

● SEPTEMBER 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Know the facts before
signing a solar lease**

**Meet this year's
Shine the Light winners**

Tailgating recipes

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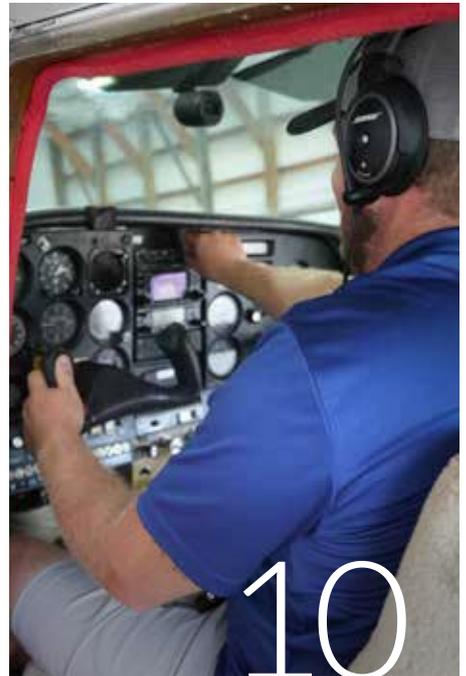
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ON THE COVER

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

FALL INTO SAFETY THIS SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



The kids are back in school and harvest season is almost here. Now is an ideal time to review some important safety precautions for fall.

Safety in the field

As you head out to the fields during harvest, always keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If your equipment comes into contact with a power pole or power line, stay in the cab and call your local utility or 911 to report the contact. Keep others away from you or from touching the vehicle. Do not exit the vehicle until an authority tells you the line has been deenergized. If your equipment is on fire and you need to exit, jump clear of the cab with both feet together and shuffle step with both feet on the ground until you are 50 feet away to avoid electrocution.

Look up and live

Cleaning gutters or working on the roof this fall? Always choose a non-conductive ladder made of wood or fiberglass for utmost safety. Pick a safe route to carry the ladder to the work area, and then carry it horizontally rather than upright. Be aware of electrical lines and tree branches in the area where you are working. When using an extension ladder, tie off the top of the ladder whenever possible.

Use the 1:4 lean ratio – the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet the ladder rises – to ensure a stable working platform.

Move over or slow down

We need your help in keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road to work safely; their families thank you!

Test your portable generators

Take advantage of the nice weather to run and test your portable

generators before a potential winter power outage. Operate your generator on a stable, dry surface and avoid rainy or wet conditions. Do not use a generator in an enclosed area; make sure the space is well-ventilated and be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be deadly. Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator, and always allow the generator to cool before refueling. Finally, never plug your portable generator into your home as it can back feed onto the electric grid and endanger our lineworkers.

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A TORO CORDLESS LEAF BLOWER!

The leaves will soon be falling, and a leaf blower is a must-have tool for your yard. This brushless leaf-blower tool provides powerful air speed and 70 minutes of runtime on a single charge. It comes with a 2.0-Ah battery and a Toro battery charger.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Sept. 30. 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 pressure washer from the July issue was **Jennifer Meier**, a **T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

GO ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR A SAFE HARVEST

BY ERIK FREESE



As local farmers prepare for and complete fall harvest, it's essential to keep safety top of mind. Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make it particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can

easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

360 awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Grundy County REC.

Smart harvest safety tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.

- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Erik Freese is a line foreman for Grundy County REC.



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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



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5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.



LANDOWNERS: KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE SIGNING A SOLAR PROJECT LEASE



If you're a landowner in rural Iowa, you may have received solicitations in the mail offering land lease options for proposed solar projects. Often, these letters offer attractive per-acre rental payments for various phases of a long-term proposed project, promising steady and predictable income. However, like with all contracts, the devil is in the details. Before signing an agreement, we encourage you to do some homework and seek legal counsel to protect your rights.

Most of these letters are coming from companies outside of Iowa looking to lease land for future solar projects. We have noticed that many of these letters refer erroneously to Iowa law, referencing legislation (Senate File 2356)

that did not pass last session. In fact, Iowa's electric cooperatives and other groups registered in opposition to the legislation due to its likely negative impact on electric co-ops and our members.

