

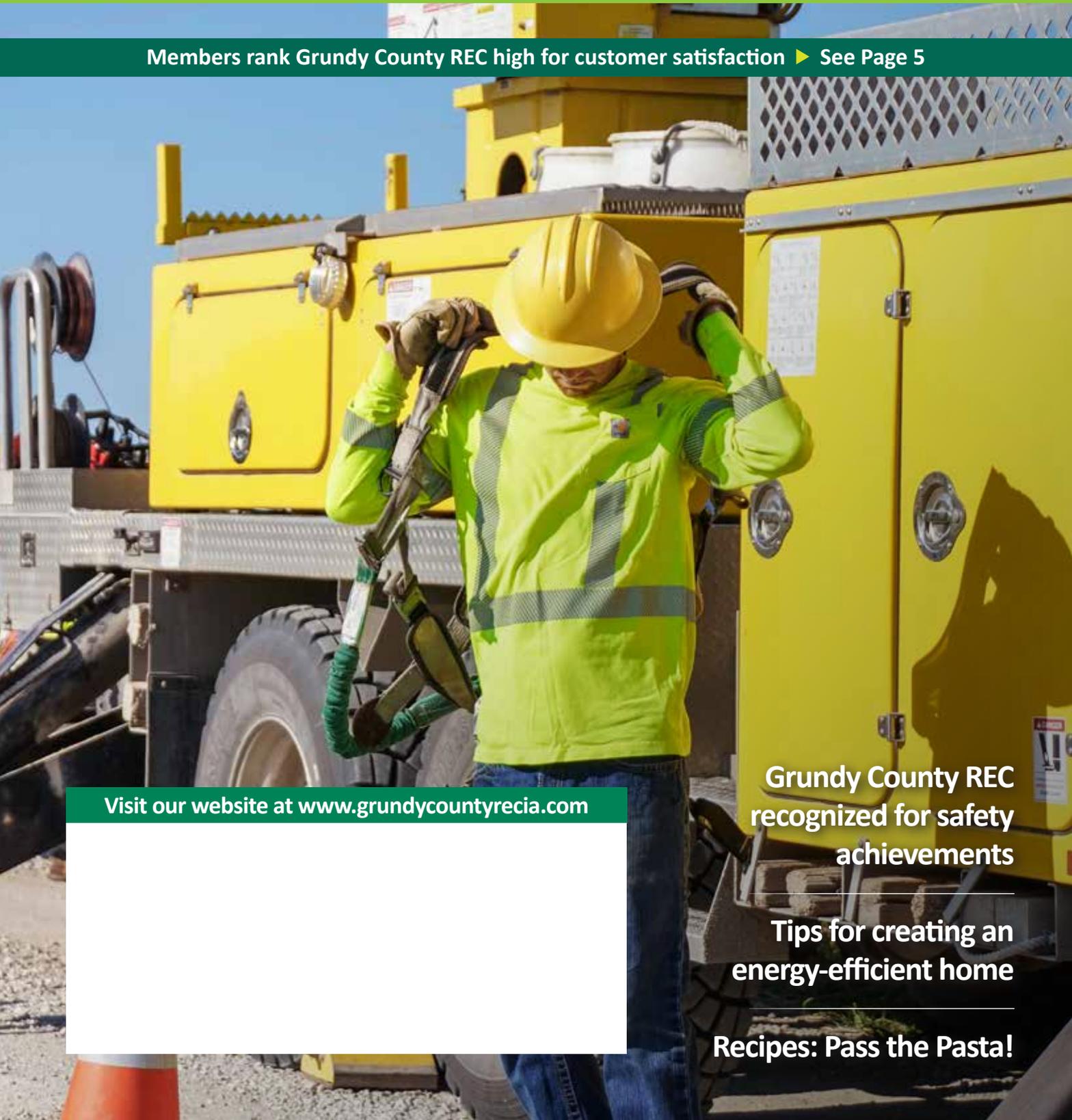
living with energy

IN IOWA

 **Grundy County REC**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

MARCH 2020

Members rank Grundy County REC high for customer satisfaction ▶ See Page 5



Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

Grundy County REC
recognized for safety
achievements

Tips for creating an
energy-efficient home

Recipes: Pass the Pasta!

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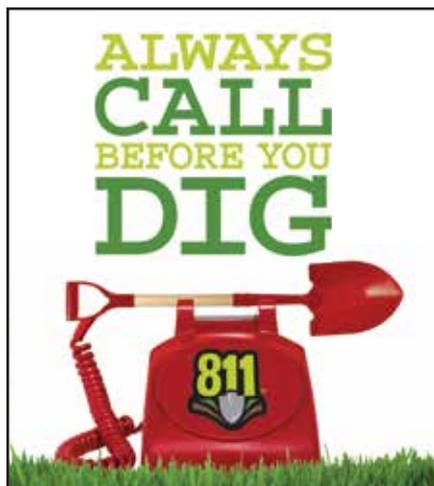
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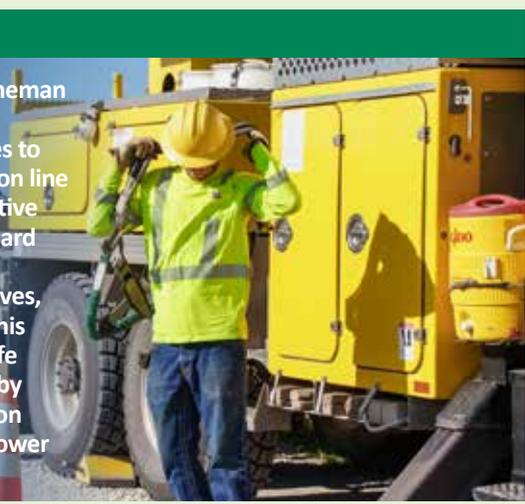
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ON THE COVER

