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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Defined electric service
areas protect rural Iowans

CVEC awards
Operation Round Up grants

Holiday party recipes

Congratulations to our National Co-op Month winner ▶ See Page 5

CONTENTS



VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 12

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Defined electric service areas protect Iowans

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a temperature-controlled smart mug

14

ENERGY MATTERS

Smart insights about smart appliances

15

OUT BACK

'Tis the season for traditions

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Allen Hollopeter, a T.I.P. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

DEFINED ELECTRIC SERVICE AREAS PROTECT RURAL IOWANS

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we are constantly monitoring issues that could impact the people and rural communities served by Iowa's electric cooperatives. Our state's 2025 Legislative Session will begin on Jan. 13, and IAEC will prioritize efforts to ensure Iowa's law regarding defined service areas is not undermined. I'd like to explain why this law has been so crucial to our mission to serve co-op member-consumers.

What are defined service areas?

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve you. This regulatory protection is called defined electric service territory, and the State of Iowa wrote Senate File 1258 into law almost 50 years ago to efficiently ensure that every square foot of our state has an electric utility obligated to provide service upon request.

Why do Iowa's electric cooperatives support defined service areas?

Electric co-ops are committed to safeguarding defined service areas because they protect rural Iowans by supporting affordable electric rates, fostering a resilient electric grid and encouraging economic development.

Defined service areas provide a high degree of certainty to Iowa's electric cooperatives, which allows us to confidently make long-term investments in power generation to maintain affordable rates, finance major grid upgrades to ensure resiliency and utilize new technologies to enhance service. Electric co-ops can also be proactive in maintenance and vegetation management to

improve reliability for the homes, farms and businesses we serve every day. Additionally, defined service areas allow electric co-ops to robustly support economic development efforts in the communities we serve, which retain and create local jobs and provide needed services and tax revenue.

Any efforts to remove or weaken Iowa's defined service areas could result in higher electric bills and decreased reliability for Iowans. This issue is non-negotiable for Iowa's not-for-profit electric cooperatives, which are mission-driven to power lives and empower communities by providing electricity that is safe, reliable and affordable.

Since the 1990s, several states have deregulated their electric utilities, but the hopes that competition would result in lower rates and improved

Scan the QR code to learn more about why defined electric service territories are important to rural Iowans.



reliability have not materialized. In fact, according to a 2023 *New York Times* investigation, "Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced." The report goes on to conclude that "On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity..." This outcome is unacceptable for the Iowans we serve.

We invite you to learn more about this issue at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com where you will also find links to research and studies on deregulation. Your locally owned electric cooperatives are working hard to safeguard defined service area protections that have benefited Iowans since 1976.

Leslie Kaufman is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A TEMPERATURE-CONTROLLED SMART MUG!

Discover a smarter way to drink coffee! Experience the comfort of consistently hot coffee (or tea) at your chosen temperature. The Ember Mug 2 offers up to 80 minutes of heat (120 to 145 degrees F) or all-day warmth on its charging coaster. Ideal for keeping drinks at the perfect temperature, the mug wakes up when hot liquid is poured and goes to sleep based on motion detection. Features like auto sleep and memory ensure your drink is always at the right temperature.



ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Dec. 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 \$100 gift card to a local business from the October issue was **Daryl Geiken**, a **Grundy County REC** member-consumer.

REFLECTING ON OUR COOPERATIVE VALUES

BY TROY AMOSS



As we wrap up another year, it's a great time to reflect on what makes Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC)

unique – and how being a part of a cooperative truly sets us apart from other utility providers. At the heart of our cooperative model is a simple yet powerful idea: we are owned by you, our members. Unlike investor-owned utilities, which are driven by profits and shareholders, CVEC exists solely to serve the needs of our member-owners. This difference shapes everything we do, from how we set rates to how we invest in the communities we serve.

Financial benefits for members

One of the clearest benefits of being a cooperative member is the financial advantage. As a member, you're not just a customer – you have an ownership stake in the cooperative. This means that when the cooperative does well, you benefit directly. Over the years, we've returned more than \$4 million in

capital credits back to our members, a reward for your ongoing partnership in helping us operate efficiently.

