

● OCTOBER 2024

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Powering a brighter  
future in Guatemala

Navigating wind  
energy leases

Family dinner recipes

Enter for a chance to win a Meco Electric Grill ► See Page 5



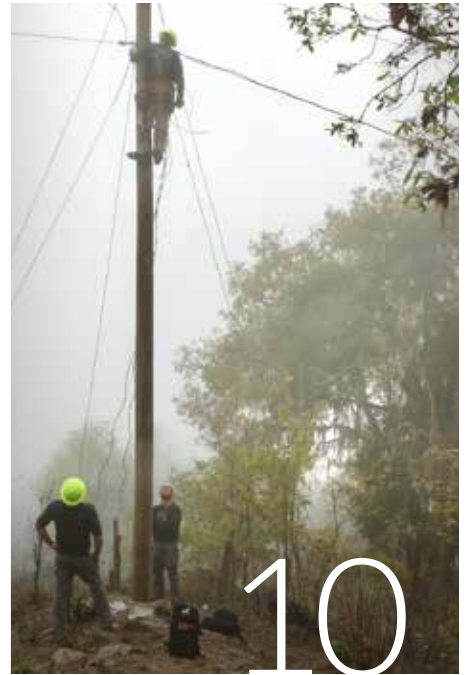
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ON THE COVER

The village of Las Peñas, Guatemala, where linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric cooperatives worked to bring electricity to the community for the first time. Read more beginning on Page 10 of this issue.

# REFLECTING ON OUR COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

BY LESLIE KAUFMAN



October is National Co-op Month, making it an opportune time to reflect on our cooperative principles. As I look back on my first few weeks

at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, the co-op principles of *cooperation among cooperatives* and *concern for community* really stand out to me for the following reasons.

## Rebuilding after the Greenfield tornado

On May 21, severe storms rolled across Iowa, including a strong tornado that tore through Greenfield. We cover this story in more detail on Pages 6-7 and share how it affected employees of Farmers Electric Cooperative, which is based in Greenfield. In the aftermath of the storm, employees of Farmers Electric immediately headed out to help those in need, and neighboring electric cooperatives provided mutual aid to repair damage and restore power in impacted areas.

## Powering a brighter future in Guatemala

Also in this issue, you'll read about how linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric cooperatives worked together to bring electricity to a remote village in the Guatemalan mountains. We understand how essential electricity is to powering opportunities and improving quality of life. Electric cooperatives across the country volunteer their time and resources to help those less fortunate in developing countries because it connects us to our legacy and mission back home.

## Shining the light on community volunteers

In the August and September issues of this magazine, you read about our Shine the Light contest, which celebrates our cooperative

commitment to community. Thank you for nominating deserving volunteers who make a positive difference in Iowa's communities! Learn more about our 2024 winners at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) and make plans to nominate a local hero in June 2025.

## October is co-op month

Once again, Iowa's electric cooperatives are teaming up with the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives and the Iowa Credit Union League to raise awareness about the many advantages of the cooperative business model. This month, we'll post videos about the seven cooperative principles and other co-op facts on social media. Visit [www.IowaCooperatives.com](http://www.IowaCooperatives.com) for more information on how cooperative ownership works and why the co-op business model is effective.

## Celebrating cooperative careers

Finally, we will commemorate Careers in Energy Week beginning Oct. 21. Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to provide nearly 2,000 stable careers with excellent benefits in an exciting and fulfilling industry. Many electric co-op employees choose to raise their families in small towns and are actively engaged in their communities. Along with lineworkers, engineers and operations staff, electric co-ops also employ accountants, customer service representatives, IT professionals, human resources staff, communicators, energy advisors, economic development specialists and more. View our latest co-op job openings at [www.iowarec.org](http://www.iowarec.org).

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A \$100 GIFT CARD!

To celebrate National Co-op Month, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. Your selection can be a restaurant, hardware store, gift shop, grocery store, beauty salon or other local business that's vital to your community.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Oct. 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 pressure washer from the August issue was **Dwayne Seeck**, a Guthrie County REC member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

# NAVIGATING WIND ENERGY LEASES: WHAT OUR MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW

BY TROY AMOSS



As the CEO and general manager of your electric cooperative, I want to address an important issue that many of our members

have been encountering the past few months and may encounter in the future – offers from wind energy companies seeking to lease land for the construction of wind turbines. Renewable energy is a rapidly growing industry, and wind power plays a significant role in the transition to a more sustainable energy future. However, while the prospect of leasing land for wind turbines may seem like an attractive opportunity, it's essential that our members proceed with caution.