Safety first! Grant Oliver, a lineman for Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, prepares to perform work on a distribution line near Harlan. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including hard hats, hi-visibility and flame-resistant clothing, rubber gloves, and a safety harness ensure his safety and gets him home safe at the end of the day. Photo by Rachel Rogers, communication specialist, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative. ⚡



Investing in educated leadership

BY STEVE SEIDL

Motivational speaker Zig Zigler once remarked, “There is only one thing worse than training employees and losing them, and that’s not training them and keeping them.”

I think the same thought applies to your co-op’s board of directors. Locally owned electric cooperatives are committed to the co-op principle of education and training; it’s central to our purpose. We make it a priority to educate our member-owners, employees and board of directors because it makes our people more effective leaders, and it’s the right thing to do. Your co-op invests resources in sending this magazine to you every month as one way to keep you informed about electric safety, local co-op news, energy efficiency and more.

Your co-op’s directors, who are elected co-op members and your neighbors, receive valuable training from our national and statewide electric cooperative associations. For example, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) hosts a two-day conference with programming specifically for Iowa’s electric co-op directors every February. At the 2020 Directors’ Update conference in West Des Moines, more than 140 directors learned about cybersecurity challenges, received an update on the



state’s rural economic development efforts, learned more about engaging effectively with co-op member-owners, received updates from legal counsel and IAEC regulatory and government affairs staff, and attended a rate building workshop.

We know that for directors to be most effective, they must be knowledgeable about the challenges and issues that could impact their electric cooperative. Your local board guides the cooperative in providing electricity that is safe, affordable, reliable and sustainable in addition to playing a crucial role in determining the strategic direction and priorities of your co-op.

Education and training are especially important for newer directors as they must learn quickly about their roles and responsibilities and understand the challenges and issues unique to the electric industry. It’s equally important for seasoned directors due to the ever-changing and dynamic energy landscape. Investing in valuable education and training for board directors helps ensure our leaders make informed decisions that will guide the cooperative to a successful future as we power lives and empower the communities we serve. ⚡

Steve Seidl is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



Teri Wallis engages the directors during the cooperative rate building session at the IAEC Directors’ Update conference in February.

Win a Philips Compact Pasta Maker for two!



This smaller version of the popular Philips Pasta Maker has a compact footprint, so it can be stored easily on the countertop or in a cabinet. The fully automated machine makes perfect pasta from scratch in just a few minutes. It comes with three discs for shaping spaghetti, fettuccine and penne. Separate flour and water measuring cups ensure you combine ingredients in exactly the right proportions for perfectly textured pasta. Create flavored pastas by adding ingredients like spinach, carrots or beets.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2So98Rq>. ⚡

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month’s contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than March 31, 2020. You must be a member of one of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to win. There’s no obligation associated with entering, we don’t share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Fitbit from the January issue was Robert Ruter from Prairie Energy Cooperative.

MARCH 24 IS NATIONAL AG DAY!



We thank our area farmers for everything they provide. Today and every day, we appreciate the food you bring to our tables!



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

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GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Iowa's electric cooperatives discuss important issues at legislative reception



Pictured left to right: Mike Geerdes, Grundy County REC member services manager; Norb Boyle, board president, Grundy County REC; Larry Rohach, board vice president, Grundy County REC; Speaker of the House Rep. Pat Grassley; Kevin Pruisner, Grundy County REC director; and Nick Strohhahn, assistant board secretary/treasurer, Grundy County REC.

Nearly 200 directors, managers and employees from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with more than 80 state legislators on Jan. 14, during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception in downtown Des Moines. Other guests of honor included Secretary of State Paul Pate, Iowa Utilities Board Member Nick Wagner and Iowa Department of Revenue Director Kraig Paulsen. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance and FUEL Iowa, hosted the annual reception.

The event provided an opportunity to meet with legislators at the beginning of the state legislative session to discuss issues regarding the commitment to reliability, commitment to community and commitment to safety shared by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

The Welcome Back Reception is a chance for Grundy County REC advocates to connect with the senators and representatives who represent our service territory as the new legislative session gets underway," says Vicki Daily, executive vice president and general manager, Grundy County REC. ⚡



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

Grundy County REC recognized for safety achievements

Grundy County REC recently received the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program (RESAP) award for 2019 at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) annual meeting. RESAP is a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and strives



to promote the highest standards of safety among electric cooperatives.

This rigorous program includes onsite safety observations and annual reporting to NRECA with additional data submissions every three years.

At Grundy County REC, we support a Culture of Safety! ⚡



Pictured left to right: Steve Seidl, IAEC board president; Vicki Daily, Grundy County REC executive vice president and general manager; Larry Rohach, Grundy County REC director; and Chuck Soderberg, IAEC executive vice president and general manager.

