

● SEPTEMBER 2026



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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



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Shine the Light winners

PECO moves into
its new headquarters

Chicken dinner recipes

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Tefna Greiner, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

CORE VALUES DRIVE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AT THE STATEWIDE LEVEL

BY JIM MILLER



Last month, I traveled across the state with the leadership team of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) for our

district meetings with member cooperatives. During our visits, we talked about our foundational values and how they impact everything we do for Iowa's electric cooperatives and the member-consumers they serve.

An organization's mission should define what it does and why it exists. IAEC's mission is to serve, support and advocate for our members by providing expertise and collaborative leadership.

Living our core values

Our core values are the fundamental beliefs and guiding principles that dictate IAEC's culture and standards for employees and board directors:

- **Integrity:** We build relationships based on trust and honesty.
- **Leadership:** We work as a unified team and lead by example.
- **Excellence:** Our work is performed with excellence and empowered through innovation.
- **Service:** We support our members with superior service in a timely manner.

When we talk about these statements and internalize them, it helps IAEC employees and board members make consistent and strategic decisions.

This column is my farewell message, as my term as a board director at Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association expires later this month. I have had the incredible privilege of serving my local cooperative as a director for 18 years, and I

often reflect on a quote that is written on the boardroom wall:

Every decision I make shall be based on what is best for the member-owners of this cooperative.

This quote is why I always prepared diligently for my local and state board meetings so I could make the most informed decisions.

A heartfelt thank you

As my term on the local co-op board comes to an end, so too does my service on the statewide board. I have truly enjoyed serving on the IAEC board for almost five years and as your statewide board president for the past two years.

I commend the outstanding staff at IAEC for their professionalism and expertise. I see IAEC's core values of integrity, leadership, excellence and service at work every time I come to the statewide office.

As I step back from electric cooperative service, I must

acknowledge my fellow statewide board directors. They greeted me with camaraderie and friendship from the very beginning, and our rapport has continued to grow. The IAEC boardroom is centered on mutual respect and trust because we focus on what unites us.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Rae. She has been so supportive of my electric cooperative service for 18 years, and I could not have accomplished this work without her.

While my leadership comes to an end, I am excited for what the future holds for electric cooperatives in Iowa. Please know that you are well represented on the IAEC board by a team of directors and employees who embody statewide core values and cooperative values every day. It has been my honor to serve my fellow co-op members in this capacity.

Jim Miller is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, whose term ends this month.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A 13-QUART AIR FRYER OVEN

Meet your ultimate cooking companion! The Cosori air fryer oven features 11 functions packed into a stainless-steel housing with a 13-quart capacity. This versatile oven is designed to make cooking a breeze with 50 chef-made recipes included to inspire your culinary creations. From baking to roasting, this is one oven to rule them all. The large capacity is perfect for cooking for a crowd or meal-prepping for the week.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

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 Bose portable speaker from the July issue was **Evelyn Beavers**, a **T.I.P. REC** member-consumer.

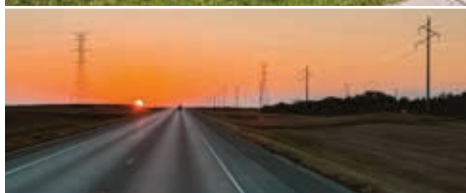
A LOOK BEHIND THE LINES: PECO MEMBERS VISIT THE ENERGY TRAIL

More than 120 electric cooperative member-owners, employees, and directors from western and north central Iowa participated in this year's Energy Trail Tour, a three-day educational experience exploring how electricity is generated and delivered.

The 2026 tours, departing from Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative's (NIPCO) headquarters in Le Mars in late June and July, took participants through the Dakotas to visit key facilities operated by Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). This year marks the 37th anniversary of the Energy Trail Tour as a three-day experience offered to members of the NIPCO and Corn Belt Power Cooperative systems.

Exploring power generation, co-op principles

Along the route, participants explored a diverse energy mix, from hydroelectric generation at Big Bend Dam in Fort Thompson, South



Interested in participating next year? Contact our office to find out how you can learn more about the 2027 Energy Trail Tour.



Office: 1511 Industrial Park Drive – P.O. Box 353
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Office Hours:
Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sunday and holidays

Phone:
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Facebook: facebook.com/PrairieEnergyCooperative

Website: www.prairieenergy.coop

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and employer

Dakota, to coal-based generation at Antelope Valley Station and lignite coal production at the Freedom Mine near Beulah, North Dakota. They also learned about wind energy and the production of synthetic natural gas and valuable byproducts at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant in Beulah.

