

● SEPTEMBER 2023

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Learn what factors most
affect your energy bill

Meet the 2023
Shine the Light
winners

School night recipes

Election results and annual meeting report ▶ See Page 5

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ON THE COVER

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

EMERGENCY PREPARATION BEGINS WITH PERSONAL PLANNING

BY SCOTT MEINEKE



There's a common saying in disaster planning, *"It's not a matter of if a disaster will take place; it's a matter of when it will happen."*

Since 2004, National Preparedness Month has been observed each September in the U.S. to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

This year's preparedness campaign focuses on preparing older adults for disaster. Older adults can face greater risks in extreme weather events and emergencies, especially when living alone, are low-income, have a disability or live in rural areas.

One of the most important steps in preparation is to have emergency supplies on hand. The following are tips to help you or loved ones create an emergency kit.

Step 1: Consider how an emergency might affect your needs and plan accordingly. It is crucial to consider what kinds of resources you use daily and what you might do if those resources are limited or unavailable.

Consider creating two kits. In one kit, put everything you need to stay where you are and make it on your own for several days. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you need to leave your home.

Basic emergency supplies include water, food, pet food, a flashlight, a radio, batteries, a first aid kit and personal sanitation items (moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties).

Step 2: Have medications and medical supplies readily available. If you take medicine, have what you

need to make it on your own for at least a week. You might not have access to a medical facility or drugstore during an emergency. Keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment information.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services, such as home health care, treatment or transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans.

Step 3: Keep extra essentials in your home. If you use eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries and oxygen, always have extras in your home. Also have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare or Medicaid cards readily available.

Step 4: Include copies of essential documents in your emergency supply kits. Include family records (and contact information), wills, power of attorney documents, deeds, social security numbers, credit card and

bank information, insurance cards and tax records. It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container.

Emergencies, especially natural disasters, can often impact electricity services. Keep your local electric cooperative's phone number handy and always avoid downed power lines. If you plan to operate a generator during a lengthy power outage, take steps now to ensure you follow all necessary precautions to use it safely. Your local electric co-op is an excellent resource for safety information.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient, and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

For more information, visit www.ready.gov.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a WiFi Smart Weather Station!

Ambient Weather's personal weather station allows monitoring of your home and backyard weather conditions with the brilliant, easy-to-read LCD color display. Monitor indoor and outdoor conditions, including wind speed, wind direction, rainfall, UV, barometric pressure, indoor/outdoor temperature, indoor/outdoor humidity and more. The weather station also calculates dew point, wind chill and heat index.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Sept. 30. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the beef bundle from the July issue was Gerald Kinney, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPT. 21	Board Meeting
OCT. 19	Board Meeting

You can access your account information 24/7, year-round on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com or by using our SmartHub app for mobile devices. You can also call our office to report service interruptions and request account information at 866-242-4232.



Manage your account like never before with the new, improved SmartHub web and mobile app.

This new version of SmartHub puts your usage and payment details front and center, and the simplified menu structure makes navigating the site a breeze.



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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FACTORS THAT IMPACT ELECTRICITY PRICES

BY TAMMY SNAVELY



Just as inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the resources required to produce electricity have also risen. We would like to help our members understand some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills).

While there is no short answer, there are a few key elements that impact electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors Access Energy Cooperative can manage, some of them you can impact and other factors are beyond our control. There are three primary parts to your monthly electric bill: a base charge, an energy charge and a demand charge.

Base charge

The first is the base charge, which covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes equipment, materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in Access Energy Cooperative's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. To ensure the safe, reliable, efficient service you expect, we must maintain the system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment.

Like many other businesses, we've experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for a distribution transformer (which looks like a long metal can at the top of a power pole) went from \$613 in 2021 to \$1,107 this year, and wait times to receive this essential equipment are up to 36 weeks. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. The base charge for each rate class is determined during a cost-of-service study, conducted by a third-party at least every three years. The board of directors reviews the

study and determines when a change in the base charge needs to be made.

Energy charge

Another component of your monthly bill is the energy charge, which covers how much energy you consume. This is determined by reading your meter each month. The amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures. When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling and heating equipment run longer, which increases your home energy use. Regardless, energy consumption is an area that you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by actively reducing energy use. Your thermostat is a great place to start, so be sure to keep it close to 78 degrees F during summer months and 68 degrees F during winter months.

