

MARCH 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

A balanced team for reliability

Operation Round Up  
strengthens communities

Sheet pan recipes

Scholarship applications are due March 29 ▶ See Page 4

# CONTENTS



VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 3

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Education and training are essential

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Bissell® carpet cleaner

14

SAFETY MATTERS

Grain bin annual notice

15

OUT BACK

Inspiration from the top of the world

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Abigail Westbrook, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING ARE ESSENTIAL TO BEST SERVE OUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

BY KATRINA DAVIS



While many of us enjoy spring break in March, education and training are always on the calendar for Iowa's electric cooperatives.

In my role as director of education and training for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), I organize more than 50 trainings, workshops and conferences each year for the staff and board directors of Iowa's electric co-ops.

In our cooperative mission to power lives and empower communities, we have an obligation to serve with excellence. Electric cooperatives invest in educating their directors and employees because they know their knowledge will result in even stronger leadership for years to come.

The following are just a few of the affordable learning opportunities that we offer at IAEC.

## Directors' Update

This annual event is held for a day and a half in February and covers topics relevant to Iowa electric cooperative board members. Our 2024 agenda included emerging trends like how to prepare the cooperative workplace for the next generation of employees, the co-op board's role in a changing industry and what to know about cybersecurity insurance for electric cooperatives.

## Conferences for Professional Groups

Each spring and fall, IAEC hosts conferences for various professional groups, including co-op managers and staff in human resources, information technology, communications and member services, accounting and finance, and safety and operations. Co-op employees benefit from presentations that shine a light on emerging technologies, industry trends,

and statewide updates on regulatory and legislative developments. Attendees also have opportunities to network with each other and share best practices.

## Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program

The Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program (CLIP) is a new and emerging leadership program for employees of any department at Iowa's electric cooperatives. Participants attend in-person and virtual sessions throughout the year and graduate from the program in December during IAEC's annual meeting. In our first year, 15 employees graduated from the program in 2023, and 17 employees are going through the program this year. CLIP graduates walk away with a greater understanding of the electric cooperative business model and learn how to harness their strengths for effective leadership at the co-op.

## Field Leader Training

This two-day, in-person training moves beyond technical aspects of the job and teaches leadership skills necessary to effectively direct the activities of a crew, work on the crew and communicate with management. The interactive scenarios and cases are just like the ones encountered on the job every day, so learning can be immediately applied when planning work, leading teams and improving safety.

Investing in education and training for effective leadership is just one way that your electric co-op ensures you receive safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity. I'm proud to help directors and employees accomplish these goals through my role at the statewide association.

*Katrina Davis is the director of education and training for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# SPRING CLEAN BY WINNING A BISSELL® SPOTCLEAN PROHEAT CARPET CLEANER!

There is no need to pull out a full-size carpet cleaning machine every time a stain or spot appears on your carpet. BISSELL® SpotClean ProHeat uses the power of heated cleaning to remove tough spots and stains. It's a powerful compact cleaning machine. Designed to easily clean carpets, upholstery, stairs, area rugs, auto interiors and more.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than March 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 All-Clad immersion blender from the January issue was Connie Stickley, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY MARCH 31!

# BACKUP GENERATOR SAFETY

BY TROY AMOSS



It's no secret that weather in Iowa can be unpredictable and uncontrollable, and despite the best efforts of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

(CVEC), power outages happen. Under extreme circumstances, they can last for hours or even several days – causing some members to use generators.

But do you know of a potential danger with the use of generators? It's called "backfeed" and it can endanger you, a family member or someone else – especially linemen or electricians working at your property.

### What is backfeed?

Backfeed occurs when power travels back through the utility lines and re-energizes them. It creates a very dangerous and potentially deadly situation for CVEC's lineworkers. If your generator is not installed properly, the resulting backfeed of electric current could kill or severely

injure a lineman working to restore your power.

At CVEC, we encourage our members who use generators to make sure they are installed correctly. This is not only for the protection of our employees but for your safety as well.

### How to prevent backfeed?

To prevent backfeed, generators (whether permanent or portable) should never be plugged into a home's wiring or directly into the circuit breaker panel.

