

DECEMBER 2022

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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scholarship applications**

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for a festive holiday season**

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Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Rene Carson, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

THE KEYS TO COOPERATIVE SUCCESS: PEOPLE. POWER. PURPOSE.

BY ROGER SOLOMONSON



The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) recently held its 2022 annual meeting in early December.

As the IAEC board president, it was my honor to review achievements and share accomplishments with our member cooperatives who attended from across the state. While preparing for the event, we selected an annual meeting theme that we thought best represented the keys to our success through the decades. It all boils down to these three factors: People. Power. Purpose.

People.

The people who form a local electric cooperative must be united in achieving a common goal. It then takes leaders from that group to stand up and govern the actions of the co-op as directors of the board. And only through effective management can a team of mission-driven professionals work every day to serve the co-op members with excellence. It all starts with the right people at every level.

At the statewide association, we are blessed with a dedicated and knowledgeable staff who provide valuable insight and leadership in several ways. Your local cooperative is receiving best-in-class services regarding education, safety training, advocacy, regulatory guidance, communications services, employee benefits, youth programs and more.

Power.

Our electric cooperative business model is focused on providing power that is safe, affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible. Each co-op must determine the best way to balance these four priorities to best

serve its member-consumers. On the statewide level, we will continue to advocate for the cooperative business model, which champions local ownership and governance.

And in today's world, utilizing a diverse portfolio of electric generation assets has become paramount in ensuring reliability as electric co-ops embrace an "all-of-the-above" approach to keep the lights on.

Purpose.

What sets cooperatives apart from other electric utilities is *why* we're in business. Electric cooperatives exist solely to serve their member-consumers. We are committed to powering lives and empowering communities to improve the quality of life for our members.

IAEC coordinates several programs that provide value to our local communities. Our Iowa Youth

Leadership Academy virtual sessions in October and Iowa Youth Tour trip to D.C. in June are great examples of how Iowa's electric cooperatives invest in the next generation of co-op leaders. Our statewide Shine the Light contest in June highlights our cooperative commitment to community as member-consumers and employees of Iowa electric co-ops are invited to nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference.

As I reflect on the electric cooperative accomplishments of 2022, it all ties back to People. Power. Purpose.

Finally, I would like to personally wish you and your family a blessed Christmas holiday. May you celebrate the season in good health with family and friends.

Roger Solomonson is the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a board director for Heartland Power Cooperative in Thompson.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Tovala Smart Oven!



This countertop convection oven allows you to choose between five modes: steam, bake, broil, reheat and toast. It automatically switches between cook cycles to ensure a perfectly cooked meal every time. The Tovala Smart Oven is smartphone controlled and includes a library of chef-crafted recipes and a meal subscription credit.

ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Dec. 31. 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 pork prize from the October issue was Glen Villanueva from Access Energy Cooperative.

SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR TWO BOARD POSITIONS

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is a member-owned cooperative governed by a board of directors that you elect. As a member, one of your most important roles is to participate in director elections, and you can become more involved in your co-op by serving on the board.

Two positions on PECO's seven-member board of directors will be open for election in 2023. The three-year terms of Ryan Eekhoff (District 2) and Marion Denger (District 5) will expire.

Board member qualifications

Candidates must be PECO members receiving electricity in the townships listed. In conjunction with these requirements, a board member is expected to attend monthly board meetings, generally held on the last Tuesday of each month, and various information and training meetings throughout the year. Because the board of directors is responsible for establishing the policies and rates under which the cooperative operates, it is important that



directors can devote adequate time to these activities. To learn more about director requirements and expectations, visit our website at www.prairieenergy.coop.

If you are a member in either district and are interested in serving on the board of directors, call the PECO office at 515-532-2805 or 800-728-0013.



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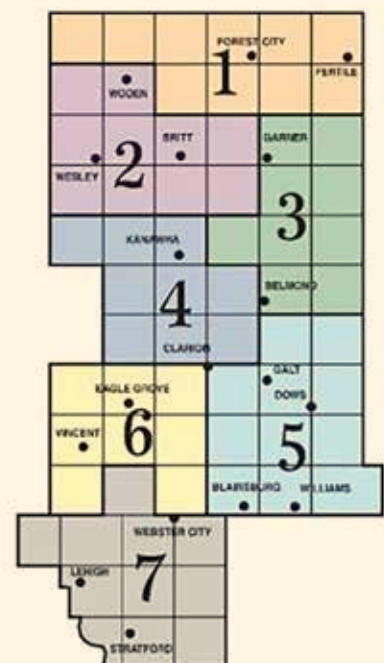
DISTRICT MAP

