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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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ON THE COVER

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

owa Association of

Touchstone Energy® Cooperative ស

Electric Cooperatives

ENTER A DESERVING LOCAL VOLUNTEER IN OUR 2023 CONTEST

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



Songwriter Jana Stanfield once said, "I cannot do all the good that the world needs. But the world needs all the good that I can do."

We all know at least one person who lives by this credo and makes our neighborhood or community a better place to live. I encourage you to take a few moments this month to enter them in our 2023 statewide Shine the Light contest! Three nominees will ultimately receive \$2,500 donations to their local charities.

How to nominate a volunteer

Member-consumers and employees of lowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate a local volunteer at www.lowaShineTheLight.com during the month of June. (If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative, you are a memberconsumer!) In 500 words or less, tell us how your nominee is making a difference and how their local charity might use the donation. Our panel of judges will review all entries and select three winners this summer. We'll announce the winners after Labor Day and feature them in the September issue of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

Celebrating community commitment

Why is your power utility participating in this effort? Your electric cooperative is locally owned and governed by you, the members it serves, and is mission driven to improve quality of life. Your co-op is also guided by seven cooperative principles, including concern for community. Our annual Shine the Light contest is a fun way to celebrate the people who give back. Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$2,500 for their charity!

Contest entries accepted at IowaShineTheLight.com during the month of June



Time is running out, so make sure

to nominate someone by June 30

at www.lowaShineTheLight.com.

receive a \$2,500 donation to their

The person you nominate could

local charity!

Think of a neighbor, friend or family member who goes above and beyond to serve. These unsung heroes deserve recognition for their efforts, and this contest is a great way to show your appreciation.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win LED string lights!

Light up your backyard oasis with LED string lights. These warm white lights add flair and ambience to a porch, gazebo, fence, balcony and more. We're offering three sets of lights in this month's contest! The ETL-certified, high-efficiency bulbs save more than 90% energy versus other incandescent bulbs.

Visit our website and win!



ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than June 30, 2023. You must be a member of one of lowa'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 Smart Lock from the April issue was Dan Langel from North West REC.



YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

His job is dangerous enough. When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.





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RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP – PATRONAGE ALLOCATIONS

BY JIM GOSSETT



Member-owner economic participation is one of the seven cooperative principles followed by Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) and rural

electric cooperatives across the country. RVEC member-owners contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative.

As a member-owner of RVEC, you are accumulating equity in the co-op as you use electricity each year. Each memberowner has a patronage allocation account on file which tracks the equity accumulated each year. The cooperative is a not-for-profit organization, so when we experience additional income over expenses at the end of the year – referred to as margins – we allocate that extra money to our member-owners in relation to how much electricity they used during the year.

Allocation approved by the board

These funds are allocated to your patronage allocation account and returned to you over time when the board determines that it is financially feasible to do so. In March, the RVEC board approved the allocation of patronage from margins generated in 2022. The amount of patronage allocated to your accounts is reflected on the power bill you received in May.



If you have more than one account with RVEC, the total amount allocated for all your accounts will appear on the bill of one of your accounts.

In April, RVEC directors elected to make a one-time early retirement of a portion of the 2022 patronage allocation to the member-owners. Like the allocation, your share of this special retirement is calculated from the amount of kilowatt hours you purchased in 2022. Your payment of this retirement of patronage was mailed on June 1.

The cooperative difference

Allocation and retirement (return) of patronage to member-owners is an important difference between electric cooperatives and investorowned utilities. RVEC does not have stockholders and does not pay dividends.

It is the responsibility of your board of directors to set sound financial policy and the duty of management to properly care for the assets of RVEC. We are pleased to provide you, the member-owner, with these returns of equity in your cooperative.

If you have any questions, call our office at 712-659-3649 or for more information, visit the "Patronage Capital" section of our website at www.rvec. coop/patronage-capital-credits.

Jim Gossett is the CEO of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.

