

living with energy

IN IOWA

Grundy County REC
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

MAY 2020

Grundy County REC offers electric vehicle charging station rebates ▶ See Page 5



Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

Powering on
during a pandemic

Electric co-ops
support Iowa's
poultry industry

Grundy County REC seeks
board candidates

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For Iowa, the answer to the age-old question is both! Iowa is No. 1 in the nation for egg production, and electric co-ops contribute significantly to this industry domination.



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ON THE COVER

Tyler Herrig, electronics technician, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, prepares Wisdom Unit 2 for a routine combustion inspection. Wisdom Unit 2 is an 80-megawatt natural gas combustion turbine generator keeping Iowans "powered on" from Wisdom Station in Spencer, Iowa. See Pages 6-7 and 14 of this issue for more information about how electric cooperatives are operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo taken by Marena Fritzier, marketing director, Corn Belt Power Cooperative. ⚡



Electric co-ops are helping members in financial need

BY STEVE SEIDL

Electric cooperatives are no strangers to extreme situations, but these are unprecedented times even by our standards. Iowa's electric co-ops have plans and processes in place to manage all types of scenarios, including a pandemic like the one we are currently working through.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, national and local economies are struggling to adapt to social distancing measures. We know many families and local businesses will feel the financial impact from reduced or lost income for months to come. Iowa's electric cooperatives and other utilities have temporarily suspended disconnections for nonpayment to help those in financial need. Please note that while electric and other utility bills may be deferred during this public health emergency, consumers will eventually need to pay for the services they have used.

As we forecast the long-term economic ramifications of COVID-19, electric cooperatives

across America will be financially impacted in the months ahead. The CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association sent a letter to congressional leaders in April encouraging them to take action to support electric co-ops in the next stimulus package. In his letter, Jim Matheson noted that without federal assistance, cooperatives' not-for-profit structure and cost-based

rates may expose them to significant financial distress as the economic downturn causes high nonpayment rates coupled with declining electric load.

Locally owned electric co-ops depend on member-consumers to pay their bills in a timely manner so we can operate as financially stable utilities and ensure safe, reliable service when you need it most. The Iowa Office of Consumer Advocate and the Office of the Attorney General encourage consumers to keep current on utility bills or pay a portion to prevent large unpaid balances and reduce the potential for service disconnection once the public



health emergency has passed. If you received a federal recovery rebate, consider using some of the funds to pay for the essential utility services you use to stay safe, connected and comfortable. ⚡

Steve Siedl is the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Financial assistance for utility bills



Concern for community is a core cooperative principle, and Iowa's electric co-ops are willing to work with member-consumers who may have trouble paying their bills. If you are experiencing financial hardships, please contact your local electric co-op to discuss payment options. Co-op staff can also suggest ways to reduce your energy use to lower your bills. Our top priority is serving our member-consumers, especially in these challenging times.

You may also be eligible for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) financial aid by contacting your local community action agency. At the time of publication, the Iowa Department of Human Rights extended the LIHEAP application period for eligible Iowans until May 31, 2020. Those who demonstrate financial need may qualify for help in paying a portion of their household's utility bill. Learn more at <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply>.

If you are compelled to help your neighbors in need, please consider a tax-deductible donation to customer contribution funds like the RECare Program or Operation Round Up if your co-op participates in them. You can pledge a one-time contribution or a recurring monthly amount to these types of funds and your support will help those in need in your local community. Contact a member service representative at your local electric co-op or visit your co-op's website to learn more.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to keeping the power flowing safely and reliably to you during these turbulent times. ⚡

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Deluxe NOAA Emergency Weather Alert Radio



May is National Electrical Safety Month. Being aware of severe weather is one way to stay safe this season. NOAA Weather Scan will automatically scan through seven available weather (WX) band channels with flood, tornado, thunderstorm, civil danger warnings and more. We'll choose two winners this month! \$70 value each. ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than May 31, 2020. 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 Philips Compact Pasta Maker for Two from the March issue was Josh and Kelli Kauffman, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

OFFICE CLOSING

MEMORIAL DAY

Grundy County REC's office will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day. Our phones are answered 24/7 at 319-824-5251 or 800-390-7605. ⚡



Grundy County REC

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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



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

General Manager/CEO: Vicki Daily

Officers and Directors:

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

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CO-OP GOVERNANCE

Seeking board candidates

As an electric cooperative, Grundy County REC is guided by an elected board of directors who represent our members when making important decisions. It is essential to elect strong directors to your cooperative's board, which is why we encourage members to run in the board elections. Not only do we need to encourage friends and family to run for board positions, but we also need to get out and vote for those individuals who we think will act in the best interests of our cooperative.