■ District 2 townships:

Buffalo, Bingham, Wesley, Orthel, Britt, Garfield, Prairie, Boone, Erin and Liberty

■ District 5 townships:

Iowa, Scott, Lincoln, Blaine, Morgan, Wall Lake, Vernon, Oakland, Blairsburg, Williams and Alden



VENZ HAS WINNING CHILI RECIPE



Prairie Energy Cooperative staff recently participated in the 5th Annual Chili Cook Off. Linecrew and staff taste-tested all entries and voted for their favorite. Lead Lineman Hunter Venz took the trophy from last year's winner, Operations Administrative Assistant Erin Baker. Congratulations, Hunter! Thanks to everyone who participated in this fun event.

FURMAN JOINS CREW

Jesse Furman recently joined the Prairie Energy Cooperative crew at the end of October. Originally from Hampton, Jesse attended Northwest Iowa Community College's powerline program, as well as Iowa Central Community College's industrial/commercial electric program.



He and his wife of 14 years, Lisa, live on the family farm with their son Kaedon, who is a senior at Belmond-Klemme High School, and their three black labs. When he's not working, Furman enjoys waterfowl and pheasant hunting, retriever training and games, and camping. He is also on the Dows Fire Department as Assistant Fire Chief.

Welcome to the team, Jesse!

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW ACCEPTED



Every year, a \$1,000 scholarship opportunity is available through our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

This scholarship is considered an investment in the economic future of rural areas. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience and a statement

of education and career goals. The scholarships must be used for educational costs, and the student must attend college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is awarded.

Seniors and college students can obtain an application through our website www.prairieenergy.coop or by contacting the PECO office at 515-532-2805. Applications are due by Feb. 17, 2023.

UPCOMING OFFICE CLOSURES

Prairie Energy Cooperative will be closed on the following dates:

- Dec. 16: All staff safety meeting
- Dec. 23: In observance of Christmas
- Dec. 26: In observance of Christmas
- Jan. 2: In observance of New Year's Day

To report a problem with your electric service, call our 24/7 dispatch center at 800-728-0013. Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR A FESTIVE **HOLIDAY** SEASON

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Upgrading to LED holiday lights can help you save on your electric bill.

The holidays are a magical time when we come together with our loved ones to share food, gifts and quality time. It's also the most expensive time of year for many families. Along with the expense of gifts, meals and travel comes colder weather and darker nights, leading to more electricity use and higher energy bills.

One way to reduce the financial burden of the most wonderful time of year is by implementing efficiency practices to use less energy throughout the holiday season.

Home efficiency basics

If you are hosting guests this holiday season, your household will consume more electricity than normal. A good first step is to follow home efficiency basics, including:

- ❄️ Program your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home. Then dial it back 8-10 degrees when you leave the house or go to sleep.
- ❄️ Use cold water in your washer and only run full loads.
- ❄️ Turn off lights and the TV when not in use.
- ❄️ Shut down computers and gaming systems instead of putting them in sleep or standby mode.
- ❄️ Lower the thermostat when guests are over or cooking food, as these activities will warm up your home. Most gatherings happen in the center of the home, so save energy by turning the heat down in areas you are not using.

Save energy in the kitchen

The holidays bring countless opportunities to bake with loved

ones or cook a holiday feast. If you're spending extra time in the kitchen this season, there are a few simple ways to be mindful of energy use.

Use the oven light to check food. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by up to 25 degrees, according to the Department of Energy (DOE). Use a slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate when possible. These appliances use less energy than an oven and stovetop. According to the DOE, a toaster oven can use up to half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time.

Let hot food cool to room temperature before placing it into the refrigerator. This ensures you don't increase the temperature inside your fridge and cause it to use more energy to cool down. You can also take some of the stress and expense out of holiday cooking by asking guests to bring a dish. It can be fun to have everyone contribute their holiday favorites!

Efficient holiday decorating

Make the switch to LEDs for all your holiday lighting both inside and outside the home. LED holiday lights consume 70% less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. For example, LED light strands cost \$0.27 to light a 6-foot tree for 12 hours a day for 40 days compared to \$10 for incandescent light strands.

Another convenient and energy-saving tip is to use timers so you don't have to remember to unplug your lights every evening. There are also smart holiday lights that offer a wide range of app-controlled options, including time, colors, music and modes.

Use less energy while you're away

The holidays might bring travel plans or opportunities to stay with family members. If you're going to be away from your home for a few days, you can take a few steps to save energy while you're gone.