The best way to avoid backfeed is by installing a transfer switch. A transfer switch ensures your household wiring, or selected circuits to be supplied by the generator, cannot be connected to the power grid and the generator at the same time, eliminating backfeed. It also protects your generator from damage if the power is restored while it is connected. For these types of generators that are permanently installed, a licensed electrician will need to install a transfer switch that complies with the National Electrical Code.

CVEC's responsibility for electric service ends at the meter, so we

cannot know when or if you have installed a generator, and we cannot know if the installation was done to the specifications of the National Electrical Code.

### Keep the cooperative informed

It is very important for our members to let us know if you plan on installing a generator at your home or business. Safety is our top priority, and we want to ensure the safety of all members and our employees. Please call CVEC at 641-932-7126 before you install a generator to ensure safety for yourself and lineworkers.

Likewise, please call CVEC if you currently have a stationary generator installed so that our records can be updated – maintaining the safety of our employees.

Just remember, when the power goes out, having a generator means that you can continue to have heat, light and many of the other conveniences we have come to enjoy. However, make sure you are not creating unnecessary danger by properly and safely using your generator to prevent backfeed.

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



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or 800-475-1702

**Website**  
[www.cvrec.com](http://www.cvrec.com)

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## HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE AT ONE OF CVEC'S FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

**All scholarship applications must be returned to the cooperative by March 29.**

For more information, check with your high school guidance counselor, call Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative at 800-475-1702 or visit our website at [www.cvrec.com/scholarship-program](http://www.cvrec.com/scholarship-program).



## WINTER MORATORIUM IS ENDING SOON

Members who qualified for energy assistance during the winter moratorium – please be advised the moratorium ends **April 1.**

If your account is past due, you will need to visit or call the office to make arrangements **before April 1, 2024**, to avoid interruption of your electrical service.

# A BALANCED TEAM FOR RELIABILITY

The winningest basketball teams in history are ones that are consistent and utilize players with varying abilities. Some are better at shooting three-pointers, and some are best at defense. Having a balanced mix of skills makes the team a powerhouse on the court. The way to keep electricity reliable is a bit like that, too.

The power team first requires a foundation of consistent sources that can be put in the game any time they're needed. Having enough "always available" fuel sources like natural gas and coal can ensure consistent power generation.

Just like a team needs different players for different situations, our power grid requires multiple sources to keep the grid running. Relying solely on one player to win every game is not an effective strategy – if they get injured, you'll likely lose. Similarly, using a single fuel source for electricity generation poses a significant risk to energy reliability. Natural disasters, geopolitical tensions or unforeseen disruptions can severely impact the supply chain of a particular fuel. A diverse mix of energy

sources acts as a safeguard, ensuring that the grid remains operational even in the face of unexpected challenges.

A diverse energy mix also enhances grid flexibility by accommodating the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources like solar and wind. Think of solar power like a team's inconsistent three-point shooter. It's awesome when the sun is shining bright, but what if it's nighttime or a cloudy day? That's where the other players, like wind, hydro, nuclear, natural gas and coal can step up and keep the team scoring.

Diverse fuel sources contribute to the stability and reliability of the electric grid. The different sources have varying characteristics, including generation patterns, responsiveness and storage capabilities. This diversity allows for a more balanced and resilient energy system that can adapt to fluctuating demand and unforeseen circumstances. Having a mix of these energy sources is like having a team with different skills to handle various situations and scenarios.

A diverse set of energy sources is essential, but that's not the only thing



we need to have reliable electricity – or a winning team. Basketball teams are always trying out new plays or training rookies to create a versatile lineup. Similarly, electric cooperatives are constantly innovating to maintain reliability for tomorrow. But creating new ways to make our power sources more efficient and reliable takes time, money and advances in technology that aren't necessarily ready yet.

As we continue to work on the innovations of tomorrow, the key to keeping our electricity reliable right now is ensuring a diverse "team" of fuels. Each one brings something special to the table, and together, they make sure we have the power we need, whenever we need it.

