

# living with energy

IN IOWA

**Grundy County REC**  
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

JUNE 2021

Grundy County REC hosting member event at Hansen's Dairy Farm ▶ See Page 5



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

Grundy County REC offers hands-on learning experience for local students

Iowans get creative to sell local

Fruit and vegetable recipes for summer

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**ON THE COVER**



Ellie Bockenstedt (*left*) and Addy Kirby were students of Edgewood-Colesburg High School's 2020 digital multimedia marketing class taught by Jodi Ehlers. The class partnered with Edgewood Locker on real-world marketing activities, such as creating a fundraising brochure. The work inspired several students to take an advanced foods class where they grilled meat and staged food for marketing photography. Cassidy Steger, a fellow student and high school junior at the time, took the photos (including our cover image) and runs her own photography business, Cassidy Leigh Photography. Read more about local meat lockers on Pages 10-12 of this issue. ⚡

# There's no such thing as a free dinner: Beware of energy claims that sound too good to be true

BY CHUCK SODERBERG

*"Save 50% on your energy bills!"*

*"Stop paying your electric utility!"*

*"Save thousands on your heating and cooling costs!"*

Have you ever received a postcard or an email featuring one of these headlines? The postcard usually includes an invitation to a free dinner at a local restaurant where you can learn more about how to "save big" on your energy bills. There's even a local phone number you can call to reserve your spot, causing you to think that a reputable, local company is organizing this effort. It almost always is not.



of information you can trust, your local co-op can answer your energy efficiency questions and suggest practical ways to save energy and money on your electric bills.

Locally owned and governed by the member-consumers we serve, Iowa's electric cooperatives fully support energy efficiency efforts. In fact, your local co-op offers several incentives, rebates and programs that can lower your electric bill. We can also provide information about which energy efficiency products may qualify for state or federal tax credits. Our priority is to make sure you're not tricked into spending your hard-earned money on products that don't work as

advertised. Be wary of exaggerated claims and overpriced products in these free dinner schemes.

## Resist pressure tactics

And if you do accept an invitation to a free dinner, don't feel pressured to make a purchase or sign on the dotted line until you've had time to research the company and the claims it is making. Any reputable business would encourage you to take the time you need to make an informed decision.

Please beware of these invitations – the actual cost of your free dinner could be more than you're willing to pay. ⚡

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Cuisinart electric smoker!

This electric smoker is perfect for backyard barbecues! A spacious 548-square-inch interior means there is plenty of room to smoke a variety of Iowa-raised meats and fresh vegetables, with 1500 watts of heat to produce temperatures from 100 degrees F to 400 degrees F. The 30-inch vertical footprint makes it a perfect size for patios and decks. Three stainless steel racks can be easily removed for smoking large cuts of meat, and an easy-to-read thermometer on the front door makes monitoring internal temperature convenient. ⚡



### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than June 30, 2021. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the \$100 Earl May Garden Center gift card from the April issue was Monte Eggers, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative.

## Research the company

Before accepting an invitation or signing a long-term contract or financing program, please research the company on the Better Business Bureau website at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org). We also encourage you to contact your local electric co-op and speak to their member services department about the offer. As a reliable source

## OFFICE CLOSING

Grundy County REC  
will be closed

**Monday, July 5**

in observance of  
**Independence Day.**  
Our phones are  
answered 24/7.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on  
**Facebook!**



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

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



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## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# We're ready for storm season. Are you?

BY MICHAEL GEERDES

Now that the summer season is here, like many of you, I welcome more opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy the warmer weather. Summertime brings many of my favorite activities like cooking out with family and friends, afternoons on the water and simply slowing down a bit to enjoy life.

But summer months also make conditions right for dangerous storms, and tornado season is already upon us. These potential weather events can cause destruction to our electrical system, but I want you to know that Grundy County REC is ready and will respond as quickly as possible should power outages occur in our area.

