

● SEPTEMBER 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



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Shine the Light winners

Electric reliability under
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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Nicole Meyer, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

FALL INTO SAFETY THIS SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



The kids are back in school and harvest season is almost here. Now is an ideal time to review some important safety precautions for fall.

Safety in the field

As you head out to the fields during harvest, always keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If your equipment comes into contact with a power pole or power line, stay in the cab and call your local utility or 911 to report the contact. Keep others away from you or from touching the vehicle. Do not exit the vehicle until an authority tells you the line has been deenergized. If your equipment is on fire and you need to exit, jump clear of the cab with both feet together and shuffle step with both feet on the ground until you are 50 feet away to avoid electrocution.

Look up and live

Cleaning gutters or working on the roof this fall? Always choose a non-conductive ladder made of wood or fiberglass for utmost safety. Pick a safe route to carry the ladder to the work area, and then carry it horizontally rather than upright. Be aware of electrical lines and tree branches in the area where you are working. When using an extension ladder, tie off the top of the ladder whenever possible.

Use the 1:4 lean ratio – the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet the ladder rises – to ensure a stable working platform.

Move over or slow down

We need your help in keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road to work safely; their families thank you!

Test your portable generators

Take advantage of the nice weather to run and test your portable

generators before a potential winter power outage. Operate your generator on a stable, dry surface and avoid rainy or wet conditions. Do not use a generator in an enclosed area; make sure the space is well-ventilated and be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be deadly. Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator, and always allow the generator to cool before refueling. Finally, never plug your portable generator into your home as it can back feed onto the electric grid and endanger our lineworkers.

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A TORO CORDLESS LEAF BLOWER!

The leaves will soon be falling, and a leaf blower is a must-have tool for your yard. This brushless leaf-blower tool provides powerful air speed and 70 minutes of runtime on a single charge. It comes with a 2.0-Ah battery and a Toro battery charger.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Sept. 30.

You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric

cooperatives to win. There's

no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the pressure washer from the July issue was **Jennifer Meier**, a **T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

A LOOK BACK AT OUTAGES ON JULY 23

BY TROY AMOSS



I want to provide an update on the power outages and blinks that impacted nearly 1,200 members in the city of Albia

on July 23. For about five hours that day and evening, many of you experienced service interruptions, and I understand how frustrating that was.

Here's what happened: The issue was traced back to a settings glitch in two of our electronic reclosing devices due to a software update. These devices play a critical role in managing the flow of electricity and maintaining system stability. When the glitch occurred, it disrupted the

normal operation of these devices, leading to the power outages and blinks you experienced.

Identifying the cause of an outage can sometimes be quite tricky. Our team sifted through various potential issues, ran diagnostic tests and carefully analyzed system data to pinpoint the exact problem. It's a process that requires both patience and precision, as even minor glitches in complex systems can cause significant disruptions.

Once we identified the issue, our team quickly focused on resolving it. They worked diligently to implement a fix, which involved recalibrating and adjusting the settings of the affected devices. I'm relieved to report that

once these adjustments were made, we were able to restore normal power and ensure the reliability of our system.

We understand how frustrating it can be when the power goes out, and we sincerely appreciate your patience as we navigated this challenge. Moments like this remind us of the importance of staying vigilant and continuously improving our technology to better serve you.

If you have any lingering questions or if you run into any other issues, don't hesitate to give me a call at 641-932-7126.

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

MEET DALE CLARK, YOUR NEWLY ELECTED DIRECTOR

One of the core Cooperative Principles emphasizes the importance of member participation, including the opportunity to serve on your cooperative's board. Serving on the board requires significant time and dedication, but

the rewards are substantial: gaining insight into key issues, and experiencing the personal fulfillment of serving your friends, business associates and fellow members.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is thrilled to welcome Dale Clark as our new District 3 director! Clark was elected by the membership during our 2024 Annual Meeting on Aug. 5 at CVEC's headquarters.

Clark, a dedicated resident of Corydon, has been a valued cooperative member for 26 years. He and his wife Joetta are proud parents of four children: Daniel, Jeffrey, Joshua and Kyle.

