

● OCTOBER 2025

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



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Happy National Co-op Month**

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Judy Godby, a Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

THE POWER OF PRINT IN A DIGITALLY DRIVEN WORLD

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



If I asked you to share a communication trend you've observed in society over the past five years, you'd probably talk

about an increase in video content or an increase in time spent viewing screens.

While these observations are both true, there's another truth that's also worth noting: printed communication really stands out in an increasingly digital world. This is an important reason why your local electric cooperative invests in mailing a printed magazine to you each month as a way to keep you informed. In fact, keeping members educated and informed is one of our seven co-op principles.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, which publishes *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine on behalf of our subscribing member cooperatives, conducted a scientific readership survey in April. We were pleased that 1,071 member-consumers of electric co-ops responded to our email invitation and anonymously completed online surveys. They shared their content preferences, some basic demographic data and level of agreement with cooperative-minded statements. We conducted a similar survey back in 2020, which allows us to analyze trends within a five-year period for additional insight. Here are two main findings:

1 In the past five years, there has been an increase in overall readership of the magazine. In 2020, 87% of our respondents said they read the magazine each month, compared to 89% in 2025. This is an

incredible statistic when you consider how video content and screen time in general have grown significantly in that same timeframe. Almost 9 out of 10 people who receive our magazine read it; we wouldn't get open rates remotely close to this if we delivered magazine content in a digital format.

2 Readers are spending more time with the magazine compared to five years ago.

Back in 2020, 44% of those who received the magazine told us they spent more than 10 minutes reading it each month. Five years later, that number has increased to 52% of our readers! As we develop long-form stories explaining complicated industry concepts, it's reassuring to know that our readers will take the time to process the information.

Increased readership and engagement would not have happened without the hard work of our capable editor, Ann Foster Thelen. Ann works

diligently to include stories on safety, energy efficiency, industry trends and co-op news in every issue while also keeping the magazine engaging with recipes and our monthly prize contest. We also attribute the stellar 2025 survey results to our magazine rebrand four years ago, which now showcases our reader-submitted photos of rural Iowa life on the front cover and draws readers in with a cleaner design and layout.

The purpose of publishing this magazine is to keep member-consumers and other stakeholders of Iowa's electric cooperatives informed. For less than the cost of a first-class postage stamp, we are able to edit, design, print and mail 16 pages of meaningful content to you each month. Thank you for spending time with us!

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A LODGE CAST IRON SKILLET SET!

Win a seven-piece cast iron skillet set. The heavyweight skillets and griddle in this set provide exceptionally even heating, so foods sear, brown and cook beautifully. The set includes: 8-inch and 10¾-inch skillets, 10½-inch diameter griddle, 6-inch square red silicone potholder, red silicone handle cover, red pan scraper, and black silicone grill-pan scraper.

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 Igloo ice maker from the August issue was **Shirley Smith**, an **Access Energy Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

POWERED BY PROGRESS: HAPPY NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

BY MICHAEL GEERDES



This month, electric cooperatives across the country celebrate National Co-op Month and reflect on the unique advantages of

being part of a cooperative. It's also the perfect time to thank you – the members who make it all possible. For us, it's not just a celebration. It's a chance to reaffirm the values that guide everything we do.

As the general manager of Grundy County REC, I see purpose in action every single day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our co-op doesn't exist to make profits for distant shareholders. We exist to serve you – our members, our neighbors and our communities. That purpose is

what sets us apart. It's why we were founded, and it's what continues to drive every decision we make.

Local accountability matters

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the very heart of our business model. Members have a voice in how our co-op operates. You elect board members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away; they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability means we can stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

We do that by investing in essential infrastructure upgrades and technologies that strengthen our local grid and improve electric service. We work hard to manage costs and keep rates as low as possible because we know how much rising prices affect families and small businesses in our area. And when storms hit or outages occur, our crews are here and ready to respond quickly, because we live here, too.

But our commitment doesn't end at the power lines.

Concern for community, planning for the future

Co-ops were built to meet community needs, and that purpose extends well beyond delivering electricity. Whether we're supporting local schools, sponsoring youth programs, partnering with volunteer organizations or offering student opportunities, we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life in the places we serve. Community support isn't an afterthought – it's part of who we are.