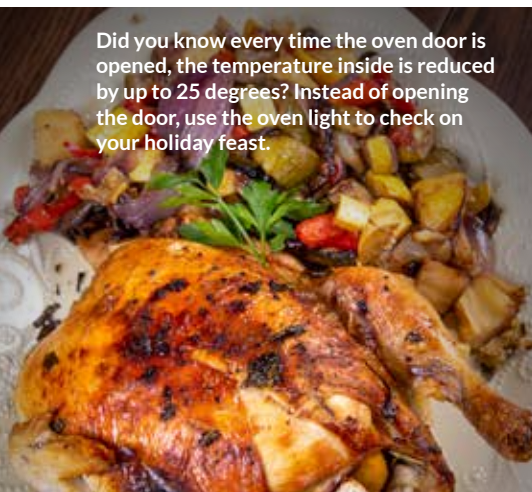
Water heating is the second-largest energy expense in your home, accounting for about 18% of your utility bill, according to the DOE. Switching your water heater to "vacation mode" will reduce wasted energy by keeping the water at a lower temperature. If your water heater does not have vacation mode on the dial, you can adjust it to the lowest setting.

Set your thermostat to around 55 degrees so you're not wasting energy to heat the home while you're away. This temperature is warm enough to keep your pipes and appliances functioning well in colder outdoor temperatures.

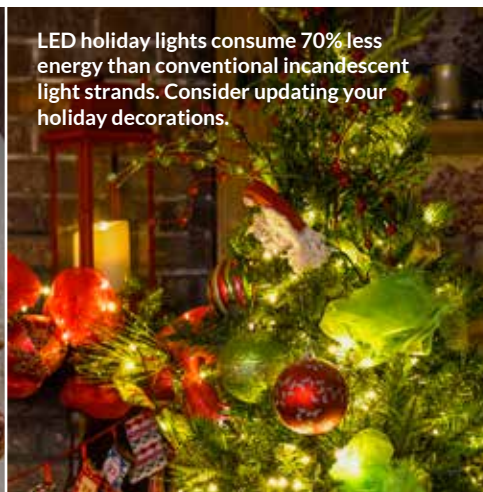
For security purposes, you may want to have lights on to make it look like you are home. Instead of leaving lights on all day, consider upgrading a lamp or fixture to a smart lightbulb. This way, you can control lights from afar and set a schedule for the light to go on and off. Another option is to repurpose your holiday light timer for one of your living room lamps.

With these tips, you can enjoy the cheer the holidays bring without the stress of wasting energy and increased electric bills. Happy Holidays!

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



Did you know every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by up to 25 degrees? Instead of opening the door, use the oven light to check on your holiday feast.



LED holiday lights consume 70% less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. Consider updating your holiday decorations.



A tree decked out in festive décor is a welcome sight for the holidays. Save by making the switch to LED holiday lights.

CHRISTMAS COOKIE & CANDY RECIPES

TWO-TONED FUDGE

- 2½ cups sugar
- ¾ cup evaporated milk
- ⅓ cup margarine
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups mini marshmallows
- 1 cup butterscotch chips
- 1 cup pecan halves, chopped
- ½ teaspoon maple extract
- 2 cups milk chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- pecan halves for garnish

In large saucepan, combine sugar, milk, margarine and salt. Cook, stirring constantly until mixture comes to full boil. Boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add marshmallows. Mix until melted and mixture is smooth. Place half the mixture in bowl and add butterscotch chips, chopped pecans and maple extract. Stir until melted and mixture is smooth. Set butterscotch mixture aside. Add chocolate chips and vanilla to remaining half of the mixture. Spread chocolate mixture into foil-lined 8- or 9-inch square pan. Put butterscotch mixture over top. Garnish with pecan halves. Chill for 2-3 hours, until firm. Cut into squares. *Yield 12-16 squares*

Bonnie Miller • Eldon • Access Energy Cooperative

PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE

- 2 cups sugar
- ⅔ cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup marshmallow creme
- 1 cup peanut butter (creamy or chunky)

In medium saucepan, combine sugar and milk. Bring to a boil until soft-ball stage or 235 degrees F on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat, then stir in vanilla. Add marshmallow creme and peanut butter, stir quickly. Pour into a 9-inch square pan lined with buttered parchment paper. Cool completely before cutting. *Yield 25 pieces, approximately*

Doris Handlos • Audubon
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

SOUTHERN PECAN PRALINES

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- ½ cup cream
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup pecan halves

In medium-size pan, dissolve sugars in cream and boil until 228 degrees F. Add butter and pecans. Cook until soft-ball stage, 236 degrees F. Cool, then beat until somewhat thickened but not until it loses its gloss. Drop by tablespoons on waxed paper, it will flatten out. *Yield 12 pralines*

