

living with energy

IN IOWA

Grundy County REC
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

NOVEMBER 2020

Grundy County REC receives safety recognition ▶ See Page 4



Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

Is a heat pump right for your home?

Gift ideas from families and businesses served by co-ops

Pie recipes for Thanksgiving

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living with energy IN IOWA

Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives of Iowa
www.touchstoneenergy.com 

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The Bakker family farms near Dike and is served by Grundy County REC. Shari Bakker is a fourth-generation farmer and owner of Farm Sweet Farm Candles. Each year, she donates a portion of the proceeds from her candle sales to an agricultural youth organization. Read more on Pages 10-11. Photo courtesy of Shari Bakker. ⚡

Thank you for investing your time with us every month

BY ANN THELEN

In the spirit of the season, I want to personally thank you for investing time in reading this publication each month. We work hard to develop compelling stories about how Iowa's electric cooperatives are powering lives and empowering communities, and it means so much to hear your positive feedback.

Over the summer, we conducted a scientific survey to learn more about our readers' preferences and demographics. We worked with Iowa's local electric cooperatives to email survey invitations to those who receive the magazine, and 722 electric co-op members completed our online survey. This response gives us a 3.6% margin of error and a 95% degree of probability in our findings, establishing a solid baseline to guide our decision making.

We learned some great things about our readers. Almost 90% of the co-op members who receive *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine read it every month, and nearly 50% of those who receive the magazine spend more than 10 minutes reading it. These findings are very encouraging in an environment saturated with marketing messages and businesses clamoring for your attention. We also learned that 62% of our readers are under the age of 65. Print is still a relevant and valuable communications tool, even in a digital world.

We have a very educated readership; 82% of our respondents have received education beyond high school. Our survey results also indicate that about one-third of our readers have been co-op members for 10 years or less.



Survey respondents rated their level of agreement to several questions about content preferences, and energy efficiency content ranked very high. Our readers want to save money and energy, and we'll continue to share home improvement tips and do-it-yourself projects in every issue.

As the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa* for more than two years, it is a privilege to present these stories to you every month. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly. I am deeply encouraged to know that many of our readers value the content and

find it useful in their lives.

Your local electric cooperative also sees the value in using this publication to provide education on electric safety, emerging technologies and energy efficiency, in addition to keeping you informed about local co-op news.

I wish you and your family a wonderful Thanksgiving. While gathering around the dining room table might look different this year due to the pandemic, we can still reflect on our blessings and be grateful for the simple things. I am certainly thankful to know more about you, our valued readers. ⚡

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Cuisinart® Extra-Large Rotisserie Fryer and Steamer

This multitasking marvel not only fries an entire 14-pound turkey in an hour using less oil than a traditional fryer, it also fries up big portions of delicious appetizers, entrées, side dishes, breakfast treats and more! Use it without oil to steam all your favorites, like vegetables and dumplings. From appetizers to entrées to desserts, the options are endless! ⚡



Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com no later than Nov. 30, 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 slow cooker from the September issue was Robert Jansen, Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

OFFICE CLOSING

Grundy County REC thanks all veterans for their service and unwavering dedication to our safety and freedom. Our office will be closed

**Wednesday,
Nov. 11**

in honor of Veterans Day. Our phones are answered 24/7.

OFFICE CLOSING

Grundy County REC will be closed

**Thursday, Nov. 26,
and Friday, Nov. 27**

in observance of Thanksgiving. Our phones are answered 24/7.

We are so thankful for our great members. From our table to yours, we wish you a safe, relaxing and wonderful Thanksgiving!



Office: Grundy County REC
303 N Park Avenue
P.O. Box 39
Grundy Center, IA 50638

Phone: 319-824-5251 or 1-800-390-7605

Fax: 319-824-3118

Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):
800-292-8989

Website: www.grundycountyrecia.com

Facebook: facebook.com/GrundyCountyREC

E-mail: vdaily@grundycountyrecia.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Call our office 24/7: 319-824-5251

General Manager/CEO: Vicki Daily

Officers and Directors:

- District 1: Kevin Pruisner
- District 2: Norbert Boyle
- District 3: Nick Strohbehn
- District 4: Larry Rohach
- District 5: Matt Kopriva
- District 6: David Schmidt
- District 7: Jason Paper

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LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Giving back to our community

BY VICKI DAILY

Over the years, you've probably heard or read about Grundy County REC's concern for our community.

