

● JANUARY 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Tips to keep your home cozy and efficient**

**How co-ops prepare for extreme weather**

**New Year's resolution recipes**

**Students: Apply for scholarships and trip to nation's capital ▶ See Page 5**

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Sherry Moffit, a T.I.P. REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!



# NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO STATE LEGISLATORS: IF IT ISN'T BROKEN...

BY KEVIN CONDON



As a new year begins, so will the 2024 legislative session of the Iowa General Assembly. And as always, Iowa's electric cooperatives will have a strong presence at the Iowa Statehouse to ensure lawmakers and their constituents understand clearly how policy proposals will impact rural Iowans. For more than 80 years, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has advocated on behalf of our members so state legislators can make informed decisions.

## Protecting electric cooperative members

This year, Iowa's electric co-ops are not proactively seeking significant changes to Iowa laws but are instead taking a "do no harm" message to Iowa policymakers. While there are tremendous challenges ahead in the energy industry, most of those debates occur on the national stage and will take place outside the halls of the Iowa Capitol.

Iowa lawmakers have gotten it right over the past several years as it pertains to setting the state's energy strategy. Iowa electric co-ops can provide reliable power to our member-consumers without unnecessary interference from the state government. In Iowa, we have established a positive balance between central regulatory compliance and local flexibility.

## Avoiding unnecessary regulations

Iowa's electric cooperatives are prepared for various ideas to resurface from the last session, in addition to untangling new ideas that may be introduced in this session. Threats to Iowa's service territory laws are ongoing and real. Calls to "deregulate" Iowa's electric boundaries under the guise of "competition and choice" will result in higher electric bills for homes and farms, while "Big Data" tech companies laugh all the way to the bank.

We also expect to hear the phrase "integrated resource plans" (IRP) quite a bit this year. IRPs are simply a "wolf in sheep's clothing" effort from special interest groups to take decision-making authority away from your local utility and shutter reliable power generation assets well before their useful life is up.

While the threat of rolling blackouts is real in many regions of the country, now is not the time to irresponsibly close dispatchable power plants. The Iowa Legislature shouldn't require IRPs but instead could expand our energy strategy to incorporate even more of an "all the above" approach to include nuclear generation and energy storage technologies.

## Focusing on safety threats

Unfortunately, we must also be concerned about threats to the safety of our electric infrastructure. Iowa electric co-ops follow the National Electric Safety Code (NESC) guidance

on overhead line clearances to accommodate large agricultural and industrial equipment. There appears to be efforts to remove liability from a person who negligently damages electric infrastructure if contact is made, and they can prove the line was outside the NESC guidelines.

Safety is paramount at your co-op, and we are concerned about changing the law in a way that would almost encourage an equipment operator to hit a power line rather than simply call the co-op to move it.

We look forward to having respectful and productive discussions with state legislators again this year. We wish Iowa lawmakers a happy and successful new year and hope that they'll remember the old saying when it comes to energy policy: *If it isn't broken, don't fix it.*

*Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# WIN AN ALL-CLAD IMMERSION BLENDER!

Make quick work of countless food-prep tasks with All-Clad's high-performance immersion blender, which offers superior versatility and unsurpassed efficiency. Its powerful motor blends foods in seconds, from thick milkshakes and homemade mayonnaise to baby food and delicate sauces.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Jan. 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 the Ring spotlight security camera from the November issue was Tina Nelson, a Consumers Energy member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY JAN. 31!

# A SOLID INVESTMENT IN YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP

BY MICHAEL GEERDES



As a member of Grundy County REC, you make an investment in the co-op every time you pay your bill. This investment benefits you and

the community, not only today but in the future as well. So, what exactly is this monthly investment, and how do you benefit from it?

If you look at your bill each month, you will see the line item labeled "Monthly Service Charge" under current activity. Maintaining poles, wires, substations and co-op equipment takes strategic planning and significant resources. This monthly service charge is an investment that helps your co-op maintain the overall electric system. It helps ensure that the equipment operates properly, and staff are

trained and ready, so the lights turn on when you need them.

Regardless of how much electricity a particular family uses, the cost of delivering power to every house is the same. This is reflected in the monthly service charge.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we believe operational costs should be spread fairly and equitably across all our members, regardless of the level of electricity use, as all members benefit from the same electric service. In essence, this gives each co-op member an equal share in Grundy County REC's operation.