VIEW YOUR KWH USAGE AND PAY YOUR BILL

Save yourself some time. Go to www.rvec.coop and pay your bill online.

SHINING THE LIGHT ON COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN JUNE

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Iowa's electric co-ops are excited to participate in the statewide Shine the Light contest once again in June to celebrate local volunteers. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the contest will accept nominations in June and select three winners who will each receive a \$2,500 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

"We've been truly inspired by the contest entries we received in our first two years," says Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. "We're increasing our three charity donations from \$2,000 to \$2,500 each this year to encourage even more participation across the state."

Member-consumers and employees of lowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers during the month of June. If you receive electricity from Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, you're a co-op member-owner and we encourage you to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-owner. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians.

The three winners will be announced in September and featured in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Go to www.lowaShineTheLight.com to review contest rules. Contest entries will be accepted at this website until June 30. Help us shine the light on community volunteers this summer and consider making a nomination.



Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$2,500 for their charity!

Contest entries accepted at IowaShineTheLight.com during the month of June



NOO-VING TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

BY ANGELA CATTON

As the demand for sustainable agriculture practices and renewable energy continues to grow, many livestock producers are considering methane digesters to benefit their operations and communities.

The Van Ess family of northwest Iowa is incorporating methane digester technology to expand and diversify their operations. The Van Esses currently operate two Iowa dairies – a 6,000-head dairy in Sanborn and a 4,000-head dairy, known as Legacy Dairy, in Osceola County.

"We are committed to promoting sustainable practices, green energy technology and being good stewards of the environment," says Jeremy Van Ess, who manages the dairies along with his parents, Harvey and Lisa, and his four brothers Josh, Chad, Tyler and Todd. "We do whatever we can to create local jobs and improve the overall environmental conditions for our neighbors." The Van Esses came to Iowa from Idaho in 2008 to establish Van Ess Dairy and, 10 years later, expanded operations to include Legacy Dairy. The dairies and a 3,300-acre farming operation are overseen by 65 employees, not including family members. Two Iowa electric cooperatives serving their facilities, North West REC and Osceola Electric Cooperative, were instrumental in bringing the Van Ess family to northwest Iowa thanks to economic development partnerships and reliable and affordable power.

What are methane digesters? Methane digesters, also known as anaerobic digesters (ADs), are biogas technologies that convert organic waste, such as animal manure, into energy. By capturing and utilizing methane emissions, farmers can operate more sustainably, manage waste and generate additional income from the sale of fertilizers, biogas or electricity. This cow is one of nearly 10,000 Van Ess dairy cows that play an essential role in sustainable agricultural practices and renewable energy production.

There are several types of methane digesters, including batch digesters, continuous digesters and covered lagoons. The Van Ess Dairy and its sister operation, Legacy Dairy, will operate continuous digesters on each site, with two 2.8 million gallon capacity reactor tanks in the Sanborn location and a single 3.3 million gallon tank at the Osceola location. The digesters are anticipated to come online in the coming months.

Feeding the digestors

Sand bedding is commonly used to provide a cool and comfortable place for livestock to rest. Soiled bedding must be scraped regularly from the barns and replaced with clean, dry bedding. The removed material is mixed with water and transported through a sand separator, which uses a mechanical process to separate the sand from the manure. The sand settles to the bottom of the separator, while the liquids are diverted away, typically to lagoons. The sand is washed, dried and recycled as bedding free of harmful bacteria, contributing to overall animal health.

When incorporated with the methane digester system, the organic waste material is diverted through a channel system into the tank reactors, heated to approximately 100 degrees F, and stirred for about 30 days. During this time, the anaerobic bacteria break down the organic material, producing methane gas and a nutrient-rich liquid called digestrate. The methane gas rises to the top of the digester, is pressurized and then blown through underground piping to various injection sites. That gas, known as renewable natural gas (RNG), can be used for energy production. The Van Ess Dairy and Legacy Dairy locations will supply enough RNG to heat approximately 2,700 homes.