Demand charge

The last component of your bill is the demand charge. Currently, the demand charge for residential rates is \$0.00; we provide this information so members can monitor how they use power. Your bill also shows the date and time when you set your highest demand of energy use during that billing period. The more electrical items you use at the same time, the higher the demand you will set each month. By changing your energy use habits and not using so many devices at the same time, you can even out your usage and make your demand more stable each month. This helps your cooperative avoid setting a new demand peak on its system and helps keep rates more stable.

While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuels, please know Access Energy Cooperative works every single day to keep internal costs down. We're here to help you do the same. Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home at 866-242-4232 or by email: contactus@accessenergycoop.com

Tammy Snavely is the chief financial officer/assistant general manager for Access Energy Cooperative.

MEMBERS CELEBRATE NAVIGATING CHANGE

BY KEVIN WHEELER



During my remarks at Access Energy Cooperative's 2023 Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 1, I reminded our co-op members why cooperatives stand apart. As

a not-for-profit cooperative, Access Energy Cooperative is not interested in selling members something you don't need. We are not about maximizing sales; we're about maximizing member satisfaction. As we navigate change and challenges, we strive to uphold our mission to exceed our members' expectations for safe, reliable, efficient service.

Many hands make a successful event

We were fortunate to have Jake McVey put on a great show for the evening at McMillan Park. After he sang the National Anthem, parachuter Bobbi Reid landed in the grassy area near the stage to open the meeting. A delicious meal was served by Mount Pleasant Hy-Vee, and we enjoyed homemade ice cream from Hinterland Dairy of Donnellson. Kids enjoyed inflatable activities from Fields of Fun, pony rides by Windy Acres, and Drive-a-Tractor by the Proennecke brothers and Dick McGohan. Members visited with people from the Henry County Health Center, the Henry County Sheriff and Youth Tour representative Alexis Wagner. We also provided information on electrical safety, SmartHub, energy efficiency and understanding electric demand.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance and participation from every individual and organization who help make this meeting happen for our members.



This includes the unseen support from Quality Equipment, the Mount Pleasant Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iowa National Guard, the Mount Pleasant Trap Team, Staats, the Midwest Old Threshers, the City of Mount Pleasant, Lance Refuse, Yotty's Golf Course, United Rentals and Printgroup. We are also thankful for the help from former employees and spouses of employees, Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. employees.

Prizes and dividends distributed

Drawings were held for prizes, including the Grand Prize of a \$500 bill credit, which was won by member Duane Copeland. Dividend checks for 2023, totaling \$1,181,879, were available for members to pick up at the meeting. Checks have been mailed to those unable to attend the meeting.

Director elections update

Following cooperative officer reports during the business portion of the meeting, election results were reported by the cooperative attorney. In District 1, David Hollingsworth was elected. In District 2, Allan Woline was elected. In District 3, Michael Holtkamp was elected.

After the Annual Meeting of Members, during the annual board



reorganizational meeting, each newly elected director was required to complete a board qualification sheet. It was determined at that time that Woline did not meet the qualification criteria of being a bona fide resident of premises served by Access Energy Cooperative. As a result, it was determined that he was ineligible to serve as a director. In response to this discovery, the board of directors called a special meeting to address the situation. During this special meeting, it was voted to appoint Jerry Barker to fill the vacant seat until the next Annual Meeting of Members to be held Aug. 6, 2024. This decision allows a qualified member from District 2 to serve on the board until the next regular election when the seat will be up again. At that time, the voters in District 2 will have the opportunity to elect a director for the balance of the term, which will be two years.

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

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

CONGRATULATIONS 2023 ANNUAL MEETING PRIZE WINNERS

\$25 bill credit	
KILJ Inc	Ralph Krogmeier
Lowell & Karen Gaulke	Jereld Burbridge
Richard E Ross	Janet Meek
Edward C Meierotto	Chris Steffensmeier
Kris Glover	David Folker

\$50 bill credit
Delores Poulter
Robert Hunt
Brian McKillip
Neal McMullin
Harlan Sugars

\$100 bill credit (from mail-in ballots)
Richard Kokjohn

\$100 bill credit (from voting online)
Janet Hellweg

Grand Prize: \$500 bill credit
Duane Copeland

Programmable thermostat (drawn from demand information booth)
Carol Copeland

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 to help others in need.

