

● JULY 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**2025 Nominating  
Committee report**

**The heart behind  
Joyful Java**

**Recipes: Firecracker  
favorites**

**Powering community spirit in Grundy Center ► See Page 4**

# CONTENTS



VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 7

3

## STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Taking stock of Iowa's  
2025 Legislative Session

3

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Solo Stove  
tabletop fire pit

14

## TRAVEL IOWA

Choose Iowa Passport  
highlights agritourism

15

## OUT BACK

107 years of life,  
wisdom and wit

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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Peg Visser, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!



# TAKING STOCK OF IOWA'S 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY HALEY MOON



The 2025 Iowa Legislative Session officially adjourned in the early morning hours of May 15, after lawmakers worked through the night to

finalize a budget agreement. With a projected adjournment date of May 2, this session included nearly two weeks of “overtime.”

Throughout the session, Iowa's electric cooperatives maintained a strong presence at the State Capitol, advocating for the interests of their member-consumers under the Golden Dome. With more than 1,800 bills introduced this year, many of which related to energy, a unified cooperative voice was more important than ever.

Co-op engagement took many forms, from large events to one-on-one meetings. Our Welcome Back Legislative Reception in January provided a valuable opportunity to meet with nearly 100 legislators at the start of session, while our REC Day on the Hill event in March brought around 200 rural electric co-op advocates to the Capitol. Individual visits, countless emails, phone calls and participation in local forums all helped reinforce the co-op message throughout Iowa's 2025 Legislative Session.

## Defending service territory

This constant grassroots engagement resulted in several legislative successes for Iowa's electric co-ops. One major victory was the defense of Iowa's service territory law, a cornerstone that ensures cooperatives can continue to deliver reliable, affordable electricity to rural Iowans. One proposal would have changed how the Iowa Utilities

Commission considers service territory changes, potentially disadvantaging co-ops and the rural Iowans we serve. Thanks to strong advocacy, these proposals were ultimately set aside by both House and Senate Commerce Committees.

## Stopping a third-party solar program

Another key success was halting the advancement of a bill that would have created a third-party solar program in Iowa. While electric cooperatives support solar as part of a diversified energy portfolio, this bill raised serious concerns as it would have allowed third-party companies to operate as utilities without being held to the same regulatory standards. Additionally, the program's structure could have shifted costs to consumers who chose not to participate. Co-ops support solar solutions that are fair, cost-effective and strengthen the electric grid; criteria this bill did not meet.

## Modernizing energy infrastructure

Gov. Kim Reynolds also introduced a comprehensive energy bill that included a right of first refusal provision for electric transmission projects, which Iowa's electric cooperatives supported. While this bill did not advance, we look forward to continued conversations about modernizing energy infrastructure to meet Iowa's future needs.

Though the 2025 session has ended, our advocacy work continues. Iowa's electric cooperatives are already preparing for the 2026 session, which will convene Jan. 12. Until then, we will remain actively engaged with lawmakers and those seeking political office to ensure the cooperative perspective continues to be heard. Keep up to date on these activities by following Iowa Rural Power on social media or at [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org).

*Haley Moon is the senior manager of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## WIN A SOLO STOVE TABLETOP FIRE PIT!

The Solo Stove Runner tabletop fire pit captures the essence of gathering around a fire with friends and family. The Runner features a clean, smokeless flame that doesn't have to be vented, bringing the warmth and ambiance of a real fire without the mess or hassle. It's an effortless way to enjoy the glow of a flame, anywhere.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than July 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of \$100 in beef certificates from the May issue was **Duane Adams**, a **Prairie Energy Cooperative** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!**

# POWERING COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN GRUNDY CENTER

We're excited to be out and about this month, powering community spirit at events that bring so many people together! These opportunities reflect our cooperative's commitment to the communities we serve – not just by powering our members, but also by showing up, interacting, educating and supporting the communities we call home.

## July 12 - Felix Grundy Days Parade

Who doesn't love a good parade ... with candy?! Grundy County REC is excited to, once again, be part of the Felix Grundy Days Parade.

## July 25 - Grundy County Fair

The Grundy County REC linemen will be at the Grundy County Fair on Friday, July 25, for live high voltage safety demonstrations! Demo times are 10:30 a.m., noon and 1:15 p.m.

Stop by one of the safety demos to enjoy free Hansen's Dairy ice cream and enter for a chance to win a \$100 Lost Island Gift Card!\*

*\*Winner will be randomly drawn and announced on Friday, July 25. You do not need to be present to win. This is open to all who attend the safety demonstrations; one entry per person.*



Stay tuned to see where Grundy County REC will be next month, continuing to power community spirit!



**Grundy County REC**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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



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**General Manager:** Michael Geerdes

### Officers and Directors:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee of Grundy County REC duly appointed by the Board of Directors, hereby nominates the following members of the Cooperative for the office of Director for the ensuing term of three (3) years each, all to be elected at the Annual Meeting to be held Sept. 4, 2025.