Sue Cook • Deep River • T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

CHRISTMAS TOFFEE

- 2 sticks butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons water
- 6 ounces milk chocolate chips

In heavy saucepan, combine butter, sugar and water. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until mixture reaches 290 degrees F, soft-crack stage. Very quickly pour mixture into greased 15x10-inch pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips over top, stir until melted and smooth. Chill and break into pieces. *Yield about 2 pounds candy*

Teresa Mowrer • Guthrie Center
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

PECO FLAKE CANDY

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups raw peanuts
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon soda
- 1 package raw chip coconut

Combine sugar, syrup and water in heavy pan. Cook, stirring constantly until sugar dissolves. Add salt and nuts. Cook, stirring occasionally to hard-crack stage, 294 degrees F. Add butter, vanilla and soda. Stir in coconut and pour onto two buttered cookie sheets. While warm, pull to desired thickness. Crack into pieces when cooled.

Phyllis Vander Linden • Ashton
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

KRIS KRINGLES

- 12 ounces chocolate chips (2 cups)
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- dash salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 cup dry roasted peanuts, chopped
- optional: peanut butter and cherry chips

Melt chocolate chips and butter in 1-quart pan. Beat in eggs until smooth and glossy. Add confectioners' sugar, salt and vanilla. Mix well, then stir in coconut and peanuts. Add peanut butter and cherry chips to taste, if desired. Spread in a 7x11-inch pan, an 8x8-inch pan or in candy molds. Chill several hours or overnight. Slice ¼-inch thick. *Yield 20-24 pieces*

Norene Hancox • Seymour
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

NUT MALLOW GOODIES

- 1 cup chocolate chips
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 7 ounces marshmallow creme
- 1 cup salted peanuts

Combine chocolate chips and peanut butter in double boiler. Melt and stir until blended. Remove from heat and add creme and nuts, mix well. Spread on greased pan or drop by teaspoon. Chill until firm.

Rebecca Pederson • Clear Lake
Prairie Energy Cooperative

SPRITZ TOFFEE COOKIES

- 1¼ cups flour
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 bag milk chocolate chips, melted
- 1 bag Heath toffee bits

Mix flour, brown sugar, butter and vanilla together. Don't chill dough as it may be too stiff to press. Using star design, press cookies onto ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 7-9 minutes or until set and lightly browned, cool. When completely cooled, dip each cookie halfway into melted chocolate chips. Place on wax paper and sprinkle with toffee bits. *Yield approximately 1½ dozen cookies*

Patsy Vander Schaaf • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

BREAKFAST RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Dec. 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

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

MAIL: Recipes

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BUSINESS LEADERS HONORED WITH IOWA VENTURE AWARDS

BY KAY SNYDER

Since 1988, the Iowa Area Development Group and its electric cooperative, municipal utility and independent telecommunication company partners annually recognize growing companies with an Iowa Venture Award. The award recognizes entrepreneurs and organizations for their leadership, capital investment and employment opportunities they are creating.

The following companies were honored at a luncheon during the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on Dec. 1. View all 287 honorees in the Iowa Venture Award Hall of Fame at www.IADG.com/HallOfFame.



CNI Ag Independent Retailers

Nominated by Midland Power Cooperative

The newest occupant of the Southview Industrial Park in Iowa Falls is CNI Ag Independent Retailers (CNI), which purchased the 24,000-square-foot speculative building for their new facility. CNI is a national distributor of crop protection products, including seed, seed treatments and micronutrients, serving its 400 independent retailers across 1,200 locations in 44 states. The Iowa Falls distribution center is the first in Iowa and will allow for continued growth in the Midwest. This location will also house a bulk packaging facility, office and meeting space.

The speculative building was built as a partnership between Iowa Falls Area Development Corporation, Midland Power, Corn Belt Power and the City of Iowa Falls. It was built to market the city to prospective businesses like CNI.



KWF, LLC

Nominated by Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

Kirchhoff Welding and Fabrication LLC (KWF) was started by Kyle Kirchhoff as a part-time business making small products for local businesses in his garage in Griswold. Since then, KWF has experienced steady growth and now employs 14 people. It has a five-building footprint housing a CNC plasma cutter, vertical band saw, press brake and state-of-the-art paint booth. KWF manufactures various equipment, including augers and conveyors, a spray boom for a helicopter, and a cement mixer truck body. With products sold nationally and internationally, their customer base has grown to include Purina and Tyson Foods pet food programs. Nishnabotna Valley REC continues to actively support KWF's growth.

