

OCTOBER 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**6 reasons electric co-ops
are great places to work**

**Highlights from RVEC's
annual meeting**

Perfect pork recipes

Win a \$100 gift card to support a local business ▶ See Page 3

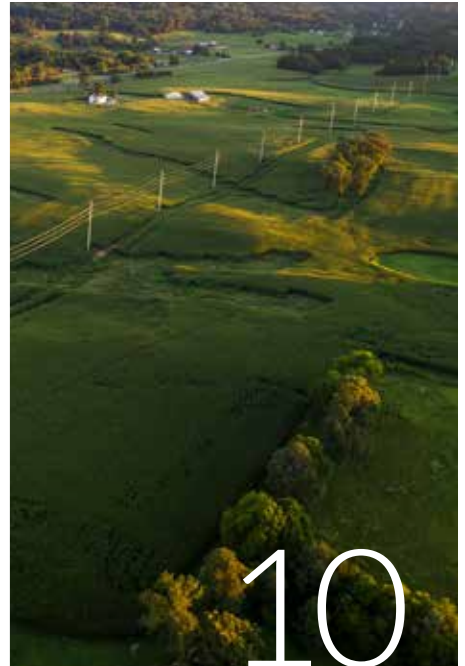
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ON THE COVER

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

FOSTERING IOWA'S GROWTH: HOW COOPERATIVES ARE SHAPING LOCAL ECONOMIES

BY CHUCK SODERBERG, DAVE HOLM AND MURRAY WILLIAMS



In the heart of the Midwest, Iowa is known for its sprawling fields, tight-knit communities and a spirit of collaboration that has long been a hallmark of its success. While often associated with agriculture and its iconic cornfields, the state boasts a different kind of growth story – one driven by cooperatives. Co-ops are more than businesses; they are pillars of empowerment, resilience and sustainable development that are shaping Iowa's local economies.



Many Iowans associate cooperatives with agriculture; however, co-ops also include rural electric service, credit unions, rural telephone, farm credit, petroleum and more. Co-ops are not-for-profit organizations that are owned and democratically controlled by their members. In fact, nearly one out of every two Iowans is a member of a cooperative.

Commitment to rural communities

As part of National Co-op Month, Gov. Kim Reynolds has declared October as Co-op Month in Iowa. During this month, cooperatives of all types and from all industries reaffirm their member-owned mission and commitment to the communities they serve.

In a state where rural communities hold a special significance, cooperatives play a pivotal role in

keeping these areas vibrant and alive. Rural cooperatives extend essential services such as energy, financial services, connectivity and healthcare to regions that might otherwise be overlooked.

Collectively, Iowa cooperatives pay more than \$75 million in property taxes to Iowa communities each year. Property taxes paid, especially in rural counties, have a big impact on county budgets and help support critical infrastructure. By pooling resources and sharing expertise, these cooperatives provide a safety net, effectively turning adversity into opportunity.

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives remain committed to powering lives and strengthening their communities. Locally elected co-op directors make informed decisions on behalf of their fellow members and neighbors to ensure reliable, affordable service for years to come. The average household served by an electric cooperative pays about \$5.25 a day for power, which is an incredible value in a world

increasingly reliant on electricity and connectivity. Locally owned and governed electric co-ops also embrace an "all-of-the-above" generation strategy as they face potential reliability challenges due to federal mandates.

A better future for everyone

The cooperative movement in Iowa is a testament to the power of community-driven endeavors. It embodies the spirit of collaboration, the commitment to sustainability and the pursuit of shared prosperity. As co-ops continue to shape local economies and empower communities, they remind us that growth is about fostering a better future for everyone. It's a future that Iowa's cooperatives are helping to build, one collective effort at a time.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president/general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives; Dave Holm is the executive director of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives; and Murray Williams is the president and CEO of the Iowa Credit Union League.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A \$100 GIFT CARD!

To celebrate National Cooperative Month, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. It will be good for a restaurant, hardware store, gift shop, grocery store, beauty salon or other local business that's vital to your community.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Oct. 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 Amazon Fire 32-inch Smart TV from the August issue was Eugene VanMeeteren, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF THE ANNUAL MEETING; YOUR ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

BY JIM GOSSETT



Thank you to all who took the time to attend the Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) Annual Meeting last month. It is always good to see those who join us and visit with many of our member-owners. The meeting included director elections in those districts up for election and financial and operations reports from RVEC.