Supporting our communities

But the value goes beyond financial returns. As a cooperative, we're also guided by the principle of "Concern for Community" – which means we actively work to improve the quality of life in the areas we serve. Whether through programs like Operation Round Up®, which channels member contributions into grants for local nonprofits, or supporting youth programs, schools and community projects, CVEC is committed to being more than just your power provider. We strive to be a positive force in our communities.

Every member has a voice

Another defining feature of cooperatives is our emphasis on democratic control. Every member has a voice, and every vote counts equally, no matter how much energy you use. Each year at our annual meeting, members elect the board of directors – local members just like

you – who represent your interests and help guide the cooperative's future.

As we look forward to 2025, I'm proud to say that CVEC will continue to put members first by prioritizing reliability, innovation and community. We'll continue to invest in the infrastructure that keeps your power flowing, while also exploring new technologies that can keep costs affordable and prepare us for the future.

I want to thank you, our members, for your continued support. The cooperative difference lies in the strength of our members. It's your involvement and engagement that makes everything we do possible. Together, we will continue to build a strong, vibrant cooperative – one that benefits all of us.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a bright new year!

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



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OFFICE CLOSINGS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

As we celebrate the holiday season, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative will be closed on the following days.

Dec. 24-25
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Jan. 1
New Year's Day

Even though our office will be closed, we're still here for you! If you have any billing or account questions, want to make a payment or need to report a service outage, call us at 641-932-7126 – our team is always ready to assist.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CO-OP MONTH CONTEST WINNER

As we wrapped up this year's celebration of National Co-op Month, we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our members who participated in our Co-op Month contest! Throughout October, we encouraged you to share your thoughts and experiences with Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC), and your enthusiasm truly made this initiative special.

A chance to win

From Oct. 1-31, members had the opportunity to submit a note – be it a question, concern or a message of appreciation – to be entered into a drawing for a Meco Electric Grill. We were thrilled to see so many of you take part and share your voice with us, reinforcing the cooperative spirit that defines CVEC.

Some of the verbatim comments we received included:

- We have been members of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative for 35 years. We appreciate the prompt attention to power outages and enjoyed the annual meeting/meal that you provided this year for the first time. It definitely won't be the last [we attend]. It was nice to see

the faces of the operation and experience the kindness. I was a little nervous but was quickly put to ease. Thanks Chariton Valley REC!

- Appreciate capital credits paid out. Also, that board of directors are chosen from members of the cooperative.
- Great job you all do to keep our lights on and how you are helping with the hurricane relief in our southern states. We enjoy getting the Iowa electric co-op magazine, wonderful way to keep the communities you serve up to date on your news. Thanks again!
- I love that you give back the extra [margins] to members!
- When the lights go out, we know you will be here soon! Thank you for your service.

These notes truly reflect the sense of community we strive to foster.

This year's winner

We are excited to announce that the winner of the Meco Electric Grill was Tim Lockard (pictured) from Russell! We hope this grill brings you countless delicious meals and joyful gatherings with family and friends.

Thank you for participating

Your input is invaluable to us, and this contest was a wonderful way to highlight the strong connection we share as a cooperative community. Each entry contributed to a better understanding of your needs and interests, helping us continue to enhance our services and initiatives.

We appreciate everyone who took the time to share their thoughts and engage with us during National Co-op Month – your voice truly matters.

As we look ahead to the coming months, stay tuned for more opportunities to connect, engage and celebrate the cooperative spirit that makes CVEC a unique and cherished part of the communities we serve.



CVEC CELEBRATES COMMUNITY AT TRICK OR TREAT THROUGH THE DISTRICT

On Oct. 25, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative joined in the Halloween fun at Albia Chamber Main Street's Trick or Treat through the District! Our team, along with the ever-popular LED Lucy and Bolt the Bucket Truck, were there to greet all the little ghosts, goblins, superheroes and more – handing out candy and sharing plenty of smiles.

As a cooperative, we're guided by our commitment to the community. Events like this are a perfect way for us to give back and stay connected with the families we serve. Being there for our members – whether it's through reliable service or spreading a little Halloween cheer – is at the heart of what we do.