Some solicitations falsely claim local support for their solar initiative or that the electric output would benefit your neighbors or the local electric cooperative. We have also seen letters that deceptively include endorsements attributed to the Iowa Farm Bureau (IFB). IFB's legal team is working to remove these perceived endorsements.

Please consult your legal counsel before signing any agreement or contract. Your legal counsel can help

explain the benefits and disadvantages of these agreements, answer any questions you have, and help negotiate fair and equitable terms. These are long-term agreements that can give the solar company exclusive options and control of your land for decades. Spending some extra time upfront to better understand the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement can save you significant time, money and headaches in the future.

For more information, we encourage landowners to reach out to Michael Geerdes, general manager of Grundy County REC, at 319-824-5251 or mgeerdes@grundycountyrecia.org to learn more about these proposed projects.

GRUNDY COUNTY REC EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Jeff Brophy and Scott Kuiper on celebrating service anniversaries this month! Both work hard for the cooperative and its members. Jeff and Scott, thank you for all you do for Grundy County REC and its members.



JEFF BROPHY
 Manager of Finance & Administration
 Sept. 1
 4 YEARS OF SERVICE



SCOTT KUIPER
 Warehouseman
 Sept. 29
 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

MINIMIZE ELECTRICAL ACCIDENTS AT HOME

BY ALLYSON MILLER

September is National Baby Safety Month. As a mom of two young boys, I know accidents are bound to happen and kids get into things they aren't supposed to. Many parents with youngsters can relate to these situations. As parents, we strive to provide our kids with the safest environment possible.

While some accidents are out of our control, here are some tips that can help safeguard our homes and minimize the risk of electrical accidents for children:

- Childproof electrical outlets
- Cover power strips or place them out of reach
- Regularly check electrical cords for damage or exposed wires
- Keep electrical items a safe distance from any water sources
- Secure heavy electronics to prevent them from being pulled down or knocked over
- When they're old enough, teach children about the importance of electrical safety

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



LESLIE KAUFMAN TAKES THE HELM OF STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

On July 26, Leslie Kaufman began her new role as the executive vice president and general manager (EVP/GM) of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), the statewide trade association serving Iowa's electric cooperatives. After a comprehensive executive search, the IAEC board selected Kaufman to succeed Chuck Soderberg, who retired this summer after nine years of service at IAEC. She is the association's sixth EVP/GM in IAEC's 82-year history.

We sat down with Kaufman during her first week on the job to learn more about her and the plans she has for serving Iowa's electric cooperatives.



Leslie Kaufman is pictured with Chuck Soderberg, former executive vice president and general manager of the the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Q: What compelled you to apply for the EVP/GM position at IAEC?

After previously serving as an association executive, I believe I can positively contribute to an organization at a higher level.

When I saw the posting for the EVP/GM opening at IAEC, I noted the many similarities between the association and the statewide association I was working for at that time, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC). The programming, staff size and structure were very similar, so my skills and experiences fit well with IAEC's model.

IAEC's core values align with my own personal values, so I knew there would be a sense of shared purpose. Our family has traveled to and through Iowa several times over the years, and once we knew of the opening, my husband and I revisited the Des Moines area. We really liked it and felt like it was a place we could easily call home. I am honored by the board's confidence in me to lead IAEC in this next chapter of serving electric cooperative members.

Q: During your initial days on the job, what were your first impressions of IAEC and Iowa's electric cooperatives?

The staff and members that I have met have welcomed me wholeheartedly. The staff is incredibly talented and committed to serving the membership. The IAEC board takes its responsibilities very seriously and wants the organization to provide value to its members.

Q: In your first few months at IAEC, what will be your focus/strategy?

Overall, I want to ensure a smooth leadership transition for members, staff and the association as a whole.

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces. I also want to know members' thoughts on IAEC's services and programs, particularly if IAEC could provide different or additional services to help members succeed. These discussions tie into the association's strategic objective

to evaluate/expand services. Meeting legislative and government leaders and fellow utility and association peers is also a priority.

