

● JULY 2022

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Reliability is a
priority for CVEC**

**Partnerships fund
local reading projects**

Favorite grilling recipes

CVEC announces annual meeting events ▶ See Page 12

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Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa’s member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative’s office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Josie Pauley, Harrison County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month’s cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

ADVOCACY: A STRATEGIC “GAME” OF OFFENSE AND DEFENSE

BY KEVIN CONDON



Another Iowa General Assembly has come and gone, and the political pundits have already moved on into “campaign mode.” While candidates prepare

to throw pound-after-pound of parade candy this summer, it is important to reflect on this legislative session for both the positive and not-so-positive developments the electric co-op family experienced.

Even though it is a grossly overused cliché, I can’t help but compare the legislative session to a sporting event. Sometimes you are on offense; sometimes you play defense. The 2022 session required us to play both, some days simultaneously.

The impacts of state tax reforms

The rural electric cooperative (REC) government relations team focused primarily on the tax conversations at the Statehouse this year. The governor and Republican majorities in both chambers laid out plans for significant income tax reforms. RECs identified a sales tax oversight from a 2018 bill that needed to be fixed in order to achieve parity for rural member-consumers.

The income tax issue came out of the blocks fast, and significant reforms were signed into law on March 1, less than two months into session. Achieving income tax exemption for cash-rent payments to retired farmers and pension payouts to retired co-op employees are positive outcomes of the reform. And member-consumers of Iowa’s electric cooperatives will collectively save more than \$1 million annually thanks to two other bills that passed this session. SF 2367 passed in the final days of session and included a resolution to the sales tax issue above and will save roughly \$300,000 annually. It was

signed by Gov. Reynolds in June. Another bill that protected the expiration of a 30-year-old special energy utility tax was also signed into law (SF 2325 – approximately \$750,000 saved annually).

Advocating for REC member-consumers

Again, while reviewing the positive outcomes of any legislative session is worthwhile, it can also be as meaningful to analyze those ideas that weren’t successful. The hard truth of public policy is that new laws can simultaneously help some and hurt others. When it is necessary to appeal to the referee to blow the whistle, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) steps in to help cooperatives and you, the member-consumer, by being the collective voice of RECs at the Iowa Capitol.

One piece of legislation (HSB 697) attempted to make a mockery of the cooperative business model by creating special “solar clubs” for certain consumers. The bill aimed to essentially push the installation costs of their systems onto other consumers of electricity. RECs support solar energy

when it is a fair deal for all cooperative members, not just a few.

A second bill (SF 2321) could have trampled individual landowners and their property rights by prohibiting the use of their land for utility-scale solar energy production based on a Corn Suitability Rating 2 score of 65 or above. Imagine Iowa farmers being told they can’t do what they want with their land because it’s TOO good! Electric co-ops believe government shouldn’t preclude any landowner from an opportunity to make a profit off their own land.

We all know and love somebody who can take a football or basketball game very seriously. I’ve been guilty of letting my blood pressure skyrocket when the Iowa Hawkeyes aren’t playing the way I think they should. But I believe the actions that play out at the Statehouse must always be taken seriously. Whether pocketbook issues for you and your co-op or whether your poles, wires or land are at risk of government overstepping, IAEC will be ready to speak up on your behalf and when necessary, call for a timeout.

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

EDITOR’S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an electric grill!

The Cuisinart compact portable grill has a built-in telescoping base, so it functions as both a tabletop grill and a freestanding grill. Use it to cook family-sized meals on the ample porcelain-enamel grate. The unit packs away in seconds for compact storage and features a briefcase-style handle for easy transport.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month’s contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than July 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to win. There’s no obligation associated with entering, we don’t share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the beef bundle from the May issue was Sam Spellman, Guthrie County REC.



ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!

GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE BEHIND YOUR POWER



Lance Henderson

GIS Coordinator

Lance has worked at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) for nine years. In his role as the GIS coordinator, he updates the system

map to keep track of equipment in the field. This helps line crews have up-to-date information on their handheld devices while doing repairs or maintenance. He enjoys his job because he can be a part of staking new projects and seeing what it takes to build and watch a system flow.

Lance and his girlfriend have two daughters and live in Albia. In his free time, he likes spending time outside with his girls, exercising and golfing when he has the chance.



Ryan Romano

Journeyman Lineman

Ryan has worked at CVEC for four years. As a journeyman lineman, he does pole changeouts and new builds. He enjoys the opportunity

to work outside with his team.

