

FEBRUARY 2024

Iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Youth Tour application
deadline approaching**

**Energy and economic
insights and trends**

Soup and stew recipes

Get involved with your cooperative ▶ See Page 4

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For the love of book clubs

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ON THE COVER

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

NEW STATEWIDE BOARD PRESIDENT IS NO STRANGER TO THE CO-OP BOARD ROOM

BY KENNY VANDENBERG



We've all heard the saying that when one door closes, another door opens. It certainly applies to my life as the door to cooperative service opened for me when I retired a while back. Thirteen years ago, I was asked to consider serving on the Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative board in Albia. As a lifelong resident of Monroe County, I thought it would be a great opportunity to serve my community and learn more about my local electric cooperative.

After serving on the local co-op board for several years, I had an opportunity to put my name on the ballot for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) board. I was eager to join the statewide board and expand my industry knowledge and working relationships with others, including our state and federal legislators. Formed in 1942, IAEC is the statewide trade association for Iowa's electric cooperatives, and it provides several services to its member co-ops, including legislative representation, regulatory oversight, training and education services, safety programs, communications support, and advocacy.

Productive and proactive leadership

Serving on the IAEC board for more than five years, I was honored to take the helm as board president in December. I truly enjoy the camaraderie of working with my fellow statewide directors and the statewide staff. We are productive and proactive in dealing with the issues at hand. In the first half of 2024, the IAEC board will be focused on hiring our next executive vice president/general manager, as Chuck Soderberg plans to retire in July. Identifying the right executive to lead us into the future is one of the statewide board's most important tasks.

This is an unprecedented time of change for the electric industry, and experienced leadership is crucial to successfully navigate the challenges ahead. I look forward to meeting with the directors and managers of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout the year to learn more about how the statewide association can support them in their mission to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity for their local member-owners.

Strengthening lines of collaboration

Additionally, I have been serving on the board of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives for four years. I'd like to explore more ways for these two statewide cooperative associations to collaborate for the benefit of their members while promoting the cooperative business model.

If you had asked me several years ago what I'd be doing after retirement, I couldn't have imagined that I would be serving in this capacity. But these leadership opportunities all started because I was willing to say yes to a local call to serve. I'm thankful for the family and friends who encouraged me along the way.

Here's my advice for my fellow cooperative member-owners throughout Iowa: Don't be afraid to answer the call to serve your local cooperative. Look for an open door in your local community and walk through it! Your next adventure awaits.

Kenny Vandenberg is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a director at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A CAFÉ™ EXPRESS FINISH TOASTER!

For busy mornings, this innovative two-slot toaster has an Express Finish mode. Just push a button and the extra heating elements kick in, toasting bread to your preferred doneness in just 60 seconds. It also has three other preset functions – bagel, reheat and frozen – plus eight browning levels for customized control. Distinguished by sleek designer finishes, this Café appliance from GE features a beautiful cast aluminum housing with brushed copper accents.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 29. 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 HappyLight® Duo Light Therapy and Task Floor Lamp from the December issue was Eugene Sieren, a T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 29!

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES, OUR WAY OF LIFE

BY ALLYSON MILLER



Coming from more of a corporate background, I found it interesting to learn that Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) follows a set of

seven cooperative principles, the “rules” in which they live by essentially, versus the normal corporate rulebook and business practices.

The seven cooperative principles include:

- Voluntary & Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members' Economic Participation
- Autonomy & Independence
- Education, Training, & Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community



To learn more about the cooperative principles, visit www.grundycountyrecia.com/seven-cooperative-principles.

In my three and a half years at Grundy County REC, I have seen these principles put into action time and time again. Whether its Cooperation Among Cooperatives with the use of mutual aid after storms roll through (The 2020 Derecho took place at the start of my second week with the co-op!). Or perhaps, Concern for Community and the ways Grundy County REC donates time and funds to help develop our communities and its members. And the principle of Democratic Member Control, which is represented by our board of directors and director elections, is another example of these principles in action.