With a distinguished 28-year career at Wayne County Hospital, where he excelled as a plant operations and maintenance specialist as well as the safety director, Clark brings a wealth of experience to the board. His career honed his skills in business management, budgeting and accounting, further enriched by his

experience managing two rental properties.

Clark's commitment to community service is evident through his active roles on various boards and committees, including the Iowa Archaeology Society, Prairie Trails Museum, Wayne County Pioneer Cemetery Commission and as a South Fork Township Wayne County trustee.

When discussing the critical issues facing the cooperative, Clark highlighted the importance of focusing on renewable energy, maintaining our current infrastructure and upgrading components to meet today's energy demands.



Join us in extending a warm welcome to Director Clark! His passion and dedication are vital to the continued success and growth of your cooperative.



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CVEC AWARDS Q2 2024 OPERATION ROUND UP® FUNDS

We are thrilled to announce the recipients of Operation Round Up®'s 2024 second-quarter funds, made possible by the generosity of our members at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC). Through Operation Round Up, members opt to round up their electric bills to the nearest whole dollar, with the spare change collectively pooled and distributed as grants by the Chariton Valley Electric Operation Round Up Foundation Board.

In July, after careful review of the submitted applications, the foundation board awarded \$9,067 to deserving local organizations. Thanks to the collective efforts of CVEC members, the following organizations have received grants:

■ **Appanoose County Lords Cupboard:** The \$1,500 grant will enable the purchase of a new freezer/refrigerator, significantly enhancing their ability to store and

distribute fresh and frozen food items to those in need. This crucial support will boost the pantry's efforts in the community, ensuring more families have access to nutritious food and allowing them to continue their mission of providing essential resources to those in need.

■ **Circle of Freedom:** The \$4,394 grant will support the purchase and construction of a storage shed, including the preparation of the land and foundation. This project will create a more comfortable and efficient environment for staff, volunteers and the individuals they serve, enhancing their ability to organize and store items and ultimately improving the overall experience of the program. Circle of Freedom is a residential recovery home that offers women a safe place to get grounded, find solutions to addiction and begin life reestablishment.

■ **Monroe County Fair Incorporated:** The \$3,173 grant will go toward purchasing new, energy-efficient air conditioning units for the Exhibit Hall Building. These funds will help create a more comfortable and enjoyable environment for exhibitors and visitors, enhancing the overall experience at the fair.

These grants highlight the significant impact that Operation Round Up has on the communities we serve. We extend our appreciation to our members for their continued support of this program, which directly benefits local organizations. We are dedicated to maintaining this tradition of giving and encourage organizations to apply for future grants.

For more information and to access application documents, visit www.cvrec.com. Applications are due by Sept. 30.



LESLIE KAUFMAN TAKES THE HELM OF STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

On July 26, Leslie Kaufman began her new role as the executive vice president and general manager (EVP/GM) of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), the statewide trade association serving Iowa's electric cooperatives. After a comprehensive executive search, the IAEC board selected Kaufman to succeed Chuck Soderberg, who retired this summer after nine years of service at IAEC. She is the association's sixth EVP/GM in IAEC's 82-year history.

We sat down with Kaufman during her first week on the job to learn more about her and the plans she has for serving Iowa's electric cooperatives.



Leslie Kaufman is pictured with Chuck Soderberg, former executive vice president and general manager of the the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Q: What compelled you to apply for the EVP/GM position at IAEC?

After previously serving as an association executive, I believe I can positively contribute to an organization at a higher level.

When I saw the posting for the EVP/GM opening at IAEC, I noted the many similarities between the association and the statewide association I was working for at that time, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC). The programming, staff size and structure were very similar, so my skills and experiences fit well with IAEC's model.

IAEC's core values align with my own personal values, so I knew there would be a sense of shared purpose. Our family has traveled to and through Iowa several times over the years, and once we knew of the opening, my husband and I revisited the Des Moines area. We really liked it and felt like it was a place we could easily call home. I am honored by the board's confidence in me to lead IAEC in this next chapter of serving electric cooperative members.