Beyond the technical learning, the tour reinforced the cooperative difference – highlighting the history, principles and community focus that set electric cooperatives apart from other utilities.

Participants also enjoyed educational and entertaining stops that showcased non-energy points of interest throughout the Dakotas.

Sponsored by Iowa generation and transmission power cooperatives NIPCO and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, the Energy Trail Tour connects members with the people,

resources, and partnerships that power their homes, farms, businesses and communities, offering a firsthand look at what it takes to keep the lights on.

Power supply information

Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) purchases approximately 80% of its power supply from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and 20% from Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), which markets power generated from the Missouri River Dam System.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative has a purchase power agreement with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, along with an allotment from the WAPA, which markets power generated from the Missouri River Dam System.

PECO CELEBRATES FIFTH-ANNUAL MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Prairie Energy Cooperative's (PECO) fifth-annual Member Appreciation Day was held on July 15 at the Red Shed Event Center in Clarion and once again welcomed a wonderful turnout from the communities we serve. Approximately 450 members and guests attended the event, making for an evening filled with food, fun and fellowship.

Smokee Heights served a delicious meal, while everyone cooled off with ice cream treats from The Olde Creamery truck. The popular Kids Zone, featuring inflatables provided by Danielle's Party Rentals, kept children entertained throughout the evening, and members of all ages enjoyed PECO giveaways.

One of the evening's biggest attractions was the bucket truck rides, where members – young and old alike – enjoyed a bird's-eye view from high above. The experience offered a unique perspective and a glimpse into the work PECO's lineworkers perform every day.

The PECO board of directors and staff extend a sincere thank you to everyone who attended. Your continued support and participation are what make this annual tradition such a success.

Watch future newsletters and cooperative communications for information about next year's Member Appreciation Day. We look forward to celebrating with you again!



Congratulations to these lucky members who were winners of the giveaways this year:

\$80 gift cards: Gary Steenblock, D&F Wacker

\$50 Scheels gift cards: George Lewis, Eldon Gast

\$100 Scheels gift cards: Neal Thomas, Dale Deimerly

50-quart cooler: Dann Schroeder

Resco swag bags: Morris Peterson, Norm Anderson, Tim Dewaard

Tower stacking game: Monica Halverson

Pellet grill: Boyd Crees

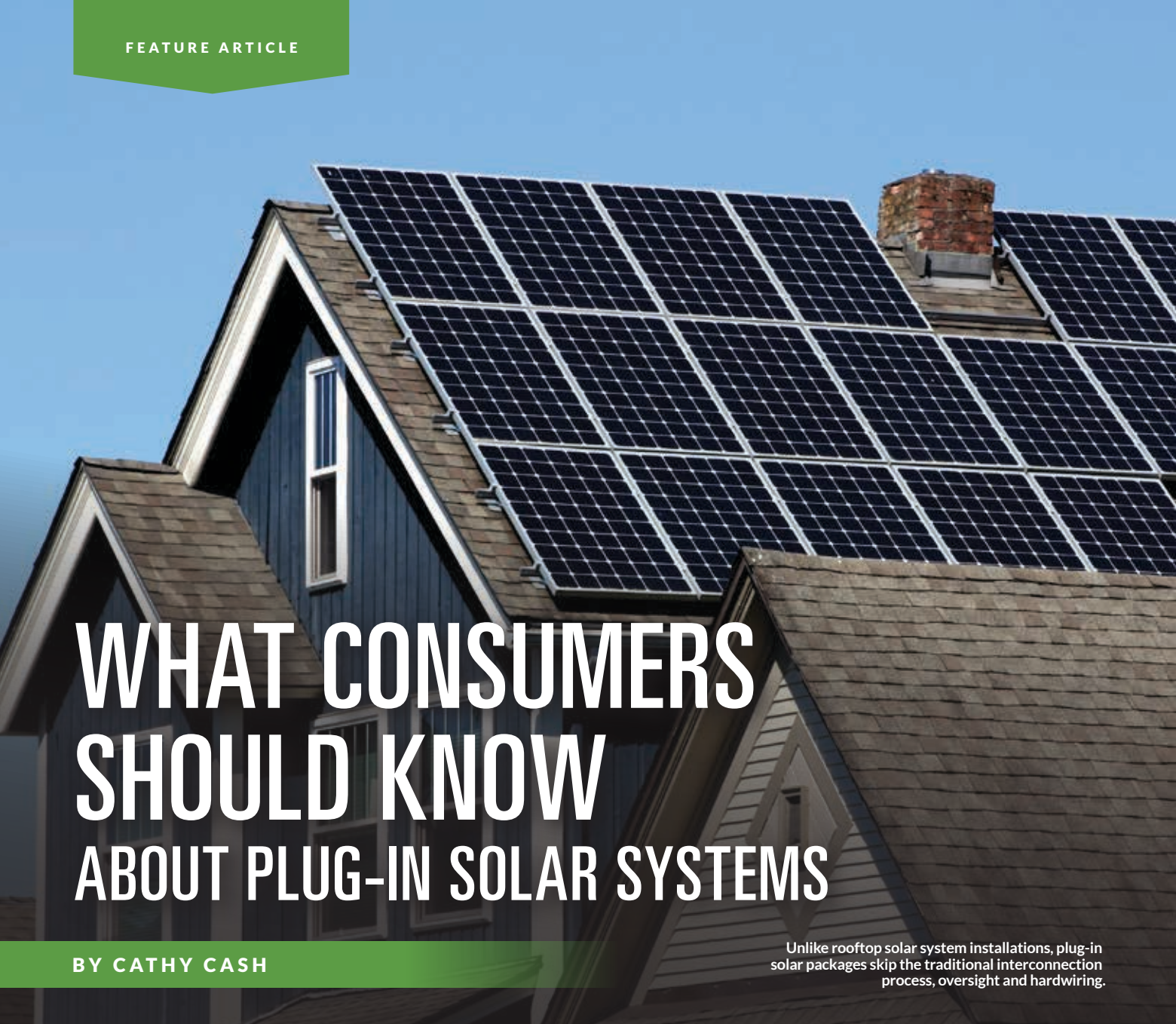
Oversized outdoor chairs: Mark Gavin

12-inch bike: Jeremy Pringnitz

18-inch bike: Jordan Voss

24-inch bike: Andrew Lee

Water slide: Andrew Eekhoff

A large array of solar panels is installed on a residential roof. The panels are dark and rectangular, arranged in a grid pattern. The roof is made of brown shingles. A brick chimney is visible on the right side of the roof. The house has blue siding and a white window frame. The sky is clear and blue.

WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLUG-IN SOLAR SYSTEMS

BY CATHY CASH

Unlike rooftop solar system installations, plug-in solar packages skip the traditional interconnection process, oversight and hardwiring.

It seems easy enough. You set up a solar panel or two and its small generator-type device outside, plug the thing into a wall socket in your house, and before you know it, electricity is flowing and lowering your power bill.

These portable, DIY solar energy systems can generate several hundred watts and are marketed like appliances that only require a regular outlet. But as plug-in solar becomes more popular, consumers should be aware that these products require important safety considerations.

So, what should you know about behind-the-meter, plug-in solar kits?

Safety comes first

First, these systems have the potential to put lives and property at risk. Electric utility leaders note that almost all of these devices lack U.S. safety requirements, such as certification under UL codes or standards. UL has only recently developed a safety certification for plug-in solar systems.

Unlike rooftop solar and electric vehicle charger installations, these plug-and-play packages attempt to bypass existing interconnection protocols, oversight and inspections.

If a home's wiring is not up to snuff to support plug-in solar, the consumer

wouldn't know because they didn't call a licensed electrician to install the equipment or an inspector who could spot that hazard.

That can be dangerous on multiple fronts, leading to overheated wires in a residence, property damage, fire and even worse, serious or deadly electrical shock.

"Plug-in solar introduces real safety risks at the consumer-member level," said Jeffrey Groenewold, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) senior energy solutions manager. "Existing residential wiring standards were not designed for generation through standard outlets,

so plug-in solar increases the potential for fire and shock hazards.”

A charged solar system can backfeed, or send electricity back to the grid, and re-energize power lines without your electric cooperative’s knowledge. This could be fatal for lineworkers.

“The evolving plug-in solar industry must work to ensure these systems are properly managed and controlled to prevent unintended backfeed,” said Groenewold. “This is critical to protecting cooperative lineworkers and keeping them safe when they are out working to restore power.”

Unplugging the system does not eliminate its risk. Contact with the power cord energized by the solar panels can cause devastating injury.