In the series of updates, RVEC President Dave Onken talked about the challenge of rate stability in today's inflationary times, member-owner satisfaction and how the board takes seriously their responsibility to serve every member-owner. I spoke about reliability, the dedication of RVEC employees and board, and how we look for opportunities in uncertain political and regulatory times.

Seeking your feedback

Since the annual meeting, all RVEC member-owners should have received a survey in the mail asking for your thoughts about the format of future meetings. Several of you have attended our annual meeting and/or member appreciation meetings, which have had various formats and locations in the last few years. Many Iowa electric cooperatives are changing their annual meeting format, so our board is interested in your opinion. Thank you in advance for completing the survey and sharing your thoughts.

Benefits of membership - patronage

Patronage is the system we use to enable RVEC member-owners to participate economically in the cooperative. This is one of the most important things that makes us a cooperative.

RVEC puts a portion of its margins each year in an account for each member and uses these funds to stabilize rates, paying for capital expenditures instead of adding to

the electric rate. When the RVEC board determines it financially wise to do so, they return or "refund" a portion of patronage held back to the membership. This year, RVEC has returned more than \$500,000 in patronage to our member-owners and a total of \$3,269,460 in returned patronage since our merger in 2010.

In addition, member-owners with records in 2002 will receive a patronage refund check in early December. The board has a goal of shortening the time we hold patronage in your accounts and returning your money to you sooner.

We are doing our best to perform our mission of safely providing reliable, affordable and responsible service while being a leader in our communities' prosperity and growth. I think you will agree this board and staff have your best interest in mind as we work every day to meet your needs.

Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



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Directors

- David Onken, President Glidden
- Jeff Cranston Odebolt
- Mark Ludwig Breda
- Karen Werner Schaller
- Steve Schable Carroll
- Adam Handlos Glidden
- Dave Schroeder Coon Rapids

Jim Gossett, CEO

RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

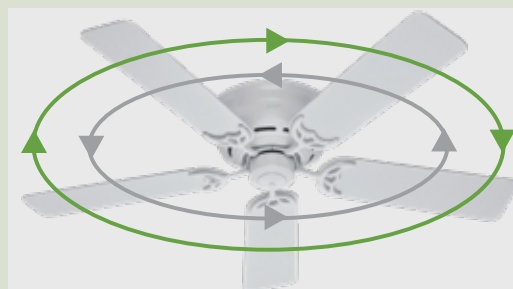
REVERSE THE SPIN & SAVE

Ceiling fans can cut your electric bills year-round! Before you buy one for every room, it's important to understand how fans can help you save energy.

If you install a ceiling fan and don't adjust your thermostat settings accordingly, you may be more comfortable – but you also could be increasing your monthly electric bills.

During winter, flip the small switch on the side of the ceiling fan to set the blade rotation to clockwise. Run the fan on low speed so it

creates a gentle upward breeze away from people in the room. This will push the warm air at the ceiling back down into the room, where it's needed. Then, set your furnace a few degrees lower to save electricity.



Counterclockwise (summer)

Clockwise (winter)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM RVEC ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) was held on Sept. 6 at The Lincoln Club in Glidden. Approximately 271 members and guests attended the meeting. The official registration count showed 121 member-owners registered.

Dinner was served from 6-6:45 p.m., then RVEC Board President David Onken called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Reports were given by Mark Ludwig, secretary/treasurer; Onken; Jim Gossett, CEO; and Rheanne Feilmeier, RVEC's Youth Tour participant.

Employee Terry Vauble received a 30-year service award, and employees Kevin Greving, Matt Schwarzkopf, Eugene Handlos and Jim Gossett received 10-year service awards.

Registered member-owners received a jumbo cooler tote for attending the meeting. Eight electric bill credits were awarded before the meeting adjourned.

Election results

Attorney Denny Puckett with Sullivan & Ward, P.C. gave election results during the meeting. Directors elected for a three-year term include District 4 David Onken of Glidden, incumbent, and District 7 Karen Werner of Schaller, incumbent.


The board of directors held an organizational meeting following the annual meeting. The following officers were elected: David Onken, president; Steve Schable, vice president; Mark Ludwig, secretary/treasurer; and Karen Werner, assistant secretary/treasurer.



Pictured from left to right: Jim Gossett, Eugene Handlos, Terry Vauble, Matt Schwarzkopf and Kevin Greving. Each was recognized for their dedication and years of service with RVEC.