Q: During your initial days on the job, what were your first impressions of IAEC and Iowa's electric cooperatives?

The staff and members that I have met have welcomed me wholeheartedly. The staff is incredibly talented and committed to serving the membership. The IAEC board takes its responsibilities very seriously and wants the organization to provide value to its members.

Q: In your first few months at IAEC, what will be your focus/strategy?

Overall, I want to ensure a smooth leadership transition for members, staff and the association as a whole.

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces. I also want to know members' thoughts on IAEC's services and programs, particularly if IAEC could provide different or additional services to help members succeed. These discussions tie into the association's strategic objective

to evaluate/expand services. Meeting legislative and government leaders and fellow utility and association peers is also a priority.

Q: What would you like to share with readers about your work with cooperatives in Kansas?

For 20 years, I had the privilege of working for cooperative members in Kansas. As president/CEO of the Kansas Cooperative Council (Council), I worked primarily with agriculture cooperatives of all sizes, from single stations to the largest farmer-owned cooperatives in the U.S. The Council also served as an umbrella association for all types of cooperatives in Kansas, including the statewide associations for

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces.

electric co-ops and credit unions, the Farm Credit system, and telecommunications cooperatives.

The Council supported KEC, the Kansas statewide, in their lobbying efforts and that relationship eventually led me to KEC over six years ago. While at KEC, I led the organization's advocacy efforts, including public policy development, lobbying, much of the regulatory work, grassroots outreach and legal activities.

Q: What are some activities and achievements from KEC that you are most proud of accomplishing?

During my first legislative session at KEC, we secured a significant victory for co-ops related to service territory protection. In Kansas, municipalities can unilaterally annex co-op electric service territory and displace the co-op. If the area taken was prime for development, but service had not yet been extended into the territory, the co-op was not compensated for that lost opportunity. We capitalized on some unexpected opportunities and succeeded in moving legislation providing notice and an opportunity to bid to remain the service provider. If not allowed to do so, the legislation

My goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative.

created a 10-year window in which the co-op could receive a percentage of revenues from new services that developed in the annexed area.

We secured another significant legislative victory for electric cooperatives, statutorily reversing a decision from the Kansas Corporation Commission that would have required electric utilities to assume liability for marking underground lines they did not own or control and may not have known even existed. We advanced legislation recognizing the electric utility's responsibility for marking extends only to lines the utility owns or controls.

I led the effort to launch an adopt-a-legislator program to connect legislators who did not have co-op service territory in their district with an electric cooperative. Beneficial and meaningful relationships

were forged across party lines and geographic boundaries, fostering greater understanding of cooperatives and the issues they face. Members and lawmakers are truly enjoying opportunities to work together.

Q: Tell us about your family.

My husband Mike is a band and music teacher at a small, rural school. He teaches in the town I grew up in, but I had graduated and left for college before he was hired at the school. He had already committed to teaching the 2024-25 school year when I was offered the EVP/GM position at IAEC, so he will finish out this school year in Kansas and then join me full-time in Iowa.

We have two children. Our oldest, Jared, is married to Megan, and they live in Fairmount, Indiana. Jared is an assistant pastor, and Megan is a social worker. Our daughter Emily is also an assistant pastor and works at a church in Brookings, South Dakota.

Q: What attractions in Iowa are you looking forward to experiencing?

We have already attended an Iowa Cubs game and look forward to seeing more games. We also hear great things about the farmers markets in the Des Moines area. I want to go to Pella Tulip Time next spring.

Q: Do you have a mantra or words to live by?

Professionally, my goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative. As a 4-H alum, their motto, "To make the best better," still resonates with me and reminds me that there is always something more that can be done to improve a program, service or process. Another favorite saying is from a sign a friend has on her office wall. It's very simple: "Work hard and be nice."

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



Leslie Kaufman (second from right) is pictured with her family, which includes her daughter Emily (left), son Jared and his wife Megan (center), and husband Mike.



