

JANUARY 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Co-op members to receive
additional bill credit in January**

New year, smarter home

Comforting casserole recipes

SmartHub launches Jan. 17 ▶ See Page 12

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EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

ART DIRECTOR
Joel Clifton

IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Chuck Soderberg

IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Erin Campbell

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ON THE COVER

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

CELEBRATING A DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



Whether you're celebrating a birthday or a historic anniversary, 75 years is a major milestone. At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

(IAEC), January 1948 was important because it marked the first month we published a statewide newspaper for member-consumers, titled "IRECA News." Sharing news and happenings from when IAEC was known as the Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the monthly tabloid quickly became a trusted and valuable source for information as more rural Iowa homes and businesses were receiving electricity through rural electric cooperatives.

An editorial in the first issue exactly 75 years ago reads:

"The editors will do everything their knowledge and zeal will allow to make the publication foremost in its field. They hope to present material which will so inform members they will be inspired to contact others who ought to unite with us and to convince outside readers the cooperative system merits their wholehearted support."

Remaining steadfast in our mission

While the name and format of our monthly statewide publication have changed a few times over the decades, our commitment to our readers has not. We remain faithful to the legacy of providing valuable information to Iowa's electric cooperative member-consumers about co-ops, rural economic development, energy efficiency, industry trends and electric safety. We also make the magazine more enjoyable by including recipes, contests and reader-submitted cover photos.

And in a world shifting to digital platforms, we prefer to mail a printed magazine each month because it breaks through the digital noise and gets read. According to a scientifically valid readership survey we conducted in 2020, 87% of those who receive our magazine take time to read it each month. In fact, 44% of those who receive this magazine spend 10 minutes or more reading our 16 pages of content each month! We simply can't get that kind of engagement in a digital format.



But we do embrace digital technology when it makes strategic sense. A few years ago, we scanned every hard copy of the statewide publication in our central files and digitized the pages of each monthly issue to preserve our archive for generations to come. I enjoy history and learning about the past in order to guide our future, so I am grateful for the ability to

access and search 900 monthly issues with the click of a mouse.

Energy topics stay at the forefront

Reading through our archive, I have seen many topics over the decades that are cycling back in the news today, including stories on nuclear technology, supply chain concerns and generating enough electricity to meet the growing electric demand of consumers. We'll look back on some of those headlines throughout the year as we celebrate our diamond anniversary.

I like to think that those first editors would be proud of where we stand 75 years later, carrying the torch they ignited so long ago. May this monthly publication continue to provide useful information to member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives for another 75 years! Our cooperative system indeed merits your wholehearted support.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Fire HD 10 Plus Tablet

This 10.1-inch, full HD, 32 GB tablet boasts a display that is 10% brighter than previous generation, with more than 2 million pixels. Enjoy your favorite apps like Netflix, Facebook, Hulu, Instagram and more through Amazon's Appstore. Ask Alexa to play videos and music, open apps, make calls or send messages, check the weather, access compatible smart home devices and more.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Jan. 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 \$100 gift card for a local business from the November issue was Jeff V. Collins from Guthrie County REC.



ENTER ONLINE BY JAN. 31!

STATE OF THE CO-OP

BY MICHAEL GEERDES



As we enter the new year, I want to take a moment to look back on 2022 and provide our membership with a “State of the Co-op.”

Capital credits distributed to members

You may have noticed the bill you received in November was a bit lower than usual; that is because the cooperative distributed capital credits.

Being a member of an electric cooperative is more than just receiving safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Grundy County REC is a not-for-profit business, meaning we operate at cost, collecting the revenue we need to operate and maintain our electrical system. When we make more money than we need to operate,

we return these funds back to you, our members, as capital credits. So, after all the cooperative expenses are paid, additional money we earn gets returned instead of padding a shareholder’s pocket.

At the end of each year, co-op financials are completed to determine if there is excess revenue (margins). If there is, those margins are then allocated (assigned) to members in the form of capital credits based on their electricity usage. These financials are presented to the board of directors who, depending on the co-op’s financial standing, will vote to approve the retirement (payment) of capital credits to the membership. The directors consider the capital credit policies we must follow and the financial standing of the cooperative when they approve the years and percentages to retire to the membership.