G&Ts ARE THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Photo Source: Corn Belt Power Cooperative

You might be surprised to learn that your local electric cooperative doesn't generate the electricity you use in your home or business. In most cases, your co-op does not own a power plant but instead purchases electricity from an outside source and then routes the power to your community.

For more than 800 electric cooperatives across the country, the source of electricity is a different kind of cooperative. Referred to as G&Ts, these generation and transmission cooperatives exist to help electric co-ops serve their members as reliably and affordably as possible. Their only members are local electric co-ops, so G&Ts are actually cooperatives that serve – you guessed it – cooperatives.

Providing at-cost power

Across the nation, 64 G&T cooperatives provide access to wholesale (at-cost) power at a better

price than each of their member co-ops could obtain on their own. Most G&Ts go beyond the delivery of power to provide sophisticated business resources that would typically be out of reach for local co-ops.

Like your local co-op, G&Ts are not-for-profit organizations that exist to serve the needs of their members. G&Ts generally serve all the co-ops in a specific geographic area.

In Iowa, electric co-ops are members of various G&T cooperatives (see map, top of Page 7). These G&Ts generate electricity at multiple sites using a diverse mix of fuels such as coal, natural gas, wind, solar, hydro and landfill gas.

G&Ts employ a leadership team of experts in data, finance, engineering, economic development, environmental management and other important specialties essential

for electric co-ops. The G&T operates behind the scenes to support the local co-op's teams, and although G&Ts may be largely unseen, they operate with complete transparency.

G&Ts are best known as the source for at-cost electricity that is generated elsewhere, then delivered to your local co-op over high-voltage transmission lines. Your co-op uses distribution power lines and transformers to then deliver that electricity to your home or business.

Most G&Ts maintain their own power plants, while others purchase power for their members on the wholesale market. Some G&Ts manage a combination of native power generation and purchases. Because a G&T buys enough power to supply all its member co-ops, it has the bargaining power to secure significantly lower prices than those co-ops could negotiate by themselves. Regardless of how

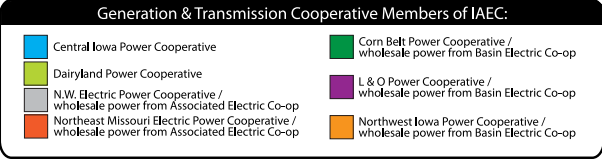
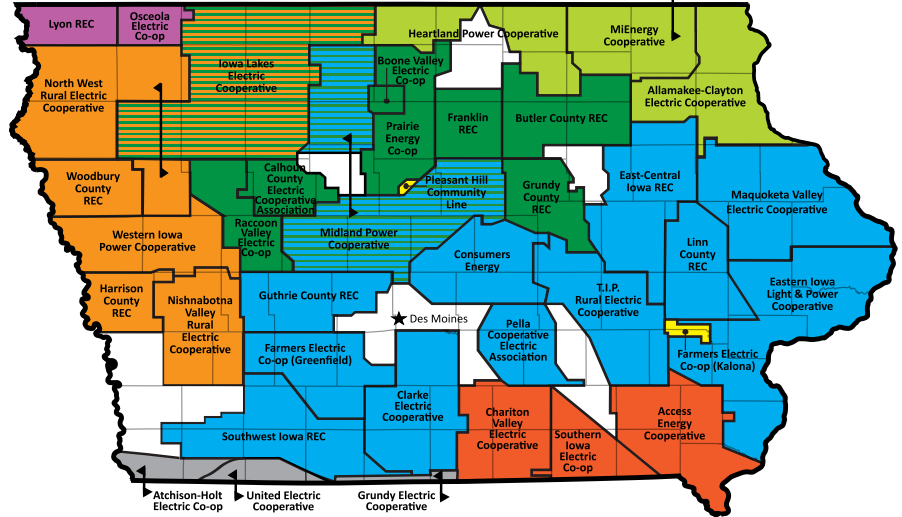
they're structured, G&Ts help keep your electric bill smaller.

Energy reliability is paramount

Just as important is the work G&Ts perform in planning. The nation's energy landscape is changing rapidly. G&Ts constantly work with local co-op staff to study and forecast power needs. They consider how growing communities might affect the demand for electricity in the future and work closely with local co-ops when power reliability is challenged, such as times when electricity demand outpaces supply or after a major weather event.