When major storms knock out power, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they get to work on any downed lines. I would encourage you to also practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during major storms and outages.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness, but you can visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries).
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies, including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual

can opener and a portable, battery-powered radio or TV.

- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.



In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help prevent overloading the circuits during power restoration. That said, do leave one light on so you will know when power is restored. If you plan to use a small generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information, and check Grundy County REC's website and Facebook for power restoration updates.

After the storm, avoid downed power lines and walking through flooded areas where power lines could be submerged. Allow ample room for utility crews to safely perform their jobs, including on your property.

Advance planning for severe storms or other emergencies can reduce stress and anxiety caused by the weather event and can lessen the impact of the storm's effects. Sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings to stay abreast of power restoration efforts and other important co-op news and information.

I hope we don't experience severe and damaging storms this summer, but we can never predict Mother Nature's plans. At Grundy County REC, we recommend that you act today because there is power in planning. From our co-op family to yours, we hope you have a safe and wonderful summer. ⚡

Michael Geerdes is the general manager of Grundy County REC.

## Grundy County REC offers hands-on learning experience for local students

On April 27, eight students from four local school districts visited Grundy County REC for a hands-on learning experience. Stacy Ascher, work-based learning coordinator with Cedar Valley West says, “I was so excited to partner with Grundy County REC to offer a hands-on learning opportunity for area students interested in the lineman industry. It is so important for students to have an experience, such as the event on April 27 while they are in the beginning stages of discovering/learning about careers. Having dedicated programming allowing students to explore in high school really makes an impact. Cedar Valley West is fortunate to have great partners, such as the REC to open their doors and share what they do.” ⚡



## Freese and Nielsen attend IAEC overhead workshop



Erik Freese, foreman, and Karl Nielsen, first class lineman, attended the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative’s Overhead Workshop in April. This workshop covered transformer training, hot pole changeout, chainsaw safety, rubber gloving and conductor burn down. We appreciate our lineworkers ongoing commitment to safety training! ⚡

## Co-op welcomes new 1,000-hour employee

Matt Johannsen joined Grundy County REC in May as a 1000-hour line employee. Prior to coming to the co-op, he worked for a company in Marshalltown. Matt attended Marshalltown Community College’s Power Line Program, choosing the program because he likes working outside.



Matt enjoys hunting, fishing, golfing, going to the lake, and spending time with family and friends.

Please join us in welcoming Matt to Grundy County REC! ⚡

# Special event

## Grundy County REC presents on geothermal at Hansen’s Dairy farm

Grundy County REC is excited to be hosting our first member event of 2021! Are you interested in learning more about geothermal and its benefits? This is the perfect event for you!

- ▶ **Who:** Members of Grundy County REC
- ▶ **What:** Geothermal presentation and tour of Hansen’s Dairy Farm
- ▶ **When:** June 26, 2021; two-time options – 11:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.
- ▶ **Where:** Hansen’s Dairy Farm, 8461 Lincoln Rd, Hudson, Iowa

If you are interested in this event, please call Allyson at 319-824-5251 to RSVP. Spots are limited!

# Drilling down — four efficient cordless tools for dad

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN



A cordless drill is one of the handiest tools for home projects.

With Father's Day this month, you might be thinking about buying some rechargeable power tools for the dad in your life whether that's your husband or father.

If your loved one enjoys tackling home projects, rechargeable tools are an excellent gift idea.

Rechargeable cordless tools are worth the investment when the corded version is the least convenient option. For example, a power drill is something you usually move around with and often use outside, so a cordless drill is much more convenient and a worthy investment. On the other hand, a table saw is usually not the first choice for cordless tools because it doesn't need to be moved repeatedly during a home project.

Quality cordless tools are usually less expensive if you buy them as part of a set instead of one tool at a time. And you can't typically mix and match between brands because each line of tools uses a unique battery. So, it may cost less in the long run to buy a cordless starter kit with a few helpful tools and a battery, then add tools to the set as needed.