Your 2023 RVEC board of directors. Back row (pictured from left to right): Adam Handlos, Steve Schable, David Onken and Dave Schroeder. Front row (pictured from left to right): Karen Werner, Mark Ludwig and Jeff Cranston.



IOWA STUDENT PLACES IN NATIONAL CONTEST

FOR CREATING ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HISTORY WEBSITE

BY ANNE GARDINER

From the 50 states. From international affiliates, including South Korea, China, American Samoa, Singapore and Guam. More than 2,600 students. 1,500 projects completed. 54 medals. One Nashua student – Caleb Sinnwell.

In July 2022, Sinnwell, a then-sophomore at Nashua-Plainfield High School, began researching

the background of rural electric cooperatives. He dove into the short- and long-term impacts of their creation to develop a website for the National History Day National Contest.

He spent months researching, conducting interviews and developing the website, titled:

“With the Flip of a Switch on the Rural Frontier: REA Lights the Way.”

Along with meeting numerous deadlines, his first National History Day contest hurdle was districts in Cedar Falls. After taking first place, he moved onto the state contest in Des Moines, where he again took first place.

Lifelong interest in electricity

Sinnwell, who has attended Butler County REC meetings since he was a child, has always found electricity and the formation of cooperatives interesting.

“This was my opportunity to learn so much more about how my family receives electricity and why it is so very important to all of us, even though most times it is taken for granted,” he explains. “This was such an interesting event in history that I wanted to share it with everyone.”

Growing up, Sinnwell heard stories from his grandparents about his great-grandparents and the number of challenges they faced living and working on the farm with no electricity.

“I also thought it was interesting that electricity existed but for the more heavily populated areas, and farmers were being left in the dark,” Sinnwell says.

“Rural electric cooperatives brought electricity to rural America. The progression of that is probably one of the largest modern marvels that has ever happened to the United States.”

- Craig Codner, Butler County REC CEO, during an interview with Sinnwell on Feb. 16, 2023

Learning from the experts

Included on his website are interviews with Craig Codner, CEO of Butler County REC; Duane Rieckenberg, board president of Butler County REC; and Carl Heyenga, retired operations manager of Butler County REC. Heyenga set poles with the first Butler County REC crews who brought power to east-central rural Iowa.

“Interviewing Craig, Duane and Carl was fascinating. It opened my eyes to the hard work Carl faced digging holes and getting electricity to the farmers who wanted it desperately,” Sinnwell says.

How the REC board of directors, elected by the co-op membership,



functions is something that Sinnwell already understood. But throughout his research and interviews, he learned more about rural electric cooperatives as innovators.

“They are always doing their best to support the local communities and rural vitality,” he shares.

Appreciation all around

Butler County REC is proud of Sinnwell and his dedication to telling the rural electric cooperative story. He earned a bronze medal at the National History Day National Contest at the Xfinity Center at the University of Maryland in June for his website. This is the third year in a row that Sinnwell has taken home a medal from the contest.

“RECs do so much more for us in ways I never even thought, and I

am so proud that Butler County REC is where my family receives its electricity because I know they truly care about us and our future,” he says.

Sinnwell is a high school junior this year. He is the son of co-op members Josh and Heather Sinnwell, who live in Nashua. You can view his website at bit.ly/3qYnjAq.

Anne Gardiner is the public relations specialist for Butler County REC.

“It was a never-ending delight to see how happy and excited people were when they first turned on a switch and saw their own electric light.”

- Ernest Neal, Iowa farmer and co-op organizer in 1934, quoted in Butler County REC's Aug. 2011 newsletter



Caleb is pictured with his mom Heather Sinnwell (center) and teacher Suzan Turner.



Caleb's three National History Day National Contest medals.