Ryan is from Albia and went to Marshalltown Community College for lineworker school. In his free time, he likes hunting, fishing and spending time with friends and family.

RELIABILITY IS A PRIORITY

BY LEILANI TODD



Mother Nature is a tough opponent when it comes to providing reliable electricity to our members. However, a resilient and reliable electric

grid that affordably keeps the lights on is the cornerstone of the American economy. Families and businesses expect the lights to stay on, at a price they can afford.

In order for Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) to meet and ensure the reliability of our power supply, we must constantly make operational adjustments as we strive for balance and a brighter future for our members. At CVEC, we strive to make sure service is available when our members need it – that is called 100% Average System Availability.

Our Average System Availability Index for the past 12 months (ending March 31, 2022, and excluding major event days) was 99.98%. This high percentage is a testament to CVEC's diligence in building beneficial new lines, maintaining existing lines and keeping the paths traveled by those lines safe and clear. However, when Mother Nature does rear up and knock out power, our award-winning employees give their all to see that your service is restored in a timely manner, being ever vigilant in recognizing the importance of the service we provide for your quality of life.

Below are five ways CVEC strives to maintain our high reliability standard:

1. Vegetation Management – CVEC prunes and/or removes trees on our regular maintenance schedule to ensure reliable electricity. Trees near power lines can cause “blinks” or power outages with downed lines either through growth or broken branches.

2. Affordability – When trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for costly repairs also grows. Suddenly, minor restoration efforts become major restoration efforts. As these costs increase, so can electric rates.

3. Planning – CVEC is responsible for meeting your electric needs and never takes for granted the substantial trust you have placed in us to meet both your needs and expectations. Our operation crews work diligently on a 4-year work plan to ensure that upgrades are implemented in a timely manner to meet the growing demands of the electrical system.

4. Technology Investment – Investing in technology, equipment, and being proactive in the maintenance of the electric distribution system translates into fewer unplanned outages and ensures that we are prepared for growth. Your electric system is stronger and in better condition than ever before, and we continue to make improvements. We utilize new technology resulting in greater reliability, fewer “blinks,” less voltage issues and reduced outage restoration times.

5. Generation and Transmission – CVEC works with our generation and transmission cooperatives to supply reliable, economical electricity to our member-owners. We believe in renewable resources; however, we also want to ensure our member-owners have electricity when they flip the switch. This means we have a diverse-mix portfolio including baseload generation and transmission.

CVEC wants our member-owners to know providing safe, *reliable* and affordable electricity is our top priority and always has been!

Leilani Todd is the CEO/general manager of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.



Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Office

2090 Highway 5 South • P.O. Box 486
Albia, IA 52531-0486

Office Hours

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

Telephone Numbers

Days, nights or holidays:
641-932-7126 (local)
or 800-475-1702

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PARTNERSHIPS FUND TWO LOCAL READING PROJECTS WITH \$20,000 DONATION

One of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative's (CVEC) most unique and exciting community programs is the CoBank Sharing Success grant program. Aimed at supporting local communities and projects, the grant is made possible by CVEC's governing board of directors in partnership with CoBank – a national nonprofit cooperative bank owned by the rural American cooperatives it services.

CVEC, Northeast Missouri Electric Power (NEP) and CoBank recently partnered again to fund two projects in our territory through the Sharing Success grant program and the Northeast Power Partnering Request program. CVEC is thrilled to be able to help the Carnegie Evans Public Library in Albia kick-start their Dolly Parton Imagination Library® program with a donation of \$13,000 and support the Friends of Drake Public Library in Centerville with \$7,000 as they expand their Dolly Parton Imagination Library® program. Both programs promote early childhood literacy by mailing books monthly directly to children under five years old in Monroe and Appanoose Counties at no cost to the child or the family.

“Rural communities and cooperatives like Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative are fortunate to have the generous support of CoBank and Northeast Power, and we are thankful for the contributions enabling us to help make our communities a better place to live and work,” says Tod Faris, CVEC economic development and community relations manager.

Dolly Parton launched the Imagination Library® to honor her father, who was smart and hardworking, but never learned how to read or write. The program is meant to give children from all walks of life a chance that Dolly's father never had. Together CVEC, CoBank, Northeast Power and the community are putting



Carnegie Evans Public Library, Albia (pictured from left to right): Tod Faris (CVEC Economic Development & Community Relations Manager), Allie Bennett (NEP Manager of Economic Development and Member Services), Ron Honeke, Sharon Crall, Cindy Johnson, Sue Goode, Melinda Montgomery, Raelynn Clouse, Aimee Campbell (Library Director), Zoey Henderson, Leilani Todd (CVEC CEO/General Manager), Haley Lancaster (Assistant Librarian), Abe Gray (NEP Chief Financial Officer).