Will Morris, a consultant to NRECA Business and Technology Strategies Group, underscored that these systems are not harmless appliances and should not be treated as such, especially around children.

“When we were growing up, our parents taught us if you would just unplug a blender or an iron or something like that, you’re putting that device in a safe state. With this, it is the complete opposite,” he said. “If somebody has this on their patio plugged into an exterior outlet and they unplug it and drop it in a puddle ... you can get 800 watts going to you. That can be a real bad day.”

Weighing the costs and benefits

Then there’s the affordability factor. Is plug-in solar really a good deal?

The equipment for this behind-the-meter energy resource can cost a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, but its output, even in areas with plenty of sunshine, will shave only an estimated 40 to 80 cents per day off your power bill, according to industry experts.

“I would be very surprised if in our markets plug-in solar makes financial sense because the average cooperative consumer rates are pretty low,” said Morris. “It would take a long time to recover that investment.”

European apartment dwellers who face very high electricity rates have been eagerly buying “balcony solar” for a while and expect to pay off their investment in a couple of years, he said.

In Germany, where rates are particularly high, the plug-and-play packages are designed within the country’s safety mandates and must be registered with the grid operator.

“So, the German utility knows when that device is being utilized and that they have potential for energy to flow back into the grid,” he said.

But in the U.S., states are at various stages of potentially regulating plug-in solar to ensure safety.

“We’re at the Wild West phase of it right now,” Morris said. “You can buy a system and plug it in. It’s like buying a hairdryer, except the hairdryer is UL certified.”

Members are encouraged to contact their electric cooperative for knowledgeable advice on plug-in solar and to inquire about requirements for installing such a device.

“The bottom line is if you’re looking to lower your electric bill with some behind-the-meter device, please let your electric cooperative know,” said Groenewold. “Co-ops have a variety of programs to partner with you to save money and to do it safely.”

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





LEMON CREAM CHICKEN

- 2½ pounds chicken thighs, boneless and skinless
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- parsley, to taste
- paprika, to taste
- creole seasoning, to taste
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup cream
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese

Place chicken in a greased baking dish. Sprinkle liberally with seasonings. Mix butter, lemon juice, garlic and cream. Spread over chicken. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 375 degrees F for 45 minutes, or internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Serves 4

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ELEGANT CHICKEN

- 4 chicken breasts
- 8 bacon slices
- 4 ounces chipped beef
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ teaspoon paprika

Wrap chicken in bacon. Cover bottom of 8x12-inch dish with chipped beef. Place chicken on top. Mix sour cream and soup, then pour over chicken. Sprinkle on paprika. Bake at 275 degrees F for 3 hours. Serves 4

Karen Bruns • Fonda
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

YUM CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 6 chicken breasts
- 6 slices Swiss cheese
- 1 package Stove Top dressing
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½ can water
- ½ can milk

Place chicken in a 9x13-inch pan. Layer cheese on top of chicken. Mix dressing, soup, water and milk. Spread mixture over cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Let sit 5 minutes before serving. Serves 6

Jane Person • Batavia
Access Energy Cooperative

CRANBERRY ORANGE CHICKEN BREAST

- 4-6 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
- 1 cup bread or cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- milk, for dipping
- oil
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- ½ cup cranberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup water

Flatten chicken breasts. Mix crumbs, cheese and garlic salt. Dip chicken in milk, then crumb mixture. Brown in oil, then place in 12x8-inch baking dish. Mix sugar, corn starch, cranberries, orange juice and water. Bring to boil, then pour over chicken. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Serves 4-6

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

STICKY CHICKEN RICE

- 2 cups uncooked rice
- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- olive oil
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- garlic, minced, to taste
- dash of sriracha
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons corn starch or arrowroot powder
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 12-ounce bag frozen green beans or broccoli
- Garnish: avocado, sesame seeds

Wash and drain rice, cook according to package instructions. Meanwhile, cut chicken into strips or chunks. Season with paprika, chili powder, onion powder, garlic powder, oregano, salt and pepper. Cook chicken and seasonings in olive oil. Once chicken is cooked, add soy sauce, honey, rice vinegar, sesame oil, minced garlic, sriracha and ginger. Coat the chicken with sauce mixture. In a small bowl, stir together corn starch or arrowroot powder and water. Stir until the sauce thickens slightly, then add to pan. Add frozen green beans or preferred vegetables. Cover and continue cooking until vegetables are done. Plate the sticky chicken over cooked rice and garnish with avocados and sesame seeds.
Serves 4-6

