

● SEPTEMBER 2026



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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Meet this year's
Shine the Light winners**

**Plug-in solar:
What you need to know**

Chicken dinner recipes

Win an air fryer oven ▶ See Page 3

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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.

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.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND LINE ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

If you've looked closely at your Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) electric bill, you've likely noticed a line item showing your monthly demand. Although it appears on your bill, it is provided for informational purposes only and is not a separate charge.

The demand information helps you better understand how and when you use electricity.

What is demand?

Your monthly electric bill includes two different ways electricity is measured:

- **Energy (kWh):** The total amount of electricity you use throughout the billing period, measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh).
- **Demand (kW):** The highest amount of electricity your home or business uses at one time during the billing period, measured in kilowatts (kW).

For example, if your air conditioner, electric water heater, clothes dryer,

oven and other large appliances are all running at the same time, your demand will be higher than if they are used at different times.

Why does demand matter?

A significant portion of RVEC's wholesale power costs is based on the cooperative's overall peak demand. Understanding your own demand can help you better understand how electricity is delivered and the factors that influence the cost of providing reliable electric service.

Although you are not currently billed for demand, RVEC continues to provide this information so members can become familiar with their usage patterns and better understand how demand works.

Monitor your usage

You can view your energy use and demand anytime through the SmartHub app or by logging in to your SmartHub account online. Monitoring your usage can help



you identify when your demand is highest and make informed decisions about your electricity use.

Simple ways to lower demand

Using large appliances at different times rather than all at once can help reduce your peak demand. Small changes, such as running the dishwasher after the dryer finishes or adjusting your thermostat during peak hours, can make a difference.

If you have questions about the demand information shown on your bill, contact RVEC. We are happy to explain what it means and help you better understand your electric usage.



Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

INSIGHTS ON YOUR ELECTRIC USE

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), commonly known as smart meter technology, provides members with valuable insights into their electricity usage. Through AMI, members can access information to better understand their energy consumption patterns, identify energy-saving opportunities and stay informed during outages.

This technology also enables Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) to improve service reliability, respond more quickly to outages and better manage the electric system to meet members' needs.

RVEC believes members have the right to understand how their energy usage information is

collected, used and protected. We are committed to transparency in our data practices and to providing clear information about available billing options, energy programs and account services.

If you believe any information associated with your account is inaccurate, we encourage you to contact us so it can be reviewed and corrected promptly. Members with questions or concerns about privacy practices are welcome to contact the cooperative for assistance.

At RVEC, protecting your personal information is just as important as delivering the safe, reliable and affordable electricity you depend on every day.



WHERE YOUR ELECTRIC DOLLAR GOES

Have you ever wondered where your electric bill goes each month? It's a great question, and one we're happy to answer.

As a member-owned electric cooperative, Racoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is committed to transparency about how your money is used. Every dollar you pay helps provide the safe, reliable and affordable electric service you depend on every day.

The largest share of your electric bill goes toward purchasing wholesale power from our suppliers. The remaining dollars are used to maintain 1,447 miles of power lines, replace aging equipment, respond to outages, invest in new technology, provide member services and cover

the day-to-day operations of your cooperative.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, RVEC doesn't operate to generate profits for shareholders. Any remaining margins after expenses are allocated to members as capital credits and returned when the cooperative's financial condition allows.

Investing in reliability

Providing reliable electric service requires ongoing investment. Poles, power lines, transformers, substations and other equipment must be maintained and replaced to keep electricity flowing safely to homes, farms and businesses across our service territory. These investments also help strengthen



the electric system against severe weather and prepare it for the future.

Your cooperative at work

At RVEC, every financial decision is made with our members in mind. We work hard to control costs, operate efficiently and invest wisely to deliver long-term value. Our goal is simple: deliver reliable, affordable electricity while serving as responsible stewards of the cooperative you own.

Thank you for being a member of RVEC.

YOUR PRIVACY MATTERS AT RVEC

Before enjoying the benefits of reliable electric service, many members don't realize how much information is required to operate the electric system safely and efficiently. At Racoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), protecting that information is a responsibility we take seriously.

Protecting your privacy

As a member-owned cooperative, RVEC collects certain information necessary to provide electric service, maintain accounts, process payments, respond to outages and improve the reliability of our electric system. This information may come from service applications, account transactions, payment history,

advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and other interactions members have with the cooperative.