## Understanding the offer

Wind companies typically approach landowners with proposals that may include upfront payments, annual lease payments and sometimes even a share of the revenue generated by

the turbines. These agreements can be long-term, often lasting 20 to 30 years or more. While the financial benefits might seem appealing, there are several factors you should carefully consider before signing any contracts.

## Key considerations for members

### 1 Contract length and terms.

The duration of these agreements can be substantial, often outlasting ownership of the land. It's crucial to fully understand the long-term implications and how they might affect your property, heirs or potential future buyers.

### 2 Impact on land use.

Wind turbines can take up significant space, and the construction process can disrupt farming or other activities on your land. Be sure to understand how much of your property will be affected and whether it will impact your current or future plans for the land.

### 3 Financial risks and rewards.

While the potential income is appealing, the payments and benefits promised by wind companies can vary. It's important to evaluate the financial stability of the company and to have a clear understanding of the payment structure. Consulting with a financial advisor is recommended.

### 4 Legal implications.

These agreements are legally binding and often complex. It's advisable to seek legal counsel to review the contract and ensure your rights and interests are fully protected. A lawyer can help you understand the implications of clauses related to property rights, tax liabilities and responsibilities for decommissioning the turbines at the end of their useful life.

### 5 Community and environmental impact.

Wind turbines can change the landscape and affect the surrounding environment. Consider the impact on your neighbors and the local community. Some members may have concerns about noise, shadow flicker or the visual impact of the turbines. Understanding these aspects is crucial to making an informed decision.

## Our role as your cooperative

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is committed to supporting our members and providing the information and resources you need to make informed decisions. If a wind company approaches you, we encourage you to reach out to us. While we do not provide legal or financial advice, we can connect you with resources and experts to help you navigate this process.

## Final thoughts

Leasing your land for wind energy can be a valuable opportunity, but it requires careful consideration. The decisions you make today can have lasting effects on your property and your financial well-being. Please take the time to thoroughly evaluate any offers, seek professional advice, and ensure that you fully understand the terms and implications of the agreement.

Our cooperative is here to support you every step of the way. Together, we can ensure that our community continues to thrive while embracing the opportunities of a renewable energy future.

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



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# EMBRACING THE POWER OF COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

October is National Co-op Month, a time to celebrate the cooperative model and the many benefits it brings to our community. It's also a great time to honor the vision and hard work of those who laid the foundation for the cooperative that continues to serve us today. Thanks to their foresight, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is more than just a utility provider – it's a member-owned organization where your voice matters. This distinction sets us apart from investor-owned utilities, giving you a direct role in how your cooperative is run.

## The perks of being part of a cooperative

- 1 You drive the decisions.** At CVEC, your needs drive our actions. You have a direct role in shaping the direction of your cooperative, ensuring that every decision reflects the best interests of our members.
- 2 Local leadership.** Our board of directors is made up of members just like you – people who live and work in our community. They understand local concerns and prioritize initiatives that truly benefit our area.

**3 Financial rewards.** Unlike investor-owned utilities that prioritize shareholder profits, any excess revenue we generate is returned to you, our members, in the form of capital credits. Over time, these returns add up, offering you real financial benefits.

**4 Community-focused.** As a cooperative, we are deeply invested in the well-being of our community. From sponsoring local events to supporting educational programs, we actively work to enhance the quality of life in our community.

**5 Sustainable growth.** We are dedicated to the long-term sustainability of our operations and the communities we serve. Our balanced approach to growth ensures that we make decisions that benefit current and future members.

### Let's celebrate together

As we celebrate National Co-op Month this October, we hope you take pride in being part of an organization that puts people first. Your membership in CVEC not only gives you a voice but also strengthens our community.



**From Oct. 1-31, we invite you to participate in our special co-op month contest!** Simply share a note with us – whether it's a question, concern or something you love about your cooperative – and you'll be entered for a chance to win a Meco Electric Grill.

## WAYS TO ENTER

- Visit our headquarters and complete the coupon; or
- Mail in the contest coupon below; or
- Visit our website at [www.cvrec.com](http://www.cvrec.com) and fill out the online form.

While we always value your input, this is a fun way to celebrate National Co-op Month and get involved with your cooperative. We can't wait to hear from you!