Grundy County REC receives favorable member satisfaction results

Every two years, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative performs an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey. We received our most recent results in December. Grundy County REC's ACSI score was a very impressive 84, which is higher than the national Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives average (75) and the scores of investor-owned utilities (73) and municipal utilities (73). We're proud that we've maintained positive scores since our first survey in 2007. Previous Grundy County REC ACSI scores were 85 in 2017, 88 in 2015, 78 in 2013, and 89 in 2011 and 2007.

Overall satisfaction taken from the survey

89%

In 2015 and 2011, our score was 92%, and 77% in the 2013 survey.

Of the key satisfaction attributes, members gave Grundy County REC the highest ratings for prompt outage response, reliable electric service, courteous employees, knowledgeable employees, quality customer service and professional business manner. Based on the survey, our members are interested in many timely topics, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, safety, electric energy storage batteries, electric vehicles and bill payment options.

Grundy County REC is pleased to offer many rebates for energy efficiency and electric vehicle chargers. We are also a member of Iowa Choice Renewables, which provides resources for information about renewable energy. Please contact our office if you want more information on any of these items.

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback so that we can continue to provide the best service possible to you, our member-owners of the cooperative. ⚡

Alert: Online payment processing changes

Recently, Grundy County REC has made the following payment processing changes as part of our regular security updates. As of Feb. 11, 2020, all saved payment cards (payment profiles) will no longer be available.

To create a NEW payment profile, you must make a payment, select the CREATE PAYMENT PROFILE BOX and add your profile name.

Due to the enhanced security,

you will now be able to add your saved payment profile to recurring payments. Go to COMMUNICATIONS > RECURRING CREDIT CARD > and select the payment profile you want to use for recurring payments. Please note, you must have a saved payment profile on file to start recurring credit card processing.

If you have questions, please contact our office at 319-824-5251 or 800-390-7605. ⚡



Promoting the value of energy-efficient homes

2020 Momentum is Building conference educates residential building professionals

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

The phrase “it takes a village” is a well-known reference to raising children. It also applies to educating the public about the benefits and value of investing in energy-efficient homes and upgrades.

This concept was at the heart of a recent keynote message from Sandra Adomatis of Adomatis Appraisal Services. She spoke to more than 200 builders, electricians, HVAC professionals and co-op member services staff at the 2020 Momentum is Building (MIB) conference in West Des Moines in February. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, the annual conference promotes residential energy efficiency building concepts and provides valuable training for building professionals and tradesmen from across the state.

Adomatis stressed the importance of many groups working together to educate homeowners about the value of energy-efficient homes. “Promoting energy efficiency housing is a group effort that requires support from utilities, builders, lenders, appraisers



Electric cooperative organizers of the 2020 MIB event pose with Scott Sieper, the “Iowa Nice Guy,” who spoke at the event. Seated: Angela Catton, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, and Sieper. Standing, left to right: Donna Griebel, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO); Erin Campbell, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives; Dawn Sly-Terpstra, CIPCO; Joe Hejda, CIPCO; Crystal Davidson; Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative; Ryan Cornelius, Corn Belt Power Cooperative; and Cheri Monahan, CIPCO.

and realtors,” she says.

As an industry insider, Adomatis sees several opportunities for improvement in Iowa’s housing industry. “We need resources in Iowa for people to look for and buy energy-efficient homes. Consumers need help in finding what they’re looking

for,” she notes. Energy efficiency is becoming more of a priority and homebuyers are willing to pay more upfront to achieve long-term benefits.

“Energy-efficient homes give us many valuable benefits like a healthier environment, lower operating costs and increased comfort. But when

HERS Index Ratings

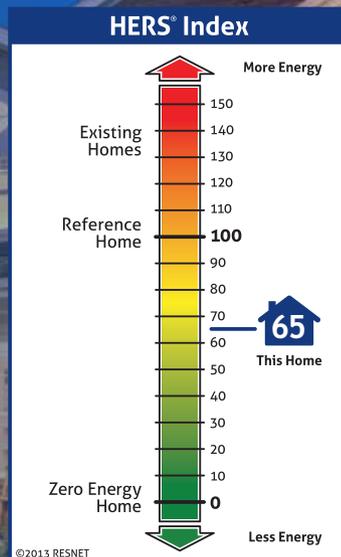
Developed by the Residential Energy Systems Network (RESNET), the Home Energy Rating System (HERS®) Index is the industry standard by which a home’s energy efficiency is measured. It’s also the nationally recognized system for inspecting and calculating a home’s energy performance.

A HERS rating can tell you a lot about the home you live in, like how efficiently it’s operating and where you can make modifications for greater energy savings. When you’re selling your home, a low HERS Index Score can command a higher resale price. And when you’re buying a home, you can anticipate the costs of

energy bills and efficiency upgrades.

A certified Home Energy Rater assesses the energy efficiency of a home, assigning it a relative performance score. The lower the number, the more energy efficient the home and the lower the energy bills. The U.S. Department of Energy has determined that a typical resale home scores 130 on the HERS Index while a standard new home is awarded a rating of 100. ENERGY STAR-certified homes average around 85 on the index.