It is one of the core principles that sets cooperatives apart from other types of utilities and businesses. We've always taken this mission and responsibility to heart because it's who we are as a co-op.

Over the past few months, like so many of you, we've risen to meet new challenges and strengthen our community's safety net, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

With the holidays fast approaching, these recent events have made me pause and think about the role we play in our community. While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable energy to you, the members we serve, we have a greater mission – to be a catalyst for good.

In addition to our Youth Tour and annual scholarship programs, you'll also see our employees serving on

local boards, coaching youth sports, and volunteering at charitable events. Grundy County REC has a strong

commitment to safety – not just for our employees, but for our community as well. We visit schools to teach children of all ages how to stay safe around electricity. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is – after all, without you, the co-op wouldn't exist.

We know that our core job is to keep the lights on, but our passion is our community. We live and work here too, and we want to make it a better place for all.

Concern for community is the heart and soul of who we are. And no matter what the future brings, you can count on *your* electric co-op to care about you. ⚡



Vicki Daily is the executive vice president/general manager of Grundy County REC.

SAFETY MATTERS

Safety-first culture at Grundy County REC

Rain or shine, day or night, our linemen work to ensure Grundy County REC's members have power. Line work can be dangerous, so we must maintain a safety-first culture to ensure that our employees make it home safely each day!

During the September safety meeting, Grundy County REC was presented with a No Lost-Time Accident Award for 2019, and we could not be prouder! ⚡



Pictured from left to right: Derek Snakenberg, Karl Nielsen, Jim Wolfe (safety instructor with the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives), Aaron Bird, Erik Freese and Tony Sienknecht.

Ductless mini-split heat pumps: What are they and should I consider buying one?

BY MIKE GEERDES, MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

Do you have a home with a non-ducted heating system, such as hydronic (hot water heat), radiant panels or space heaters? Ductless, mini-split-system heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, make good, retrofit add-ons for homes with these types of heating systems. They can also be a good option for room additions where extending or installing distribution ductwork is not possible and for very efficient, new homes that require only a small space conditioning system.

Tip: Be sure to choose an ENERGY STAR® compliant unit and hire an installer familiar with the product and its installation.

Advantages

- Smaller in size with flexibility for zoning or heating and cooling individual rooms; many models have enough units for up to four zones or rooms that are



connected to just one unit. Keep in mind, the number of indoor units will depend on how much heating and cooling is required for each zone and how well the area is insulated and air sealed.

- Each zone has its own thermostat, so you only need to condition occupied spaces, saving energy and money!
- Mini-splits are easier to install than some other space conditioning systems and a

further distance between the indoor and outdoor components is possible.

- More interior design flexibility than other add-on systems with various floor-standing, ceiling and wall mounting options. Many options also offer a remote control to make it easier to turn the system on and off.
- Mini-splits do not have ducts, so they avoid the energy losses associated with the ductwork of central forced air systems. ⚡

DIRECTOR ACHIEVEMENT

Director Boyle receives leadership certificate

During Grundy County REC's September board meeting, Larry Rohach, president, presented Norb Boyle, director, with his National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board Leadership Certificate (BLC). Obtaining a BLC consists of participating in a series of educational courses focusing in greater depth on specific industry and governance issues. These include issues such as risk management, power supply, parliamentary procedure, technology and policy development. Congratulations, Norb! ⚡



BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP

Shop small with the Co-op Connections program



With the holidays approaching, it's a perfect opportunity to support our local businesses. Whether you are looking for a one-of-a-kind gift, a delicious sweet treat, or don't feel like cooking and want to enjoy a meal out on the town, local businesses have a great deal to offer! While Saturday, Nov. 28, is the designated national day to shop small, you can shop small every day. An often underutilized benefit of being a member of Grundy County REC is the Co-op Connections® program!

