

NOVEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Learn about changes to  
CVEC's food drive

Shop co-op local  
this holiday season

Slow cooker recipes

Give to RECare ▶ See Page 13



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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Ryan Van Dyke, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES POWER IOWA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

BY CHUCK SODERBERG



You depend on your local electric cooperative to power your life every day, but did you know that your co-op also powers economic growth in your region?

Earlier this year, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives commissioned an economic impact study through the esteemed Goss & Associates of Omaha. This study confirmed what we've long known about our association members: Iowa's locally owned electric co-ops contribute greatly to the state's economy.

For the five years ending in 2021, the study found that Iowa electric co-ops generated a total impact on the state of \$4.8 billion, produced \$688 million in wages and salaries, directly supported 1,961 jobs, generated self-employment income of \$79.5 million and paid \$144.7 million in state and local taxes.

## Powering people and communities

Powering lives and empowering communities are at the core of our cooperative mission. This economic analysis is helpful as we talk with legislators, policymakers and other decision-makers about how electric cooperatives invest in rural Iowa. For more than 80 years, electric co-ops have maintained reliable and affordable electric service, provided stable career opportunities and paid taxes, which have vast ripple effects throughout the regions we serve.

Not only have electric co-ops' economic impacts been historically significant, but the study also concludes that co-ops have assisted local and state organizations in retaining, attracting and expanding businesses in the state. Separate from their spending impacts, electric cooperatives invest in efforts to attract and retain jobs and investment within their communities.

In addition to their daily duty of providing safe, reliable and affordable power,

the study found that Iowa electric cooperatives had an impact of \$14.7 billion in economic development projects between 2018 and 2022, supporting 7,366 jobs (retained, attracted or expanded) during that same time period.

## An important connector

Your electric cooperative has undoubtedly supported many economic development initiatives over the decades by serving as an intermediary for U.S. Department of Agriculture revolving loan funds, among other programs and projects. For example, several Iowa electric co-ops have been instrumental in developing industrial speculative buildings to accommodate local business expansion or to attract new businesses and jobs to the community. Iowa's electric cooperatives also give generously to local charitable causes and support youth education initiatives.

You should be proud of your local electric co-op's contributions to Iowa's economy. As a member-owned and locally governed entity, your electric co-op is more than a service provider; it's a major economic engine of progress for your community.

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

Access a PDF of our 2023 economic impact study at [www.iowarec.org](http://www.iowarec.org).

## Economic Impact: By the Numbers

For the five years ending in 2021, Iowa electric cooperative investments and operations generated the following impacts on the state of Iowa.

**\$14.7 BILLION** Impact in economic development projects.

**\$4.8 BILLION** Overall economic activity.

**\$688.1 MILLION** In wages and salaries.

**\$79.5 MILLION** Self-employment income.

**\$144.7 MILLION** In state and local tax collections.

**1,961 JOBS** Supported each year.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# WIN A RING SPOTLIGHT SECURITY CAMERA!

Shine a light on your home security with a Ring spotlight security camera – a versatile outdoor dynamo fit for any property.

See vivid detail with HD video in almost any weather. Deter threats with built-in spotlights. And get real-time alerts when there's motion in your yard.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Nov. 30. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the wireless weather station from the September issue was Nathan Stauffer, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!

# A NEW TWIST TO OUR ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

BY TROY AMOSS



For the 14th year in a row, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is holding a food drive to benefit those who are less fortunate in our community – but this year, we are trying something new!

CVEC employees and directors will be hosting our first-ever “fill the bucket” food drive on Nov. 18 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. We will be stationed in the

Hy-Vee parking lot and the Jim & Charlie’s parking lot in Albia.

Our team is dedicated to making a difference in our communities. There are many families and individuals who are facing hunger in our communities, and our local food pantries rely on the donations they receive to help keep their shelves stocked.

To help address this important need, we are asking members to rally together and participate in our “fill the bucket” food drive campaign. Please plan to stop by one of the

designated locations and help “fill the bucket” with your nonperishable food donations. If you are unable to participate during our scheduled event, you can drop off nonperishable food items at CVEC’s office between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. before Nov. 18.

We need your support to provide food for our neighbors in need! Spread the word to family and friends and join us as we continue to tackle hunger in our communities.

*Troy Amoss is the CEO/general manager of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.*



## WELCOMING NEW FACES AT CVEC

Stephen Conley and Austin Smithberg have been hired as 1,000-hour apprentices at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC). In these roles, they will work alongside our line crews to gain knowledge and on-the-job experience.

Conley and Smithberg both recently graduated from North American Lineman Training Center (NALTC) in McEwen, Tennessee. They each logged more than 500 physical and classroom hours, became certified climbers and learned many rescue and safety procedures.

Conley is from Albia and prior to joining CVEC he worked for Highline Construction. In his free time, he enjoys golfing, riding

dirt bikes and being with friends. He is excited to work with CVEC because of the positive work environment and being a part of a fast-moving industry.