We are committed to limiting the collection and use of personal information to what is necessary to serve our members and to operate the cooperative effectively. Your information is not sold or shared with third parties for marketing purposes.

RVEC may disclose member information only in limited circumstances, including:

- 1 To complete a transaction or service requested by the member
- 2 When authorized by the member

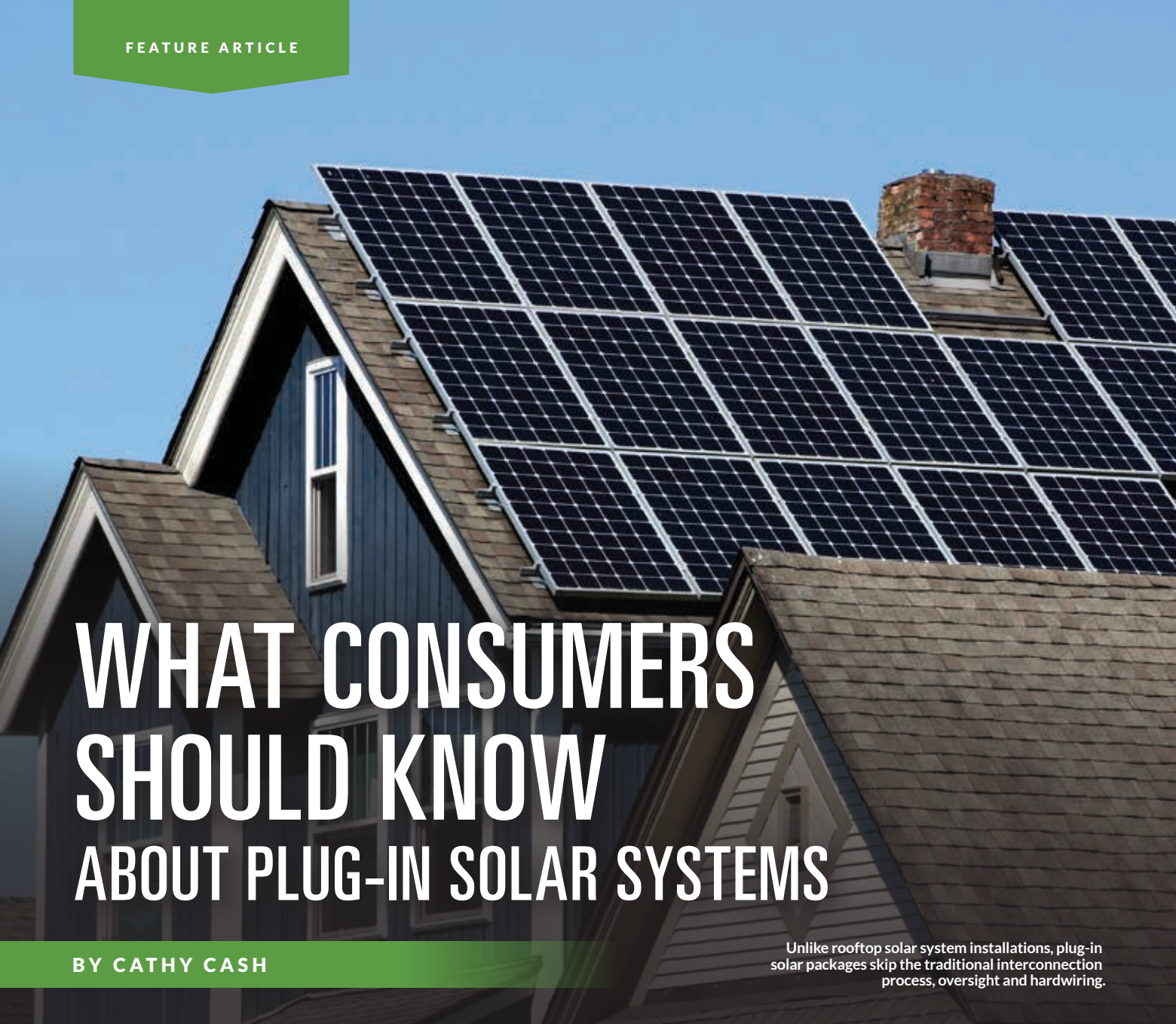
- 3 When required by law, court order or regulatory requirements
- 4 To trusted service providers who assist RVEC in delivering services and who are bound by strict confidentiality agreements

Access to member information is limited to employees who need it to perform their job duties. RVEC employees receive training on the importance of safeguarding member information and maintaining confidentiality.

