

# living with energy

IN IOWA

Grundy County REC  
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

SEPTEMBER 2021

Meet Grundy County REC Director David Schmidt ▶ See Page 12



INTRODUCING  
**THE 3**  
WINNING  
VOLUNTEERS



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

Tips for a safe harvest

Learn about Iowa's Youth Leadership Academy

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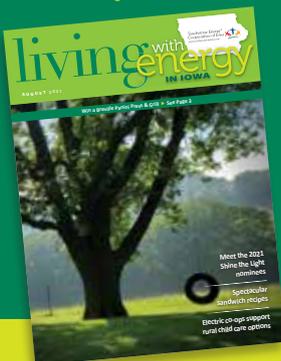
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On Pages 10, 11 and 14 of this issue, meet the three individuals featured on this month's cover. Each is a shining light in their communities. ✨

# What's in a name?

BY ANN THELEN



Styles come and go, trends evolve and change, but one thing that never goes out of style is what it means to be part of an electric cooperative. Since

locally owned electric cooperatives first brought power to rural Iowans in the 1930s, the momentum fueled by the cooperative spirit has only strengthened.

A business model that has endured the test of time sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. Your electric cooperative adheres to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community. Owned by the member-consumers we serve, Iowa's community-focused electric cooperatives power the lives of 650,000 Iowans throughout all 99 counties and are committed to delivering safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible power.

## Sharing what it means to be an electric cooperative member

Each month, through the pages of this magazine, we share what it means to be an electric cooperative member. We embrace with pride the opportunity to tell the stories of community volunteers, such as our Shine the Light winners in this issue; to highlight economic development success stories helping communities prosper; and encourage youth to become engaged in the future success of the electric cooperative industry.

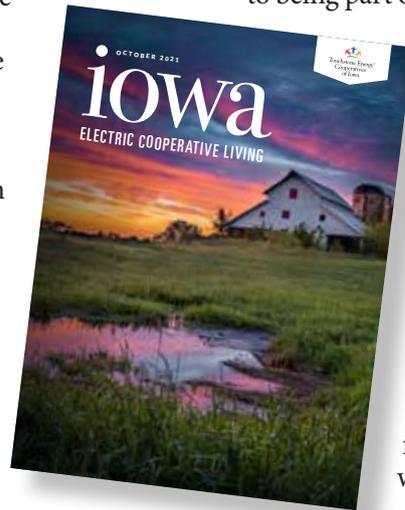
Since this publication began in 1948, it has undergone six name changes while keeping to the central mission of keeping co-op member-consumers informed. From starting as a newsletter to becoming a magazine 61 years ago, each change was meant to further illustrate what it means to be an electric cooperative member.

## Magazine name change coming in October

With the October issue of this publication, we're excited to unveil a name change that we believe even more clearly describes the magazine. Your statewide publication will now be called *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. On behalf of the team, I'm excited for the magazine's name to fully reflect who we serve – you the members – and who we are – Iowa's electric cooperatives.

This magazine's name should identify us, be unique to us and tell readers what to expect inside. We are confident that *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* will do all these things and more.

Based on our 2020 readership survey and years of research by the



National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, we know that member-consumers have a strong affinity to being part of a cooperative. It makes sense to have "cooperative" as part of the magazine's name. To the left, we're giving you a sneak peek at what the cover of the October issue will look like so that you know what to expect when you open your mailbox. Inside, you'll find fresh designs paired with familiar favorites – energy efficiency tips, information

on technology and innovation, economic development features, and of course, recipes!

Once the October issue comes out, we'll be anxious for your feedback! ⚡

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Keurig K-Classico Coffee Maker!

Wake up to amazing coffee with this Keurig single-serve coffee brewer. Select from 6, 8 or 10 ounces for each brew. A 48-ounce water reservoir allows users to brew 6+ cups before having to refill, saving you time and simplifying your morning routine. An auto-off feature is easily programmed to turn off the coffee maker after it has been idle for 2 hours, helping to save energy. ⚡



### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Sept. 30, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the \$100 home improvement gift card from our July issue was John Evans from North West REC.