*Note: All fields must be completed to qualify for contest entry)*

Member name: \_\_\_\_\_

Service address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: \_\_\_\_\_

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# GRIT AND DETERMINATION BRING AN IOWA CO-OP AND A COMMUNITY BACK FROM DISASTER

BY STEVEN JOHNSON

Sometimes the seventh cooperative principle of concern for community is more than an affirmation. It's a matter of life and death.

When a devastating EF-4 tornado swept through the tightly knit Iowa community of Greenfield on the afternoon of May 21, lineworkers and employees of Farmers Electric Cooperative left their secure, concrete-walled shelter about a mile away as soon as it was safe to do so.

As they entered Greenfield, population about 2,100, they shoved aside debris, pulled survivors from the rubble and tended to the wounded in a community that resembled a war zone.

"We talk about the cooperative principles and how we're like a family," says Holi Weston, CEO of Farmers Electric, whose family lost its century-old home to the tornado. "Tragedy just makes it real. I couldn't be prouder of this group."

The pain from one of the most violent tornadoes on record – peak internal winds topped 300 mph – is still being felt. It left five dead, destroyed or damaged more than 150 homes in Greenfield, ended the school year prematurely and rendered the city fire station and hospital unusable.

But Farmers Electric, with about 5,100 members spread across parts of six counties, is part of a community-wide effort bringing a new sense of normalcy to the spirited city.

"System-wise, we've had more damage from ice storms," says Dave Shike, a lifelong area resident and operations superintendent at Farmers Electric. "But that's a matter of going out and fixing things. The tornado had an impact beyond just the poles and the wires. You're talking about people's lives."



Silos remain twisted and torn and buildings remain damaged weeks after a tornado hit Greenfield. Support for the community has come from near and far. Photos: Steven Johnson



## First rumblings

Tuesday, May 21, began with warnings of volatile weather in Adair County. Weston elected to keep her daughter Maddie, a high school junior and avid track competitor, at home, just in case. Schools released students early because of the tornado threat, the first time that longtime residents can recall such a precaution.

At Farmers Electric, which has 21 full-time employees, the co-op staff gathered as it does before any storm to monitor the potential course of severe weather and review plans for power restoration. Around 3:30 p.m., alarms went off on everyone's phones, a simultaneous cacophony of beeps and buzzes. According to

plan, the staff headed for the co-op "vault," the building's secure zone.

"We had a roll call list in the vault that we've never used before, but we did that day," says Weston, who has been at Farmers Electric since 2009 and CEO since December 2022. "You could just tell it was different."

Different indeed. The staff was in the vault for a couple of minutes at most, but in that time, Weston's husband messaged her that their street was gone. Lineworker Trey Eddy reached his wife, huddled with their two children in the basement of their damaged house. Their neighborhood was wiped out, she told him. Another call and Weston learned her father, Dennis Pickrell, was trapped with a fallen wall on his chest.



**No one had time to think**

Shike knew the tornado had wreaked havoc on the co-op system, but power restoration would have to wait. A group of lineworkers jumped into trucks and headed toward what was left of Southeast First and Second Streets, among them Eddy, also Weston’s neighbor. Weston followed them with Marisa Pickrell, Farmers Electric work order accountant and wife of a cousin of Weston.

“When we were driving for town, I don’t know that we were prepared for what the town was going to look like,” Pickrell shares. “We were running over stuff but at that point, we didn’t care. Let’s just get there. I just kept saying, ‘Oh, my God. Where is all this stuff from?’”

Gas was leaking from the hospital and homes. Residences were ripped from their foundations and scattered everywhere. The tornado had lifted Eddy’s car and hurled it 100 feet away. He and other lineworkers pulled Weston’s father from the caved cinder block wall to safety; he was treated for his injuries and said he could not have sustained his position much longer.

“Then the linemen just took off running,” Weston says. “At that point, they weren’t worried about outages. Our line superintendent wasn’t worried about outages. They were worried about the people, pulling people out of basements. One of our linemen took off his sweatshirt and used it as a tourniquet on a lady’s leg. They took doors and used them as gurneys. A new apprentice was sitting with a challenged adult, just sitting with him until he could get help for a head wound.”

She adds, “I don’t think anybody had time to think. It was just unbelievable.”

**The recovery process begins**

After about 90 minutes, Shike made the call – crews needed to get back into the field and restore power.

“It was just a mess. We were cutting our way through lines. We had 40 poles on the ground,” he says.