How much a member receives in capital credits depends upon their monthly usage. The higher the usage, the greater your capital credit; however, the percentage will remain the same. Your yearly bill total is multiplied by a percentage, which determines how much your capital credit will be for that year.

The board of directors and I are pleased to share that after receiving a large credit from our power providers, Grundy County REC will be issuing an additional bill credit to our membership on the bill you receive this month.

Projects to ensure reliability, safety

Our line crew has been hard at work building line, conducting line maintenance and keeping the lights on for Grundy County REC members. Our annual pole inspection was completed in November, and our operations department is reviewing that report to determine if any areas need to be addressed.



At our October safety meeting, we received the summary report of our Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) certification. This report is completed every three years and takes a deep look at the safety of the cooperative. We received strong scores, with mostly “meets” or “exceeds” expectations.

Our staff has also been working to complete two large technology upgrade projects – changing out our meters and launching a new internal management system and external member portal, SmartHub. SmartHub will be available to members after Jan. 17.

To say 2022 was a busy year for Grundy County REC would be an understatement. However, all the projects are helping us be more efficient and better serve our membership in providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity. I am confident Grundy County REC is sitting in a strong position, and I speak for the entire staff and board of directors when I say we can’t wait to see where 2023 takes us.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to reach out to our office at 319-824-5251.

Michael Geerdes is the general manager of Grundy County REC.



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

“Our mission is to provide our members safe, reliable, electric service”



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

Phone: 319-824-5251 or 1-800-390-7605

Fax: 319-824-3118

Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):
800-292-8989

Website: www.grundycountyrecia.com

Facebook: facebook.com/GrundyCountyREC

Email: mgeerdes@grundycountyrecia.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Call our office 24/7: 319-824-5251

General Manager: Michael Geerdes

Officers and Directors:

District 1: Kevin Pruisner
District 2: Norbert Boyle
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GRUNDY COUNTY REC EARNS SAFETY ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION



In December, Grundy County REC was proud to be honored at the 2022 Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) Annual Meeting for earning the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) certification.

Safety is, and always will be, the No. 1 priority at our cooperative! General Manager Michael Geerdes and Board President Nick Strohhahn are pictured with IAEC General Manager Chuck Soderberg (far right) and IAEC Board President Roger Solomonson (left).

ASK ME ANYTHING: CO-OP EDITION WITH DAN STELPFLUG, OPERATIONS MANAGER



Dan Stelpflug, Grundy County REC operations manager, has been with the cooperative for two years and has more than 40 years of experience.

Q: What would cause my lights to blink on occasion?

A: A variety of things can cause your lights to blink. This may include loose connections, faulty equipment, trees, animals or birds, cracked insulators and bad weather.

Q: What projects are in the works for the line crew in 2023?

A: We plan on replacing more than four miles of three-phase line and more than 10 miles of single-phase line throughout our territory – which includes nearly 350 poles. The crew will also conduct routine maintenance work like pole test change out, equipment maintenance and line patrol.

Q: What electrical safety tip do you want every member to know?

A: Never touch a downed wire. I've personally known two trained linemen who died because they assumed downed lines were not energized, when they were.

Q: What's your favorite part of working in the electric cooperative world and/or working at Grundy County REC?

A: I like working with the members and employees.

Have a question or a topic you'd like to learn more about? Email Allyson Miller at amiller@grundycountyrecia.org. Each month, a different department or staff member will be featured in the "Ask me Anything: Co-op Edition" column.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

Scholarships

The 2023 scholarship application is now available! Grundy County REC will award three \$1,000 scholarships along with a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship to member students. **Applications are due by Feb. 6.**

Visit www.grundycountyrecia.com/scholarships to learn more and apply.

Youth Tour

The 2023 Youth Tour will be held June 17-23. Member students who are in their sophomore, junior or senior year are eligible to apply for an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. Participants will learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government. They will also visit with their congressional representatives and tour popular sightseeing and historic sites.

Youth Tour applications are due by March 1.

Visit www.grundycountyrecia.com/youth-tour for more information.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC POWER

BY CONGRESSMAN RANDY FEENSTRA
AND CHUCK SODERBERG

Editor's Note: The following column was published in *The Hill* as an op-ed in late November to educate Congressional leaders about reliability concerns within the electric industry. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has a strong legacy of working with Iowa's elected officials and policymakers to raise awareness about issues affecting the safety, affordability and reliability of power for the cooperative member-consumers we serve.