The nomination process puts no limit on the number of candidates in a given district. To serve on the board:

- A candidate must hold an active membership and be a bonafide resident in the district he or she is to represent.
- A candidate cannot be in any way employed by, financially affected by or have other interests in a business that competes with the cooperative, its affiliates or sells its products or services to the cooperative. No close relative of a candidate, as defined by board policy, can be employed by the cooperative.
- All candidates should note the time requirements of a director are more than just 12 monthly meetings. Directors should be prepared to devote an average of 25-30 days annually to cooperative business-related activities.



Director elections are scheduled to be held at Grundy County REC's annual meeting on Sept. 10. Currently, two board seats are up for election in two of the seven cooperative districts. The incumbent directors whose terms expire in 2020 include **Larry Rohach, District 4**, and **David Schmidt, District 6**.

If you are interested in being nominated as a director, please contact one of the following nominating committee members to learn about the process.

- Kenneth Fogt, 33465 230th Street, Reinbeck, IA 50669, 319-269-3264, District 4
- Edwin Berends, 28799 C Avenue, Conrad, IA 50621, 641-486-5966, District 6
- Norbert Boyle, 10574 A Avenue, Ackley, IA 50601, 641-751-4916
- Nick Strohhahn, P.O. Box D, Reinbeck, IA 50669, 319-231-3140 ⚡

NEW HIRE

Nichole Heaverlo joins co-op team

Grundy County REC recently welcomed Nichole Heaverlo to our team as our consumer accountant. She lives in Garwin with her fiancé and two children. She has degree in accounting from AIB College of Business. In her spare time, she likes to travel and watch sports. GO HAWKS! ⚡



Up to \$500 incentive rebate for registering your electric vehicle charging station!



Photo: Ford

Electric vehicle (EV) sales are on the rise, and Grundy County REC wants to know if you have an EV. We're offering an incentive rebate for members with Level 2 electric vehicle chargers.

Rebate details:

- Rebate of 50% of a Level 2 charger equipment price (not installation) up to \$500 per charger.
- Rebate is retroactive to all previous installations.
- Rebate is limited to three chargers per household.

- Charger must be hardwired, and installation must meet local codes.
- Member is required to provide charger serial number and specifications.
- Member is required to sign an agreement for future load control.
- Member is required to provide make, model, VIN, license and purchase date information about the vehicle(s).

Contact Mike Geerdes at 319-824-5251 or 800-390-7605 to learn more and apply for the new rebate. ⚡

Congratulations to the 2020 scholarships winners

Grundy County REC congratulates our 2020 scholarship winners! Abigail Roegner of Grundy Center was awarded the Basin Electric \$1,000 scholarship. Derek Kinney, Victoria Kuper and Morgan Hansen were each awarded a \$750 scholarship from Grundy County REC.

Abigail Roegner is the daughter of Chad and Amanda Roegner. Abigail attends Roegner Homeschool and plans on attending the University of Georgia. She is going to study veterinary medicine and wants to help people spend as much quality time as possible with their animals.



Derek Kinney is the son of Gerald and Keri Kinney. Derek attends Dike-New Hartford High School. Derek plans to major in business and has not yet decided the college he will attend.



Victoria Kuper is the daughter of Ryan and Monica Kuper. She attends AGWSR High School. Victoria plans to attend the University of Iowa to study communication and media. Her goal is to enter a career field where she can use her skills to inspire others to become honest and respectful leaders.



Morgan Hansen is the daughter of Brad and Tricia Hansen. Morgan attends Hudson High School. She plans to attend Luther College and study nursing. Her goal is to become a travel nurse after college before settling down at a more stationary job. ⚡



Renewable energy

Iowa Choice Renewables can provide you with local and trusted solar energy options. For more information about installing a new system, contact Mike Geerdes, member services manager, at 319-824-5251 or 800-390-7605. ⚡



Powering on during a

Electric cooperatives demonstrate resilience in planning and operating

BY ANN THELEN

As providers of an essential service, electric cooperatives perform a lot of work behind the scenes for electricity to be available when a member-consumer flips the light switch or turns on a computer. The continually evolving dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic show how much we rely on electricity during these challenging times. Thanks to reliable power and technology, many employees across Iowa's diverse economy transitioned to remote work environments successfully.

