrees F. *Serves 2*

**Donna Stoll • Hospers**  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## Chicken Pasta Salad

- 1 cup mini bow tie pasta
- 1 cup mayonnaise (don't substitute)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups chicken breast, cooked and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 cup celery, thinly cut
- 1 cup red grapes, washed, drained and cut in half
- ¼ cup whole cashews

Cook pasta until just tender then drain, rinse and cool. Mix mayonnaise and sugar, set aside. Combine cooled pasta, chicken, celery and grapes. Stir in mayonnaise and sugar mixture, then refrigerate. Add cashews just before serving. *Serves 6-8*

**Jennifer Judson-Harms • New Hampton**  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

**Chicken Facts**  
Source: U.S.  
Department of  
Agriculture, National  
Chicken Council

### LEAN PROTEIN

Chicken breast is a great source of lean protein. A 3-ounce, boneless, skinless breast offers 26 grams of protein in just 128 calories.

# BBQ Chicken Quesadillas

- 6-8 flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar or Mexican blend cheese, shredded
- 1 cup cooked chicken, shredded
- ½ cup barbecue sauce

Divide cheese between tortillas, spreading cheese evenly over half of each tortilla. Top each with chicken and barbeque sauce. Fold each tortilla in half and place on lightly greased large baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5-6 minutes until cheese is melted, tortillas are lightly browned. Cut tortillas in half and serve. *Serves 6-8*

Nichole Blankespoor • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

# Barbecue Bacon Chicken

- 12-15 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 12-15 slices bacon
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 16 ounces ketchup
- ⅓ cup vinegar
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- colby jack cheese, shredded

Grill chicken about 5 minutes per side, doesn't need to be fully cooked. Cook bacon until mostly done but still limp. Wrap one bacon strip around each chicken breast. Place on a large baking pan, bacon-seam side down. Heat brown sugar, ketchup, vinegar, butter and Worcestershire sauce on stovetop until butter melts. Pour over chicken. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1-1.5 hours, until chicken is completely cooked through. Top with shredded cheese. *Serves 12-15*

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative



**Search** our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's rural kitchens.

[www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes)

# Baked Chicken Fajitas

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes with green chilis
- 1 large bell pepper, sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 3 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 12 tortillas
- avocados, optional

Mix chicken, diced tomatoes with green chilis, bell pepper and onion in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Mix oil and seasonings in a small bowl (optional, replace seasonings with one fajita seasoning packet). Drizzle over the chicken mixture, toss to coat. Cover and bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken is cooked and veggies are tender. Serve on warmed tortillas. Top with sliced avocados if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcy Gherian • Alvord  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## Wanted: Slow Cooker Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

You can't beat the convenience and versatility of a slow cooker! From dips and casseroles to stir fries and soups, we want your favorite recipes prepared using a slow cooker. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at [www.livingwithenergyiowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com).

The deadline is Sept. 30, 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@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

**MAIL:**  
**Recipes**  
*Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Urbandale, Iowa 50322

### HORMONE-FREE

No hormones are ever used in U.S. chicken production.

CHICKEN FACTS

### COOK IT SAFELY

Chicken should be cooked to a safe internal temperature of 165 degrees F as measured with a food thermometer.

CHICKEN FACTS

### WINGS BY THE BILLION

Americans ate a record 1.42 billion wings during Super Bowl LV in 2021.

CHICKEN FACTS

### PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

Beyond protein, chicken contains under-consumed nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, choline, vitamin B12 and iron.

CHICKEN FACTS

### NO. 1 PROTEIN

The average American consumes more than 98 pounds of chicken in a year. It is the No. 1 protein consumed in the U.S.

CHICKEN FACTS

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners

The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa are driven by a commitment to community. To celebrate local volunteers, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives launched the first-ever Shine the Light contest earlier this summer. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.



The judging committee had the difficult task of narrowing down from 39 outstanding nominees to select three contest winners.

Congratulations to **Suzanne Askelsen** who is recognized for her enthusiastic support of the Ballard Education Foundation; **Marlene Walthart** who is recognized for her dedication to the Emmet County Animal Shelter; and **Dr. George North** who is recognized for his vision in establishing Wilder Park. These three winners have been awarded a \$1,500 donation to their charity or community organization of choice.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).



Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy (second from right), presents a check to Shine the Light winner Suzanne Askelsen (third from left).



Suzanne Askelsen (far right) presents a check on behalf of the Ballard Education Foundation to teacher JoEllen Wesseleemann, (second from right).



Suzanne Askelsen (center) with Ballard Education Foundation Board Members Sara Hillbrand and John Hilleman.

## BALLARD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

### Suzanne Askelsen enthusiastically supports teachers and students

Ask anyone who knows Suzanne Askelsen to describe her, and you'll hear things like, "She has a big heart!" and "She's an inspiration!" delivered with a big smile.