We're also planning for the future. As electricity demand grows due to new technologies and economic development, electric co-ops are working to ensure we continue to meet those needs with a balanced, reliable energy mix. We know our members care about affordability and dependability, and we're committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

This National Co-op Month, I encourage you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer – you're an owner, a stakeholder, and a vital part of a larger effort to keep our community strong, connected and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative.

Michael Geerdes is the general manager of Grundy County REC.



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Call our office 24/7: 319-824-5251

General Manager: Michael Geerdes

Officers and Directors:

- District 1: Kevin Pruisner
- District 2: Norbert Boyle
- District 3: Nick Strohhahn
- District 4: Larry Rohach
- District 5: Matt Kopriva
- District 6: Roger Brown
- District 7: Jason Paper

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Return the coupon below for a chance to win Grundy County REC swag, bill credits and more!

Q: Why do you love being a member of Grundy County REC? _____

Name: _____

Service address: _____

2025 ANNUAL MEETING RESULTS

Last month, more than 300 members came out to engage with Grundy County REC and participate in the 2025 annual meeting and director elections.

Director election results

- District 1:** Kevin Pruisner, incumbent re-elected
- District 5:** Matt Kopriva, incumbent (ran unopposed)
- District 7:** Jason Paper, incumbent (ran unopposed)

Board reorganization meeting results

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| President: Kevin Pruisner | Treasurer: Matt Kopriva |
| Vice President: Norb Boyle | Assistant Secretary/
Treasurer: Jason Paper |
| Secretary: Roger Brown | |

Annual meeting prize winners

Yeti cooler bundle:

Earl & Jeanette Slinker

Gift cards:

\$500 Great Wolf Lodge:

Adam & Heather Harms

\$10 Joyful Java:

Abby Pruisner
Shane Metz
Allen Hansen
Phyllis Boelts
Carol Ellis
Angela Bell
Dale Akkerman
Curt & Verlene Petersen
Warren Lucas
Ryan Noteboom

\$10 South Porch Cider:

Robert Murra
David Hummel
Walt Miller
Wanda Christensen
Richard & Chris Ruzicka
Brittany Liekweg
David Kerlin
Brendon Luhning
Steve Fevold
Bruce Morrison

Stay tuned to the November edition for more updates from the 2025 annual meeting.

HELPING MEMBERS IN NEED

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative has always extended a helping hand to those needing it. In response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your rural electric cooperative has established RECare, a program of members helping members.

RECare provides funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and assist in the weatherization of low-income consumers' homes.

You may make a monthly pledge that will be automatically added to your electric bill – even just a dollar a month – or a one-time contribution to help others.



RECare Consumer Authorization Form

I would like to make a (check one):

- One-time contribution of \$ _____
- Monthly contribution of \$ _____ (That will be added to my bill)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip Code _____

Phone # _____

Email _____

Account # (if known) _____

Return to Grundy County REC
303 N Park Avenue • P.O. Box 39
Grundy Center, IA 50638

GRUNDY COUNTY REC RECEIVES AWARD

The Grundy County REC linemen accepted the 2025 Meritorious Service Award on behalf of the co-op during the 2025 Grundy County Fair. Andrea Traeger with the Grundy County Extension Office said, "Their dedication to supporting youth is outstanding. Grundy County REC has been a partner with the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, hosted by Grundy County Extension, for over 22 years. They have continued to increase their partnership by becoming a part of the planning committee and sending at least two or three staff members to



present at Safety Day each year. The co-op has offered support in other areas of youth programming in the past, and we look forward to our continued partnership. We are very thankful for their support and enthusiasm when it comes to educating youth."



WHAT SETS CO-OPS APART FROM OTHER POWER PROVIDERS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

No matter where you travel across the U.S., you'll always find a place to plug in your phone charger. From the East Coast and Pacific Northwest to small towns in the Sonoran Desert, the familiar wall socket delivers electricity wherever you go. But while the power itself may be consistent, the organizations behind it often are not.

Throughout the U.S., electricity is delivered through three types of power providers: investor-owned utility companies (IOUs), public power systems (also known as municipal utilities) and electric power cooperatives. Two-thirds of American homes and businesses receive their electricity through an IOU. Public power companies serve 15% and co-ops deliver power to 13% of the nation's consumers.