In addition to obtaining the electricity local co-ops need, G&Ts improve and maintain the reliability of the infrastructure co-ops and their communities depend upon. By working with local co-op staff to upgrade transmission lines and deploy substations, they make sure the power will be there for members like you when you need it. G&Ts also work closely with government agencies that monitor and manage the nation's electric grid.

Electric Distribution Cooperative Members of IAEC:



So, while your co-op may not own the power plant that generates the electricity you use every day, it's part of an even bigger not-for-profit cooperative whose mission is to make your service even more reliable and

affordable. As the power behind your power, just like your electric co-op, G&T cooperatives exist to serve you.

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



G&Ts employ a leadership team of experts across many career fields. Photo Sources: Central Iowa Power Cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.

Holiday

PARTY
RECIPES



WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE

- 3 cups half and half, divided
- $\frac{3}{8}$ cup white chocolate chips
- 1 3-inch cinnamon stick
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- whipped cream, for garnish
- cinnamon, for garnish

Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup half and half, white chocolate chips, cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Stir over low heat until chips are melted. Discard cinnamon, add remaining half and half and stir until hot. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour into three or four mugs and garnish each with whipped cream and cinnamon.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

EASY PARTY CHEESECAKE

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 can Eagle brand milk (sweetened condensed milk)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 9-inch graham cracker crust

Mix cream cheese and milk until smooth. Add lemon juice and vanilla. Mix, then pour into the graham cracker crust. Refrigerate 2 hours or overnight. *Serves 8*

Kary Blunk • Russell
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

BAKED PARMESAN CRISPS

- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- optional toppings: garlic powder, paprika

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put heaping teaspoons of Parmesan cheese on paper, spreading them to make neat circles about 2 inches in diameter. Sprinkle with optional toppings to taste. Bake at 400 degrees F for 5 minutes. Remove and let cool. The cheese makes a lacey disc, almost like a snowflake. Best served the day you make them. *Serves 12*

Patsy Vander Schaaf • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

CARAMEL MACCHIATO

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup instant coffee
- hot water
- 5 ounces caramel sauce
- 3 ounces vanilla syrup
- $6\frac{1}{4}$ cups milk
- whipped topping
- caramel drizzle

Dissolve coffee in a little bit of hot water. Meanwhile, froth caramel sauce, vanilla syrup and milk in a saucepan. Heat to 150 degrees F. Combine coffee with frothed ingredients. Serve with whipped topping and caramel drizzle. *Serves 6-8*

Clark DeSmet • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

HOLIDAY SPREAD

- 1 package raw cranberries, chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1-2 jalapeños, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 package cream cheese crackers or chips

Combine cranberries, cilantro, onions, jalapenos, sugar, cumin and lemon juice. Refrigerate overnight or at least 4 hours. Spread cream cheese on a tray or plate and cover with cranberry mixture. Serve with crackers or chips.

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SPINACH TORTILLA ROLL-UPS

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 large spinach burrito tortillas
- ¾ cup raisins
- 3 tablespoons chives or green onions, chopped
- 12 ounces deli turkey slices
- 8 ounces Havarti cheese
- romaine lettuce, ribs removed

Spread cream cheese on tortillas. Layer remaining ingredients in the order listed, avoiding spreading layers all the way to the top as they will slide when you roll them. Roll tightly from bottom to top. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight or several hours. Cut into 1-inch slices and serve on plate or platter. These can also be made with deli ham and Swiss cheese. *Serves 10-12*

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SALMON LOG

- 1 16-ounce can salmon
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated
- 1 teaspoon horseradish
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon liquid smoke
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- 3 tablespoons parsley, snipped
- crackers

Drain and flake salmon. Combine salmon with cream cheese, lemon juice, onion, horseradish, salt and liquid smoke. Mix well and chill for several hours. Combine pecans and parsley, set aside. Shape salmon mixture into log and roll into parsley pecan mixture. Chill well. Serve with crackers. *Serves 6-8*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CRAB-IN-A-ROUND