The digestrate is pumped to the lagoons and used as fertilizer. Because the anaerobic process removes much of the methane gasses from the organic material, what enters the lagoons has a lower odor content than lagoons containing waste that has not undergone the AD process.

The Van Ess family applies their digestrate to their crops, producing animal feedstock.

"We are a closed-loop process," Jeremy explains. "Our livestock produce milk that we sell for dairy products like milk and cheese. Our cows also generate organic waste materials, which, in turn, help to power our operations and improve crop yields. And the cycle continues around and around."

The Van Esses take great pride in their environmental commitment and sustainable operating practices. For the family, the benefits of technology to their operational goals far outweigh any challenges it presents. They look forward to the journey toward reaching net-zero status while contributing to reducing greenhouse gases through organically produced renewable energy that serves the needs of northwest lowa for generations.

Angela Catton is the manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative. Harvey Ven Ess noint

Harvey Van Ess points to one of two 2.8 million gallon reactor tanks being constructed at Van Ess Dairy.



Stanchions allow Van Ess Dairy cows to graze on one side and lounge on soft sand bedding on the other.

A HERD OF BENEFITS

Benefits to livestock producers Some challenges are associated with implementing methane digesters, such as high initial costs. Still, the potential benefits make them an attractive option for many farmers. For the Van Ess family, the cost of the digesters is not subsidized by taxpayers but through a partnership with Brightmart RNG Holdings LLC in a joint venture with Chevron U.S.A. Inc. Working with energy development partners like **Brightmart and Chevron eliminates** the financial commitment by the Van Ess family, allowing them to focus on the overall benefits to their dairy and farming operation.

Environmental benefits

Methane digesters can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by capturing methane, a potent greenhouse gas produced during the decomposition of organic waste. By capturing methane and using it as a fuel, farmers can reduce their environmental impact and contribute to a more sustainable future.

"As an industry, dairy producers are committed to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, or sooner. Incorporating methane digesters into livestock operations is a solid step toward reaching that goal," Jeremy says.

Reduced waste management costs

Livestock farms generate large amounts of manure and bedding material. Disposing of this waste can be costly, especially if it has to be transported off-site. Bedding may be cleaned and recycled through the sand separation process while the organic matter is converted into methane for energy production and a natural, lower-odor soil enhancement.

Revenue diversification

Methane digesters allow their operators to diversify revenues by selling valuable



Harvey Van Ess and his family rely on their cooperatives for reliable and affordable power. Van Ess chats with North West REC member energy advisor Brent Van Beek.

byproducts. Farmers can generate additional income from selling biogas or electricity by capturing and utilizing methane emissions. The solids and liquids that produce the biogas create a nutrient-rich, organic fertilizer that is a popular, lower-odor alternative to synthetic fertilizers to improve soil health and crop yields.



CALICO BEANS

- 1/2 pound bacon
- ¹/₂ cup onions
- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 1 15-ounce can lima beans, drained
- 1 15-ounce can pork and beans, drained
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained
- ¹/₂ cup ketchup
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- ⅔ cup brown sugar
- ¹∕₃ cup sugar

Brown bacon and crumble. Brown onions in bacon drippings. Mix ground beef, bacon and onions in a 2½-quart casserole dish or a slow cooker. Add beans, ketchup, dry mustard, vinegar, brown sugar and sugar. Stir and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour or for 2 hours in a slow cooker. If desired, add ham or sausage to ground beef. Serves 12

> Karla Cose • Glidden Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

MACARONI SALAD

- 1 pound macaroni
- 1 red or green pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 carrots, shredded
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 16-ounce package cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup vinegar Add garnishes (tomatoes, parsley), if desired

Cook macaroni and drain. Mix with green pepper, onion, carrots, celery and cheddar cheese. Use less cheese if desired. Make a dressing by mixing mayonnaise, sugar, sweetened condensed milk, salt, pepper and vinegar. Pour dressing over salad and chill. Stir before serving.