Different types of power providers

When business and homeowners talk about their electric service, most simply credit the "power company" that issues the monthly bill for the kilowatt-hours they've used. Although the three types share many characteristics, how they operate – and how that affects the users of the power they deliver – is strikingly different.

The biggest single difference is the profit motive. Public power systems and electric co-ops are not-for-profit organizations. That means their primary motive isn't to make a profit, but to deliver electricity to the homes and businesses they serve at the most reasonable cost. In other words, their first objective is service.

Compare that to investor-owned utilities. As the name implies, IOUs are owned by investors. Those investors hold shares of stock in the utility, each owning some percentage of the utility's assets. The goal of the IOU is to generate profits, thereby increasing the value of the stock and providing income to shareholders in the form of dividends. No matter how much effort an IOU puts into being a good power provider for its customers, its ultimate goal is often to maximize profits for its owners.

Public power systems are owned by municipalities and other forms of government, which means they're technically owned by – and accountable to – the taxpayers they serve. The people who run these government units want to keep the

taxpayers happy, so their goal is to keep rates as low as possible. Similarly, co-ops are owned by the members they serve, and their primary motivation is to keep the cost of electricity as low as possible.

Local control and member voice

Decision-making is another differentiator. IOUs are large corporations that may be headquartered hundreds of miles away from the folks who pay the bills. If one of those customers has a concern, they may have a difficult time getting the utility's management to listen.

For public power, the same officials elected or hired to manage things like streets and parks oversee operations. A customer can reach out to their government representative if they're unhappy with the service they receive.

Once again, co-ops are different. Their operations are managed by an elected board of directors made up of members. Those directors represent their neighbors and have an obligation to consider the concerns and preferences of other members. A co-op member who has questions about their rates or concerns about their service can turn to their local director for answers.

Serving rural communities efficiently

Infrastructure needs represent another key difference. Public power providers and IOUs tend to serve areas such as cities, suburbs and larger towns that have higher population densities. Most co-op service areas are in rural areas and smaller communities, where members are more widespread.

As a result, co-ops average just 7.98 members per mile of power lines, compared to 32.4 customers per mile for other types of power providers nationwide. In Iowa, electric cooperatives serve four members per mile of line compared to 58 customers for municipal utilities and 28 customers for investor-owned utilities. In Iowa, co-ops earn \$10,800 in annual revenue from members, compared to \$131,000

and \$85,000 for municipal and investor-owned utilities, respectively.

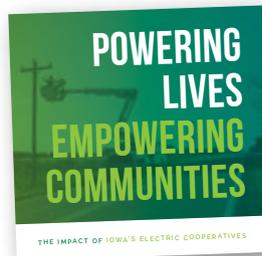
This data shows that co-ops must manage significantly more infrastructure for the number of homes and businesses they serve, although they receive less money than the other types of power providers.

Because co-ops are inherently focused on the needs of their members, they center their planning and operations around the places they operate. They also play active roles in building the economic strength of the places they serve through community support, economic development initiatives, by employing more than 73,000 Americans, and by paying \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes annually across the nation. In Iowa, electric cooperatives support nearly 2,000 jobs and pay almost \$29 million annually in state and local taxes. For the five years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive impact of \$4.7 billion in economic development projects.

Electric cooperatives work closely with neighboring co-ops and counterparts across the U.S. This collaboration stems from their shared commitment to the seven cooperative principles – especially the call for cooperation among co-ops. These close relationships, whether through joint investment in assets such as solar farms, shared resources to eliminate duplication, or joint ownership of a generation and transmission cooperative, strengthen all co-ops' ability to serve their members.