Director elections exemplify a key principle

While all seven of the principles are important to the way cooperatives conduct business, you will be hearing a lot about Democratic Member Control over the next few months as we start to prepare for our 2024 director elections and annual meeting. Your board of directors is comprised of seven members, just like you, who believe in the cooperative and want to take an active role in how it is governed; these directors are nominated and voted for by the membership. Members can also get involved by serving as a member of

the Nominating Committee, who works on behalf of the cooperative to find interested director candidates for their districts, attending the annual meeting and member appreciation events, and voting for the director candidate they feel would best represent the concerns and interests of the members and Grundy County REC.

Are you interested in serving?

The 2024 Nominating Committee members will be appointed at the April 25, 2024, board meeting for the following districts:

District 2 – Currently filled by Norb Boyle

District 3 – Currently filled by Nick Strohbenn

If you reside in either district and would like to serve as a member of the nominating committee or a director candidate in the 2024 director election, I encourage you to reach out to me at 319-824-5251 or amiller@grundycountyrecia.org.

The 2024 Nominating committee meeting will be held on May 30, 2024.

All members have a voice in their cooperative, and we encourage you to use it!

Allyson Miller is the executive assistant/human resources for Grundy County REC.



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Email: mgeerdes@grundycountyrecia.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-3:30 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
District 3: Nick Strohbenn
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.

WATER HEATERS: GAS VS. ELECTRIC

BY BRADY CODNER



Let's talk water heaters! In rural Iowa, where simplicity and budget-friendly choices matter, selecting the right water heater is a big decision.

One of the big questions to consider when making a decision is choosing between gas or electric.

Comparison: Gas vs. Electric

Gas water heaters. While gas water heaters may heat water faster, they come with downsides that might not suit rural Iowa homes. They need a gas line, more maintenance and proper ventilation due to carbon monoxide emissions.

Electric water heaters. They're safer, need a reliable electrical connection, and are more cost-effective. Despite a slower recovery time, they're a solid choice for country living.

Why go electric

1 Easy installation. For rural Iowa residents, simplicity is key. Electric water heaters are straightforward to install – no need for gas lines or complicated venting systems. They're the go-to choice for budget-conscious individuals, offering lower upfront costs.

2 Safety first. Safety is a top priority. Electric water heaters provide peace of mind without worrying about gas leaks or carbon

monoxide. Your family stays safe while enjoying hot water.

3 Low maintenance. Electric water heaters require less upkeep, no dealing with burners or pilot lights and minimal gunk buildup. Spend more time on essential tasks and less on maintenance. Count on electric water heaters for a continuous flow of hot water.

4 Longevity. Built to last, electric water heaters often outperform gas ones, delivering more years of reliable hot water without breaking the bank.

Purchasing doesn't have to break the bank

One of the many perks of being a Grundy County REC member is being able to take part in our Water Heater Program! This program allows the co-op to sell water heaters to our members well below retail. However, water heaters for new construction and conversion from gas to electric are FREE* to members! These top-rated, durable Marathon water heaters come with a lifetime warranty to the original owner.

From easy installation to energy efficiency and special Grundy County REC member pricing, electric water heaters are a great option for homeowners living in rural Iowa. Make the switch to electric water heaters for a reliable and budget-friendly homestead.

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

*Must enroll in load management program to receive the member price. Member pricing assumes all incentives/agreements and is not eligible for an additional rebate. Member pricing as of Jan. 1, 2024, subject to future change.

SIZE	DIMENSIONS	ELECTRIC REPLACEMENT *(plus tax)	GAS REPLACEMENT/ NEW CONSTRUCTION
50 gallon	66¾ x 23½	\$250	Free
85 gallon	70¾ x 28¾	\$250	Free
105 gallon	70 ¾ x 30¾	\$250	Free



YEARS OF DEDICATION TO OUR MEMBERS

Grundy County REC is proud of the knowledge, experience and dedication of our staff and board of directors. Please join us in recognizing the following service anniversaries celebrated in 2023!