Q: What would you like to share with readers about your work with cooperatives in Kansas?

For 20 years, I had the privilege of working for cooperative members in Kansas. As president/CEO of the Kansas Cooperative Council (Council), I worked primarily with agriculture cooperatives of all sizes, from single stations to the largest farmer-owned cooperatives in the U.S. The Council also served as an umbrella association for all types of cooperatives in Kansas, including the statewide associations for

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces.

electric co-ops and credit unions, the Farm Credit system, and telecommunications cooperatives.

The Council supported KEC, the Kansas statewide, in their lobbying efforts and that relationship eventually led me to KEC over six years ago. While at KEC, I led the organization's advocacy efforts, including public policy development, lobbying, much of the regulatory work, grassroots outreach and legal activities.

Q: What are some activities and achievements from KEC that you are most proud of accomplishing?

During my first legislative session at KEC, we secured a significant victory for co-ops related to service territory protection. In Kansas, municipalities can unilaterally annex co-op electric service territory and displace the co-op. If the area taken was prime for development, but service had not yet been extended into the territory, the co-op was not compensated for that lost opportunity. We capitalized on some unexpected opportunities and succeeded in moving legislation providing notice and an opportunity to bid to remain the service provider. If not allowed to do so, the legislation

My goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative.

created a 10-year window in which the co-op could receive a percentage of revenues from new services that developed in the annexed area.

We secured another significant legislative victory for electric cooperatives, statutorily reversing a decision from the Kansas Corporation Commission that would have required electric utilities to assume liability for marking underground lines they did not own or control and may not have known even existed. We advanced legislation recognizing the electric utility's responsibility for marking extends only to lines the utility owns or controls.

I led the effort to launch an adopt-a-legislator program to connect legislators who did not have co-op service territory in their district with an electric cooperative. Beneficial and meaningful relationships

were forged across party lines and geographic boundaries, fostering greater understanding of cooperatives and the issues they face. Members and lawmakers are truly enjoying opportunities to work together.

Q: Tell us about your family.

My husband Mike is a band and music teacher at a small, rural school. He teaches in the town I grew up in, but I had graduated and left for college before he was hired at the school. He had already committed to teaching the 2024-25 school year when I was offered the EVP/GM position at IAEC, so he will finish out this school year in Kansas and then join me full-time in Iowa.

We have two children. Our oldest, Jared, is married to Megan, and they live in Fairmount, Indiana. Jared is an assistant pastor, and Megan is a social worker. Our daughter Emily is also an assistant pastor and works at a church in Brookings, South Dakota.

Q: What attractions in Iowa are you looking forward to experiencing?

We have already attended an Iowa Cubs game and look forward to seeing more games. We also hear great things about the farmers markets in the Des Moines area. I want to go to Pella Tulip Time next spring.

Q: Do you have a mantra or words to live by?

Professionally, my goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative. As a 4-H alum, their motto, "To make the best better," still resonates with me and reminds me that there is always something more that can be done to improve a program, service or process. Another favorite saying is from a sign a friend has on her office wall. It's very simple: "Work hard and be nice."

Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Leslie Kaufman (second from right) is pictured with her family, which includes her daughter Emily (left), son Jared and his wife Megan (center), and husband Mike.



TAILGATE BITES

STUFFED HOT PEPPERS

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- ½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 6 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder

15-20 mini sweet peppers or hot peppers

Mix all ingredients except peppers. Cut peppers in half lengthwise and remove seeds. Spread cheese mixture in pepper halves. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-30 minutes. If using sweet peppers, add some chopped hot peppers to the cheese mixture if desired.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

RANCH CHICKEN

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
Lawry's Seasoned Salt, to taste
- 1 cup ranch style dressing
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Trim excess fat off chicken. Season with Lawry's and place in bowl. Pour ranch dressing over chicken and sprinkle with pepper. Allow to marinate for 1-2 hours or cook immediately. Grill on a wood pellet grill until internal temperature is 165 degrees F. Serves 4-6