Smithberg, an Albia native, and his fiancée Olivia are expecting a baby girl this month. Outside of work, he enjoys football, hunting, fishing and spending time with friends and family. He looks forward to working with CVEC because he has always wanted to work for his hometown cooperative to serve the community where he lives.

CVEC is fortunate to hire and help train these apprentices in the beginning stages of their linework careers. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Stephen and Austin!



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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

We accept



Stephen Conley



Austin Smithberg



# CREATING MOMENTS THAT BLOOM

Bright blooms. Subtle greenery. Unique textures. Timeless palettes. Finding the perfect combination for each floral arrangement inspires Tonia Benson, who owns Blooms & Things in Albia.

“I love making something beautiful with God’s creation and sharing it with others – no matter if that’s to provide comfort during a funeral or share the joy of a new baby,” she explains.

Benson and two part-time employees are dedicated to adding a special touch to each floral arrangement. They are passionate about working directly with customers to create florals that are perfect for both the moment and the recipient.

The shop offers arrangements for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, “thinking of you” moments and funerals. It also has green plants, silk flowers and small gift items such as candles, soaps and journals. Orders can be delivered throughout Albia and surrounding communities within a 20-minute radius.

“We’ve been a part of the community for so long that it feels like every order is for our family. I know the people these arrangements are going to. It makes it enjoyable and allows me to add a special touch,” Benson explains.

Before owning the shop, Benson was a certified wedding planner for Honey Creek Resort in Moravia. Using this event experience and her passion for the wedding industry, she works with couples to design, plan and deliver their wedding day florals. She can also help coordinate extra details like tuxedo rentals and balloons for any event.

### Commitment to a “blooming” community

The shop was first opened in 1978 by Mike Ogle, who owns Ogle’s Greenhouse in Albia. It has had a few different owners over the years, and Benson purchased the shop in 2019 after beginning as a manager in 2018.

“Buying the shop was a great opportunity for our young family,” Benson explains. “It aligns with

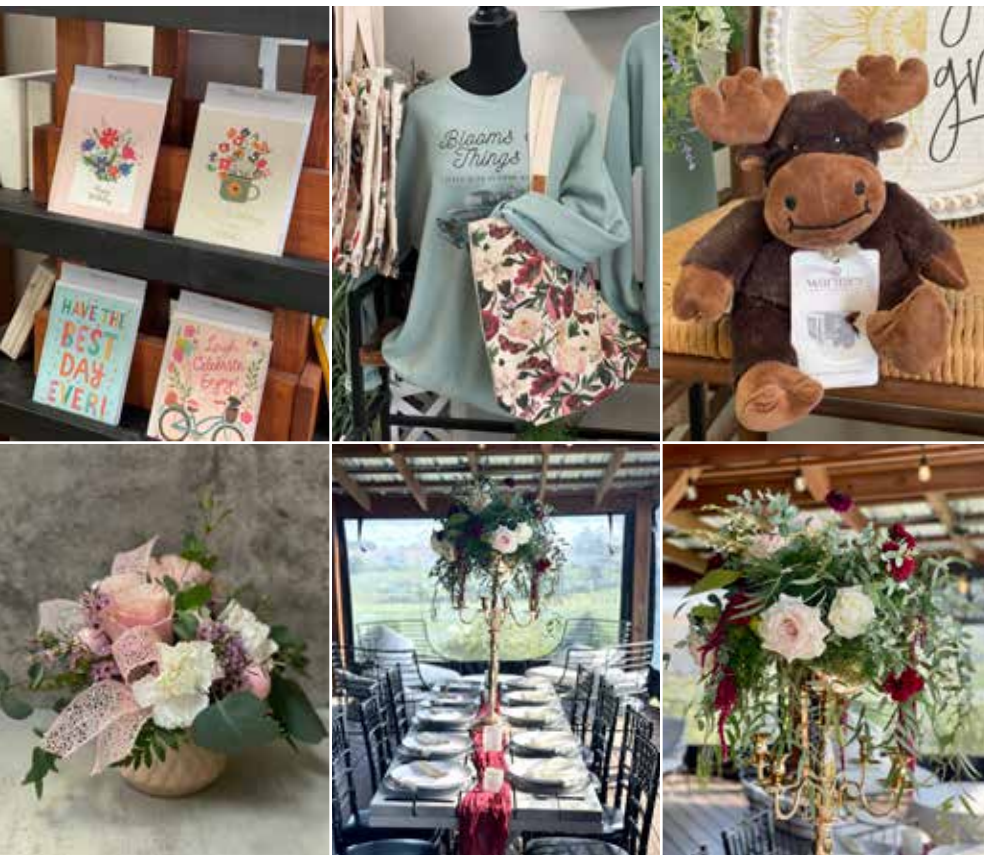


my passions and experience in the wedding industry, plus it allows us to be even more a part of the community we love.”

Benson and her husband Tom are both Albia natives and are proud to raise their two boys, Henry (5) and Barrett (6 months), in the community. The family is actively involved in the First Family Church and often hosts outdoor movie nights for neighbors, church friends and others.