In addition, RVEC employs physical, electronic and administrative safeguards to protect member data from unauthorized access, misuse or disclosure.

OFFICE CLOSURE

Racoon Valley Electric Cooperative will be closed Sept. 7 for Labor Day. Beginning Sept. 8, the office will return to normal business hours, which are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

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."



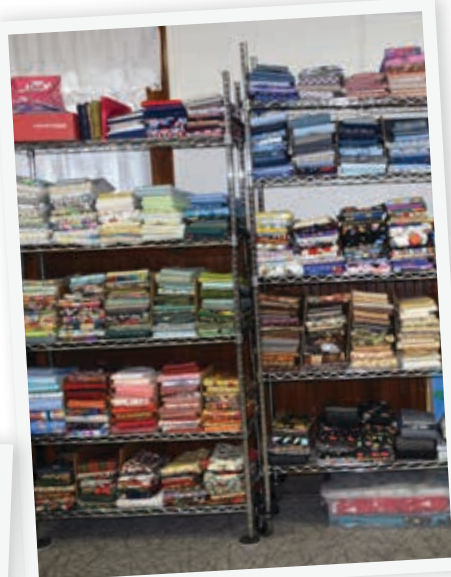
Ellen Campbell (left) shares information with a fellow volunteer.

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



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

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.



Belinda Seay.

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

HARVEST SEASON SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

Harvest is one of the busiest – and most demanding – times of the year on Iowa farms. Long hours, changing weather conditions, tight schedules and large equipment can create additional safety risks. At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), we want to remind everyone that no harvest is worth risking a life.

As you're working to bring in this year's crop, keep these important safety tips in mind:

TIP Be extra cautious around power lines.

Always know the location of overhead power lines before moving combines, grain carts, augers or other large equipment. Keep equipment lowered whenever possible during transport.

TIP Use a spotter for oversized equipment.

If you're moving tall or wide equipment near power lines, have someone watch for overhead hazards and guide you safely through.

TIP Never move or lift a power line.

Even if a line appears to be insulated or inactive, always assume it is energized. Never attempt to raise, move or push a power line out of the way.

TIP Lower portable augers and grain elevators before moving them.

Many electrical accidents occur when equipment is transported in the raised position.

TIP Make sure tractors and equipment are properly marked and lighted.

Many roadway accidents involving farm equipment occur at dawn, dusk or after dark. Proper lighting, reflective markings and escort vehicles, when needed, help keep everyone safe.

TIP Shut equipment off before servicing it.

Always turn off the tractor or equipment and wait for all moving parts to stop before clearing plugs, making adjustments or performing maintenance.

TIP Take care of yourself.

Fatigue can be just as dangerous as faulty equipment. Stay hydrated, eat nutritious meals and snacks and take short breaks throughout the day to remain alert and focused.

If equipment contacts a power line

Knowing what to do in an emergency can save your life.

If your equipment comes into contact with a power line:

- **Stay inside the cab whenever possible.** Call 911 immediately and contact RVEC. Warn others to stay away from the equipment.
- **Assume the equipment is energized.** Anyone touching the equipment and the ground at the same time could be seriously injured or killed.
- **Only leave the equipment if there is an immediate danger, such as fire.** If you must exit, jump clear with both feet together – do not step down. Avoid touching the equipment and the ground at the same time.
- **Shuffle or hop away.** Move with your feet together until you are at least 40 feet from the equipment. Never return to the equipment until utility personnel confirms it is safe.

Everyone wants a productive harvest, but the most important thing to bring home is yourself. By staying alert and following these simple precautions, we can all help make this harvest season a safe one.

If you have questions about electrical safety around your farm or need assistance, contact RVEC at 712-659-3649 or visit www.rvec.coop. We're here to help keep you, your family and your operation safe.

CAPITAL CREDITS: A BENEFIT OF COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

If you noticed a capital credit line item on your August electric bill, you've experienced one of the unique benefits of membership in Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC).

Unlike investor-owned utilities that return profits to shareholders, RVEC is a not-for-profit, member-owned cooperative. Any margins remaining after operating expenses are allocated to members as capital credits based on the amount of electricity they purchased during the year. These funds help maintain the cooperative's financial strength and allow RVEC

to continue investing in a safe and reliable electric system.