TAILGATE BITES

STUFFED HOT PEPPERS

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- ½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 6 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder

15-20 mini sweet peppers or hot peppers

Mix all ingredients except peppers. Cut peppers in half lengthwise and remove seeds. Spread cheese mixture in pepper halves. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-30 minutes. If using sweet peppers, add some chopped hot peppers to the cheese mixture if desired.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

RANCH CHICKEN

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
Lawry's Seasoned Salt, to taste
- 1 cup ranch style dressing
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Trim excess fat off chicken. Season with Lawry's and place in bowl. Pour ranch dressing over chicken and sprinkle with pepper. Allow to marinate for 1-2 hours or cook immediately. Grill on a wood pellet grill until internal temperature is 165 degrees F. Serves 4-6

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SIMPLE CHEESE DIP

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 block cheese
- 1 can pizza sauce
- tortilla chips

Cook ground beef, then combine with cheese and pizza sauce in a slow cooker. Heat until melted. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 12

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

GRIDIRON GUACAMOLE

- 3 avocados, pitted
- 1 small jalapeño, finely chopped, remove seeds if desired
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped plus more for serving
- ¼ cup small white or red onion, finely chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, optional
- tortilla chips

In a large bowl, mix avocados, jalapeño, cilantro, onion, lime juice, salt and nutritional yeast, if desired. Slowly turn bowl as you run a fork through the mixture to ensure guacamole stays chunky. Continue until desired consistency is reached. Top with additional cilantro and serve with tortilla chips. Serves 6

Jeffrey Hedquist • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

CHILI SAUCE FOR HOT DOGS

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 can kidney beans

Brown ground beef, onion and garlic, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until heated. *Serves 16-20*

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

TAILGATE PARTY MIX

- 4 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 4 cups Corn Chex cereal
- 2 cups cheese crackers
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 4 cups cheese popcorn

Mix cereal and crackers together. Melt butter and add taco seasoning, stir well. Pour over cereal and stir until evenly coated. Microwave 3 minutes. Cool for 30 minutes, then stir in popcorn. Store in air-tight container.

Mary Gropper • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

TAILGATE BRUNCH ENCHILADAS

- 2 cups ham, fully cooked and cubed
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 10 8-inch flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt

Combine ham and onion. Place about ½ cup of mixture down the center of each tortilla. Top each with 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up tortilla and place seam side down in a greased 9x13-inch pan. In a bowl, combine flour, milk, eggs and salt. Stir well, then pour over tortillas. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes. Sprinkle with any remaining cheese and bake 3 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 10*

Mary Beth Peiffer • Cedar Rapids
Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



SLOW COOKER SHREDDED CHICKEN NACHOS

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 1-ounce packet taco seasoning
- 1 15.5-ounce can corn, drained
- 1 15.5-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup salsa
- ½ lime, juiced
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced for garnish
- tortilla chips or cooked rice

Place chicken breasts in bottom of slow cooker. Season the tops of the chicken with half of the taco seasoning. Pour the corn, beans, salsa and remaining taco seasoning on top of the chicken. Cook on low for 6-8 hours, or until chicken is cooked through and the internal temperature has reached 165 degrees F. Remove the chicken to shred, then return to slow cooker. Stir in the lime juice and garnish with fresh cilantro. Serve immediately over tortilla chips or a bed of rice. *Serves 4*

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County REC

WANTED:

BREAD WINNERS

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

Submit your **favorite bread recipe**. 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.)

MAIL: Recipes

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MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

Judy Hess is pictured second from the left.



COMMUNITY BEACON

JUDY HESS AND THE MAGS REVITALIZE FONDA

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their fourth-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

The judging committee reviewed essays from 75 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Judy Hess**, who is recognized for community dedication and innovation through Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc.; **Doug Pralle**, who is recognized for his generous efforts through Compassion Flights; and **Beth Thole**, who is recognized for her commitment to preserving the area's agricultural heritage.

These three winners have been awarded a \$3,000 donation to their charity. The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities.