Benson is also a part of the Albia Chamber Main Street board and was actively involved in helping Albia become certified as a Main Street Iowa community in 2022 – a designation awarded to only two Iowa communities each year. This initiative focuses on helping the downtown area thrive through improvements to living, beautification, and unifying retailers and spurring economic development.

“Businesses, organizations, churches and individuals work together to make our community very special. It’s why we love living and working here,” Benson explains.



Visit Blooms & Things at 8 S Main St. in Albia or online at [albiablooms.com](http://albiablooms.com).

# SHOP CO-OP LOCAL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

It's time to start this year's holiday shopping, and it's easy to be merry when you surprise a loved one with a special gift.

During the holiday season, shopping local is a festive way to support your friends and neighbors who are also business owners. Many of these small businesses are served by Iowa's electric cooperatives and share a common mission – being committed to the communities they serve.

To help your holiday gift-giving or list-making, we've combined a list of electric cooperative-served businesses that offer unique gifts to place under the Christmas tree or in a stocking. As you embark on Santa Claus duties this year, keep in mind that this list is just a sampling of local businesses. Take a walk along your community's Main Street or explore all that your local area offers for additional inspiration to shop local this holiday season!



## 300 ACRES

[www.300acres.llc](http://www.300acres.llc)

**Facebook:** 300acres

300 Acres is a local and veteran-owned business in Ocheyedan (located on Business Corner near May City). They focus on supplying the highest-quality products, which include LED lights, shovels, coffee, coolers, custom decals, signs and much more.



## ADVANTAGE APPAREL

[www.advapparel.com](http://www.advapparel.com)

**Facebook:** advapparel2019

Advantage Apparel is a local small town, family-owned, one-stop apparel shop in Albia. They pride themselves on quick turnarounds, with quality service guaranteed on business, school and sports logos, stadium chairs, uniforms, sportswear and other items.



## BLOOMS & THINGS

[www.albiablooms.com](http://www.albiablooms.com)

**Facebook:** albiablooms

The shop offers arrangements for every special occasion. It also has green plants, silk flowers and small gift items such as candles, soaps and journals. Orders can be delivered throughout Albia and surrounding communities within a 20-minute radius.





## BOUILLON FLOWER & GARDEN

[www.bouillonflower.org](http://www.bouillonflower.org)

**Facebook:** [BouillonFlowerGarden](#)

Bouillon Flower & Garden in Greene is a one-stop-shop for flower-related needs. They boast an impressive selection of flowers and arrangements for everyone's taste! From home décor options to bouquets for special occasions – there's always a reason to invest in a beautiful arrangement.



## BRITCHES 'N' BOWS COUNTRY STORE & BOUTIQUE

**Facebook:** [shopbnb](#)

Gift and décor shop in Panora offering modern farmhouse décor, boutique-style clothing and trendy accessories.



## CORNCRIB DESIGNS

[www.corncribdesigns.com](http://www.corncribdesigns.com)

**Facebook:** [corncribdesigns](#)

A trending shop filled with farmhouse vibes, traditional and seasonal home décor, apparel, and vintage and repurposed finds. The business features a mobile trailer, which offers pop-up shopping around rural Iowa. Corncrib Designs strives to inspire patrons to transform your home into a place you love.



## FOREST MILLS QUILT SHOP

[www.forestmillsquilts.com](http://www.forestmillsquilts.com)

**Facebook:** [forestmillsquiltshop](#)

This unique quilt shop is located just south of the beautiful Yellow River outside of Postville on the family's Century Farm. They carry material, quilt kits, quilts for sale and host events.



## GRAND VIEW BEEF

[www.grandviewbeef.com](http://www.grandviewbeef.com)

**Facebook:** [GrandViewBeef](#)

For more than 100 years, the Severson family has been farming in Clarion and calling Grand View Farm and Ranch home. Now, people across the nation can enjoy their products. Send or receive a box of this family-raised, 100% grass-fed beef. The meat is shipped on Monday in a compostable cooler with dry ice and arrives within two days.



## J&J CANDLES

[www.jjcandlesmanson.com](http://www.jjcandlesmanson.com)

**Facebook:** [jjcandlesmanson](#)

J&J Candles is a family-owned business that has been offering handcrafted, scented products for more than 25 years. They feature nearly 200 scents. In addition to individual sales, they offer wholesale pricing with minimum orders and do fundraisers. All the scented products are made at its facility south of Manson.



## MOLLY'S

**Facebook:** [mollyscountrystore](#)

Molly's in Audubon is an old barn turned retail store with home décor, clothing and more!



## PROMISELAND WINERY

[www.Promiselandwinery.com](http://www.Promiselandwinery.com)

**Facebook:** [promiselandwinery](#)

Located on the southern hills of Guttenberg along the Great River Road, this winery offers a full experience of tasty wines, food, six boutiques for shopping and beautiful views!