Friends of Drake Public Library, Centerville (pictured from left to right): Allie Bennett (NEP Manager of Economic Development and Member Services), Doug Aeilts (NEP CEO/General Manager), Abe Gray (NEP Chief Financial Officer), JeNel Barth (Library Director), Dolly Parton, Nicole Cox (Volunteer DPIL Committee Member), Leilani Todd (CVEC CEO/General Manager), Tod Faris (CVEC Economic Development & Community Relations Manager).

books in the hands and hearts of our local children.

“Supporting Dolly Parton's Imagination Library® is a powerful way to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and families in our cooperative community,” says CVEC CEO/General Manager Leilani Todd.

“CVEC is excited to help bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library® to our communities. By focusing our efforts as a community on early childhood education, we can help ensure the next generation is prepared to meet the workforce needs of our business community and continue building on our current achievements.”

UNDERSTANDING THIS SUMMER'S ELECTRIC GRID RELIABILITY CONCERNS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Editor's Note: This article provides timely information about state and national news regarding potential power generation impacts this summer. The story focuses on Southwest Power Pool (SPP) and Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) organizations that many electric cooperatives in Iowa are affiliated with. Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and its power suppliers are NOT affiliated with SPP or MISO.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) recently released a reliability report indicating that many states, including Iowa, are at an increased risk for power generation shortfalls this summer. Decreased power generation capacity, increased electricity demand, above-normal temperature forecasts and drought conditions contributed to NERC's assessment.

You might have noticed local, state and national headlines warning of impending power outages based on the report's findings. While many of us remember the polar vortex outages that impacted Texas in February 2021, Iowans aren't accustomed to these types of news reports about potential outages based on energy supply.

What does this report mean for Iowa's electric cooperative member-consumers, and why is electricity generation a concern now? While the information warrants awareness and consideration, there is no reason to panic.

Reliability is paramount

First and foremost, locally owned electric cooperatives are committed to providing member-consumers with reliable electric service around-the-clock. Iowa's electric co-ops rely on an "all-of-the-above" generation strategy, including coal, natural gas, hydropower, wind and solar resources. Ensuring reliability involves a portfolio of diverse options to meet consumers' energy needs while also prioritizing our commitment to affordability and environmental responsibility.

Sources of electric generation have changed dramatically over the past 20 years. More renewable energy sources (wind and solar) have been integrated into the power grid while traditional baseload generation sources (coal and nuclear) have been shut down or retired. Renewable energy is also considered intermittent because the wind doesn't always blow, the sun doesn't always shine, and large-scale battery storage isn't yet feasible. Because of these factors, resources that can be used regardless of weather conditions, such

as coal, nuclear, hydro and natural gas, are still critical to ensuring reliable, 24/7 generation.

Power generation and demand mismatch

The power grid is complex and vastly interconnected, even though it might seem simple at the local level. The poles and wires you see dotting Iowa's countryside and leading to your home or business are just one part of a complex grid that includes local distribution systems and transmission infrastructure. Many of Iowa's electric cooperatives are part of regional transmission organizations or independent system operators, which coordinate, control and monitor a multistate electric grid (see sidebars about SPP and MISO). These federally created organizations act as "air traffic controllers" to enable the reliable and cost-effective delivery of electric service.

Unlike water or gas, electricity cannot be effectively stored in large quantities at this time. Electricity must be consumed the instant it is generated,

which requires supply to be kept in constant balance with demand. That's where organizations like SPP and MISO provide incredible value; they constantly monitor electric demand regionally and manage available electric generation resources to maintain an equal balance.

Controlled interruptions

In the rare event that electric demand exceeds available supply, deliberate and thorough plans are in place to keep the grid from shutting down and to minimize interruptions to electric service. Groups like SPP and MISO, along with electric cooperatives, are planning and preparing every minute of every day to use tools and resources to balance electric demand and supply. Some Iowa electric cooperatives have voluntary load management programs in place to cycle off water heaters, air conditioners and commercial/industrial loads to quickly reduce electric demand. Interruptions of electric service are a last resort but could still take place in some areas.