Your monthly investment makes it possible for the cooperative to provide safe, reliable and affordable power to all members when you need it. We appreciate and value the investment



that you make in the co-op each month, and we strive to use that investment wisely for the benefit of all members and our community.

To learn more about the monthly service charge, please contact us at 319-824-5251.

*Michael Geerdes is the general manager of Grundy County REC.*



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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



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## EMPLOYEE NEWS



### Stelplflug Announces Retirement

Grundy County REC Operations Manager Dan Stelplflug has formally announced his retirement, effective June 3.

"In his time at Grundy County REC, Dan has made a positive impact on the operations department and the entire co-op staff," shares Michael Geerdes, Grundy County REC general manager. "His wealth of knowledge and years of experience have proven to be a true asset to the cooperative and our membership. While we will miss Dan and feel the loss of his retirement, we wish him the best of luck in this next stage of life."



### Employee Service Anniversary

Brady Codner, member service advisor, celebrates three years with Grundy County REC on Jan. 25! Brady is known around the office for his quirky sense of humor, and he is always willing to provide a helping hand. Congratulations, Brady, and thank you for all you do for the cooperative and its members!

**CONGRATS, DAN AND BRADY!**

## WAYS TO PAY

Grundy County REC has a variety of payment options available to best fit your lifestyle!

### 1 Auto payment

Don't want to worry about remembering to pay your bill on time? Take advantage of this free, automatic withdrawal option from your checking or savings. You can enroll online via the "Online Bill Pay" SmartHub link on our website or by calling 319-824-5251.

### 2 Automated phone payments

Call 844-941-4397. Please note, this number does not reach the cooperative staff directly as it is an automated payment portal. If you have not yet used this option, it will prompt you to set up a PIN. You will need to provide your account number.

### 3 Mailed or in-person payments

As always, members can mail in a payment or stop at the cooperative's office or drop box to deliver payment. If using the drop box, please do not use cash.

#### Mail

Grundy County REC  
PO Box 39  
Grundy Center, IA 50638

#### In-person

303 North Park Ave.  
Grundy Center, IA 50638

### 4 SmartHub account

Manage your account online or with your mobile device. Visit [www.grundycountyrecia.smarthub.coop](http://www.grundycountyrecia.smarthub.coop). Payments can be made in the "Billing & Payments" tab.

### 5 Pay now online link

Members can make one-time, online payments without a SmartHub account at [www.grundycountyrecia.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html](http://www.grundycountyrecia.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html).



## YOUTH TOUR AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### 2024 Youth Tour

Member students in their sophomore, junior or senior year of high school who are interested in history, public service, advocacy or leadership – this opportunity is for you!

Grundy County REC is now accepting applications for a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., from member students. The 2024 Youth Tour will be held June 15-21. **The deadline to apply is March 1.**

Learn more or submit an application at [www.grundycountyrecia.com/youth-tour](http://www.grundycountyrecia.com/youth-tour).


### Scholarships

There is one month left to apply for one of four \$1,000 scholarships! These scholarships are for Grundy County REC member students and will go directly to the school of each recipient's choice to assist with college tuition. **The deadline to apply is Feb. 5.**

For more information, visit [www.grundycountyrecia.com/scholarships](http://www.grundycountyrecia.com/scholarships).







# RETHINKING ENERGY

## HOW USING MORE ELECTRICITY CAN SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

BY PAUL WESSLUND

Of all the world's changes during the past 30 years, few are as significant as how we use energy.

In the 1990s, new drilling techniques brought a boom in natural gas production. That increase in supply cut prices so much that natural gas started replacing coal power plants, which generated half of the country's electricity. Concern for the environment grew and now renewable energy produces more of our electricity than coal.

Major changes to how we use energy have also come into our homes.

If you go to the movies and forget to turn off your kitchen lights, you can switch them off from an app on your phone. If you're returning from a vacation, you can adjust your thermostat from anywhere so the temperature of your home is comfortable when you get back.

Every vehicle manufacturer is racing to build electric models. Last year, Ford even started producing an electric version of their best-selling pickup truck. And the electric F-150 is more than just being promoted as better for the environment. The ads show it running power tools on a remote job site.