## TEACHERS, APPLY FOR "ENERGY IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM" COURSE

Each year, electric cooperatives sponsor local teachers to attend a two-day "Energy in Today's Classroom" course, which is hosted by Central Electric Power Cooperative. The 2024 course is July 31 and Aug. 1 in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is seeking applicants for this year's course, which is sponsored entirely by the cooperative.

Topics covered during the professional development program include energy basics, energy sources, economics

and energy production, electrical safety, energy efficiency and electric vehicles. In addition, the teachers get to complete hands-on energy projects and tour the power generation station at the University of Missouri.

The overall objective of the course is to provide educators with an understanding of what it takes to deliver electricity to homes, schools and businesses.

During the course, the teachers are provided with hands-on demonstrations of electrical teaching



If you are interested in applying to participate in Energy in Today's Classroom, please visit or call our office at 641-932-7126 by April 1.

aides that can later be used in their classrooms. The course also allows all teachers to receive 15 professional development hours.

# WOMEN ARE INCREASINGLY POWERING ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

BY SCOTT FLOOD AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

A generation ago, if a young woman expressed an interest in working in the energy industry, it's possible her friends, family, and even prospective supervisors would have steered her away. Keeping the lights on was traditionally seen as men's work.

Today, women represent an increasing share of the electric cooperative workforce and governance structure, and not just in traditional roles of the past. As you look around our



"I like working at Farmers Electric because of the co-workers and the members we serve. I thrive in learning new things and working in the ever-changing electric industry is exciting. The family environment of the cooperative has proven to be successful, and I am so fortunate to be a part of it."

*Holi Weston*

CEO  
Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

electric co-ops, you'll find women in every imaginable role – including lineworkers, engineers, financial managers, communicators, board directors and CEOs.

## Diverse perspectives are vital to the industry's future

International Women's Day is celebrated annually in March. It's a great occasion to recognize the accomplishments of the many women who are transforming electric co-ops and how they serve their local communities. It's hard to imagine a better career field for today's young women who are interested in making their communities better places to live, work and play.

"The competition for talent and skill shortages has highlighted the need to expand recruitment strategies to get a more diverse range of candidates," explains Desiree Dunham, workforce programs manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). "The diverse experiences and



"Serving on my local electric co-op board allows me to make a difference to communities in our service area. As board members, we approve low-interest loans sponsored by USDA to support businesses creating jobs, hospitals, emergency services and many other projects. As a not-for-profit utility, we also return any margins above the co-op's financial needs to our members."

*Share Brandt*  
Board Director  
Butler County REC

perspectives of women contribute to more creative and effective problem-solving, which can be especially beneficial in navigating complex challenges and finding innovative solutions that cater to a broad range of consumer needs."

NRECA recently reported that nearly 90 electric co-ops are headed by female CEOs, including five in Iowa, adding that strengths like teamwork, problem-solving and communication that women often bring to leadership are particularly important to the industry's future.

"I enjoy working for a cooperative because we hold ourselves to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity while maintaining a close-knit, family-friendly work environment. The co-op provides excellent benefits, paths for career advancement and the opportunity for longevity, which is great for a hometown girl who plans to stay! I like to think of working at the co-op as a paycheck with a purpose. We have a commitment to improving the quality of life for our families, friends and neighbors through the work we do each day."

*Anna See*  
Executive Assistant/  
Communications Coordinator  
Chariton Valley Electric  
Cooperative



"I enjoy serving on the state board for the electric cooperatives because we all follow the cooperative principles and do our best to work together to serve our co-op members. We never make a decision lightly, knowing it could have an immediate or long-term impact on our co-op and the members we serve."

I also believe the industry is – and will continue to be in the future – facing some of the biggest challenges we have ever faced. The demand for electricity continues to grow, with reliability being pushed to the limits and our energy sources being limited. I enjoy being a voice for these concerns with our members and legislators and having a seat at the table to find solutions to these challenges."

*Deena Moore*  
Board Director  
Southwest Iowa REC and  
the Iowa Association of  
Electric Cooperatives

"It is rewarding to know that the work we do has a tangible impact on our members' daily lives. This impact is not possible without investing in our number one asset, our employees. It is an honor and a privilege to be part of a locally owned organization that simply exists to serve our membership, contribute to our communities and be part of this great cooperative network."