In the news, member-consumers might hear the term "load shedding," which in simple terms means a reduction in electric demand is needed. If this occurs, a controlled and temporary power interruption could take place on certain portions of the grid to decrease electric demand so it matches the available electric supply on the regional grid. If these brief power interruptions are needed on high-demand days this summer, they would likely last for a couple of hours or less. While highly unlikely, these temporary, controlled power interruptions are protection mechanisms designed to prevent catastrophic, system-wide damage to the regional power grid.

What are electric cooperatives doing?

Those managing the ongoing energy transition must recognize the need for time, invest in technology development and be inclusive of various energy

sources to maintain reliability and affordability. A resilient and reliable electric grid that affordably keeps the lights on is essential to daily life. Iowa's electric cooperatives will continue to advocate for an all-of-the-above energy strategy with policymakers. A diverse energy mix that includes adequate baseload supply is essential to providing member-consumers with safe, reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy for the long term.

Your electric cooperative might offer load control programs or have suggestions for conserving energy to lower electric use on high-demand days. If a temporary, controlled interruption is necessary, it could occur with little notice. Follow your cooperative on social media, monitor its website or contact them directly for the most up-to-date information.

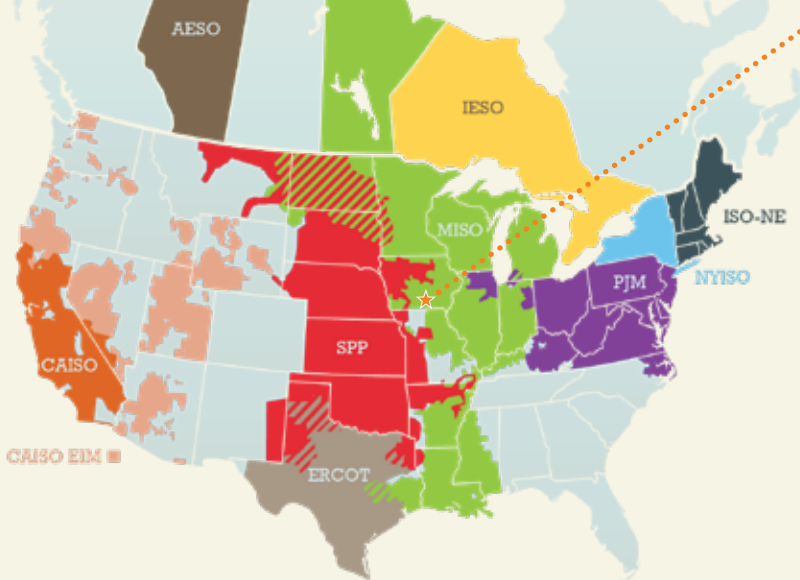
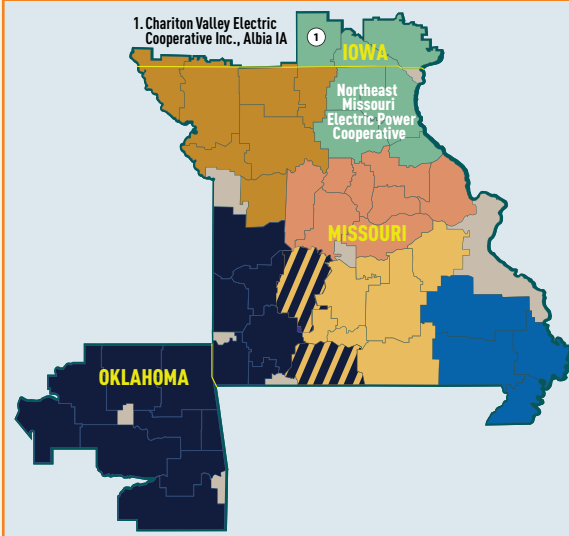
Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is not a member of SPP or MISO. Instead, it is part of a three-tiered system that generates, transmits and brings the power to you, our members. CVEC obtains our power from a system of cooperatives that is organized into three levels or "tiers," each with its own set of responsibilities. CVEC is a distribution cooperative, and Associated Electric Cooperative (Associated) is owned by and provides wholesale power to a system of six regional transmission cooperatives (including Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative, which serves CVEC) and their 51 local distribution cooperatives. This three-tiered cooperative system delivers electricity to member-consumers in Missouri, northeast Oklahoma and southeast Iowa. Associated is independent from regional transmission organizations (RTOs) but has joint operating agreements in place with RTOs surrounding its service territory. *See inset map below.*

If you have questions about grid reliability, please contact CVEC.

★ Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is not a member of SPP or MISO.

ASSOCIATED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. SERVICE TERRITORY



WHAT IS SPP?

Southwest Power Pool (SPP) is a regional transmission organization (RTO) and a nonprofit corporation. SPP oversees the bulk electric grid and wholesale power market in the central U.S. on behalf of a diverse group of utilities, including some electric cooperatives, and transmission companies in 17 states, including portions of western Iowa.

WHAT IS MISO?

Headquartered in Indiana, Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) is an independent, not-for-profit, member-based organization responsible for operating the power grid across 15 U.S. states, including portions of Iowa, and the Canadian province of Manitoba. 42 million people depend on MISO to generate and transmit the right amount of electricity every minute of every day.



TERIYAKI STEAK

- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon ginger powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 shot Saki wine
- 2 or 3 sirloin steaks, cut ¾-inch thick

Mix marinade ingredients together and marinate steak on one side for at least 1 hour. Turn steaks and marinate for 1 more hour. Grill to your taste.

Lea Bradley • Mount Pleasant
Access Energy Cooperative

TERIYAKI PORK CUBES

- 3-4 pounds pork chops or roast
- ½ teaspoon Accent meat tenderizer
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon ginger
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon water
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup oil

Cut meat into 2-inch pieces and sprinkle with meat tenderizer. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over meat. Marinate for 1.5 hours or longer before grilling. Can be stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours. Grill 10-15 minutes until done.

Kamie Meyer • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

GRILLED VEGETABLES WITH BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

- 1 medium eggplant
- 2 medium zucchinis
- 2-3 medium yellow squash
- 2 medium red bell peppers
- ¾ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2-3 tablespoons mixed herbs, finely chopped

Slice eggplant, zucchini and squash lengthwise into ½-inch slices. Core, seed and cut red pepper into 1-inch-wide slices. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over vegetables. Let stand for at least 30 minutes. Oil hot grill to prevent sticking. Lift vegetables from vinaigrette and place on grill for 10-15 minutes or until fork tender, turning once or twice. Remove from grill. Remaining vinaigrette may be poured over vegetables just before serving. *Serves 6*

Mary Schreur • Kanawha • Prairie Energy Cooperative

BRATWURST SUPPER

- 3 pounds bratwurst links, uncooked
- 3 pounds red potatoes, cut into chunks
- 1 pound baby carrots
- 1 red onion, sliced into rings
- 1 4-ounce jar mushroom stems (7 pieces), drained
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 envelope onion soup mix
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cut bratwurst links into fourths. Place bratwurst, potatoes, carrots, onions and mushrooms in a greased tinfoil roaster pan. Dot with butter. Sprinkle with soup mix, soy sauce and pepper. Stir lightly to mix and cover with tinfoil. Grill covered over medium heat for 60 minutes or until vegetables are tender and sausage is no longer pink, stirring once. *Serves 12*

**Stephanie Messner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

GRILLED PINEAPPLE

- 1 large pineapple
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon hot water
- pinch salt
- oil

In a small bowl, whisk together brown sugar, honey, hot water and salt until combined. Peel pineapple, cut into ¾-inch slices and place in a gallon-sized zip-lock bag. Add brown sugar mixture, then seal the bag and shake it until the pineapple is evenly coated. Let sit at room temperature for 15 minutes. While pineapple sits, preheat the grill on high heat. After 15 minutes, scrape the grill grates and then lightly oil them. Place the pineapple slices on the grill for 2-3 minutes or until heated through and grill marks appear. Flip the pineapple and grill for another 2-3 minutes. Serve immediately.

**Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

GRILLED ASPARAGUS WITH BACON

- 1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed
- bacon slices
- salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat grill on high heat. Group 3-4 asparagus spears, wrap with a bacon slice and secure with a toothpick. Repeat then season with salt and pepper to taste. Place asparagus bundles on aluminum foil or grill pan. Grill over high heat for 3-5 minutes to desired tenderness for asparagus, turning once to cook bacon completely. *Serves 4*

**Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

PIZZA DOGS

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- mozzarella sticks
- hot dog buns
- mozzarella cheese slices
- ½ cup pizza sauce
- pepperoni slices (optional)

Mix all seasonings with ground beef. Take a ball of meat and flatten out then wrap around a cheese stick, giving it a hot dog shape. Grill for 15-20 minutes or until the meat is cooked. Add mozzarella cheese slices to hot dog buns and toast under a broiler or on the grill for 3-5 minutes. Place pizza dogs into bun and top with pizza sauce and pepperoni slices if desired. *Serves 5*