Mutual aid came from Clarke Electric Cooperative in Osceola as several lineworkers helped Farmers Electric clear debris and rebuild lines. A small municipal electric utility serves Greenfield, and Farmers Electric reached out to it with support and materials.

Shike says service was restored to members who could safely receive it on Friday, May 24.

“We left a lot of things on the ground to be cleaned up later,” he adds. “We’re still waiting on some members to decide whether they want to rebuild or go in another direction.”

Weston says power restoration had practical and psychological value. “It’s one thing to cross off the list. The power is on. Now we can start cleaning. Now we start cooking meals.”

Shike also gained a new neighbor, as Weston’s family took up residence in a cabin on his property for about two months. The north side of her house was destroyed, though her daughter’s track medals remained untouched on a desk. She and her family are in a rental home until they figure out their

next move. Pickrell and her family, including two daughters, have been living with a brother, while the Eddy family lives in an empty farmhouse owned by the uncle of an electric cooperative foreman.

Relief contributions have been flowing in to deal with an estimated \$30 million in repairs, and the hashtag #greenfieldstrong has been prominent on social media. In late July, the Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI), passed through Greenfield. Farmers Electric closed its office for the day to help with the event, with riders donating about \$10,000 to the Greenfield cause.

“It’s been the longest and shortest few months of my life,” Weston says. “I have always said that I am super thankful for this team we have. We’re a pretty close team, but after the tornado, seeing how everyone supported everyone else shows you that the co-op is a family in good times and bad.”

*Steven Johnson is a contributing writer for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



# Family Dinner FAVORITES

## ITALIAN CASSEROLE

- ½ pound ground pork
- ½ pound ground beef
- ⅓ cup onion, chopped
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 1 can tomato soup
- ⅓ cup water
- 2 cups wide noodles, cooked
- ½ pound Velveeta cheese
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (or more cheese if desired)

Brown pork, beef and onion together. Drain. Add seasonings to the mixture. In a large bowl, combine meat mixture with soup, water, noodles and Velveeta cheese. Place in a 9x12-inch casserole dish or a round casserole dish. Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese around the edges of the casserole (or over the entire casserole). Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. You can also freeze prior to baking and bake later. Casserole is great served with bread sticks and a lettuce salad. *Serves 6*

Dianne Riley • Osceola  
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## BBQ SANDWICHES

- 3 pounds hamburger
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- 3 teaspoons salt
- buns

Brown hamburger with onion, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 20 minutes. Serve on buns. *Serves 30*

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## LOADED BAKED POTATO CASSEROLE

- 1 pound chicken breast, cubed
- 6-8 red-skinned potatoes, cubed
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce, plus more, if desired
- 2 cups cheese, shredded
- 1 cup bacon, crumbled
- 1 cup green onion, diced

Mix the first eight ingredients and bake at 400 degrees F for 55-60 minutes. Top with cheese, bacon and green onion for the last 5 minutes of baking. *Serves 8*

Nancy Hemann • Parkersburg  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative



Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## CHEESY CHICKEN SPAGHETTI

- 16 ounces dry spaghetti, cooked
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese, cubed
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and chopped
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can RO-TEL tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can mushrooms, drained
- ½ cup water
- 1 small onion, diced
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Spray slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray. Combine all ingredients in slow cooker and stir to mix well. Cook on low for 2-3 hours. Stir before serving. *Serves 6-8*

**Arie Schiller • Donnellson  
Access Energy Cooperative**

## HEARTY HAM CASSEROLE

- 4 cups ham, cubed
- 2 cans corn, drained
- 4 cups potatoes, cooked and diced
- 2 tablespoons onion, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- ⅔ cup flour
- 3½ cups milk
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded

In a large bowl, combine ham, corn and potatoes, set aside. Sauté onion and butter for 2 minutes. Stir in flour and blend. Add milk and pepper, then bring mixture to boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Add to the ham mixture and stir. Transfer to a 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with cheese. Bake 5 to 10 minutes longer.