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 5-ounce jar Old English cheese spread
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 6-ounce can crab meat, drained
- 1 package English muffins
- canned mushrooms, chopped
- parsley flakes

Combine softened butter and cheese spread, mix well. Add seasoned salt, garlic powder and mayonnaise. Add crab meat and mix well. Split English muffins into halves, add crab mixture and top with chopped mushrooms and garnish with parsley flakes. Bake at 400 degrees F for 10-15 minutes, until golden brown and bubbly. Cut into four pie-shaped pieces and serve with a toothpick in each wedge for a quick appetizer. *Serves 24*

Karen Segriff • Brooklyn
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

RECIPES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Dec. 31

Submit your **favorite international-inspired recipes**. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



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

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POWERING LIVES EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Editor's Note: This article is Part 1 of a two-part series showcasing the impact of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout all the state's 99 counties.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to be member-owned, serving our communities with a steadfast commitment to safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable power for over 85 years.

Covering more than two-thirds of Iowa's land area, our cooperatives maintain close to 62,000 miles of power lines – enough to circle the globe two and a half times! We deliver power to nearly 240,000 households, farms and businesses, reaching approximately 650,000 Iowans across every county.

Primarily serving rural areas, we are mission-driven to enhance the quality of life for our member-owners and are guided by seven core principles that define all cooperatives.

Iowa's electric co-ops serve **80%** of Iowa's land mass and maintain enough power lines to wrap around the equator **2.5X** (That's around 62,000 miles!)



Owned and governed by the members we serve, not-for-profit electric cooperatives power the lives of

650,000 IOWANS throughout all 99 counties.



Electric cooperatives directly support almost

2,000 JOBS IN IOWA



Empowering communities

For over eight decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have made significant contributions to the local communities we serve by creating stable jobs, paying taxes, returning surplus funds to members and investing in student programs.

Iowa's electric cooperatives directly support nearly 2,000 full-time jobs, providing Iowans with steady careers, competitive wages and benefits in a dynamic industry. Many co-op employees are rooted in small-town communities where they actively participate in local events and initiatives.

Collectively, Iowa's electric cooperatives contribute almost \$29 million annually in local and state taxes. These funds support essential services, including emergency

response, road maintenance, healthcare and public schools.

Being member-owned means electric co-ops build equity for members based on individual electric use, and surplus funds are returned to them over time.

The surplus capital is returned to members over time when local boards determine it is financially feasible. To date, Iowans have received more than \$300 million in retired capital credits from their electric cooperatives.

We are also deeply invested in Iowa's future, supporting various educational and leadership development programs for students. Over the past 65 years, Iowa's cooperatives have sent more than 2,500 high school students to Washington, D.C., for the annual Youth Tour, where students gain insights into citizenship and the cooperative business model. Co-ops further support students with college scholarships and internships.

Economic engines of progress

Electric cooperatives do more than just provide power; we also invest heavily in economic development efforts throughout rural Iowa.

From 2018 to 2022, Iowa's electric cooperatives invested \$4.7 billion in economic development projects, supporting more than 7,300 jobs, both retained and created, across the state.

In that period, our cooperatives generated \$688 million in wages and salaries and produced \$232 million in self-employment income.

Iowa's cooperatives have a long history of partnership with the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development and USDA's Rural Utilities Service, proudly serving as intermediaries for revolving loan funds and other programs. Several Iowa co-ops have also developed industrial speculative buildings to foster local business growth and attract new enterprises to rural communities.

Electric cooperatives are equally proud to work with the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) to bolster rural economic development. Established nearly 40 years ago, IADG provides crucial support for business and community projects on behalf of more than 150 Iowa

electric and telecommunications utilities. IADG has facilitated over 2,550 projects, creating or retaining at least 62,000 jobs statewide.

Investing in economic development is one of the key ways Iowa's electric cooperatives proudly contribute to the vitality of our communities.

Learn more at www.iowarec.org/who-we-are/economic-progress.

Part 2 of this feature will appear in the January 2025 issue of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living and focus on the impact of electric cooperatives in providing reliable and affordable power.



For the five years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive impact of

\$4.7 BILLION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

These investments supported more than

7,300 JOBS



(retained, attracted or expanded) DURING THAT SAME TIME PERIOD.