# Unplug with meaningful community programs

BY MICHAEL GEERDES

Most adults have a vague memory of a time when “checking for messages” meant listening to an answering machine. We carried on with our days without relying on cell phones and managed just fine. But today, we are more connected than ever through our smartphones and other devices.

Our phones are so much more now – from cameras to calendars to social media connections – and truly disconnecting from them can be tough. But it’s even harder for our kids to unplug because they only know life with these tiny screens. It’s difficult for them to imagine life

without computers, gaming devices, tablets or cell phones.

But there’s great value in unplugging for children and adults, even if it’s for just a short period of time. For kids, time away from the screen to be outside with other children allows them to connect with nature and others in a way that a virtual experience simply does not allow. They are able to experience life in the moment and allow their creativity and energy to break free.



## Ideas to disconnect from digital

Fortunately, we have access to great community programs and organizations such as 4-H, FFA, church programs, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts that provide children with a safe place to play, learn and grow, while cultivating new skills and interests.

These types of clubs and programs offer kids an opportunity to explore activities and interests outside of school academics. Children can investigate areas they might not otherwise have access to and discover new interests and passions. They often learn new skills and strengthen existing ones. It’s no secret that the broader the range of experiences and activities children are exposed to, the more likely they are to find their own path and possibly a career. Community programs also foster important leadership development and public speaking skills. Through guided and informal play and activities, children learn problem-solving and interpersonal skills that enable them to resolve conflicts peacefully and improve interpersonal relationships.

Adults can also find meaningful opportunities to spend time with the kids when we all unplug. From board

games to craft projects to playing in the park, there are many ways we can unplug for some family fun.

## Energy savings opportunities

While you and your children are disconnecting, take a moment to identify potential energy savings. Unplug electronics that are not in use to avoid “vampire” energy loss. This is the energy that is drained from technology and electronics even when they are not in use. For example, although it is turned off, your TV is waiting to receive a signal from the remote and your DVR is waiting to record the next show or perform an update.

Let’s encourage youngsters to step away from the screens and join in. To play and be part of an organization that helps them connect with others and find meaningful interactions and explore new activities and interests.

When you do plug back in, Grundy County REC is here to help you save money and energy by connecting you with our energy saving programs and services. While we’d love to see you in person, we’re also just a call or click away. If you are interested in learning more about these programs, please contact Brady Codner at 319-824-5251 or [bcodner@grundycountyrecia.org](mailto:bcodner@grundycountyrecia.org).

Michael Geerdes is the general manager for Grundy County REC.



**Grundy County REC**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  
"Our mission is to provide our members safe, reliable, electric service"

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800-292-8989

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## COOPERATIVE NEWS

Follow us on Facebook



Make sure you follow Grundy County REC on Facebook (@GrundyCountyREC) to stay up-to-date on energy efficiency information, safety tips, current promotions, outages and more! ⚡

# Tips for a safe harvest

Sept. 19-25 is National Farm Health and Safety Week! Grundy County REC wishes all farmers a safe harvest season and wants to share some important safety tips.

Agriculture is the backbone of our country, and our livelihood greatly depends on the crops provided by American farmers. In addition to being one of the most labor-intensive professions, farming is also considered one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

The hard work and exhaustive labor are tough but rushing the job to save time can be extremely dangerous – even deadly – when farming near electrical equipment.

Every year, there are collisions where tractors and other farming equipment accidentally hit utility poles and power lines, causing injuries and power outages. These dangerous accidents can be avoided by looking up and around your surroundings when operating large farm machinery.

If you're preparing for harvest season, please keep the following safety tips in mind:



Photo courtesy of member Kaylie Appel with Bergman Farms LLC in Hudson.

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance around all utility equipment in all directions.
- Use a spotter and deployed flags to maintain safe distances from power lines and other electrical equipment when working in the field.
- If your equipment contacts an energized or downed power line, call 9-1-1 immediately and remain inside the vehicle until the power line is de-energized. In case of smoke or fire, exit the cab by making a solid jump out of the cab (without touching it) and move away to safety.
- Consider equipment and cargo extensions of your vehicle.

Lumber, hay, tree limbs, irrigation pipes and even bulk materials can conduct electricity, so keep them out of contact with electrical equipment.