Learn more at www.iowaShineTheLight.com.

When Kerry Noethe heard about the Shine the Light contest, one name stood out instantly: Judy Hess. As the vibrant founder of Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc. (MAGs), Hess represents the heart and soul of community dedication and innovation.

"I've always admired the group's dedication," Noethe shares. "Judy has always been a good leader. I've been part of volunteer programs in the past, and I know how important it was to me when my children were young. Keeping people aware of the community and showing it's a good place to live is valuable even though we're a bedroom community.

Judy is always looking for new ideas, and she's just a great motivator."

Amanda Johnson, a dedicated member of MAGs, highlights the group's profound connection to their hometown.

"I think we have a lot of pride about our hometown of Fonda," Johnson says. "Our kids and our grandkids are really important to us, so it's just a no-brainer to do things that benefit our community and our kids."

For Noethe, now a grandmother herself, the value of a thriving community is deeply personal.



“My grandchildren are 16 and 13, and they have been coming to Fonda since they were babies,” she explains.

“Our little towns are just dying out. We want to keep Fonda a place where our kids can play and enjoy our town, keeping it a community where people want to live and raise their families.”

Maintaining community spirit and vitality

Hess launched MAGs in 2018, and the group’s momentum has been unstoppable ever since.

“We put the group together in 2018, setting up the pool. We put everything toward the youth,” Hess explains. “We gave them a freezer and refrigerator to use. We added a slide, lawn chairs, a water filler and a drinking fountain in the park. We’ve organized various fundraisers for the group.”

Every MAGs project relies on volunteer efforts, donations and grants.

“I got some people together,” Hess recalls. “Everyone was excited about it, and we started doing fundraisers. We have Chicken Bingo, and we’ve organized different community events and hosted a father/daughter dance.”

Other fundraising events feature a variety of activities, including festive Christmas events, an exciting rodeo and many more community gatherings.

MAGs is raising funds to replace the outdated public basketball court. The new court, projected to cost \$78,000, will feature a regulation-size VersaCourt floor with official markings and new baskets. Hess hopes the project will be completed by 2025.

Hess and MAGs are significantly impacting Fonda, turning it into a more vibrant and welcoming community. Their unwavering commitment ensures that the town remains a cherished place for current and future generations.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



WHERE HOPE GROWS WINGS
FLYING THE COMPASSIONATE SKIES WITH DOUG PRALLE

Doug Pralle is pictured with his airplane.

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Doug Pralle has been flying since 2008, but his journey into the skies started much earlier, rooted in an emotional childhood memory.

“When I was a kid, my Dad died at an early age,” Pralle recalls. “I found some of his pilot books. He was training to be a pilot. I think, as an 8-year-old, it kind of tied me to him. Once I got old enough and could afford it, I got my license.”

One particular childhood memory stands out, shaping his future endeavors.

“My Dad was in a hospital in Chicago, and the doctor gave us his limo to take to a Cubs game. As a kid, you remember that stuff. His kindness created a spark in me,” Pralle reflects.

That spark ignited a spirit for giving back. In 2008 and 2009, Pralle flew a local child and his mother to Rochester for cancer treatment.

“Years later, I started thinking about ways to give back and use some of the skills we built over time, so we started Compassion Flights,” he says.

Wings of hope

Compassion Flights, a nonprofit organization, offers free flights to those in need of medical care. Pralle and Compassion Flights fly patients from

Iowa to surrounding states, working with other groups for longer trips.

The process of applying for a compassion flight is simple. Those in need or who know someone in need can visit www.compassionflights.com, fill out an online flight request, and get a response directly from Pralle or his wife.

When Pralle isn’t flying for Compassion Flights, he’s working his day job as a crop duster, spraying fields with an airplane or helicopter, and farming with his brother. The nonprofit operates entirely on donations.

“We are here for everyone,” Pralle emphasizes. “We work 100% on donations. No one takes any wage. My spray business pays for most of the bills, from the lighting and heating. When people donate money, they donate it directly to a flight.”