MacKenzi Harger • Nevada
Consumers Energy

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 small head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 cup ham, finely cubed
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded

Heat butter and oil in pan. Add cauliflower and cook 8-10 minutes, until crisp tender. Add garlic and onion, cook for 1 minute. Stir in flour, then whisk in broth. Bring to a boil and cook until cauliflower, onions and garlic are tender. Cool and then puree in blender. Return to pan and stir in chicken, half and half, ham, mustard, salt and pepper. Heat through. Add cheese and stir until melted.
Serves 6-8

Joyce James • Prescott
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



SPICY CHICKEN TAGINE

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pat butter
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1½-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 red chilies, seeded and chopped
- 3 fresh rosemary sprigs
- 1-2 cinnamon sticks
- 8 chicken thighs
- 6 ounces dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons clear honey
- 1 14-ounce can plum tomatoes, with juice
- water, as needed
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- rice or couscous, optional

Heat oil and butter in medium-hot cast iron skillet or iron pot. Add onion, ginger and chilies until soft. Add rosemary sprigs and cinnamon sticks. Add chicken and brown on both sides. Add apricots and honey, then stir in tomatoes with juice. Add water, if needed to cover skillet bottom and apricots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer gently for 35-40 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and basil, stir. Serve over cooked rice or couscous. *Serves 4*

George M. Clifford • Farmington
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

MEATLESS MEALS

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

To ring in the new year, we want to share your favorite wintertime **meatless meals!** From sheet pans and casseroles to soups and savory salads, send us your favorite vegetarian meals for a chance to be featured in our January issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322



MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their sixth-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 83 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Ellen Campbell**, who is recognized for bringing comfort and connection to others through **Stitch & Chatter**; **Bill and Megan Gleeson**, who are recognized for supporting families facing pediatric cancer through the **Rally For Reid Foundation**; and **Belinda Seay**, who is recognized for her compassion and dedication to serving others through **Monroe County Helping Hands**.

These three winners have been awarded a \$3,000 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.



Stitch & Chatter receives a Shine the Light contest donation for Ellen Campbell's (right) volunteer efforts.

STITCHING TOGETHER A STRONGER COMMUNITY

ELLEN CAMPBELL'S VOLUNTEER SPIRIT BRINGS COMFORT AND CONNECTION TO OTHERS

BY SARAH OLTROGGE

For Ellen Campbell of Panora, volunteering has always been about bringing people together to help others. Now, her dedication has earned statewide recognition.

Ellen joined Stitch & Chatter after retiring from Panorama Schools in 2015, seeing it as a way to keep busy and be productive at the same time. What began with borrowed sewing machines has grown into a thriving volunteer group with members from towns as far away as Jefferson that create quilts, pillowcases, doll clothes and other handmade gifts for people throughout the community.

Handmade with care

"Each and every member is a delight to be around," Ellen said. "Without them, none of this could happen. We talk about who should be given a quilt, then invite the community to view them and see who will receive them. Probably the most rewarding part is the delivery of the quilts to so many people."



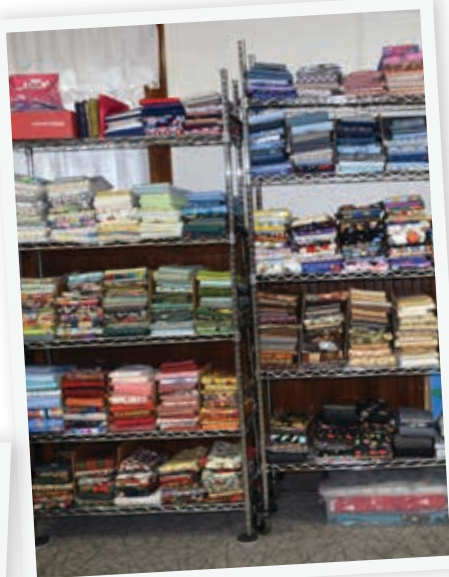
Ellen Campbell (left) shares information with a fellow volunteer.

The group relies on donated fabric and grant funding to support its work, providing handmade items to organizations, including Children's Clothes Closet (Three C's), medical facilities and others in need. She also helps organize donations, write grants and coordinate the group's annual quilt showcase, where community members can see the finished projects before they are distributed.

In her nomination letter, Guthrie County REC member Luann Waldo said Ellen's leadership and commitment made her an easy choice for the nomination.