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SIMPLE CHEESE DIP

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 block cheese
- 1 can pizza sauce
- tortilla chips

Cook ground beef, then combine with cheese and pizza sauce in a slow cooker. Heat until melted. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 12

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

GRIDIRON GUACAMOLE

- 3 avocados, pitted
- 1 small jalapeño, finely chopped, remove seeds if desired
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped plus more for serving
- ¼ cup small white or red onion, finely chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, optional
- tortilla chips

In a large bowl, mix avocados, jalapeño, cilantro, onion, lime juice, salt and nutritional yeast, if desired. Slowly turn bowl as you run a fork through the mixture to ensure guacamole stays chunky. Continue until desired consistency is reached. Top with additional cilantro and serve with tortilla chips. Serves 6

Jeffrey Hedquist • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

CHILI SAUCE FOR HOT DOGS

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 can kidney beans

Brown ground beef, onion and garlic, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until heated. *Serves 16-20*

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

TAILGATE PARTY MIX

- 4 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 4 cups Corn Chex cereal
- 2 cups cheese crackers
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 4 cups cheese popcorn

Mix cereal and crackers together. Melt butter and add taco seasoning, stir well. Pour over cereal and stir until evenly coated. Microwave 3 minutes. Cool for 30 minutes, then stir in popcorn. Store in air-tight container.

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

TAILGATE BRUNCH ENCHILADAS

- 2 cups ham, fully cooked and cubed
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 10 8-inch flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt

Combine ham and onion. Place about ½ cup of mixture down the center of each tortilla. Top each with 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up tortilla and place seam side down in a greased 9x13-inch pan. In a bowl, combine flour, milk, eggs and salt. Stir well, then pour over tortillas. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes. Sprinkle with any remaining cheese and bake 3 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 10*

Mary Beth Peiffer • Cedar Rapids
Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



SLOW COOKER SHREDDED CHICKEN NACHOS

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 1-ounce packet taco seasoning
- 1 15.5-ounce can corn, drained
- 1 15.5-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup salsa
- ½ lime, juiced
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced for garnish
- tortilla chips or cooked rice

Place chicken breasts in bottom of slow cooker. Season the tops of the chicken with half of the taco seasoning. Pour the corn, beans, salsa and remaining taco seasoning on top of the chicken. Cook on low for 6-8 hours, or until chicken is cooked through and the internal temperature has reached 165 degrees F. Remove the chicken to shred, then return to slow cooker. Stir in the lime juice and garnish with fresh cilantro. Serve immediately over tortilla chips or a bed of rice. *Serves 4*

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County REC

WANTED:

BREAD WINNERS

THE REWARD:
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Deadline is Sept. 30

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



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MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

Judy Hess is pictured second from the left.



COMMUNITY BEACON

JUDY HESS AND THE MAGS REVITALIZE FONDA

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their fourth-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. 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 reviewed essays from 75 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Judy Hess**, who is recognized for community dedication and innovation through Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc.; **Doug Pralle**, who is recognized for his generous efforts through Compassion Flights; and **Beth Thole**, who is recognized for her commitment to preserving the area's agricultural heritage.

These three winners have been awarded a \$3,000 donation to their charity. 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.

When Kerry Noethe heard about the Shine the Light contest, one name stood out instantly: Judy Hess. As the vibrant founder of Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc. (MAGs), Hess represents the heart and soul of community dedication and innovation.

"I've always admired the group's dedication," Noethe shares. "Judy has always been a good leader. I've been part of volunteer programs in the past, and I know how important it was to me when my children were young. Keeping people aware of the community and showing it's a good place to live is valuable even though we're a bedroom community.

Judy is always looking for new ideas, and she's just a great motivator."

Amanda Johnson, a dedicated member of MAGs, highlights the group's profound connection to their hometown.

"I think we have a lot of pride about our hometown of Fonda," Johnson says. "Our kids and our grandkids are really important to us, so it's just a no-brainer to do things that benefit our community and our kids."