Iowa's generation and transmission cooperatives took aggressive planning measures before the COVID-19 crisis emerged in the state. Their resiliency allows Iowans to power on through this pandemic with safe and reliable energy.

Co-ops are hard at work

Although most co-op offices throughout Iowa have closed their doors to visitors, their message is clear – we're still working to provide members with safe, reliable power.

"The situation may have altered how we do business, but it hasn't changed what we do – serving our members with power when they need it," says Bill Cherrier, executive vice president/CEO of Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO). CIPCO's distribution co-op members serve a population of nearly 300,000 rural and urban residents in 58 of Iowa's 99 counties.

Weeks before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, CIPCO conducted a pandemic simulation

with its workforce. Dan Burns, vice president of utility operations for CIPCO, led the exercise.

"While we regularly conduct planned emergency response simulations, we held a surprise tabletop exercise for a pandemic in February," Burns explains. "As part of the simulation, we operated under a hypothetical scenario that 40% of our essential staff was unavailable due to pandemic. With this reduction, we would have minimal staff available to run the power plant and transmission system."

Taking this approach allowed CIPCO to map out in advance how the co-op would react in the situation. Leadership examined employee bench strength, outlining the people who knew how to do different jobs within the organization other than their current roles. They discussed what would happen if certain power plants needed to run more to compensate for other temporary plant closures. The team prioritized what maintenance projects could be deferred without sacrificing reliability to member-consumers.

"Our dispatch system is our most critical area and the hub of everything we do to keep the power flowing," Burns says. "We made that area off-limits to anyone other than the five people who work in dispatch."



NIPCO Transmission Superintendent Steve Harringa leads a morning crew meeting to discuss the day's work in the garage instead of in the crew office to allow for proper social distancing.



Jon Behounek, chief system operator, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, oversees daily control center operations. Behounek is a North American Electric Reliability Corporation-certified operator.



Jon Myer, IT administrator, Corn Belt Power, works to maintain Corn Belt Power Cooperative's corporate network inside the co-op's server room.

G&T cooperatives

Generation and transmission cooperatives (G&Ts) provide wholesale power to distribution co-ops through their own electric generation facilities or by purchasing power on behalf of the distribution members.

Distribution cooperatives

Your local distribution cooperative is part of the foundation of the electric cooperative network. As a co-op member-consumer, it is your direct point of contact in the delivery of electricity and other services.

pandemic

Construction continues on CIPCO's Summit Lake Expansion project to add new generating units. COVID-19 has impacted the way the work is carried out. CIPCO staff have minimized direct contact with construction personnel, increased cleaning activities and are working solo as much as possible. Contractors have also responded to COVID-19 with their own measures.

An always-prepared mindset

At Corn Belt Power Cooperative, whose distribution co-ops serve members in 41 north-central Iowa counties, similar measures were taken through rigorous cleaning and restricting access in the control center and other areas.

"Our control center operators are essential for keeping the system online. They manage high-voltage power lines that only certified NERC (North American Electric Reliability Corporation) operators can do," explains Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager for Corn Belt Power. "Dependable power production relies on the regulation of the transmission network, which provides electric energy from generation facilities. A disruption can affect many locations and consumers."

Electric cooperatives are veterans at preparing for emergencies, such as tornadoes and ice storms. This always-prepared mindset has served the co-ops well in the pandemic situation, one of which this country hasn't seen since

the Spanish Flu more than a century ago. Even with intense planning, it's unpredictable.

"No one is ever 100% prepared for a pandemic of this magnitude," says Matt Washburn, executive vice president/general manager of Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO), whose distribution cooperatives serve Iowans in 10 counties. "Because of our cooperative business structure, we've been able to nimbly adapt to the daily changes of the pandemic."

Kuyper echoes the value of the cooperative structure. "We always put our members' needs first and are proud of our exceptional track record of reliability and service."

Safety remains paramount

Like CIPCO and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, NIPCO placed significant emphasis on first keeping its employees safe, and then ensuring remote work could be seamless. The IT teams worked tirelessly to ensure staff and distribution cooperatives

were able to effectively and efficiently work remotely.