National Farm Health and Safety Week is Sept. 19-25; however, practicing safety on the farm all year is important. We hope you never find yourself in a situation where farming equipment contacts power lines or poles, but if you do, remember these safety tips. ⚡

## October is National Co-op Month

October is National Co-op Month, and we have exciting activities planned for the celebration! We will release details on our website ([www.grundycountyrecia.org](http://www.grundycountyrecia.org)) and our Facebook page on Friday, Oct. 1. You can also find updates in the October edition of this magazine.

#PowerOn

Grundy County REC  
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative  
"Our mission is to provide our members safe, reliable, electric service."

Save the Date  
9.9.21

85<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Meeting  
5-7 p.m.

# IOWA YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

We're looking for high school students who are interested in public service and leadership

Students who attend our Zoom sessions in October will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship!



For decades, Iowa has been sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital as part of the national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trip was canceled in 2020 and 2021, but is scheduled to return in 2022.

To bridge the gap in not having a Youth Tour for the past two summers, Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to offer a new opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model. The **Iowa Youth Leadership Academy** will be held as a three-part webinar series in October and is open to any high school student in the state. Students can register at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com).

## Who should attend?

This new program is geared for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership or government. The goal of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is to raise students' awareness of the role electric cooperatives have in their local communities. In addition, participants will learn about electric cooperative careers.

## Zoom sessions in October

Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last around 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic.

## Zoom Sessions

- **Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.**  
Cooperative Business Model
- **Thursday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.**  
Rural Iowa Advocacy
- **Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.**  
Civic Involvement & Leadership

During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our speakers and presenters while learning about advocacy and leadership. Attendees will also hear from former Iowa Youth Tour students who pursued their passion for government service and leadership after attending the weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. ⚡

## Featured speakers



**Haley Moon**  
Advocacy and Political  
Action Manager  
Iowa Association of  
Electric Cooperatives



**Adam Schwartz**  
Founder & Principal  
The Cooperative Way



**Kathleen Riessen**  
Leadership Expert  
Kathleen Riessen &  
Company

# Details released for Iowa Home Energy Assistance Program



## Opportunities to win

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship

## Save the date

The 2022 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour is slated for June 18-24.

“Students really need to take advantage of all the opportunities that the Iowa Youth Tour provides – not only what participants see and do while in D.C., but also for the lifelong opportunities. The activities are great networking events with electric cooperatives and peers from around the state. I’m constantly running into people I met. Even today, through my job, I interact with people that went on the Iowa Youth Tour.”

Jacob Holck  
(2016 Iowa Youth Tour participant)  
Communications Specialist  
Office of Iowa Secretary of State

Learn more at  
[www.iowaYouthTour.com](http://www.iowaYouthTour.com) or  
contact your local co-op for  
more information.

The 2021-2022 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 19 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

If you’re a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you’re self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you’re on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Family Investment Program (FIP), Veteran’s Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days. For FIP recipients, bring your current DHS Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable

document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2021, through April 30, 2022. The start date is Oct. 1, 2021, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you’re not sure where to apply, visit [humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply](http://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply). to contact your local community action agency, call 2-1-1 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319. 📧

### Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,320

**Note:** For households with more than eight members, add \$9,080 for each additional member.

# Chicken

## RECIPES



## Bruschetta Chicken Bake

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon olive oil  
salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 ripe Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
fresh basil  
noodles or rice, optional

Place oil in a skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken and season with salt and pepper. Cook until golden on both sides and almost cooked through. Place chicken in a sprayed 8x8-inch dish then add tomatoes, oregano and garlic (optional, replace fresh tomatoes with 15 ounces canned diced tomatoes). Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake uncovered at 375 degrees F for 18-20 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Remove and let sit for 5 minutes, top with fresh basil. Can be served on your choice of noodle or rice.