Cindy Snider • Seymour Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

ITALIAN BEEF FOR A CROWD

- 25 pounds arm or chuck roast
- 5 packets Italian dressing mix
- 1/4 cup oregano
- ¼ cup garlic powder
- 2 jars pepperoncini buns
 - cheese

For one roaster, cut roast into 1-pound chunks. Add dressing mixes, oregano, garlic powder and pepperoncini. Cook at 225 degrees F for 14 hours. Shred and serve with buns, au jus and cheese. *Serves* 75

Anna Domnick

Rock Rapids

Lyon REC

FESTIVE SALAD

- 1 large bunch Romaine lettuce
- 1 red apple
- 1 pear
- 6 green onions
- 34 cup cashews
- 34 cup craisins
- 34 cup feta cheese, optional
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¹⁄₄ cup vinegar
- ¹/₂ cup canola oil (or preferred oil)
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds

Cut up lettuce. Cut apple, pear and onions into bite-size pieces. Mix lettuce, apple, pear, onions, cashews, craisins and feta cheese, if desired. Set salad aside. Make a dressing by mixing sugar, lemon juice, mustard, vinegar, oil and poppy seeds. Add dressing to salad mixture right before serving. *Serves* 8-10

Cindy Tripp • Panora • Guthrie County REC

SUNSHINE JELL-O SALAD

- 1 3-ounce package orange Jell-O
- 1 3-ounce package cherry Jell-O
- 1 3-ounce package lime Jell-O
- 4 cups boiling water, divided
- 3½ cups cold water, divided
 - 1 3-ounce package lemon Jell-O
 - 4 cups whipped topping

Prepare orange, cherry and lime Jell-O flavors separately by dissolving each package in 1 cup boiling water and then adding 1 cup cold water. Pour each flavor into a separate 8-inch square pan. Chill to firm. Once firm, cut into ½-inch cubes. Set aside a few cubes of each flavor for garnish. Dissolve lemon Jell-O in 1 cup boiling water and then add ½ cup cold water. Chill until slightly thickened. Blend in whipped topping. Mix in orange, cherry and lime Jell-O cubes, except those set aside for garnish. Put Jell-O mixture in a glass bowl. Garnish with reserved cubes on top. Chill until firm. *Serves 16*

Sonya Colvin • Ames • Consumers Energy

CHOCOLATE-FILLED CUPCAKES

- 2½ cups unsifted flour
- 2½ cups sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ⅓ cup cocoa
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon plus a pinch of salt, divided
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 cup hot tap water
- 2 eggs, slightly stirred
- 1 cup coconut oil, melted
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- ¹∕₃ cup whole milk
- 1 cup butter, softened, divided
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4¼ cups powdered sugar, divided
 - 2 egg whites, stiffly beaten
- ½ teaspoon almond, orange or hazelnut extract

Sift together flour, 2 cups sugar, baking powder, cocoa and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Dissolve baking soda in hot water. Then, in a separate bowl, mix dissolved baking soda together with eggs, coconut oil, buttermilk and 1 teaspoon vanilla. You may substitute the buttermilk with 1 cup whole milk mixed with 1 teaspoon white vinegar. Pour batter into paper-lined muffin tins, filling $\frac{2}{3}$ full. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Cool completely before filling cupcake centers.

For filling, mix ½ cup sugar, whole milk, ²/₃ cup butter, ¼ teaspoon salt, water and ½ teaspoon vanilla. Beat for 7 minutes or until very smooth. Add ¾ cup powdered sugar and beat 3-5 more minutes. Stuff the filling into a cake decorator tube and fill each cupcake in the center until you are just able to see the filling peek out. Take a frosting knife and scrape off any excess filling.