Here are a few cordless tools that the father in your family will love!

## 1 Power drill

As one of the most-used power tools, a drill should be everyone's first cordless tool. Using a corded drill can mean constantly moving the cord around furniture, other tools

or your own feet, which can be dangerous. Cordless drills are easy to use, and the technology has improved so they have more power and hold a charge longer. Light-duty drills are smaller and less powerful but easy to use for smaller projects.

## 2 Leaf blower

If the father in your family uses a gas-powered leaf blower, you can do him (and your neighbors!) a favor by giving him a cordless leaf blower. This option is more energy efficient, much quieter and less polluting.

## 3 String trimmer

A string trimmer is a quick way to trim weeds and grass



# 2

near walls, bricks and rocks. If your family uses an outdated gas trimmer around the yard, it's time for a change. Two-stroke engines pollute the air and require regular maintenance. Electric trimmers are more energy efficient and quieter. You can find a variety of models between \$50 and \$150, and it's worth paying a little more to get a highly rated model that will last longer.

## 4 Flashlight

Today's LED technology is amazing – LED flashlights can produce 20 times as much light as incandescent ones. And they come in a variety of options, from tiny key chain lights

to headlamps to waterproof spotlights. A flashlight can usually give better light than a cell phone, especially if you're working in a tight space like under a sink. A flashlight often comes as part of a cordless tool set, or you can buy a single unit that recharges using a USB port on a charger, USB wall socket or mobile phone battery.

Batteries make cordless tools possible. Lithium-ion batteries are more expensive, but they're gaining popularity because they hold a charge longer. While they hold a longer life, they still degrade over time and may need to be replaced in about three years.

It's worth buying a reputable brand of cordless tools so you can be

confident you will be able to find a replacement battery. Lithium-ion batteries should not be disposed with trash because they are a fire hazard and contain toxic chemicals. Your local waste disposal service can provide information on how to dispose of these batteries properly.

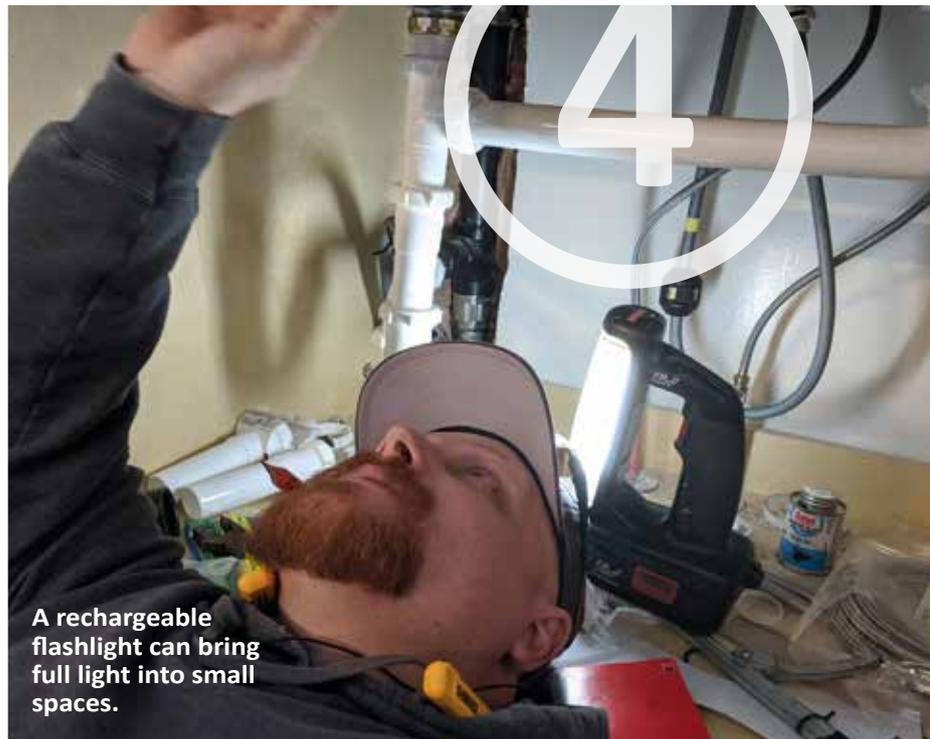
It goes without saying, but these cordless tool gift ideas aren't just for dads or Father's Day. All DIY enthusiasts would enjoy any of these gifts any time of the year and hopefully put them to good use! ⚡