**Arie Schiller • Donnellson**  
Access Energy Cooperative

## Chicken Casserole

- 1 pouch dry onion soup
- 8 ounces pineapple and apricot preserves
- 8 ounces Thousand Island salad dressing
- 6 whole chicken breasts, skinned and boned  
rice

Mix dry onion soup, preserves and dressing together. Put a small amount of sauce in a 9x13-inch pan. Split chicken breasts in half and place on sauce in pan. Spoon remaining sauce on top of chicken. Bake at 325-350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes. Baste a couple of times while baking. Serve with rice. *Serves 6-8*

**Darla German • Rhodes • Consumers Energy**

## Crispy Chicken

- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- ½ teaspoon basil
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ⅛ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded
- ⅛ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon milk
- ½ pound boneless chicken breast

Combine breadcrumbs, basil, oregano and cheese in a shallow bowl. Mix mayonnaise and milk in a separate shallow bowl. Dip chicken into mayonnaise mixture and then into breadcrumbs. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken reaches 165 degrees F. *Serves 2*

**Donna Stoll • Hospers**  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## Chicken Pasta Salad

- 1 cup mini bow tie pasta
- 1 cup mayonnaise (don't substitute)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups chicken breast, cooked and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 cup celery, thinly cut
- 1 cup red grapes, washed, drained and cut in half
- ¼ cup whole cashews

Cook pasta until just tender then drain, rinse and cool. Mix mayonnaise and sugar, set aside. Combine cooled pasta, chicken, celery and grapes. Stir in mayonnaise and sugar mixture, then refrigerate. Add cashews just before serving. *Serves 6-8*

**Jennifer Judson-Harms • New Hampton**  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

**Chicken Facts**  
Source: U.S.  
Department of  
Agriculture, National  
Chicken Council

### LEAN PROTEIN

Chicken breast is a great source of lean protein. A 3-ounce, boneless, skinless breast offers 26 grams of protein in just 128 calories.

# BBQ Chicken Quesadillas

- 6-8 flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar or Mexican blend cheese, shredded
- 1 cup cooked chicken, shredded
- ½ cup barbecue sauce

Divide cheese between tortillas, spreading cheese evenly over half of each tortilla. Top each with chicken and barbeque sauce. Fold each tortilla in half and place on lightly greased large baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5-6 minutes until cheese is melted, tortillas are lightly browned. Cut tortillas in half and serve. *Serves 6-8*

Nichole Blankespoor • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

# Barbecue Bacon Chicken

- 12-15 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 12-15 slices bacon
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 16 ounces ketchup
- ⅓ cup vinegar
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- colby jack cheese, shredded

Grill chicken about 5 minutes per side, doesn't need to be fully cooked. Cook bacon until mostly done but still limp. Wrap one bacon strip around each chicken breast. Place on a large baking pan, bacon-seam side down. Heat brown sugar, ketchup, vinegar, butter and Worcestershire sauce on stovetop until butter melts. Pour over chicken. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1-1.5 hours, until chicken is completely cooked through. Top with shredded cheese. *Serves 12-15*

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

# Baked Chicken Fajitas

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes with green chilis
- 1 large bell pepper, sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 3 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 12 tortillas
- avocados, optional

Mix chicken, diced tomatoes with green chilis, bell pepper and onion in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Mix oil and seasonings in a small bowl (optional, replace seasonings with one fajita seasoning packet). Drizzle over the chicken mixture, toss to coat. Cover and bake at 400 degrees F for 25 minutes or until chicken is cooked and veggies are tender. Serve on warmed tortillas. Top with sliced avocados if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcy Gherian • Alvord  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative



**Wanted:**  
**Slow Cooker Recipes**  
**The Reward:**  
**\$25 for every one we publish!**

You can't beat the convenience and versatility of a slow cooker! From dips and casseroles to stir fries and soups, we want your favorite recipes prepared using a slow cooker. 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](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com).

The deadline is Sept. 30, 2021. 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@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

**MAIL:**  
**Recipes**  
*Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Urbandale, Iowa 50322

## HORMONE-FREE

No hormones are ever used in U.S. chicken production.

CHICKEN FACTS

## COOK IT SAFELY

Chicken should be cooked to a safe internal temperature of 165 degrees F as measured with a food thermometer.

CHICKEN FACTS

## WINGS BY THE BILLION

Americans ate a record 1.42 billion wings during Super Bowl LV in 2021.

CHICKEN FACTS

## PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

Beyond protein, chicken contains under-consumed nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, choline, vitamin B12 and iron.

CHICKEN FACTS

## NO. 1 PROTEIN

The average American consumes more than 98 pounds of chicken in a year. It is the No. 1 protein consumed in the U.S.

