

JUNE 2023

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Meet Grundy County REC's  
scholarship recipients**

**Three surprising facts  
about energy efficiency**

**Picnic and potluck recipes**

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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!

# 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 Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate a local volunteer at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) during the month of June. (If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative, you are a member-consumer!) 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](http://IowaShineTheLight.com) during the month of June



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.*

Time is running out, so make sure to nominate someone by June 30 at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).

The person you nominate could receive a \$2,500 donation to their local charity!

## 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 this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than June 30, 2023. 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 Smart Lock from the April issue was Dan Langel from North West REC.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!**

## OFFICE CLOSED

Grundy County REC will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. We wish you and your family a safe, relaxing and enjoyable holiday!

Our phones are answered 24/7, year-round.

## NEW OFFICE HOURS BEGIN MAY 30

Beginning Tuesday, May 30, Grundy County REC will have new office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



**Grundy County REC**  
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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



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**Fax:** 319-824-3118

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

**Website:** [www.grundycountyrecia.com](http://www.grundycountyrecia.com)

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# PREPARING TO SERVE YOU BETTER

BY DAN STELPFLUG



Providing reliable power is and will always be one of the top priorities for Grundy County REC. These days, power reliability seems to be making news

more than ever. As the energy industry continues to transition and more segments of the economy are becoming electrified, such as vehicles, machinery and even lawn equipment, additional pressures are being placed on our nation's electric grid.

With summer storm season upon us, I thought it would be a good time to tell you about a few measures we're taking to ensure you continue receiving the reliable power you depend on and deserve.

### Managing vegetation in rights of way

Let me be the first to say I love trees and the character they add to our communities, and I know you do too. While trees provide shade and add beauty to our area, you may be surprised to learn that overgrown vegetation accounts for about half of all power outages.

That's why we strive to keep the co-op's power lines clear in right-of-way areas. A right of way is the land a co-op uses to construct, maintain, replace or repair underground and overhead power lines. This area enables Grundy County REC to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder distribution power lines.

In general, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive tree trimming and pruning, which we call vegetation management, keeps lines clear to improve power reliability. The overall goal of our vegetation management strategy is to provide

reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our area.

Over the past couple of years, the cooperative has partnered with an outside vendor to aid us in these efforts, which has greatly improved the vegetation management in our territory.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Grundy County REC assists members, free of charge, in the trimming of trees that are encroaching on power lines. Please contact the co-op at 319-824-5251 to learn more.**

### Planned outages improve reliability

Although it may seem counterintuitive, we also maintain power reliability through planned, controlled outages. By carefully cutting power to one part of our local area for a few hours, Grundy County REC can perform system repairs and upgrades, which ultimately improves electric service. Planned outages can also be used to balance energy demand, but only in rare circumstances. Rest assured, we will always notify you in advance of a planned outage, so make sure we have your correct contact information on file to receive the latest communications and updates.

As we move into busy summer months with a variety of co-op activities, I encourage you to follow Grundy County REC on Facebook so you can stay up to date about the latest co-op updates and announcements.

*Dan Stelpflug is the operations manager for Grundy County REC.*

# ENERGY-SAVING PROJECTS FOR THE WEEKEND WARRIOR

BY BRADY CODNER



Are you a weekend warrior? If you're considering home improvement upgrades that save energy *and* money, we've got a few project ideas for you – all of which can be completed in a day or less! Here are three energy-saving projects that you can easily tackle.

**Get smart about home cooling and heating.** Cooling and heating costs typically account for a large portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats can help keep energy use and costs in check, with ENERGY STAR®-certified models saving about 8% on annual energy costs. Play it safe when installing by carefully reading the instructions before you get started.



**Go green and boost your greenery with a rain barrel.** If you've got a green thumb, you already know that rainwater is the best water for your outdoor plants. Rainwater is free of minerals, salts and treatment chemicals found in tap water or groundwater. It also contains helpful macronutrients to foster healthy plant growth.

Installing a rain barrel is an easy way to harvest large amounts of rainwater and reduce home water use – it's a win-

win. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one rain barrel can save a homeowner 1,300 gallons of water annually.



**Create fresh savings with a DIY clothesline.** If you have enough outdoor space available, installing a clothesline is a great way to save energy. Not only will you save on dryer costs, but you can also save on cooling costs in the summer since unwanted heat from the clothes dryer won't be causing your air conditioner to work harder. Additionally, air drying is much gentler on fabrics and will keep your clothes and linens looking fresh longer.

If an outdoor clothesline isn't an option, no sweat! You can easily create an indoor drying rack that folds to save space. Home improvement websites like [thespruce.com](http://thespruce.com) and [hgvtv.com](http://hgvtv.com) offer step-by-step tutorials for a variety of indoor clothes racks.