Each flight costs about \$500, depending on various factors. Despite the costs and the challenges, Pralle remains committed to his mission.

“Our motto is ‘Where Hope Grows Wings,’” he says. “We’re trying to help somebody not think about what’s actually going on in their life. We want to just get them away from everything for a little bit.”

Through Compassion Flights, Pralle offers more than just transportation – he provides a lifeline – a moment of relaxation and a twinkle of hope for those navigating the toughest times of their lives.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



ELECTRIC RELIABILITY UNDER ATTACK BY GOVERNMENT RULES

BY MARK VIGUET

During previous winter storms and summer heat waves, many electric cooperatives set records for seasonal electricity demand. Through the extreme conditions, Associated Electric Cooperative (Associated) – the power generator for electric cooperatives in southeast Iowa, Missouri and northeast Oklahoma – and its six transmission cooperative member-owners kept the power flowing reliably using a balanced portfolio of generation sources, including coal and natural gas power plants, hydropower, wind and a resilient transmission system.

While other utility companies resorted to rolling blackouts during the harsh weather, Associated kept power flowing, thanks in large part to the 24/7 coal power plants and natural gas generation designed to work when they are most needed, regardless of weather conditions.

The future is cloudy

But the potential for a less reliable electric system looms. Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a new rule targeting existing coal-fired and new gas-fired power plants with the goal of shutting down all fossil fuel power plants. This controversial rule will have devastating effects on the reliability of the electric grid by speeding up the retirements of coal and natural gas plants, which produce 60% of the energy in the U.S.

Reliability is not a concern of the EPA. The result for electric cooperatives is

less reliable and more expensive electricity for their members. For those reasons, the EPA has been challenged in multiple lawsuits by a coalition of utilities in 27 states.

Fossil fuel generation delivers unmatched reliability

Associated's diverse mix of generation resources keeps reliability and affordability as the top priorities for the electricity generated and delivered to members. As pressure from the EPA causes more reliable fossil fuel plants to shut down prematurely, what energy source will fill the gap? Coal and natural gas plants are the backbone of reliable and affordable power for electric cooperatives because they are available when needed 24/7. Renewable sources, such as wind and solar, cannot provide power with that same reliability.

When coal plants and natural gas generators are replaced by weather-dependent, intermittent sources like solar and wind, reliability will suffer while prices increase. Until there is a proven alternative with equal reliability, fossil fuel generation is a key part of keeping the lights on.

A cleaner environment

Those who rely on the land, air and water for their livelihoods are deeply invested in taking care of the environment they depend upon. For electric cooperatives, safeguarding rural communities is a foundational value demonstrated through a history of proactive stewardship and compliance with state and federal regulations.

“Given that clean air, water and land resources mean so much to the electric cooperative members we serve, our commitment to the environment is not just talk, but put into action,” says Buster Geisendorfer, board president of Associated. “Cooperative member-ownership and leadership of our cooperative ensures our values reflect those who use our electricity.”

Since 1993, Associated and its member-owners have spent more than \$1.1 billion to reduce air emissions by 90% at its coal power plants. The improvements, which included a milestone conversion to cleaner low-sulfur coal, were the leading edge of Associated's proactive environmental work.



Protecting water and air resources

Since 2015, Associated and its members have invested more than \$202 million to meet coal and water mandates issued by the EPA, funding coal ash and water quality projects, including pond closures, water systems and groundwater quality monitoring. Part of that total includes \$69 million in recent projects for both New Madrid Power Plant and Thomas Hill Energy Center to remain compliant.



Cleaner energy

Associated Electric Cooperative's long-term commitment to a healthy environment includes the following.

Carbon cut

From 2005 to 2023, Associated has reduced its carbon emissions rate by nearly 25%.

Wind power

The addition of eight wind farms since 2007 has lowered carbon emissions.

Natural gas generation

Associated has added cleaner-burning natural gas plants, which results in carbon reduction.

Greenhouse gas drop

Since 1994, Associated has reduced total greenhouse gas emissions by 90%.

Environmental investments

Since 2015, Associated has invested more than \$202 million to meet coal and water mandates issued by the EPA.