CHICKEN FACTS



**Search** our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's rural kitchens.

[www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes)

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners

The Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa are driven by a commitment to community. To celebrate local volunteers, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives launched the first-ever Shine the Light contest earlier this summer. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.



The judging committee had the difficult task of narrowing down from 39 outstanding nominees to select three contest winners.

Congratulations to **Suzanne Askelsen** who is recognized for her enthusiastic support of the Ballard Education Foundation; **Marlene Walthart** who is recognized for her dedication to the Emmet County Animal Shelter; and **Dr. George North** who is recognized for his vision in establishing Wilder Park. These three winners have been awarded a \$1,500 donation to their charity or community organization of choice.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).



Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy (second from right), presents a check to Shine the Light winner Suzanne Askelsen (third from left).



Suzanne Askelsen (far right) presents a check on behalf of the Ballard Education Foundation to teacher JoEllen Wesseleemann, (second from right).



Suzanne Askelsen (center) with Ballard Education Foundation Board Members Sara Hillbrand and John Hilleman.

## BALLARD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

### Suzanne Askelsen enthusiastically supports teachers and students

Ask anyone who knows Suzanne Askelsen to describe her, and you'll hear things like, "She has a big heart!" and "She's an inspiration!" delivered with a big smile.

Askelsen lives by the motto, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." She embodied this belief when launching an education foundation that helps students and teachers in the Ballard Community School District.

"My parents taught me to always lend a helping hand," she says. "To me, life is about making a better place for everyone around you."

Askelsen is the recipient of one of three Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa. The contest awards \$1,500 to a non-profit organization of the recipient's choice and Askelsen chose the Ballard Education Foundation.

Midland Power Cooperative member Carol Gilbert nominated Askelsen, who is a member of Consumers Energy. As Askelsen's

mother, Gilbert showed her daughter how giving time to her community can be a fulfilling and rewarding journey.

"I nominated Suzanne for this contest as a thank you to the person she is and how she lives her life," Gilbert says. "It's been wonderful to watch her grow into the young woman she is today. By her shining example, Suzanne lives out her personal belief daily in 'doing what you can, with all you have, wherever you are.'"

In 2013, Ballard Superintendent Ottie Maxey first approached Askelsen about starting an education foundation. The foundation would supplement the school district's budget for teacher resources. Askelsen agreed and her enthusiasm attracted other community members to get the foundation off the ground.

"Suzanne shows up and get things done," Superintendent Maxey shares. "She was absolutely one of the key reasons why this foundation started."

Officially established in February 2015, the Ballard Education



Winner: Suzanne Askelsen (left)



Winner: Marlene Walthart (right)



Winner: George North (left)

Foundation partners with the school district, alumni, businesses and individuals to identify and meet the needs of Ballard students. Askelsen served as the organization's first president from 2015-2019.

"She led us through those initial grassroots efforts," says Sara Wilson, current president of the Ballard Education Foundation. "When I think about her leadership, I think about mobilizing community action and volunteers. She can connect the dots."

As a Shine the Light contest winner,

Askelsen has directed the money to fulfill grant requests from teachers for resources to enhance the curriculum. Bridget Itzen, CEO/general manager of Consumers Energy, presented the check to Askelsen and the foundation on Aug. 2.

"Consumers Energy is excited to recognize Suzanne's volunteerism in the community," Itzen says. "She has the values I think we all wish we had. Everyone needs a Suzanne in their life."

For those wishing to get involved in their community but don't have time to

volunteer, Askelsen suggests monetary donations to a favorite charity or group can go a long way.

"I believe if you have time in your life to be part of something bigger than you, you will walk away with a full, warm heart and a smile on your face," she says.

To learn more about the Ballard Education Foundation, visit [ballardedfoundation.org](http://ballardedfoundation.org).

Article contributed by Sarah Heggen, Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

## EMMET COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

### Marlene Walthart shares her time and lifelong love of animals

If you ask Dawn Eveleth, there's one person you go to in a pinch when you need a volunteer: her cousin Marlene Walthart.

"I've known her forever," Eveleth says. "For as long as I can remember she's been a volunteer. From the time she was a little kid, up until now, it's kind of been her life. You can ask her anything and if she's available to do it, she's always willing for anyone or any animal."

