



Chariton Valley  
Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

● MAY 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Join CVEC's board  
of directors**

**What to know if you're  
considering solar energy**

**Spring-inspired recipes**

**CVEC's Youth Tour representatives selected ▶ See Page 12**

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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Emerson Landas, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!



# HELP US SHINE THE LIGHT ON LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND DESERVING CHARITIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



We are gearing up for year five of our statewide Shine the Light program, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. During the month of June, member-

consumers and employees of Iowa electric cooperatives are invited to nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference in their Iowa communities. Three winning volunteers will each receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity and be featured in the September issue of this magazine.

## Your nomination makes a difference

Starting on June 1, go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) to make a nomination. Simply enter some basic contact information for you and your nominee and answer this question in 500 words or less:

***How has your nominee made a difference in the community and how might their local charity/nonprofit use the \$3,000 donation?***

The success of our Shine the Light program depends on co-op member-consumers who take the time to nominate a friend, neighbor or relative who deserves to be recognized. If you have nominated a volunteer in a previous year and they weren't selected as a winner, you are welcome to nominate them again.

Additionally, I will share that the judges who read through all the volunteer nominations respond positively to essays that tell a story and draw in the reader. A little creativity can help your nomination stand out in a crowded field!

## A diverse impact statewide

In the first four years of the program, our 12 winners (three winners each year) represent a diverse group of charities and nonprofits. Some of the winners have included an education



Starting on June 1, go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) to make a nomination.

foundation, an animal shelter, a community garden, a local food and furnishings closet, an agricultural pavilion and an air transportation service for medical treatments. You can see our past winners at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) to learn more about these incredible groups. We are continuously impressed with the range of volunteer activities and local organizations that are nominated each year.

Many of these organizations are small operations that don't have the resources to seek major funding or media attention. Beyond the monetary

donation, the Shine the Light program has been helpful in spreading the word about the great work being done by some incredible volunteers.

Thank you for considering the nomination of someone in your community who should be celebrated for their volunteer efforts and for helping us shine the light on these deserving organizations. Make your nomination online from June 1 through June 30 at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

## WIN \$100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away \$100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than May 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the \$100 gift card for landscaping from the March issue was **Jeanie Hall**, a **Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

# PROTECTING YOUR ASSETS

BY TROY AMOSS



At Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC), we take our responsibility to protect your assets seriously – because at the end of the day, the

cooperative's assets belong to you, our members. Every power line, substation, truck and pole is an investment made on your behalf to ensure safe, reliable and affordable electricity. That's why we remain vigilant against policies and proposals that threaten the long-term sustainability of your cooperative.

## Current challenges we face

Two challenges we're currently facing – community solar mandates and the erosion of the right of first refusal – put your assets at risk. These efforts claim

to expand energy options, but in reality, they jeopardize the cooperative model by allowing third parties to profit from infrastructure that you, our members, have built and maintained for decades.

Take community solar mandates, for example. Some entities want to force cooperatives to purchase power from solar installations they don't own or control, while still being responsible for delivering electricity when the sun isn't shining. This shifts costs onto cooperative members while outside developers reap the financial benefits. Similarly, efforts to weaken the right of first refusal could allow for-profit transmission companies to build costly new lines within our service territory – again, increasing costs for our members without improving reliability.

## Keeping decision-making with members

If these trends continue, the result will be higher rates for all of us. Our commitment has always been to provide affordable, reliable power while keeping decision-making in the hands of those who have the most at stake – our members. That's why we actively advocate for policies that protect your investment and ensure that the cooperative remains strong for generations to come.

We encourage you to stay informed and engaged. When we work together to protect what we've built, we can ensure that CVEC remains a trusted, member-focused provider for years to come.

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

## OFFICE CLOSING

In honor of Memorial Day, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative will be closed on Monday, May 26. We take this time to remember and honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Regular business hours will resume on Tuesday, May 27. Have a safe and meaningful Memorial Day!



**Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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

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## WANT A SAY IN YOUR COOPERATIVE? JOIN THE CVEC BOARD!

Are you ready to make a difference in your cooperative? Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is now accepting nominations for members interested in serving on the board of directors. Serving as a director is a vital opportunity to have a direct voice in shaping CVEC's future while working alongside others committed to the cooperative's values and the democratic process.