At every co-op, safety is paramount. Under normal conditions, working with power lines and equipment can be dangerous if the proper processes and procedures are not followed. With the pandemic causing distractions, there is the potential for that atmosphere to create an unsafe work environment. It's a daily priority for co-op leaders to mitigate and minimize distractions by helping their workers keep safety top-of-mind at all times. They do so by following strict workplace cleaning standards, distancing practices and a constant refinement of processes.

"Planning and preparations have allowed us to provide reliable power just as we have always done," Cherrier says. "This situation will make cooperatives even stronger and more prepared. It's in our cooperative spirit to work together and power on." ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.

Ensuring the continuous delivery of safe and reliable power

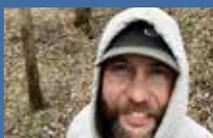
Key steps taken by Iowa's G&T cooperatives



■ **Taking trucks home.** Crew members are assigned trucks to take home, if necessary, so they can go directly to job sites rather than reporting or returning to co-op headquarters or warehouses.



■ **Ramping up hygiene and distancing.** Work areas are cleaned between shifts, in-office workdays are alternated when appropriate, start times are staggered and distancing procedures are strictly enforced.



■ **Performing solo projects.** Focusing on jobs out in the field that can be completed by one person at a time to increase distancing.



■ **Working in pairs, staggered starts.** Lineworkers are staggering start times and working in the same pairs to avoid spreading COVID-19.



■ **Facilitating remote work.** IT departments ensure all employees who need to work remotely have laptops and VPN connections.



■ **Providing ways to collaborate.** Employees who are working remotely use software, such as Microsoft Teams, to facilitate face-to-face online collaboration.

See Page 14 for a photo gallery of how these cooperatives #PowerOn.

RECIPES TO

Celebrate Spring



Grandma's Rhubarb-Pecan Muffins

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar, divided
- 3/4 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 2 teaspoons orange peel, finely shredded
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 1 1/4 cups rhubarb, finely chopped

In a large bowl, combine flour, 3/4 cup sugar, pecans, baking powder, salt and baking soda. In another bowl, beat together egg, cooking oil, orange peel and orange juice. Stir in rhubarb. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour in the rhubarb mixture all at once. Stir until just moistened, batter should be lumpy. Line muffin cups with paper baking cups. Fill 2/3 full. Sprinkle with 1/4 cup sugar. Bake at 400 degrees F for about 20 minutes or until golden. Remove from pans, serve warm. Makes 14-18 muffins.

Diane Wilson • Grinnell Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Strawberry Pie

- 1 quart fresh strawberries
- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups and 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Sort, then rinse and halve strawberries. Place in the pie crust. Sift flour, 1 1/2 cups sugar and salt together in a bowl. Add sour cream and stir well. Pour this mixture over the strawberries. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons sugar on top. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Reduce oven to 350 degrees F and bake for another 30 minutes or until crust is a golden brown.

Patricia Hawk • Danville • Access Energy Cooperative

Asparagus Guacamole

- 1 1/2 pounds asparagus, cut into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
- 3 green onions, sliced thinly
- 1/2 jalapeno pepper, minced
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 dash hot pepper sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

Cook asparagus until tender. Drain and puree in food processor. Combine puree with remaining ingredients. Refrigerate until ready for use. This recipe has fooled many people into thinking it was avocado guacamole.

Rae Jean Hollopeter • Ladora T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Crunchy Rhubarb Crisp

- 4 cups fresh or frozen rhubarb, diced
- 1 3-ounce box strawberry gelatin
- 2/3 cup quick oats
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup butter

Place rhubarb in a 2-quart glass baking dish. Sprinkle gelatin over the rhubarb. Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl. Cut in butter until crumbly and sprinkle evenly over rhubarb. Microwave for 12-16 minutes on high until tender. Makes about 6 servings.

Monica Wuebker • Rockwell City Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

FIRST TO RIPEN

Strawberries are the first fruit to ripen each spring. Considered a member of the rose family, they give off a sweet fragrance as they grow on bushes. If you come upon a bush of them growing, you'll find they smell as sweet as they taste.

Asparagus Casserole

- 4 cups asparagus
- 1 cup water, lightly salted
- 2 cups croutons, crushed
- 8 ounces shredded cheese
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- French fried onions

Cook asparagus in lightly salted water. Combine croutons and cheese. Add soup to undrained asparagus. Layer ½ of crouton mixture in a 2-quart casserole and ½ asparagus mixture. Repeat and top with French fried onions. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes.