EMPLOYEES

- Aaron Bird, 16 years
- Jeff Brophy, 3 years
- Brady Codner, 2 years
- Erik Freese, 9 years
- Mike Geerdes, 12 years
- Nichole Heaverlo, 3 years
- Scott Kuiper, 9 years
- Allyson Miller, 3 years
- Karl Nielsen, 11 years
- Tony Sienknecht, 21 years
- Derek Snakenberg, 3 years
- Dan Stelpflug, 3 years

DIRECTORS

- Norb Boyle, 11 years
- Matt Kopriva, 4 years
- Jason Paper, 13 years
- Kevin Pruisner, 19 years
- Larry Rohach, 30 years
- Nick Strohhahn, 5 years

Contact Brady Codner, member service advisor, at 319-824-5251 to learn more!

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME: WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS WILL DO AND SEE ON YOUTH TOUR:

- Albert Einstein Memorial
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Ford's Theater
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Mount Vernon
- The National Mall
- U.S. Capitol tour
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- Washington National Cathedral
- White House
- World War II Memorial

Enter the essay contest by March 25



iowayouthtour.com



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[@iowaYouthTour](https://twitter.com/iowaYouthTour)



[iowaYouthTour](https://www.snapchat.com/add/iowaYouthTour)



[iowayouthtour](https://www.instagram.com/iowayouthtour)



[iowayouthtour](https://www.tiktok.com/@iowayouthtour)

THESE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE SPONSORING THE 2024 YOUTH TOUR

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trips this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

Access Energy Cooperative
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Butler County REC
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative
Assoc.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Consumers Energy
East-Central Iowa REC
Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative



ONE IOWA YOUTH TOUR STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A \$1,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP!

During the 2024 Youth Tour this June, a student from each state that participates in Youth Tour will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The Iowa YLC representative will be selected during the Youth Tour trip and will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship.

These young leaders will meet virtually throughout 2024 and into early 2025 and participate in leadership training, practice their public speaking skills, attend co-op forums and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

The YLC experience will culminate at the 2025 NRECA Annual Meeting, held in Atlanta, Georgia. Here, the group will spend a few days reflecting on the experiences they've had throughout the year, attend informational and entertaining conference sessions alongside electric cooperative leaders from throughout the country, and solidify lifelong friendships and connections!

To enter, you will be required to submit an official entry form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement:

Tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in your community.

Entry forms are available at www.iowayouthtour.com. You can submit your essay at this website or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by March 25.

Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 15-21 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the 10th year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living 2024 Youth Tour Contest*!

Of course, students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. However,

students can increase their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op.

More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

Our 2024 Youth Tour Essay Contest is open to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior whose family is served by an Iowa electric cooperative AND to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior who attended all three virtual sessions of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy in October 2023. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine will award one all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. Students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. The winner of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living Youth Tour Contest* will be announced on April 4, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives will have chosen their 2024 Youth Tour participants.

Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Franklin REC
Grundy County REC
Guthrie County REC
Harrison County REC

Heartland Power Cooperative
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lyon REC
Midland Power Cooperative
MiEnergy Cooperative

Nishnabotna Valley REC
North West REC
Pella Cooperative Electric Association
Prairie Energy Cooperative
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
Southwest Iowa REC
T.I.P REC
United Electric Cooperative
Western Iowa Power Cooperative



BACON POTATO CHOWDER

- 8 slices bacon (½ pound)
- ½-1 cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups potatoes, chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1½ cups milk
- cheddar cheese, optional

Cut bacon into ½-inch pieces. In a 3-quart saucepan, cook bacon over medium heat until browned. Add onion and continue cooking, 2-3 minutes until tender, drain. Add potatoes, water, salt and pepper. Continue cooking 15-20 minutes until potatoes are tender.