*Teresa Floyd*  
CEO  
East-Central Iowa REC



Anna See (pictured) is a member of this year's class of the Cooperative Leadership in Iowa Program. The program was formed in 2023.

### Programs build awareness among students

Co-ops across America are actively working to build awareness among young women about the opportunities available to them. Some even host day camps for teens in which they get a behind-the-scenes look at what's involved with delivering electric power. Beyond the highly visible roles such as linework, participants learn about how people in areas as diverse as IT, finance, economic development and environmental compliance are vital to co-op operations. Without that exposure, those future co-op leaders probably wouldn't know those jobs exist. As the familiar adage reminds us, it's difficult to be what we cannot see.

Students are just one of the targets of such efforts. Dunham points to the priority the industry is placing on supporting career development for women. Mentorship programs and networking opportunities

create platforms for women to connect and share their experiences. The recently launched Women in Power Mentoring program for the electric co-op community provides mentorship and resources to support and guide women in their careers.

"These positive shifts need to be continuously reinforced with targeted outreach efforts, career awareness campaigns and support systems to enhance the entry points and career progression for women in co-ops," Dunham notes.

### Co-ops as best places to work

As nearly 20% of the nation's co-op workforce nears retirement age over the next five years and local cooperatives struggle with an ever-tighter job market, expanding the pool of potential workers is an

effective solution. At the same time, there are many reasons women who are entering (or reentering) the workforce should consider finding a place in the electric co-op world.

"Cooperatives are often recognized as 'best place to work' employers in their communities, offering competitive benefits, caring cultures and support for families," Dunham says. "Co-ops also have a solid commitment to strengthening inclusion and diversity, and women are often strong advocates for fostering a culture where all individuals are valued for their skills and expertise."

*Scott Flood writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops. Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.*



Visit [iowarec.org](http://iowarec.org) or scan this QR code to find co-op career opportunities.



## SAUSAGE & VEGETABLE DINNER

- 1 medium sweet potato
- 1 head broccoli
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- Cajun seasoning, to taste
- 1 12-ounce package beef smoked sausage
- optional: cherry tomatoes, red onion

Dice sweet potato and cut broccoli into florets, toss in olive oil (along with optional ingredients, if desired) and spread on sheet pan. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and Cajun seasonings. Cut sausage into slices and add to sheet pan or rectangular baking dish. Note: Any type of sausage (substituted for beef) will work. Bake at 425 degrees F for 30 minutes or until veggies are tender. *Serves 4*

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

## LEMON-PARMESAN GNOCCHI

- 16 ounces gnocchi
- 8 ounces mushrooms
- 1 bunch asparagus, cut into pieces
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, plus some for topping
- ½ teaspoon garlic, minced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In large mixing bowl, combine gnocchi, mushrooms, asparagus, lemon juice, olive oil, ¼ cup Parmesan cheese and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Stir well to combine. Pour mixture onto 15½x10½-inch baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Spread into a single layer and bake at 400 degrees F for 35 minutes. Serve with extra Parmesan cheese, if desired. *Serves 4-5*

**Donna Johnson • Kanawha  
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

## OVEN "FRIED" CHICKEN

- 1 cup dried breadcrumbs
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- black ground pepper, to taste
- ½ cup nonfat buttermilk
- 4 bone-in chicken breasts, skin removed

In a shallow dish, combine breadcrumbs and spices. With a pastry brush or the back of a spoon, "paint" chicken breasts with buttermilk. Buttermilk can be substituted with plain yogurt. Roll chicken in seasoned breadcrumb mixture, and place in small baking sheet sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 375 degrees F, about 45 minutes, until brown and internal temperature exceeds 165 degrees F. *Serves 4*

**Tina Ahlberg • Holland  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## TURKEY LATTICE PIE

- 3 8-ounce tubes refrigerated crescent rolls, divided
- 4 cups turkey, cooked and cubed
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar or Swiss cheese
- 3 cups frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained
- 1 10¾-ounce can condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 1½ cups 2% milk
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- ½ teaspoon salt
- dash pepper
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten

Unroll two tubes of crescent roll dough and separate into rectangles. Place rectangles in an ungreased 15x10x1-inch baking pan; press onto the bottom and ¼ inch up sides to form a crust, sealing seams and perforations. Bake at 375 degrees F for 5-7 minutes or until light golden brown. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine turkey, cheese, broccoli, soup, milk, mustard, onion, salt and pepper. Spoon mixture over crust. Unroll the remaining dough and divide into two rectangles. Seal perforations and cut each rectangle lengthwise into 1-inch strips. Using strips, make a lattice design on top of turkey mixture. Brush with egg and bake 17-22 minutes or until top crust is golden brown and filling is bubbly. *Serves 10*

**Dave Duit • Nevada  
Consumers Energy**

## RANCH PORK CHOP SHEET PAN SUPPER

- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 3.5-ounce package ranch dressing mix, divided
- 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1½ teaspoons salt, divided
- 1½ teaspoons pepper, divided
- 4 boneless pork chops
- 1½ pounds baby Yukon Gold potatoes
- 8 ounces green beans

Whisk together honey, Worcestershire sauce, 2 tablespoons ranch mix, 2 tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Place pork chops on one end of sheet pan and brush honey glaze mixture on both sides of chops, set extra glaze aside. Halve potatoes lengthwise. In a bowl, combine potatoes, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 1 tablespoon ranch mix, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper and toss together. Place potatoes in the center of sheet pan, next to chops. Roast chops and potatoes at 475 degrees F for 15 minutes. Mix green beans, 1 tablespoon oil, remaining ranch mix, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Toss together and set aside. After 15 minutes, flip chops and brush with additional glaze mixture. Turn potatoes, then spread green beans in the empty space on pan. Return to oven and roast 7-8 minutes, until pork chops are done, and veggies are browned. *Serves 4*

**Joanna Schaefer • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

### WANTED:

## SUMMER DESSERT RECIPES

### THE REWARD:

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

### Deadline is March 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](mailto: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](http://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.

## BEWARE OF SOLAR SCAMS

Before working with any vendor, Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage you to do your homework to ensure you choose a reputable provider.



If you have a complaint regarding solar installation or financing, you can complete and submit an electronic complaint at [bit.ly/3usfVj7](http://bit.ly/3usfVj7).

Consumers can also call the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 or email [consumer@ag.iowa.gov](mailto:consumer@ag.iowa.gov).

# OPERATION ROUND UP PROGRAM RECAP

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative's (CVEC) Operation Round Up® program has been helping area organizations and our communities for four years. Operation Round Up is a community service program that gives CVEC members the option to round their electric bill to the next whole dollar. The difference in the actual bill and the rounded amount is then deposited into the Operation Round Up Fund, and 100% of the funds accumulated are dispersed to charitable causes in communities served by CVEC.



The program is governed by CVEC's Operation Round Up Foundation Board, which consists of nine CVEC members from across the cooperative's service area. Members of the Foundation Board may serve two consecutive three-year terms and meet every quarter to review applications and award grants.

The program's funds are used to provide grants to non-profit organizations, such as police departments, fire and rescue departments, youth organizations, and much more. Since the first grants were dispersed in the spring of 2020, the Foundation has awarded more than \$80,000 to local organizations.

The following grants have been awarded since the program's inception (listed in order from the first awards to the most recent).

### Seymour Food Pantry - \$300

Funding used to help purchase food, paper products and cleaning supplies for those in need.

### South Central Iowa Community Action Program (SCICAP) - \$3,500

Funding used to aid in building and roof repairs required at the Albia facility.

### Moravia Betterment Society - \$4,000

Funding used to create a "Welcome to the Area" display at the intersection of Moravia and Lake Rathbun.

### Albia Police Department - \$2,000

Funding used to purchase a night vision thermal camera.

### King Opera House - \$5,000

Funding used to install all new LED lights, while also cleaning up electrical issues.