Lillian Schweer • Donnellson
Access Energy Cooperative

Rhubarb Punch

- 1 quart rhubarb juice
- 1 6-ounce can frozen orange juice
- 1 6-ounce can lemonade juice
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 package cherry powdered drink mix
- 3½ quarts water

Make rhubarb juice by cutting rhubarb and covering with water. Cook until soft, then strain off juice. Mix rhubarb juice with all the ingredients listed and serve. Makes 5 quarts.

Linda Cuvelier • New Hartford
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative



Search our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's co-op cooks.

www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes

Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

- 4 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups and 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup butter
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 egg
- ½ cup ice water
- 2 cups rhubarb, chopped
- 2 cups strawberries, sliced
- ¼ cup Minute tapioca egg whites

For the pie crust, measure flour, salt and 1 tablespoon sugar in a mixing bowl; cut in the shortening and butter. Combine the vinegar, egg and ice water then add to the first mixture until incorporated. Chill for 1 hour. For the pie filling, stir together the rhubarb, strawberries, remaining 2 cups sugar and tapioca. Roll out half the pie dough. Place the dough in a pie pan and pour in the filling. Roll out remaining dough, place on top of filling and crimp edges together. Put a glaze of egg white on top crust and sprinkle with sugar if desired. Cut 4 slits in top crust. Bake at 400 degrees F for 40-50 minutes, covering the crust if needed, to prevent over browning.

Tammi Christensen • Chariton
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Blush Rhubarb Jam

- 5 cups rhubarb, cut in ¼-inch pieces
- 1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 small package strawberry Jell-O

Mix rhubarb, pineapple and sugar. Let stand for 2 hours, then boil for 12 minutes. Remove from heat. Add Jell-O and mix well. Process in hot water bath canner for 15 minutes to seal.

Jane Person • Batavia • Access Energy Cooperative

IT'S A VEGETABLE

Rhubarb is a member of the buckwheat family and botanically speaking, it's a vegetable, not a fruit.

SPRING FOOD FACTS

SEEDS ON THE OUTSIDE

The average strawberry has 200 seeds, and it is the only fruit to wear its seeds on the outside.

SPRING FOOD FACTS

LEAVE OUT THE LEAVES

Never eat rhubarb leaves, cooked or raw. Eating the leaves can be poisonous because they contain oxalate.

SPRING FOOD FACTS

WHITE ASPARAGUS

White asparagus comes from the same plant as green asparagus, but it is grown underground to block sunlight and prevent photosynthesis, thus inhibiting production of chlorophyll.

SPRING FOOD FACTS

Wanted: Favorite apple recipes for fall! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Apples are a favorite fruit of the fall season. Whether you use them in desserts, in salads or as a complement to a pork dish, the possibilities are endless. Share your favorites, and if we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is May 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:

Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

Which comes first, the

BY KAY SNYDER



Photo: Iowa Poultry Association

For Iowa, the answer to the age-old question is BOTH! With nearly 59 million laying hens, producing approximately 16 billion eggs annually, Iowa far outpaces other states in both categories. Add to that the 12 million turkeys that are raised annually in Iowa, and you can see why Iowa is a poultry powerhouse. Another interesting fact is that Iowa's electric cooperatives contribute significantly to this industry domination, not only by powering farms and companies but also in recruiting and supporting existing poultry businesses and operations.

Thirty-five years ago, amid the farm crisis and major recession, Iowa electric cooperatives came together in the spirit of cooperation to develop the unified economic development organization, Iowa Area Development Group (IADG). At that time, Iowa ranked in the bottom 25 states for poultry production and produced only about 18 million eggs per year.

Industry research tapped to guide this economic development effort gave high priority to the value-added agriculture industry and identified access to raw materials for feed as a significant factor setting Iowa apart

from other states. Based on the reports, IADG and partners focused on growing Iowa's egg and poultry industry, as well as expanding the supply chain and processing facilities. Fast forward 35 years, and Iowa is the industry leader in poultry and egg production. IADG and Iowa's electric cooperatives remain active partners providing reliable electric power and supporting the farmers, suppliers and businesses that make up Iowa's value-added ecosystem. ⚡