## RECREATION UNLIMITED

[www.recreationunlimited.net](http://www.recreationunlimited.net)

**Facebook:** [recreationunlimited04](#)

A family-owned and operated business in Traer offering top-notch outdoor equipment and accessories, including Green Mountain Grills.



## THE RED SHED

**Hwy. 63, Bloomfield**

The Red Shed has a wide variety of gifts, handmade chocolate and Amish-made items.



## RHONDA'S COUNTRY RETREAT

**Facebook:** [rhondascountryretreat](#)

Rhonda's Country Retreat was founded in October 2020. This home-based specialty shop offers Iowa-made home décor, jewelry, soy candles, Iowa wines and more. All available products can be purchased at her farm store or online.



## SHELBBIE DEBOLT DESIGNS

[www.etsy.com/shop/ShelbieDeBoltDesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/ShelbieDeBoltDesigns)

**Facebook:** [shelbiedeboltdesigns1](#)

Operating via an Etsy shop, Shelbie Ehlers makes custom clothing, including holiday and everyday items.



## SWEET HONEYMOON WINERY

[www.sweethoneymoonwinery.com](http://www.sweethoneymoonwinery.com)

**Facebook:** [sweethoneymoonwinery](#)

Sweet Honeymoon Winery is a craft winery in Calhoun County making quality wines (including dry wines) in small batches from imported grape juice from all around the world.

Because of this approach, the business offers varietals not normally available to wineries in our northern climate.

They also make an award-winning Mead (honey wine).

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



To find more local businesses in your area, check with your local chamber of commerce or electric cooperative. Happy shopping!



SPECTACULAR  
SLOW COOKER  
RECIPES

## SLOW COOKER MAID-RITES

- 3 pounds hamburger
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 can chicken gumbo soup
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 teaspoons dry mustard

Cook meat and drain. Dissolve bouillon in hot water. Add remaining ingredients and place in slow cooker for 4 hours.

**Karen Caldwell • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative**

## PEACHY KEEN SWEET POTATOES

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes
- 1 cup peach pie filling
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Put all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on low for 5-7 hours.

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

## SLOW COOKER PORK CUTLETS

- 1 can beef stock
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 package brown gravy mix
- 1 package onion soup mix
- 2 pounds pork cutlets
- ½ pound mushrooms
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- mashed potatoes

Pour beef stock, cream of mushroom soup, gravy mix and onion soup mix in slow cooker and stir together. Season cutlets with salt and pepper. Add to slow cooker and top with mushrooms. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Serve over mashed potatoes. *Serves 4-6*

**Tiana Stroman • Merrill  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SLOW COOKER APPLE CRISP

- 2 cans apple pie filling
- 1 package butter pecan cake mix
- ½ stick butter, sliced

In the order listed, layer ingredients in slow cooker. Don't stir. Cook on high for 2 hours.

**Cindy Pottebaum • Alton  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**



## CREAM CHEESE CHICKEN

- ½ cup butter
- 1 7-ounce envelope Italian dressing mix
- 2 pounds boneless chicken breasts
- 1 10.75-ounce can cream of chicken soup
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese  
mashed potatoes, rice or noodles

Melt butter in bottom of slow cooker on high. Stir in Italian dressing mix until well mixed. Cut chicken into 1-inch strips. Place chicken in slow cooker and stir to coat with butter and dressing mix. Cook covered on high for 2 hours.

Remove chicken and set aside. Add soup and cream cheese to liquid in slow cooker. Stir to melt until smooth and creamy. Add chicken back to slow cooker and turn to low until ready to serve.

Serve over mashed potatoes, rice or hot buttered noodles. Can be frozen for a great make-ahead meal. *Serves 6*

**Regina V. Lloyd • Linden**

**Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## SLOW COOKER PIZZA-LASAGNA

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 98-ounce package mini lasagna noodles
- 1 package pepperoni
- 1 28-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- ¾ cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 10 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, grated

Cook beef and onion until meat is browned, drain. Cook noodles until almost tender (you can substitute with rotini). Combine all ingredients except Mozzarella cheese in layers in slow cooker. Sprinkle Mozzarella cheese over top. Bake on low for 5-7 hours, or on high for 2 hours.

**Larae Van Wyhe • Lester**  
**Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## ITALIAN ROUND STEAK

- 2 pounds round steak  
salt and pepper
- 3 cans Italian diced tomatoes
- 2 cans French-style green beans  
onion, to taste, sliced

Cut steak into serving-sized pieces, season with salt and pepper. Place all ingredients in slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 7 hours. *Serves 4-5*

**Gladys Willey • Yale**

**Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## APPLE STREUSEL DESSERT

- 6 cups apples, sliced
- 1¼ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¾ cup milk
- 5 tablespoons butter, divided
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1½ cups Bisquick baking mix, divided
- ½ cup brown sugar  
ice cream or cream

Toss apples with spices. Place apples in greased slow cooker. In a bowl, combine milk, 2 tablespoons butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and ½ cup baking mix. Pour over apples. Combine 1 cup baking mix, brown sugar and 3 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle over apples. Cover and cook on low for 6-7 hours. Serve with ice cream or cream.