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



Photo Credit: Makita Tools



# FRESH

VEGETABLE & FRUIT

## RECIPES



### Green Beans and Bacon

- 2½ pounds green beans, trimmed kosher salt**
- ½ pound bacon, roughly chopped**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped**
- 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- juice of ½ lemon**
- freshly ground pepper**
- salt, optional**

Add green beans to a large pot of boiling salted water. Cook until bright green in color and crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain, then shock green beans in a large bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Drain again, pat dry, then set aside. Cook bacon in a large, heavy sauté pan until crisp, about 5 minutes. Remove bacon and place on a paper-towel lined plate to drain. Spoon off excess grease from the pan, leaving 2 tablespoons. Add onion and sauté until soft, about 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle in garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté 1 minute. Add green beans and cook until heated. Return bacon to the pan. Add lemon juice, pepper and salt, if desired. Stir well. *Serves 6-8*

**Kathleen Steele • Hedrick**  
Access Energy Cooperative

### Fresh Basil Cucumber Salad

- 1 English cucumber, diced**
- 2-3 Roma tomatoes, cubed**
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped**
- 1 cup bread cheese, cut into small cubes**
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil**
- Himalayan salt**
- pepper**

In a bowl, combine the cucumber, tomatoes and basil. On medium-low heat, warm cubed bread cheese until hot. Once hot, add to veggies. Drizzle with olive oil, add salt and pepper to taste and blend. Best served while cheese is hot. *Serves 3-4*

**Amy Rudolph • Renwick**  
Boone Valley Electric Cooperative

### Awesome Marinated Tomatoes

- 1 pound cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered**
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced**
- ½ green pepper, diced (more if you prefer)**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- ½ tablespoon cilantro**
- ½ tablespoon parsley**
- ½ tablespoon lemon juice**
- ½ tablespoon lime juice**
- salt and pepper, to taste**

Toss all ingredients together. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours, or 24 hours for full flavor.

**Becky McClenathan • Toledo**  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

### Grandma's Pasta Salad

- ½ pound spaghetti**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 1 green pepper, chopped**
- 1 cup celery, chopped**
- 7 grape tomatoes, chopped**
- 1 cup fresh peas**
- 1 cup cheese, shredded**
- 8 ounces creamy Italian dressing**
- ⅓ cup sugar**
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard**

In a large bowl, combine cooked spaghetti, vegetables and cheese. In a separate bowl, mix Italian dressing, sugar and mustard then pour over salad. Cover and chill.

**Marlene Burns • Swisher**  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

**Fresh Facts Source:**  
Iowa State University  
Extension and  
Outreach, Spend  
Smart. Eat Smart.

#### RIPEN TO SWEETEN

Avocados, unripe melons and tree fruits (pears, plums, peaches and nectarines) should be kept at room temperature to ripen and become sweeter. Once fully ripened, store in the refrigerator until you are ready to eat them.

## Carrot Raisin Salad

- 4 cups carrots, shredded (4-5 large)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups raisins
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup Miracle Whip
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons milk

Combine carrots and raisins in a bowl. In a separate bowl, mix remaining ingredients, then spread over carrots and raisins. Mix thoroughly.