For Noethe, now a grandmother herself, the value of a thriving community is deeply personal.



“My grandchildren are 16 and 13, and they have been coming to Fonda since they were babies,” she explains.

“Our little towns are just dying out. We want to keep Fonda a place where our kids can play and enjoy our town, keeping it a community where people want to live and raise their families.”

Maintaining community spirit and vitality

Hess launched MAGs in 2018, and the group’s momentum has been unstoppable ever since.

“We put the group together in 2018, setting up the pool. We put everything toward the youth,” Hess explains. “We gave them a freezer and refrigerator to use. We added a slide, lawn chairs, a water filler and a drinking fountain in the park. We’ve organized various fundraisers for the group.”

Every MAGs project relies on volunteer efforts, donations and grants.

“I got some people together,” Hess recalls. “Everyone was excited about it, and we started doing fundraisers. We have Chicken Bingo, and we’ve organized different community events and hosted a father/daughter dance.”

Other fundraising events feature a variety of activities, including festive Christmas events, an exciting rodeo and many more community gatherings.

MAGs is raising funds to replace the outdated public basketball court. The new court, projected to cost \$78,000, will feature a regulation-size VersaCourt floor with official markings and new baskets. Hess hopes the project will be completed by 2025.

Hess and MAGs are significantly impacting Fonda, turning it into a more vibrant and welcoming community. Their unwavering commitment ensures that the town remains a cherished place for current and future generations.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



WHERE HOPE GROWS WINGS
FLYING THE COMPASSIONATE SKIES WITH DOUG PRALLE

Doug Pralle is pictured with his airplane.

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Doug Pralle has been flying since 2008, but his journey into the skies started much earlier, rooted in an emotional childhood memory.

“When I was a kid, my Dad died at an early age,” Pralle recalls. “I found some of his pilot books. He was training to be a pilot. I think, as an 8-year-old, it kind of tied me to him. Once I got old enough and could afford it, I got my license.”

One particular childhood memory stands out, shaping his future endeavors.

“My Dad was in a hospital in Chicago, and the doctor gave us his limo to take to a Cubs game. As a kid, you remember that stuff. His kindness created a spark in me,” Pralle reflects.

That spark ignited a spirit for giving back. In 2008 and 2009, Pralle flew a local child and his mother to Rochester for cancer treatment.

“Years later, I started thinking about ways to give back and use some of the skills we built over time, so we started Compassion Flights,” he says.

Wings of hope

Compassion Flights, a nonprofit organization, offers free flights to those in need of medical care. Pralle and Compassion Flights fly patients from

Iowa to surrounding states, working with other groups for longer trips.

The process of applying for a compassion flight is simple. Those in need or who know someone in need can visit www.compassionflights.com, fill out an online flight request, and get a response directly from Pralle or his wife.

When Pralle isn’t flying for Compassion Flights, he’s working his day job as a crop duster, spraying fields with an airplane or helicopter, and farming with his brother. The nonprofit operates entirely on donations.

“We are here for everyone,” Pralle emphasizes. “We work 100% on donations. No one takes any wage. My spray business pays for most of the bills, from the lighting and heating. When people donate money, they donate it directly to a flight.”

Each flight costs about \$500, depending on various factors. Despite the costs and the challenges, Pralle remains committed to his mission.

“Our motto is ‘Where Hope Grows Wings,’” he says. “We’re trying to help somebody not think about what’s actually going on in their life. We want to just get them away from everything for a little bit.”

Through Compassion Flights, Pralle offers more than just transportation – he provides a lifeline – a moment of relaxation and a twinkle of hope for those navigating the toughest times of their lives.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



CO-OP MEMBERS ENJOY SUMMER FUN WITH GRUNDY COUNTY REC

As summer comes to an end this month, we want to take a moment to reflect on a fun and eventful summer, full of activities and engagement opportunities with our member-consumers. Being able to get out in the communities where we serve, live and work is one of the many things Grundy County REC loves about serving you.

Congratulations to the following winners from this summer's activities!