Beyond production to processing, West Liberty Foods – Two decades of growth

In 1996, the Louis Rich turkey plant (owned by Kraft Foods) in West Liberty announced it was closing. Swiftly, 47 turkey growers formed the Iowa Turkey Growers Cooperative, purchased the plant from Kraft and named it West Liberty Foods (WLF). Though turkey prices were volatile for the first couple of years, a purchase agreement with Kraft helped keep the company in operation. In 2003, WLF purchased an Access Energy Cooperative speculative building and opened a further processing facility in Mount Pleasant, complete with the nation's first Clean Room Food Processing Systems. Two years later, they expanded and added a state-of-the-art quality assurance laboratory. Today, WLF has six locations in three states and employs over 2,900 people. In addition to Iowa plants in West Liberty, Sigourney and Mount Pleasant, WLF operates in Utah, Illinois and Arkansas. IADG honored WLF in 2000 with the Value-Added Agriculture Venture Award. ⚡

Hatcheries Feed Markets



Select Genetics Hatches Turkeys in Osceola

In 2011, Valley of the Moon, as part of Aviagen, built a state-of-the-art hatchery in Osceola. The 87,000-square-foot hatchery can set 50 million eggs per year and hatch about 800,000 turkeys per week. As a result of a 2018 merger, the company is now Select Genetics. The company continues to supply commercial turkey poults to the U.S. market. Clarke Electric Cooperative is the electric provider for Select Genetics and also nominated them for an Iowa Venture Award in 2011.



Hy-Line North America

In 2016, Hy-Line North America opened a 95,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art egg production facility – its largest hatchery – on a 25-acre site in the Wilton Industrial Park. Hy-Line North America delivers high-quality, day-old chicks to customers across the U.S. and British Columbia. The Wilton hatchery is capable of producing 150,000 chicks per day. Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative serves the Wilton Industrial Park and nominated Hy-Line North America for a 2015 Iowa Venture Award. ⚡



chicken or the egg?



Photo: Iowa Poultry Association

Diversifying farm operations with a new opportunity

Four years ago, Costco announced it was investing \$400 million in a new poultry complex in Fremont, Nebraska, to supply its stores with chicken. The plant started operating in 2019, and an estimated 120 new broiler sites were needed to meet the demand for chickens. The barns need to be within a 100-mile radius of Fremont, making three Iowa counties eligible. Currently, about 10-15 percent of the farmers are in Iowa. Lincoln Premium Poultry provides the chicks, feed, technical expertise, veterinary services, base pay with a performance bonus and other support. For many, this offers an opportunity to diversify their operations, be a full-time farmer and not require off-farm employment.

Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative spearheaded this western Iowa initiative, hosted several information meetings and now serves 52 chicken barns, with four more under construction. Each barn is 640 feet

by 63 feet, longer than two football fields. Additional barns in Iowa include four served by Western Iowa Power Cooperative and another four coming online soon.

Harrison County Farm Bureau President Mike Dickinson built four new broiler barns and saw this as the opportunity of a lifetime. Dickinson grew up on his family's farm. He knew he wanted to join the operation but also needed to support his family of five. He became a nurse, which provided him the opportunity to work three 12-hour shifts while earning a salary and benefits, leaving the other four days to support the farm. Today, Dickinson operates four broiler barns, raising 168,000 chickens at a time. He expects to raise six flocks per year. The houses remain vacant for two weeks between flocks to allow time for maintenance and prep work for the next flock. His father, David Dickinson, was a Harrison County REC board member for approximately 25 years. ⚡

COVID-19 unintended consequence

It turns out that in addition to toilet paper and hand sanitizer, people have also been panic-buying chickens. The Murray McMurray Hatchery of Webster City was featured in a *New York Times* article discussing that their inventory of chicks was completely sold out for several weeks in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Farm stores that carry chicks also report long lines of people who are hoping to buy chicks. Many are first-time owners, and their motivation is two-fold. Food security is one benefit. Many people feel that if they are going to be at home for several months, this can provide time to begin a new hobby and nurture the chicks as they grow. ⚡



IADG and member electric cooperatives promote Iowa at trade shows.

What is an Iowa Venture Award?