**Crystal Hammes • Libertyville
Access Energy Cooperative**

MARINADE FOR GRILLED PORK CHOPS

- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup Italian dressing
- 1 teaspoon dry red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pounds pork chops

Mix all ingredients and marinate pork chops before grilling. *Serves 4*

**Emily Rassi • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

WANTED:

THANKSGIVING SIDE DISH RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is July 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CONSIDERING SOLAR

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Often, homeowners conflate installing solar at home with energy efficiency. But what most people don't realize is solar is not energy efficiency. Solar is generating energy. Energy efficiency is finding ways to use less energy. While these are not one in the same, both are thought of as beneficial to the environment and a way to save money.

If you are interested in installing solar, it is important to understand your motivations. It may be saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency can address both motivations.

Here are the five key energy efficiency

considerations to evaluate when adding solar to your home.

1 Energy consumption

Solar systems are sized based on a home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system – which will save money and reduce your home's environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy, and those insulation

measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy efficiency projects before installing solar.

2 Affordability

Consider your overall out-of-pocket expenses. The expected lifespan of a heating and cooling system is 15 to 25 years. Check the age and condition of your HVAC equipment and consider the expenses of replacement.

3 Roofing

Consider the age, orientation and shade of your roof. It is more difficult and expensive to reroof a home with solar panels. Evaluate if the



roof will need to be replaced before the solar panels need to be replaced.

The best orientation for solar panels is south facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof helps keep your home cool in the summertime but reduces solar energy production.

4 Maintenance

A solar system doesn't last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy. Maintenance and repairs may be needed.

5 Electric bills and storage

Solar is not "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill.

Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in battery storage system, which comes at an additional cost.

During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects lineworkers from injury while making repairs.

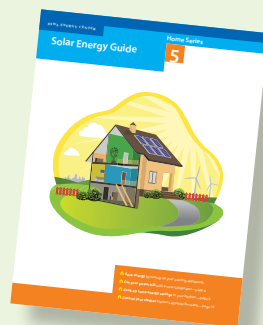
Contact your electric co-op

Solar contractors often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with your co-op's offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, check with your electric co-op for local information rather than relying on what the contractor says.

As with any other system for your home, get bids from three contractors to compare equipment and pricing. Another option may be community-owned solar. Many electric co-ops offer community solar programs. You may have an option to enjoy the benefits of solar without the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



SOLAR ENERGY GUIDE

Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to helping member-consumers make educated energy decisions that make sense for their home or business. Before moving ahead with a solar project, contact your local co-op first and also review the Solar Energy Guide for tips and to learn interconnection requirements.

www.iowarec.org/publications/solar-resources

TOP 10 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

- 1 Address energy efficiency.** Implementing energy efficiency measures in advance can help reduce your overall energy or water consumption, and subsequently, the size of your solar system.
- 2 Do your homework before writing a check.** Talk to your electric co-op at the outset of the process. Then speak with credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals that will help guide you through the process.
- 3 Know your co-op's rate structure and policies.** Your co-op will help you understand the rate structure and what type of charges are likely to be incurred. They will also let you know how you will be compensated for the excess, unused energy that is generated by your solar system.
- 4 Analyze your electric load.** Understanding your electricity use and overall energy needs will help determine if solar is a good investment for you.
- 5 Determine costs upfront.** You will likely be responsible for initial upfront costs to install the system, as well as maintenance and repair costs. Doing your homework upfront will help determine if it is economical for your energy needs.
- 6 Research incentives and tax credits.** Visit with your co-op to see if there are financial incentives to offset your investment costs. These are often driven by laws and policies and can vary on the type and size of system.
- 7 Understand responsibilities.** A variety of parties are involved in making a solar project a reality, so it's important to know exactly what tasks and costs you're responsible for.
- 8 Know safety requirements.** Solar is connected to the grid, so it's important that you work with your co-op to ensure you're meeting their requirements to keep the grid reliable and safe.
- 9 Choose a reputable vendor.** It is important to find a reputable installer who will give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check reviews and ask for third-party input.
- 10 Keep thorough records.** Establish a thorough record-keeping process to retain all data and research you gather.