### District 1

Kevin Pruisner, incumbent  
Shawn Samo

### District 5

Matt Kopriva, incumbent

### District 7

Jason Paper, incumbent

DATED at Grundy Center, Iowa this 30th day of June, 2025, and posted on the 2nd day of June, 2025, in the office of the above-named Cooperative. There were no Nominations by Petition submitted to the Cooperative.

# PROMOTING SAFETY: FROM OUR TEAM TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Safety is the number one priority at Grundy County REC. May was Electrical Safety Month, so it was the perfect opportunity for the co-op to provide electrical safety education.

## Local students

Line Foreman Karl Nielsen and Member Service Advisor Brady Codner participated in the Grundy County Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, presenting high-voltage demonstrations to more than 200 local students from across the county.

## First responders

Partnering with our local emergency management, Grundy County REC welcomed more than 30 local first responders into our facility for a safety demonstration and electrical safety presentation. These dedicated professionals often work near energized equipment during emergencies, and our team was excited

to share tips to help ensure their safety while responding in the field.

## Our team

With support from Jim Wolfe, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative's safety instructor, our office staff and operations crew took part in advanced emergency response training. Our linemen also completed their annual pole top climbing competency and bucket truck rescue exercises. Both are important in reinforcing safety protocols and readiness in the event of an emergency. These are things we hope to never have to use, but we are grateful knowing what to do should the need ever arise.

From educating our youngest residents to equipping first responders and our own employees, our focus on safety is constant and community driven.



## SKAKENBERG PROMOTED TO FIRST CLASS LINEMAN

We are excited to announce that Derek Snakenberg passed his final apprenticeship test last month and has been promoted to first class lineman.

Congratulations, Derek! We are excited to see you continue to grow with Grundy County REC.

## You're Invited! GCREC MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENT

FOX RIDGE WINERY  
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WEDNESDAY, AUG. 6  
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TODAY!

- ✓ Dinner on us – food truck style!
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- ✓ Bucket truck rides
- ✓ Bounce houses
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# EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR OLDER HOMES

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

I love old homes. I've always been drawn to the details and craftsmanship. The features of older homes can make them less efficient than modern construction, but it doesn't have to be a trade-off. You can keep the charm and make your home more efficient.

Start by prioritizing the invisible upgrades that make your home more comfortable and efficient. When we were kids, I don't think any of us thought, "When I grow up, I want to spend my hard-earned money on insulation." It's not as exciting as new countertops or a remodeled bathroom, but air sealing and insulation can save you money every month. Then you can apply the savings to aesthetic improvements.

## Addressing your home's envelope

Many older homes are not properly insulated. Insulation has several benefits beyond sealing your home and keeping outdoor air from seeping in. It reduces outdoor noise, makes your home quieter and improves your overall comfort.

Always properly air seal before you insulate. Older homes with pocket doors, coved ceilings, dumbwaiters, doors to attic spaces and laundry chutes allow indoor air to escape through the cavities, gaps and cracks around these classic features. Sealing off open cavities around those features often requires plywood, rigid foam or drywall fastened into place and then caulked around the edges.

Keep an eye out for framing features that cause drafts. Balloon framing is a type of construction where wall studs run all the way from the foundation to the roof, allowing air to flow freely through those spaces. Second floors with knee wall attics on both sides are notorious for air leakage. Open cavities allow air to flow horizontally between the attic spaces, making the home uncomfortable and inefficient. Seal off the open cavities in the floor framing and insulate attic spaces.

Dense-packed cellulose or closed cell foam insulation can be sprayed into exterior walls. Skilled contractors can remove pieces of siding and drill holes to fill the wall cavities from the outside of the home. For brick or stone homes, holes can be drilled from the



inside and then patched and painted. Insulating walls from the inside of the home requires more time and effort in preparation and cleanup, but having well-insulated walls is worth it.

Knob and tube wiring – commonly used from the early 1880s to the 1930s with no grounding wire – should be replaced prior to insulating walls and attics for safety purposes. Contact between insulation and knob and tube wiring can create a fire hazard.

People often think new windows are the best way to improve a home's efficiency. Considering the cost of replacing windows, I recommend investing in air sealing and insulation first. Then, consider storm windows to keep the charm of the original windows, such as leaded glass and stained glass windows in good condition. Choose from interior or exterior options that are operable and inoperable.

### Appliance improvements

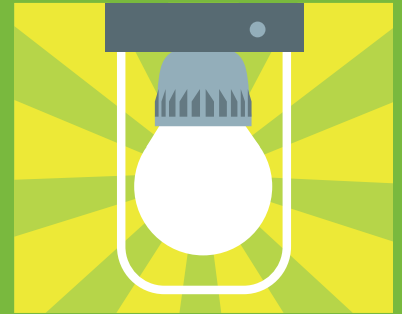
Once you've addressed the envelope of your home, consider appliance improvements. Replace your old electric water heater with a heat pump water heater. This upgrade can save a family of four an estimated \$550 per year and more than \$5,600 over the lifetime of the water heater, according to ENERGY STAR®.