Visit the HERS Score website at www.hersindex.com to find an energy smart rater, find an energy smart builder and search for a HERS-rated home. ⚡



people are building a new home, they don't know what they don't know," Adomatis explains. "They focus on granite countertops, but energy-efficient upgrades can also increase the value of a home while saving the homeowners money in the long run. It's up to us in the home building industry to educate homebuyers and present them with options and accurate information. We can build houses better, and we need to tell people about it."

With more than 25 years of experience as a real estate appraiser, Adomatis has served as an active member of the Appraisal Institute since 1985. She is now a national instructor for residential seminars and courses through the Appraisal Institute and has earned the prestigious Senior Residential Appraiser (SRA) designation, NAR GREEN designation and LEED Green Associate credential.

Adomatis offers several strategies for builders, lenders, appraisers and realtors within the home building industry regarding energy efficiency promotion.

BUILDERS: Adomatis encourages home builders to start listing detailed energy efficiency features for potential buyers because people want to save money on their energy bills. Builders can also seek a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) report for appraisers to use in valuing energy efficiency and quantifying energy savings. Appraisers usually appraise new construction from plans and specifications and that requires builders to provide a projected HERS rating for appraisers to use in quantifying the energy savings for valuation. Build with a vision for the second and third homeowner. Place efficiency stickers and stats in the electric box so details don't get lost. Document what's behind the walls because the original homeowners often forget to share that information when selling the home.

REALTORS: Most realtors don't market energy-efficient homes because they feel uninformed themselves. Adomatis says that builders and vendors must be able to explain why an energy-efficient home is more valuable and worth the investment. Realtors can also work to populate the MLS with energy information, so homebuyers have as much data as possible. The MLS should have a HERS search field that appraisers and homebuyers can use in finding energy-efficient homes.

LENDERS: Mortgage lenders can help promote energy-efficient homes. According to Adomatis, energy-efficient mortgages exist, but lenders do not typically offer them because many lenders are not familiar with them and they may take additional paperwork. Homebuyers need to find lenders who will work for them by identifying energy-efficient mortgage options. She adds that lenders can do more to promote the total cost of homeownership, including monthly utility bill estimates with the monthly mortgage payment so homeowners have a better sense of energy-efficient cost savings.

APPRAISERS: Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and FHA guidelines require appraisers to consider the energy-efficient features of the home, and if the market supports an adjustment in the appraised value, one must be made. But an average appraiser won't take this into account if they aren't aware of the energy efficiency of the home. An appraiser herself, Adomatis is passionate about working on adding more energy efficiency features to the standardized appraisal form. Once these additions are made, it will become more acceptable for appraisers to analyze energy efficiency.

Advice for Buyers/Sellers:

- Access a list of qualified appraisers – <https://bit.ly/3bAjllr>
- Download the brochure, "Appraised Value and Energy Efficiency: Getting It Right" – <https://bit.ly/2Sm9O9X>
- Search for HERS rated homes: <https://bit.ly/2vrvk3B>
- Work with a lender who has experience with energy efficiency mortgage products. ⚡

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





Baked Spaghetti

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup onion, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 tablespoon butter or oleo
- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 4 ounces canned mushrooms
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- 10 ounces spaghetti, cooked and drained
- 2 cups shredded cheese

In large skillet, sauté onion and peppers in butter. Add beef, mushrooms, garlic salt, salt, cayenne and chili powder. Simmer together with the spaghetti sauce. Break spaghetti into pieces, cook and drain. Mix the cooked spaghetti with the sauce mixture and put in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle with cheese and bake at 350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes.

Jacqueline Petersen • Logan
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

Ham Stuffed Manicotti

- 8 manicotti shells
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cups (1 pound) ground ham, fully cooked
- 4 ounces mushrooms, drained and sliced
- 4 ounces shredded Swiss cheese, divided
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup green pepper, chopped
- 3 tablespoons butter or oleo
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- paprika
- fresh parsley, chopped

Cook manicotti according to package directions; set aside. In a large skillet, sauté onion in oil until tender. Remove from heat and add ham, mushrooms, 2 ounces of the Swiss cheese and the Parmesan cheese, set aside. In a saucepan, sauté green pepper in butter until tender. Stir in flour until thoroughly combined. Add milk and cook, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbly. Mix a quarter of the sauce mixture into ham mixture and stuff each shell with portions of the filling. Place in a greased 7x11x2-inch baking pan. Top shells with remaining sauce and sprinkle with paprika to taste. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Top with parsley and the remaining Swiss cheese before serving.

Marjorie Alliger • Lohrville
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

Pepperoni Pizza Mac and Cheese

- 8 ounces large elbow macaroni
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dry mustard
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups whole milk, warmed
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup pizza sauce
- 6 ounces sliced pepperoni
- Optional toppings: cooked sausage, olives, mushrooms, etc.
- 2 ounces Italian blend cheese, shredded
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Cook pasta according to package directions until al dente (cellentani or large spiral pasta can also be used). Melt butter in pan over medium-high heat and whisk in flour and mustard. Slowly whisk in milk until smooth. Continue whisking until sauce boils. Turn heat to medium, cook and whisk until thickened, about 4 minutes. Turn off heat and whisk in cheese until smooth. Stir in pasta and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer pasta to a greased baking dish. Top pasta with pizza sauce and then pepperoni (and optional toppings if desired). Top with Italian and Parmesan cheeses. Bake at 400 degrees F until hot and bubbly, about 20 min.