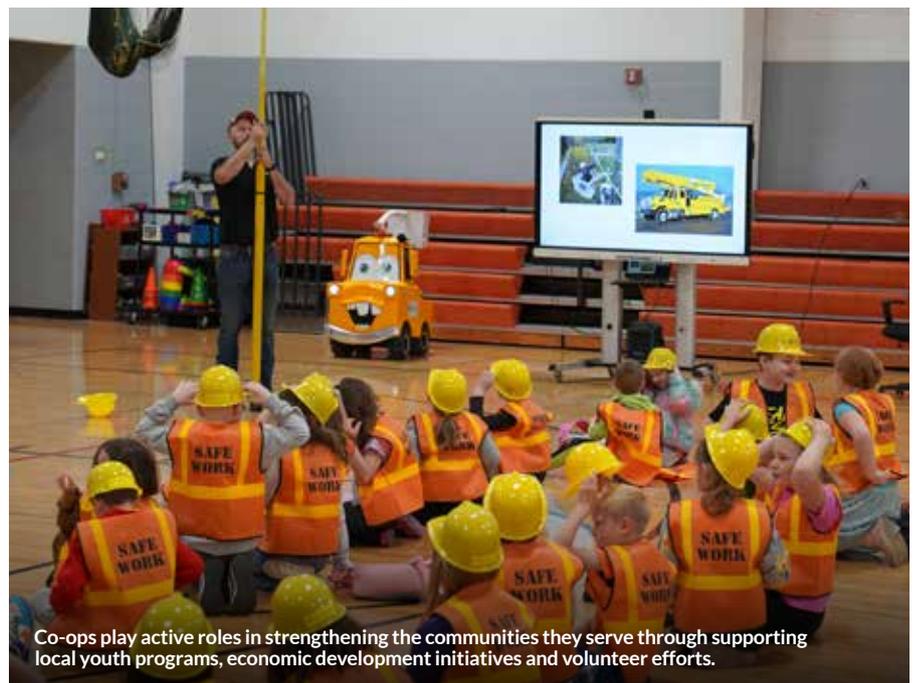
While the three types of power providers are structured and operate in different ways, it's essential to note that all are highly regulated by multiple state and federal agencies. Unlike other industries in which companies can raise prices or build facilities at will, power companies typically need to obtain regulators' permission before taking actions that affect the services they provide and the rates they charge.

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



October is National Co-op Month!

Scan to learn more facts about Iowa's electric cooperatives.



Co-ops play active roles in strengthening the communities they serve through supporting local youth programs, economic development initiatives and volunteer efforts.



Harvest Season

FAVORITES

ZUCCHINI SOUP

- ½ cup butter
- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 2 pounds zucchini, cut into chunks
- 1 medium potato, cut into chunks
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 3 cups chicken broth
- ½ cup heavy cream
- croutons or roasted pumpkin seeds

Melt butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Add onions and cook until softened. Add zucchini, carrot and potato. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add chicken broth and bring to a boil. Then reduce heat to a simmer. Continue to simmer for about 20 minutes, until vegetables are very fork tender. Remove from heat, add cream and blend until smooth. Serve with croutons or roasted pumpkin seeds. *Serves 6*

Marta Smigowska • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy

BUTTERNUT SQUASH BAKE

- 2 cups butternut squash, cooked and mashed
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup nonfat dry milk
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup butter, melted

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Pour into greased 1½-quart casserole dish. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 60-65 minutes. To serve, spoon out so every serving has some raisins (they sink to the bottom of the casserole). *Serves 6*

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

APPLE AND CARROT CASSEROLE

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons flour
- pinch of salt
- 6 apples, cored, peeled and sliced
- 3 carrots, cooked and sliced
- ¼ cup orange juice

Mix brown sugar, cinnamon, flour and salt, set aside. Arrange half of the apples in a greased casserole dish. Cover with half of the carrots. Sprinkle half of the sugar mixture on top. Repeat and then pour orange juice over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. This is great with pork. *Serves 8*

Rebecca Darrington • Persia
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

JACK STRAW EGGPLANT

- 1 eggplant
- 1 cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon salad oil
- oil for frying
- salt, to taste

Pare eggplant and cut into French fry shapes. Mix flour and salt. Gradually add egg, milk and salad oil to flour mixture. Dip eggplant into mixture. Put ½-inch oil in pan and heat to 375 degrees F. Put eggplant in oil, separating with tongs. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Drain on paper towels and salt to taste. *Serves 4-6, depending on eggplant size*

Dee Ann Paulsrud • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

POTATO-CARROT CASSEROLE

- 1 pound hamburger
- 1 teaspoon minced onion
salt, to taste
pepper, to taste
- 1 10.5-ounce can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 10.5-ounce can vegetable beef soup
- 6-10 mini carrots, thinly sliced
- 3 medium potatoes, quartered and sliced