Reduce heat to low, stir in soup, sour cream and milk. Continue cooking, 3-5 minutes, stirring occasionally until heated through. Season to taste and top with cheese, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

**Peg Visser • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

CREAMY SQUASH SOUP

- 7 pounds butternut or other winter squash variety
- 2 large, sweet onions, chopped
- olive oil
- water
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary
- ½ teaspoon sage
- 1 tablespoon salt, or to taste
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional

Bake butternut squash whole at 350 degrees F for approximately 1 hour, until soft when poked with a large fork at the stem end. Remove from oven and let cool. Cut open and remove seeds. Winter squash, if used, will need to be cut in half before baking cut-side down until tender.

Sauté onions in enough oil to keep from sticking. Sauté on high at first to get hot, then on low until onions are clear. Stir more frequently after onions are clear. Sauté until brown and caramelized (do not burn). Blend 1½ cups squash with ⅓ of the onions with just enough water to be smooth and mostly pourable. Repeat two more times. Stir all batches together in slow cooker or heavy-bottomed soup pot. Add rosemary, sage, salt and cayenne pepper, if desired. Simmer for ½ hour or until seasoning flavor comes out. Serve piping hot. Leftovers can be frozen. *Serves 6*

**Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**



Looking for a new recipe? Search our free archive of tried-and-true recipes from rural Iowa kitchens! Search by keyword, category or main ingredient: ieclmagazine.com/recipes

TATOR TOT SOUP

- 1 32-ounce bag tater tots
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound ham, chopped or cooked bacon
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 5-7 hours. Add more milk during cooking if a thinner consistency is desired. *Serves 6-8*

Stacy Venteicher • Glidden
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

CREAMY CHICKEN TACO SOUP

- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added black beans
- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added whole kernel corn
- 1 10-ounce can mild diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3-4 chicken breasts, cooked and diced
- 1 ounce taco seasoning
- 1 tablespoon dry minced onion
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- corn chips, optional
- cheddar cheese, optional

Drain and rinse beans, drain corn. Add the first seven ingredients to a slow cooker. Cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in cream cheese, and top with corn chips and cheddar cheese, if desired.

Angie Graeve • Reinbeck
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

HUNTER STEW

- 2 pounds venison
- 4 carrots
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 4 potatoes, chunked
- 2 cups stewed tomatoes
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup

Chop venison into 1-inch cubes. Cut carrots into 1-inch chunks. Mix all ingredients together in roaster pan. Cook at 250 degrees F for 4 hours.

Jeff Gropper • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

HEARTY HAM SOUP

- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups raw potatoes, diced
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 1 10-ounce package frozen peas, thawed
- 1¼ cups cooked ham, diced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon celery salt
- blue cheese wedge, optional

In a heavy, 2-quart saucepan, melt butter. Add onion, potatoes and water. Cover and bring to steam. Lower heat to simmer, then cook about 15 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Stir in flour, then slowly add milk. Cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Stir in peas, ham, salt, marjoram, pepper and celery salt. Let simmer until peas are cooked, about 5 minutes. Serve hot and add a wedge of blue cheese crumbled over soup, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcia Rich • Lockridge
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

TURKEY DISHES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 29

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



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

MAIL: Recipes

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

INDUSTRY LEADERS SHARE ENERGY INSIGHTS AND TRENDS

In December, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) held its 2023 Annual Meeting at the Sheraton West Des Moines Conference Center with more than 350 registered attendees. At the event, which carried the theme “Powerful Connections,” board directors and employees from Iowa’s locally owned electric co-ops received informative updates from the statewide board and staff, in addition to learning about industry trends and best practices from invited speakers.

Leaders share insights and perspectives on future trends

The IAEC Annual Meeting also provided the opportunity for attendees to learn more about the electric industry and future trends that may impact rural Iowa’s economy and quality of life.

IAEC presented several educational sessions, including hearing from the following industry leaders:

- Author, podcaster and film producer **Robert Bryce** discussed the physical and barriers to a rapid transition from carbon-based energy sources. He provided a realistic forecast about how our electric grid will change in the coming decades.
- **Kavi Chalwa** and **Jeff Kappen** from Bâton Global discussed disorder in geopolitics and how it will influence economic growth on various scales. They provided insights on how Iowa’s electric cooperatives can best navigate these challenges for organizational success.
- **Mark Tiemeier** of the Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO) informed attendees about how changes in the electric generation mix and resources challenge grid operators. Tiemeier is responsible for leading MRO’s annual regional risk assessment.