While Marlene is known to volunteer elsewhere in her Estherville community, she has been selected as a winner in the inaugural Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa for her work at the Emmet County Animal Shelter.

Kristy Henning founded the shelter in 2010. Right away, Marlene saw the shelter as just another way to help her community.

"I wanted to do something with my Girl Scouts to win the silver award badge," Marlene says. "I got in touch with Kristy and started doing things around the shelter. It just went from there."

Henning says she can't count how many times she relied on Marlene and her husband Larry in those early days.

"I don't even know where to start," she says. "They are just invaluable to the shelter. Marlene and Larry were integral.

They spent numerous hours here, I don't even know how we would do that today."

What motivates Marlene?

It's her lifelong love for animals.

"My husband and I believe I am part cat," she says. "All my life I have wanted cats. My dad wanted dogs. I would bring a cat home, and they would say no. I would take it back and cry."

Today, the shelter has grown from a predominately cat rescue to also include a dog section.

"We have the opportunity to save a lot of animals' lives," Marlene says. "We usually have around 100 cats. When I first got in touch with Kristy, she told me about some instances of animal cruelty that I was unaware of."

For the Waltharts, volunteering goes far beyond just loving on animals. The duo set up a non-profit can redemption center adjacent to the shelter. The can redemption center serves as a funding vehicle for the shelter. Marlene takes care of office and bookwork, while Larry can be relied upon for handyman tasks.

As for how the shelter will use its \$1,500 Shine the Light grant, Henning says expansion is always needed with the mission to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome the unwanted, unloved and the abandoned.

"The need for puppy rescue is overwhelming right now," she says.

"We're going to put an outside run on the intake kennel. If we can run two groups of puppies at the same time, we can rescue more puppies."

To learn more about the Emmet County Animal Shelter or to inquire about adopting a pet, visit [emmetcountyanimalshelter.org](http://emmetcountyanimalshelter.org).

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



Marlene with husband Larry.



Marlene with Kristi Henning, shelter director.

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## COOPERATIVE NEWS

## Employee anniversary

Allyson Miller, executive assistant and human resources, celebrated her first anniversary with Grundy County REC on Aug. 3.

Her favorite part of her job is the great group of people she gets to work with daily, whether it is her coworkers, the board or the members. Her first impression of the



cooperative world was the positive attitudes of the linemen and the helpful nature of other cooperatives and organizations in the industry.

In her free time, Allyson enjoys spending time with her husband Eric, her son Isaac and her family. She grew up in Dike and returned to the area after being away for more than seven years. She enjoys raising her son in a small community and being close to family.

Congratulations on one year with Grundy County REC, Allyson! ⚡

## ANNOUNCEMENT

## Congratulations

Grundy County REC members Julie and Timothy Colburn were one of the lucky winners in the *May Living with Energy in Iowa* editor's choice contest. They received a one-year membership to the Arbor Day Foundation and 10 shade trees! ⚡



## HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

## Meet David Schmidt, District 6 director for Grundy County REC

### How long have you been on the Grundy County REC board?

I will have been on the board for four years in September.

### Why did you decide to run for the board?

Two individuals were needed to run for the board, so I added my name. I didn't think that I would win, but I did. I guess the joke was on me!



### What are some of your accomplishments while on the board and committees?

I think the biggest accomplishment was selecting a new general manager who will serve the cooperative well into the future. This may be the most important decision that the board has to make.

It takes effort for all board members to ensure that we work together to accomplish our mission of serving our members. I enjoy having some input into the future of our cooperative during our strategic planning sessions. Having everyone attend educational sessions and learning how an electric cooperative is run and listening to other cooperatives' board

members explain what is happening in their cooperatives is of value. I believe that as board members, it is our responsibility to ensure that our members have safe, reliable and affordable electric service well into the future.

### What's your favorite thing about serving on the board?

I enjoy seeing all the talent that is serving on this board – young and old alike – and listening to members' input from their different perspectives. We all come from different backgrounds and have different views of how the cooperative should be run, but in the end, we come to the same conclusion: we want what is best for the members. I enjoy our annual meeting because it is a time that we get to visit with our members and hear what they think about the cooperative.