Brown hamburger, onion, salt and pepper. Drain hamburger and add soups, stir. Lightly grease an 8x8-inch or 9x9-inch pan. Put carrots in pan, then add potatoes and level. Add meat mixture on top and level. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 6-8*

Marjorie Vander Lee • Melvin
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

EASY FRENCH DIP SLIDERS

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 package Hawaiian sweet rolls, 12 total
- 12 slices provolone cheese
- 1 pound deli roast beef, rare
- 1½ cups French fried onions
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 package Au Jus seasoning mix, separated
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
- ¾ teaspoon dried minced garlic
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 2 cups cold water

Butter the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish with softened unsalted butter. Without separating, slice the package of rolls in half. Place the bottom half of the rolls in the baking dish. Top with six slices of provolone cheese, roast beef, fried onions, six more slices of cheese and the other half of the rolls. In a small bowl, melt butter in the microwave. Mix in 1 tablespoon Au Jus seasoning mix, Worcestershire sauce, sesame seeds, garlic and onion powder. Whisk until well combined. Top the rolls with this mixture and ensure all the rolls are entirely coated. Bake the sliders uncovered at 350 degrees F for 15-20 minutes, until the cheese is gooey and the tops of the rolls are golden brown. Meanwhile, take the remaining Au Jus mixture and place in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add 2 cups cold water and whisk. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to a simmer to allow it to slightly thicken. Remove sliders from oven and cut with a sharp knife. Serve sliders with Au Jus mix. *Serves 6*

Angela Jager • Ashton
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CHILI SAUCE

- 12 tomatoes
- 2 onions
- 1 green pepper
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon salt
- ½ cup vinegar

Chop vegetables and mix all ingredients together. Cook down until thick. The recipe is great for canning.

Mark Smith • Osceola
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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



CORN BREAD TACO BAKE

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 package taco seasoning
- ½ cup water
- 1 12-ounce can whole kernel corn, drained
- ½ cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 8.5-ounce package corn muffin mix
- ½ cup cheddar cheese, shredded

In a large skillet, brown the ground beef and drain. Stir in taco seasoning, water, corn, green pepper and tomato sauce. Pour mixture into 2-quart casserole dish. In a small bowl, prepare the corn muffin mix according to package directions. Spoon corn muffin batter around edges of beef mixture. Bake uncovered at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes, or until corn bread is done. Top the corn bread with cheese. Bake uncovered for a few minutes more until cheese is melted. *Serves 4-6*

Lori Collingwood • Ladora
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

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From gumbos and Po' Boys to shrimp dishes and beignets, submit your favorite **Cajun recipes** in celebration of Mardi Gras! Recipes will appear in our February issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



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Des Moines, IA 50322

IOWA FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL EXPANSION



BY JEFF GARGANO AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

Fundraising is underway for an expansion of the Iowa Firefighters Memorial, located along I-80 near Coralville.

Nearly 3,800 names have been added to the granite walls of the Memorial in 30 years. “When the committee started working on the project in 1989, we talked about it extensively with the architect and he thought the walls would last 100 years,” said committee member Mike Reuman. “Until you do something you won’t know how well it will be accepted. No one envisioned it being received this well.”

Initially, a couple hundred names were engraved. In 1999, plans were drawn up for an expansion of the walls, which was completed in 2005. By 2010, a second expansion was needed.

The projected cost of the third expansion is \$300,000. Already, \$200,000 has been raised, leaving \$100,000 still needed. The goal is to raise

the money so construction can begin in June 2026.

“The committee has really stepped it up. They want to get this done as quickly as possible because every year we wait adds to the cost due to inflation,” Mike said. “At the recent 2025 Memorial Service, we had a table set up with prints to sell to raise funds and accept donations. When we counted the money, there was more than \$12,000, and most of it was in donations. One customer handed us a check for a \$180 print; the check was for \$2,000.”

More than 50 fire departments have donated at least \$1,000 and challenged others to match or exceed the gift.

The expansion will add 12 new granite panels and include sidewalk work, drainage and lighting.