In today's world, electricity is essential. American families rely on electricity daily to heat and cool their homes, wash their clothes, cook their meals, charge their phones, turn on the lights and connect to the world. And while it might seem like magic, electricity is not generated out of thin air. We expect the lights to turn on when we flip a switch and our phones to charge when we plug them into an outlet. Our energy policies must reflect these expectations and ensure that our families, businesses and communities have access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

Over the last few years, green-energy absolutists and federal policymakers

have prioritized an untenable, unrealistic and costly energy agenda over commonsense policies to power our country and provide American families with reliable, affordable energy. This detrimental agenda for American-made energy at the highest levels of government has caused gas increases and volatile electricity costs. Even worse, these policies have the potential to be particularly catastrophic for our rural communities, farm families and main street businesses.

Local model empowers lowans, ensures abundant supply

As opposed to states like California, whose one-size-fits-all energy policies

impose production restrictions that lead to blackouts and high costs, Iowa is home to 48 locally owned, community-focused electric cooperatives that prioritize reliability and affordability for the more than 650,000 lowans and 210,000 businesses, homes and farms that they serve.

Thanks to local governance and diversified power generation sources, the average co-op member household in Iowa pays about \$5 a day for electricity and Iowa electric cooperatives have returned more than \$300 million to their member-owners in the form of retired capital credits. These low costs and attractive

returns are only possible due to a commonsense management approach that empowers electric cooperatives to invest in the most productive and cost-effective power sources for their member-consumers. We urge national policymakers to do the same.

To support a robust cooperative ecosystem and expand abundant supplies of affordable electricity, lawmakers must prioritize economic and energy certainty for electric cooperatives by advancing an all-of-the-above American energy strategy that prioritizes permitting reform and provides low-interest capital for community development projects.

All-of-the-above energy strategy is critical

Reliable and affordable electricity generation requires source flexibility and policy malleability. In other words, Congress should embrace an all-of-the-above energy agenda that ensures that Iowans can access affordable electricity when and where they need it, while simultaneously investing in renewable energy sources that are abundant in Iowa like wind power.

To date, Iowa electric co-ops have invested in 33 wind farms, over a dozen utility-scale and community-based solar projects, four landfill gas projects, five methane digesters and multiple hydroelectric stations to complement more traditional power sources like natural gas and coal. Some co-ops are also looking at small-scale nuclear technology as another dispatchable power generation option.

Additionally, Iowa electric co-ops have interconnected roughly

2,200 member-owned generation installations as a demonstration of support for an all-inclusive generation mix, even from non-utility locations. By allowing local cooperatives to determine the best, most comprehensive energy strategy for their consumers, our families, farms and businesses benefit from lower costs, energy security and vital investments in our rural communities.

Prioritizing permitting reform

Congress needs to prioritize federal regulatory and permitting reform. While a great deal of buzz was generated during the end of September over this issue, we are confident that a serious debate is needed over how the federal government can facilitate the development of critical energy and transmission projects. As firm believers in local control, we believe the value of energy infrastructure is best determined by those who will benefit from a particular project. Allowing utilities and the people they serve to have a voice in where a transmission line might be located and who might pay for it is important. The federal government isn't always in the best position to tell the American people what is in their best interests locally.

Strengthening rural economies and communities

We need to protect and strengthen the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program, which powers economic and community development and keeps families and good-paying jobs in rural Iowa. This program provides zero-interest loans of up to one million dollars to local utilities and cooperatives, which

are then tasked with passing this funding along to small businesses and community organizations to support initiatives that create jobs, enhance economic opportunity, revitalize main streets and aid small businesses in rural America.

Ensuring that our rural communities have access to the capital and credit they need to strengthen long-term economic vitality and attract new residents and businesses to populate small, vibrant towns must be a top priority of the 118th Congress and the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization.

Electric cooperatives play a crucial role in delivering safe, affordable and reliable electricity to hundreds of thousands of Iowans and tens of millions of Americans. In both the long and short term, the largest threat to our nation's energy producers and electricity distributors remains federal overreach and unrealistic mandates. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Congress to eliminate red tape that hinders their ability to power our businesses, homes, hospitals and farms and to instead provide them with the flexibility to streamline baseload power generation and diversify their power sources.