**Sue Cook • Deep River**  
**T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative**

**WANTED:**

## SHEET PAN MEALS

**THE REWARD:**

**\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!**

**Deadline is Nov. 30**

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](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

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

**MAIL:** Recipes

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# ENERGY-SAVING GADGETS & GIZMOS

BY PAUL WESSLUND

With the holidays approaching, shoppers will soon be eying an abundance of devices and gadgets to gift friends and loved ones – or to buy for themselves.

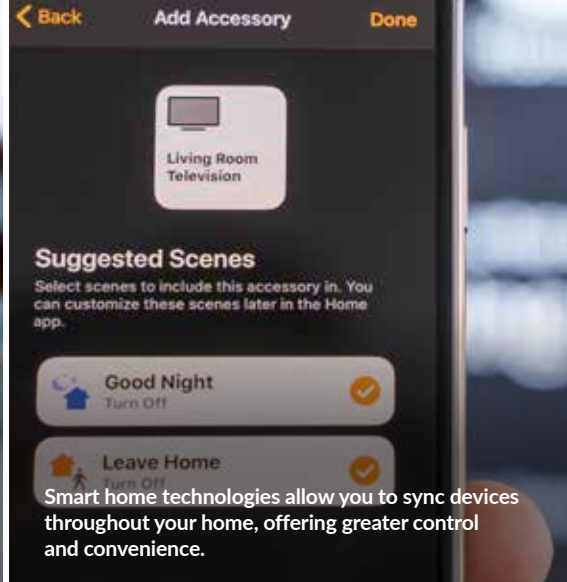
Many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including one often-overlooked perk: energy savings. With so many options available, choosing the best tech for your needs can be overwhelming.

**The following four tips can help you determine the right smart home technologies for your home.**





When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience and other benefits, including energy savings.



Smart home technologies allow you to sync devices throughout your home, offering greater control and convenience.



Smart thermostats offer convenience and achievable energy savings.  
Photo Source: Ecobee

## 1 ASK YOURSELF HOW SMART YOU WANT YOUR HOME TO BE.

Smart plugs, energy-use apps and home monitors are cool devices that can help you save energy. But it helps to understand how they work to make the most of them. Before you invest your time and money, ask yourself, how much technology do you want? What are your habits when setting up and using the latest development? If you like to tinker, an energy app on your phone could be fun and help you save money. But as electronics get smarter, even non-tech-savvy people find them easier to use.

## 2 GET THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK.

The most frequently recommended energy-saving device is a smart thermostat. And that makes sense because the thermostat controls your heating and cooling, which account for the most energy consumption in your home. Smart thermostats can program an energy schedule to adjust the heating or cooling when you're sleeping or out of the house during the day. Additional smart thermostat features include detecting movement in a room to adjust energy use, learning your daily habits, responding to voice commands and tracking the weather.

Renters might even be able to convince a landlord to pay for an energy-saving smart thermostat.

If you have a heat pump, contact your electric co-op before using a smart thermostat. Lowering the temperature too much when you're not home could result in switching to more expensive auxiliary heat to bring the house back to room temperature.

Other devices that can produce energy savings for minimal cost and effort include smart light bulbs, outlets and charging stations.

## 3 DETERMINE YOUR ENERGY-SAVING GOALS.

A home energy monitor is one way to save on electricity, and the range of choices means you'll need to ask how much you're willing to pay and if it's worthwhile. One study found that spending about \$1,800 on a full home, commercially installed energy monitor could save about 16% on electric bills and pay for itself in 10-15 years. Much less ambitious approaches involve downloading an app on your phone to keep track of your electricity use and even turning smart appliances on and off when you're away.

## 4 DO A SIMPLE ENERGY CHECKUP.

Take a walk through your home with the intention of identifying everything that uses electricity. You'll likely notice a lot of functions that could be managed with smart devices. If your phone sits plugged in long after it's charged, smart power strips and smart outlets can stop the electricity use when the battery is at 100%. Smart

light bulbs can be controlled with an app on your phone, saving energy and giving your home that lived-in look when you're away. Ceiling fans can now adjust themselves for the best air flow, depending on the temperature. Motion detectors can turn indoor lights on and off when you enter or leave a room; even solar-powered outdoor lights can detect when you're approaching and light the way.

With just a little planning, you can make sure this gift-giving season is merry, bright – and smart.

*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*



Smart lights allow you to manage home lighting from anywhere, anytime.

# POWER WITH A PURPOSE

*A conversation with Joe Wilkinson, Associated Electric Cooperative's chief member relations officer*

For 25 years, Joe Wilkinson has worked for cooperative members at Associated Electric Cooperative, the power generation cooperative for electric cooperatives in Missouri and parts of Iowa and Oklahoma. Recently, he sat down for a wide-ranging conversation that touched on his member-focused role, the state of electric reliability and the enduring wisdom of the cooperative business model.