These local businesses currently participate in the Co-op Connections

program with Grundy County REC:

- Natural Grind (Grundy Center)
- The Landmark Bistro (Grundy Center)
- 319 Décor & Design (Grundy Center)
- Crazy Daisies (Grundy Center)
- Tasty House (Grundy Center)
- Stylish Living (Grundy Center)
- Sweets on Main (Traer)
- Retro Rooster (Traer)
- Traer Theater (Traer)
- A Wild Hair Salon & Boutique (Traer)

If you have questions about the program, please contact us at 319-824-5251. ⚡

Iowa linemen demonstrate the power of “Cooperation Among Cooperatives”

Crews restore power to region

BY ANN THELEN



Iowa has seen its fair share of weather-related disasters, including 25 Federal Emergency Management Agency declared disasters in the past 10 years. From flooding to tornadoes to ice storms, the heart of the Midwest isn't immune from situations that take a toll on electric power infrastructure.

When there's a disaster or significant power outage, Iowa's electric cooperatives embody the co-op principle of "Cooperation Among Cooperatives." It's a foundational part of a members-first philosophy in ensuring safe, affordable and reliable power delivery. When someone is in need, co-op employees and directors step up to help. Whether it's helping a neighboring co-op or going across state lines as part of a mutual aid effort, Iowa co-ops have a long history of coming forward to serve members.

Helping after a hurricane

On the heels of the destruction the summer derecho caused in our state, linemen from Iowa's electric cooperatives didn't waver in their commitment to assist other co-ops members when another massive storm hit.

On Aug. 27, Hurricane Laura – a Category 4 hurricane – made landfall in the Gulf Region and knocked out electricity to more than 1 million people. Beauregard Electric Cooperative (BECi) in DeRidder, Louisiana, was hit incredibly hard. The hurricane left 43,000 BECi members in the dark, and due to the massive damage, 13,000 members were still without power three weeks after the storm.

That's when 21 linemen from seven of Iowa's electric cooperatives

answered the call for mutual aid and headed south to Louisiana on Sept. 18 for two weeks. When a cooperative provides aid in these situations, the impacted co-op reimburses for the services.

Dillon Clark and Aaron Nippert, linemen from Harlan-based Nishnabotna Valley REC, aren't strangers to tough working conditions. Nippert volunteered when Category 5 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005. Clark has helped other states and most recently helped other Iowa co-ops restore power after the derecho.

"By the time we arrived, the co-op members had already been without power for three weeks. A lot of the debris had been removed, so we could drive our vehicles to the job sites," Nippert says.

impacted by Hurricane Laura

He adds, however, that five consecutive days of rain from Tropical Storm Beta shortly after the Iowa crews arrived contributed to difficult working conditions. Large tents at Georgia Pacific Lumber served as the camp for the crews, and the ground was saturated. The tents were situated on plastic grates on the ground. Because the Louisiana soil there doesn't drain well, the rain quickly pools and sits. Fire ants and other insects contributed to uncomfortable living conditions.

"With another approaching storm, we were all moved to the local airport, which was all on a hard surface. It made the temporary living conditions much better," Clark says. "The members were initially told they would be without power for two months, so they were really happy when power was restored after a month."

Kurt Lowenberg, line foreman with Access Energy Cooperative in Mount Pleasant, has also been on the ground restoring power following a hurricane.

"It's gratifying to help others. When your own co-op and member-consumers are going through a major outage situation, we know how grateful we are to receive the mutual aid assistance," Lowenberg says. "The residents made signs thanking us and gave us goodie bags with soda, water and candy bars."

With the potential spread of COVID-19 a concern, the lineworkers had regular temperature checks before meals, and cots and tables were spread out to facilitate a degree of



social distancing. The crew enjoyed a variety of traditional Louisiana food, including delicious Cajun dishes.

"Where we worked, a lot of people had poor living conditions, yet they were so thankful we were there to help," says Jared Howard, a foreman with Anamosa-based Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative. Howard has also worked in hurricane- and storm-impacted regions in Iowa and the U.S.

"Any of those people would have given us the shirt off their back if we would have needed it. When the derecho hit our co-op's service territory, my home was out of power for three days. That was long enough for me, and I can't imagine being out of power for a month."