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) set a new attendance record at the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members, held Monday, Aug. 5, at the CVEC headquarters. This year's drive-through format drew an impressive 673 individual memberships, setting a new record and showcasing the strong response from our members to this innovative meeting format.

"Our members have clearly embraced this new approach," says CVEC CEO/General Manager Troy Amoss. "The numbers speak volumes about their engagement and support."

As a member-owned electric cooperative, CVEC is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. Traditionally, our annual meeting involved a sit-down meal and in-person discussions. However, due to COVID-19, the format was shifted to virtual in 2020. Since then, we've adapted each year to find the most effective way to connect with our members.

"Looking ahead, we recognize that our members appreciate convenience," Amoss notes. "Next year, the board will continue to balance the convenience of modern formats with the value of traditional meetings."

This year's meeting included an important board election. The cooperative welcomed Dale Clark as the new District 3 director, succeeding Wes Green, who retired after 12 years of service. John Houser was re-elected for District 1, and Norm Major was re-elected for District 5. The minutes of the 2023 CVEC Annual Meeting were also approved by the membership.

As part of our tradition, members who returned their ballots by Monday at 4 p.m. were entered into a drawing for a chance to win a \$250 energy credit or one of five \$50 energy credits. Those who attended the drive-through event were entered into a separate



Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is grateful to everyone who participated. Be sure to check your *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine and our website for updates as we begin to plan for next year's event.

"Given that clean air, water and land resources mean so much to the electric cooperative members we serve, our commitment to the environment is not just talk, but put into action."

- Buster Geisendorfer
Associated Electric Cooperative board president

Make your opinion known today

Meeting reliability and environmental responsibilities is an ongoing commitment made more challenging and costly by recent EPA rules. Today more than ever, reliable and affordable power is at risk.

You can help. Send a letter to your members of Congress telling them to support reliable power by halting the EPA's unrealistic, unnecessary and expensive rules.

Mark Viguet is the managing director of corporate communications for Associated Electric Cooperative.

drawing for a chance to win a \$500 energy credit or one of ten \$100 energy credits.

Mail-in ballot prizes

\$50 energy credit winners

- Patricia Russell
- Mary McClure
- Shelda or Warren Lunsford
- Trudy Calvert
- Jennifer or Matthew Cronin

\$250 energy credit winner

- Janet or Dale Maddison

Attendance prizes

\$100 energy credit winners

- St. Mary's Weller
- Todd A. Ryan
- Sosia N. Kipfer
- Karen Caldwell
- Joyce A. Robinson
- Thomas A. Teno
- Mary L. Fisher
- Steve or Karen Arter
- Mark or Jodi Maddy
- Charles Hindman

\$500 energy credit winner

- Loren D. Corcoran

MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Beth Thole is pictured in the back row, second from left.

KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE BETH THOLE IS COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

BY KELLY SLAGTER

Continued from Page 11

Gary and Karen Trei, members of Osceola Electric Cooperative, immediately thought of Beth Thole when they read the 2024 Shine the Light contest description in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Thole's enthusiasm and dedication to remembering the past and educating future generations are things to be admired.

"Working with Beth is never dull," explains Karen. "When you volunteer for Beth, you never know which job you'll end up doing or who you'll end up working with."

As a retired teacher, Thole's passion for education lives on in her vision for a pavilion to educate residents of Osceola County about the area's deep agricultural heritage. The Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion on the county fairgrounds began taking shape seven years ago when Thole's research led her to realize the trials and determination of previous generations.

"It's important to keep that history alive and teach the people coming after us what their forefathers did," Thole explains. "The pavilion uses pictures and artifacts from donors to create exhibits that tell stories and trigger memories."

Bringing the community together
Since the Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion began, Thole and the

Agriculture Pavilion board have coordinated several events to unite the community and raise funds for the museum. The success of these events, which were entertaining and educational, is a testament to the integral role of each community member. Fundraisers included an escape room at a historic schoolhouse, cemetery headstone tours with local actors to bring the stories alive, tractor rides, auctions and dinners. Other donations, such as lumber and building materials, have also been abundant.