Safety Demo Day at the Grundy County Fair

\$250 Great Wolf Lodge gift card

- Becky Janousek

Member Appreciation Event

\$500 Great Wolf Lodge gift card

- Jeanne Paustian

Iowa Hawkeyes vs. Troy Trojans tickets

- Brenda Hoeg

Iowa Hawkeyes vs. Washington Huskies tickets

- David Chizek

Iowa State Cyclones vs Baylor tickets

- Richard Ruzicka



GRUNDY COUNTY REC ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, Sept. 5 | 5-7 p.m.

Business Meeting to follow

Grundy County REC Headquarters



FOOD, PRIZES, BUCKET TRUCK RIDES AND MORE!

Members must register for prizes in person at the Annual Meeting on Sept. 5, but prize winners will be announced on Friday, Sept. 6.

This event is available for Grundy County REC members only.

OCTOBER IS CO-OP MONTH

Stay tuned to Grundy County REC's Facebook page and Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine during October to learn more about the history of the co-op and why staff loves serving our member-consumers!



WHY FOLLOW GRUNDY COUNTY REC ON FACEBOOK?

We use Facebook to communicate with our members regarding important announcements, energy efficiency tips and fun co-op events. This is also where outage information gets posted because it is the quickest way for the cooperative to reach our membership!

FEDERAL TAX CREDITS, INCENTIVES AND REBATES FOR EFFICIENCY UPGRADES

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Tax credits and rebates can help bridge the affordability gap for higher-efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete energy efficiency upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money in years to come.

Tax credits vs. rebates

Knowing the difference between a tax credit and a rebate is important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the rebate program is set up, it may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that taxpayers can report on their tax documents to reduce the amount of taxes owed. When you file your tax documents, you apply for a tax credit, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than a rebate.

Tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades

According to ENERGY STAR®, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal tax credits are available for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps. Tax credits for ENERGY STAR-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope – the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside – with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the panel upgrade, up to \$600.



When shopping for appliances, look for the ENERGY STAR® logo on the energy guide to identify which products are the most efficient options. *Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources*



You can also improve your home's envelope with tax credits for insulation. *Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources*



Tax credits for ENERGY STAR® heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. *Photo Source: Bonneville Power Administration*

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the U.S., not new construction.

Rebates for energy efficiency upgrades

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 expanded available funding for many home upgrades. The act allocated \$8.8 million for home rebate programs to be implemented at the state level, and this funding is offered in two different programs. The HOMES program allows up to \$8,000 per home for standard-income households. Higher rebates are available for low-to moderate-income households. The HEAR program offers rebates of up to \$14,000 per home for qualified, efficient electric equipment for low-to moderate-income households.

These programs are designed to bolster existing programs and should be available in late 2024 or early 2025.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, more than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents. These programs can help people save money on electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid.

Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable, helping you save money and improve the overall comfort of your home.

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

MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Beth Thole is pictured in the back row, second from left.

KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE BETH THOLE IS COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

BY KELLY SLAGTER

Continued from Page 11

Gary and Karen Trei, members of Osceola Electric Cooperative, immediately thought of Beth Thole when they read the 2024 Shine the Light contest description in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Thole's enthusiasm and dedication to remembering the past and educating future generations are things to be admired.

"Working with Beth is never dull," explains Karen. "When you volunteer for Beth, you never know which job you'll end up doing or who you'll end up working with."

As a retired teacher, Thole's passion for education lives on in her vision for a pavilion to educate residents of Osceola County about the area's deep agricultural heritage. The Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion on the county fairgrounds began taking shape seven years ago when Thole's research led her to realize the trials and determination of previous generations.

"It's important to keep that history alive and teach the people coming after us what their forefathers did," Thole explains. "The pavilion uses pictures and artifacts from donors to create exhibits that tell stories and trigger memories."

Bringing the community together
Since the Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion began, Thole and the

Agriculture Pavilion board have coordinated several events to unite the community and raise funds for the museum. The success of these events, which were entertaining and educational, is a testament to the integral role of each community member. Fundraisers included an escape room at a historic schoolhouse, cemetery headstone tours with local actors to bring the stories alive, tractor rides, auctions and dinners. Other donations, such as lumber and building materials, have also been abundant.