Chris Daniels • Casey
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

RINSING PASTA

Rinsing pasta quickly cools it down and washes away the starch. For most warm pasta recipes, such as those with marinara or Alfredo, having some starch on the pasta gives the sauce something to cling to.

PASTA TIPS

FLAVOR IN THE SALT

For flavorful pasta, salting the cooking water is a must. The typical rule of thumb is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of salt for every pound of pasta (and three to four quarts of water per pound).

PASTA TIPS

Ravioli Bake

- 1 26-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup water
- 2 1-pound packages frozen ravioli, either beef or cheese or one of each
- 2 cups shredded Italian three-cheese blend or other Italian cheese
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Mix spaghetti sauce, tomatoes and water (the water can be poured into the empty spaghetti sauce jar to shake and rinse it). Spoon 1 cup sauce mixture into the bottom of 9x13-inch baking dish. Layer half the ravioli and 1 cup shredded cheese over sauce mixture. Top with remaining ravioli and sauce mixture. Sprinkle with remaining shredded cheese and cover with foil. Bake at 400 degrees F for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake additional 15 minutes or until ravioli is tender. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Let stand 10 minutes.

Suzanne Stills • New Virginia
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Shrimp Linguini

- 1 pound linguini
- ½ cup olive oil
- Italian seasoning, to taste
- garlic salt, to taste
- 2 onions, finely diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound fresh or frozen shrimp

Cooked linguini in salted water until al dente and drain. Meanwhile in a large skillet, heat olive oil seasoned liberally with the Italian seasoning and garlic salt. Sauté onions and garlic in the heated oil until soft. Add shrimp. If using frozen shrimp, rinse in cold water to thaw and drain well. Pour oil and shrimp over the hot, drained linguini.

Audrey Metzger • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Tomato Basil Pasta

- 12 ounces pasta
- 15 ounces diced tomatoes with liquid
- 1 large sweet onion, cut in julienne strips
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 large sprigs basil, chopped
- 4½ cups vegetable broth
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoon oregano
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper
- Parmesan cheese

Place pasta, tomatoes, onion, garlic and basil in large stock pot. Pour in vegetable broth. Sprinkle pepper flakes and oregano on top. Drizzle with oil. Cover pot and bring to a boil. Reduce to a low simmer, keep covered and cook about 10 minutes, stirring about every 2 minutes. Cook until almost all liquid has been absorbed. Season to taste with salt and pepper, stirring pasta several times to distribute liquid at bottom of pot. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese.

Ernie Schiller • Donnellson • Access Energy Cooperative

Sausage & Macaroni Comfort Food

- 1 pound pork sausage, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup green peppers, chopped
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1½ cup elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1½ cans water

Mix all ingredients together in a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 375 degrees F for 50 minutes. Uncover, stir and bake another 15 minutes at 350 degrees F.

Bonnie Hunold • Argyle • Access Energy Cooperative

FILL YOUR POT PROPERLY

Use enough cold, fresh water that once the pasta begins to cook and expand, there will still be plenty of room for the noodles to move freely.

PASTA TIPS

WAIT FOR A BOIL

Adding noodles to non-boiling water will cause them to get mushy. Always give your pasta a good stir once it hits the water.

PASTA TIPS

MATCH NOODLES TO SAUCE

For the perfect dish, pair complementary sauce to your noodles' shape. For example, penne noodles are tubular and ridged. These two features help sauces cling to the noodles.

PASTA TIPS

TIMING MATTERS

A drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate your finished pasta dish. But, don't add the oil to the cooking water. By doing so, your sauce will slide right off the noodles.

PASTA TIPS

Wanted: Summer's Best Burger Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

The best summer meals come right off the grill. To celebrate July being National Grilling Month, we're looking for your favorite burger recipes. Whether they are made with beef, pork, turkey or veggies, a burger is an All-American staple of backyard barbecues. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com. The deadline is March 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

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

MAIL:
Recipes
Living with Energy in Iowa
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7 easy steps for planning energy efficiency upgrades

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

With spring on the horizon, it's a great time to start planning home projects. Making your home more energy efficient can be done by taking one step at a time, or you can take it on all at once as a larger project. Either way, it's helpful to have a plan in place before you dive in, so you don't end up doing unnecessary work or repeating steps along the way.

This seven-step checklist can help you get organized.

Step 1: Set goals and constraints.

Start by setting your primary goal. Are you mainly looking to save money on your home's energy bills, make it more comfortable, increase the resale value or help the environment?

Then, set a deadline for when you need the project completed. This may affect whether you do some of the work yourself and which contractor you choose.

Set your budget. How much is it worth to you to live in an energy-efficient home? One way to look at this is to review your annual energy bills. If they're around \$2,000 per year, you might ask yourself how much you'd be willing to spend if

you could cut that expense in half. Maybe you'd be willing to spend \$10,000 to save \$1,000 each year? That would be a 10% rate of return on your investment. Or, if your home is drafty and cold, how much are you willing to spend to make it more comfortable?