These are just a few simple ideas to help you save energy and money. Visit [www.grundycountyrecia.com/together-we-save](http://www.grundycountyrecia.com/together-we-save) for additional energy-saving ideas and tips!

*Brady Codner is the member service advisor for Grundy County REC.*

## COMMITMENT TO SAFETY AND COMMUNITY

Grundy County REC is a proud donor and participant in the Progress Ag Safety Day at the Grundy County Fairgrounds each year. Brady Codner, member service advisor, delivered the donated Grundy County REC bags prior to the event. And during the event, Erik Freese, foreman, and Derek Snakenberg, apprentice lineman, **provided a safety demonstration to nearly 300 elementary students!**



## HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

To all the amazing dads out there!

– From Grundy County REC



# MOO-VING TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

BY ANGELA CATTON

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.

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.

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 digesters

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 digestate. 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 digestate 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 digestate to their crops, producing animal feedstock.

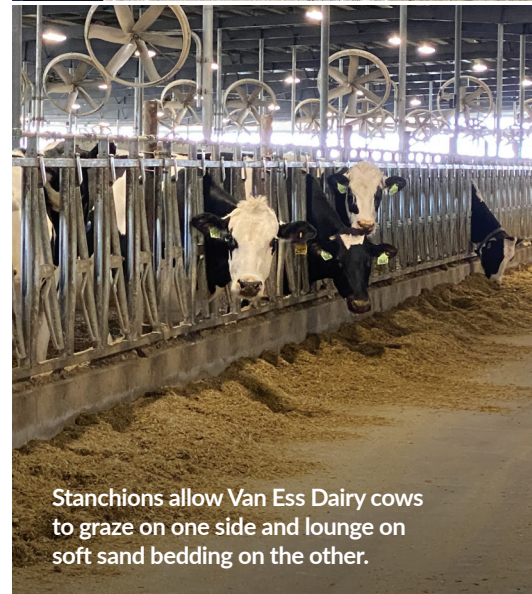
“We are a closed-loop process,” Jeremy explains. “Our livestock produce milk that we sell for dairy products like milk and cheese. Our cows also generate organic waste materials, which, in turn, help to power our operations and improve crop yields. And the cycle continues around and around.”

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 Iowa for generations.

*Angela Catton is the manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.*



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.

# Picnic & POTLUCK Favorites



## CALICO BEANS

- ½ pound bacon
- ½ 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
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- ⅔ cup brown sugar
- ⅓ 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
- ¼ 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
- ¼ 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
- ¾ cup cashews
- ¾ cup raisins
- ¾ cup feta cheese, optional
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ½ 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, raisins 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
- ½ cup cocoa
- ½ 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
- ½ 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 ¼ 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 ⅔ full. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Cool completely before filling cupcake centers.

For filling, mix ½ cup sugar, whole milk, ⅔ cup butter, ¼ teaspoon salt, water and ½ teaspoon vanilla. Beat for 7 minutes or until very smooth. Add ¼ 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 1¼ cups powdered sugar and 1⅓ cup butter. Add the beaten egg whites remaining, 1¼ cups powdered sugar, pinch of salt, ½ 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*

Sue Leerhoff • Clarksville • Butler County REC

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](mailto: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.*

## 1 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

## SHAKENBERG CELEBRATES 3 YEARS WITH CO-OP



Apprentice Lineman Derek Shakenberg celebrated his third service anniversary with Grundy County

REC on June 1. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the co-op and our members. **Congratulations, Derek!**

## BOARD RECOGNIZES GENERAL MANAGER MICHAEL GEERDES



Pictured from left to right: Larry Rohach, Grundy County REC director, Michael Geerdes, Grundy County REC general manager, and Nick Strohhahn, Grundy County REC board president.

During the April board meeting, the board of directors recognized General Manager Michael Geerdes for his contribution to national industry articles, as well as his work serving on statewide panels addressing topics impacting rural electric cooperatives.

## ASK ME ANYTHING:



Dad, husband, lineman and farmer – these are just a few of the hats First Class Lineman Karl Nielsen wears. Nielsen has worked as a

lineman at Grundy County REC for 11 years and gives us a look into the life of a lineman in this month's Q&A.