SAVE THE DATE FOR THIS YEAR'S IN-PERSON ANNUAL MEETING

This year marks a momentous milestone for Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) as we celebrate 75 years of providing reliable electric service to our members! The 2022 annual meeting will be held on **MONDAY, AUG. 1**, at the King Opera House in Albia - 115 Benton Avenue E, Albia, IA 52531.

Watch your mailbox for your 2022 annual meeting materials, including:

- Official annual meeting notice
- Reports of officers, directors and committees
- Director candidate information and voting materials

Please take note of the following important information regarding this year's annual meeting.

- The **capital credit checks** you normally pick up at the annual meeting will be mailed to the address on your electric account if the amount is greater than or equal to \$25. If the amount is less than \$25, it will be credited to your account.

AGENDA OF EVENTS

5-6:30 p.m. - King Opera House - East Courtyard

- Family-friendly activities, including:
- Bucket truck tours
 - Spin art
 - Electric safety demonstrations
 - History booth
 - And more!

6:30 p.m. - Inside the King Opera House

- Business meeting
- Pledge of Allegiance
 - National anthem
 - Invocation
 - Address of welcome
 - Call to order
 - Declaration of quorum
 - Election results
 - Adjournment of meeting

Following the Business Meeting - Inside the King Opera House

- Free feature movie
- Free concessions provided

CVEC encourages you to attend this year's event, vote for directors, review the reports and communicate with your cooperative! If you have any questions, please contact our office at 641-932-7126 or 800-475-1702.

- This year's director election will be conducted by **mail-in balloting ONLY**. There will be no in-person voting at the annual meeting. The official ballot will be included in your official annual meeting packet.
- All ballots must be received by **noon on Monday, Aug. 1**, for your vote to be counted.

Return your ballot in the prepaid envelope by noon on Aug. 1, to receive a \$15 energy credit!

COPPER THEFT REWARD PROGRAM

Copper prices are on the rise and so is copper theft. Not only can copper theft cost Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) a considerable amount of money and create outages, but it can also result in safety concerns for our employees, our members and the public.

For this reason, CVEC and Northeast Power are sponsoring a copper theft reward program to encourage individuals to turn in copper thieves. If you see suspicious activity around substations, power lines or property owned by CVEC, you are encouraged to call in this information.

In return, you may earn a reward of up to \$1,000. The reward money will be provided as long as the tip results in the arrest and conviction of someone stealing, defacing, destroying or otherwise vandalizing cooperative property.

The reward is limited to thefts and vandalism from electric cooperatives on the Northeast Power system in Missouri and Iowa. Tips from other utilities are still welcome even though they



will not qualify for the reward. Please know, all information called in will be shared with law enforcement in the appropriate area.

To report theft or vandalism, call the toll-free theft reward hotline at 855-COPPER9 (855-267-7379).

A CART OF LOCAL VALUE AND HOMETOWN PRIDE

Jim and Charlie's Affiliated Foods is more than a place to buy bread and milk – it's a cart full of hometown value and customer service. The independent grocer has been at the heart of the Albia community for decades.

The full-service grocery store is owned by Jim Van Klavern and Charlie Sinnott, who both worked at the store while growing up in the community. Together the duo purchased the business in February 1997 and the retail building in 1998. The store was originally a SuperValu, but the owners chose to go independent around 2001.

As an independent grocery store, Jim and Charlie's works with Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc. – a cooperative food wholesaler that serves 1,100 member companies and over 3,100 locations across 28 states.

Standout meat, deli counter and liquor selection

With three butchers working at the store, Jim and Charlie's stands out for its fresh-cut meat offerings. The grocer often gets rave customer reviews for its Midwest-sourced beef and pork products and homemade bratwursts.

"We're known for our homemade brats, ranging from pineapple, jalapeno pepper jack, cheddar, regular and Italian flavors," says Van Klavern. "A lot of customers will stop through on their way to the lake to pick up brats and beer specials."

The meat department also supplies products for a variety of restaurants in the county.

Beyond the meat counter, the grocer offers fresh-cut deli meats sliced for the customer and wrapped in butcher paper. The deli case also includes top-of-the-line deli salads, potato salads and egg salads, which have premium freshness and flavor.

The store is also known for its large liquor selection with a wide variety of beers and specialty alcohols.



Local roots and community support

Jim and Charlie's employs 16 team members and is one of two grocery stores in the Albia community.

"It's rare to have two stores in a community this size," says Sinnott. "It's not always easy for independent retailers to compete, but we're proud to be locally owned and operated and our customers appreciate that too."