COMMUNITY IMPACT GROWS WITH CVEC'S LATEST OPERATION ROUND UP GRANTS

We are excited to share the latest impact of our members' generosity through the Operation Round Up® program! Thanks to the contributions of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative members who round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar each month, small change adds up to big support for local organizations. These funds, distributed by the Chariton Valley Electric Operation Round Up Foundation Board, go directly toward strengthening our community.

After careful review of applications, the foundation board awarded \$4,100 in grants in October to organizations making a real difference in the lives of those they serve.

Here's how your contributions are making an impact:

- **Albia Community Schools** was awarded \$2,600 to purchase two stackable washer and dryer units for Grant Elementary and Lincoln Center. These units will ensure that all students have clean clothes, coats and bags, helping them feel comfortable and confident at school.
- **Appanoose County Lords Cupboard** received a \$1,500 grant to purchase a second new freezer/refrigerator. As the pantry continues to grow and serve more families, this additional equipment will significantly increase their ability to store and distribute fresh and frozen food, allowing them to better fulfill their mission of feeding those in need.



These grants are a powerful reminder of the collective impact our members can have. Every penny contributed through Operation Round Up goes right back into supporting the organizations that make our communities stronger.

We extend our appreciation to our

members for their continued support of this program. If your organization or one you know of could benefit from a grant, we encourage you to apply.

For more information and to access the application documents, visit www.cvrec.com by Dec. 31.

A.Y. MCDONALD: A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN



Founded in 1856 by Scottish immigrant Andrew Young McDonald, A.Y. McDonald Mfg. Co. has grown into a premier manufacturer of natural gas and water valves, and plumbing products. Rooted in Scottish heritage and family values, the company serves customers across the U.S. and operates facilities in the Iowa communities of Dubuque and Albia, along with Elizabethton, Tennessee. Each facility embodies A.Y. McDonald's commitment to quality, family values and customer service.

Precision manufacturing at the Albia plant

The Albia location plays a pivotal role in A.Y. McDonald's operations, producing natural gas distribution products such as valves and meter bars. According to Plant Manager Ronnie Delaney, the process starts with raw iron castings from Midwest foundries, which are then transformed by CNC milling machines into finished products.

"Each component is crafted through the dedication of our talented co-workers," Delaney explains, reflecting the high standards for quality and precision at every step.

A family-oriented culture

The Albia facility embraces a culture where all staff are referred to as "co-workers," creating a sense of unity and respect. This philosophy was one of the key factors that drew Delaney to A.Y. McDonald after a 27-year military career.

"Our largest asset is our co-workers," he says. The company's internal motto, "None of us is as smart as all of us," highlights the value placed on collaboration and mutual respect.

To nurture a welcoming and inclusive environment, A.Y. McDonald hosts

monthly events for co-workers. These gatherings foster camaraderie and contribute to the company's family-oriented atmosphere. This culture is further reinforced by the absence of hierarchical distinctions – co-workers, including the CEO, have no assigned parking spots.

A.Y. McDonald's commitment extends beyond its workplace to the Albia community, where it actively supports local organizations and events. Recent contributions include a \$1,000 donation to the Albia High School Booster Club, sponsorship of the annual rodeo, participation in holiday toy drives and support for the Welcome Home Soldier Memorial.

"The Albia community values good jobs and benefits, and in return, we're dedicated to supporting causes that make a positive impact here," Delaney shares.

A lasting legacy in Albia

A.Y. McDonald's guiding principle is that "the customer is the boss." This customer-centric approach has been a cornerstone of the company's success for more than 168 years, driving its commitment to quality products and excellent service. Delaney explains, "Without our customers, we don't have a job, and we live every day by that motto."

As A.Y. McDonald continues to expand its reach and innovate within the water works, plumbing and natural gas industries, its dedication to customers, community and co-workers remains unwavering. The Albia facility is a testament to the company's core values, blending a rich heritage with a forward-thinking approach to make a meaningful impact in Albia and beyond.