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

You can use SmartHub to enroll in RECare!

To have a monthly amount deducted from your electric bill:

1. Log in to your SmartHub account. Go to the Billing & Payments tab. Select RECare, and follow instructions; or
2. Send the form below to:

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



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) _____

GET SMART ABOUT HOME LIGHTING

BY ABBY BERRY

Gone are the days when a simple flip of the switch was the only choice for illuminating our homes. While we still have this tried-and-true option, we've entered a new era of innovative and intelligent technologies, which includes smart lighting.

Smart lighting connects to Wi-Fi and offers an array of cutting-edge functionality and convenience. Let's look at the main benefits of smart lighting options.

Smart lighting is energy efficient

Most smart bulbs utilize LED technology, which is much more efficient than traditional incandescent lighting. Smart lighting also gives you more control over how and when you light your home, resulting in less energy use.

Smart lighting provides convenience and control

Most smart bulbs can be controlled from an app on your smartphone or paired with your voice assistant, like Amazon Alexa. You can conveniently control lighting settings anywhere in your home or when you're away. Whether you want to set a schedule for lighting or adjust brightness levels, these smart options offer effortless control from the comfort of, well, anywhere!

Smart options empower you to personalize home lighting

Bright, warm, purple, green – whatever mood you want to create, smart lighting can help. For a more traditional look, try dimmable white bulbs. If you want to create the perfect ambiance for movie night, look for bulbs that can be adjusted for a variety of vibrant colors. The possibilities are endless.

While smart lighting offers convenience and control, keep in mind your wall light switch will need to stay “on” for you to control the smart bulb from your phone or via voice command. To use a smart bulb, the wall switch it's connected to must be “on” so the bulb receives power, which enables it to connect to a Wi-Fi network.

Other smart lighting tools

Consider a smart light switch if you need

additional options to operate the lights. Today's smart switches tend to play nicely with smart bulbs. If you want to control your smart bulbs with a physical switch (in addition to using your phone and voice commands), look for smart switches with a built-in feature that allows both. Many smart light switches include motion detectors as well.

If you want to take the plunge and integrate multiple smart bulbs into your home lighting system, your best bet may be a kit like the Philips Hue Starter Kit. Most kits include several bulbs and any additional tools needed to get started.

If you're new to smart home technology and looking to start small, try a smart bulb in a high-traffic area of your home. It's also worth noting that smart plugs are a great starter option and allow convenient control of lamps or other lighting fixtures that are plugged into a wall outlet. Smart plugs are inexpensive and plug into your existing outlet. Electrical items, like smart bulbs, connected to the smart plug can be controlled from a smartphone app.

Whether you're looking for more convenience, colorful options or better ways to manage energy use, smart lighting can provide multiple benefits. Determine which smart lighting features are most important for your needs, then start shopping!

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



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, we see 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.

Safety tips to keep in mind

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deploy flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 911 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 hop 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.

National Farm Health and Safety Week is Sept. 17-23, but practicing safety on the farm year-round yields positive results. 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 writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUMMER HELP

Access Energy Cooperative appreciates the dedication and hard work of our summer employees and intern.

Hoyt Dzwoniarski
engineering department summer intern

Brady Hoewing
summer help, operations department

Payton Stevens
summer help, operations department

Good luck with your education plans this fall!



SCHOOL NIGHT

RECIPES



SIMPLE CHICKEN OR SHRIMP ALFREDO

- 8** ounces cream cheese
- ½** cup butter
- 1** cup milk
- ½** cup Parmesan cheese
- 1** teaspoon garlic salt
- ½** teaspoon garlic powder
- ½** teaspoon pepper
- ½** pound shrimp, detailed and cooked (or 2 chicken breasts, cooked and diced)
- noodles, cooked**

Mix all ingredients, except meat, in a saucepan over medium heat until cooked through. Add meat and serve over noodles. Serves 2-4

Marcy Gherian • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BAKED TUNA SANDWICHES

- 3** eggs, hard-boiled and diced
- 7** ounces canned tuna, drained
- 2** tablespoons sweet pickles, diced
- 1** tablespoon onion, diced
- ½** cup mayonnaise
- 1** cup cheese, cubed to taste
- buns**

Mix ingredients, put on buns and wrap in aluminum foil. Bake at 225 degrees F for 25 minutes.