**Bonnie Boot • Pella  
Pella Cooperative Electric Association**

## BACHELOR'S PIE

- 2 pounds hamburger
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cans tomato soup
- 2 cans green beans or mixed vegetables, drained
- 6 cups mashed potatoes
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Brown hamburger and onion in large skillet, drain. Combine with soup and green beans or mixed vegetables. Add salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a 9x13-inch baking pan. Spread mashed potatoes on top (like frosting a cake) and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for about an hour or until cheese melts. *Serves 16*

**Joanne Fox • Sioux City  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

## DEVILED SWISS STEAK

- 1 3-pound beef round steak, 1-inch thick
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 4-ounce can mushroom stems and pieces water
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Cut meat in half for easier handling. Mix mustard, salt and pepper together, then sprinkle over meat. Pound seasonings into both sides of meat. In skillet, quickly brown meat on both sides in hot oil. Drain excess fat. Drain mushrooms, reserving liquid and setting mushrooms aside. Add water to liquid to make ½ cup. Add Worcestershire sauce, then pour liquid mixture over meat. Cover and simmer 1¼ to 1½ hours on low heat or until meat is tender. Add mushrooms and heat through. Transfer meat to platter and pour remaining liquid and mushrooms over meat. *Serves 8*

**Danice Zern • Conrad  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

**WANTED:**

## CHERRY RECIPES

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

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# POWERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR THE PEOPLE OF LAS PEÑAS, GUATEMALA

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Have you ever considered how different your life would be without daily access to electricity? Simple tasks like making coffee, taking a hot shower, washing clothes, refrigerating food, cooking meals or lighting a room would become nearly impossible without safe, reliable electric service.

Living without electricity was common in rural America before electric cooperatives were formed in the 1930s and 1940s, even though most people in cities and towns benefitted from the conveniences of power. Many of us are a generation or two removed from those times; however, 14 linemen from Iowa and Minnesota electric co-ops were able to experience the fulfillment of powering a brighter future for the rural village of Las Peñas, Guatemala, in June.

Through their respective statewide associations, several electric cooperatives from Iowa and

Minnesota teamed up for a rural electrification project through NRECA International, which is affiliated with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Since 1962, NRECA International has brought electricity to more than 220 million people throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

## Working in a mountainous terrain

The team's mission was to build primary and secondary electric distribution infrastructure and wire more than 30 homes in the village of Las Peñas, nestled in mountainous terrain at an elevation of 6,000 feet above sea level.

The daily journey from Jalapa, where the linemen stayed in a hotel, to Las

Peñas took over an hour by vehicle via primitive, narrow dirt roads and switchbacks. During the rainy season, the dirt roads quickly become washed out and impassable by vehicles. Near the end of the project, they had to hike the arduous final mile on foot every day.

Las Peñas is only about 15 miles from the bustling city of Jalapa as the crow flies, but lifestyles in these two locations are vastly different.

"Close your eyes for a moment and imagine you're at a campground with the smell of wood burning. Now add the smell of the livestock barns from the county fairgrounds and the smell of tortillas cooking – that's what it was like to be in Las Peñas,"



A villager checks out electrical equipment, which will power her home.



Linemen worked on steep areas to string wire and place power equipment.

Follow the linemen's journey on our public Facebook group: [2024 Powering a Brighter Future in Guatemala](#)



explains Scott Meinecke, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, who traveled to the village near the completion of the project.

### Electricity will allow girls to attend school

Most of the families of Las Peñas farm corn, coffee beans and other crops by hand and raise pigs and chickens. The women and girls stay close to home, cooking food and tending to household chores.

“Without electricity or reliable refrigeration, girls don’t have time to go to school; they are needed at home to help grind corn and cook every day. Bringing electricity to these rural villages is especially transformative for girls because they can now complete food prep chores on the weekends and store a week’s supply of food in a refrigerator, which means they can go to school and receive an education,” Meinecke says.

### Building infrastructure by hand

Before the linemen arrived, no power lines were serving the village. Villagers helped the local municipal utility set poles for the team, and they got to work immediately stringing primary wire across 3.5 miles of distribution infrastructure. Without modern equipment like bucket trucks, all the work had to be completed by hand.

Mike Berkenpas of North West REC says many of the spans in the mountains were 1,000 feet or more between poles because of the unbelievably steep terrain. For context, spans between poles in Iowa are set to a standard of approximately 200 feet. Bailey Bautsch of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative was impressed with how the villagers helped the linemen pull up the wire and carried tools during the project.

The rain was challenging throughout the project, prompting the team to be thankful for the maintained roads back home.

“When it rains, you can’t get to the village without walking. The road is only built for tractors, horses and mules, and it was built 3 weeks before we got here,” explains Hunter Venz of Prairie Energy Cooperative.



Linemen from Iowa and Minnesota pose with Las Peñas villagers.