Invest in high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment. A mini-split heat pump, also known as a ductless heat pump, is a more efficient option than electric baseboard heating and provides the benefit of air conditioning.

Older homes don't have to be inefficient. Show your home some love and invest in energy efficient upgrades.

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

## ALWAYS CONSIDER AN ENERGY AUDIT



An energy audit is a comprehensive assessment of your home or business designed to identify ways to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs. It's an important first step when considering energy efficiency improvements. Contact your local electric cooperative for more information.



There are many ways to keep the charm of an older home and improve its efficiency. Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



The first step to improving an older home's energy efficiency is air sealing and adding insulation to attic spaces. Photo Source: Bonneville Power Administration



Prioritize the invisible upgrades that make your home more comfortable and efficient, such as adding blown-in insulation to your attic. Photo Source: Bonneville Power Administration





# Firecracker Favorites

## MEXICAN STREET CORN

- 6 medium ears sweet corn
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mayonnaise
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh cilantro, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon lime zest, grated
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 6 tablespoons cotija cheese
- 2-3 teaspoons chili powder

Carefully peel back corn husks to within 1 inch of bottom, remove silk. Rewrap corn in husks and secure with butcher's twine. Place in Dutch oven, cover with cold water. Soak corn for 20 minutes, then drain. Grill corn over medium heat 25-30 minutes until tender, turning often. Meanwhile, in a small bowl combine sour cream, mayonnaise, cilantro, garlic, lime zest and lime juice. Peel back husks, spread sour cream mixture over corn. Sprinkle with cotija cheese and chili powder. Serve immediately. *Serves 6*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## ALCINDA'S JALAPEÑO SPAGHETTI DIP

- 2 pounds spaghetti noodles
- 1 12-ounce jar jalapeño slices
- 1 32-ounce jar mayonnaise
- corn chips

Break spaghetti into 2 to 3-inch pieces, boil and drain. Chop jalapeños with juice into small pieces. Stir together jalapeños, noodles and mayonnaise. Refrigerate overnight. Serve with corn chips for dipping.

Andrea Mosbach • Webster City  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

## CHEESE STUFFED JALAPEÑOS

- 25 fresh jalapeño peppers
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 3 cups cheddar cheese, finely shredded
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 4 strips bacon, fried and crumbled

With gloved hands, cut peppers in half and remove seeds and membrane. Mix the remaining ingredients and spoon into pepper halves. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake at 400 degrees F for 10 minutes. *Serves 15*

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## JALAPEÑO POPPERS

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons garlic powder
- 16 fresh whole jalapeño peppers
- 8 pieces bacon, thinly sliced, cut in half crosswise

Mix together cream cheese, cheddar cheese, Parmesan cheese and garlic powder until thoroughly blended. Lay a jalapeño pepper on a work surface and cut a lengthwise sliver from the side, exposing seeds and white membrane. With the handle of a teaspoon, scrape out seeds and membrane, leaving the pepper hollow. Repeat for all peppers. Chop the removed pepper slivers and mix into cheese stuffing. Stuff each pepper with cheese mixture and wrap in a half bacon slice. Secure with toothpicks. Grill stuffed jalapeños on a less hot part of a grill for about 30 minutes, until peppers are hot and juicy and bacon is browned. *Yields 16 pieces*

Marilyn Obrien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative



## DAL (RED LENTIL) SOUP

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons ginger, grated
- ½ teaspoon Hot Madra curry
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 cups dried red lentils
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- fresh cilantro for topping, chopped

In a large pot, heat oil for 1 minute. Add onions and cook for 5 minutes until soft and clear. Stir in garlic, ginger, curry, cumin, turmeric, cayenne and salt. Cook for 1 minute then add lentils and broth. Turn up heat to bring mixture to a boil. Once boiling, lower heat and add coconut milk. Simmer soup for 20 minutes. Add tomatoes and continue simmering for another 5 minutes or until lentils are soft. Remove from heat. Stir in lemon juice and add salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot in bowls, topped with cilantro. *Serves 4*

Jacqueline Minikus • Pisgah  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

## CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP

- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cheddar cheese soup
- or 4 ounces Velveeta cheese
- 1 can spicy nacho cheese soup
- 2 cans milk
- 1 4-ounce can green chiles
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1½ cups chicken, diced
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- optional: nacho chips, sour cream

Mix ingredients and heat through. Serve with nacho chips, sour cream and more shredded cheese, if desired. *Serves 8*

Carla Jansma • Hudson  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## FIRE CRACKERS

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons crushed red peppers
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 2 tablespoons dry ranch seasoning powder
- 1 box saltine crackers (4 sleeves)

Mix oil, red peppers, garlic powder, onion powder and ranch seasoning together. Microwave for 1 minute to infuse flavors. Pour over crackers and stir gently. Let stand 15 minutes before eating. These are great with meat or cheese, crushed onto a salad, or just as a snack.