**Q: What is your role in the cooperative system?**

**Wilkinson:** The role of my team is twofold. First, we communicate with all of our different audiences about Associated and its activities. Providing that information is key to developing an understanding among member systems, business partners, the news media and others about what we do and why. The second aspect is offering programs, services and products to our system cooperatives that help them to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively.

To that point, a big part of my job is being out with our cooperatives, understanding their needs, challenges and goals for the future. Because of that, I can bring issues back to Associated so that the voice of our member systems is heard as decisions are made. That listening function also is important so I can understand how our team can best help cooperatives meet their challenges and goals with specific services and deliverables that will, hopefully, make their jobs a bit easier.

**Q: A cooperative is unique from other business types. How do you explain that difference?**

**Wilkinson:** The biggest distinguishing factor for cooperatives is that we are owned by those we serve. The people who ultimately receive the electricity we generate, the members at the end of the line, own their cooperatives. And that holds true throughout our three-tiered system: Associated is owned by its six transmission cooperative member-owners, who in turn are owned by their member distribution cooperatives and those distribution cooperatives are owned by their members at the end of the line.

At each tier, their boards of directors are democratically elected. It's a very pure form of ownership. Unlike an investor-owned company that may have to decide between keeping rates stable or raising them to increase returns for shareholders, a co-op doesn't have that conflict of interest. In the co-op model, the shareholders and people using the service are one and the same: the member. As Associated makes recommendations about power generation and rates, for example, the board members evaluating that information and making decisions are also cooperative members and owners.

**Q: Can you cite an example where Associated's cooperative business model really benefits its members?**

**Wilkinson:** Looking at our generation portfolio, the Associated board has invested in a balanced mix of sources for decades. That started at the beginning with hydropower, then coal power plants were added, followed by natural gas and, more recently, significant wind power. They made the decision not to put all the eggs in one basket but use a mix of resources that have different operating characteristics. Even with pressure to retire fossil







## GIVE TO RECare

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) established RECare, a program that facilitates members helping other members. RECare provides funds to local community action agencies who then distribute assistance to low-income CVEC members. Your support helps pay winter heating bills and assists in home weatherization.

As a member of CVEC, you can make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge to help your neighbors in need. If you choose to make a monthly pledge, it will be automatically added to your electric bill.

If you are interested in donating, please complete and return this form to our office. Any amount you give is greatly appreciated! Please note, your contributions are also tax deductible.



Please complete this form if you wish to participate in RECare. Simply detach the completed form and send directly to CVEC at P.O. Box 486 Albia, IA 52531, or include it with your next payment.

### YES **I care and want to contribute**

- I will make a one-time contribution to RECare. My check is enclosed.
- I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to RECare. I understand this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill. You may discontinue your pledge at any time by simply contacting our office at 641-932-7126 or P.O. Box 486 Albia, IA 52531.

CVEC Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

fuel plants and replace them with renewables, the board has listened to the member systems, making reliability and generation balance a priority.

We are not following the crowd. Another key board decision has been to remain independent of regional transmission organizations (RTOs) that manage the electric grid for member utilities in a geographic area. By keeping independent, we can buy, sell and transmit power with multiple RTOs, so that has been advantageous both for reliability and for the economic benefit of the system.

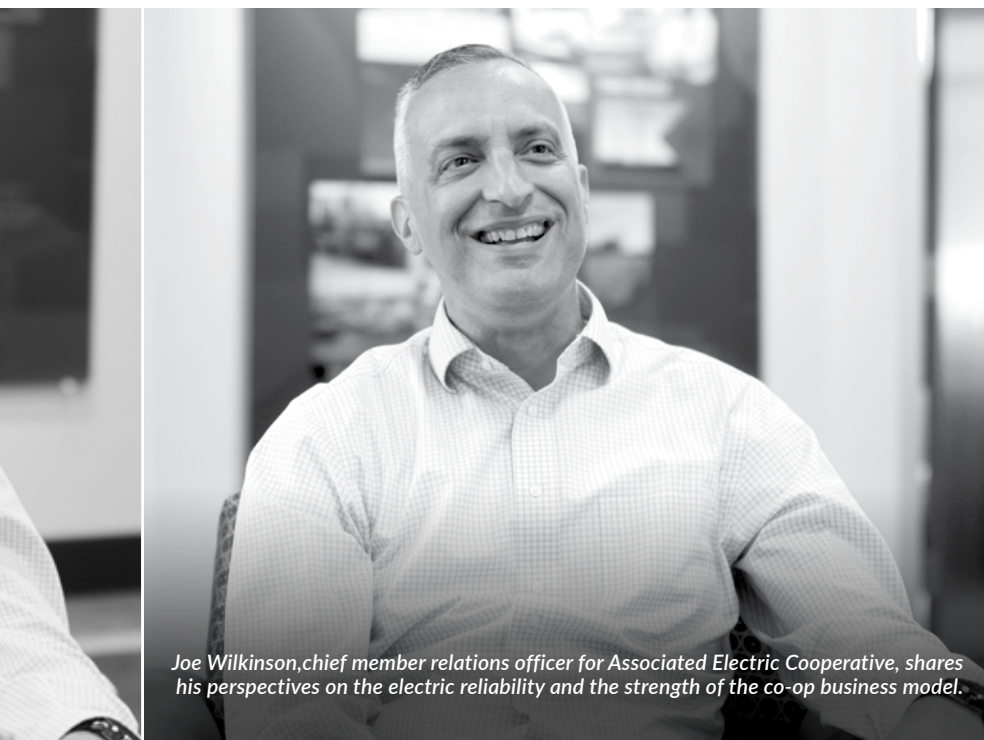
That independence really paid off during Winter Storms Uri in 2021 and Elliott in 2022. We set all-time system peaks in both of those weather events. Repeatedly, while many around us resorted to rolling blackouts, Associated kept the lights on – and that’s what members expect. Our reliability track record stems from our balanced generation portfolio and our independence to manage our generating assets to maximize reliability for members.