The following **Iowa electric cooperatives** and **linemen** participated in this year’s effort. Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, **Jason Donnelly**; East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative, **Brian Reidy**; Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative, **Andy Koopmann**; Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, **Bailey Bautsch**; Midland Power Cooperative, **Tanner Dreier**; North West Rural Electric Cooperative, **Mike Berkenpas**; Prairie Energy Cooperative, **Hunter Venz**.

When the linemen finished wiring more than 30 homes for electricity, it was time to celebrate.

“June 18 was supposed to be the inauguration and lighting ceremony; however, we finished a few days early, so we loaded up water filters and the things we bought for the villagers to help make their lives easier. We met them about halfway down the mountain since driving on the road was still too dangerous. We had a small ceremony on the road and thanked them for all their help over the past days we were onsite,” shares Brian Reidy of East-Central Iowa REC.

“Their mayor gave a speech, thanking all who were involved in the long process to get power to the village over the past several years. We handed out the things we brought and said our goodbyes, loaded the remaining gear and headed back up and off the mountain for the last time. What a memorable and humbling experience – I’m not sure words could ever articulate what we experienced.”

### Electricity is a doorway to opportunity

As the linemen shared photos of the project and the village, a young boy standing outside the doorway of his home as a lineman wires it for electricity is a metaphor for how electricity provides a doorway to new opportunities for the next generation.

Electrification transformed rural America over 80 years ago, and today, it’s happening in remote Guatemalan villages as they gain access to electricity. Electricity provides access to safer cooking and lighting, easier chores, safer food and water, higher-quality education, better healthcare and more. Participating in these international electrification projects connects us even more to our cooperative mission of powering lives and empowering communities.

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



A young boy stands outside as his home is wired for electricity.



Scan the QR code to watch the project video.

# THE REMARKABLE AFFORDABILITY OF ELECTRICITY

Did you know that the average American household is spending less on electricity as a percentage of its income, even with our growing reliance on digital conveniences?

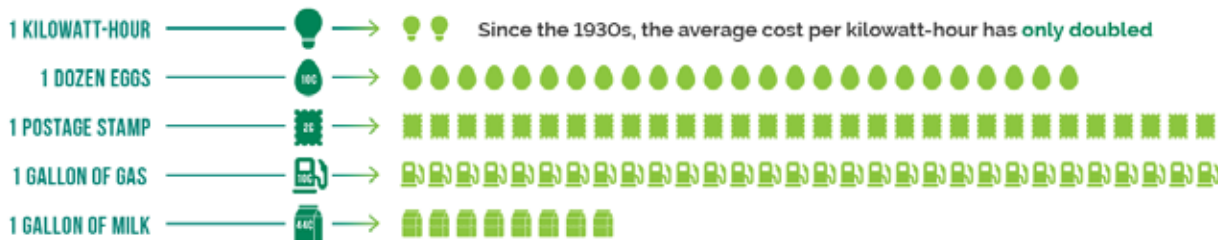
In Iowa, the average household served by electric cooperatives, like Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC), pays about \$5.25 per day for electricity – less than the cost of a sandwich or a specialty coffee. Despite significant increases in the cost of most goods and services over the past 85 years, electricity remains very affordable.

At CVEC, we are dedicated to helping our members use energy efficiently through various programs, rebates and incentives, allowing you to allocate your hard-earned money to other priorities. As a member-owned cooperative, we focus on controlling local costs and keeping rates and fees as low as possible. Unlike investor-owned utilities driven by profit, our rates are cost-based, ensuring that we serve your best interests.

## COST COMPARISON:

1930s

TODAY



# MARCHELLE BROWN SHINES WITH DIRECTOR GOLD CREDENTIAL



Congratulations to Marchelle for reaching this impressive milestone!

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is thrilled to share that Director Marchelle Brown has earned the Director Gold Credential from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). This prestigious recognition is a testament to Marchelle’s hard work and dedication to leading our cooperative with excellence.

The Director Gold Credential is not just a mark of achievement – it’s a celebration of going the extra mile. To earn this honor, Marchelle completed both the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificate programs, and then took additional courses to deepen her expertise. Plus, it requires ongoing education every two years to keep her skills sharp.

Marchelle’s dedication to learning and leadership helps ensure that CVEC continues to thrive and serve our members with the highest level of care.

“Director Brown’s achievement reflects her strong commitment to both her role and our cooperative community. Her drive for continuous improvement keeps CVEC strong and ready for whatever comes next,” says Troy Amoss, CEO/general manager of CVEC.