On behalf of its member utilities, IADG annually honors distinguished Iowa companies and entrepreneurs with the Iowa Venture Award. This award recognizes outstanding businesses for providing leadership, capital investment and employment opportunities for rural Iowa. ⚡

Crack open the benefits – May is National Egg Month

BY KAY SNYDER



As you reach for your next egg, pause for a moment and reflect on the importance of Iowa's egg industry. Iowa leads the nation in egg production, caring for nearly 59 million laying hens producing approximately 16 billion eggs. Iowa's egg farming families achieve this incredible level of production by being

committed to raising healthy flocks; producing safe, healthy, affordable eggs; and protecting the environment for future generations. In addition to producing more eggs than any other state, Iowa egg farmers process more eggs than any other state in the U.S., with the eggs being made into frozen, liquid, dried or specialty egg products. ⚡

Iowa's poultry and egg industry

Iowa ranks No. 1 in the nation for egg production, caring for nearly 59 million laying hens producing nearly 16 billion eggs per year, and No. 1 in egg processing.

- Iowa produces enough eggs to provide an egg-a-day for all Americans for 47 days.
- Iowa produces almost 1 out of every 6 eggs in the U.S.
- Iowa's chicken layers consume 55 million bushels of corn and 504,500 tons of soybean meal annually.
- Iowa "breaks" an estimated 42% of the eggs further processed in the U.S.
- Iowa's egg producers contribute about \$2.4 billion in total sales, some 8,825 jobs and nearly \$22.8 million in state tax revenues.
- One large egg is just 70 calories and provides six grams of protein and all nine essential amino acids. ⚡

Egg crystallization facility experiences growth

Nutriom is a growing, family-owned company from Washington state that invented a technique for drying eggs to keep their fresh flavor, nutrition and functionality. The Iowa Area Development Group made contact with the leaders of Nutriom at a trade show. Nutriom was planning to expand and an Iowa location would put them closer to a steady egg supply.

They began operation in a 29,000-square-foot existing building in Panora. The company has experienced steady growth and has completed the construction of a 9,000-square-foot pasteurizing facility, allowing for increased capacity and quality control. Guthrie County REC, Farmers Electric Cooperative in Greenfield, Central Iowa Power



Cooperative, Panora Communications Cooperative and Aureon were among seven organizations that supported this recent expansion through their respective Revolving Loan Funds.

Nutriom's product is called OvaEasy Egg Crystals. Through an innovative drying process, the egg maintains the flavor and functionality of the original egg product without adding chemicals,

preservatives or any other additives. They have been using their food dehydration technology since 2003 to produce unique egg products that solve otherwise serious logistic, shelf life or storage problems.

Nutriom was honored with a 2018 Iowa Venture Award. Nutriom is a customer of Panora Municipal Utilities, a wholesale electric customer of Guthrie County REC. ⚡



Seek savings through energy efficiency upgrades

BY DERRILL HOLLY

If May's warmer weather has you thinking about the sultry summer months ahead, this could be a great time to consider energy-saving options and making plans to help control your energy costs.

There's a combination of things you can do yourself, like making slight modifications to your family's routine that can help identify and achieve opportunities for savings while keeping your home more comfortable throughout the summer cooling season ahead.

Tune it up

When it comes to heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment, spending a few dollars at the beginning of the season can add up to big savings and help you avoid expensive surprises and system failures.

A qualified service technician with the right skills and equipment will check critical components like the compressor and condenser, clean the coils and inspect the ductwork. A technician may also offer advice on how to get the most value out of your programmable thermostat.

According to experts with the ENERGY STAR® program, sealing and insulating ductwork can improve the overall efficiency of your HVAC by as much as 20%. Making sure systems are appropriately sized can also improve performance.

Consider replacing systems that are more than 10 years old (or those that no longer keep your home comfortable) with a high-efficiency system that is properly sized and designed to meet your needs.

Gain insights

Sometimes it pays to get the big picture, so when it comes to energy efficiency and getting real value for your home improvement dollars, professional advice is an excellent



During summer months, consider using smaller appliances like a slow cooker to eliminate heat gain in the kitchen.

Photo: Scott Van Osdol

place to start.

Your local electric cooperative may be able to recommend professionally trained energy advisors who can conduct comprehensive assessments and provide recommendations that could help you control energy costs and improve comfort.

Energy audits include an examination of heating, cooling and water heating equipment, as well as interior and exterior lighting. Other available services can include inspections and assessments of windows, crawl spaces and other voids for air leaks, which can degrade HVAC performance.

According to the DOE's Energy Information Administration, a professional energy auditor will review monthly, seasonal and annual energy bills, consider household occupancy patterns, and examine condition, age and use of appliances and other electronics.