Hen Haven

Nominated by Southwest Iowa REC

Hen Haven's layer facilities began operation in the 1990s, supplying shell eggs to the breaker industry. Seeing the future need for cage-free eggs, the owners remodeled nine layer barns and added new processing machinery to sell eggs to the cage-free breaker market.

Freebird Holdco LLC purchased the site in 2021 and renamed the company Hen Haven. At the end of November 2021, the site suffered a fire, causing a catastrophic loss of one layer house, the processing plant and the biosecurity facilities. Just as the company started to rebuild in February 2022, highly pathogenic avian influenza hit, and the site was depopulated. During that time, the determined Hen Haven team worked tirelessly to shorten the cleanup period, repopulate the barns and resume operation. The recent challenges demonstrate the Hen Haven team's dedication to delivering top products and services to their customers and partners.

SHELL ROCK SOY PROCESSING NAMED “OUTSTANDING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR”

Nominated by Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Mid-Iowa Growth purchased nearly 100 acres in the Butler Logistic Park near Shell Rock to be the site of a startup soybean processing facility. The Shell Rock Soy Processing (SRSP) complex is now ramping up to full operation. The facility expects to crush 38.5 million soybean bushels annually, producing 847,000 tons of soybean meal for livestock markets and more than 400 million pounds of soybean oil. SRSP expects to purchase 150 truckloads of soybeans per day. The company will employ 50 to 60 people when fully operational.

Many partners, including Butler County REC and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, supported the development of the Butler Logistics Park, SRSP and other businesses within the complex. Butler County REC also constructed a new substation to meet their needs.



Godbersen Metal Works

Nominated by Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative

Godbersen Metal Works (GMetal) was founded in 2019 by Kent and Jill Godbersen. It is built on a family heritage of quality manufacturing, which began in 1965. The company is a metal fabricator specializing in assembly, bending, laser cutting, machining, powder coat painting, warehousing and welding. They work with multiple metals, including aluminum, stainless steel and steel.

GMetal acquired a vacant manufacturing facility in Spencer and immediately made facility improvements and energy efficiency upgrades. They have built a customer base that supports 23 jobs and has the capacity to double as they source additional workers.

Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative and Corn Belt Power supported GMetal with several technical and financial programs, including a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan.



Marker 126

Nominated by Prairie Energy Cooperative

Marker 126 is a new travel center that recently opened at mile marker 126 on Highway 20 near Fort Dodge. Owners Kevin and Sheila Stumpf had a vision for a travel destination that provides a high-end experience for all types of travelers. Marker 126 is a family operation, including their daughter and son.

Marker 126 opened in September with an impressive slate of ever-expanding amenities. In addition to gas, diesel and offerings of a convenience store, Marker 126 houses Table 126, offering nutritious meals made from locally sourced fresh ingredients, the Brew 126 coffee shop and a creamery serving ice cream.

Sheila designed the building, and it includes indoor and outdoor seating, a fireplace area, and a loft for meetings or groups. Coming soon are electric vehicle charging stations, a dog park and a play area for kids. A trucker campground, including a shower house, is also being planned.

Prairie Energy has worked with the Stumpfs throughout the planning and building phase. Prairie Energy, Midland Power and Corn Belt Power supported this facility through their Revolving Loan Funds.



SFM Fairfield

Nominated by Access Energy Cooperative

Sun & Fun Motorsports (SFM) Fairfield opened their new showroom and parts center in the Fairfield Business & Industrial Park in August. SFM Fairfield offers ATVs, side-by-sides and motorcycles from a growing stable of brands, including Can-Am, CFMOTO, SSR and Benelli. They also offer parts and services for these brands and more.

SFM was formed in 2013 by Scott Goedken and is headquartered in Iowa City. After adding two additional dealerships in Iowa City, SFM searched for a location to better serve southeast Iowa and the surrounding border states. Fairfield was selected because of the available speculative building, location and local support.

Access Energy Cooperative and Northeast Power supported the development of the industrial park, the construction of the speculative building and the location of SFM to the park.

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

KEEPING POWER FLOWING CALLS FOR INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Various factors, like extreme weather and increased use of renewable energy, affect the electric utility industry so much that there's even a new way to talk about it: resilience.

You might be surprised to learn that "resilience" isn't strictly used to describe the major changes affecting electricity service. Instead, it's about actionable steps electric utilities take to keep power flowing.