# BOGIE'S STEAK HOUSE: A MULTIGENERATIONAL LEGACY IN ALBIA

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Since 1990, Bogie's Steak House has been a beloved dining destination in Albia, renowned for its warm family atmosphere and top-quality steaks. Founded by Kevin and Toni Walter, the restaurant has grown into a multigenerational business that thrives on a blend of exceptional food, loyal customers and a dedication to family values.

The couple's foray into restaurant ownership began when they decided to fill a niche in the local community.

"There was no place for us to go and get steaks," Toni recalls. "So, we decided to create a restaurant, even though neither of us had any experience in the restaurant business."

The Walters bought a vacant building, renovated it and installed an open-pit grill, setting the foundation for what would become one of Iowa's most treasured restaurants. Their vision was simple: to create a place to serve the food they loved. A straightforward approach and commitment to quality have kept customers returning for decades.

Bogie's Steak House is more than a business; it's a family tradition. Kevin and Toni's grandson Jayce Riley grew up immersed in the restaurant's operations. From an early age, he was involved in every aspect, from serving to cooking. Today, Jayce runs the day-to-day operations, continuing the family legacy with the same passion and dedication his grandparents instilled in him.

## Quality and consistency are the centerpiece

Many patrons have been dining at Bogie's for decades, including one customer who still frequents the restaurant after having been one of the

first through its doors on opening night more than three decades ago. Recently, a guest, while waiting for a table, counted license plates from 29 counties and seven states in the parking lot.

"We've had customers from every state in the U.S.," Jayce says, adding that even a youth baseball team from Hawaii once visited.

The food is the centerpiece of the restaurant's appeal. Bogie's is known for its carefully sourced Midwest beef, which Jayce personally cuts and ages using a secret technique passed down from his grandparents. The restaurant team also grinds its own burgers and cuts its own steaks.

Bogie's offers an array of classic steak house fare, including filet, ribeye, sirloin and prime rib, along with some delicious sides like their famous pan-fried potatoes, which are only available on Saturdays. What sets Bogie's apart is not just the quality of the food but also the consistency.

"People tell us it's just as good today as it was 20 or 25 years ago," Kevin says. That consistency, coupled with a commitment to keeping the restaurant as clean and inviting as it was on day one, has earned Bogie's a reputation for excellence.

## Community connection and longevity

While Bogie's Steak House remains integral to the Albia community, its influence reaches far beyond the local area. Customers from across the country visit the restaurant for its famous steaks and welcoming environment. Many customers are part of the restaurant's extended "family," with some even bringing their children and grandchildren to enjoy the same experience they've cherished for years.



Pictured from left to right: (Back) Kevin Walter, Carter Koffman and Jayce Riley. (Front) Courtney Riley, Toni Walter and Amie Koffman.



Kevin and Toni Walter.



Steaks are cut and aged in-house.

Though Bogie's doesn't advertise, it has garnered widespread recognition through word of mouth and its feature on Iowa Public Television's "This is Iowa," which brought in new customers from across the state and beyond.

## The next generation

Jayce and his wife are expecting their first child, and he is excited to welcome the next generation to the family business. He hopes the legacy of the business will continue for the next 35 years and beyond.

Whether you're a local or a visitor from afar, Bogie's Steak House offers an authentic dining experience where exceptional food and family values come together in the heart of Iowa.

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

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# DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2024-2025 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. If you receive alimony or child support, it will need to be verified too.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Family Investment Program (FIP), Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days. For FIP recipients, bring your current DHS

Notice of Decision or contact your local office for acceptable document information.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025. The start date is Oct. 1, 2024, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit [hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap](https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap). To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Income Maximums	
Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$30,120
2	\$40,880
3	\$51,640
4	\$62,400
5	\$73,160
6	\$83,920
7	\$94,680
8	\$105,440

**Note:** For households with more than eight members, add \$10,760 for each additional member.



# COME BACK TO SILENCE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Here on the farm, harvest is one of the busiest times of the year. Days are short, to-do lists are long, and it's always a race against time and the weather to get the corn and soybeans in the bin.

Machines provide a constant soundtrack to all this activity. Everywhere you turn, the roar of combines, tractors, semi-trucks and grain dryers never wanes. As much as I love this exciting time of year, my thoughts turn to something I heard a speaker address this past summer.

That young man is a pastor and an avid outdoor enthusiast who cherishes his annual summer trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Located in northern Minnesota, this massive area contains more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes, 12 hiking trails and 2,000 campsites.