### **Q:** How does the future look for rural energy reliability?

**Wilkinson:** Associated and its member-owners are well-positioned. A recent

forecast by the government agency responsible for the country’s electric grid reliability showed about two-thirds of the nation with an elevated or even high risk for reliability problems. But if you look at the map that visualizes that forecast, the middle of the country where Associated serves is clear. That doesn’t mean we can never experience reliability problems. But it does mean the cooperative business model and member-ownership works well for the people we serve.

The major challenge to reliability for us is a regulatory environment that does not prioritize reliability but caters to a host of other agendas. We prioritize reliability and are working to maintain it, which has often felt like a fish swimming upstream. Although we were one of the first to speak out on the issue, many other utilities, trade organizations, political representatives and others now advocate for making reliability a key part of policymaking. We are hopeful the education process is opening eyes to the problem of transitioning too quickly to a future dependent on intermittent, renewable generation at the expense of reliable electricity. Our people and economies depend on reliable power.



*Joe Wilkinson, chief member relations officer for Associated Electric Cooperative, shares his perspectives on the electric reliability and the strength of the co-op business model.*

# IOWA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CONNECT WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

More than 25 representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives traveled to the nation's capital in September to advocate for their co-op members. While in Washington, D.C., the group attended high-level briefings on key issues impacting the electric industry and met with all six members of Iowa's Congressional Delegation to discuss priorities and concerns.

Advocates shared concerns that could impact electric cooperatives' ability to provide reliable and affordable power, including federal Environmental Protection Agency mandates that may force electric generation plants to shut down prematurely. Additionally, co-op representatives talked about continued supply chain challenges and how they impact day-to-day operations.

Co-op advocates also asked their senators and representatives to support permitting reforms to the National Environmental Policy Act to avoid costly delays in the permitting process. The group urged the Iowa Congressional Delegation to authorize an increase in funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant program as part of the Farm Bill reauthorization to support our rural Iowa communities.

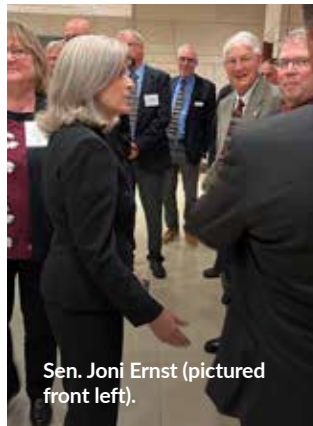
Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster funding was also a concern, as the electric co-op group asked the Iowa Delegation to support supplemental funding for the Disaster Relief Fund to ensure that support is available should a natural disaster strike Iowa.

We appreciate the service of Iowa's elected officials and the tireless work of their staff who help look out for Iowans in the Halls of Congress.

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



Rep. Zach Nunn (pictured in the center).



Sen. Joni Ernst (pictured front left).



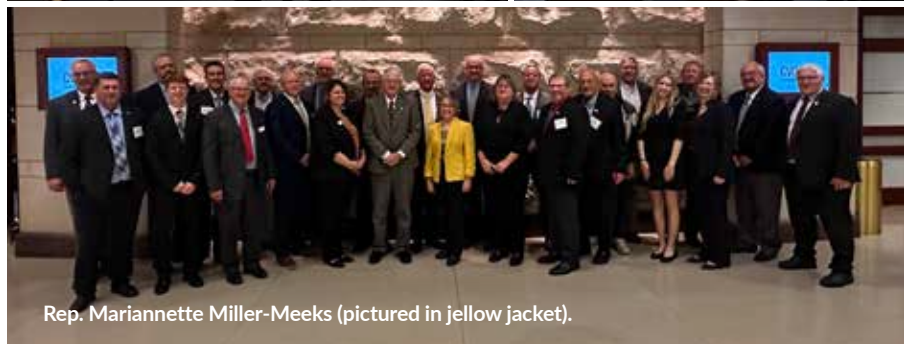
Rep. Ashley Hinson (pictured in red jacket).