"When people bring something to donate, they often stick around to help set it up," Thole says.

Her vast knowledge of people within the community has brought together many volunteers, both young and old.

"Osceola Electric Cooperative is happy to contribute to educating the

community on our county's history," says Jeff TenNapel, general manager of Osceola Electric Cooperative.

For one of the exhibits, electric cooperative linemen assembled vintage material to recreate infrastructure, portraying what it looked like when electricity first came to rural Osceola County in the 1940s and 1950s. The display sits out front of the 100-year-old Agriculture Pavilion building as a reminder of how rural electrification dramatically improved the lives of farmers and their families.

Thole and the Agriculture Pavilion board have many ideas for using the \$3,000 donation; among them are purchasing tables for upcoming events and a smart TV to aid in the exhibits.

Article contributed by Kelly Slagter, customer service representative/communicator, Osceola Electric Cooperative.



HOPE BLOOMS ETERNAL

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

If you had to guess, how much of Iowa was once covered with prairies? It's roughly 80%, by some estimates.

This tidbit of information was shared in the Master Conservationist program I completed this summer through Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach. Inspired to learn more, I attended a prairie field day in mid-July at ISU's Horticulture Research Station near Ames. About 75 of us toured a remnant prairie, a reconstructed prairie and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' prairie seed production project, all of which help attract pollinators, protect soil and water quality, and provide an array of other benefits that give me hope for the future.

I was also awestruck by the beauty of ISU's prairie. Purple coneflowers and other native Iowa plants created a kaleidoscope of colors across a shallow valley framed by an oak tree more than 300 years old.

A place for prairie flowers

I was thinking about prairie plants when I recently reconnected with my friend Jennifer Welch, an urban conservationist with the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District in central Iowa. When I asked her about her post on Facebook, in which she asked friends to donate vases for a flower project, she was happy to tell me more.

"I started seeding prairie everywhere I could, including open spaces and along the lanes, after we moved to our farm in 1997," she explains. "I love finding any patches, even small ones, to transform the landscape into its native habitat."

Today, these areas flourish with everything from purple prairie clover plants to tall, yellow compass plants, with their distinctive sandpaper leaves that point north and south (hence the name).

"Our native landscaping is amazing," Jennifer adds. "It's so adaptable and hardy. It's also ever-changing and dazzles us with God's creativity."

Earlier this summer, Jennifer spent an hour harvesting some of her prairie flowers. Then she and the ladies in her Bible study group (called the Bittersweet Road, named for the road near Jennifer's home) designed about 45 vases of flowers filled with bee balm, gray-headed coneflower, pale purple coneflowers and other blooms.

Jennifer dropped off the bouquets at the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center the next morning. She visited with a resident named Richard, who loved his prairie flower delivery.

"He recalled how his father started growing flowers when he was 55, and then he grew flowers, too," Jennifer says. "So, the bouquet made him smile."

Small acts of kindness can change the world

Jennifer has often seen this kind of "flower power" since she started her flower ministry in 2021. She enjoys hearing the stories recipients share about their gardening and flower memories. Sometimes, they want to talk about the person they plan to share their bouquet with.

Talk about a win-win. Jennifer finds fulfillment by sharing her flowers with others and educating people about Iowa's landscapes and ecosystems – all while bringing people more joy.

"I love to surprise people with flowers and bouquets. It makes them feel special, seen, valued and loved," she says. "It also makes me feel good to help them know they are seen, special, valued and loved by God."

Life is what you make of it, and Jennifer makes the most of her land and her prairie plants. It also



The ladies in Jennifer Welch's Bible study group designed vases of flowers, which were delivered to the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

proves that no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

While it's easy to sometimes lose faith in people in today's challenging world, sometimes a simple act of kindness – like a small bouquet of prairie flowers – is all it takes to help hope bloom again.

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



A flower recipient enjoys his prairie flower delivery from Jennifer Welch.