An analysis developed from the collected information can help determine a series of recommendations that, if accomplished, can produce savings. Homeowners can then decide which

measures fit into their budgets or schedules.

Make small changes to add savings

When your goal is to keep the house cool and comfortable, remember that any activities adding heat and humidity to your air-conditioned spaces can increase your costs.

Open doors don't just allow people to come and go. They also provide an instant exchange of cooler inside air for warm, moist air, much the same as the cooling effect you experience when standing in front of an open refrigerator. A cooler stocked with cold drinks and chilled snacks and placed outdoors can help cut down on household traffic on hot summer days.

Ceiling fans operating in air-conditioned space can make you feel about 4 degrees cooler while you are in the room. But the benefits only occur when a room is occupied. Make it a habit to turn off the fan when you leave the room. ⚡

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

#POWERON

The resiliency of electric cooperative employees allows Iowans to power on through the COVID-19 pandemic with safe and reliable energy. Behind the scenes, these are some examples of employees hard at work to keep power flowing. ⚡

BY ANN THELEN



Grant Jackson, control operator, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, monitors the Wisdom Unit 1 burner control system during operation at Wisdom Station in Spencer. Wisdom Unit 1 is a 38-megawatt natural gas generating unit with fuel oil back up.

Two CIPCO employees made face coverings to help protect the health of co-workers. Learn more about this effort on Page 4 of this issue.



NIPCO Engineering & Operations Manager Jayme Huber (*center*) leads a NIPCO construction planning meeting with System Protection Engineer Chris Larson (*right*) and Apparatus Services Manager Jeff Persinger (*left*). In-person meetings continue with staff while observing recommended social spacing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.



CIPCO Journeyman Lineman Lee Madison works solo on a variety of projects in the field. Home start and frequent check-ins help line crews stay socially distanced.

NIPCO Crew Foreman Tom Berkenpas disinfects a service truck. Equipment and fleet vehicles undergo regular and thorough cleaning and disinfecting to protect line crews.



Joel Harklau, system operator, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, monitors daily control center operations. Harklau is a North American Electric Reliability Corporation-certified operator.

When cocooning becomes cloying

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Most of us have spent the last month hunkered down trying to avoid a nasty little bug that has spread quickly across our country. I'm pretty much a stay-at-home person anyway, so the thought of having some unscheduled time to pursue house projects and devour books sounded heavenly. After about 10 days, I found myself having in-depth conversations with the cat and admiring Gov. Kim Reynolds' wardrobe choices.

Here's what I learned during my cocooning:

- Lack of time at home is something we're always complaining about, right? We all want more "me time"; more hours to work on our house, play with our kids, go for walks in nature. That's what we want until we're forced into it. Then, knowing we have no other choice, claustrophobia sets in. Days blur into a week. The lack of a routine disorients us and makes us lethargic. I performed the Annual Changing of the Closet, putting winter clothes in storage and getting the spring ones out before realizing I have nowhere to wear them. I rearranged my linen closet twice. (Okay, in full disclosure, it's a cupboard with a couple shelves that hold bedsheets. I've been experiencing illusions of grandeur while I'm home.)
- Working from home exposes every technological glitch known to humankind. At one online meeting with 10 people, we spent 20 minutes trying to get everyone on the same digital page. Our leader did something weird from his end and cut all of us off. When we got back online,



several participants could hear the others, but we couldn't hear them. One person kept changing his background as we met. One moment he was sitting in front of the Eiffel Tower; the next, the pyramids of Egypt. To say it was distracting would be an understatement. Those whom we couldn't hear ended up making signs and holding them up to the camera. Smoke signals might have been as effective.

- Entertainment becomes a relative term in captivity. After one long, tedious day, Kent and I spent 15 minutes FaceTiming with our grandsons and listening to them oink at each other. We've become easily amused.
- We've become a nation of panicky would-be hypochondriacs. Try standing in line (6 feet apart, naturally) at the pharmacy. If

you have the bad luck to sneeze or cough, you will immediately have to follow that up with, "It's allergies! Really!" as you get the side eye from the others in line, who fully expect a giant red X to appear on your chest any moment.

- I've learned to become more empathetic with shut-ins. For them, "shelter in place" is their life. I vow to call, visit or send messages more often.

Perhaps by the time you read this, we'll be settling back into a new normal. I hope so; I have a closet full of brightly colored spring clothes that I need somewhere to wear. 🌩

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.



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