PERFECT PORK RECIPES

BBQ PORK CHOPS

- 1 can tomato soup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon instant minced onion
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 6 pork chops

Combine first seven ingredients into a sauce. Brown chops on both sides, pour off excess fat. Pour sauce over chops. Cover and simmer for about 1 hour. *Serves 6*

Jane Fetter • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

BREAKFAST SOUFFLÉ

- 1½ pounds pork sausage
- 9 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3 cups milk
- 1½ teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 slices bread, crumbled
- 1½ cups cheese, shredded

Brown sausage and drain. Mix eggs, milk, mustard and salt. Stir in sausage, bread and cheese. Pour into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate covered overnight. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 8*

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

COUNTRY-STYLE RIBS

- 2½ pounds country-style pork ribs
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup Karo white corn syrup
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

Brown ribs in microwave for 1½-2 minutes on each side, depending on the size of your microwave, to pull off some of the grease before baking. Place ribs in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients into a sauce and pour over ribs. Bake covered at 325 degrees F for 1½ hours. *Serves 4*

Audra O'Neill • Wall Lake
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

GROUND PORK CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 pound cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 5 cloves garlic
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- noodles or rice

Brown pork, then add cabbage. Add remaining ingredients and cook for 5 minutes. Serve over noodles or rice.

Karen Wingert • Panama
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

PORK TACOS WITH PINEAPPLE SALSA

- 4-5 pounds boneless pork loin
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits
- ½ jalapeno pepper, chopped
- juice of half a lime
- ½ red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro
- 2 cups rice, cooked
- tortillas
- sour cream

Rub brown sugar, salt, pepper, paprika, oregano and red pepper flakes over pork loin. Bake covered at 250 degrees F for 4 hours. Shred meat. Combine pineapple, jalapeno, juice of half a lime, onion and cilantro to make a salsa. Serve pork, rice and salsa in tortillas with sour cream.

**Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

HAM ROLLS

- 2½ pounds ground ham
- 2½ pounds ground pork
- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 cups cracker crumbs
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 cans tomato soup, undiluted
- 2¼ cups brown sugar
- ¼ cup cider vinegar

Combine ham, pork, beef, cracker crumbs, eggs and milk. Mix and form into rolls or balls. Combine dry mustard, soup, brown sugar and cider vinegar into a sauce. Spoon sauce over ham rolls and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Rolls can be frozen either before or after baking. An alternative is to make into smaller rolls or balls and serve as an appetizer. *Serves 10-15*

**Jo Growth • Plainfield
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

SLOW COOKER HAM SLIDERS

- 2 boneless hams, thinly sliced
- 1 cup honey
- 2 cups brown sugar
- cheese slices
- 2 dozen slider buns

Set crockpot on low, spray with nonstick spray. Add ham, honey and brown sugar. Cook for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Layer ham and cheese slices of your choice on slider buns. *Serves 10*

**Nancy Hemann • Parkersburg
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

PORK CARNITAS

- 1½ tablespoons salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 pounds pork butt, cut into 4-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons cooking fat
- ½ medium onion, roughly chopped
- 1 cup water
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup green onions, sliced into ½-inch pieces
- juice of half a lime

Mix 1 tablespoon salt with pepper. Use mixture to season the pork butt evenly. Melt the cooking fat in a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the pork (be sure not to overcrowd) and brown all sides, 3-4 minutes per side. Remove pork from the pot and set aside. In the same pot, reduce heat to medium-low, add onion. Cook and stir for 4-5 minutes, until translucent. Add water, garlic, chili powder and cinnamon. Increase heat to medium-high, return the pork to the pot and bring to boil. Cover pot with a lid or tightly wrapped foil. Transfer to oven and bake at 350 degrees F for 2½ hours, turning the meat after each hour. Pork should be fork-tender when done. Transfer pork to a bowl and shred, discarding any excess fat. Incorporate cooking liquid from the pot, then add green onions and lime juice. Season with the remaining ½ tablespoon salt. *Serves 4-6*

**Amy Rudolph • Renwick
Boone Valley Electric Cooperative**

WANTED:

SOUP & STEW RECIPES

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

Deadline is Oct. 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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6 REASONS ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE GREAT PLACES TO WORK

BY PAUL WESSLUND AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

The electricity in your home can seem like an impossible miracle to explain. But one way to understand it is to think about the variety of skills and types of jobs it takes to make power happen.

That kind of thinking can also be handy if you or someone you know is looking for a promising career.

Running electric utilities today takes just about every skill imaginable. Some jobs call for the physical ability to climb a utility pole and for others, the technical know-how to create intricate

cybersecurity systems. Some require the interpersonal skills of talking with a co-op member about how they can lower their electric bill.

Other roles may require logistical knowledge to deliver essential equipment through a challenging supply chain.

An industry that depends on such a vast range of abilities offers job seekers a variety of career opportunities. Here are six reasons electric co-ops are a great place to work.