"Cooperation Among Cooperatives" – it's not just a tagline or phrase. It's a promise co-op member-consumers can always count on, day in and day out. ⚡

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



Iowa cooperatives and linemen providing power restoration aid to Louisiana

Access Energy Cooperative

Kurt Lowenberg
Ben Smith
Colton Stephens
Jon Trumpold

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

Thad DeMoss
Ryan Romano
Mark Waechter

Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative

Cory Cushion
Colby Duggan
Dana Mortensen
Justin Willett

Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative

Jared Howard
Travis Manders
Matt Osweiler
Mason Paustian

Midland Power Cooperative

Jordan Bos
Cody Busher

Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

Dillon Clark
Aaron Nippert

Prairie Energy Cooperative

Austin Codner
Scott Muhlenbruch



THANKSGIVING

Pie Recipes

Kentucky Pecan Pie

- 1 cup white corn syrup
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/3 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 whole eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 9-inch pie shell
- 1 1/2 cups whole pecans

Combine syrup, sugar, salt, butter and vanilla. Mix well, then add slightly beaten eggs. Pour into a 9-inch unbaked pie shell. Sprinkle pecans over entire pie. Bake at 350 degrees F for approximately 45 minutes.

Phyllis J. Kline • Missouri Valley
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

Good Ole Gooseberry Pie

- 3 cups gooseberries, divided
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3 tablespoons quick cooking tapioca
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 9-inch pie shells
- 2 tablespoons butter

Wash and stem gooseberries. Set aside 2 1/2 cups, then crush remaining 1/2 cup. Add sugar, tapioca and salt. Cook until bubbly and then cook 2 additional minutes, stirring occasionally. Add remaining whole berries. Line 9-inch pie plate with pastry, fill with berries and dot with butter. Add top crust, cut slits on top or make heart shapes with knife. Seal edges and bake at 400 degrees F for 35 minutes.

Betty Sorden • Webster • T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Pumpkin Pecan Pie

- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 can pumpkin
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 9-inch pie shell

Combine first 8 ingredients. Pour into unbaked pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for 40 minutes or until a knife inserted halfway between the middle and the edge comes out clean. Cool before serving.

Dode Westendorf • Waverly
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Tips source
AllRecipes.com

Butternut Squash Pie

- 1 9-inch single pie crust
- 1/4 cups sugar
- 4 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 3 cups butternut squash, cooked and mashed
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup water
- 3 teaspoons vanilla extract
- whipped cream

Line a 9-inch pie plate with pastry, trim and flute edges. Cut out scrapes with a leaf shaped cookie cutter for garnish, if desired. Place on baking sheet and set aside. In a large bowl combine sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon. Beat in squash, butter, eggs, water and vanilla until smooth. Pour into crust. Cover edges loosely with foil. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes. Remove foil and bake 35 to 40 minutes longer or until knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Bake leaf cutouts for 5 to 7 minutes or until golden brown. Cool pie and cutouts on a wire rack for one hour. Refrigerate pie until chilled. Garnish with pastry leaves and whipped cream.

Sue Harrison • Le Mars
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

PARTY ON A PLATE

Use cutout shapes, crimps, braids and other fun tricks to make your pie look like a party on a plate.

PIE TIPS

ROLL OUT THE DOUGH

Use as little flour as possible when rolling out the dough. The pastry can absorb extra flour, which will also make it tough. After rolling out the dough, brush off loose flour with a pastry brush or gently brush it with the edge of a clean kitchen towel.

PIE TIPS

Southern Sweet Potato Pie

- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 2/3 cups sugar
- 1 cup mashed sweet potatoes
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup evaporated milk
- 1 9-inch pie shell, unbaked

In a large bowl, combine flour and sugar. Add sweet potatoes, eggs, corn syrup, nutmeg, salt, butter and milk. Beat well, then pour into pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for 55 to 60 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 1 hour. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours before serving.

Karen Caldwell • Albia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Sour Cream Raisin Pie

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 9-inch pie crust
- whipping cream

In a large bowl, combine eggs, sour cream, sugar, vanilla, salt and nutmeg. Beat until smooth, then stir in raisins. Pour filling into pie crust. Bake in lower half of oven at 375 degrees F for 40 minutes or until filling is set. Allow to cool before serving with a dollop of whipping cream.