Step 2: Educate yourself.

This step is crucial so you can weigh the costs and benefits of each potential improvement. There are many helpful lists of small and large energy efficiency upgrades available online. There are also some great resources like the Department of Energy, ENERGY STAR® and Consumer Reports. Your electric co-op may have a home energy advisor on staff or available literature that can help.



Photo Credit: Piedmont Electric Cooperative.

An energy audit will help you prioritize so you can spend your money on the measures that will bring you the most benefit.

Inspecting and sealing furnace ducts are high-impact projects best left to the professionals.



Photo Credit: United Cooperative Service.



Step 3: Schedule an energy audit.

An energy audit will help you prioritize so you can spend your money on the measures that will bring you the most benefit. And an energy auditor can help in other ways during the project. If a contractor is hired to do some major energy efficiency upgrades, ask an energy auditor to look at the work before paying for it. In some cases, auditors find the work isn't close to the level agreed to in the contract and more work is required. Ensure the completed work is up to the promised level of efficiency.

Step 4: Plan your projects.

Now that you have set your budget and priorities and have a sense of the work and costs involved, make a list of the items you want to include in your energy efficiency upgrades.

Step 5: Are there tasks you can take on yourself?

Some work, like caulking windows or adding weather stripping to doors, can easily be done by the homeowner, especially with the help of online tutorials. Other work, like insulating an attic, can be dangerous and may require special equipment or know-how.

Step 6: Identify and select contractors.

You want a contractor who really knows how to do energy efficiency work. And you may need two or more contractors, such as one for your heating system and another for insulation. Maybe you'd like to find one who can do air sealing or duct sealing. In some rural areas,

contractors may not specialize in the efficiency measures you are interested in. Are they willing to learn what they don't know?

Be sure to get several quotes if possible, as well as references from past clients. Create and sign a contract with guaranteed work and completion dates, with payments due only as work is completed and inspected.

Step 7: Oversee the work.

The quality of the work makes a big difference in the amount of energy savings and added comfort you desire. Keep an eye on the project, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Remember, it's your home, and you're the one paying the bills! ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.



Caulking around windows inside and outside the home is a cost-effective improvement that can be done with a little research.

Your attic can be one of the greatest sources of heat loss in your home. An energy auditor can look for issues and recommend steps to correct them.



Photo credit: Andy Harper, EE Image Database.

Iowa community foundations build on 15 years of success

BY KAY SNYDER

Philanthropy has the power to transform communities, and the special places, events and nonprofit organizations that elevate our lives. Every day, ordinary Iowans share extraordinary gifts of time and money to make our towns more attractive, caring and welcoming.

Iowa is celebrating the 15th anniversary of one of the nation's most heralded philanthropic partnerships. This celebration is possible because Iowa leaders, legislators and the governor came together to pass and implement legislation known as the County Endowment Fund and the Endow Iowa Tax Credit Program.

Supporting communities

The County Endowment Fund and the Endow Iowa Tax Credit Program were enacted to ignite community foundation building and to be a catalyst for bringing the community foundation movement to small communities and rural counties.

Each year, 84 counties without a state-licensed gaming venue receive a small portion of gaming tax revenues that are deposited in a countywide community foundation. In addition, Iowa taxpayers are allowed a special

25 percent tax credit for gifts of a permanent endowment to a qualified community foundation.

Thanks to community-minded leaders and generous citizens, these initiatives are positively changing the lives of Iowans.

Today, more than **\$900 million** has been raised to support permanent community foundation endowments across the state. Over **4,385 nonprofits and charitable causes** are supported through countywide community foundations. Gifts and grants from community foundations are supporting charitable causes that advance economic development, education, health and recreation, arts and culture, and more. Over **28,000 grants** totaling over **\$100 million** have been invested in nonprofits across the state with the encouragement of these programs.

Involving cooperatives

Iowa Area Development Group (IADG), which was founded by Iowa's rural electric cooperatives, is a proud leader in Iowa's community foundation development efforts. IADG created the first and only statewide community foundation in 2003. Contributions from IADG



Bricker Price Block, Earlham

sponsors, gifts from individuals, and grants from institutions provided the seed money to help establish the IADG Community Foundation. The early efforts of the Foundation were aimed at providing education, training and inspiration to get community foundations up and running across the state. The Foundation has awarded more than **\$500,000** in grants, and its assets have grown to nearly **\$2 million**. In 2016, IADG Community Foundation announced the "Partners in Progress" grant program. It is designed to help implement and share programs and initiatives that are new, innovative and ready for replication by its rural utility partners and others.

IADG encourages Iowa's electric cooperatives and their members to engage with community foundations across the state. These organizations enable charitable giving, foster the transfer of wealth, infuse grant money into communities and allow Iowans to give back to cities and the state.

To learn more about the IADG Community Foundation or community foundations in your area, visit IADG.com/foundation or call 800-888-4743. ⚡



County Foundation Leaders quarterly meeting



Rocket Manufacturing, Rock Valley



Okobojo Entrepreneurial Institute



Maquoketa housing development groundbreaking

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.

Keeping crews safe and power flowing

BY ANN THELEN

Electric cooperative employees across Iowa participate in numerous meetings each year to work on one of their most significant challenges – staying safe as a lineworker.