Sen. Charles Grassley.



Rep. Randy Feenstra (pictured at the front of the room).



Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (pictured in yellow jacket).



# KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When I was growing up, some of the most popular toys had their own cartoon shows. This included G.I. Joe, who also narrated public service announcements (PSA).

These PSAs addressed something dangerous kids did unintentionally – such as running out into traffic. After the kids learned the right way to do things, each message ended the same: “Now you know. And knowing is half the battle.”

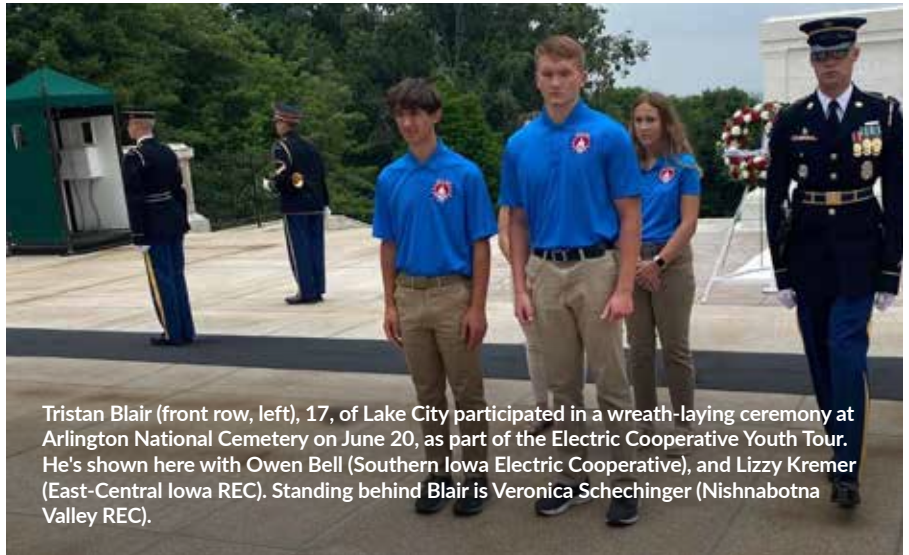
Fast forward to today. I’m concerned we’re letting young people wander down a dangerous road when we fail to teach them history, including the significance of Veterans Day each Nov. 11.

Its roots trace back to World War I. Fighting ceased when an armistice between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – Nov. 11, 1918. By 1919, the date became known as Armistice Day, although Congress renamed it Veterans Day in 1954. Veterans Day continues to honor American veterans of all wars for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

## What are we teaching youth?

What’s the state of affairs as we approach Veterans Day in 2023? A recent Morning Consult poll found that only 16% of Gen Z (people born between 1997-2012) are proud to live in the U.S. Every U.S. military branch is struggling to meet its recruiting goals. Volunteering, in general, is also suffering.

A report released in January 2023 by AmeriCorps and the U.S. Census Bureau shows that less than one-quarter of Americans age 16 and older volunteered from September 2020 to September 2021. That’s down from 30% in 2019. Annual hours donated by volunteers has plunged during the



Tristan Blair (front row, left), 17, of Lake City participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery on June 20, as part of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. He's shown here with Owen Bell (Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative), and Lizzy Kremer (East-Central Iowa REC). Standing behind Blair is Veronica Schechinger (Nishnabotna Valley REC).

past two decades, sinking from 52 hours in 2002 to 25 hours today.

I think these disturbing trends are connected to “knowing is half the battle.” What are we teaching young people about the importance of volunteering and serving others? Do we invite our kids and grandkids to place flowers and American flags by the graves of veterans? Do we encourage students to learn about the sacrifices our armed forces have made to protect our freedom?

## Youth Tour offers new perspectives

I’m grateful the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sponsored by many of Iowa’s electric cooperatives, offers students the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. This trip is dedicated to learning about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, while giving students a greater understanding of their role as American citizens.

This year’s Youth Tour participant from my rural electric co-op (Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association) was Tristan Blair (17) of Lake City. At Arlington National Cemetery, Blair escorted fellow students who laid the wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“I felt instant sympathy for anyone who lost a loved one in combat,” says Blair, whose thoughts also turned to his family members who’ve served.

These family members include Dennis Moulds (great-grandpa), Bill Marine (grandpa), Steve and Sheri Nockles (grandpa and grandma), Adam Nockles (uncle), Cara (Blair) Hove, and Kolby Blair (cousin). Some served in the Army, while others joined the Air Force. They included a tank mechanic in South Korea, a signal corps communication specialist and more.

“Thank you so much for asking me to get this information,” Blair told me. “I had no idea about some of that stuff.”

Knowing is half the battle. Once you plant the seeds of knowledge, good things follow.

“Thank you to all the veterans and current soldiers,” Blair added. “I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this without the sacrifices you made for my generation and the whole country.”

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family’s Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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