**Q: As a lineman, you handle all types of outages. This might include weather-related outages, equipment failure or issues caused by the public. Describe what it is like working to restore power during a big storm. What challenges do you run into?**

**A:** One of the most complex storms I've experienced during my line career was the derecho in 2020. While there was a lot of damage, it was amplified by the fact that communication systems were also down due to the storm. Our radios and cell phones weren't working, so we had to go about the restoration process "old school," which meant driving the lines and meeting back at a designated point at a certain time to compare notes and establish a plan. When you're working a storm, your

## CO-OP EDITION WITH LINEMAN KARL NIELSON

adrenaline is going; you have to start at the source and work your way out to find the root of the problem. One thing that can be challenging and a potential safety hazard, is if community members or residents drive around to survey the damage. This can cause delays in power restoration due to traffic in the area, but it also poses safety concerns. If the crew is focused on avoiding traffic and pedestrians, they can't be 100% focused on restoring power. After a big storm, like the derecho, you also don't know what may be around the corner, under debris or wrapped up in tree branches.

**Q: Restoring power isn't as easy as flipping a switch, and outages can happen any time of day or day of week. Can you describe what it's like being on call?**

**A:** Our crew responds to outages 24/7, 365 days a year, and we alternate who is on call each week. When you're on call, you have to always expect to get that call. It always comes at a different (and sometimes inconvenient) time, like when you are just opening up a can of paint for a house project or during a family event. But that's part of the job, and we knew that when we chose this profession. You always have to be ready for what may come up and plan accordingly.

**Q: This line of work can be dangerous. What is one piece of safety advice you think our members need to know?**

**A:** On the roadway, move over or slow down when lineworkers are parked on the side of the road. As a lineman, when you're up in a bucket and a vehicle flies by without thinking or paying attention, it's unnerving. If a vehicle strikes the truck, the lineman could fall out of the basket, get injured while in the bucket, cause the truck to go in the ditch and seriously hurt the driver.

**Q: Why do you enjoy working for Grundy County REC?**

**A:** I love working for a member-owned cooperative because it's the members that own us, not a big corporation. I also enjoy building relationships with our members, being able to problem solve and the people I work with. Both my wife and I grew up in the Dike-New Hartford area, our families still live there, and the family farm is there, too. We chose this area because we want our children to grow up in a small, rural community.

# 2023 GRUNDY COUNTY REC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

We are proud to announce the three recipients of the 2023 Grundy County REC scholarships! Once again, the cooperative received many great scholarship applications. This makes the selection of recipients a difficult, but rewarding, task. Congrats to these scholarship winners!



## Hannah Buttjer

Hannah is the daughter of Matthew and Angela Buttjer. She is a graduate of Aplington-Parkersburg High School. She plans to attend Wartburg College to study biology, with the hopes of eventually entering the medical field to become

a dentist. In her free time, she enjoys working with her cows and getting them ready for the county fair. Hannah also likes hiking, painting and reading. Fun fact about Hannah: She and her sister can quote eight seasons of the TV show "Psych" together.



## Sophia Folkerts

Sophia is the daughter of Ryan and Nicole Folkerts. She is a graduate of Dike-New Hartford High School. After high school, she will be attending Central College to major in kinesiology/pre-physical therapy, while continuing her volleyball career. In her free time, Sophia enjoys hanging out

with friends, doing CrossFit, reading and listening to music. Fun fact about Sophia: She has 25 first cousins.



## Abby Sienknecht

Abby is the daughter of Tony and Marci Sienknecht. She is a graduate of Gladbrook-Reinbeck High School. After high school, she plans to attend Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) to complete the Dental Assistant Program. In her free time, she likes to be active in any way possible – lifting weights, sports or anything outside when the weather is warm. Fun fact about Abby: She has a twin brother.

## Maroon & White

invites you to the  
**Uncky Daylo Kids Campus-  
Ribbon Cutting**

**Friday, July 7, 2023**

1001 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Grundy Center

Please join us to celebrate the completion of a three-year community project to provide new and expanded space for early childhood programs.

The former Jr./Sr. High and Upper Elementary Building has been transformed into the new Uncky Daylo Kids Campus!

This building is now the home to GCP&CC Preschool & Childcare, YMCA Before & After School Care and Headstart.

**Facility Tours: 5:00-7:00 p.m.**

**Ribbon Cutting Ceremony: 7:00 p.m.**

Short program to follow.



Grundy County REC is a proud sponsor of the renovations that took place at the Uncky Daylo Kids Campus, having **donated a total of \$10,000** to the project, and we are excited to announce the upcoming ribbon cutting ceremony next month!

## FAIR FOOD FUN AT THE GRUNDY COUNTY FAIR

Back by popular demand, Grundy County REC is providing members food vouchers to the BarLea Roots booth (located in the 1851 Pavilion) during the Grundy County Fair! Visit our headquarters between now and July 10 to grab your free \$10 food vouchers, valid July 19-22. These vouchers are for members only; two vouchers per member account.

**Thank you for being a member  
of Grundy County REC!**



# 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



Photo Source: Trico

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 consumer-members' 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 consumer-members 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 last-minute, 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](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*



Scan the QR code  
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