Sonya Colvin • Ames • Consumers Energy

## Blackberry Salad

- 3 ounces cherry Jell-O
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 cup blueberry yogurt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup fresh blackberries

Dissolve Jell-O in boiling water. Add yogurt, lemon juice and blackberries. Mix and refrigerate for 30-60 minutes. *Serves 4*

Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## Cucumber Salad

- 1 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dill weed
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, optional
- 4 medium cucumbers, peeled and sliced thin
- 3 green onions, chopped

Combine mayonnaise, sugar, vinegar, dill and salt. Mix well, then toss in cucumbers and onions. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour. *Serves 8*

Esther Miller • Alford • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## Sautéed Summer Squash

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup onions, diced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup green peppers, diced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon Italian seasoning
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic salt
- 4 cups zucchini and summer squash, sliced  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

Add oil to a large skillet. Sauté onions and green peppers with Italian seasoning and salts until the vegetables are tender. Add zucchini, summer squash and water. Cover and cook over low heat for 15 minutes, or until squash is tender. Top with cheese. Keep on low heat until the cheese melts. Serve immediately. *Serves 4-6*

Gloria Moser • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## Angel Food Strawberry Dessert

- 1 small package strawberry Jell-O
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 cup cold water (can have ice in it)
- 2 cups whipped topping
- 4 cups angel food cake, torn into pieces
- 2 cups strawberries

Dissolve Jell-O and lemon juice in boiling water. Add cold water to thicken (can be refrigerated to help thicken). Once thickened, whip Jell-O until light and fluffy. Fold in whipped topping, angel food cake pieces and strawberries. Add mixture to a 9x13-inch pan. Chill before serving. *Serves 12*

Karen Heiden • Dows • Prairie Energy Cooperative

### STORE IN CRISPER DRAWER

Keep your refrigerator at or below 40 degrees F and use the crisper drawer for produce when possible.

FRESH FACTS

### STEM SIDE DOWN

Tomatoes will keep longer when stored stem side down.

FRESH FACTS

### REFRIGERATE CUT PRODUCE

Any cut produce must be refrigerated to prevent foodborne illness.

FRESH FACTS

### USE RUNNING WATER

Wash produce under running water rather than putting it in a container of water. This increases the likelihood of washing away potential contaminants.

FRESH FACTS

## Wanted: Flavorful Pork Recipes The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Pork is a versatile protein that pairs perfectly with any flavor profile! No matter if it's tangy, herbaceous or fruity, we want your favorite recipe for a flavorful pork dish. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at [www.livingwithenergyiowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com).

The deadline is June 30, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

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

**MAIL:**  
**Recipes**

*Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
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### WASH ALL PRODUCE

Wash all produce before you eat it. Even fruits that have thick peels, such as oranges, bananas and melons, should be washed.

FRESH FACTS

# Iowans get creative to sell local

BY KAY SNYDER

Farmers, agribusinesses and meat lockers innovate to meet consumer demand



Nothing says summertime like pork chops or ribeye steaks sizzling on the grill! With grilling season in full swing, Iowans are sure to find high-quality and flavorful protein options no matter if they shop at the grocery store, local meat locker or purchase from a neighboring farmer.

The movement to “buy local” foods – especially meat – skyrocketed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and consumers were preparing more of their own meals. The increased demand for animal protein exposed gaps in meat processing systems, causing the traditional farm-to-fork cycle to derail. There wasn’t a shortage of livestock; the supply chain was disrupted by worker shortages at processing facilities due to the pandemic. As a result of the disruption, food insecurity increased and consumers wanted more control over the source and supply of their food. The trend to buy local is expected to continue throughout 2021 and beyond.

Iowa’s livestock farmers lead the nation in pork production and are in the top 10 states for beef production. Globally, Iowa meats are recognized as the standard of high quality and flavor. With the challenges large meat processing plants faced during 2020, Iowans turned their attention to sourcing meat from small local lockers.

In general, local demand for meat has far outweighed capacity. Local meat lockers – many in electric cooperative-served areas – have developed unique offerings and business model responses to strengthen Iowa’s overall food processing supply chain, support rural communities and help meet consumer demand.