A few years ago, "reliability" was the term of choice. Reliability meant trimming trees near power lines and keeping squirrels from chewing up electrical equipment. Attention to those priorities worked. The average American's electricity stayed on well over 99.9% of the time. That reliability record is still holding up, but it's under pressure on several emerging fronts.

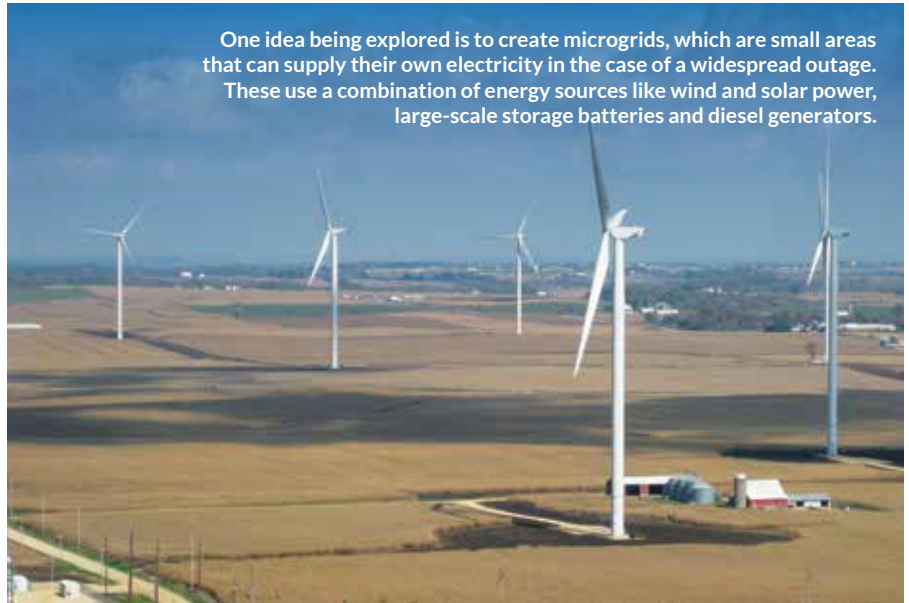
More powerful and frequent natural disasters and even the growing fleets of electric vehicles call for all-electric utilities to learn new ways to do their job. Maintaining the power grid means planning for sudden and large-scale disruptions.

If you're unsure about the difference between "reliability" and "resilience," you're not alone. Even utilities can have slightly different definitions. But most tend to agree that grid resiliency is the ability to withstand and recover from disruptive events and to predict and adapt to ensure consumers have the reliable power they need in a time of new energy challenges.

A less-formal definition from the Future Electric Utility Regulation Advisory Group compares electric service to a boxing match:

"Reliability is when you can take a punch. Resilience is how fast you get up off the canvas after you've been hit hard."

Electricity is more important than ever in our daily lives. At the same time,



One idea being explored is to create microgrids, which are small areas that can supply their own electricity in the case of a widespread outage. These use a combination of energy sources like wind and solar power, large-scale storage batteries and diesel generators.

weather events can suddenly take that essential electricity away from many people. Utilities need to be ready to get back up off the canvas quickly. Last year, Congress passed and the White House signed a law that includes a \$10.5 billion Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership Program.

Here are a few other ways electric utilities are building resilience:

■ Coordinated, local planning

Cybersecurity is an example of government and utilities working closely together, sharing information to protect against the latest cyber threats. In other cases, one size does not fit all. Electric cooperatives, in particular, point out that resilience means paying attention to regional and local differences.

■ Microgrids

One idea being explored is to create small areas that can supply their electricity in the case of a widespread outage. These microgrids use a combination of energy sources like wind and solar power, large-scale storage batteries and diesel generators.

■ Continued modernization

Electric utilities are investing in building power lines connecting to new renewable energy sources. They're also investing in digital equipment and sensors that can more quickly detect and resolve power outages or other problems.

There are opportunities as well – the growing number of electric vehicles plugged in overnight could be seen as a huge energy drain on the grid when the batteries in the electric cars are charging. Or those same batteries, when fully charged, could be a source of reserve power to supply the home in case of a large, unplanned outage.

There's no doubt that major changes to how we generate and consume energy are happening. But utilities, including electric cooperatives, are answering the call with innovative solutions to serve their local communities. That's called resilience.

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

'TIS THE SEASON – TO CELEBRATE SAFELY!

This isn't just the time of year that we eat more than usual, it's also the time when we have the most household accidents and fires. To help make sure your holidays don't go from merry to scary, remember these tips.

12 Days of Holiday Safety Tips

1 Keep decorations at least three feet away from heat sources – especially those with an open flame, like fireplaces and candles. And remember to blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.