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CHICKEN STIR-FRY

- 1** pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
- ¾** cup mayonnaise
- 16** ounces frozen stir-fry vegetables
- 2** tablespoons soy sauce
- ¼** teaspoon garlic powder
- rice**

Dice chicken, then cook in mayonnaise in a large skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and continue cooking until chicken is done and veggies are tender. Serve over rice. Serves 6

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

BURGER BOWL

- 1** pound ground beef
- ½** teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼** teaspoon black pepper
- 1** head lettuce, chopped
- 1** cup cheese, shredded
- 2** dill pickles, sliced
- ¼** cup onion, chopped
- salad dressing**

Brown ground beef and crumble until cooked. Add seasoned salt and pepper. Meanwhile, divide lettuce into four serving bowls. Top lettuce with ground beef, cheese, pickles and onion. Top with ranch, Thousand Island or your favorite dressing.

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

COMPANY GRAVY

- 2 pounds lean stew beef
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of onion soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- ½ cup water
- optional: rice, mashed potatoes or noodles

Place all ingredients in a slow cooker on low for 5-6 hours. Can also be baked covered in oven at 275 degrees F for 3½-4 hours. Stir before serving. Best served over rice, mashed potatoes or noodles. *Serves 8*

**Susie Jacobs • Allison
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

BISCUIT CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 roll refrigerator biscuits
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- ½ cup brown sugar
- mozzarella cheese

Brown ground beef and onion. Cut each biscuit into four pieces and layer on bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Mix spaghetti sauce and brown sugar with meat mixture. Pour over biscuits and bake at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes. Add mozzarella cheese and bake another 5-10 minutes. Gluten free option: Use one recipe box or homemade gluten free biscuits in place of refrigerator biscuits. *Serves 8*

**Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

SWEET & SPICY CHICKEN WRAPS

- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups coleslaw mix
- 1 small scallion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha sauce
- 4 frozen breaded chicken tenders
- 4 8-inch flour tortillas

Combine sour cream, 1 tablespoon mayonnaise, sugar, seasoned salt and pepper. Stir in coleslaw mix and scallion (can substitute shredded cabbage and carrots for pre-made coleslaw mix). Create a sauce by combining ¼ cup mayonnaise and Sriracha sauce. Prepare chicken tenders according to package directions. Divide sauce and coleslaw mixture among tortillas and top with chicken tenders. Roll tortilla into a wrap. *Serves 4*

**Chris Daniels • Casey
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

TACO CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 package taco seasoning (4 tablespoons)
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 roll refrigerator pizza crust
- 4 ounces corn chips, crushed
- 1½ cups Mexican cheese, shredded
- optional toppings: salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper, diced tomato

Brown pork, chop into small pieces as it cooks and then drain. Stir in taco seasoning and sour cream until well blended. Spray 9x13-inch cake pan with cooking spray. Press pizza crust into pan and slightly up sides. Bake crust at 400 degrees F for 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle crust with half the crushed corn chips.

Spread meat mixture over corn chips. Sprinkle with cheese and top with remaining corn chips. Bake an additional 18-22 minutes or until cheese starts to brown and crust is baked.

Cut into squares and add salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper and diced tomatoes as desired. Can substitute 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese and ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese for Mexican cheese. *Serves 8*

**Barb Sexton • Rockwell City
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association**

WANTED:

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION RECIPES

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

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
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48,
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



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

The judging committee reviewed essays from 126 outstanding nominations and selected three winners.

Congratulations to Erica Lindaman, who is recognized for her generous efforts through Gift of Giving; Betty Thronson, who is recognized for restoring hope for families through Project Flo; and Heather Weers, who is recognized for her compassion for children through Sleep in Heavenly Peace. These three winners have been awarded a \$2,500 donation to their charity.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at www.iowaShineTheLight.com.

GIFT OF GIVING

ERICA LINDAMAN'S PASSION FOR GIVING DOESN'T GO UNNOTICED

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Erica Lindaman saw a need and acted. The Clarion teacher started Gift of Giving 501c3 nonprofit organization to help collect Christmas gifts for children.