## Expansions in Edgewood

Edgewood Locker is embarking on the construction of a 19,000-square-foot facility in Edgewood. The additional space will help satisfy demand from wholesale and retail customers. It is expected to quadruple the volume of wholesale

business, increasing the production of products such as jerky, sausage and more. As of early this year, Edgewood Locker’s processing capacity for individual farmer-owned beef was sold out through 2021 and 2022. Owners expect the new facility to open sometime next year and anticipate adding 14 full-time jobs for the community.

Central Iowa Power Cooperative has applied for possible U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) support of this project. Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative and Dairyland Power also offered to provide support from their revolving loan funds, if needed.

## New opportunities in Camanche

Naeve Family Beef in Camanche plans to construct a 14,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art processing and packaging facility this year. The startup company will provide locally raised protein products to local consumers, retailers, restaurants,



grocery stores and food distributors. It will also offer custom processing and packaging to farmers across the Midwest. The new plant is expected to process 50 head-per-day and create 45 to 50 new jobs for the region.

### Customer service in Osage

S&S Meats & Spirits has a vending machine filled with meat products that are available to the community of Osage all year. No matter if the shop is open, this vending machine offers a rotating stock of beef sticks, bacon, cured pork and other locker-made products. In addition to the vending machine, they offer curbside pick up and meat bundles for customers who may not have the finances or freezer space to buy a half or quarter of beef or pork. The meat bundles provide a larger selection of meat at a reduced per pound price. Throughout COVID-19 shutdowns, S&S owners and staff used social media to stay connected with customers.

### Mobile meat processing in Hull

Old Parlor Meat Company is a custom meat-processing business with a unique twist – its mobile unit travels to livestock when it is

time for slaughter. Bringing the processing facility to the farm saves time and is less stressful for the animals. The carcass is brought back to a permanent location on the Van Grouw family farm between Rock Valley and Hull, where meat can be aged, cut, trimmed and packaged to customers' specifications.

### Program expands market opportunities

In May 2020, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship adopted the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Program, designating Iowa as the seventh state to enter the program. CIS allows meat processed at state-inspected plants to be sold outside of Iowa. To qualify for the program, a meat processor must have less than 25 full-time employees and comply with all federal food safety, sanitation and facility regulations.

This means that livestock producers can sell their meat and poultry across state lines if processed at a CIS facility. Before this program, farmers had to use a USDA-inspected facility to sell out of state, but small and mid-sized livestock farms could rarely

access those plants due to volume requirements and logistics tailored to larger producers. The CIS program allows farmers to grow their business, move more products and access new markets. It also gives consumers more access to Iowa-raised processed meats.

“Local meat lockers play an important role in their communities and the food supply chain,” says Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig. “We pursued the CIS program to help small Iowa businesses grow and give consumers more access to Iowa-grown meat and poultry products.”

Story City Locker was Iowa's first meat processor to be approved for the CIS program. They originally were interested in the CIS program to fill a 15% lag in their schedule, but with COVID-19-related product demand, the locker quickly gained traction and experienced a 25% increase. Story City Locker is now booking well into 2022 for custom processing. Being approved for the program has positioned the locker well for future growth. ⚡

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





# Safety day!

Last month, Erik Freese, foreman, and Brady Codner, member services advisor, attended safety day at the Grundy County Fairgrounds, where they taught local third and fourth graders about electrical safety. ⚡

## CONGRATULATIONS

# Co-op employees celebrate work anniversaries

### Michael Geerdes

Michael Geerdes, general manager, celebrated 10 years with Grundy County REC on May 11.

Mike's favorite part of working at the cooperative is his fellow employees. In his free time, Mike enjoys spending time with his family and attending his kids' events. A fun fact about Mike – he is a huge Iowa Hawkeyes fan and enjoys going to football games in the fall.



his co-workers and the family atmosphere. In his free time, Tony enjoys spending time with his family, going to his cabin and watching his children play sports. A fun fact about Tony – his hobby is water skiing; he actually previously skied with the Waterhawks out of Waterloo.