Whether it is volunteering their time or being involved in local organizations, Van Klavern and Sinnott enjoy giving back to the community where they were raised. They credit their decades of success to the support of the community as well as their employees and families.

Customer service is a top priority for the team at Jim and Charlie's.

Employees are proud to carry groceries to the parking lot for shoppers, and during COVID-19 restrictions, they offered a variety of shopping options to meet customers' differing comfort levels and needs.

Whenever possible, the store will order and stock unique products – ranging from Borax to butter brickle ice cream – based on customer requests. They also operate a full-service can redemption facility and plan to continue offering this service even as recent legislation changes grocer requirements.

Jim and Charlie's is open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and is only closed on Christmas Day.

HOW TO SAFELY USE A GENERATOR

Before using a portable generator, it's essential to understand the potential dangers associated with using them, such as their production of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, colorless and tasteless poisonous gas that is called the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like CO alarms. Follow these tips when using a generator.

- **Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator.** Be sure you understand the directions before hooking up the generator.
- **A generator is a temporary power source.** It should never be used as a permanent solution.
- **Maintain adequate ventilation because generators emit CO.** It's against fire code to operate a generator in your home, garage or other enclosed building. Place it in a dry location outdoors. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent CO from entering the home.
- **Never plug a portable electric generator into a wall outlet or connect directly to a home's wiring.** This can energize utility power lines and injure you or others working nearby. Electrical back feed can also damage the generator and home electrical equipment.
- **Turn off the generator and allow cooling before refueling.** Gasoline and its vapors may ignite if they come in contact with hot components or an electric spark. Store fuel in a properly designed container in a secure location away from the generator or other fuel-burning appliances, such as water heaters. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located nearby.



Photos: Honda/Kohler

- **Protect your appliances.** Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit. Remember, generators are for temporary usage, prioritize your needs.
- **Generators pose electrical risks especially when operated in wet conditions.** Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- **Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.** Many generator components are hot enough to burn you during operation.
- **Use proper extension cords.** Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.
- **Shut down the generator properly.** Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- **Remember maintenance between uses.** Drain the gasoline from the generator while it is being stored. It's also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality, and to start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

For more information, visit Safe Electricity at safeelectricity.org

THE GIFT OF A BRIDGE

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

A much-wanted gift finally materialized about a year ago. Kent and I had always discussed placing a bridge across the creek that separates our land from my parents' and my sister's. Without it, the only way to get to either of them was down our dead-end road and up a gravel one, 1.5 miles out of the way on a busy road.

Kent finally had all the pieces to put our bridge together. Someone was getting rid of a dock on their pond, so he and our son Colin dismantled it, and it became the bridge itself. Iron beams, pipes and whatever other paraphernalia are needed to make a bridge were finally in our possession. We would become bridge builders.

Well, Kent would. I'm not much good in the way of building anything. Even constructing a pillow fort in our living room with the grandkids is fraught with anxiety. So, I cheered on the bridge that would cross the 15 or so feet from bank to bank of what we call Meadow Creek.

A whole new world

Saying that the bridge changed my life might be a little melodramatic, but it certainly added a depth to my days that I hadn't anticipated. The four of us – my sister, my parents and I – share notes about our 4-wheeler rides and what we've found: a beaver dam, a new fawn, the old foundation of a country school that used to sit on my parents' acres.

I ride out there as frequently as the weather, the crops and my schedule allow. There's the Pig Wood, a stately stand of trees that once housed hogs in A-frames, with the remnants of one still remaining; my folks' cook spot, the site of many bonfires, sledding parties and weenie roasts; and a piece we call "Nebraska," because it's so far out of the way.

Imaginations run wild

At the back of the properties runs



Thunder Creek, a slow, wide stream that travels across the north end of Marion and Mahaska Counties and connects the Des Moines River with the South Skunk River. On a cool evening, I watched the bend that wraps around the north end of the field, and I could almost see the Native Americans who used this creek for a shortcut from one river to the other, canoeing slowly as they progressed. I surveyed the spots where I would put a cabin if I were homesteading in the 1840s. I watched the sun send streams through the Pig Wood, turning it into a medieval glade. My grandson, riding along with me, said,

"It's like a fairy tale, isn't it, Grandma?" and I replied, "It certainly is."

It's hard to describe the love of land where you know you belong. You feel its pull in your blood, in your heritage and in your responsibilities toward it. You can sense the generations that lived there before, whether you are related to them or not.

And in a medieval glade at sundown, you just might find yourself in the middle of a fairy tale.

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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