"Ellen likes to keep busy. She is very good at organizing whatever task is put before her," Luann shared of her longtime friend. "She has a talent of recruiting people to help her, but she never asks anyone to do anything that she won't do herself."

Luann added that the quilts are "made with love for fellow



citizens. It's a gift that shows the recipient someone cares about and for them."

Inspiring others to serve

Ellen hopes the recognition inspires others to get involved in their own communities.

"I would encourage others to find a group in their community they could join and discuss how they could help someone," she said. "Maybe random acts of kindness to a neighbor, business or even family member to bring a smile to their face."

To learn about Stitch & Chatter, visit www.panorafcc.org/stitch-and-chatter.

Sarah Oltrogge is the communications content supervisor for Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

A HEART FOR HELPING OTHERS

BELINDA SEAY'S COMPASSION AND DEDICATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MONROE COUNTY FAMILIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Selfless. Irreplaceable. Angel walking among us.

These are the words nominators used to describe Belinda Seay of Moravia and her volunteer work at Monroe County Helping Hands, located in Albia. Belinda was nominated by three members of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative who work with her at Helping Hands.

Sharon Cunningham, site director of the thrift store and local food pantry, shared, "Belinda has been a wonderful volunteer for us for the last 10 years. She is the clothing supervisor and supervises many other volunteers. She works tirelessly to make sure the clothing donations we receive are sorted and hung for distribution to our shoppers, which are at least 600 every month."

Fellow volunteer Marnie Starr said, "I am not surprised by her 10 years of service as she has also been a nurse for 30 years and a Christian all her life. Compassion is one of the best volunteer traits to find in a person, so this is her wheelhouse. I have personally witnessed unselfish acts of concern from Belinda for the welfare of others. She has a true altruistic spirit."

"Belinda, during these 10 years, volunteers four days a week. She also stops at a store on her way to Albia from Iconium to bring in donated dairy to the food bank. She is dedicated, selfless and goes above and beyond to help others. Her sense of humor and patience help purchasers and the rest of the volunteers to be their best," remarked nominator Pat Merrick.

Helping Hands at work

Monroe County Helping Hands was established in 1985 and currently

operates out of an older building in Albia that was previously a laundry facility. There is a constant need for maintenance, and the \$3,000 Shine the Light donation will help to keep the facility in good working condition while also stocking the shelves of the food pantry section.

The thrift store is open to the public and operates on donated clothing and household goods from the community. The proceeds from thrift store sales benefit the food pantry, allowing Monroe County Helping Hands to purchase food monthly from the Food Bank of Iowa. The food pantry serves more than 200 people in need each month, and no one who asks for assistance is turned away.

A spirit of service

And what makes Monroe County Helping Hands such a longstanding blessing in the community are volunteers like Belinda. Marnie shared, "Belinda has a genuine concern for people. All people. She is invaluable and her dedication is priceless and irreplaceable."

Belinda has endured some difficult challenges recently, and her faith sustains her. She shared, "My biggest faith is in God. Without his grace and his mercy, I would not be the person I am today."

To learn more, find Monroe County Helping Hands, Inc. on Facebook.

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

See Page 14 for the article on Bill and Megan Gleeson's Rally For Reid Foundation.



Belinda Seay (second from the left) accepts a Shine the Light contest donation for Monroe County Helping Hands. She is pictured with her nominators.



Belinda Seay.

CO-OP FOREMAN SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) Foreman Wes Held has been selected to participate in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International Program, where he will join a team of volunteer lineworkers to bring electricity to rural communities in Guatemala.

Held will be part of an 18-member crew working Sept. 15 through Oct. 2 in the mountain villages of Montenegro and El Estocal, near the town of Guastatoya in south-central Guatemala. The region, located about two hours northeast of Guatemala City, features steep, rugged terrain with sandy soil and an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet, making the project both physically demanding and rewarding.

The volunteer team includes seven lineworkers from Iowa, seven from Oklahoma and four from Colorado. Together, they will construct approximately four miles of primary electric distribution line, install 40 primary poles and build three miles of secondary distribution line with



28 secondary poles in Montenegro. Once complete, the new electric system will be energized by the Municipality of Guastatoya.

Serving community needs, quality of life

The project will provide reliable electricity to approximately 100 homes, as well as a local school and health clinic, creating new opportunities for education, health care and economic development.