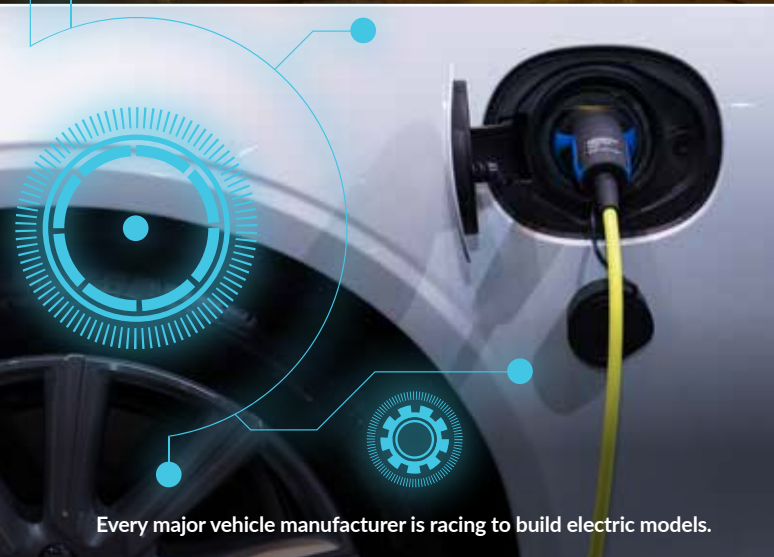
That approach to showing the benefits of an electric vehicle (EV) highlights a whole new way of thinking about energy.

### Powering your home with a truck

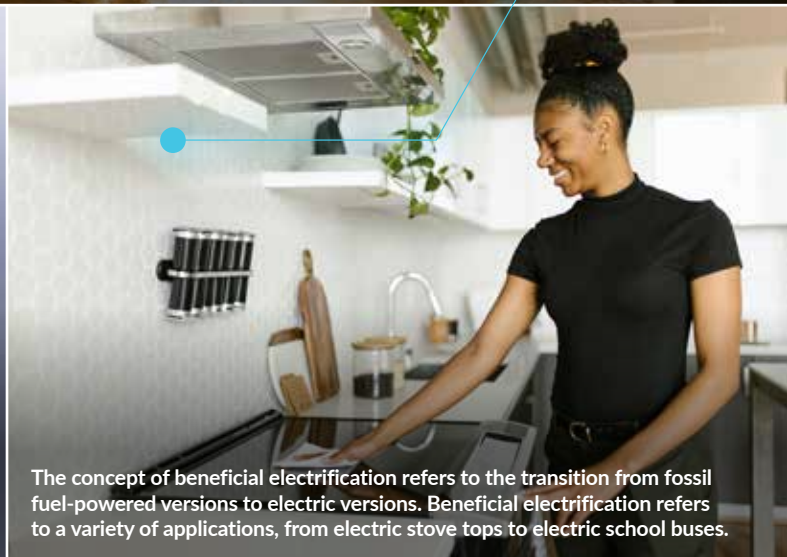
For example, instead of just going out and buying a new pickup truck, you or a business could consider the advantages of electric options. A traditional gasoline-powered model would be best for long trips, but how many miles a day does the truck really travel? What would it be like to plug it in overnight and never have to visit a gas station again? What if it could also power home appliances during a power outage?



Ford's electric pickup, the F-150 Lighting Pro, can even power your home during a prolonged power outage. Photo Credit: Ford



Every major vehicle manufacturer is racing to build electric models.



The concept of beneficial electrification refers to the transition from fossil fuel-powered versions to electric versions. Beneficial electrification refers to a variety of applications, from electric stove tops to electric school buses.

There's a name for that kind of thinking – beneficial electrification. Although that phrase doesn't easily roll off the tongue, the idea is catching on because it's basically a way to get things done better and cheaper.

There's even an organization called the Beneficial Electrification League. The group aims to improve the nation's economy by making broader use of electricity, from heating and cooling homes and businesses to electric school buses, to replacing diesel motors on farm irrigation systems with more efficient electric models.

According to the League, the benefits of electrification are money savings, less impact on the environment, improved quality of life and smoother operation of the nation's increasingly internet-connected electric grid.

One of the clearest effects of switching from fossil fuel to electricity is on environmental impact. Natural gas, coal and oil all produce greenhouse

gases. Electricity uses some fossil fuels to generate power but is increasingly made with renewable energy. So, switching from an internal combustion engine to an EV, for example, will reduce the burning of fossil fuels.