Askelsen lives by the motto, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." She embodied this belief when launching an education foundation that helps students and teachers in the Ballard Community School District.

"My parents taught me to always lend a helping hand," she says. "To me, life is about making a better place for everyone around you."

Askelsen is the recipient of one of three Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa. The contest awards \$1,500 to a non-profit organization of the recipient's choice and Askelsen chose the Ballard Education Foundation.

Midland Power Cooperative member Carol Gilbert nominated Askelsen, who is a member of Consumers Energy. As Askelsen's

mother, Gilbert showed her daughter how giving time to her community can be a fulfilling and rewarding journey.

"I nominated Suzanne for this contest as a thank you to the person she is and how she lives her life," Gilbert says. "It's been wonderful to watch her grow into the young woman she is today. By her shining example, Suzanne lives out her personal belief daily in 'doing what you can, with all you have, wherever you are.'"

In 2013, Ballard Superintendent Ottie Maxey first approached Askelsen about starting an education foundation. The foundation would supplement the school district's budget for teacher resources. Askelsen agreed and her enthusiasm attracted other community members to get the foundation off the ground.

"Suzanne shows up and get things done," Superintendent Maxey shares. "She was absolutely one of the key reasons why this foundation started."

Officially established in February 2015, the Ballard Education



Winner: Suzanne Askelsen (left)



Winner: Marlene Walthart (right)



Winner: George North (left)

Foundation partners with the school district, alumni, businesses and individuals to identify and meet the needs of Ballard students. Askelsen served as the organization's first president from 2015-2019.

"She led us through those initial grassroots efforts," says Sara Wilson, current president of the Ballard Education Foundation. "When I think about her leadership, I think about mobilizing community action and volunteers. She can connect the dots."

As a Shine the Light contest winner,

Askelsen has directed the money to fulfill grant requests from teachers for resources to enhance the curriculum. Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy, presented the check to Askelsen and the foundation on Aug. 2.

"Consumers Energy is excited to recognize Suzanne's volunteerism in the community," Itzen says. "She has the values I think we all wish we had. Everyone needs a Suzanne in their life."

For those wishing to get involved in their community but don't have time to

volunteer, Askelsen suggests monetary donations to a favorite charity or group can go a long way.

"I believe if you have time in your life to be part of something bigger than you, you will walk away with a full, warm heart and a smile on your face," she says.

To learn more about the Ballard Education Foundation, visit [ballardedfoundation.org](http://ballardedfoundation.org).

Article contributed by Sarah Heggen, Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

## EMMET COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

### Marlene Walthart shares her time and lifelong love of animals

If you ask Dawn Eveleth, there's one person you go to in a pinch when you need a volunteer: her cousin Marlene Walthart.

"I've known her forever," Eveleth says. "For as long as I can remember she's been a volunteer. From the time she was a little kid, up until now, it's kind of been her life. You can ask her anything and if she's available to do it, she's always willing for anyone or any animal."

While Marlene is known to volunteer elsewhere in her Estherville community, she has been selected as a winner in the inaugural Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa for her work at the Emmet County Animal Shelter.

Kristy Henning founded the shelter in 2010. Right away, Marlene saw the shelter as just another way to help her community.

"I wanted to do something with my Girl Scouts to win the silver award badge," Marlene says. "I got in touch with Kristy and started doing things around the shelter. It just went from there."

Henning says she can't count how many times she relied on Marlene and her husband Larry in those early days.

"I don't even know where to start," she says. "They are just invaluable to the shelter. Marlene and Larry were integral.

They spent numerous hours here, I don't even know how we would do that today."

What motivates Marlene?

It's her lifelong love of animals.

"My husband and I believe I am part cat," she says. "All my life I have wanted cats. My dad wanted dogs. I would bring a cat home, and they would say no. I would take it back and cry."

Today, the shelter has grown from a predominately cat rescue to also include a dog section.

"We have the opportunity to save a lot of animals' lives," Marlene says. "We usually have around 100 cats. When I first got in touch with Kristy, she told me about some instances of animal cruelty that I was unaware of."

For the Waltharts, volunteering goes far beyond just loving on animals. The duo set up a non-profit can redemption center adjacent to the shelter. The can redemption center serves as a funding vehicle for the shelter. Marlene takes care of office and bookwork, while Larry can be relied upon for handyman tasks.

As for how the shelter will use its \$1,500 Shine the Light grant, Henning says expansion is always needed with the mission to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome the unwanted, unloved and the abandoned.

"The need for puppy rescue is overwhelming right now," she says.

"We're going to put an outside run on the intake kennel. If we can run two groups of puppies at the same time, we can rescue more puppies."

To learn more about the Emmet County Animal Shelter or to inquire about adopting a pet, visit [emmetcountyanimalshelter.org](http://emmetcountyanimalshelter.org).