In addition to building electrical infrastructure, the team will complete a community service project at the local school. Volunteers will update the school kitchen by installing

new flooring, adding shelving and providing a new refrigerator to improve food preparation and storage for students.

PECO is proud of Wes for volunteering his time and expertise to support communities in need. His participation reflects the cooperative principle of Concern for Community, demonstrating how electric cooperatives work to improve quality of life both locally and around the world.

A feature story highlighting the project and its impact will appear in the November issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

PECO MEMBERS RECOGNIZE COMMUNITY IMPACT MAKERS



Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO), one of Iowa's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, is proud to recognize individuals who make a positive impact through volunteerism and community service.

As part of the annual Shine the Light contest, PECO members were invited to nominate volunteers who exemplify the cooperative principle of Concern for Community.

The following individuals were nominated by members from within our service territory in recognition of their outstanding dedication to serving others:

Kelly Kirstein: Chicks Ministry

Danielle Rogers: The SALT Center

Tyler Linn: Lazy J Rescue Ranch

PECO extends its sincere appreciation to each nominee for the difference they make in the lives of others and we thank the members who took the time to recognize their service.

To learn more about the Shine the Light contest and see the 2026 winners, visit www.IowaShineTheLight.com and read about this year's winners on Pages 10-11 and 14 of this issue.



PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE HAS A NEW HOME

Prairie Energy Cooperative has officially moved into our new headquarters at 1511 Industrial Park Drive in Clarion. Beginning Aug. 24, all member payments and cooperative business moved to our new location. Our new facility provides the space and resources needed to support our cooperative and serve our members for years to come.

While our location changed, some things stayed the same:

🕒 Monday-Friday
7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

☎ 515-532-2805

Payment drop box information

For members who prefer to drop off payments, we now have a convenient drive-through payment drop box located at our new headquarters on the southwest corner of the property. To help make this transition as smooth as possible, we continued checking the payment drop box at our former office through Aug. 31. All drop box payments can now be made at our convenient drive-through drop box at 1511 Industrial Park Drive. Or stop in and say hello to pay at the counter.

Thank you for your patience

Moving an entire cooperative was a big undertaking, and we



We look forward to welcoming you to our new headquarters and making 1511 Industrial Park Drive our new home!

appreciate the patience and understanding our members showed throughout the process.

As we settle into our new home, we ask for a little grace as we adjust to our new surroundings. We're so excited to

begin this next chapter and grateful to have our members along with us.

Our address may have changed, but our commitment to our members and the communities we serve remains the same.

SAFETY TODAY, SUCCESS TOMORROW.

Sept. 21-25

NATIONAL FARM SAFETY & HEALTH WEEK - 2026

MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

RALLY FOR REID FOUNDATION

**BILL AND MEGAN GLEESON
HONOR THEIR SON'S LEGACY
BY HELPING FAMILIES FACING
PEDIATRIC CANCER.**

BY JIM WILLIAMS

Feature continued from Page 11

Bill and Megan Gleeson faced every parent's nightmare when they were told their 2-year-old son had cancer. Their son, Reid, died in 2020 when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer. Megan was nominated for Shine the Light by Kathy Wunderlich, who is a member of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.

Reid was an active and fun-loving boy who had a special love for garbage trucks. He would spend time on the 12th floor of the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital overlooking Kinnick Stadium and would watch Hawkeye football games and participate in the iconic Wave tradition. Reid would also point out all the green and yellow garbage cans around the stadium. He would watch for garbage trucks and identify which companies they belonged to during family car trips.

During a stay at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for treatment, Reid toured two garbage and recycling centers, as well as the McNeilus Companies facility where garbage trucks are made. During his fifth birthday party, the city of Davenport organized a garbage truck parade past his house in his honor.

Turning loss into a legacy

As a legacy to their son, the Gleesons founded the Rally For Reid Foundation

to support other families facing this devastating diagnosis. The Foundation helps provide support for the entire family, allowing families to stay together during the difficult times they are facing.

"We felt a great loss and emptiness after we lost Reid," Megan said. "After we started the Foundation and started to receive messages from the families it benefitted, it helped fill that void and gave us a sense of purpose."

The Foundation supports the Stead Family Children's Hospital and a variety of research efforts dealing with pediatric brain tumors. Its mission is to provide support for families and children affected by pediatric cancer and to raise funds for vital research.

Supporting families when they need it most

The Foundation has funded several programs to assist with travel expenses and ensure families have access to meals at the hospital so they can stay with their child without having to leave or skip meals. It also provides Family Care packages with essential items and comforting treats to help keep family spirits up during treatment at the hospital.