"We saw a need based on people not working as much," Lindaman explains. "Hours were cut because people had to stay home."

A mission grows

Gift of Giving could have stayed with just meeting Christmastime needs, but that wasn't in Lindaman's plans.

Since that first Christmas, the program has grown exponentially. The organization now assists with everything from food insecurity to bedding and furniture.

"It has grown into this massive entity," she says. "We are trying to get people in Wright County to keep their clothing and pieces here rather than take them to a different county to donate."

Emily Bernhardt, one of Lindaman's many nominators, has known her for 13 years. "I think Erica has seen a



Erica Lindaman is presented with a check for her Gift of Giving charity.

Gift of Giving continued:

need in the community through her background being a teacher and working with students on a daily basis,” Bernhardt says. “She just stepped in to fulfill that need. I know she spends a lot of her personal time and effort working with Gift of Giving. Her whole family has become involved and quite dedicated.”

For Lindaman, it has almost become a full-time job – and one that she loves.

“I literally get between 20 and 30 texts, emails and Facebook messages saying, ‘I need this,’ or ‘How can you help me with this,’” she says. “We have extended where we are helping to pay for electric bills and water bills. We have provided gas cards for people who are having health problems. We are just here to give.”

A heart for giving

That tenacity shines through for all to see, even when she may not want the credit.

“Erica has a huge heart,” Bernhardt says. “She may be quiet sometimes and likes to be in the background. But she has a huge heart and huge passion for the youth and families in the community.”

Today, Lindaman and Gift of Giving accept any items in Wright County. Those are stored in a temporary warehouse, where you can meet with Lindaman by appointment or visit one of the organization’s “pop-up” events.

“If you have a need, and you come to me, or you come to my mother or my father, or anyone who is involved in the organization, we’re going to find you a resource or the right person to help you,” she says.

Learn more about Gift of Giving at www.facebook.com/groups/134251198297192.

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



The Project Flo Association works to build hope in the Chickasaw County area by restoring homes. And it all started with a mother’s love for her community.

Betty Thronson of New Hampton was nominated for Shine the Light by her sister, Shirley Hoffman, a member-consumer of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative in Ionia. In her essay, Hoffman shared that she and Thronson come from a family of 15 children, and they established Project Flo in 2011 after the passing of their mother, Florence “Flo” Thronson. Their mother was known in the New Hampton area for her positive spirit of volunteerism and her children have made it their mission to keep her spirit alive through community service.

Thronson has served as president of Project Flo for more than 11 years and is responsible for gathering family, friends and neighbors once a year in June to offer needed home repairs in the Chickasaw County region. These essential repairs help local families take control of their homes and help restore their faith in humanity. Often, the homes would be deemed unsafe and homeowners’ insurance could be jeopardized if the repairs weren’t made. Hoffman says, “The impact Betty has made on the residents, neighborhoods and businesses in Chickasaw County is immeasurable. Her dedication and leadership have significantly improved the lives of many individuals in need.”

A widespread impact

Project Flo coordinated 80 volunteers working on six projects in 2023,

including home repairs for a disabled veteran, a young family of five, a single mother of three, a low-income couple with a disability, and a retired man who is disabled. The volunteer group of carpenters, plumbers, electricians and masonry professionals use their vast skills to repair steps and sidewalks, install flooring, paint, perform landscaping, remove debris, repair bathrooms, and replace doors and windows.

Since Project Flo began, Thronson’s organization has assisted more than 30 homes in addition to helping with repairs at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and St. Joseph Community School in New Hampton. Thronson takes charge of coordinating the grant and fundraising endeavors for Project Flo. She then conducts a thorough assessment of the tasks needed for each project and prioritizes them. During June each year, Thronson shifts into project mode and reaches out to local businesses to coordinate supplies and services.

Thronson also coordinates volunteer assistance to ensure each home project has the right crew ready to work. Hoffman says, “When Betty visits a work site, her infectious energy fills the air with jubilation, laughter and camaraderie. Volunteers of all ages are thrilled to see Betty, recognizing her as the glue that holds the family and project together.”

The \$2,500 Shine the Light donation will be invested to purchase much-needed renovation equipment and supplies for Project Flo.

Learn more about Project Flo at www.thronson.com.