### Erik Freese

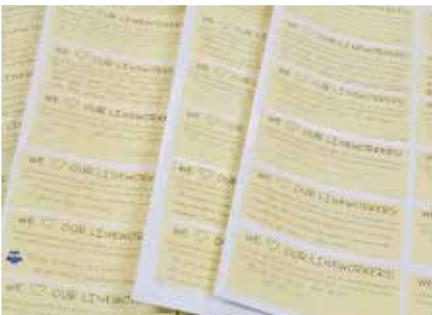
Erik Freese, foreman, celebrated 7 years with the cooperative on May 27. His favorite part of working at



Grundy County REC is helping and interacting with the members while enjoying his job. In his free time, Erik enjoys spending time with his wife and three children, family and friends. He also enjoys hunting and fishing. A fun fact about Erik – if he could have chosen another profession, he would have been a fire fighter. ⚡

### Tony Sienknecht

Tony Sienknecht, line and staking foreman, celebrated 19 years with Grundy County REC on May 20. His favorite part of working at the cooperative is being outside, meeting with the members, interacting with



## Thank you ...

### from the linemen of Grundy County REC

In April, we celebrated our linemen with a lunch grilled by Michael Geerdes, Grundy County REC general manager, and showcased the love and support of our members by displaying all the thank you notes that were sent in. The linemen would like to thank all of the members who took the time to write out and send in these kind comments. ⚡



## Get smart about lighting.

Smart light bulbs offer convenient control through voice commands or a smart phone app, and you can save additional energy (and money!) with LED options.

Photo Credit: Philips

# Three ways to save energy outdoors

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

The deck often becomes the kitchen during summer months. While you may have invested a lot of time and effort making the interior of your home more energy efficient, there are ways to also take those saving outdoors. Here are three ways to save energy outdoors this summer.

## 1 Pumps and maintenance

Many homes have one or more pumps that service our yard or reside on our property. Pumps can supply water for a swimming pool, lawn and garden, septic system or well. It's easy to let maintenance slip, which cuts the pump's efficiency and shortens its life.

Maintaining pumps involves cleaning filters or checking oil and belts. If you have multiple pumps and need to hire a professional for assistance, try to do all the maintenance at once to reduce the overall cost. You may also want to consider replacing older pumps with energy efficient ENERGY STAR®-rated ones before they break down. While you're at it, check for leaks in the water lines, which make pumps work harder and longer.

## 2 Outdoor lighting

If you have security lighting, there's a good chance you can save a little energy. Some security lights can be 500 to 1000 watts. That's the equivalent of 40 to 80 indoor LED bulbs – quite a lot of energy! Adding timers, motion sensors and light sensors can reduce your bulb energy use. Plus, when you use your lights less often, your neighbors may appreciate a little less light pollution!

Switching to LEDs is another great strategy. Solar lights are also a good way to light walkways, a water feature or your deck – without having to buy any electricity at all.



Cooking all the courses on the grill eliminates the need to turn on the kitchen stove.



Solar landscape lighting is a popular outdoor lighting option, and they use natural energy from the sun.



Doing annual maintenance on outdoor pumps, like the swimming pool pump shown here, can make it more energy efficient.

## 3 Grilling

Using your oven can raise your kitchen's temperature up to 10 degrees F, increasing the need to run your air conditioner, so grilling outdoors is a great way to save energy. If you like to barbecue or grill most of your meals, you may want to consider the fuel you use. If natural gas is available, it's usually much less expensive than propane. Natural gas is also convenient because you don't have to refill any tanks. On the downside, if you don't already have gas lines running to your patio or deck, the cost of installing them can be prohibitive.

Other fuel types like charcoal briquettes or wood take more preparation and can be fussy to work with, and charcoal grills emit three times as much carbon as gas grills.