### No more gas cans

Utilities are exploring ways to use the growing number of EVs to create a more resilient electric grid. Using smart-grid analytics, all those electric cars sitting in garages and charging overnight could supply power back into the electric system during outages or during times when the demand for electricity is high.

Consumers can consider beneficial electrification for the home as well, to see how electric options might improve quality of life. Replacing lawnmowers, leaf blowers and other yard tools with battery-powered versions would reduce noise and could get all the gas and oil cans out of your garage.

You might love your gas stove and heating system, but do you like

it enough to pay for two forms of energy, with both gas and electric bills coming due even when you're on vacation? Add to that, the continual improvements in electric heat pumps that will both heat and cool your home with an incredible 300% efficiency.

And if you're concerned about power outages, battery backup systems are getting increasingly powerful and efficient. Compared to a gasoline generator, a battery wouldn't need to be "started up" and wouldn't emit poisonous carbon monoxide.

You may not be ready to make the switch to all-electric. These shifts can take time as technology advances and costs become more competitive. But the notion of beneficial electrification offers a new way to evaluate the tools we depend on for everyday life.

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



# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

## RECIPES



### BLACK BEAN COOKIE DOUGH ENERGY BITES

- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 4 medjool dates, pitted
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons creamy almond butter
- 3 tablespoons coconut flour
- ⅓ cup cocoa
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Blend all ingredients except chocolate chips in blender. Stir in chocolate and shape into balls. Chill or freeze. *Serves 20*

Laura DeSmit • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### HEALTHY OATMEAL BALLS

- 4 cups old-fashioned oatmeal
- 2 cups peanut butter
- 1 cup honey

In large mixing bowl, add oatmeal and set aside. Microwave honey and peanut butter for 1-2 minutes. Mix until combined. Pour honey mixture over the oatmeal. Form small balls and place on wax paper. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Freezer friendly to pull out for a healthy snack! *Yields 48 small balls*

Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

### SUGAR-FREE GRANOLA

- ⅓ cup honey
- 1½ cups Sucanat
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 10 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup dry milk
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- optional toppings: coconut, nuts, raisins

Mix honey, Sucanat and oil in saucepan. Heat until Sucanat is dissolved (oil will separate). Mix all other ingredients in a large cake pan. Pour honey mixture over dry ingredients and stir well. Bake at 375 degrees F for 10-15 minutes. Once cooled, add coconut, nuts and/or raisins, if desired. Store in airtight container. Good as cereal with milk or plain for snacking. *Yields 16-20 cups*

Trina Nester • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### HEALTHY DRINK

- 1 large banana
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 10 ice cubes

Cut banana into chunks. Mix all ingredients in a blender and blend well. Serve in a glass. *Serves 2*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.



## BACON-PEA-SWISS SCRAMBLE

- 3 slices bacon
- 5 eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons chicken broth
- chili powder, to taste
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed and drained
- ½ cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 tablespoons Swiss cheese, shredded
- 4 teaspoons parsley

Cook bacon in a skillet, then cut into pieces. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, broth and chili powder. Stir in bacon, peas and tomatoes. Pour mixture into skillet and cook on medium-low heat, stirring until done. Fold in cheese and parsley.

Cook 30 seconds more, then serve immediately. *Serves 2*

**Beth Townsend • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy**

## CALIFORNIA POWER BOWL

- ½ red bell pepper, sliced
- ½ red onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 dash black pepper
- 1 cup spinach or spring mix
- 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup cooked brown rice
- ¼ cup corn
- ¼ avocado, diced
- 1 tablespoon raw sunflower seeds
- 1 can tuna, optional

Sauté bell pepper and onion in avocado oil. Season with salt and pepper. Put spinach in a serving bowl and top with lemon juice. Mix in rice and corn. Top with warm peppers and onion. Add avocado, sunflower seeds and tuna, if desired. *Serves 1*

**Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## TERIYAKI CHICKEN & VEGETABLES

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup Bragg's liquid aminos
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 cups cabbage, sliced
- rice, optional

Mix first three ingredients together. Cut chicken into chunks and place in a slow cooker. Add vegetables on top. Pour marinade mixture over all ingredients. Cook on high for 2-3 hours, allowing steam to release naturally. Can be served over rice. *Serves 6-8*

**Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## CITRUS-PECAN QUINOA SALAD

- 1½ cups water
- ¾ cup quinoa, rinsed if not prewashed
- 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 2 cups romaine or greens of choice, chopped
- 1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans or chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 15-ounce cans mandarin orange slices, drained
- 3 mini-cucumbers, washed and sliced
- 1 cup pecan pieces, toasted

In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add quinoa and reduce heat. Cover and simmer 12-15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with fork and set aside to cool. Quinoa can be made a day ahead and refrigerated. In a small bowl, finely grate zest from a lemon, then cut and squeeze juice into the zest (can substitute with an orange). Whisk in oil, salt and pepper. In a large bowl, combine greens, beans, oranges, cucumbers and quinoa. Just before serving, add nuts and lemon dressing, toss to coat. *Serves 4-6*

**Karla R. Pals • Belmond  
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

**WANTED:**

## SPRINGTIME SALADS

**THE REWARD:**

**\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

**Deadline is Jan. 31**

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



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

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



# ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE PREPARING FOR EXTREME WEATHER

BY SCOTT FLOOD

From the earliest days of electricity, weather has presented the biggest challenges to reliability and safety. Severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, derechos, heat waves, heavy snowfalls, flooding and ice events have long

put power lines and co-op crews to the test, including those in Iowa.

If you think storm events seem to be more frequent and more intense these days, you're not wrong. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which

tracks weather and climate disasters causing more than \$1 billion in damage, reported an annual average of 18 such events between 2018 and 2022. That compares to an average of just 8.1 major disasters per year from 1980 to 2017.



## Proactive upgrades, vegetation management

While scientists and policymakers debate the causes of our wild weather, electric co-ops are diligently working to prepare for it. From coast to coast, cooperatives are taking steps to harden the vital infrastructure that delivers electricity to our members' homes, farms and other businesses. Co-ops have been upgrading equipment and our connections to the nation's electric power grid so we can better withstand disaster-level events. We're also taking steps to prevent damage from happening in the first place.

For example, you may have noticed our emphasis on tree trimming and other vegetation management strategies. Keeping trees and branches at a safe distance from power lines reduces the potential for weather-related outages. Like you, we're sometimes sad to see our favorite trees trimmed, but many of the outages we handle every year happen when trees tangle with power lines.

Because recent wildfires have spread to places where they've previously been rare, we also need to plan for the possibility of fires in our area. Keeping vegetation away from power lines and equipment helps us prevent wildfires and limit their spread.

Hardening our infrastructure will include a long list of other strategies. We're paying more attention to the condition of our system. If one of our power poles is damaged or otherwise weakened, strong winds might bring it down and leave a big area of our community in the dark. That's why we keep an eye on all our poles and install more durable replacements when necessary.

When our crews aren't fixing problems, they're working just as hard to prevent them from happening. Poles and wires are frequent targets for lightning, so we can protect the local power grid by installing devices that safely divert surges caused by lightning strikes.

## Leveraging new technology

We also invest in sophisticated management systems – what some call the smart grid – capable of drawing our attention to potential issues before they grow into problems. Paired with innovative technology like reclosers, these systems are engineered to keep your power flowing even in the toughest weather conditions (or when



Vegetation management is a preventative process to keep trees and brush from coming into contact with power lines.



Extreme storms have long put power lines and Iowa's crews to the test.

a squirrel makes a poor choice). We're also taking steps to protect substations and other important outdoor equipment from severe weather events.

## Outages, availability impact costs

Power outages are just one way extreme weather can affect your energy costs. Weather extremes in one part of the country can have significant effects on energy availability and costs elsewhere. As winter temperatures drop in many areas, the demand for heating drives market energy prices up, and not-for-profit electric co-ops may have to pass those higher costs along to members.

## Reducing peak energy use

You and your neighbors can help us limit the impact of those higher costs

by shifting your energy use during peak times. For example, instead of running the dishwasher in the early evening when energy costs are highest, set it to run while everyone's asleep and rates are lower. The more members who help by reducing energy use at peak times, the less everyone will have to pay for energy.

Considering the impact of potential weather disasters and implementing steps to prevent damage is just one more example of your electric cooperative's dedication to making sure your power is always ready when you need it most.

*Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.*

# TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HOME COZY AND EFFICIENT

BY BRADY CODNER



Winter in Iowa can be chilly, but Grundy County REC is here to assist you in creating a warm and cost-efficient home. As a new homeowner myself, I'm always looking for ways to save money and energy while keeping our house comfortable and not breaking the bank! Here are my five favorite energy-saving tips for a comfortable winter without straining your budget.

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



## 1. SEAL THE CHILL!

Keep the cold out by using caulk or foam sealant to fill gaps in walls and windows. Additionally, consider adding window wrap for greater insulation. It keeps out cold winds, maintains a comfortable indoor temperature, prevents drafts and contributes to a cozy, energy-efficient home.

## 2. EMBRACE LAYERING & THERMOSTAT SETTINGS

Adding extra blankets and layers of clothing are easy and cost-effective ways to keep the chill away during the cold Iowa winter. Combine this with a thermostat setting of 68 degrees and resist cranking up the heat too much, and you'll help keep your electric bill a bit lower this winter.

## 3. UTILIZE HUMIDIFIERS

Combat the dry winter air by using humidifiers. Adding moisture to the air helps you feel warmer at lower temperatures, reducing the need for excessive heating. Not only does this contribute to comfort, but it also supports overall indoor air quality during the winter months.

## 4. INSULATE PIPES & WATER HEATER

Save energy by insulating your pipes and water heater. This small step makes a significant difference in keeping water hot and your energy expenses low. Insulated pipes reduce heat loss, ensuring that the water reaching your faucets stays warmer, especially during cold winter days.

## 5. REPLACE FURNACE FILTER

Ensure your furnace runs efficiently by regularly replacing the filter. A clean filter prevents the furnace from working extra hard, contributing to both energy savings and a warm home during winter. This simple maintenance task can improve air quality and keep your heating system running smoothly throughout the season.

Grundy County REC is committed to ensuring your Iowa winter is both comfortable and affordable. Follow these five tips with confidence, knowing they come with the endorsement of your trusted cooperative. Keep warm during the colder months without overspending!

**Contact me at 319-824-5251 or via email at [bcodner@grundycountyrecia.org](mailto:bcodner@grundycountyrecia.org) to learn more or schedule your complimentary member home energy audit!**



# ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY AND HOME SAFE

BY ALLYSON MILLER

As a mom with two young, adventurous and daring boys, I think it's important to teach them electrical safety early on. Children don't naturally understand the danger of electricity or electrical equipment, and they often find them enticing and fun.

Here are 10 electrical safety tips we share and practice at our house throughout the year!

- 1 Don't fly kites near powerlines! Instead, find a large, open area during good weather conditions.
- 2 Don't play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment. These are those green metal "boxes" on cement pads and contain transformers.

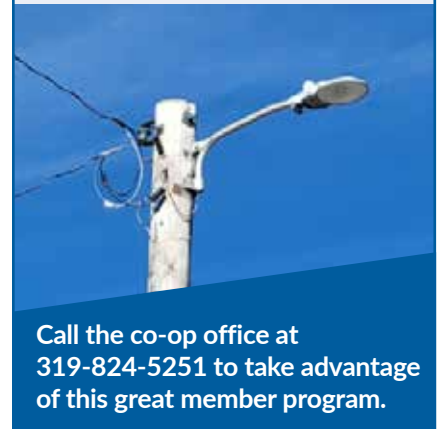
- 3 Never go into an electrical substation.
- 4 Seek shelter immediately if lightning or thunder is present.
- 5 Call 811 before you dig.
- 6 Stay away from downed power lines.
- 7 Don't have electrical appliances plugged in near water.
- 8 Cover unused outlets with safety covers.
- 9 Check for or install GCFI devices.
- 10 Don't use extension cords as a long-term solution.

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

## DID YOU KNOW?

### MEMBER-ONLY YARD LIGHT PROGRAM

Grundy County REC's Yard Light Program costs members just **\$4 per month**. The best part – the cooperative provides the LED light fixture and takes care of all maintenance, repairs and replacements.