For frosting, cream together 1³/₄ cups powdered sugar and ¹/₃ cup butter. Add the beaten egg whites remaining, 1³/₄ cups powdered sugar, pinch of salt, ¹/₂ teaspoon vanilla and either almond, orange, hazelnut or any preferred flavor. Beat until smooth. Use a frosting decorator or knife to frost the cupcakes. Store in refrigerator. Keeps well for two to three days or longer in a freezer. *Makes* 12-18 cupcakes

WANTED:

PORK RECIPES

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

Deadline is June 30

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com (Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

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



THREE SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Americans are more energy efficient than you might think. And you may also be surprised to learn that we can do even better with some innovative thinking and by controlling hidden power users.

Electricity touches our lives nearly every minute of every day, making up about 5% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). So, it makes sense to use it wisely, whether you're concerned about how it affects the environment or you want to save money – or both.

Here are three surprising facts about energy efficiency that can help you make the best use of your electricity.

PROOF OF EFFICIENCY

A little-known way of measuring efficiency performance is with a statistic called the "energy intensity index." It shows how much energy it takes to produce a dollar of the economy's GDP. Another term that's been used for that idea is "energy productivity."

Whichever term you use, the indexes show that Americans are getting better at creating more economic activity with less energy – energy intensity is down and productivity is up. Way up.

The numbers show that energy intensity is about half what it was 30 years ago. That's because we're making strides in a range of ways, from building codes to light bulbs to motor vehicle mileage. And these improvements are expected to continue. The Department of Energy projects energy intensity will decline by 30% over the next 30 years.

2 OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

The old phrase "you have to spend money to make money" is catchy because, at first, it sounds like it doesn't make sense. But when it comes to appliances that consume a lot of energy, it can make dollars and sense.

From dishwashers to computers, energy efficiency is improving dramatically every year as technology, federal rules and plain old competition give you a better bang for your buck. In fact, if your refrigerator or dishwasher is more than 10 years old, the money you can save on energy use for a new appliance could pay for itself in just a few years.

The yellow Energy Guide labels found on products at your appliance store will tell you how much you can save with a new purchase. Another way to compare the old to the new is to search "flip your fridge" on Google or another online search engine. It will take you to an ENERGY STAR® calculator that will compare the energy use of your current appliances to what's available in stores.

3 SLAYING VAMPIRES

Did you know you could be spending \$100 to \$400 a year on energy you don't even need? That frightening fact even comes with scary names-phantom power or vampire electronics. It's the TV and video game console that draw power so they're ready to turn on instantly. It's the digital clocks. It's the computers and phones plugged in even though they're fully charged.

Getting rid of phantom power can be tricky. You probably don't want to regularly shut off your wireless router or constantly reboot your smart TV. But you can plug several devices into a power strip and turn them off when they are not being used. Or smart power strips are available that will do that for you. When you're shopping for new electronics and appliances, look for the latest ENERGY STAR®-rated models that take vampire loads into account. It is also worthwhile to take a notepad through each room of your home and list anything that's plugged in. This helps you figure out which energy users you might be able to control without causing too much inconvenience.

Phantom power costs do add up, but it's also true that your home has much bigger energy users. If you're concerned about energy costs, ensure your heating and cooling system is up to date and working efficiently, and your windows and doors aren't leaking air.

Your electric co-op can advise you on the most effective steps for energy savings. After all, they're your local leading authority on home energy use. And that's no surprise.

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.



Phantom power is energy consumed by electronics and appliances when they're in standby mode but not being used. Photo Source: Louis Poitras

The latest energy intensity index shows that we're getting better at creating more economic activity with less energy. Energy intensity is down, and productivity is up. Photo Source: Peter Magera

KEEP COOL THIS SUMMER

There's no need to lose your cool when you get your summer electric bill during the hottest days of the year. Instead, try some alternatives to cranking up the air conditioning when the sun is blazing, and it hasn't rained in days.