"This wilderness offers freedom to those who wish to pursue an experience of expansive solitude," proclaims the U.S. Forest Service on its website.

Hmmmm, expansive solitude. What an intriguing concept.

The young man noted it's illegal to have a motor running in the BWCAW. What a stark contrast to daily life. Nearly everywhere you go, there's a motor running, from the car engine to the hum of the refrigerator or the whirl of a fan.

"For most of human history, people weren't overwhelmed with noise," the young man added. "Our souls aren't designed to be inundated with noise. We need to withdraw from the world periodically and seek more silence."

## Turn down the volume

Consider the remarkable phenomenon that transforms people when they spend time in the BWCAW. The newbies seem agitated

for the first few days without all the electronic distractions that dominate modern life. After a couple of days, however, a "wilderness detox" kicks in.

The young man noted that his buddies who go with him to the BWCAW start enjoying life at a slower pace. It's not unusual to see them sitting by the campfire, just watching the flames, mindlessly poking the ashes with a stick. They are content.

"When we learn how to be quiet and listen, something deep inside us awakens," the young man said. "Our spirit is alert and paying attention."

The true power of silence emerges in the space it creates for reflection and understanding. Silence becomes a source of great strength.

## Commit to listening

Silence can be uncomfortable, however, because we don't practice it.

Valuing silence also requires you to answer some key questions. Whose voice is the loudest in my life? What voices do I need to turn down? How can I listen for those gentle whispers that matter most?

It's possible to carve out silence, even in our chaotic, noisy world. The young man who savors the silence of the

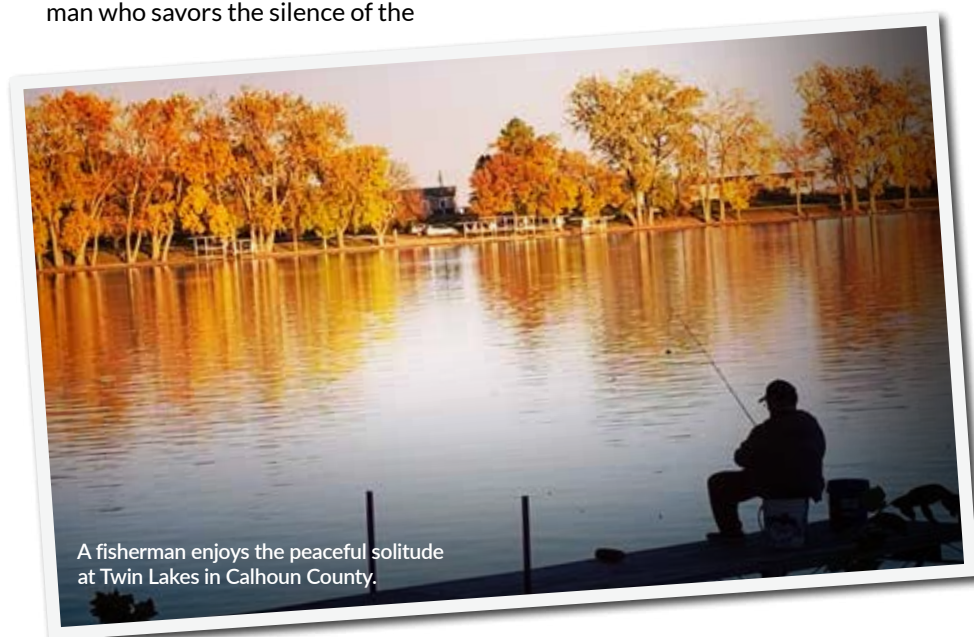
BWCAW urges us to accept one of these three challenges this week:

- 1 Enjoy silence next time you're traveling in your vehicle.** That means no music, phone calls, talk radio or podcasts.
- 2 Seek silence under the stars.** Go outside, and gaze at the night sky. Marvel at the beauty and grandeur of the heavens.
- 3 Carve out 5 minutes for silence each day.** Sit quietly in the morning before your day begins or take 5 minutes in the evening just to breathe, calm down and experience the silence. Set a timer on your phone so you don't have to watch the clock.

While these might seem challenging at first, pick one and give it a try. Once you do, seeking silence will become like water or air – essential to your very existence.

Silence allows us to channel our energies, provides the clarity we need to face challenges and calms our soul. That's a bountiful harvest indeed.

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



A fisherman enjoys the peaceful solitude at Twin Lakes in Calhoun County.



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