Our laws must allow electric cooperatives to do what they do best: power our local economies and provide our thriving communities with reliable, affordable electric power that we all rely on every day.

Congressman Randy Feenstra represents Iowa's 4th congressional district, and Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.





BAKED GOULASH

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded, divided
- 1 24-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 8-ounce package elbow macaroni, cooked and drained
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Brown beef and onion, drain. In large bowl, combine 1 cup cheese and remaining ingredients. Add beef and onion to pasta and sauce mixture. Place in 9x13-inch baking dish and top with remaining 1 cup cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 20-25 minutes until done. *Serves 6-8*

Connie Betts • Woodbine
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

BEV'S CASSEROLE

- ¼ pound cooked chicken, turkey or ham
- 1 cup uncooked macaroni
- 1 cup cheese, cut up
- 1 can cream of mushroom or chicken soup
- 1 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons onion, chopped

Mix all ingredients together and put in a 9-inch square baking dish. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Make this simple casserole with leftover chicken, turkey or ham. Add a salad and your next meal is ready. *Serves 6*

Rhonda Benton • Rowan • Prairie Energy Cooperative

CHICKEN PASTA OVERNIGHT CASSEROLE

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 6-8 dashes tabasco sauce
- garlic salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 2 cups Colby Jack cheese, shredded, divided
- 1 7-ounce package shell pasta, uncooked
- 3-4 cups chicken, cooked and cubed
- 1 can water chestnuts, sliced and drained
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, sliced
- 1 small bag frozen mixed vegetables

Put soups in mixing bowl and beat to smooth. Add milk, 1 cup at a time, until absorbed. Add seasonings and stir well. Add 1 cup cheese and remaining ingredients, stir until well mixed. Pour into buttered or sprayed 9x13-inch casserole dish. Cover tightly with saran or Press-n-Seal wrap. Refrigerate overnight. Set out 1 hour before baking. Bake covered with foil at 325 degrees F for 1½ hours. Uncover and add remaining 1 cup cheese. Cook for 30 minutes more for light browning. *Serves 10-12*

Belinda Fink • Cambridge • Consumers Energy

UPSIDE DOWN PIZZA CASSEROLE

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion, chopped or minced
- 1 16-ounce jar spaghetti sauce sliced pepperoni, optional
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Parmesan cheese

Brown beef with salt, pepper and onion, drain. Mix beef with spaghetti sauce and pepperoni, if desired. Layer the meat mixture in a 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over meat. Make a crust by mixing flour, eggs, milk and oil. Pour the crust mixture over top. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 6-8*

Judy Jackson • Hedrick
Access Energy Cooperative

BUSY DAY CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 can mixed vegetables
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 pound cheese, shredded, optional

Brown beef with butter, drain grease. Put in 10x10x2-inch glass baking dish. Add potatoes, salt, vegetables and soup. Mix will and cover. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, or until potatoes are done. If desired, top with cheese and melt in the oven for a few minutes. *Serves 9*

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison
Access Energy Cooperative

CABBAGE CASSEROLE

- 1 medium head cabbage
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1½ cups milk
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cut up and cook cabbage, then place in casserole dish. Combine butter and flour and cook 2 minutes. Add milk, cream cheese, salt and pepper. Stir until cream cheese is melted. Pour mixture over cabbage. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 4-6*

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

CHEESEBURGER QUICHE

- ½ pound ground beef, browned
- ⅓ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup milk
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1½ cups cheese, shredded
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper
- pie shell, optional

Mix ingredients together and place in pie pan, with or without pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for 35 minutes. *Serves 4*

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

HAM/CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 1 box Rice-a-Roni wild rice
- ½ small package frozen peas
- 1½-2 cups ham, diced
- 1½-2 cups rotisserie chicken, bite-sized pieces
- 2 cups cheese, shredded
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- croutons

Prepare wild rice according to package directions. Mix all ingredients together except for croutons. Place in a greased 9x13-inch casserole pan. Top with croutons (can substitute with diced bread mixed in melted butter). Bake at 350 degrees F for 1-1½ hours, or until hot and bubbly. *Serves 12*

Deb Wentzien • Lincoln
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

WANTED:

BEEF RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Jan. 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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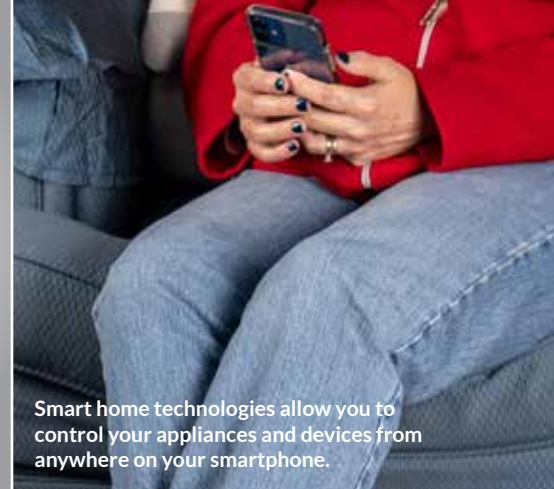
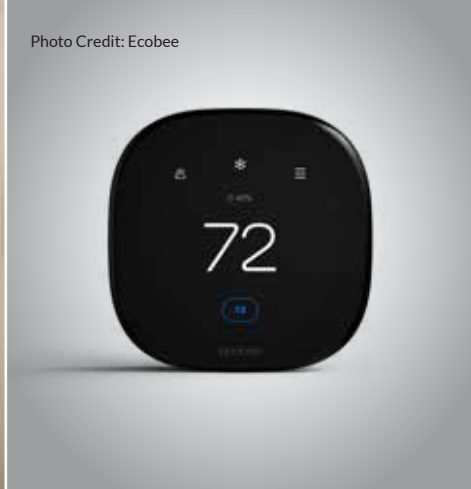
NEW YEAR, SMARTER HOME

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE





Smart window coverings, such as these Serena Smart Roller Shades, can help save energy in the winter and summer with app capabilities and preset schedules.



Smart home technologies allow you to control your appliances and devices from anywhere on your smartphone.

You've probably heard the term "smart home" a lot in recent years. If you're curious about what makes a home smart, how it can boost energy efficiency and help you save money, you've come to the right place.

"Smart" was originally an acronym for self-monitoring analysis and reporting technology. It refers to technology that can be programmed for automation or controlled remotely using Bluetooth or Wi-Fi from a smartphone app or online. A smart home is one with automated control of appliances and systems, such as lighting fixtures and heating and cooling systems.

There are multiple reasons people choose to automate their homes, including convenience, energy efficiency and security. Just because a product is smart doesn't mean it's energy efficient. Added connectivity, lights and touchscreens can actually increase your energy use. Always look for the ENERGY STAR® logo when shopping, which certifies the products meet standards for energy efficiency.

Energy savings typically come from automating the systems, devices and appliances in your home to use less energy or use energy when it costs less. Here are a few ways you can start implementing smart technology at home.

Smart upgrades for the entire home

Because heating and cooling account for the most energy use in a home, these systems are the best place to look for energy savings.

Smart thermostats offer features and functionality that can help you

save energy and money without thinking about it, including learning preferences and automatically setting temperatures. Geofencing is a feature that uses your phone's location to gauge your distance from home and adjusts the temperature accordingly.

Smart thermostats also let you control the thermostat from anywhere with an internet connection, and automatic software updates use new algorithms to maximize energy savings. Features vary by product, so be sure to choose one that's right for you.

Smart window coverings are increasing in popularity and availability. They can help save energy both in the winter and summer by operating based on the temperature of the room or a preset schedule.

Smart lighting can help you remotely control lights in your home based on occupancy or a preset schedule. Lighting also can be paired with home security systems.

You can use smart outlets and power strips to control devices from outside the home or manage use based on load. For example, you can plug your computer and devices into a load-sensing power strip that turns off peripheral devices, such as monitors and printers, when your computer is not in use.

Smart streaming for the living room

Many people use Wi-Fi to stream TV shows and movies. Smart TVs with built-in streaming functionality offer the most efficient way to stream content. If your TV cannot connect to the internet for streaming, opt for

a streaming media player, such as Roku or Apple TV. They use 15 times less energy than a gaming console to stream the same shows and movies.