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



Marlene with husband Larry.



Marlene with Kristi Henning, shelter director.

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## SMART HUB UPDATE

# Win \$25 by using SmartHub



**Don't have a SmartHub account? Create one today for a chance to win a \$25 bill credit.**

Access Energy Cooperative makes it convenient to connect with us using our online SmartHub platform. SmartHub users are able to perform all tasks related to managing their electric account right from a computer, tablet or smartphone.

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. If you are already using SmartHub, you automatically qualify for the drawing. Simply follow these instructions to sign up:

- Look up your account number
- Go to [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://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
- Report outages
- Check balances and make payments
- And so much more! ⚡

## RELIABILITY MATTERS

## After-hours answering service

Access Energy Cooperative strives to exceed your expectations. It is stated in our mission statement, which is part of our everyday life at the cooperative. We take that mission very seriously.

We have contracted with an answering service to support our incoming calls after hours. When we experience bad weather or other circumstances that affect a large number of members, they experience a significant increase in the number of incoming phone calls.

Like many other small businesses in the service industry nationwide, answering services are operating with less-than-normal staffing capacity. When you combine a reduced staff with an increase in the number of calls, we are regretful that the result can mean a wait time when calling to report a power outage.

If you happen to experience a power outage, please call us at 866-242-4232. Stay on the line until you speak with

someone or leave a message.

Another option is to report an outage through your SmartHub account. All members have access to the SmartHub app. You can use it to monitor your usage, pay your bill and send notifications such as outages.

If you have issues signing up with SmartHub, call the office during regular business hours and we will be happy to assist.

The answering service we partner with has implemented a stringent plan to obtain its goal of serving our members promptly. Everything possible is being done to increase their staffing levels and maintain the level of service you have come to expect from Access Energy Cooperative.

We do appreciate your patience during this time. If you have concerns about any communications with Access Energy Cooperative, please call us at 866-242-4232 during normal business hours. ⚡



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

## Energy savings for your business

Locally owned businesses are the backbone of our community. Fall is the perfect time to make sure your building is equipped for maximum energy savings.

Here are some ideas to implement today:

- LED lighting for your business allows you to maintain preferred brightness levels while keeping energy costs low. Don't forget about your outdoor lighting options as well as timers for automatic or overnight shutoff.
- Check any refrigeration to ensure it is running optimally and keeping items cool without setting the thermostat lower than necessary. Keep up with regular maintenance and freon refills to ensure safe and longer-lasting inventory.
- Electric motor-driven systems account for about 25% of all commercial energy use. For larger

operations, variable speed drives may be necessary to optimize your energy consumption.

- Unplug all unnecessary or unused appliances and electronic equipment. Many of these devices continue to draw power even when they are turned off. Advanced power strips are a smart, low-cost upgrade.
- Make sure your HVAC system is sized correctly for your business space. If it is not, this could lead to inefficient operation or insufficient heating or cooling.

Access Energy Cooperative knows that your bottom line is important when making business operations decisions. If these or other energy-saving adjustments require purchases, be sure to check out our rebates section for ways to save at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). ⚡

## Welcome to the Access Energy Cooperative team

Access Energy Cooperative welcomes new apprentice lineman Robert Carey to our team this month. Rob is from New Boston, Illinois, and graduated in 2019 from Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon. Rob has worked at PAR Electric since graduation. Welcome Rob! ⚡



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## How to process a concern

As a member-owner of Access Energy Cooperative, assistance is available to you for resolving questions, comments or complaints about your electric service.

Access Energy Cooperative has trained representatives available to answer your questions and address any concerns you may have. Contact our office at Access Energy Cooperative, P.O. Box 440, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641 or call 866-242-4232.

If your question is related to our service (other than rates), and your concern is not resolved, you may request assistance from the Iowa



Utilities Board by calling toll-free 877-565-4450, by writing to Iowa Utilities Board, 1375 E. Court Ave., Room 69, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069 or by email to [customer@iub.iowa.gov](mailto:customer@iub.iowa.gov). ⚡

PHOTO CONTEST

## 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!

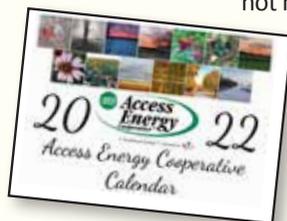
We're looking for photos of rural settings in southeast Iowa, including

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](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com).

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



## 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. Call us at 866-242-4232 or visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) to help others in need. 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) \_\_\_\_\_

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners



Dr. George North stands with friend Deb McWhirter, who nominated him for the 2021 Shine the Light contest.



▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

## WILDER PARK

### Dr. George North establishes a recreational destination for the community

If you drive east of Allison on Highway 3 and look north, you'll find Wilder Park. Those who take the time to stop and drive through don't soon forget it; at least that's what Dr. George North hopes.