“With this expansion, we hope it will last another 30 years before needing more room for additional names,” Mike said.

Meet some employees of Iowa’s electric cooperatives who share why they serve as volunteer firefighters in their communities.



“My grandfather and dad were both on Cascade’s volunteer fire department, and I knew I wanted to

follow in their footsteps and help the community. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative supports volunteer efforts by giving us some paid time off hours to use and also donates \$1 for every hour I volunteer. Last year, that added up to \$250 for my hours alone, which went to the Cascade Fire Department. There is huge need in small communities for people to step up and volunteer, whether that’s on the fire department or with other groups.”

Cody Koppes, fiber splicing technician
Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative
14 years as a volunteer firefighter
Cascade Fire Department

Honoring firefighters and families

Each year's Memorial Service is moving for families and the fire service community. At this year's service, a sign language interpreter was arranged so a hearing-impaired granddaughter could participate when her grandfather's name was added.

"We want the Iowa Firefighters Memorial site to be well maintained, giving the deserved honor and respect to every firefighter in Iowa, past, present and future," the fundraising committee wrote.

The site provides a place where all Iowa firefighters who have served their communities or have given the ultimate sacrifice in a line-of-duty death are honored in perpetuity. The visitor center includes restrooms, a guest book and displays. Several thousand people stop each year, including international visitors.

"It's amazing. People from all over the world stop. There was one visitor from India the Saturday before the candlelight Memorial Service," Mike said.

Stories of reflection and remembrance

The Memorial also inspires powerful stories. Just three days after the 9/11 attacks, survivor John Campbell, who escaped from the 64th floor of the World Trade Center, stopped at the site while driving west. He left a note that read in part: "Coming

out of the World Trade Center after walking down 64 flights of stairs, I saw your brethren walking single file marching toward the depths of hell. Brave heroes. Nothing describes what they did. The rest of my life I will honor your profession as the magnificent people you are."

A retired New York City firefighter also visited the Memorial in 2003, leaving his helmet, caps and patches from Ground Zero, along with a two-page letter. Coralville Chief Dave Stannard secured the items, which remain on display at the Visitor Center.

Supporting the expansion

The Iowa Firefighters Memorial is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations can be made to: Iowa Firefighters Memorial Wall Expansion Project, Attn. Mike Reuman, Iowa Firefighters Memorial, P.O. Box 7, Traer, IA 50675.

Any person, fire department or business that donates \$5,000 or more will receive a 2025 print, and donations of \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$25,000 or more will be honored with on-site recognition.

For more information, contact committee chair Jim Thiele at 641-494-9677.

Jeff Gargano is a volunteer firefighter and publisher of several Fire Association newsletters, including in Iowa. Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.



"I knew there was a need for volunteer firefighters in Iowa's smaller communities, so

I wanted to help out. The co-op is very supportive of having its employees volunteer, not just on the fire department, but with other organizations, too."

Jack Scanlan, line superintendent
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative
35 years as a volunteer firefighter
Glidden Fire Department



"I'm at a point in my life where I have time to volunteer and give back to the community. My

son is on the fire department, too, so it's fun to also spend time with him and watch him excel in his field. Whether you're on the fire department, a volunteer EMT or helping the community in another way, the co-op supports our efforts."

Ryan Wagner,
Manager of member services
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
8 years as a volunteer firefighter
West Union Fire Department



"I started volunteering because I wanted to be closer with my community. My

grandpa and great grandpa were both on the Lake Mills Fire Department. I'm proud of how Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative supports our volunteer efforts, whether that's allowing us to help on calls if we're available or considering applications through Operation Round Up grants. Last year, those funds helped us get four new fire suits for the Lakota Fire Department."

Dylan Low, lineman
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
4 years as a volunteer firefighter
Lakota Fire Department



ECONOMIC ENGINES OF PROGRESS: COOPERATIVE REVOLVING LOAN FUND

Electric cooperatives do more than just provide power. We also invest heavily in economic development efforts throughout rural Iowa. Iowa's electric cooperatives serve as intermediaries for U.S. Department of Agriculture Revolving Loan Funds (RLF), among other programs and projects.