Article submitted by Erin Campbell, director of communications for Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Continued on Page 14

FROM WASTE TO WEALTH

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Biomass energy, which converts animal, human and plant waste into energy, is gaining popularity as a renewable energy source. Biomass energy reduces waste and greenhouse gas emissions, generates electricity and provides additional advantages.

Creating energy from biomass requires several phases. First, the collection and transfer of waste to a processing plant where the biomass is sorted. After sorting, the waste can be converted to energy through a variety of processes, including:

- **Anaerobic digestion.** This is a frequent approach that breaks down organic waste without oxygen. Biogas can be burned to generate power or heat from this method.
- **Incinerating biomass.** This involves a controlled burning of organic waste to generate power or heat.
- **Pyrolysis.** This biomass-to-energy technique produces bio-oil by heating biological waste without oxygen. Bio-oil is a liquid fuel used to generate power or heat.

Advantages of biomass energy

Since waste is constantly being produced, biomass energy is considered a renewable source. Farms and other agricultural enterprises produce animal waste every day and harvesting crops generates plant waste. Human waste also provides energy-generating organic material. Electricity generated from waste is environmentally sustainable and reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

Cost savings is another significant advantage of biomass energy. Additionally, biomass energy can be produced locally, which reduces reliance on foreign energy sources, stabilizes energy prices and economic risks, and creates employment opportunities in waste management and energy.

Disadvantages of biomass energy

Even though there are major advantages to biomass energy, there are a few drawbacks. Not all organic waste can be converted to energy, and certain waste materials are contaminated, therefore, unsuited for biomass energy production.

Biomass energy production can also be costly when waste must be transported long distances to a processing facility. To address these issues, the cost and efficiency of

biomass energy production are being improved, and new technologies are being developed to enhance anaerobic digestion and other biomass energy production methods.

Despite these challenges, biomass energy has the potential to become an important renewable energy source.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

ELECTRICITY FROM BIOMASS

Biomass is renewable organic material that comes from plants and animals. It can be burned directly for heat or converted to renewable liquid and gaseous fuels through various processes.

Types of Biomass Used for Energy



How do electric utilities use biomass?

The electric power sector uses wood and biomass-derived waste to generate electricity. Most electricity generated from biomass is produced by direct combustion.

1. Biomass is burned in a boiler to produce high-pressure steam.
2. Steam flows over turbine blades, causing them to rotate.
3. The turbine rotation drives a generator, producing electricity.

One Advantage of Biomass: Electricity generated from biomass waste is environmentally sustainable and reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

One Disadvantage of Biomass: Biomass energy production can be costly, particularly when waste must be transported long distances to a processing facility.

Source: Dept. of Energy

ENERGY-EFFICIENT WINDOWS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Upgrading or improving your windows is an important component of your home's energy efficiency. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heat gain and loss through windows consume 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling energy use.

Understanding efficiency factors

If you're evaluating your windows' energy efficiency, start by identifying what kind you have. Are they single pane or double pane? Looking closely at the window's edge, you can see the number of windowpanes. Are the frames metal, wood or vinyl? Some manufacturers etch the make and model numbers in the corner of the glass so that you can look up the manufacturer for more information.

Window efficiency

Several components can make windows more efficient. High-quality frame materials insulate and reduce heat transfer. Two or more panes of glass with space in between (filled with air or gas) improve the window's insulation capability. Warm edge spacers hold the panes of glass the proper distance apart and help insulate the edges of the panes. Low-emissivity coatings applied to the glass can reflect infrared light, keeping the heat in during the winter and out during the summer.

Window efficiency is rated in U-factor and Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC).

U-factor measures heat transfer through the window, which relates to how well it insulates. The lower the U-factor, the more efficient the window. The SHGC measures how effectively the window blocks heat from the sun.

Considerations for replacing windows

If you want to replace your existing windows, shopping for ENERGY STAR®-certified windows is recommended. ENERGY STAR sets specific U-factor and SHGC requirements based on geography so you get the best fit for your location. Replacement windows offer additional benefits, like improved operability and aesthetics.

Storm windows are a lower-cost solution for some homes. Traditional storm windows are made with clear glass. Low-emissivity storm windows have energy savings similar to replacement windows at about a third of the cost. Storm windows are mounted to the interior or exterior and are available in operable styles, so you can still open and close your windows. Look for ENERGY STAR-certified models.