Brady Gleeson (Reid's brother) participates in the Rally For Reid Golf Event in early August.



Reid Gleeson died when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer.

To date, the Foundation has helped more than 300 families, raised nearly \$250,000 and provided care packages to nearly 200 families of children battling cancer.

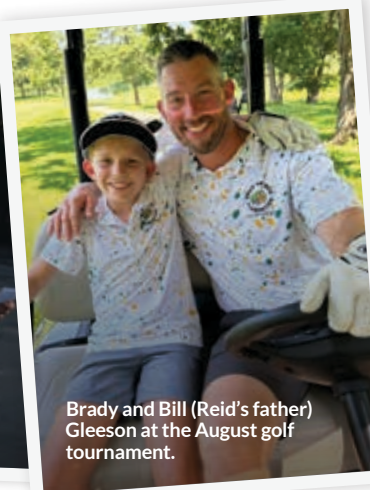
At the hospital, Reid's Story Corner is located in the Janice and Bruce Ellig Children's Library, where Reid loved to spend time reading books and doing puzzles. The activities were a welcome distraction for Reid during his four-to-five-hour chemo treatments.

To learn about the Rally For Reid Foundation, visit www.rallyforreid.org.

Jim Williams is the communications director for Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.



Megan Gleeson, Reid's mother, addresses the golfers at the start of the Rally for Reid Golf Event.



Brady and Bill (Reid's father) Gleeson at the August golf tournament.

NEVER FORGET

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Would you believe about one-third of Americans are too young to have any personal memories of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks? It's also hard to fathom that 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of that horrendous day.

In 2001, I was working from my home near Grimes that Tuesday morning, writing articles for AgWeb.com. My landline phone rang shortly before 9 a.m. My colleague demanded that I turn on the TV.

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I went to the living room and grabbed the remote control. Like millions of other Americans, I watched in disbelief as a second airplane hit the World Trade Center. I couldn't turn away as more updates came in. Something hit the Pentagon! A plane crashed in Pennsylvania! What next? Would one hit Chicago? Omaha?

In the days ahead, we learned that terrorist attacks had left nearly 3,000 people dead in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

A day no one will ever forget

I recently asked my friends and acquaintances about their memories of 9/11.

"I was working in the Sac County courthouse," said JoAnn Ellerbrock of Lytton. "I heard the breaking news on the radio when the first plane hit. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Our son was in college. I remember calling to check on him. It was kind of like when I was in grade school, and our superintendent told us President Kennedy had been shot."

Jon Hollatz, a Garner-area farmer, was hauling old-crop corn to town. "The news came across the radio tuned to KWMT 540 AM in the '69 Ford straight truck. My grandpa and I turned on the TV during the lunch hour. That day reminded him of Pearl Harbor in 1941."

Katie Daniel, whose family farms in Carroll County, was eating breakfast when the morning news was interrupted. "It sounded like an accident involving one of the World Trade Center towers. Within minutes, the second plane came, and terrorism was mentioned. I was in disbelief the rest of the day and was praying through it all."

Sac City-area farmer Gary Langbein was headed to the Clay County Fair when he heard the news on the radio. "We found out it was not an accident. A lot of people at the fair were watching all the TVs for sale at the vendors' booths. I remember some people were worried that the fair might get hit."

For Lake City-area farmer Barb Richardson and her husband, Eric, Sept. 11 started as an ideal day to chop corn silage. "The weather was so perfect. Not too hot, and the sky was a bright blue with the prettiest puffy clouds. When the first plane hit, I heard the news over KWMT.



We only had AM radios in those straight trucks. It sounded like a tragic accident. And then the next plane hit the towers, and the third into the Pentagon. My mother-in-law videotaped the news broadcasts, so we could watch them later."

Melanie (Hjelm) Bloom, the ag teacher and FFA advisor at Sioux Rapids High School, was a senior at Iowa State University. "Some friends met me after class and filled me in. I remember how quiet the campus was, maybe an hour after the attacks happened. The phone lines were so busy it was hard to get a call home."

Remembering why it still matters

What a different world that was.

Today, a quarter century later, we must never forget the tragic day that changed America. We must continue to share our memories so those born after 9/11 learn its significance and enduring legacy.

What are your memories of 9/11? Email me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

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



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

September 2026

Visit our website at www.prairieenergy.coop

SAFETY

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