2 The best decorations are safe decorations, so when you are decorating, make sure not to run cords under rugs or furniture, out of windows, or across walkways and sidewalks.

3 If you have a natural Christmas tree, water it to keep it fresh and safe. Real trees can dry up and turn into kindling in no time at all. Get rid of the tree after Christmas. Dried-out trees are a fire hazard and should not be left in the home or garage.

4 Always turn off your decorations when you leave your home and when you're sleeping. Most deadly fires happen while people are asleep.

5 Be mindful of how you are using electrical outlets. If you're using extension cords or adapters that add receptacles, consider having a qualified electrician add more outlets to your home. Extension cords are a common cause of home fires.

6 Only use electronics in dry areas. As tempting as it is, you just can't decorate your aquarium with icicle lights!

7 Remember that phones and tablets should stay on your nightstand. We all love falling asleep to the muffled crooning of Bing Crosby and Michael Bublé, but overheated electronics under pillows and blankets are dangerous.

8 Need a perfect gift idea? How about a smoke alarm? Every home needs a working smoke alarm in each bedroom, outside sleeping areas, and on every level, including the basement. And remember to test your own to make sure they're working.

9 If you're using a space heater, switch it off before leaving the room. It only takes seconds for a fire to start if a space heater tips over or comes in contact with something combustible, like a blanket or curtains.

10 Inspect your decorations and discard any that are damaged or worn out. Talk to your aunt about that life-sized Elvis-dressed-as-Santa statue. It's falling apart, it's creepy and it's got to go.

11 Keep batteries stored safely in their packaging and out of reach of anything that might try to eat them, like small children and pets. Eating a battery can be deadly.

12 The best gift for your family is to upgrade to Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter breakers or outlets. It is estimated that half of the electrical fires that occur every year could be prevented by AFCIs. All upgrades should be completed by a qualified electrician.

SMART APPLIANCES FOR THE SMART CHEF

BY KATHERINE LOVING

Whether you're a master chef or a culinary novice, smart appliances add convenience to any kitchen. They can guide you step-by-step or even perform the cooking themselves.

Smart appliances typically rely only on Wi-Fi paired with a custom smartphone application, while others can work with common smart home systems like Google Home or Amazon Alexa. You can set smart devices to begin a programmed routine to turn on lights, adjust the thermostat and many other tasks.

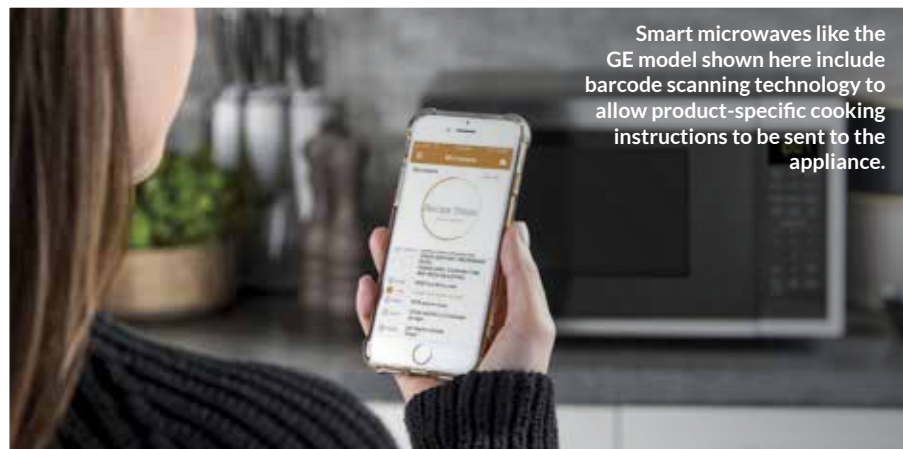
Cooktops and ranges

Induction cooktops are an innovation in themselves. Induction cooking works by using a magnetic field to deliver energy directly to induction-specific cookware. They are 32% more energy efficient than gas cooktops and about 75% more efficient than electric cooktops.

Like other smart cooktops, smart induction models recognize when a pan is placed on an element and automatically turn off when a pan is removed from the cooktop. Brands like Samsung and Bosch offer additional smart functions like synchronizing the cooktop with a brand-matched smart ventilation hood. The smart hood activates when cooking begins and adapts to cooking intensity on the fly.

Smart ranges can also include this function and often feature a barcode scanning system that allows you to scan store-bought foods, prompting the oven to start based on the instructions. Smart ranges can be controlled remotely to preheat, change and monitor temperatures through the companion app or an integrated home system. A few brands offer a Wi-Fi-connected cooking thermometer to allow remote monitoring.