Carol DeJong • Sibley  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## CHICKEN JALAPEÑO LASAGNA

- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 cup jalapeño peppers, chopped
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cubed
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and cubed
- 1 cup chicken broth, divided
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce, optional
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 8 ounces lasagna noodles, cooked
- 8 ounces pepper jack cheese, shredded
- 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

In a large skillet, sauté garlic, onion and jalapeños in butter until tender. Add cream cheese. Cook and stir until melted. Stir in chicken and ½ cup chicken broth. Add hot sauce if desired and season to taste. Combine the pepper jack and cheddar cheese. Pour the remaining ½ cup broth into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Layer three noodles, half the chicken mixture and half the cheese mixture. Repeat layers. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 30-45 minutes, until bubbly. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing.

Sue Warner • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## PEPPER JACK CHICKEN DIP

- 8 ounces pepper jack cheese
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 large can chunk chicken
- 1 can jalapeños, optional
- chips or crackers

Mix first four ingredients together and heat in a slow cooker or microwave. Serve with chips or crackers.

Stephanie Messner • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## WANTED:

## PIE RECIPES

**THE REWARD:**  
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### Deadline is July 31

Submit your favorite pie recipes. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

**EMAIL:** [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

### MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322



# A DIVERSE FUEL MIX IS ESSENTIAL FOR RELIABLE POWER

BY MICHAEL LEITMAN

Our electric grid is most reliable when a wide range of technologies, including traditional and renewable energy sources, is available.

Providing members with safe, reliable and affordable power is the mantra for electric cooperatives across the nation. Co-op members can see the work necessary to maintain reliable electricity at the local level, such as co-op lineworkers maintaining utility poles and wires and repairing them after major storms. At the regional and national levels, a diverse mix of power generation resources, transmission lines and pipeline infrastructure are essential cornerstones of maintaining reliable electricity.

The U.S. electric grid has undergone major changes over the last decade. The share of electricity generated from coal plants has declined significantly, while the share from natural gas and intermittent wind and solar generation has grown. Fuel diversity means that your electricity is supplied by a variety of generation technologies, each with their own characteristics and performance capabilities over different weather and seasonal conditions.

## Common types of generation

Dispatchable technologies can be turned on and off as needed. Large steam generation plants (most commonly using coal or nuclear fuels) are generally considered “baseload,” meaning that they are designed to run efficiently 24/7 to

serve as the base of the electricity mix. However, steam plants are less capable of ramping output up or down to meet the various peaks and dips as grid conditions change.

Natural gas is the most versatile fuel, powering large combined-cycle plants that can operate as baseload but are also more flexible with ramping up and down. These capabilities are essential for meeting demand on the hottest and coldest days and for balancing intermittent renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind.

Most hydroelectric power comes from generators inside large dams, which can be dispatched when needed – as long as there is enough water available.

Over the last decade, the share of electricity generated from wind and solar plants has increased. These plants can deliver renewable energy – but they only generate electricity when the wind blows and the sun shines. The production patterns of solar and wind technologies are complementary to one another. Solar energy is generated during the day, and wind tends to generate more at night. Across seasons, wind output is typically higher during the colder months when there is less sunshine. Deployed together, wind and solar technologies can help balance each other.

## Battery storage

While battery energy storage technology is growing, allowing some control over when renewable energy sources can be dispatched, natural gas plants remain the primary method for “firming” renewable generation resources. There are also barriers to battery storage such as the significant cost and physical size of battery systems.

Ultimately, our electric grid is most reliable when a wide range of technologies is available. When conditions lead to lower generation from one type of source, others can help compensate for the shortfall. When there is an imbalance, such as a major winter storm that causes electricity use to skyrocket, grid operators are forced to rely on purposefully reducing demand and occasionally plan rolling outages to keep the grid operating.

While there is variation across regions in what types of power plants can be built based on weather and infrastructure, electric cooperatives work diligently to ensure a diverse and reliable power supply for the communities they serve.

*Michael Leitman writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



# WATT'S THE BIG FISSION? THE RESURGENCE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

From electric cooperatives to tech giants, nuclear energy is witnessing a comeback after nearly a decade with no new activity. Over the last year, there have been major nuclear energy announcements, from recommissioning power plants to purchasing deals by hyper-scalers like Meta, Google and Microsoft.

The nuclear comeback has already impacted cooperatives. With U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) financing, Holtec International is restarting the Palisades Power Plant in Michigan with Wolverine Power Cooperative and Hoosier Energy as the main offtake customers. In addition, Constellation Energy is restarting Three Mile Island Unit 1 in Pennsylvania.