Editor’s note: The information on the next page is a high-level overview of some points covered during each speaker’s presentation and are the perspectives and opinions of the speakers based on their knowledge and research. Their points address what they believe to be issues or concerns of interest for utilities, including electric cooperatives.

POWERFUL CONNECTIONS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

ROBERT BRYCE



Robert Bryce is a Texas-based author, journalist, film producer, and podcaster. The host of the Power Hungry Podcast, Bryce has been writing about energy, power, innovation and politics for more than 30 years. His articles have appeared in many publications, including the Wall Street Journal,

New York Times, Forbes, Time, Austin Chronicle and Sydney Morning Herald.

Key points

- There are significant land use conflicts when it comes to building more wind, solar and high-voltage transmission. In the past nine years, at least 603 wind and solar projects have been rejected in the U.S.
- Since 2000, the U.S. has reduced CO2 emissions the most of the world's six largest economies. Four countries – the U.S., U.K., Germany and Japan – have reduced emissions, while India and China have increased emissions. In fact, China has increased more than eight-fold over U.S. emissions.

- The U.S. Department of Energy says the nation needs a 57% increase in high-voltage transmission. Currently, there are 240,000 miles of high-voltage transmission in the U.S. From 2008 to 2021, 1,700 miles per year were built in the U.S. At this rate, it will take 80 years to meet the forecasted need for high-voltage transmission.
- Utility product cost inflation is at an all-time high, increasing by 33% since 2020. There is a one- to three-year wait for transformers. Foreign companies dominate the high-power transformer market.
- Since 2008, when then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger mandated renewable energy use, California's electric rates have grown 3.2 times faster than the rest of the U.S.
- China dominates the entire downstream electric vehicle battery supply chain.
- For the first time, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation cited “energy policy” as a threat to the reliability and resilience of the bulk power system.
- Energy security is national security.

KAVI CHALWA



Kavi Chalwa has spent the majority of his career as a strategy advisor and consultant to private and public-sector organizations, supporting them with the development and execution of their global growth strategies. Prior to transitioning into an advisory role, Kavi was in the investment banking industry. Kavi's sector expertise includes energy. His

regional expertise is focused on high-growth markets, especially the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key points

Recommends businesses and energy providers pursue an aggressive “Iowa and Me” internationalization strategy by:

- Diversifying our trade relationships to target countries that align with Iowa's economic growth clusters and that have high levels of current and projected future alignment to U.S. policies on the Chinese Communist Party.
- Building relationships with third-country-based investors to attract investment into Iowa-based business, Iowa-based innovation and Iowa-based research.
- Flexing Iowa's muscle to protect and mitigate downside impacts of restrictive policies on Iowa businesses.
- Flexing Iowa's muscle to create favorable conditions for accelerating entry into new growth markets for Iowa businesses.
- Mobilizing the collective power of commodity and association groups to serve as a force multiplier for Iowa businesses.

MARK TIEMEIER



Mark Tiemeier, P.E., MBA, is a highly experienced electrical professional with focused expertise in the power systems and regulatory fields. He has extensive knowledge in modeling transmission components. The Midwest Reliability Organization is a non-profit organization dedicated to the reliability and security of the bulk power

system in the central region of North America, including parts of both the U.S. and Canada.

Key points

Extreme weather, consumer demand, and changes in technology and generation resources continue to present a rapidly increasing number of challenges to grid planners and operators. Physical and cybersecurity risks also continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace. The top risks to electric reliability are primarily being impacted by the following factors:

- Conventional, baseload generation (e.g., coal) is being retired and replaced with dispersed, variable generation (e.g., wind and solar), tightening reserve margins.
- Increasingly bold cybercriminals seek to exploit vulnerabilities in utilities' networks to disrupt normal operations of the grid.
- Extreme weather continues to cause generating resource outages, limiting energy supply at the same time as demand increases.
- Increasing amounts of generating resources that are physically distant from load is straining transmission capacity and limiting import capability.