1. Install a dehumidifier. If the indoors feels as humid as the outdoors, there's too much water in the inside air. If you see water dripping out of the air conditioner or if you must set it so low that you're freezing just to make the humidity level feel comfortable, a dehumidifier will help.

2. Cook outdoors or eat cold food. Salads, raw veggies and fruit make great summer meals. And best of all,

INVEST IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY THIS SUMMER

If you're remodeling your kitchen or adding a room to your house this summer, take the opportunity to make your home more energy efficient.

Energy improvements aren't inexpensive, but they pay off in a big way. First, they can lower your cooling bill during the summer and your heating bill when it's cold outside. Second, energy-efficient products will make your home feel more comfortable. And third, they will add value to your home when you're ready to sell it.

Here are five worthwhile energysaving home improvements:

1. Outdoor window shades. Shade screens and awnings keep the sun from beaming directly through your home's windows and into air-conditioned rooms. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimates that placing shades on they don't require you to turn on the stove or oven, which can make the air in the kitchen too warm. Instead, gather the family for a barbecue and fire up the outdoor grill or serve a cold buffet on extra-hot evenings.

3. Hang bright curtains. Red, orange and yellow tend to deflect heat, so for curtains, those colors are energy efficient. Closing the curtains or blinds during the day will keep sun rays from heating up the home you're trying to keep cool. Or install solar screens or a window tint to let in the light but keep out the heat.

4. Run fans. Ceiling fans whose blades turn counterclockwise pull heat up from the room and send a soft breeze

south-facing windows reduces solar heat gain by up to 65% and 77% on west-facing panes.

2. Whole-house fan. Installed in your attic, this enormous fan pulls cool air in through open windows around the house and then forces hot air out through attic vents. When you run the fan, open windows on opposite sides of the house and you'll enjoy a cool cross breeze as your home airs out. The DOE says a house fan can cut your air conditioning bill by up to 5%.

3. Attic insulation. Even if your attic has plenty of insulation, it's likely that it has moved out of place over the years. Insulation is effective only when it touches the surface that it is supposed to cover. If it droops or falls, it's not working correctly. Reattach insulation and add more in places where the original application has thinned out.

4. Energy-efficient air conditioner. The older your air conditioner is, the harder it's working to keep your home cool. Newer models are designed to cool your home more efficiently. In fact, you can save up to 10% on cooling bills if you replace an inefficient air down, so anybody nearby will feel cooler. Portable electric fans placed in windows facing outward can suck heat out of a room on days when you want to give your air conditioner a break.

5. Run your dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer after dark. Appliances that use heat to operate also throw some heat into the rooms where they are located. So run these appliances during the coolest part of the day – after the sun goes down.

conditioning system with a model approved by Energy Star.

5. Sealed ductwork. The ductwork attached to the air conditioning system leaks in most homes. Next time you have an HVAC tech conduct routine maintenance, have those ducts inspected and sealed. You can knock up to 25% off your cooling costs if ducts are sealed properly. Note that sealing ductwork is different from cleaning it. Sealing is the key to energy savings.

> TH OFJUE The Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative office will be closed Tuesday, July 4. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday!

STAY SAFE DURING THE FOURTH OF JULY

Make your Independence Day celebrations safe for your family by following some common-sense rules for celebrating with and near electricity.

- 1. Keep fireworks far away from overhead power lines. If fireworks are legal in your community and you choose to set them off yourself, keep them at least 10 feet away from power lines and 35 feet away from high-voltage wires.
- 2. Keep an eye on your grill. Whether it's electric, gas or charcoal, do not leave a hot grill unattended, even for a few minutes. The intense grill heat can easily harm children or pets. Plus, if flames are involved, you need to be close by in case the fire gets out of control. Cooking accidents are the leading cause of house fires.
- **3. Don't overload power cords.** If you need an extension cord to plug in your grill or another cooking appliance, do not use that cord on more than one device at a time. And do not plug extension cords



into each other; they're not designed to be strung together. They can overheat and cause a fire.