### Moravia Historical Society - \$5,000

Funding used to make structural repairs and restorations, mainly focused on the foundation, to their historic Summer Kitchen.

### Moravia Ruritan Club - \$1,500

Funding used to support their scholarship program (three \$500 scholarships).

### American Legion Post 136 - \$6,000

Funding used for their building improvement project, which included ceiling tile replacement, new ceramic tile flooring in the restrooms, a new stool in the women's restroom and a new stove and deep freeze in the kitchen area.

### Appanoose County Historical Society - \$5,000

Funding used to aid in the restoration of the Bland Log House and Old Sherriff's Residence.

### Walnut City Church Project - \$4,000

Funding used to aid in the completion of a working restroom in the iconic and historic building, allowing the facility to host community functions.

## 2024 OPERATION ROUND UP FOUNDATION BOARD

**Jerry Power**, District 1  
Moravia - President

**Angie Folkerts**, District 2  
Rural Albia - Director

**Mark Spragg**, District 3  
Promise City - Director

**Lori Johnson**, District 4  
Russell - Treasurer

**Tracey Matt**, District 5  
Albia - Director

**Steve Hoch**, At Large  
Centerville - Vice President

**Ron Hohneke**, At Large  
Rural Albia - Director

**Jan Stalzer**, At Large  
Albia - Secretary

**Mindy Stalzer**, At Large  
Lovilia - Director



**Moravia Shooting Sports Program – \$3,000**

Funding used to purchase Garmin Xero Trapshooter Trainers, which allows the team to visually see where their shot ended in relation to the target, while also keeping track of scores and response times.

**Albia Police Department – \$2,500**

Funding used to purchase a drone and the necessary training to use the drone for local police operations.

**Carnegie-Evans Public Library – \$4,500**

Funding used to aid in the advancement of the library through an integrated library management system.

**Drake Public Library – \$1,000**

Funding to aid in their story walk project.

**Friends of Oakland Cemetery – \$2,650**

Funding used in the final phase of the Liberty Park-Veterans Memorial and Cremation Garden project, where they installed a black metal safety railing on top of the concrete retaining walls.

**Lucas County Fair Association – \$1,450**

Funding used to purchase a table-top, interactive cow display that promotes agriculture education through eight liftable panels with trivia questions and a wheel visitors can spin to read facts.



**Monroe County Council on Aging – \$2,000**

Funding used to aid in the removal and replacement of the heaved and cracked concrete sidewalk in front of the Leisure Lounge in Albia, to increase safety for the senior citizens and staff, as well as passersby.

**Albia Blue Demon Archers – \$2,214**

Funding used to purchase 18 new national archery in schools-approved targets that allow the students to score their shots more accurately and for the club to host larger tournaments.

**South Central Iowa Community Action Program (SCICAP) – \$3,350**

Funding used to replace the old, outdated and threadbare carpet in the Albia Outreach Center to create a more appealing and safe experience for clients, visitors and staff.

**Ragtime Industries – \$4,200**

Funding used to purchase adaptive equipment, tools and resources for job applicants.

**Welcome Home Solider Monument – \$5,000**

Funding used to aid in lighting the trail that encompasses the monument with illuminated bollards from each branch of service with veterans' names cut into each one.

**Monroe County Helping Hands – \$6,843**

Funding used to aid in Phase II of their Structural Integrity Project, which included replacing the gravel alleyway with concrete.

**Monroe County Public Health – \$750**

Funding used to purchase four first-aid kits for the Monroe County Fairgrounds.