"The rise of artificial intelligence and need for stronger computing power and data centers has led technology firms to pursue reliable and carbon-free electricity from nuclear power," CFC Senior Energy Industry Analyst Alisha Pinto said. "The main players in the tech and data center world – Meta, Google, Amazon, Equinix and Oracle – are signing letters of intent and investing in advanced nuclear reactors and small modular reactors (SMRs)."

Across the U.S., there are 54 commercially operating nuclear power

plants in 28 states with a total of 94 reactors. Nuclear energy accounts for more than 18% of the U.S. electricity generation mix. The latest reactor to come online was the Vogtle Unit 4 in Georgia, serving electric cooperative members through Oglethorpe Power.

"Nuclear energy is viewed as a stable and reliable source that provides almost 24-hour electricity," Pinto says. "The capacity factor (the utilization rate) is very high at 92.3%. In comparison, the capacity factor of natural gas plants is about 55%, while wind and solar are between 25% to 35%."

The fuel supply chain is a key part of the puzzle in the expansion and resurgence of nuclear energy. The U.S. has mining and production operations for uranium in the western parts of the country. Of the five production facilities that are running, three are in Wyoming and two are in Texas. However, most of the uranium used in the U.S. is imported from other countries.

"Limited domestic production capacity has resulted in the U.S. importing 99% of the uranium needed to fuel its nuclear power plants," Pinto says. "In 2023, the main trading partners for uranium were Canada,

Australia, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Most recently, Uranium Energy Corporation and Radiant Energy announced an agreement to collaborate on enhancing the nuclear fuel value chain. Securing the domestic supply chain will support U.S. energy security needs."

The policy landscape will also help to shape the future of nuclear energy. Both the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided financing for nuclear technology and supply chain development. Under the IRA, which is currently under review, DOE is expected to finalize contracts with 10 companies to enhance domestic uranium production. Additionally, the Trump administration announced funding for the deployment of SMRs.

"The main challenges to deploying new nuclear energy are the high investment costs and the long timelines for approvals, construction and commercial operation," Pinto said. "Long-term growth in the sector will be determined by how quickly and efficiently it can develop and meet new electricity demands."

*Source: CFC Solutions News Bulletin, published by the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation*



Renewable energy sources like solar and wind provide many benefits, but they only generate electricity when the sun shines or the wind blows.



The U.S. electric grid has undergone major changes over the last decade. The share of electricity generated from coal plants has declined significantly, while the share from natural gas and intermittent wind and solar generation has grown.



The Palisades Nuclear Power Plant. Photo Source: Holtec International

# CO-OP REVOLVING LOAN FUND HELPS A NEW LOCAL BUSINESS

At Grundy County REC, our commitment to community runs deep. We believe that powering homes goes hand in hand with empowering people and the communities we serve. That's why we actively invest in the growth and well-being of our rural communities through more than just reliable electric service, but through strong local partnerships as well.

Through our Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program, we're helping our communities grow by supporting

efforts that build stronger local economies, bring job opportunities to the area and improve daily life.

So far in 2025, Grundy County REC is excited to announce that we've been a part of three new local RLF projects. Stay tuned to future magazine editions to learn about the great projects your cooperative has had the privilege of being a part of. For this issue, we're spotlighting one business: Joyful Java!



Pictured from left: Joyful Java owners Angie Koop and Laura Dove and Grundy County REC General Manager Michael Geerdes. Geerdes presented a check from the cooperative's RLF program.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# JOY COMES IN THE MORNING: THE HEART BEHIND JOYFUL JAVA

Located in Dike, on a quiet corner of Main Street, a long-vacant building is coming back to life – not just with the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, but also with the spirit of friendship, community and restoration. Two lifelong friends, Angie Koop and Laura Dove, have poured their hearts into a shared dream: opening a welcoming coffee shop that feels like home.

Joyful Java is more than just a coffee shop where you can stop for that morning latte or a bite to eat. It showcases hope, love and togetherness, all while giving a nod to the past. Brought about by a friendship that inspires action and being named from the verse Psalm 30:5 – ***Tears may flow in the night, but joy comes in the morning*** – the

Joyful Java story is unique and inspiring.

## A dream years in the making

Angie and Laura had long felt that Dike needed a place where people could gather – not just for good food and coffee, but for connection. They pictured a cozy gathering place that offered fresh, homemade breakfast and lunch,

a place where friends could meet, where kids could study and where community groups could gather.

That vision began to come to life when the friends heard that the old corner building – a fixture of Dike's history – might soon be available. What began as a dream and a conversation between two friends turned into a reality.

## A building with a story

Located at 568 Main Street, the building has been a part of the community since its founding in 1900. Throughout its history, the building has served many purposes over the decades – doctor's office, general store, pharmacy, dime store and restaurant – but had been vacant since 1989. It may be most favorably remembered for the soda fountain and the Green Rivers that were enjoyed!

*Continued on Page 13*



This photo from 1905 is one of the earliest photos of the building where Joyful Java is now located.