"I appreciate the co-op philosophy that focuses on the seven cooperative principles, keeping members first and foremost in all decision-making. These principles guide us in everything we do, and it reflects on the success of the electric cooperative business model since 1938. I am part of a community working here and can reach out to any other electric cooperative in Iowa with any questions. 'Iowa Nice' shines brightly working in electric cooperatives."

Jeni Kolsrud

IT Manager
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative

1 Stability. You can count on homes and businesses needing electricity now and in the future. Energy careers offer excellent benefits and paths for career advancement. Employees typically stay in the industry for more than 15 years.

2 Excitement. While utility work is reliable, it's also at the cutting edge of innovation. Electrification is the centerpiece of the push for greener energy. The number of electric vehicles is doubling every year, which means new workforce skills are needed to figure out how to keep all those cars and trucks plugged in and charged up. Two of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are wind turbine technician and solar voltaic installer. More than \$120 billion a year is being spent to modernize the U.S. electric grid to manage new patterns of electricity use.



"I've worked for the cooperative for 20 years. In this time, I have witnessed electricity become increasingly important to our daily lives, from improving basic health and well-being to facilitating services like online banking to ordering groceries. Cooperatives are dedicated to their member-consumers. We are always working to improve the reliability of our distribution system and serve our members."

Jason Gibbs

Manager of Member Services
Clarke Electric Cooperative



"The past 10 years working at the cooperative have been the most enjoyable of my working career. The opportunities to increase my knowledge and skills are invaluable. The atmosphere is like a family. Networking with my peers at other cooperatives has proven to be extremely helpful. Supporting our member-owners instead of working for 'customers' has been refreshing, and the cooperative principles, including concern for our communities, make us stand out."

Sarah Newton
Director of Finance/
Administrative Services
Southwest Iowa REC

3 Variety. The skills needed in the utility industry range from an advanced college degree to trade school, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. And the variety of positions is staggering – accountants, social media managers, IT specialists, engineers and human resources professionals, to name a few. There are more unique positions as well, such as drone operators to inspect power lines, data analysts to coordinate the flow of electricity and power plant operators to oversee electricity generation.

4 It's local. Maintaining electric service needs to happen locally. That means that much of the work takes place near your hometown. Not only can a utility worker make a living and raise a family in the area they choose to live, if they decide to move to another part of the country, there will likely be energy career opportunities there as well.

5 Satisfaction. Any lineworker will tell you when they've just climbed down from a pole in the middle of the night during a rainstorm, there's no better feeling than knowing the power outage you've just restored brought light and heat back into the homes of hundreds of people. The same goes for the utility truck dispatcher back at headquarters or the media specialist getting the word out about the status of power restoration. Utility workers can know they're powering their neighbors and the nation.



"I enjoy the variety of each day. I have satisfaction in helping members daily and with long-term planning for our cooperative. Co-op employees are usually long-standing, which means I can have long-term relationships with my co-workers."

John Endelman
Operations Manager
Butler County REC

6 Not-for-profit business model
The people behind the power at your electric co-op get to know even higher levels of job satisfaction. Electric co-ops offer a unique business model led by the members who use the electricity.

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.



"One of the reasons I like working for a co-op is the opportunity to work with a dedicated team with a common goal of improving our members' lives. It is also rewarding to see the positive results from the improvements we have made to our distribution system over the years."

Pat Hyland
System Controller
East-Central Iowa REC



"The best part of working in the cooperative world is being a part of a great team. Every job at my co-op is specialized, and every employee is committed to serving our members to the best of their ability. It's extremely satisfying to be a part of a dedicated and talented group of people who positively impact our local communities."

Nate Hopwood
IT Manager
T.I.P. REC



"I am honored to be able to work for an electric cooperative that serves the community in which I live. I love that decisions are made locally by a board of member-directors and that we are able to provide our members with safe and reliable power at the lowest possible price."

Katie Stadheim, PHR, SRM-CP
HR Director
East-Central Iowa REC

DON'T SACRIFICE SAFETY FOR SPEED DURING HARVEST

For many farmers, the harvest season is a flurry of activity with long hours and little rest. The pressure to harvest as much as possible – combined with fatigue and looming deadlines – can result in too little attention being paid to potential hazards. Safe practices should never be compromised for the sake of speed. Doing so could potentially end in tragedy.

Farmers and agricultural workers have dangerous occupations. One of the causes of injury and death in the agricultural industry is electrocution. Of those injuries, overhead power lines are the most common cause of electrocution.