"When people bring something to donate, they often stick around to help set it up," Thole says.

Her vast knowledge of people within the community has brought together many volunteers, both young and old.

"Osceola Electric Cooperative is happy to contribute to educating the

community on our county's history," says Jeff TenNapel, general manager of Osceola Electric Cooperative.

For one of the exhibits, electric cooperative linemen assembled vintage material to recreate infrastructure, portraying what it looked like when electricity first came to rural Osceola County in the 1940s and 1950s. The display sits out front of the 100-year-old Agriculture Pavilion building as a reminder of how rural electrification dramatically improved the lives of farmers and their families.

Thole and the Agriculture Pavilion board have many ideas for using the \$3,000 donation; among them are purchasing tables for upcoming events and a smart TV to aid in the exhibits.

Article contributed by Kelly Slagter, customer service representative/communicator, Osceola Electric Cooperative.



HOPE BLOOMS ETERNAL

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

If you had to guess, how much of Iowa was once covered with prairies? It's roughly 80%, by some estimates.

This tidbit of information was shared in the Master Conservationist program I completed this summer through Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach. Inspired to learn more, I attended a prairie field day in mid-July at ISU's Horticulture Research Station near Ames. About 75 of us toured a remnant prairie, a reconstructed prairie and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' prairie seed production project, all of which help attract pollinators, protect soil and water quality, and provide an array of other benefits that give me hope for the future.

I was also awestruck by the beauty of ISU's prairie. Purple coneflowers and other native Iowa plants created a kaleidoscope of colors across a shallow valley framed by an oak tree more than 300 years old.

A place for prairie flowers

I was thinking about prairie plants when I recently reconnected with my friend Jennifer Welch, an urban conservationist with the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District in central Iowa. When I asked her about her post on Facebook, in which she asked friends to donate vases for a flower project, she was happy to tell me more.

"I started seeding prairie everywhere I could, including open spaces and along the lanes, after we moved to our farm in 1997," she explains. "I love finding any patches, even small ones, to transform the landscape into its native habitat."

Today, these areas flourish with everything from purple prairie clover plants to tall, yellow compass plants, with their distinctive sandpaper leaves that point north and south (hence the name).

"Our native landscaping is amazing," Jennifer adds. "It's so adaptable and hardy. It's also ever-changing and dazzles us with God's creativity."

Earlier this summer, Jennifer spent an hour harvesting some of her prairie flowers. Then she and the ladies in her Bible study group (called the Bittersweet Road, named for the road near Jennifer's home) designed about 45 vases of flowers filled with bee balm, gray-headed coneflower, pale purple coneflowers and other blooms.

Jennifer dropped off the bouquets at the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center the next morning. She visited with a resident named Richard, who loved his prairie flower delivery.

"He recalled how his father started growing flowers when he was 55, and then he grew flowers, too," Jennifer says. "So, the bouquet made him smile."

Small acts of kindness can change the world

Jennifer has often seen this kind of "flower power" since she started her flower ministry in 2021. She enjoys hearing the stories recipients share about their gardening and flower memories. Sometimes, they want to talk about the person they plan to share their bouquet with.

Talk about a win-win. Jennifer finds fulfillment by sharing her flowers with others and educating people about Iowa's landscapes and ecosystems – all while bringing people more joy.

"I love to surprise people with flowers and bouquets. It makes them feel special, seen, valued and loved," she says. "It also makes me feel good to help them know they are seen, special, valued and loved by God."

Life is what you make of it, and Jennifer makes the most of her land and her prairie plants. It also



The ladies in Jennifer Welch's Bible study group designed vases of flowers, which were delivered to the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

proves that no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

While it's easy to sometimes lose faith in people in today's challenging world, sometimes a simple act of kindness – like a small bouquet of prairie flowers – is all it takes to help hope bloom again.

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



A flower recipient enjoys his prairie flower delivery from Jennifer Welch.



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Iowa's electric
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