*Continued from Page 12*

The two friends committed to a full renovation, balancing historic preservation with modern needs, like the importance of being fully handicapped accessible. The restoration included returning the decorative tin ceiling to its original beauty, reviving the gorgeous lavender stained glass above the entry and bringing back the front picture window.

Even the original cornice and dentil molding at the roofline and time period-appropriate door knobs are being replicated as a tribute to the building's past.

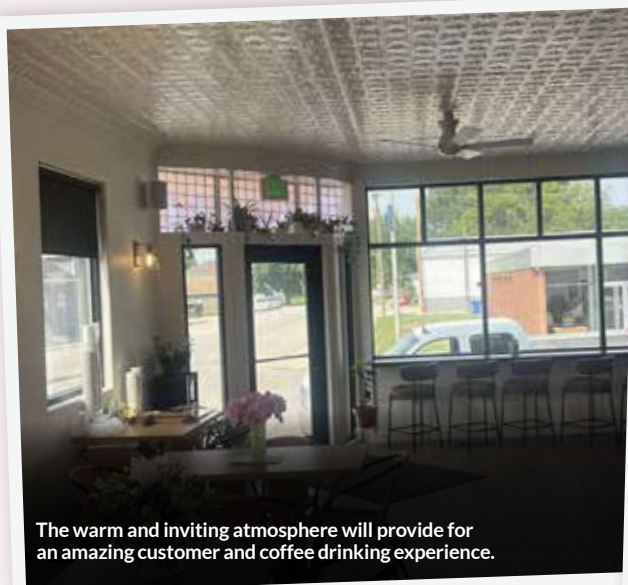
Upstairs, renovations are underway on a two-bedroom apartment that will blend modern conveniences with the original character of the building.

### A place for community

Joyful Java will be open Monday through Saturday, from 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., offering a menu full of fresh and thoughtful options: coffee drinks, smoothies, iconic Green Rivers, acai bowls, quiche, sourdough sandwiches, protein balls, salads, soups, and baked goods like cinnamon rolls and Danish pastries.

But beyond the menu, Angie and Laura are creating something deeper – a place where the town can gather, talk, laugh and connect. A private conference room will be available for small meetings, study groups or family celebrations. The welcoming vibe can even be found in the little details, like the cozy fireplace, comfortable seating, plants propagated by local students and art-lined walls.

Their hope is that Joyful Java will become a part of everyday life in Dike – the place people start their mornings, meet up with friends or simply find a moment of peace.



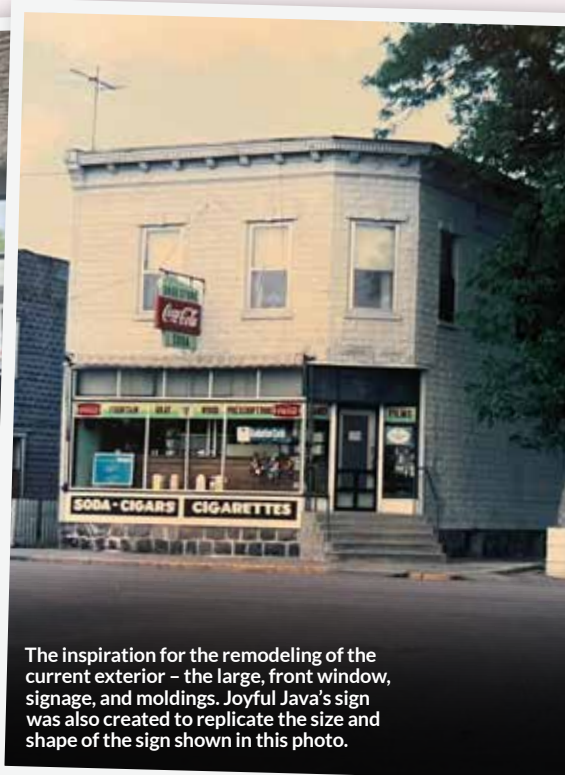
The warm and inviting atmosphere will provide for an amazing customer and coffee drinking experience.

In restoring this building, they are preserving a piece of Dike's history. And in opening its doors again, they're inviting the entire community to be part of something joyful, something lasting and something truly meaningful.

### A heart for inclusion

Both women bring invaluable life experience to the venture. Laura owned and operated Tangos Salon in Cedar Falls for eight years before stepping back to raise their four children. Angie worked for years in special education at the Central Rivers Area Education Agency, helping students with disabilities gain life and employment skills.

Now retired, Angie is channeling her full energy into Joyful Java and continuing her passion for inclusion. The coffee shop is partnering with Dike-New Hartford High School's special education program to provide meaningful, work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities. Its location, just one block from the school, makes this initiative especially powerful. Joyful Java plans to employ high school students, giving young people a chance to learn valuable job skills in a supportive environment.



The inspiration for the remodeling of the current exterior – the large, front window, signage, and moldings. Joyful Java's sign was also created to replicate the size and shape of the sign shown in this photo.