Safety reminders

If you are a farm operator or worker, be aware of the location of power lines and keep the following safety guidelines in mind during the harvest season.

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Always keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperatively immediately.
- If your equipment hits a power line, do not leave the cab. Immediately call 911, warn others to stay away and wait for the utility crew to cut the power.



The only reason to exit equipment that has contacted overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire, which is very rare. However, if this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

To help ensure a safe harvest, stay alert for power lines, exercise caution and always put safety first.

MAKE FRIGHT NIGHT A DELIGHT



Halloween is one of the happiest holidays for kids and their parents. Don't let it turn into a frightening experience because of outdoor safety hazards at your home.

Welcome trick-or-treaters to your door by making your yard and porch safe to visit. Here's how:

Keep pets indoors. Those vampire and zombie costumes might not scare

you, but they can freak out dogs, cats and other furry family members. And a frightened animal might hiss, bite or scratch your little visitors. Seclude your pets in a quiet, comfortable part of the house where they can't see or hear the intruders. You'll do both pets and people a favor.

Keep it clean. Your yard, that is. Pick up rakes, power tools, tree branches and anything else that could either trip or tempt a witch or goblin. Clutter can cause trouble when children are traipsing through your yard.

Keep the lights on. Light up a walking path to your front door. This will direct the trick-or-treaters to the single spot at your house where you'd like them to be and offer them a safe way to get there. Before Oct. 31, replace all burned-out outdoor

lights and consider adding some more. If you don't have any pathway lights, consider placing glow sticks along the sidewalk and porch for the evening.

Keep your message clear. The best way to tell trick-or-treaters that you've run out of candy is to turn off all outdoor lights and most of the indoor ones. A dark house signals to take the party elsewhere.

Keep it simple. Homeowners decorate nearly as much for Halloween as they do for Christmas. If your display includes outdoor lights, choose products rated for safety by UL. If you don't see a UL mark on the box the lights come in, don't buy them. And every year, before hanging your outdoor decorations, check for damaged wires, which can cause a fire.

CELEBRATE THE COOPERATIVE WAY

The utility that keeps your lights and appliances humming along every day is a cooperative business, not a corporation.

Cooperatives are owned by the consumers who use their services: you and your neighbors. In fact, your electric cooperative doesn't ever refer to you as a "customer." Instead, everyone who works for a co-op knows you are a "member-owner."

Every October is Cooperative Month, when members from more than 29,000 cooperatives nationwide – including more than 900 electric cooperatives – celebrate their heritage.

To help celebrate, we want to share a little more about the way your electric cooperative does business. At our core, co-ops are not-for-profit, democratically controlled, volunteer-run and member-owned. That means we don't sell stock to out-of-state shareholders or let outsiders decide

what's best for our local member-owners.

And it means that any member-owner – including you – can run for election to the cooperative's board of directors. These democratically elected leaders hire the co-op manager and set policies for the utility. Even if you don't want to be a board member, you still can vote for the candidates you want to represent you on the board.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1 Cooperatives are owned and controlled by the people who buy their goods and use their services – their members – and any surplus revenues are returned to those member-owners. No other business form has this characteristic.
- 2 Co-op members directly and democratically elect their board of directors from within the membership.

3 Cooperatives are businesses that, by their very nature, are directly accountable to their member-owners. They are structured to ensure that the business serves only the best interests of its members.

4 A cooperative returns any margins, after bills are paid and money is set aside for operations and improvements, to the co-op members in the form of patronage dividends.

5 Co-op members benefit from better service, high-quality products, cost savings on products and services, and from their direct control of the co-op business.

6 According to a recent survey by the National Cooperative Business Association, more than two-thirds of Americans surveyed believe that the democratic business structure of cooperatives is more trustworthy and ethical than other types of business.



FALL IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR AN ENERGY CHECKLIST

The best time to ensure your house is ready for winter is before the cold weather arrives. Use this energy checklist to make the most of the fall season:

- Call a licensed, qualified heating technician to service your furnace or boiler.
- Change the filters in your heating system to ensure air can pass through and your heater will work efficiently during the winter.
- Caulk and weather strip around windows and doors to prevent heated air from leaking through cracks or gaps.
- Have a chimney sweep clean and inspect your wood-burning fireplace

before you light the first fire of the season.

- Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms before you use your gas or wood fireplace. Change their batteries.
- Replace the batteries in your digital or programmable thermostat before the heating season begins.

If you don't have a programmable thermostat, consider having one installed during your heating system inspection. It can help you save energy and money on your heating bill by automatically turning the heat down every day when you leave for work or go to bed.

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DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2023-2024 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

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

Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. The start date is Oct. 1, 2023, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply. To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$29,160
2	\$39,440
3	\$49,720
4	\$60,000
5	\$70,280
6	\$80,560
7	\$90,840
8	\$101,120

Note: For households with more than eight members, add \$10,280 for each additional member.

PRESERVING IOWA'S AWARD-WINNING CULINARY HISTORY

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I never know what to expect when I check my email. If you're like me, sometimes the inbox contains a reply (yeah!) from someone I'm trying to contact. There's also plenty of junk mail, but sometimes there's something interesting – and unexpected – like this:

Subject: 4-H Project

Date: May 30, 2023

Hello Ms. Darcy Dougherty Maulsby,

My name is Kathleen Mosher. I am a freshman in high school and a member of the ENP Bearcats 4-H club in Hardin County, Iowa. This year, I read your book, "A Culinary History of Iowa." After reading your book, I decided to cook my way through all of the recipes listed in the book and keep a journal of my progress as a 4-H project.

I am writing to ask if I have permission to display your book and use the recipes contained in the book for the 4-H project I described above? The book and project would be on display at our county fair in July at the Hardin County Fairgrounds.

Within minutes, I replied to Kathleen. "I think your 4-H project sounds terrific (what a creative idea!). You are certainly welcome to display my book and use the recipes for your 4-H project."

Hands-on experience builds confidence

This correspondence got me thinking about my own experiences as a member of the Lake Creek Go-Getters 4-H club, when I entered a variety of foods in the Calhoun County Expo each summer. These experiences expanded my culinary skills, but they also built my confidence.

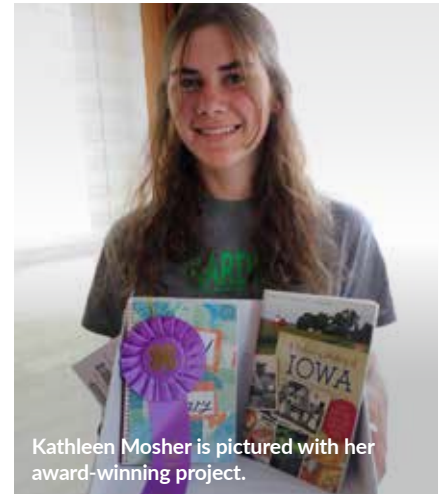
So did a college internship at Living History Farms during the summer of 1995. Clad in calico skirts, buttoned-up blouses and aprons sewn on a treadle sewing machine, I learned to milk cows by hand, transform homegrown vegetables into delicious side dishes, and bake bread and cookies in a wood-fired cookstove at the 1900 farm.

About halfway through that summer internship, my supervisor announced she was leaving for an appointment that morning and was putting me in charge of cooking the day's dinner for about eight staff members and volunteers at the 1900 farm. I panicked. "You'll be fine!" she shouted as the squeaky screen door clattered behind her.

During the next three hours, I discovered she was right. I got the meal cooked on time, and the hungry farmhands appreciated the food. My fear of "I can't" transformed into "I can." That's an attitude I've embraced far beyond the kitchen.

Cooking transcends time

Something unexpected also happened along the way. As I prepared the pot



Kathleen Mosher is pictured with her award-winning project.

roast, fresh lettuce salad, creamed peas, bread (with butter I had churned) and cake in that hot kitchen, I felt a connection with my Grandma Fern, who grew up on a farm in Webster County, and my Grandma Katherine, who grew up in West Point, Nebraska, in the early 1900s.

That's the amazing thing about cooking – it transcends time and brings people of all ages closer, especially when meals include treasured family recipes. But what happens when the cooks who knew these recipes (from kringla to kolaches) are gone?

That's a big part of why I wrote "A Culinary History of Iowa." I'm thrilled that Kathleen's 4-H project based on my book took top honors at the 2023 Hardin County Fair, plus it received a blue ribbon at the Iowa State Fair, along with the Outstanding Food and Nutrition Award.

Well done, Kathleen! If your efforts are any indication, young Iowans will help carry on our state's culinary traditions for years to come.

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





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Visit our website at www.rvec.coop

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