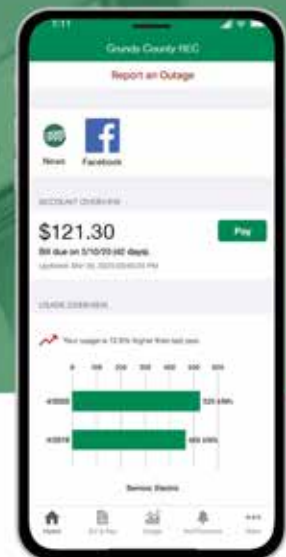
Call the co-op office at 319-824-5251 to take advantage of this great member program.



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# DESIGN A T-SHIRT FOR YOUTH TOUR AND YOU COULD WIN \$300

During the annual rural electric cooperative Youth Tour every June, Iowa participants wear matching T-shirts on each day of the trip. It's an excellent opportunity to showcase our great state while providing a unifying theme and look for the students.

This year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) is excited to announce a new contest for design submissions. Students across Iowa, grades 9-12, can create a unique design for the 2024 Youth Tour. If selected, the winner will receive \$300 in cash!

The idea for a statewide design contest came from Olivia Marti, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, who is Iowa's representative on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Leadership Council (YLC). As part of YLC, Marti and other young leaders meet virtually and participate in leadership training, polish their public speaking, attend co-op forums, and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

Connecting youth leaders and providing them with experiences and exposure to our nation's capital is a cornerstone of the Youth Tour program.

**Q: What is the Youth Tour?**  
Iowa's electric cooperatives have been sending high school students to Washington, D.C., since 1958! On the weeklong tour in June, students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walk away with a greater understanding of their role as American citizens. They participate in National Youth Day, visit with their elected legislators, and explore the sights around the nation's capital. In Iowa, students apply for slots from their local electric cooperative. High school students passionate about government and public service are encouraged to apply. **Learn more at [iowayouthtour.com](http://iowayouthtour.com).**

**Q: When is the deadline for T-shirt designs?**  
T-shirt designs must be submitted by midnight, March 1. Designs

should be accompanied by an application found at [iowayouthtour.com](http://iowayouthtour.com) and uploaded to Dropbox.

**Q: What kinds of concepts would work well for design?**  
Since this trip is focused on learning more about government and our nation's history, the T-shirt theme centers around the seven cooperative principles and leadership. You can learn more about the cooperative principles at [iowayouthtour.com](http://iowayouthtour.com). Iowa must be referenced in the design. IAEC welcomes students to use their imagination to create an eye-catching and meaningful design.

**Q: Does my electric cooperative need to be part of the Iowa Youth Tour for me to participate?**  
No. The T-shirt design contest is open to any high school student in Iowa.

**Q: Who will judge the contest?**  
A small group of electric cooperative representatives will vote on the winning design. The winner will be announced March 8.



## 2024 IOWA YOUTH TOUR T-SHIRT CONTEST

**\$300 CASH PRIZE!**



### ABOUT THE CONTEST

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

### TIMELINE

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



Scan this code to upload your T-shirt design.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Entries must be submitted to Dropbox for review.

[www.iowayouthtour.com](http://www.iowayouthtour.com)



# WRITING THE STORY OF A LIFETIME

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Every now and then, readers ask where I get my story ideas. Sometimes, people give me a good story lead. More often, the ideas come from paying attention, listening carefully and seeing value in things that are easy to overlook or take for granted.

I think back to last October, when I was interviewing Paul and Sally Brown at their farm between Lanesboro and Churdan. I was working on stories about Sally's quilting hobby and the Brown's Greene County barn. During our conversation about the history of the farm, Paul handed me his self-published book titled "Life is Sweet!"

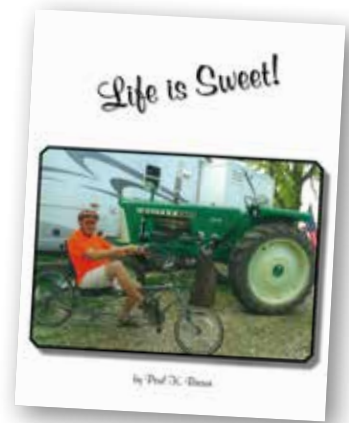
I had no idea Paul had written his autobiography – but I knew this could be a good story. I was fascinated as I flipped through the 35 pages filled with vintage photos, stories and copies of newspaper clippings. Paul wrote the book more than a decade ago when he and Sally were in Arizona for the winter. "After I got started, it was fun," Paul says. "I was excited to keep writing and share it with others."