When the cooperative's financial condition permits, the board of directors authorizes the retirement of capital credits and returns those funds to members. This year, the board approved the retirement of capital credits from 2006 and part of 2007, along with the Corn Belt Power Cooperative Quick Roll amount. Active members received their retirement as a credit on their August electric bill, while former members received a check by mail.

Capital credits are one of the many benefits of cooperative membership. Instead of profits going to outside investors, they are reinvested in the electric system and, over time, returned to the members who helped generate them.

Keep your contact information current

Even if you no longer receive electric service from RVEC, you may still have capital credits that will be retired in future years. To ensure you receive future capital credit checks, please notify RVEC whenever your mailing address or contact information changes.

HOW ANIMAL GUARDS HELP KEEP YOUR POWER ON

You may not give much thought to what's happening atop an electric pole – but for Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), it's a critical part of keeping your lights on. One unexpected threat to electric reliability? Animals.

Squirrels, birds, raccoons, snakes and other wildlife are naturally curious and often view power poles as ideal places to perch, climb or nest. Unfortunately, when animals come into contact with energized equipment, it can cause power outages, equipment damage, pole fires or injury to the animal.

That's where animal guards come in.

What are animal guards?

Animal guards are protective devices installed on utility poles and electrical equipment to keep wildlife safely away from energized components. At RVEC, a common type of animal guard is a pole wrap – a thick, smooth plastic sheet wrapped around the pole.

The slick exterior makes it difficult for animals to grip and climb, while the interior protects the wood and reduces long-term damage. These wraps help deter animals such as squirrels, raccoons, opossums, snakes and even woodpeckers from accessing sensitive electrical equipment.

Other types of animal guards used throughout the electric industry include spinning rollers, metal barriers, mesh coverings and specialized shields installed on transformers and at substations.

Why animal guards matter

Animals are among the leading causes of unplanned power outages nationwide. Along with severe weather and fallen trees, wildlife interference is a major challenge that electric cooperatives work to prevent – especially during the spring and fall, when animals are most active.



Animal guards help:

- 1 Prevent power outages by keeping animals from contacting energized equipment
- 2 Protect wildlife from injury or electrocution
- 3 Reduce equipment damage and maintenance costs
- 4 Improve overall system reliability for our members

A commitment to reliability

Iowa's electric cooperatives are known for delivering some of the most reliable electric service in the country, and RVEC is proud to be part of that effort. Using animal guards is just one of the many behind-the-scenes steps our crews take to protect the electric system and keep power flowing safely and reliably to your home or business.

So, the next time you spot a smooth wrap or guard on a utility pole, you'll know it's doing important work to protect both your power and the wildlife around us.

ALTERNATE ENERGY PRODUCTION FACILITY NOTICE REQUIREMENT

On Jan. 1, 2013, a notification requirement went into effect. This requirement applies to the owner of an alternate energy production facility that will be attached to an electric transmission or distribution line. Alternate energy production or distributed generation facilities are defined as solar, wind turbine, waste management, resource recovery, refuse-derived fuel, agricultural crops or residues, standby generators, battery storage systems or wood-burning facilities used to generate electricity.

Under this requirement, the owner of the facility is required to provide written notification to their utility of the intent to construct or install the facility at least 30 days prior to construction.

In the written notice the owner must provide information on the type of facility and the anticipated completion date of the construction.

If you are considering installing an alternate energy system, please contact Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative at 712-659-3649.



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.

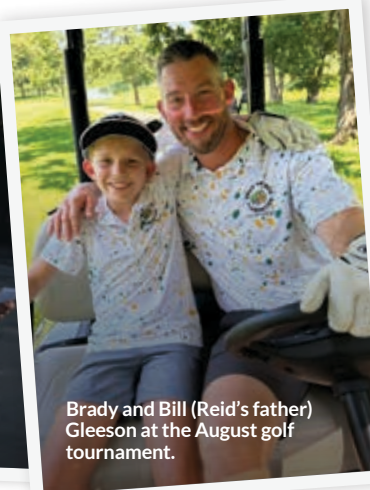
At the hospital, Reid's Story Corner is located in the Janice and Bruce Ellig Children's Library, where Reid loved to spend time reading books and doing puzzles. The activities were a welcome distraction for Reid during his four-to-five-hour chemo treatments.

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.rvec.coop

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A large white utility bucket truck is parked on a dirt road. Two workers in yellow safety gear and hard hats are in the bucket. The truck has 'Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' written on its side. In the background, there are orange traffic cones and a green field under a clear sky.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®