Tamara Kramer • Le Mars
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Gingersnap Cranberry Lime Pie

- 4 ounces gingersnap cookies, approximately 18
- 1 cup walnut pieces
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 12 ounces cranberries, frozen or fresh
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 1/3 cup water
- 3 large eggs
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons orange zest
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup cold butter, cubed
- garnish: whole berries coated in sugar whipped topping**

Pulse cookies, walnuts, melted butter and brown sugar in a food processor. Press into bottom and sides of a deep pie pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 12 to 15 minutes, until browned. Allow to cool. Cook cranberries, 1 cup sugar and water until berries burst and most liquid evaporates, approximately 12 to 15 minutes. Cool to lukewarm then puree until smooth. Add puree, remaining sugar, eggs, egg yolks, orange juice, orange zest and salt to a double boiler. Cook until thick enough to coat a spatula, approximately 8 to 10 minutes. When just warm, add butter one piece at a time, beating on high speed until the curd is lighter in color. Pour into crust and chill for 2 hours. Garnish with whole berries and serve with whipped topping.

Carol DeJong • Sibley
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.



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

www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com/recipes

CHILL THE DOUGH

Chill the dough after rolling it out and lining the pie pan. This step relaxes the dough and prevents it from shrinking in the oven.

PIE TIPS

LET IT COOL AND SET

Fruit pies should cool at least four hours before slicing; custard pies should cool for two hours before serving or being refrigerated.

PIE TIPS

SET THE STRUCTURE

For custard pies and cream pies, it's often a good idea to pre-bake the crust, a.k.a. "blind baking" the crust.

PIE TIPS

IN THE OVEN

Bake pies on the lowest oven rack on a preheated sheet pan. This helps prevent soggy bottom crusts. A rimmed pan also prevents juicy fruit pies from bubbling over onto the oven floor.

PIE TIPS

Wanted: Irish Recipes! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

You don't have to hail from Ireland to celebrate the favorite foods of St. Patrick's Day! From corned beef and cabbage to Shepherd's Pie, Irish Stew and shamrock desserts, we're looking for Irish-inspired foods. 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.livingwithenergyiniowa.com.

The deadline is Nov. 30, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

NEW: Please also provide the number of servings per recipe.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL:

Recipes

Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

Gift ideas from families and businesses

Shopping local benefits Iowa's communities

BY KAY SNYDER

This year has brought about unprecedented situations, from the COVID-19 pandemic to a derecho, many Iowans' lives and businesses have been impacted. Even in a typical year, buying products that are locally grown or made helps keep our local communities strong. More than ever, people are looking for more ways to support businesses run by friends, neighbors and community members. With Iowa's electric cooperatives powering businesses in all of the state's 99 counties, there are many opportunities to shop local this upcoming holiday season.

We've rounded up a sampling of some Iowa-based products to consider adding to your gift-giving list. In your communities, we invite you to discover the unique businesses that line Main Street or reside along the rural landscape.

Country View Dairy – Hawkeye

In 2011, Carolee and Dave Rapson built a creamery on their family farm and expanded their product offerings. Country View Dairy makes all-natural farmstead yogurt, in both original and Greek style, using the wholesome milk from the family's dairy herd. Additional dairy products include sour cream, frozen yogurt and whole milk. Their state-of-the-art creamery is located on the family farm, guaranteeing the freshest premium quality products. Visit their on-farm store to shop for dairy items, candles, soaps and more. To shop their products online and access a list of distributors, visit countryviewdairy.com.



Served by Allamakee-Clayton
Electric Cooperative

Hinterland Dairy Farmstead Cheese - Donnellson

Hinterland Dairy, owned by Ralph and Colleen Krogmeier, opened their cheese processing and retail business on their Iowa farm in 2019. Hinterland is a European term describing "land that is off from what is typically visible." This depicts their 400-acre dairy farm nestled between Fort Madison and Donnellson. Hinterland's milk is handcrafted with the best cultures and finest salt, creating a flavor that is unique to the farm. Products include cheese, cheese curds, cheese bundles and a wide variety of other local products. Visit their online store at hinterlanddairy.com.