## Sledding with a Studebaker?

An autobiography like Paul's is a testament to a life well-lived. The ups and downs of everyday life provide plenty of fodder to produce an interesting autobiography. Consider this story from Paul's book:

"Probably the stupidest thing we did was in the wintertime while sledding. We used to go down hills on scoop shovels, toboggans, car hoods and tires. Sometimes, we even used a Flexible Flyer sled. This was the fastest sled around. Once, but only once, we took an old 1946 Studebaker (that my brother Earl drove) down the hill. We had four kids inside and one on each side standing on the running boards while we were going down backward and spinning the wheels forward. The car spun around a few times on the way down the hill. When we got to the bottom, we thought, 'How stupid that was!' No one wanted to try it again."

Even if you never went spinning down a hill in a 1946 Studebaker, you can



likely relate to this story. Haven't we all made questionable choices at times? Hopefully, we've learned some useful life lessons along the way, too.

## Leaving a legacy

Sharing wisdom is part of leaving a legacy, which is an important part of a life well-lived. I know I'm biased, but I believe it's vital to share these experiences in a lasting format like the written word. Memories tend to fade with time. Family history vanishes if it isn't passed down from generation to generation. Stories preserved in a fixed format like a book stand the test of time.

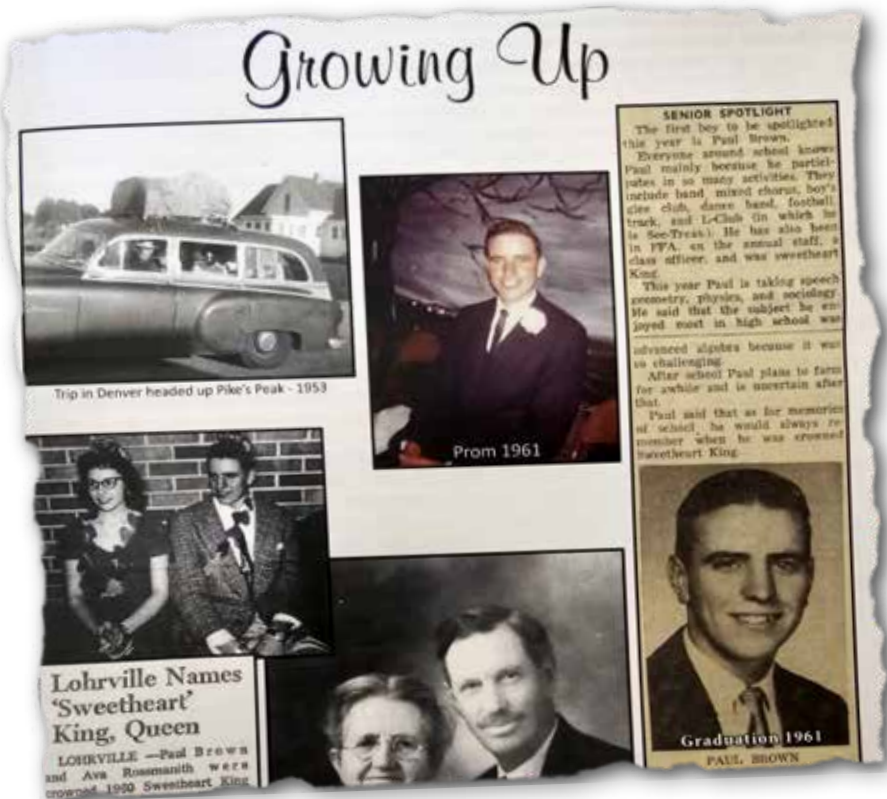
In this season of New Year's resolutions, making a commitment to writing your autobiography can offer a powerful sense of purpose. It also helps you establish deeper connections with family, friends and others who have touched your life.

Paul's daughter Heidi (Brown) Billmeier, who lives near her parents' farm, is grateful she had the opportunity to help her father document his memories.

"It's fun to read all the stories about Dad and his siblings when they were growing up," she shares. "The changes in agriculture, from when Dad started farming with his father to watching how my brother and his sons farm now, are fascinating. I'm happy our boys will have this book available to read when they're ready."

This focus on the future taps into something much deeper. Consider the immortal words of Pericles, the ancient Greek statesman and general: "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

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



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



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