- **4. Stay away from water sources.** Keep the grill, blender, TV and other appliances away from the pool and from all water sources. Even if you're a safe distance away from the water, unplug the appliance as soon as you're finished using it.
- **5. Have a working fire extinguisher.** Keep a working fire extinguisher on hand, and make sure you're familiar with how to use it.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SELECTED

Seven members were elected to serve on the Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) 2023 nominating committee. The purpose of the committee is to nominate members to serve on RVEC's board of directors.

District 1	Kyler Oswald
District 2	Dennis McCartan
District 3	Jeremiah Johnson
District 4	Louis Tigges Jr
District 5	Dale Wernimont
District 6	Raasch Farms / Carol Raasch
District 7	Keith Kenny

JOINT MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE

Joint memberships are allowed for Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) member-owners according to provisions in the cooperative's Articles of Incorporation. Please read the following questions and answers to consider if you and your spouse should consider a joint membership.

Q: What are the advantages of a joint membership?

A: With a joint membership, either spouse is eligible to serve on the RVEC board of directors or the nominating committee. Either one may vote at a cooperative Annual Meeting.

Q: Does a joint membership entitle both the spouses to a vote at a cooperative Annual Meeting?

A: No. A membership, whether single or joint, has one vote. Either spouse may cast the vote, but the joint membership has only one vote.

Q: What happens to the patronage dividends if either spouse dies with a joint membership?

A: If spouses hold a joint membership and one of the two dies, the membership is considered to be held by the survivor. Ownership assignment of the patronage is transferred to the surviving spouse. In the case of a single membership, if the member dies, the surviving spouse must take out a new membership in their own name. The patronage is paid out to the deceased spouse's estate and is not assigned to the surviving spouse's new membership.

Forms to change your membership are available at the RVEC office. Look at the name on your electric bill to see if you have a single or joint membership. Please call if you would like more information about RVEC membership.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR GENERATING POWER

BY JENNAH DENNEY



Offshore wind farms provide many of the same benefits as land-based wind farms, including renewable energy production for domestic use and creating new employment opportunities. Photo Source: Nina Ali



The ways electric cooperatives power communities have changed over time. These changes will continue as advantageous economic conditions and technological innovation keep moving the nation's electric grid toward increased use of renewable energy sources.

The electric grid's efficacy and durability depend on several sources of power generation, and electric co-ops have invested in cutting-edge technologies to meet and predict consumermembers' energy needs. Your electric cooperative continuously monitors new technologies, develops strategies for adapting to them, and shares best practices with fellow co-ops.

Several revolutionary technologies for creating electricity are reshaping the future of power generation. The following are a few that are currently on electric co-ops' radars.

Offshore wind

Offshore wind farms provide many of the same benefits as land-based wind farms. And because the ocean provides more than enough space to install several turbines, offshore wind is positioned miles out at sea, barely visible from the land and away from sea routes and ecologically sensitive areas.

Often wind speeds offshore are higher than on land. The wind is stronger, steadier and less turbulent than on land. Slight changes in wind speed result in substantial improvements in energy production. For example, a turbine operating in winds of 15 mph can produce twice as much energy as one operating in winds of 12 mph.

Battery energy storage

Of course, renewable energy solutions have their challenges. We need electricity around the clock, yet we don't have sunlight and wind 24 hours a day. This means we need greater investments in energy storage projects to leverage electricity created through renewable sources. Energy storage will play an essential role in enabling the grid to be more flexible and resilient.

Energy storage is expected to expand significantly in 2023, following robust growth in 2022. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, developers and power plant owners plan to increase utility-scale battery storage capacity in the U.S. nearly fourfold in the next three years, reaching 30 gigawatts (GW) by the end of 2025.