If you want to maintain the historic architecture of your existing windows, low-emissivity storm windows are a great option. Some companies can refit your existing window frames with custom double-pane glass and weatherstripping.



Windows add to the aesthetic of our homes. Ensure they also add comfort year-round by maintaining or replacing old windows.
Photo Credit: Alpen High Performance Products

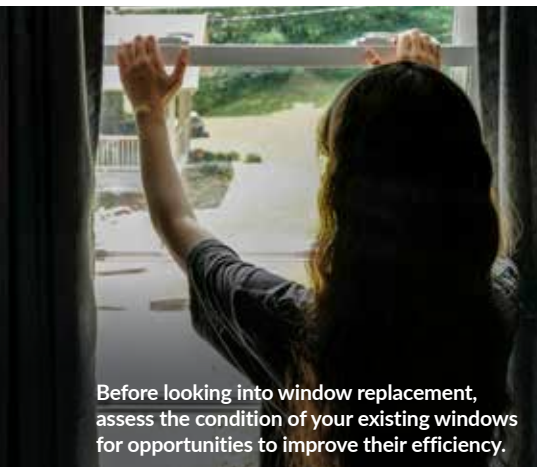
Maintenance options

If new windows or storm windows are outside the budget, your best bet is to maintain your existing windows. Keep the paint and caulking on the exterior in good condition. That will help prevent damage from the elements. Caulk around the inside trim, ensure sash locks are correctly installed and seal tightly when locked. There are a variety of weatherstripping options for windows to keep drafts at bay.

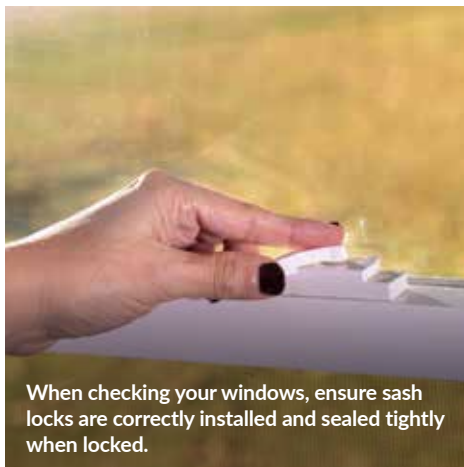
As with any home improvement project, be sure to get multiple quotes to compare pricing and scope of work. You may find additional savings with rebates from your electric cooperative or state or federal tax credits for window upgrades.

Whether you replace or make improvements to what you have, adding efficiency to your windows will add year-round comfort to your home.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.



Before looking into window replacement, assess the condition of your existing windows for opportunities to improve their efficiency.



When checking your windows, ensure sash locks are correctly installed and sealed tightly when locked.



Maintain your existing windows by ensuring the sashes lock properly, adding caulk around the trim and replacing worn weatherstripping.

ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE HEATHER WEERS WORKS TO PROVIDE BEDS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

BY CHRISTIE REMLEY

Heather Weers (right) is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. She is pictured with MVEC employee and member Megan Ruley, who nominated Weers for the honor.

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Heather Weers of Center Junction has dedicated her professional and personal life to improving the lives of Jones County children and residents alike.

By day, she works for the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children, which aims to improve the child welfare process. And on her own time, she is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a non-profit dedicated to providing beds for children who would otherwise not have them. While the national organization's mission is "No Kid Sleeps on the Floor in Our Town[®]," Weers likes to say, "No kid sleeps on the floor in Jones County."

Addressing a community need

When the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children received a \$1,600 grant to buy beds for children, Weers was shocked to learn how great the need was in her community. While researching ways to help, Weers discovered the national organization Sleep in Heavenly Peace and pursued starting a local chapter. She established the Jones County

chapter in 2019 and has delivered more than 320 beds to local children since then.

Weers is humble and attributes the impact of Sleep in Heavenly Peace Jones County to the local volunteers who help build the beds and donate materials.

"It's not about me; it's about what the community comes together to do to give children a comfortable place to sleep," she says. Weers hopes to inspire others to make their own impact. "I want others to know that you can help people with the simplest gestures – sometimes it's just a thank you note or a letter that can profoundly impact another person's life," says Weers.