Selected as a winner of the Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, North had a vision for the park in the early 1990s. Today, that vision has become a reality. His idea began when the land the park now sits on was gifted from the original property owner.

"My early involvement was with the Boy Scouts, planting trees," says North, who is a retired dentist. "We planted 250 to 300 trees."

Today, the park is full of large, mature trees. It has turned into a recreational destination for people across Iowa, full of activities ranging from camping to fishing to frisbee golf.

Deb McWhirter nominated North for the Shine the Light contest. She says the growth of the park is due in large part to his commitment.

"It was a farm field. They have

turned this into a destination for a lot of campers and people. It has developed over the years," she says. "Dr. North has been the mastermind of the whole project. It takes a lot of volunteers and a person with a vision about what you want to have happen to the future of this park. He's been instrumental in making a plan and following through, making sure things happen."

It all started with getting his Boy Scouts involved with the environment by planting trees. According to North, who turns 92 this year, trees have been a metaphor for what having a vision means.

"Rarely when you plant trees do you get to see the result of that activity," he says. "Trees don't grow that fast. Fortunately, I've lived long enough to see the fruition of the vision. A lot of people have a very difficult time seeing down the road. Seeing what the possibilities are. Seeing what the positives are of having this type of facility."

North knew he wanted more for the park and the area than just having trees.

"Our mission is to create an affordable recreational activity facility," he says. "Except for renting an RV space, all our amenities are free. Everything is based on our mission – affordability. That's caused our level of usage to go way up."

Wilder Park also serves as one of the major outdoor classrooms in the state of Iowa. The park features more than 100 different tree species and is home to an uncommon species arboretum.

North says it's all about giving back to the community. Something he has lived by in all his years.

"I think you're obligated to give back," he says. "Part of life's responsibility is to pay it forward, give back to your community, do what you can to facilitate the growth and ambiance. To me, that's just part of living."

To learn more about the park, visit [www.visitwilderpark.com](http://www.visitwilderpark.com). To reserve a camping spot or cabin, contact the Allison City Hall. 🌿

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.

# Dreaming in color

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I admit to being a “color person.” I like seeing the differences between taupe and ecru, the subtle variances among celery and sage and seafoam. I was a frustrated grade-schooler, being limited by 24 crayons in the box since my mom wouldn’t spring for the larger 64-color supply. And the larger box had its own crayon sharpener! How could she have missed the importance of that?!

Even with 64 choices, I’m not sure it would have been enough for my hue-hungry first-grade self. My mother says that even as a toddler, I was perplexed by the color turquoise. It wasn’t green, it wasn’t blue ... wow.

## “Bluetiful” discoveries

That’s why I read with wonder the discovery of a new color. A team of chemists at Oregon State University inadvertently came up with a new shade of blue, which they dubbed YInMn Blue (pronounced YIN-min Blue) after the elements used to create it. Evidently, this is the first new blue discovery since cobalt entered the world in 1802.

When I heard the news, I immediately had questions. How exactly do you know you’ve discovered a new color? I’ve looked at pictures of this shade, and it looks a lot like wood violet to me, or maybe amethyst. Heck, I had bridesmaids’ dresses of this shade. What makes this discovery a bona fide discovery?

But it must be. This new tint, even with its unglamorous name, has become sensationalized in scientific journals. Harvard Art Museums has added the shade to its Forbes Pigment Collection, a digital resource on the history of color. Even Crayola has annexed this hue of hyacinth to its product, with a



striking crayon called “Bluetiful.” It must be a real thing.

## Expanding palettes

All of this has gone over the head of people like my husband, for whom the basic eight crayons are enough. We’ve been married more than 35 years, and he just added “mauve” to his color lexicon. It drives him crazy when I talk in terms of “eggshell” and “snowfall” when describing white paints. He rolls his eyes when I tell him I’m looking for a couch that’s emerald.

“You mean green?” he says with a here-we-go-again voice.

“Well, yes ...” I hesitate. “But there are so many greens. I don’t want avocado or hunter. I’m looking for a strong, clear emerald green.”

“So, you’re looking for green,” he says again.

“Uh, yeah, whatever.” I give up. The complexities of finding the right shade of emerald are lost on him. My quest continues alone.

Will another color be discovered? Will our mnemonics like “Roy G. Biv” for memorizing the colors of the rainbow change? Will crayon manufacturers be forced to add another layer of pigmentation to their products?

I don’t know. But I do know that no one had better mess with emerald. ⚡

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.

# WE NEVER STOP.

**Not everyone** starts their day at the same time, or in the same way. But no matter when or how, your local Touchstone Energy cooperative is there to help you power every moment of it.

To learn more, visit [TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://TouchstoneEnergy.com)

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