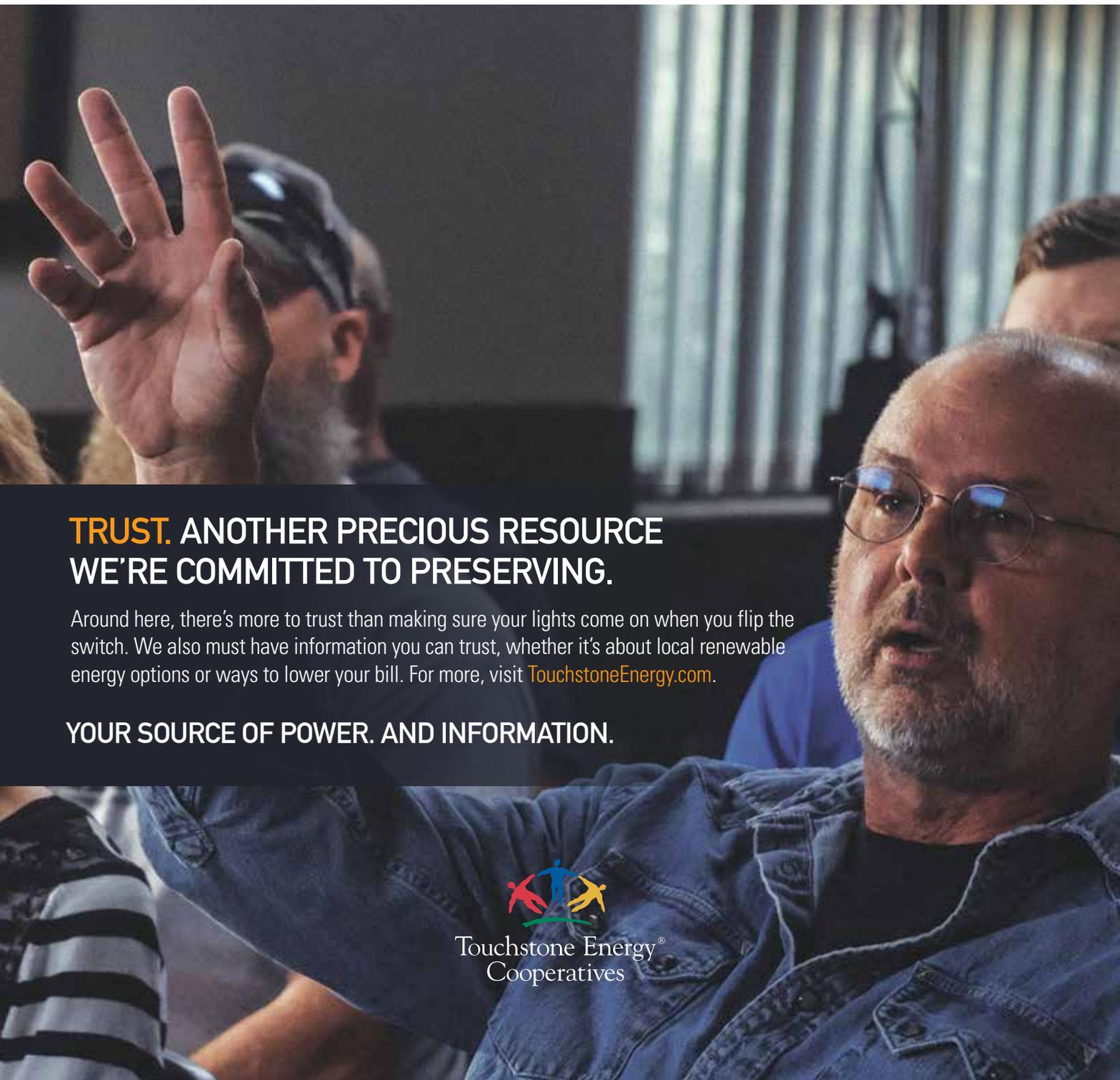


The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

September 2024

Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a blue denim shirt, with his right hand raised in a meeting. In the background, another man wearing a hard hat is visible. The setting appears to be an industrial or workshop environment.

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