### What do you like to do in your free time?

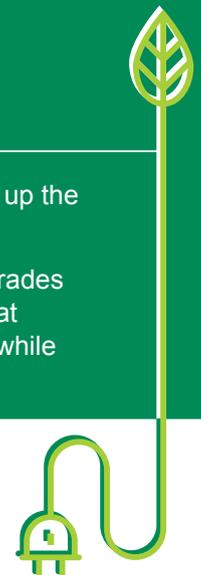
I try to walk at least two miles a day. I do like to read some but not a lot. I enjoy my kids and grandkids, but I don't see them enough. We are St. Louis Cardinals baseball fans. ⚡

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy used for cooling and heating your home makes up the largest portion of your monthly energy bills.

By combining regular equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bills while helping our environment.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)



# Get charged: Electric trucks and SUVs are coming

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

Electric pickups – like the Ford F150 Lightning – are changing minds about what an electric vehicle (EV) can do. Americans are seeing soon-to-be-released electric pickups and SUVs as innovative, compelling and competitive vehicle options. In fact, today's EV sales are about 24 times higher than they were 10 years ago.

Here are several competitive benefits that are driving EV demand:

- Instant torque from electric motors boosts acceleration.
- Low center of gravity improves handling and reduces rollover risk.
- An electric motor offers superior traction control, which can increase off-road capability and safety in winter.
- The upfront cost of an EV purchase is now more competitive with similar internal combustion models, and most EVs qualify for a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500.
- Operating fuel cost per mile (for electricity) is cheaper compared to gasoline or diesel.

## New pickup models announced

Ford's electric F150 Lightning is scheduled to arrive in Spring 2022, starting under \$40,000 for the commercial trim package and 230-mile range model. A 300-plus-mile battery is an option, and all models are 4x4 with respectable towing and payload capacities. The Lightning is also equipped to provide 9.6kW of home backup power or portable power for a job site.

Tesla has more than a million preorders for the new Cybertruck, which will likely arrive in 2022. The 250-mile range 2WD model starts under \$40,000 and steps up to \$50,000 for the 300-mile range 4WD model. Tesla plans to offer



Ford's all-electric F150 Lightning, arriving Spring 2022, can provide portable power to a job site.



Rivian's R1T all-electric pickup is available later this year.



Tesla is expected to make the Cybertruck available by early 2022.

a 500-plus-mile range version for \$70,000 that can tow more than 14,000 pounds.

GMC has announced a late 2021 release of an electric Hummer with 1,000 horsepower and additional features for off-road performance.

Rivian, a startup backed by Ford and Amazon, is planning to unveil their R1T electric pickup later this year.

## Electric SUVs coming soon

Crossover SUVs (CUVs) are one of the most popular types of vehicles, and a number of manufacturers say they'll have electric models available soon. Ford's Mustang Mach-E is available now with a range up to 305 miles, starting at \$45,000. Volkswagen's ID4 CUV starts at \$40,000 and is available with AWD options. More electric SUVs are coming, including Rivian's R1S,

Nissan's Ariya and Volkswagen's six-passenger ID6.

And it's not just vehicles that are shifting to electric. Electric snow machines and jet skis are arriving soon. Even large construction equipment like excavators, backhoes and heavy-duty trucks will have electrically fueled models.

One remaining hurdle for increased EV adoption in rural areas is fast, sufficient charging for longer trips. Most EV owners charge at home, but more fast-charge stations on rural highways will be helpful.

If you're interested in an EV, talk to your electric co-op. They may offer special EV rates or rebates. ⚡

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Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

# Announcing the inaugural Shine the Light award winners



Dr. George North stands with friend Deb McWhirter, who nominated him for the 2021 Shine the Light contest.



▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

## WILDER PARK

### Dr. George North establishes a recreational destination for the community

If you drive east of Allison on Highway 3 and look north, you'll find Wilder Park. Those who take the time to stop and drive through don't soon forget it; at least that's what Dr. George North hopes.

Selected as a winner of the Shine the Light awards sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, North had a vision for the park in the early 1990s. Today, that vision has become a reality. His idea began when the land the park now sits on was gifted from the original property owner.

"My early involvement was with the Boy Scouts, planting trees," says North, who is a retired dentist. "We planted 250 to 300 trees."