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

Five fun facts about A.Y. McDonald as a company and a person:

1. In 1863, the company's founder, Andrew Young (A.Y.) McDonald patented an improvement of the monkey wrench.
2. A.Y. McDonald Mfg. Co. actively supported the country's war effort during World War II, producing several products for the U.S. Navy, Army and Air Force.
3. During the Civil War, A.Y. McDonald was captured and held prisoner for two months, until his brother-in-law John Morrison ventured into Missouri alone by wagon to rescue A.Y. and 10 others.
4. A.Y. McDonald Mfg. Co. is a fifth-generation-ran company, with the sixth generation now working at the company.
5. When the company started, the building was so small that to thread a length of pipe, a hole was made in the outside wall to allow one end of the pipe to hang outside while the other end was held in the vise inside and threaded.



SMART INSIGHTS ABOUT BUYING SMART APPLIANCES

BY SCOTT FLOOD

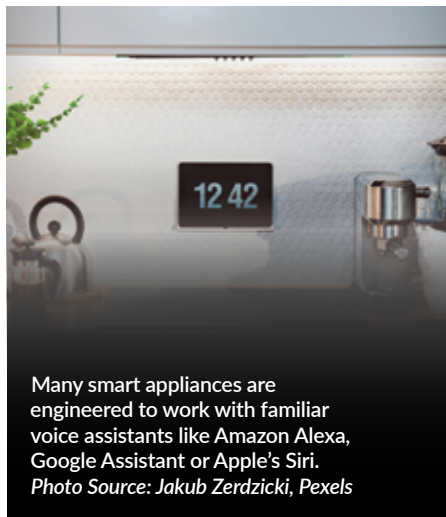
Santa isn't the only one who makes an appearance as the year nears its end. Retailers start trumpeting deep discounts on home appliances. That's great if you've considered replacing some of your home's appliances with one of today's "smart" models. Before deciding to buy a smart appliance, take some time to get smarter about what they offer – and what you really need.

Start with an assessment

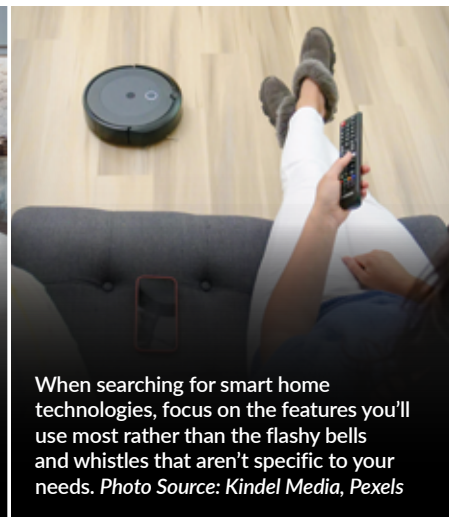
Begin with an honest look at how you live and consider the role your current appliances play in your daily routine. Would the capabilities of a smart appliance make your life easier? For example, if you frequently forget to start the laundry or your dishwasher, Wi-Fi-enabled appliances with remote start capabilities may save you time and trouble. But if you're thinking about stepping up to a smart appliance because it has a cool feature you might use once a year, ask yourself if it's worth the extra cost.

Next, think about any smart devices you already use in your home. Make sure they're compatible with the smart appliance's operating system so you can get all the benefits you expect. For example, many of these appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Incompatible systems might limit your ability to use the features that are most important to you.

Is your home's infrastructure ready to handle the demands of a smart appliance? Depending upon the model you choose, it might require anything from a basic internet connection to a home Wi-Fi network to provide the operation you expect. Some smart appliances may require Bluetooth, Zigbee, Z-Wave or other systems for connectivity. Having access to the right technology



Many smart appliances are engineered to work with familiar voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant or Apple's Siri. Photo Source: Jakub Zerdzicki, Pexels



When searching for smart home technologies, focus on the features you'll use most rather than the flashy bells and whistles that aren't specific to your needs. Photo Source: Kindel Media, Pexels

ensures your system will function correctly and be able to handle updates as they become available.

Consider energy efficiency and other factors

It's always important to consider energy efficiency when purchasing a new appliance. Most smart appliances are designed to reduce energy consumption, with operating modes that deliver the performance you want while making more efficient use of energy. Smart appliances that are ENERGY STAR®-certified meet or exceed federal energy efficiency standards and some may use only half as much energy as standard appliances.