Save on suds in the laundry room

Smart washing machines can be scheduled for off-peak energy times (when people in your community use less energy), which is helpful if your electric rate is based on the time of day energy is used. Smart clothes dryers can shut off automatically when your clothes are dry.

Smart savings in the kitchen

There are many options for smart appliances in the heart of the home. Smart refrigerators offer energy-saving features, such as notifications when the door is left open. Some models have digital screens that show the fridge's contents to keep you from opening the door.

Smart ovens let you preheat when you are on your way home or check if you forgot to turn off the oven when you are away. Toasters, range hoods, microwaves and countertop ice makers are among the growing list of additional smart kitchen gadgets available.

More smart home technologies are on the horizon, bringing more ways to operate the various systems, devices and appliances in your home. As you think about ways to make your home smarter, remember to look for products that use the same smart home apps, which will make these new technologies even easier to manage.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

IMPORTANT SMARTHUB LAUNCH INFORMATION

Bill payment information

Attention autopay members! If your account is currently set up to pay your bill automatically by debit or credit card, you must create a new online member account and re-enter your card information in the secure profile on or after Jan. 17 for payment to occur.

Phone payments. Effective January 2023, Grundy County REC can no longer accept phone payments.



Watch your emails

If you have provided your email address, you will receive an email with the subject line, "It's Here!! Sign up for SmartHub today" on Jan. 17. This email will provide you with the information and steps you will need to register for and download SmartHub.

Mark your calendars

- Jan. 9-17: During this transition period, the only payment methods accepted will be those mailed or dropped in the night drop box. Website payments and cash or check payments made in our lobby can't be accepted. Payments will not post to your account until the new system is in place. Because of this, late charges will be waived during this time.
- Jan. 17: SmartHub launches! Visit www.grundycountyrecia.org/SmartHub to learn more.



Preventing Home Electrical Fires



Fire departments respond to an average of **46,700** home fires each year caused by electrical failure or malfunction.

WARNING SIGNS of electrical issues:

Damaged cords and flickering lights

Discolored outlets and switch plates

Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

Over a recent 4-year period...



30%

happened in cold weather months (Nov. – Feb.)

Fires caused an estimated average of:



1

Wiring and related equipment were involved in the **greatest number of home electrical fires.**

Lighting, a lamp or a bulb was involved in the **second largest number of fires.**



Safe Electricity.org®



Success Checklist



When our SmartHub system launches on **Jan. 17**, you will be able to manage your account like never before! View and pay bills anywhere at anytime. Manage your account settings and communicate with us when you have a question. We want to make sure you have a handy launch day checklist to help you take full advantage of what SmartHub has to offer you from day one. Please reach out if you have any questions.

What you will need for REGISTRATION

- An **email address**.
- Your **account number**. You will be able to find your account number on your latest bill. You can also call our customer service team at 319-824-5251 or 800-390-7605.

Download the SmartHub App

Follow these instructions if you would like to use SmartHub on your mobile device.

- Open up the Apple or Google Play app store (depending on your device).
- Search for “SmartHub” in the app store and install the app on your device.
- You can find instructions on our SmartHub support site at grundycountyrecia.org/smarthub.

REGISTER your account in SmartHub

The first thing you will need to do is register your account in our new SmartHub system.

- Mobile: Click the “Don’t have an account? Register now” link on the app’s log in page.
- Web: Visit our SmartHub support page at grundycountyrecia.org/smarthub and click on the Register button.
- You can also find instructions on that page.

AUTO PAY re-registration (if enrolled)

If you use our Auto Pay program with a debit/credit card or bank draft, you will need to re-enroll.

- On either web portal or app, click on Bill & Pay.
- Click on Auto Pay Program link.
- If you use your bank’s payment service to schedule payments, you will need to verify your Grundy County REC account number to ensure payments are routed properly.

Consider trying PAPERLESS BILLING

Save time by getting your bills instantly through SmartHub and save the cost of printing and mailing your bill.

- You can activate paperless billing during your account registration.
- Web portal: Under the My Profile menu, click on Update my Paperless Settings sub-menu.
- Mobile: Select settings and Paperless Billing.

Set up NOTIFICATIONS

Choose how you receive notifications from SmartHub (email or SMS).

- Under the Notifications menu, click Manage Contacts to add email and/or text numbers.
- Enter verification code to activate.
- Click on Manage Notifications to set up email and/or SMS alerts using the contact info you entered.