For novice chefs, many smart ovens and cooktops have guided step-



Smart microwaves like the GE model shown here include barcode scanning technology to allow product-specific cooking instructions to be sent to the appliance.

Photo credit: GE



The June Oven includes an in-oven camera that allows progress to be tracked from its app, which provides progress monitoring and notifications to your phone when cooking is complete.

Photo credit: June



Induction cooktops, like the Samsung model shown here, transfer heat directly to the cookware, which is specially made for induction cooking.

Photo credit: Samsung

by-step recipes within the app to help control the cook time and temperature.

Countertop ovens

Manufacturers are adding smart functionality to their countertop cooking options as well. The June Oven includes an in-oven camera that allows progress to be tracked from an app. The app also provides progress monitoring with push notifications to your phone.

Tovala offers a smaller countertop oven for ready-to-cook meals. These ovens use barcode scanning technology for both Tovala meals and those from the grocery store. The app also uses push notifications to track progress.

Like Tovala, the Breville smart oven offers guided recipes and an app that directs cooking temperature and function, such as air fry or bake, as the recipe advances. The Breville smart oven uses an onboard chip to monitor and stabilize temperature from all sides for more efficient cooking.

Microwaves and other gadgets

Other common kitchen appliances and small devices are getting smart, too. Microwaves from manufacturers like LG, Whirlpool, GE, Sharp and Toshiba include the barcode scanning function to allow product-specific cooking instructions to be sent to the appliance.

Smart kitchen scales, air fryers and pasta makers are also available to connect to your phone for guided measuring and cooking. Try a smart meat thermometer if you're looking for a smart kitchen gadget that won't break the bank. These handy little devices work with an app to specify optimal cook time and temperature, and notify the chef when the meat is ready.

As appliances and kitchen gadgets get smarter, home chefs will have more options for convenience and functionality. Bon appétit!

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

KITCHEN TOOLS TELL THE STORY OF RURAL IOWA

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Like many of you, I've been spending more time in the kitchen lately, cooking holiday meals and treats. As I was washing some dishes the other night, a wooden-handled cookie spatula caught my eye.

The stainless-steel blade is printed with the John Deere logo and "Merry Christmas 1966, Snyder Implement Co., Lake City, Iowa." I inherited it from my grandma Katherine Dougherty, and it's one of my go-to gadgets for serving cake and brownies.

I remember tagging along many times in the early 1980s with my dad to Snyder Implement when it was located on the east edge of town. I loved checking out the farm toys just around the corner from the parts counter. I also remember begging Dad for some money so I could work the candy machine near the shop where the mechanics worked.

Cooking up rural nostalgia

As I look around my kitchen today, I think about how many gadgets record a history of rural Iowa over the last 100 years. I love my blue, glazed-ceramic salt-and-pepper shakers in the shape of 3-inch-tall grain elevators printed with the words "Farmers Coop Grain Co., Yetter, Iowa."

Then there's the white, magnetic clip with the iconic double-circle logo from Farmers Co-op Grain Co. The phone numbers for the Yetter elevator and Lake City office on the clip reflect the seven-digit phone system with Lake City's 464 prefix, which came into use around the early 1960s.

The seven-digit phone system must not have been in use when Arndt's Café & Tavern at Yetter had personalized, blue plastic salt-and-pepper shakers. Back then, you had to call 24-95 (an Auburn number) to reach the café, which was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Arndt.

Speaking of Auburn, I have a metal flour sifter from the Auburn Hardware Co. ("Where you always get a square



deal") and one from Zehms Grocery in Knierim. "When it's sifted down, you'll find it pays to trade with Zehms Grocery," proclaims the yellow, black and red sifter, which noted that Zehms paid cash for poultry, cream and eggs.

Then there are my vintage hot pads from Farmers Cooperative Creamery, phone 243, in Corning ("Butter Your Income with Us," and "Try Your Co-op First"), and the C-D Farm Service Company in Spencer, which offered petroleum, L.P. gas, fertilizers, feed, seed, chemicals, twine, motor oils, grease and animal health products. I wonder how many of these companies are still in business. Not many, I suspect.

While businesses don't give away as many kitchen gadgets as they used to, I still love them when I get them, from an instant-read thermometer from the Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association to a plastic cutting board from Latham Hi-Tech Seeds.

These modern items continue to tell a story about the evolution of rural Iowa. They also reflect how some things never change, like the need for handy tools and the pleasure of eating home-cooked meals. Mmmm, I could go for some cake. Where's that John Deere spatula?

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



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