This year has been busy for Grundy County REC and the RLF program. This month, we are excited to spotlight South Porch Cider Co., a business owned and operated by Crystal and Luke Davis, who tapped into the RLF and are also co-op members.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT:

Cider, comfort and a whole lot of charm



If you're driving through downtown Grundy Center, you may notice a more recent addition to the row of businesses. The former Hallmark store now has a beautiful, blue storefront and "South Porch Cider Co." in big gold letters. The local business has become a gathering place for friends, book clubs and more.

The name South Porch has a special meaning to owners ... it comes from the spot on their property where they planted their first apple trees. Their home's south porch overlooks the orchard, and it's where so many of their ideas – and conversations over cider – have taken place. But more than that, the name reflects the feeling they want people to experience when they visit: the comfort of sitting on a friend's porch, relaxed and welcome.

"Whether you're drinking cider, beer, soda or just water, everyone is part of the gathering. We've built South Porch to be a place where the whole family feels at home," Crystal said.

Where it all started

Luke and Crystal always had the desire to build an agriculture-based business rooted in their local community. With limited land on their acreage, they explored different possibilities – dreaming of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) ideas, raising specialty pork and other small-scale ventures.

The turning point came when a friend invited them to an apple pressing. Not long after, they connected with a homebrewing friend who introduced the couple to the craft of cider making. That experience opened their eyes to the incredible range of flavors different apples varieties can offer. Each apple has its own story, and they were inspired to create a value-added product that celebrates locally grown fruit that brings people together around it.

With Luke's love for researching topics and creating new things and Crystal's joy and love for reading and creating opportunities to bring people together for a craft, game or a good conversation, this duo is bringing a fun and unique twist to their business.

The unique blend behind South Porch

At South Porch, everything starts with the fruit. They focus on sourcing high-quality apples and using minimal intervention in the cidermaking process, allowing the natural character of each variety to shine. Like wine, cider is crafted through careful fermentation and blending, but it's as easy to enjoy and

approachable as beer. They do the hard work up front, creating thoughtful blends that result in small-batch ciders with depth, variety and complexity.

Their small-batch approach also gives them the freedom to experiment. They love trying new ingredients, styles and techniques – and thanks to their taproom, they get to share those ideas directly with their community and hear what they think. One of the most rewarding parts of what they do is having that connection with their customers and having that creative feedback loop.

"The most rewarding part has been the increased sense of community that we have gotten since we have opened the cidery," Crystal shared. "Knowing more people and getting more involved through South Porch Cider has been incredible rewarding."

Uncovering history

The uniqueness of South Porch Cider goes beyond the product; the building itself exudes distinctiveness and charm. For Luke and Crystal, one of the most exciting parts of the renovation



FUN FACT

This year, they produced 1,000 gallons of cider, which equates to over 16,000 pounds of apples!

was uncovering features of the building that hadn't seen the light of day in nearly a century. On the former pharmacy side, they discovered a beautiful original tin ceiling, but they had to remove three layers of ceilings to find it.

"It was a lot of work, but absolutely worth it. Uncovering that history and restoring those details helped us connect the space to the past while giving it new life for our cidery," said Luke.

Words of advice

Reflecting on their journey so far, Luke and Crystal shared some words of advice: "Be flexible! Plans rarely go exactly the way you imagine, and your ability to adapt is everything. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions. Whether it be about permits, codes or logistics, asking early saves you from headaches later. Most of the people you'll need to ask actually want to see you succeed, so just reach out. It's always better to ask than guess. And finally, having a strong partner makes all the difference. Someone who shares the vision and can walk with you through the highs and lows, having that support is invaluable."



FUN FACT

There are over 7,000 named varieties of apples out in the world! South Porch Cider is evaluating more than 40 varieties at their home orchard to see what thrives best in the area.



Hours of operation

Thursday and Friday: 5-10 p.m.

Saturday: Noon-10 p.m.

Sunday: Noon-5 p.m.

Pizzas are made fresh on Saturdays by owner Luke Davis.

Event space available

A private room that can seat 20-25, depending on setup, is available for reservation during normal hours of operation or off-hour evenings.

Reservations for the whole building are also available.