Repairs to smart appliances can be expensive, so consider the warranty. Generous manufacturer warranties demonstrate the company's confidence in the quality of its products.

For most homeowners, the biggest downside to smart appliances is that they carry a higher price tag than their not-so-smart counterparts. However, price is just one factor in the cost of any appliance. When you

also consider the long-term value smart appliances deliver – whether in energy savings, helpful conveniences or improved reliability – most will save you money over their service life. In addition, smart appliances may be eligible for rebates and tax incentives, so ask your retailer what's available.

What's ahead for smart appliances in the foreseeable future? The marketplace is starting to see the integration of basic artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities that can make smart appliances provide better service, greater reliability and lower energy needs. As these AI-fueled systems become more common, your refrigerator might know your habits so well that it can generate a shopping list for you. Your dishwasher could adjust its operating cycle to better clean your family's uniquely dirty dishes.

There was a time when appliances changed little from decade to decade. Today, products advance more quickly than ever before, and we can expect to see more big changes ahead.

Scott Flood writes on energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

'TIS THE SEASON FOR TRADITIONS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

We've officially entered the season of traditions. Can you recall a holiday tradition your family had when you were younger? What holiday traditions do you still enjoy today?

For me, these included homemade chili for supper and opening gifts on Christmas Eve. Baking Christmas cookies. Attending services at the country church in Webster County where generations of my mom's family worshipped.

It's always fun to hear about other families' traditions, as well. When I was visiting my second cousin Barb at her home near Coggon last winter, she mentioned the Hamilton Family Cook Off.

This family tradition (inspired by the "Iron Chef" cooking competition on the Food Network) started in 2006 with an M&Ms Challenge. The rules were simple. Any Hamilton family member (or date of a family member) could enter. Contestants just had to include M&Ms in their recipes. Everyone voted on their favorite dish when the family gathered for the Christmas holidays. (The winning entry was a cheesecake with M&Ms.)

This friendly competition was such a hit that it has endured. Each year, the featured ingredient is announced around Thanksgiving. Options have included cheese, apples, cranberries, beer, cinnamon, olives, bacon, peanut butter, ginger, chipotle peppers, oranges, corn, maple, lemon and honey.

After the judging is complete, the year's winner receives a traveling trophy (a kitschy, chef-themed ceramic pig), plus the winner gets to choose the "secret ingredient" for next year's Hamilton Family Cook Off.

Decoding the power of traditions

This got me thinking about how traditions can enrich our lives. They are the glue that holds families,

communities and even countries together. They can be as diverse as a summer family vacation, tailgating at college football games each fall or celebrating America's independence on the Fourth of July.

Traditions hold the power to shape human history. "Tradition" comes from a Latin word that means "to hand over, to transmit." Psychologists tell us that traditions are important to our mental health since they strengthen shared values and provide a sense of stability.

Passing traditions from generation to generation also preserves our heritage and helps us reconnect with our roots. The results can be especially profound for children.

I'm fascinated by research conducted by Marshall Duke, a clinical psychologist and faculty member at Emory University in Atlanta. His studies have shown that the more children know about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives and the higher their self-esteem. These children prove to be more resilient and can cope more effectively with the stresses of life.

Time won't wait

This lesson in resilience is something I need to remember. With my busy schedule, I've gotten away from some family traditions, like decorating homemade sugar cookies in the weeks leading up to Christmas and sending holiday cards.

Did all that busyness enrich my life? Not really. I can hardly remember what was so important that I

sacrificed some family traditions to slog through a never-ending to-do list.

The longer I live, the more I'm reminded that time won't wait. The country church where we used to gather for the Christmas service closed permanently in 2010. Some of my loved ones have passed away. Yet, I still cherish the traditions we shared and the priceless memories we created together.

During this holiday season and the year ahead, let's all make more time to enjoy the traditions that keep us connected. Maybe even create a new tradition. It's never too late to start something good.

If you have beloved traditions in your life, I'd love to hear about them. Email me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



This pig is a traveling trophy for the Hamilton family's holiday cooking competition.

Visit our website at www.cvrec.com



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