“Anyone involved in working with electricity knows it has the potential to be dangerous and life-threatening,” says John Dvorak, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association Electric Cooperatives (IAEC). “Lineworkers are handling 7,200-volt and 14,400-volt power lines daily, and while that can become routine, we work hard to ensure the hazards of the work should never be taken for granted.”

Commitment to Zero Contacts

That’s why the Commitment to Zero Contacts program has become a central component of safety training for electric co-ops throughout Iowa and the country. Developed as a joint initiative by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Federated Rural Electric Insurance Cooperative, it was introduced to electric co-ops in spring 2018 as a major focus of safety awareness.

“Since April of 2018, more than 570 CEOs of electric co-ops have personally endorsed the goals of the program,” says Bud Branham,



NRECA’s director of safety programs.

“These commitments are centered on reviewing current safety efforts against the initiative findings and adjusting where possible to mitigate risk. It is not meant to be a top-down initiative, and the real value comes through involving employees as part of the commitment.”

“One of our greatest challenges is making sure that routine familiarity with the work, complacency and overconfidence don’t erode overall safety awareness,” Dvorak says. “We strive to instill the philosophy of never letting your guard down and knowing that if you lose focus – even for a second – it could result in a serious injury or fatality.”

Reinforcing safety fundamentals

The consequences of an incident in this industry are so high and getting that critical “buy-in” requires much more than lectures, memos and discussions. IAEC’s safety instructors use a variety of techniques to make safety awareness personal and encourage lineworkers and other

employees to discuss safety concerns.

In the breakrooms and gear rooms of several co-ops, the family connection to safety is a regular reminder for co-op employees, with family photos hanging on the walls to remind crews that one mistake can be fatal.

Reinforcing safety fundamentals is critical, and IAEC’s safety instructors always look for ways to interject the Commitment to Zero Contacts into their regular discussions and training lessons.

“We encourage conversations about safety during job briefings, and that includes a thorough inspection of personal protection equipment before work gets underway,” Dvorak says. “Our cooperative commitment to safety never stops. Every day, our goal remains the same – for linemen to go home safely to their families.”

When co-op crews are protected and ready to get the job done, members can count on the safe, reliable power they depend on day in and day out. ⚡

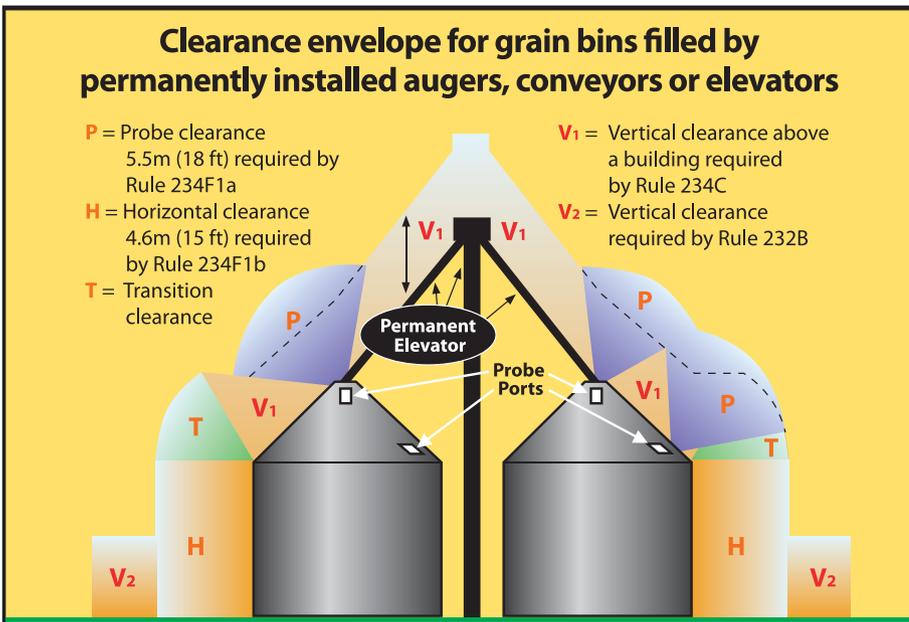
Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.