Today, the park is full of large, mature trees. It has turned into a recreational destination for people across Iowa, full of activities ranging from camping to fishing to frisbee golf.

Deb McWhirter nominated North for the Shine the Light contest. She says the growth of the park is due in large part to his commitment.

"It was a farm field. They have

turned this into a destination for a lot of campers and people. It has developed over the years," she says. "Dr. North has been the mastermind of the whole project. It takes a lot of volunteers and a person with a vision about what you want to have happen to the future of this park. He's been instrumental in making a plan and following through, making sure things happen."

It all started with getting his Boy Scouts involved with the environment by planting trees. According to North, who turns 92 this year, trees have been a metaphor for what having a vision means.

"Rarely when you plant trees do you get to see the result of that activity," he says. "Trees don't grow that fast. Fortunately, I've lived long enough to see the fruition of the vision. A lot of people have a very difficult time seeing down the road. Seeing what the possibilities are. Seeing what the positives are of having this type of facility."

North knew he wanted more for the park and the area than just having trees.

"Our mission is to create an affordable recreational activity facility," he says. "Except for renting an RV space, all our amenities are free. Everything is based on our mission – affordability. That's caused our level of usage to go way up."

Wilder Park also serves as one of the major outdoor classrooms in the state of Iowa. The park features more than 100 different tree species and is home to an uncommon species arboretum.

North says it's all about giving back to the community. Something he has lived by in all his years.

"I think you're obligated to give back," he says. "Part of life's responsibility is to pay it forward, give back to your community, do what you can to facilitate the growth and ambiance. To me, that's just part of living."

To learn more about the park, visit [www.visitwilderpark.com](http://www.visitwilderpark.com). To reserve a camping spot or cabin, contact the Allison City Hall. 🌿

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.

# Dreaming in color

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I admit to being a “color person.” I like seeing the differences between taupe and ecru, the subtle variances among celery and sage and seafoam. I was a frustrated grade-schooler, being limited by 24 crayons in the box since my mom wouldn’t spring for the larger 64-color supply. And the larger box had its own crayon sharpener! How could she have missed the importance of that?!

Even with 64 choices, I’m not sure it would have been enough for my hue-hungry first-grade self. My mother says that even as a toddler, I was perplexed by the color turquoise. It wasn’t green, it wasn’t blue ... wow.

## “Bluetiful” discoveries

That’s why I read with wonder the discovery of a new color. A team of chemists at Oregon State University inadvertently came up with a new shade of blue, which they dubbed YInMn Blue (pronounced YIN-min Blue) after the elements used to create it. Evidently, this is the first new blue discovery since cobalt entered the world in 1802.

When I heard the news, I immediately had questions. How exactly do you know you’ve discovered a new color? I’ve looked at pictures of this shade, and it looks a lot like wood violet to me, or maybe amethyst. Heck, I had bridesmaids’ dresses of this shade. What makes this discovery a bona fide discovery?

But it must be. This new tint, even with its unglamorous name, has become sensationalized in scientific journals. Harvard Art Museums has added the shade to its Forbes Pigment Collection, a digital resource on the history of color. Even Crayola has annexed this hue of hyacinth to its product, with a



striking crayon called “Bluetiful.” It must be a real thing.

## Expanding palettes

All of this has gone over the head of people like my husband, for whom the basic eight crayons are enough. We’ve been married more than 35 years, and he just added “mauve” to his color lexicon. It drives him crazy when I talk in terms of “eggshell” and “snowfall” when describing white paints. He rolls his eyes when I tell him I’m looking for a couch that’s emerald.

“You mean green?” he says with a here-we-go-again voice.

“Well, yes ...” I hesitate. “But there are so many greens. I don’t want avocado or hunter. I’m looking for a strong, clear emerald green.”

“So, you’re looking for green,” he says again.

“Uh, yeah, whatever.” I give up. The complexities of finding the right shade of emerald are lost on him. My quest continues alone.

Will another color be discovered? Will our mnemonics like “Roy G. Biv” for memorizing the colors of the rainbow change? Will crayon manufacturers be forced to add another layer of pigmentation to their products?

I don’t know. But I do know that no one had better mess with emerald. ⚡

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, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter.

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