Served by Access Energy Cooperative



Loess Hills Lavender Farm – Missouri Valley

In 2005, Mary and Tim Hamer visited lavender fields in Sequim, Washington. The trip ignited a spark in Mary to bring lavender to Iowa. In 2006, the Hamers planted their first 20 lavender plants and began the lavender farming journey. Loess Hills Lavender Farm, located north of Missouri Valley, has cultivated a thriving business and enthusiastic following. In addition to the beautiful lavender field, the farm boasts a gift shop with a full line of skincare and bath products and goods from many local artists. Handmade lavender products include lavender butter balm, lavender lotion, shower gel, spritz, bar soap and scented sachets. For more information, visit loesshillslavender.com.

Served by Harrison County
Rural Electric Cooperative

served by co-ops

Farm Sweet Farm – Dike

Shari Bakker is a fourth-generation farmer who farms alongside her husband Jarrod and three children. Shari grew up on a Century Farm in southwest Iowa, where her family raised hogs and row crops. She met her husband at Iowa State University, and they later moved to his hometown of Dike. They currently raise hogs, grow corn and soybeans, and both work off-the-farm jobs to support their dreams.



Shari created Farm Sweet Farm Candles out of her love for agriculture and a passion for starting her own business.



Each candle is made from soy-based waxed and hand-created by Shari, with products researched and approved

by her family. The scents are based on agricultural products, and wooden wicks provide a crackling ambiance. Shari believes in giving back, and each year donates a portion of the proceeds from her candle sales to an agricultural youth organization.

Farm Sweet Farm Candles celebrate all types of agriculture, and as the seasons change, so do the products and scents. Shari says, “My candles celebrate American agriculture and the farmers who provide us with so many choices.” For more information and to shop the online store, visit farmsweetfarmcandles.com.

Family served by Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

Stensland Dairy – Larchwood

Stensland Family Farms is a multigenerational farm, which started in 1915 outside of Larchwood. The Stenslands operate a 200-cow dairy and recently opened an on-farm creamery. Approximately 1,500 acres of cropland feeds the cows that produce milk for the dairy. The milk is bottled and also used to create ice cream,



aged cheese

and cheese curds. Stensland’s products are available at its on-farm store, Sioux Falls location and local grocery stores. To learn more, visit stenslandfamilyfarms.com.

Served by Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative



IOWA SMOKEHOUSE meat snacks and laura beth’s jar goods (Preferred Wholesale, Inc.) – Albia

Preferred Wholesale, Inc. started as a snack food distribution business in 1984. After many years of distributing other companies’ products, owner Lee Holsman and his family decided to create their brands. The company started with laura beth’s all-natural jams, salsas and pickled jar goods, and then added IOWA SMOKEHOUSE jerky and meat snacks. These products are now available across the U.S. Look for IOWA SMOKEHOUSE meats and laura beth’s products at Bomgaars, Mills Fleet Farm, Theisen’s, Tractor Supply, Hy-Vee, Fareway, Orscheln, Casey’s and more. Preferred Wholesale, Inc. will launch an online store in 2021, after completing a facility expansion project. To learn more, visit preferredwholesaleinc.com.

Served by Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

When you “Buy Iowa,” you’re supporting local families and helping businesses thrive. In addition to online purchasing and home delivery, many businesses also offer gift cards for products and services. ⚡

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

Shopping local benefits Iowa's communities

A new website helps Iowans shop locally without even leaving their homes. The online experience brings together hundreds of brick and mortar retail businesses from across the state into one virtual marketplace. **ShopIowa.com** was launched by the Iowa Economic Development Authority to help small businesses showcase their products. Customers shop the website, then arrange to pick up in-store or have the purchases shipped. Check out the endless product offerings at **ShopIowa.com**. 🌱



Save with the Co-op Connections® Program

As a member of Iowa's electric cooperatives, you can access Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives'



Co-op Connections® Program. This free program connects co-op members with discounts on everything from hotel stays to restaurants to prescription drugs. Members can use their card to receive discounts at many participating local businesses and national retailers.

The program provides electric cooperative members with best in class savings and discounts. Touchstone Energy partners with local and national businesses to provide valuable discounts while helping businesses grow by connecting them with consumers.