NEED ASSISTANCE? WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

grundy@grundycountyrecia.org
319-824-5251 | 800-390-7605

HOW TO SAFELY USE A GENERATOR

Before using a portable generator, it's essential to understand the potential dangers associated with using them, such as their production of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, colorless and tasteless poisonous gas that is called the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like CO alarms. Follow these tips when using a generator.

- **Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator.** Be sure you understand the directions before hooking up the generator.
- **A generator is a temporary power source.** It should never be used as a permanent solution.
- **Maintain adequate ventilation because generators emit CO.** It's against fire code to operate a generator in your home, garage or other enclosed building. Place it in a dry location outdoors. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent CO from entering the home.
- **Never plug a portable electric generator into a wall outlet or connect directly to a home's wiring.** This can energize utility power lines and injure you or others working nearby. Electrical back feed can also damage the generator and home electrical equipment.
- **Turn off the generator and allow cooling before refueling.** Gasoline and its vapors may ignite if they come in contact with hot components or an electric spark. Store fuel in a properly designed container in a secure location away from the generator or other fuel-burning appliances, such as water heaters. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located nearby.



Photo: Honda

- **Protect your appliances.** Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit. Remember, generators are for temporary usage, so prioritize your needs.
- **Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions.** Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- **Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.** Many generator components are hot enough to burn you during operation.
- **Use proper extension cords.** Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.
- **Shut down the generator properly.** Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- **Remember maintenance between uses.** Drain the gasoline from the generator while it is being stored. It's also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality, and to start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

For more information, visit Safe Electricity at safeelectricity.org

HOW TO LIVE TO BE 115

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Ever get into one of those conversations where you think, “How did that THAT topic come up?”

It happened during a luncheon at the 2022 statewide rural electric cooperative (REC) annual meeting in Des Moines. As we finished our salad, the conversation turned to cigarettes, of all things. A gentleman from eastern Iowa mentioned he quit smoking years ago but still craves a cigarette now and then.

He recalled the cigarette machine in the lunchroom at the American Institute of Business (AIB) in Des Moines when he was a student there in the 1970s. Those cigarettes were \$0.50 a pack, higher than the typical \$0.35 or \$0.40 at local stores. But hey, they were handy. AIB even placed ashtrays outside the classrooms for extra convenience.

While I’ve never been a smoker, I chimed in with a memory from the 1991 Iowa REC Youth Tour. As we flew to Washington, D.C., I remember how one of the livelier participants got busted for messing with the ashtrays in the armrests.

The former smoker commented that when he flew in years past, he was seated in the smoking section, which was usually in the back six or so rows. (Not sure how that kept the smoke away from the other passengers. Go figure.)

“It seemed like everyone smoked back then,” added another gentleman at our lunch table. As everyone nodded in agreement, the conversation turned to health and longevity as we enjoyed fruit pie for dessert. The former smoker recalled a hard-working local contractor in his area who smoked a pack of cigarettes a day and drank a fifth of whiskey for good measure. He lived to be about 93 years old.

Wise words from a supercentenarian

I mentioned I’m from Lake City, the



Darcy Dougherty Maulsby with Bessie Hendricks of Lake City at her 110th birthday party. Bessie turned 115 in November.

same hometown of the oldest person in America and the fourth oldest living person in the world – Bessie Hendricks. Bessie and I share a Nov. 7 birthday. Bessie was born in 1907 and turned 115 this past November. Her lifetime has seen 21 presidents, the sinking of the Titanic and two world wars.

A few years ago, I visited Shady Oaks Care Center in Lake City to interview Bessie and her adult children. When I asked her secrets to longevity, the retired farm wife credited hard work. She also advised to “stay away from doctors.”

Bessie takes hardly any medication and still enjoys listening to her family

sing “You Are My Sunshine.” (She used to sing along but turning 115 does come with some limitations.) Much to my delight, Bessie also enjoys eating dessert.

If you ask doctors to explain supercentenarians (people who are 110 or older), they’ll usually say a lot of this longevity is due to good genes. While we can’t do much about our genes, we can make a New Year’s resolution to stay positive, just like Bessie.

And for good measure, ditch the cigarettes, but don’t skip dessert.

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



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