Contact Crystal

✉ crystal@southporchcider.com

☎ 319-505-3902 (call or text)

BE A
FIRE SAFETY
HERO



Use this checklist with a grown-up to help **make your home safe** and **know what to do if there's a fire.**

Home Fire Safety Checklist

- Check outlets to make sure they are not overloaded.
- Make sure cords are not frayed or under rugs.
- Test smoke alarms.
- Find two exits in every room.
- Practice yelling "FIRE" loudly.
- Find the fire extinguisher.
- Know how to call 911 and share your full address.
- Practice a fire drill.
- Pick a family meeting spot outside of the house.
- Know how to stop, drop and roll.

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DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2025-2026 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. Additional countable income and/or income verification not listed above may be required for eligibility determination.

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, Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026. The start date is Oct. 1, 2025, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants.

If you're not sure where to apply, visit hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap.

To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums	
Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$31,300
2	\$42,300
3	\$53,300
4	\$64,300
5	\$75,300
6	\$86,300
7	\$97,300
8	\$108,300

Note: For households with more than eight members, add \$11,000 for each additional member.

GRIT TO GLORY: SOFTBALL CINDERELLA DISPROVES THE DOUBTERS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Don't you just love a great underdog story? For baseball fans (October 'tis the season for the World Series, after all), you can't forget 2016, when the Chicago Cubs clinched their first World Series win in 108 years.

I came across another great underdog story this past August when I attended an Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) regional meeting in Storm Lake. Ethan Hohenadel, IAEC director of policy and advocacy, shared a proud-dad story.

He told us about his daughter Ava, 18, who thrives when the stakes are high. With the 2025 state championship game tied in extra innings, Ava stepped up and smashed a walk-off home run, sealing an 8-7 victory and securing Van Meter's second-straight Class 2A state title.

My "story sensor" went into overdrive. Like a modern-day Paul Harvey, I sent Ethan a follow-up email to get the rest of the story.

When Ava was 10 years old, she told Ethan her dream was to play for a state champion softball team. "Through the years, I watched her put so much time and effort into trying to reach that dream," Ethan said.

It was rarely easy. People told her she wasn't good enough. She didn't have what it takes. She couldn't do it. "But she didn't let them derail her dream," Ethan emphasized. "She just put her head down and kept on working."

Prove 'em wrong

I reached out to Ava and asked her to tell me about those "dream killers" who could have discouraged this state champion first base player.

"I was around 11 or 12 when this first happened," Ava said.

"I was pushed to the side, and at that point I was an aspiring pitcher."

Back then, Ava wasn't naturally talented at softball. "It was a game I always have had to work at. I wasn't always the biggest or fastest person on the field," she shared.

She joined a traveling ball club at age 11, becoming one of the youngest players on the team. The coach always selected another pitcher on the team instead of Ava. True, that pitcher was about a year older than Ava and had more experience, but the favoritism showed during a tournament.

"We played about six games in one day, and I didn't pitch a single one of them. That really stung," she said.

Ava's mind started drifting to some dark places. "Maybe I'm not that good. Maybe I should quit."

While this was one of the lowest points in her softball career, the club organizer (Doug Glade) and another coach (Mitch McCoy) had her back through the whole ordeal.

"Coach McCoy poured so much faith into me that I fell back in love with the sport itself," Ava said.

Simply going to practice wouldn't cut it, though. Ava invested countless hours on her off days at an indoor hitting facility to get better. She also



Ava Hohenadel's walk-off home run sealed Van Meter's 2025 state championship title. Photo Source: Shannon Payne and Tony Doremus of Shannon Payne Photography

worked with a hitting coach (who lives 2.5 hours away from the Hohenadel's home) to fine-tune her skills.

Inspiring excellence in others

Everyone around her took note. "My teammates have told me that I drive them to put in the extra work, have the same grit that I do, and be better players," Ava told me.

Today, Ava is still playing softball. She's on the team at Bryant & Stratton College, a junior college in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where she's majoring in marine biology. Reaching this goal is even sweeter when Ava thinks back to those doubters years ago. "I used the negativity to push me forward in my journey and prove those people wrong," she shared.

Well played, Ava, well played! And now you know ... the rest of the story.

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



The Van Meter softball team celebrates following Ava Hohenadel's championship-winning home run.

Scan this QR code to watch a video of Ava's game-winning home run.



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