For more details, visit the Co-op Connections website at **www.connections.coop**. The website shows participating local and national businesses. If you don't already have a card, sign up is free via the Co-op Connections website or by contacting your local electric cooperative. 🌱

Gift-giving ideas with a booming Iowa industry

Iowa's craft beer industry has experienced remarkable growth recently. A few years ago, the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the Iowa Wine and Beer Promotion Board commissioned a study to better understand the industry's impact on Iowa's economy. The research shows that craft beer provides a \$100 million boost to Iowa's economy, and the wine industry tops \$420 million. The sector also contributes to historic preservation, spurs the Iowa travel industry and creates jobs.



To support Iowa's agricultural industry, brewers have even made limited-edition beers using corn raised by Iowa's farmers.

The Iowa Wine & Beer App, available on Apple and Android devices, allows patrons to search for nearby distilleries, breweries and wineries and provides notifications of new listings and special events. From apparel and jewelry to other novelties, in addition to local products, many of these locations offer gift ideas, gift baskets and more! Visit **IowaWineAndBeer.com** for statewide information. 🌱

Three efficient appliances for your kitchen

BY MARIA KANEVSKY

With more people staying at home than ever before, many of us are spending more time in the kitchen. Whether you're roasting a chicken, blending your favorite smoothie or baking a loaf of sourdough bread, kitchen appliances are used nearly every day.

Using energy-efficient kitchen appliances can help you save energy in the long run and ultimately lower your monthly energy bills. For any home chef interested in new, electric gadgets for the kitchen (while also being energy efficient), there are several options available.

Stoves consume a great deal of energy in the kitchen. One of the most energy-efficient forms of cooking is with an induction cooktop. Electromagnetic energy used in induction cooktops is directly transferred to the pan, which reduces cooking time and saves energy. Gas stovetops are generally less energy efficient than induction cooktops or any other type of electric cooktop for that matter. This is because a significant amount of energy from the gas stovetop is not transferred directly to the food. Instead, the stove also heats the surrounding air and warms up your kitchen. Since induction

cooktops use a magnetic field to heat pans, you can touch the stove without burning yourself, which adds a safety bonus. It's important to note that induction cooktops only work with compatible cookware that is magnetic. An easy test for compatibility is to place a magnet near the cookware; if it sticks, it will work with an induction cooktop.

A cup of morning coffee or tea is a daily ritual for many. This makes the hot water kettle an essential part



Photo Credit: Whirlpool

of the kitchen to achieve that daily brew. Electric kettles are more energy efficient than cooktop kettles since the heating component underneath

the kettle directly heats the water. The electric kettle's automatic shutoff feature further helps to reduce energy and prevents overheating.

Another benefit

with electric kettles is that you can choose the exact temperature to heat the water, which allows for a finer brew that brings out the best flavor in any tea or coffee. Overall, electric kettles are more convenient, efficient and portable than their cooktop counterparts.

Microwaves are typically the most efficient way to cook or heat food compared to other kitchen appliances, and state-of-the-art microwaves are becoming much

smarter. Some microwaves can even scan barcodes of microwaveable meals and heat them accordingly. Others can be paired with an Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant and react to voice commands. Many of these additional features are becoming increasingly common among smart home devices to provide extra comfort and convenience.

Kitchen appliances aren't replaced very often, so be sure to do your research before purchasing any new gadgets. Different types of products provide varying benefits and understanding your needs on the front end will help you make the right choice. ⚡

Maria Kanevsky is a program analyst for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.



Photo Credit: Whirlpool

Iowa announces COVID-19 Residential Utility Disruption Prevention Program

In October, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced the launch of the new Residential Utility Disruption Prevention Program. The program will provide eligible households with up to \$2,000 toward electric, natural gas and water bills if they are at risk of disconnection due to an inability to pay due to a COVID-19-related loss of income. Payments through the program will be made directly to utility providers and applied to the applicant's account.

"We are facing an unprecedented pandemic and from the very beginning the state has made it a priority to provide critical assistance to families, farmers, renters, homeowners and small business owners," Gov. Reynolds says. "For Iowans who lost their job or saw their paycheck shrink as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Residential Utility Disruption Prevention Program will help them keep the power on and their water running."