Whichever fuel type you choose for your grill, you can save energy by barbecuing (rather than grilling because barbecuing keeps the lid closed during cooking).

Hopefully these ideas will help you enjoy your outdoor living space this summer – and help you save energy! ⚡

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

# Nominate a community volunteer by June 30!



## Step 1:

Go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) from June 1-30 to make a nomination and to review the contest rules.

## Step 2:

As a nominator, provide your contact information and answer the following question in 500 words or less.

**How has your nominee made a positive difference in the community, and why do they deserve to be recognized?**



### It's time to nominate a community volunteer!

Iowa's electric cooperatives are excited to announce a new statewide contest, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. Called **Shine the Light**, the contest will accept nominations in June and award three winners with a \$1,500 check to their local charity or community organization.

"We're excited to launch this cooperative effort to shine the light on local volunteers," says Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric

Cooperatives. "So many people throughout the areas served by Iowa's electric cooperatives deserve to be recognized for making a positive impact."

Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the Shine the Light contest will accept contest entries online during the month of June. The three winners will be announced during the Iowa State Fair in August. In addition to receiving a \$1,500 donation for their charity or nonprofit of choice, the winners will also be featured in the September issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine.

### How to nominate

Member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers. If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative in Iowa, you're a co-op member-consumer and invited to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-consumer. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians. ⚡

# INSIDE A REAL-LIFE FARMHOUSE

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

It's impossible not to notice the farmhouse decorating craze has taken over. On Instagram, you're invited to vote for your favorite farm kitchens. In magazines, you have an opportunity to win the items pictured in the spread. On home decorating TV shows, you can hold your phone camera up to the screen to find out where to buy the items featured.

I often chuckle when viewing these glossy creations. In my opinion, not one of those houses has come within 100 miles of a real farm. How do I know?

Both Kent and I grew up in farmhouses on real farms with real animals and crops and buildings. And we know that a real farmhouse contains the following at one time or another:

- **A mud porch or breezeway.** Now, that's not to say that some of these illustrious houses don't sport those as well, but a real farmhouse has a spot for mud-encrusted boots sitting on a scrap of rug or some newspapers. It holds an old refrigerator full of animal serums and other veterinary medicines. Syringes for administering the meds litter the countertops, along with a variety of work gloves. On the floor is a gunny sack or an old box with bulbs that haven't yet been planted and starts of the neighbor's flowers that need to get in the ground.
- **Evidence of animals in the house.** This is in addition to any pampered pet you may have roaming the premises. Real farmhouses are known to harbor piglets in a bushel basket behind the oil burner stove or a calf born too early in cold temperatures lounging in the bathtub. Real farmhouses have a bucket of eggs that have been recently gathered but still retain evidence of their origins clinging to the shells.



- **A pile of farm publications.** The pile starts in the kitchen and expands from the desk to the floor to beside the rocking chair. Not the carefully placed and curated tomes that the photographers want you to see. These include the oldies that your grandfather also read to the new ones that propose more modern methods of agriculture to those catering to the women in the family. There's 4-H information mixed in, along with the local shopper, open to an upcoming auction bill. You will notice that some of these publications have gaping squares, where a recipe or a phone number was clipped out and stuck inside the cupboard door.
- **A less-than-picturesque laundry room.** The laundry room in a real farmhouse isn't the neatly ordered shelves, clean appliances and cheery oversized words

tacked on the wall that you'll see in these various media. Instead, it has filthy, grease-encased blue jeans in a heap on the floor. In a sink next to the washer, soak ancient towels used to stanch the bleeding of the dog, who had wandered into some sort of scrape with a larger animal and is bearing the wounds to prove it. The detergents piled on top of the dryer are all extra heavy-duty grease lifters, bleaches and soda-based concoctions to get rid of the smells.

So, I'll smile and give a condescending glance at the farmhouses that are proffered for my decorating wants. And then I'll wonder how a pile of dirty blue jeans would look in that magazine spread. ⚡

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



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# LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

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