### More than coffee

Joyful Java is a labor of love – love for the town, for tradition and for the friendships and conversation that will flourish within its walls. With every cup poured and friend that walks through their doors, Angie and Laura are offering something special; they are offering a joyful place to gather, to remember and to build new memories.

Joyful Java – where joy comes in the morning and the community is always welcome!



Joyful Java's revitalized storefront with a gorgeous, original lavender stained glass window.

# CHOOSE IOWA PASSPORT OFFERS AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig recently announced the launch of the Choose Iowa Passport. The free, interactive digital platform is designed to help Iowans and visitors find farms and farm stands, orchards, you-pick opportunities, farm-to-table dining and restaurants, farmers markets, and even boutique shops featuring locally sourced Iowa products, including Iowa-raised meats. This innovative marketing initiative, a collaboration between Choose Iowa and Travel Iowa, promotes unique agritourism experiences and encourages visitors to enjoy food, beverages and agricultural products that are grown, raised and made in Iowa.

Users of the Choose Iowa Passport can check in at participating locations via their smartphones to earn points, which can be redeemed for prizes.

"This partnership between Travel Iowa and Choose Iowa offers authentic agritourism experiences

that celebrate and elevate Iowa's agricultural prominence and heritage," said Secretary Naig. "The Choose Iowa Passport is free to sign up for, easy to navigate, and users can support local farmers and businesses while earning rewards featuring products from Choose Iowa members. I encourage everyone to set out on their own adventure and use the Choose Iowa Passport to make memories with friends and family."

## Find Choose Iowa products

Beyond visiting Choose Iowa Passport locations, consumers looking to support and purchase local Iowa products can look for the Choose Iowa logo and know these items are grown, raised or made in Iowa. Farms and businesses that join the Choose Iowa branding and marketing program can add the Choose Iowa logo on their products, which meet or exceed established criteria and standards.

Choose Iowa's membership is climbing steadily, with many of the 264 current members offering on-farm retail. This collaboration between Travel Iowa, the state's official tourism office within the Iowa Economic Development Authority, and Choose Iowa supports rural communities while connecting travelers with agritourism, farm-to-table dining and unique agricultural experiences.

"Agritourism is one of Iowa's greatest competitive advantages," said Amy Zeigler, tourism manager at the Iowa Tourism Office. "The Choose Iowa passport offers a way to educate visitors about the vital role agriculture plays in our economy and serves as an invitation to experience the unmatched hospitality of rural Iowa. We're excited to draw visitors from across the state and country to explore our farms, markets and small towns in a way that's uniquely Iowa."

## KEY FEATURES OF THE CHOOSE IOWA PASSPORT

- **Free and easy to use:** The Choose Iowa Passport is free and mobile-friendly with no apps to download. It is accessible anytime via smartphone.
- **Earn rewards:** Choose Iowa Passport users can check in at each stop to earn points and redeem them for prizes, including Iowa products.
- **Explore authentic Iowa destinations:** Discover farms with on-site retail, agritourism experiences, farm-to-table restaurants, and retailers offering Iowa products and farmers markets showcasing local products.
- **Support local:** Connect with Iowa farmers, businesses and restaurants committed to selling and sourcing Iowa products.

Visit [www.chooseiowa.com](http://www.chooseiowa.com) to learn more.



Photo Sources: Choose Iowa and Travel Iowa





# 107 YEARS OF LIFE, WISDOM AND WIT

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Did you hear about the 107-year-old World War II veteran from Sac City who joined the graduating class of East Sac County High School this past May to get his honorary diploma?

News articles that went around the globe noted how Orville “Orv” Von Ehwegen graduated from eighth grade during the Great Depression. Then his father informed the 14-year-old he’d have to stay home and work on the family farm. Orv would never attend high school.

I knew I had to meet Orv. A friend in Sac City connected me with Orv’s daughter, Pat, who was visiting her dad around Memorial Day weekend. Orv and Pat graciously invited me to stop by that Friday afternoon. We had a delightful visit on his sun porch, overlooking the backyard bird feeders.

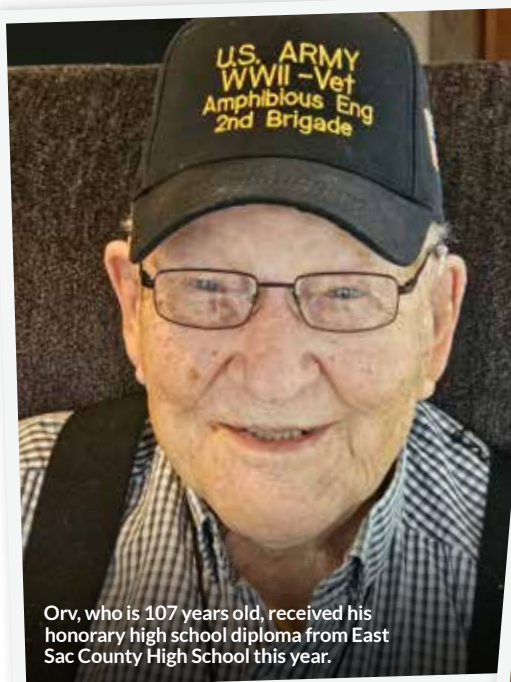
We chatted a bit about how Sen. Chuck Grassley and others had been calling to congratulate Orv. “It’s getting kind of old!” he joked. We also chuckled about how Orv was 89 when most of his fellow 2025 East Sac graduates were born.