Small nuclear

Nuclear energy has been a source of power generation for a long time, constituting approximately 15% of the fuel mix for 661 electric co-ops in the U.S. In total, 93 commercial nuclear reactors are operational in 28 states.

Many in the industry are keeping an eye on the development of a new wave of nuclear power plants that may be on the horizon, known as small modular reactors (SMRs).

SMRs can generate carbon-free, reliable baseload power on a footprint comparable to that of a conventional coal-fired power plant. SMRs currently being developed in the U.S. come in various sizes, technological options, capabilities and deployment situations. These advanced reactors, ranging in size from 10 to 300 megawatts (MW), can be used for power generation, to process heat, desalination and other industrial applications. SMRs also provide numerous other benefits, including lower capital expenditures, siting flexibility and the capacity for additional power expansions.

As our nation's energy sources continue to shift, electric co-ops remain committed to exploring the best sources and technologies for their local communities and the consumermembers they serve.

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

SAVOR THE JOY OF IMPERFECTION

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Do you ever wonder why some life lessons take so long to learn? For me, one of those lessons has been progress, not perfection.

When I was a kid, this was the time of year I should have been working hard to prepare my many 4-H fair projects for the Calhoun County Expo. Oh sure, I took care of my pigs daily, but some of my cooking entries and other fair projects always seemed to become lastminute, mad-dash scrambles.

As odd as it sounds, I wasn't procrastinating because I was lazy. It was because I was afraid my work wouldn't be good enough. If it wasn't perfect and if I didn't get a blue ribbon (or qualify for the Iowa State Fair), my efforts were wasted – or so I thought. My parents didn't raise me to be a perfectionist. For some reason, though, I put all that ridiculous pressure on myself.

A contest "date"

That's why the perfectionist in me was shocked when my friend David Tallman from Cherokee recently shared a humorous story with me. A number of years ago, his mother encouraged him to enter a *Taste of Home* magazine cooking contest sponsored by the *Cherokee Times* newspaper. The rules specified that each recipe had to include Dromedary dates. David wasn't interested, but his mom persisted.

On a lark, he decided to doctor up a cornbread mix. In addition to following the directions on the box, he mixed in a can of chopped green chilies, an 8-ounce bag of shredded taco cheese and a box of chopped dates. Then he poured the batter into cast iron pans shaped like ears of corn.

He found an attractive wicker basket and lined it with corn-themed fabric and clear plastic wrap. He arranged a dozen date/cornbread sticks in the basket, along with individual packets of jelly and honey, and dropped his contest entry off at the local newspaper office.



"My dad was an administrative dietician, and he always said if your food is unappealing to the eye, no one will want to eat it," David says. "I kept that in mind."

Would you believe David won first prize? His award included a case of chopped Dromedary dates and an imitation pewter, daily-bread-themed plate.

"Even months later, women would congratulate me on my winning recipe," he says. "Their husbands loved it whenever they made that date/cornbread."

Ironically, some contest organizers seemed a little miffed that a man had won. No one bothered to take David's photo for the newspaper – not until three days after the big event.

"I felt that since they didn't bother to take my picture the day of the contest, the prizes didn't mean much to me – plus, I'd made up the recipe as a prank anyway," David says. "I gave the plate to my niece and nephew to encourage them to become good cooks. It worked! My nephew became a certified chef, and my niece is a fantastic home cook."

A taste of success

An avid home cook myself, I knew I needed to try making date/cornbread sticks. My perfectionist tendency reared its ugly head, though. Oh no – the sticks weren't releasing cleanly from the pan. Did I bake them long enough? Why am I such an incompetent person?

But then I took a bite and savored the wisdom of "progress, not perfection." It's amazing how chopped dates, taco cheese and chilies elevate boxed cornbread mix into a gourmet creation – even if my cornbread didn't look contest-worthy. As David would say, "Who knew it would actually taste so good!"

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



Scan the QR code for the recipe or visit bit.ly/3MdUInf.



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