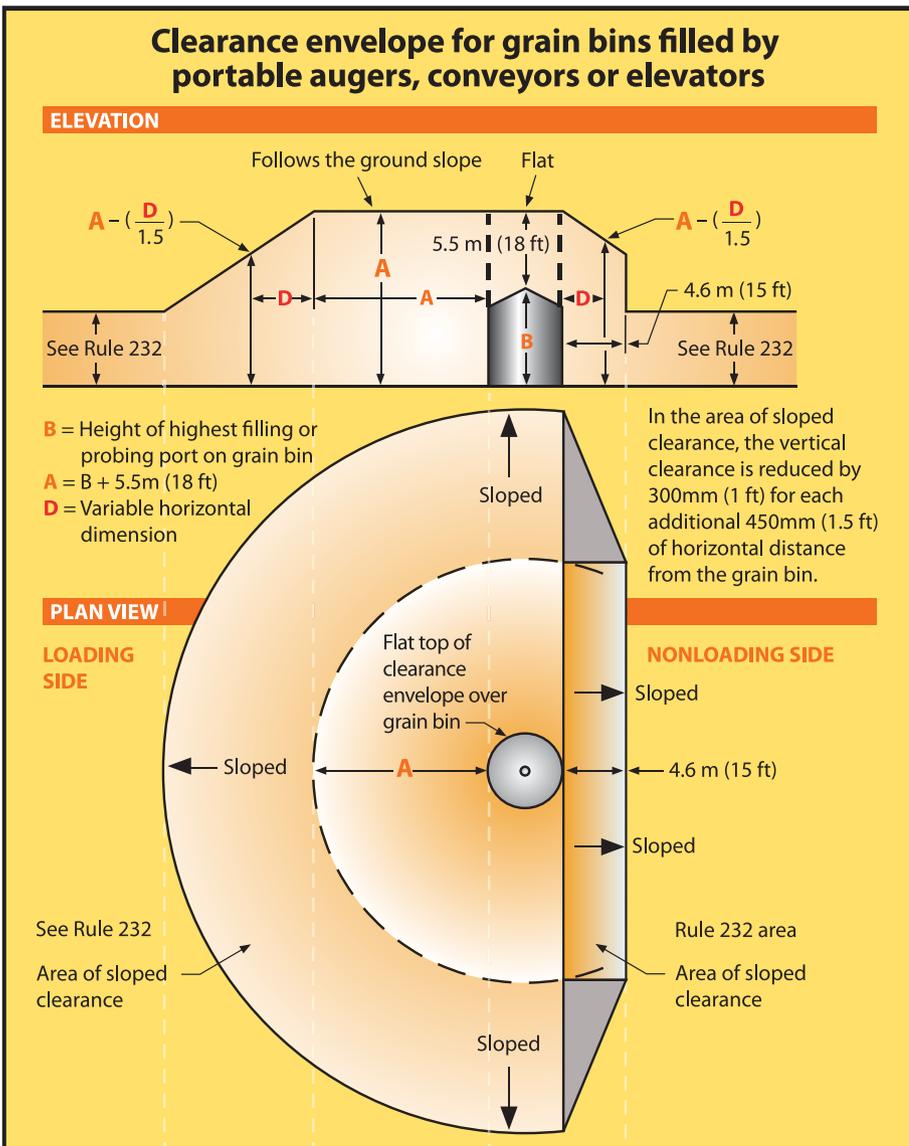
Maintain proper clearance around grain bins

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b: *An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 “National Electrical Safety Code,” Rule 234F. This paragraph “b” shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997.* The Iowa Utilities Board has adopted this language.

Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op’s policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call your electric co-op for help. ⚡



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These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives’ annual public information campaign and are based on the 2017 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

WALLPAPER LEAVES A STICKY RESIDUE ON HER LIFE

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

All the home decorating magazines are saying that wallpaper is back “in.” I read that statement with trepidation. The truth is, I have a love-hate relationship with wallpaper. I love the look, the way it gives a room depth and expresses the personality of the homeowners. It appears, however, that I think the personality of the previous homeowners stinks.

I’ve lived in old houses my entire life. And in each of those houses, I’ve found myself scraping through endless layers of paper that were put on, I’m convinced, with whatever the Super Glue of the era was. No one thought of removing old paper before applying the next layer. Oh no, they left that to someone 80 years down the road, namely *moi*.

Equipped with sprayers and white vinegar and scrapers and damp sponges, I’ve never had luck in gouging out anything larger than a postage stamp-sized fragment at any given moment.

My biggest project was about 25 years ago in a huge old Victorian home that we had just bought in Pella. The place was a drafty old barn, but it had an open stairway that made my heart go pitter-patter. The problem? The walls of the stairway and adjoining hallway were encased in ... we didn’t know how many layers.

There was a pressing need to get this done – I was eight months pregnant with our third son, and the thought of standing in ankle-deep paper scraps cradling a newborn held no appeal for me.

So, I spent a summer begging, cajoling, bargaining with anyone who walked through the door to help. Just one hour, and then we’ll watch *Northern Exposure* together, I pleaded



with Kent, which, when you think about it, was a pretty pathetic offer.

Inch by inch, the layers peeled off. And what layers they were – an entire history lesson in interior design on our very walls. It started with the 1970s gold flocking – a psychedelic design in gold and cream that made me dizzy as I scraped away. Once that was retired, the next layer emerged, straight from the 1950s: palm leaves and tropical blooms that looked as if Cuba had just thrown up on my walls.

On it went ... a purple-and-green plaid paper from the 1940s, applied with what I guessed was a flour and water paste; a jaunty Jazz Age print that featured fuchsia saxophones; Edwardian designs flaunting rust flame print; and finally, the bottom layer, a nifty 1890s pattern of teal-and-burgundy paisleys.

Underneath it all were plaster walls with cracks and holes filled with newspaper. And like Edgar Allan Poe’s Raven, we quothed “Nevermore.”

Scraping wallpaper is a lot like giving birth. In the throes of it, you are sure you’ll never, ever do this again. But sooner or later, you just might find yourself in that situation again.

So, I’m torn about the new wave of wallpaper that’s trending now. But I am really curious if fuchsia saxophones might work in my dining room. ⚡

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

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