Dedication to community shines

Weers was nominated for Shine the Light by Megan Ruley, a member and employee at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC).

"When I learned about the Shine the Light contest, the first person who came to mind was Heather," Ruley says. "Her work with Sleep in Heavenly

Peace is heartwarming, and I admire her dedication to improving the lives of our Jones County residents. The work outlined here doesn't even begin to encompass all of Heather's impact in our community as she seems to be behind many initiatives to make Jones County a better place now and into the future."

"Maquoketa Valley is thrilled to recognize Heather's dedication to making Jones County a better place. Heather embodies the co-op principle, 'Concern for Community' by recognizing unmet needs and then rolling up her sleeves to meet those needs," says Jeremy Richert, MVEC CEO.

The \$2,500 award will help the Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapter purchase materials, tools, bedding and mattresses. With the vision of no Jones County child sleeping on the floor, Weers is seeing to that goal one bed at a time. For more information, visit shpbeds.org/chapter/ia-jones-co.

Article contributed by Christie Remley, manager of communications and public relations for Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.

IT'S ALL GOOD ON RIVER TIME

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I kept thinking to myself, “How far back in here do I have to drive?”

In July, I was invited to share my “Adventures Along the Lincoln Highway” history program with the volunteers of Iowa Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) – the state’s largest river cleanup event.

Fortunately, I found my contact easily once I reached the campground. “No worries,” my hosts said. “We’re on river time.”

Decades of cleanup work

It turns out this was the 20th Annual Iowa Project AWARE event, and an impressive 315 volunteers gathered for the big cleanup. They paddled canoes down 58 miles of the Iowa River from July 9-14, removing all kinds of junk along the way. We’re talking serious trash here, including tires, mannequin heads, appliances and farm equipment (some of it 100 years old). The crew hauled 21,360 pounds (10.7 tons) of junk from the Iowa River. An amazing 96% of this (20,520 pounds, including 161 tires) can be recycled.



The origins of Iowa Project AWARE were inspired by Chad Pregracke, “The River Rescuer,” who started a movement to help clean up the Mississippi River. Inspired by his work, three dozen volunteers spent a week during the summer of 2003 camping, canoeing and picking up trash from the Maquoketa River. That first-of-its-kind event became known as Iowa Project AWARE. It quickly became the state’s largest volunteer river cleanup.



Photo Credit: Project AWARE 2023

While it started as an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) event, Iowa Project AWARE now operates through a nonprofit organization known as N-Compass, Inc. Major partners include the Iowa DNR and the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa. Hundreds of participants return each year for this unique event, including multigenerational family groups, youth groups, church groups and scouting groups.

One gentleman I met said his kids grew up participating in Iowa Project AWARE. Now they plan their vacations around this annual, can’t-miss event.

Diligent volunteers make a difference

Even though they’re on “river time,” these volunteers work hard. They’ve cleaned the Boone River, Maquoketa River, Cedar River, Lower Des Moines River, Wapsipinicon River, Big Sioux River, Iowa River, Little Turkey, Turkey and Volga Rivers, West and East Nishnabotna Rivers, Cedar River, Winnebago River, Shell Rock River, Middle and North Raccoon River, English River and Little Sioux River.

The Iowa Project AWARE team is just as diligent about tracking results as cleaning up Iowa’s rivers. In the past 20 years, 6,223 volunteers from across the country have been part of this effort. They’ve cleaned 1,429 river miles of nearly 1 million pounds (979,480 pounds, to be exact) of trash. A majority (81%) of this trash has been recycled. Wow!

I checked in with my friend Jodi Henke from Norwalk and her daughter Michaela, who started volunteering with Project AWARE in 2021 and helped clean up the Iowa River this summer.

“Hearing a loud ‘whoop!’ from around the river bend means someone found something cool – probably their first tire,” Jodi shares. “Also, some of the nicest people you’ll ever meet are wet, filthy dirty, stinky and so proud of the trash they collect. We totally believe in what we’re doing. Every piece of trash we pull out of the river is one less thing to potentially harm the environment.”

For someone like me who cares about Iowa’s water quality, that’s great news. It also speaks to the goodness of Iowans. There’s nothing quite like Iowa Project AWARE in any other state. These volunteers know it’s all good when you’re on river time.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.





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