The state allocated approximately \$14.5 million of federal CARES Act funds for utility assistance programs (the Small Business Utility Disruption Prevention Program launched in mid-July).

"We're pleased this program has been established to help provide some financial relief to local families in need during the pandemic," says Chuck Soderberg, executive



vice president/general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

To be eligible to receive assistance, a residential electric, natural gas and/or water utility customer must have:

- A primary Iowa residence with active residential utility accounts, renters may apply as long as the utility account is in the applicant's name.
- An unpaid utility bill balance or have previously entered into a payment plan with their utility provider.
- An annual income that is 80% of the median family income, based on county and household size.
- Experienced a COVID-19 loss of

income (job loss, reduction in hours, reduction in pay) on or after March 17, 2020, which resulted in hardship in paying bills for electric, natural gas, and/or water utility service provided between March 17, 2020, and Oct. 31, 2020.

"Iowans, especially our low-income citizens, have been greatly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic," IEDA and Iowa Finance Authority Director Debi Durham says. "We are proud to make available this program offering to help our most vulnerable maintain critical utility services."

For a full list of eligibility requirements, additional information and to apply, visit iowahousingrecovery.com. Applications will be accepted between Oct. 8, 2020, and Nov. 20, 2020, or until funding is depleted, whichever comes first. Assistance will be awarded based on application completeness and eligibility in order received until all funds have been exhausted.

If you need assistance with documentation for your application, please contact your local electric cooperative. ⚡

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Cooler weather is here! Heating requires more energy than any other system in your home, typically making up about **42%** of your energy bill. With proper equipment maintenance and upgrades like additional insulation and air sealing, you can save about **30%** on your energy bill. ⚡



Source: energy.gov

In every church basement

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I recently found myself in the basement of the church I grew up in. It wouldn't matter how old I was – I would know the smell of that church anywhere: a chalky dryness just this side of musty, with a little lemon cleaner thrown in.

Over the years, I've visited many basements in houses of worship – for camps, Bible schools, baby showers, speaking engagements and teen lock-ins. And it's occurred to me that every church basement worth its salt has some of the same things in common.

First, there's the bar of gold soap in the bathroom, one split with black cracks, that has been perched on the edge of the sink since approximately 1972. Hand-pumped liquid soap has been slow to catch on in older churches. Probably because no one has dared to dump the rock-like bar that's still there "and has plenty of use in it."

Then, have you ever noticed the similarity of church dishware? I can just hear a ladies' society in 1946 picking out these dishes: "They've got to last! I'm sick of bake sales!" What's unfathomable, though, is why serviceable and sturdy equals ugly. In my girlhood church, the dishes are a heavy off-white porcelain, with a thick maroon band around the edges, looking for all the world as if they were seconds from an institution.

Curtains are another matter of equality in church basements. I have yet to visit the nether parts of a church that didn't have curtains worthy of a Sound of Music sequel – you know the one, where the von Trapp children get play clothing made from old draperies? In a burst of 1950s secular flair, they scream of tropical pineapples and palm leaves on a heavy, lined – and very dusty – print.

Tucked away somewhere just off



the basement will be the church nursery. You could probably make a fortune in here – some of these toys are most assuredly antiques and probably unsafe for any child under 3. In a recent nursery I visited, toys I hadn't seen for 40 years sat in the bin: a popcorn-type dome with wheels that was pushed around, colored balls hopping wildly; wooden blocks that were so faded you couldn't see whether there were numbers or letters printed on the sides; and a toy xylophone that seemed to be missing the mallet. On top of everything else, this room is often the recipient of shag carpeting in a 1970s shade of blazing orange or golden sunset.

Somewhere in the kitchen, maybe in a cupboard, or possibly on top of

a coat rack, will be a Lost and Found Box. These receptacles invariably contain the same items: a small doll with no hair, a little girl's plastic purse, a vinyl coin purse that zips (with 22 cents in it) and 14 ink pens flaunting seed corn insignia on the sides.

Perhaps we could start a bingo game of going from church to church to mark various church oddities on our cards. The winner would get the contents of the Lost and Found Boxes. And you'll get bonus points if the nursery has avocado green shag carpeting. 🌩

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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