While he received a standing ovation at graduation, I hope everyone there truly grasped what a treasure was in their midst.

## Remembering rural electrification

Orv, who was born Aug. 21, 1917, grew up on a farm southwest of Sac City in Wall Lake Township. I rarely get to interview people with this much life experience, so I didn’t waste any time in my quest to gather information about his life history. I asked him about rural electricity on the farm.

His father, Karl, had installed a Delco battery plant on the farm. “There were a whole bunch of batteries – I mean a whole bunch of ‘em,” Orv said. The Delco plant was anchored to a cement block and had an exhaust system and a muffler. The 32-volt



Orv, who is 107 years old, received his honorary high school diploma from East Sac County High School this year.

system could power one light in each room of the farmhouse, along with a couple lights in the barn, but you couldn’t have too many lights on at once, Orv noted.

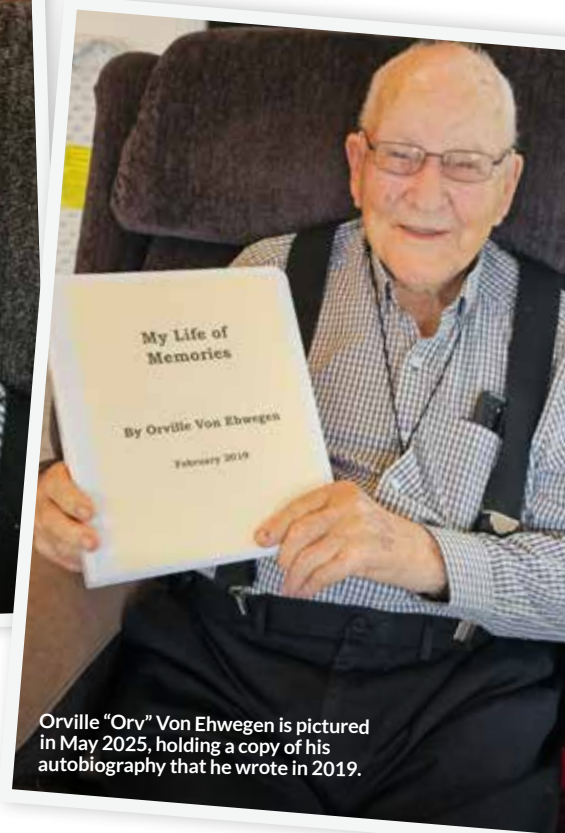
When rural electrification came to the area, farm families could get a free yard light if they hooked up to the electric line. “I was glad we got 110-volt rural electricity,” Orv said. “That meant I didn’t have to carry that darn lantern out to the barn anymore. That was such a fire risk.”

Even with electricity, farming meant lots of hard, physical labor, especially for a young teenage boy like Orv who was required to do a man’s work.

## When the going gets tough, the tough get going

Things didn’t get any easier when Orv was drafted into the Army during World War II. He was seconds from death when a Japanese bomber blew up the truck he was driving in New Guinea.

Orv served in the military from 1942-1945. After returning home to Sac County, he and his wife



Orville “Orv” Von Ehwegen is pictured in May 2025, holding a copy of his autobiography that he wrote in 2019.

Ruth ran an appliance store in Sac City. The couple enjoyed 56 years together before Ruth died in 2003.

Through it all, Orv’s Christian faith is stronger than ever. “God’s still got a reason for keeping me here,” he said.

Orv’s friends will tell you life hasn’t always been easy for him, yet he keeps smiling and remains positive. It makes me think of these words of wisdom I saw online:

“Some of the kindest souls I know have lived in a world that was not so kind to them. Some of the best human beings I know have been through so much at the hands of others, and they still love deeply, they still care. If that isn’t something to be in awe of, I don’t know what is.”

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives

July 2025

Visit our website at [www.grundycountyrecia.com](http://www.grundycountyrecia.com)

A photograph of a family of four sitting on a lawn in front of a house. A young girl stands on the left, wearing a blue shirt. A boy sits next to her in an orange shirt. A woman sits in the center in a floral dress, and a man sits on the right in a plaid shirt and a baseball cap. They are all smiling and talking. In the background, there is a house with a porch and some garden plants.

# WHERE WE HAVE MEMBERS WE ACTIVELY LIVE OUR COMMITMENT

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