CO-OP EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES



Nichole Heaverlo, consumer accountant, celebrates four years with Grundy County REC on Feb. 3.

Heaverlo is knowledgeable and great at what she does – a true asset to the cooperative and its members. When you call Grundy County REC, chances are she is the friendly voice on the other end of the line assisting you!



First Class Lineman Karl Nielsen celebrates his 12th service anniversary on Feb. 6! Nielsen

takes great pride in his work and does a fantastic job ensuring anyone with questions receives an answer they can understand. He's also quick to jump in and help whenever needed.

Congratulations to Nichole and Karl!

We appreciate all you do for Grundy County REC and its members.



Learn more or apply at www.grundycountyreca.com/youth-tour.

APPLY TODAY – 2024 YOUTH TOUR!

The deadline to apply for Youth Tour is quickly approaching!

Do you have a student in their sophomore, junior or senior year of high school who is interested in history, public service, advocacy or leadership? Don't let them miss out on this excellent opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C.

Participants will learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, while also visiting with their congressional representatives and seeing popular tourist destinations and historical sites.

The 2024 Youth Tour will be held June 15-21. **The deadline to apply is March 1.**

2024 IOWA YOUTH TOUR T-SHIRT CONTEST

\$300 CASH PRIZE!



ABOUT THE CONTEST

- Open to any high school student (grades 9-12) regardless of co-op membership status.
- The theme is the seven cooperative principles and leadership.
- Shirt will be worn on one day of Youth Tour.
- The state of Iowa must be referenced.

TIMELINE

- Contest begins: Jan. 1
- Submissions due: March 1
- Winner announced: March 8



Scan this code to upload your T-shirt design.

SUBMISSIONS: Entries must be submitted to Dropbox for review.

www.iowayouthtour.com

WINTER WEATHER HITS SERVICE TERRITORY

Grundy County REC was fortunate during the winter weather that hit our service territory, and the State of Iowa, during the second week of January. Our co-op experienced just a few outages. However, getting to those outages proved to be difficult with the amount of snow, blowing winds and snow drifts making visibility extremely difficult and some roads nearly impassable.

There truly is something about “small town living,” where folks don’t bat an eye at helping out. A huge shoutout to the members who helped plow a lane through covered roads, moved snow away from poles, and, yes, even offering up the use of their snowmobile to make it possible for the crew to get where they need to

be to restore power! We also want to thank the membership for their kind words and encouragement, and to those who did lose power, thank you for your patience and understanding as the crew worked to get the power back on.

Whether it be rain, sleet or snow, our line crew works in all types of weather, and they are ready to respond should the need arise. Always call to report an outage, 319-824-5251, our phones are answered 24/7, 365 days a year.



Are you working on your taxes and need your annual electric bill total? Members can access this information 24/7, year-round, with a couple of quick steps on SmartHub!

SMARTHUB CAN HELP MAKE TAX TIME EASIER

STEP 1: Access SmartHub online or through the mobile app. Not yet registered? Log onto the cooperative’s website, selecting the “Online Bill Pay” button or download the SmartHub app and follow the “New User?” prompts.

STEP 2: Select the “Billing History” option under the “Billing & Payments” tab. From this tab, you can view data for all meters by billing date with total due, view bill PDFs and usage, and access the Payment History tab.

It’s that easy!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Quick Links

- Pay My Bill
- Manage My Account
- View Billing History
- View Usage
- Report An Issue/Inquiry
- Get Help

View and Manage My Usage

We've improved your usage management tools!

Key Features

- Analyze and understand usage trends to find ways to cut back.
- Create and track a monthly budget to avoid unexpected high utility bills.
- Set a point or range in time to compare differences in usage.
- And much more.

Check out all the great My Usage features! [Start Now >](#)

If you need assistance, contact the cooperative at 319-824-5251.