**CJ3 Foundation – \$5,000**

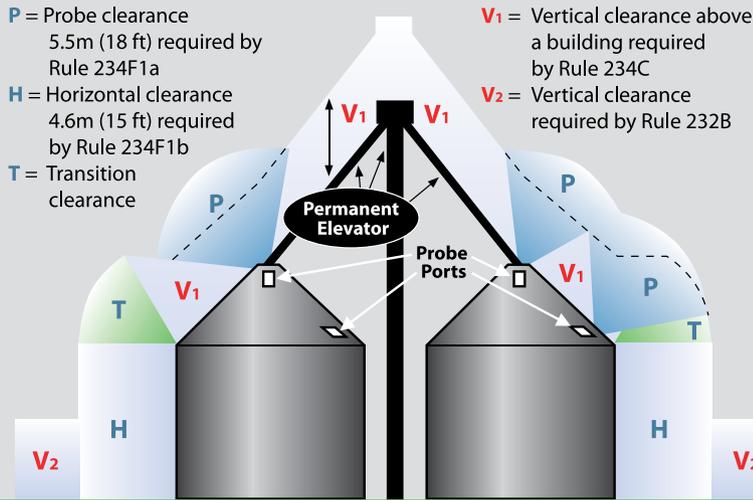
Funding used to purchase an ADA-compliant front door for Kendall Place, allowing disabled veterans and other visitors with wheelchairs or walkers easy accessibility to the building.

All these grants were made possible by the generosity of CVEC members participating in the program. No matter how large or small, every time we give back, we strengthen our communities. We sincerely appreciate the members who continue to give to this program – we could not do what we do for our communities without you!

For more information on how to apply for ORU funding, visit [www.cvrec.com/how-apply-oru-funds](http://www.cvrec.com/how-apply-oru-funds). Applications are due on the last business day of each quarter.

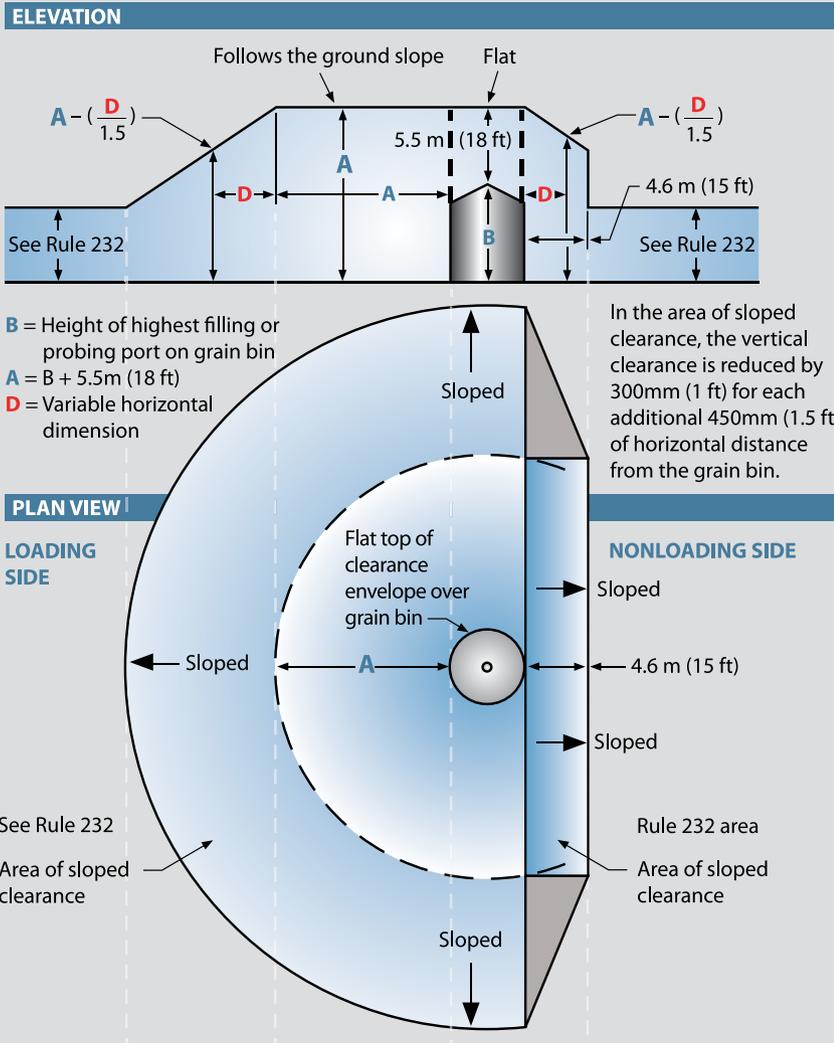


### Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by permanently installed augers, conveyors or elevators



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### Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors or elevators



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## MAINTAIN PROPER CLEARANCE AROUND GRAIN BINS

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 - 25.2(3) b: An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2017 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997. The Iowa Utilities Board has adopted this language.

Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op's policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations - or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one - please call your electric co-op for help.

These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives' annual public information campaign and are based on the 2017 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

# VIEW FROM THE TOP: LIVING A LIFE OF ADVENTURE AND PURPOSE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Have you ever been bold enough to have a dream so big everyone thinks it's impossible? Charlie Wittmack has.

This Des Moines-area attorney climbed Mount Everest, swam the English Channel, and rode a bicycle 8,000 miles across Europe and Asia to Kathmandu, Nepal. He shared remarkable stories of his "World Triathlon" during a program at the Lake View Public Library in early January, and I was riveted.

There was an overflow crowd that Saturday afternoon. None of us were super-athletes looking for tips to gain the winning edge. Yet that's exactly what Wittmack gave us, thanks to his ability to translate lessons from endurance sports into real life. Consider these gems:

**1 Take small steps to reach big goals.** When Wittmack was growing up in the Boone area, he read a book about Captain Matthew Webb, an Englishman who was the first recorded person to swim the English Channel. The story captivated Wittmack. Why not try it himself? What if he made it part of the world's toughest triathlon? To fund his dreams, Wittmack started working various jobs, making \$8 per hour pouring concrete. The young adventurer also secured a loan from Bankers Trust. He says, "I learned early on the importance of taking small steps to get me from where I was to where I wanted to be."

**2 Do the next right thing.** When Wittmack was completing the World Triathlon, his body burned about 14,000 calories a day. Sometimes his epic odyssey almost overwhelmed him. When it was time to bicycle from Europe to Asia, Wittmack didn't dwell on the hardships inherent in crossing 11 countries, including a massive desert. "Instead of focusing on how



Charlie Wittmack (far right) visits with attendees of his January speaking event at the Lake View Public Library.

I'd get from France to Kathmandu, I just got on the bike and made it go forward," he shares.

**3 Seek signs of hope.** Wittmack understands the allure of giving up. During his 8,000-mile bicycle journey to Nepal, he decided to call it quits in the desert. As he pedaled to the next town to find the nearest train station, he met some French adventurers on an around-the-world walking journey. "There was something really different about these guys' thinking. They said, 'Oh, you're the American who's always in such a hurry,'" says Wittmack, who credits this interaction with renewing his hope and motivating him to press on toward his goal. "We all have times in life when we're going through a desert. Look for signs of hope, especially when it feels like your destination is a long way off."

**4 Don't give up.** There are good days and bad days, whether you're training for a triathlon or just living daily life. During his grueling World Triathlon quest, Wittmack was diagnosed with amoebic dysentery, pulmonary anemia and cerebral

anemia. If pushing his body to the limit wasn't enough, he was hit by a car in Kazakhstan and lost vision in his right eye. "Take advantage of the good days to charge your batteries for the tough days," he advises.

**5 Find the purpose beyond your passion.** Climbing Mount Everest (the highest point on Earth, at 29,035 feet above sea level) as part of the World Triathlon became more than a personal quest for Wittmack. During his time in Nepal, he was troubled to learn that thousands of newborns and young children in the country die each year from preventable causes. He has helped raise money for Save the Children, an international organization that helps kids get a good start in life. He adds, "When I reached the top of Mount Everest, I realized what a small piece of creation I am, yet what a difference we can make if we commit to being part of the change."

Indeed, Charlie. Thanks for the inspiration from the top of the world.

*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

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives.

March 2024

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

A group of utility workers, including men and women in various work attire like polo shirts, t-shirts, and caps, are gathered around a piece of electrical equipment labeled "SAFETY TRAINING". One man in a light blue polo shirt and white cap is speaking to the group. The setting appears to be an outdoor or semi-outdoor training area with yellow bollards and orange traffic cones in the background.

# SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**.

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