CYBERSECURITY BEGINS WITH PROACTIVE MEASURES



Electric cooperatives recognize the evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to the nation's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to our member-consumers, co-ops are taking proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, can disrupt power reliability. That's why electric co-ops continually assess vulnerabilities, monitor emerging threats and implement cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, co-ops ensure a more reliable power supply, reducing the risk of disruptions.

Electric co-ops implement multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for our local communities and the importance of reliability for our members.

Co-ops deploy advanced monitoring and protection systems that

continuously analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and alert security personnel to potential problems. Additionally, co-ops regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks, and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

A collaborative effort

Electric co-ops regularly engage with other co-ops, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay current on the latest threats.

We also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols.

In addition to internal measures, co-ops establish dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so members can easily identify

individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns. Co-op members are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through dishonest claims, messages sent as emails or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the co-op. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help keep our co-op community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Commitment to reliability and security

Electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to the members we serve. Our top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

We will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of our local communities. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid.

ENTER TO WIN

RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution. To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.

Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



FOR THE LOVE OF BOOK CLUBS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, I'm intrigued by surveys showing that more people (especially younger generations) plan to spend the holiday with friends. It's a different approach that's far less focused on romance.

To me, that's a good reminder of the many forms of caring and love. One of the most inspiring stories I've heard lately came from my friend Marlene Armbrecht, who mentioned she's been a member of a local book club since the fall of 1973.

Once a novel concept

While book clubs are common today, this was a novel concept (no pun intended) 50 years ago.

"All of us were stay-at-home moms or worked part time, so we enjoyed meeting in the afternoon the third Thursday of every month," recalls Marlene, one of the club's original members.

There had been no grand plan to start the club. Arlene Christensen of Lake City and her friend Marilyn Willis (also a Lake City resident) had been reading the new novel, "My Name Is Asher Lev" by Chaim Potok. They decided to invite a few friends to join them.

Within a few years, the club had grown to about nine members, including several newcomers who had moved to Lake City and Rockwell City in the late 1970s. For years, the club met once a month at members' homes. Each member had the opportunity to choose a book every few months. The member who chose the book would purchase copies for her fellow club members, who would then reimburse the hostess at the meeting. The club "modernized" its system when books became available through interlibrary loans at the local library.

Fast forward to March 2020, when club members gathered at Karen Willis's home in Lake City. No one



Marlene Armbrecht (back row, right) is pictured with members of her book club.

knew everything was about to change forever due to COVID-19. As the pandemic spread, club members decided to keep meeting via Zoom video calls – a tradition they still maintain.

"Zoom has allowed several members who had moved out of the area to be active in our group again," says Marlene, who notes that club members are responsible for getting their own books.

The ladies maintain an impressive record book listing the titles they've read through the years. Marlene estimates the total is close to 500 books. No time to read the entire book before the club's next gathering? No worries!

"Everyone is always encouraged to come and just listen," Marlene says. "Sometimes our book discussions are fairly short, but we always share what's going on in our busy lives. What a fabulous support group we were – and still are – for each other!"

A club extending far beyond books

These friends know a book club is much more than books. It's a support system, a second family. Once you're in, you're in for life.



Lake City area book club members in 1986.

"I love these ladies," says Diane Ely of Iowa City. The former Lake City resident is grateful to reconnect with the club, thanks to Zoom. "The richness comes from sharing life experiences. These women feel like extended family."

I had the chance to visit with these ladies this past summer at the Lake City Country Club, where they reminisced, shared updates about their family (including their grandchildren) and looked ahead to the club's 51st year. It's clear their connections become more precious as the years go by.

Author Louis L'Amour once said, "Once you read a book you care about, some part of it is always with you." I love how this truth is also reflected in the cherished friendships that have endured a lifetime, thanks to one remarkable book club.

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

Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com



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Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

As your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**, we are your energy community. The power we provide is much more than a way to keep the lights on, it plugs into the family, friends, and neighbors that make up your local co-op.