This year, board seats are open for election in the following districts:

- **District 1** – Appanoose County
- **District 2** – Monroe County and portions of Davis and Wapello counties
- **District 5** – Albia city limits

### What does a director do?

CVEC directors play an essential role in:

- Setting cooperative policies
- Approving budgets and strategic plans

- Attending monthly board meetings
- Participating in special sessions and training seminars to stay informed on industry developments

### How to become a candidate

Any CVEC member residing in an open district is eligible to seek election. To qualify, candidates must:

- ✓ Complete a director candidate petition packet
- ✓ Collect at least 15 signatures from CVEC members residing in the same district

Petition packets are available by:

- Calling 641-932-7126
- Emailing [election@cvrec.com](mailto:election@cvrec.com)
- Visiting [www.cvrec.com/election-directors](http://www.cvrec.com/election-directors)

**Completed packets and all required materials must be submitted to CVEC by June 6 at 4:30 p.m.**

Get involved, represent your fellow members and help lead CVEC into the future!

# CVEC CHAMPIONS RURAL ELECTRIC INTERESTS AT 2025 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) joined rural electric cooperatives (RECs) from across the state at the Iowa Capitol on March 19 for the annual REC Day on the Hill. This event provided a key opportunity for CVEC representatives to meet with legislators and advocate for policies that protect our cooperative members and rural communities.

## Standing up for defined service territory

A top priority for CVEC during this year's event was protecting Iowa's defined electric service territory laws. These laws have been in place for nearly 50 years, ensuring affordable rates, grid reliability and long-term investments that support rural communities.

"Protecting defined service territories is crucial for ensuring that rural communities continue to receive reliable, affordable power," says Troy Amoss, CEO/general manager of CVEC. "These laws give us the stability to plan for the future and make the necessary investments in our grid, all while keeping our members' best interests at the forefront."

CVEC representatives encouraged lawmakers to uphold these laws, which provide the stability needed to plan for and maintain reliable electric service. You can learn more about this issue at [www.ProtectRuralIowa.com](http://www.ProtectRuralIowa.com).

## Advocating for key issues

In addition to service territory protections, CVEC discussed several other legislative priorities with elected officials, including:

- **Right of First Refusal (ROFR) for Transmission Projects** – CVEC supports provisions in the Governor's Energy Bill (HF 834/SF 585) that would allow Iowa's incumbent electric providers to construct and maintain electric



Pictured from left: John Houser, CVEC director; Marc Smiarowski, CVEC staking and field technician; Anna See, CVEC communications coordinator/executive assistant; Norm Major, CVEC director; Troy Amoss, CVEC CEO/general manager; Richard Welsh, CVEC director; Karla Heffron, CVEC director; and Kenny VandenBerg, CVEC director.



CVEC CEO Troy Amoss and others talking with Rep. Sam Wengryn.



CVEC CEO Troy Amoss and others talking with Rep. Sam Wengryn.



Group of CVEC representatives and Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative representatives meeting with Rep. Austin Harris and Rep. Hans Wilz regarding the community solar bill.



Troy Amoss discusses key legislative issues with lawmakers.

transmission projects, ensuring reliability and cost efficiency.

- **Concerns Over Community Solar Bill (HF 404)** – CVEC representatives voiced concerns about a proposed community solar bill that could allow non-utilities to provide retail electric service within rate-regulated utility territories, potentially undermining Iowa's defined service territory laws.

## Highlighting the cooperative difference

Beyond legislative discussions, CVEC representatives took the opportunity to showcase the value of the not-for-profit cooperative business model, emphasizing:

- Local ownership and democratic governance

- Cost-based rates that put members first
- Investments in technology, economic development and grid reliability
- Commitment to electric safety and youth programs

Several electric cooperatives set up informational booths in the Capitol rotunda to highlight how Iowa's electric cooperatives are working to power and strengthen their communities.

CVEC remains committed to advocating for policies that support its members and ensure the continued success of cooperative-powered communities. To stay informed on legislative issues affecting electric cooperatives, visit [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org).





# "MOVE OVER" TO PROTECT ROADSIDE CREWS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Iowa state law requires motorists to move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, which are usually well-marked. Electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they often work along remote stretches of roads, frequently in adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

## Move over laws vary

The danger of work zone crashes led every state to adopt "move over" laws that require drivers to lower their speed and switch lanes when possible to protect emergency vehicles. The goal is to provide an added safety buffer and minimize the potential for accidents. Drivers caught violating the laws can face penalties such as significant fines.

Unfortunately, the Journal of Road Safety reports that just 14 states' "move over" laws protect other types of service vehicles, such as construction trucks and utility vehicles. That means drivers in those states are under no legal obligation to give lineworkers that added margin of safety.

In accordance with Iowa state law, motorists must move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle

stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

## Distracted driving poses additional risks

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers' attention away from the road. The most common is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles per hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they'll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.



The design of today's vehicles contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Geography can also be a factor. Co-ops serving rural and remote areas often have power lines along hilly roads. Locals accustomed to driving those roads at fairly high speeds may be startled and have little time to react when they encounter a work crew past a hill or around a curve.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op's ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

### **Maintaining focus is essential**

Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers, such as reconnecting high-voltage power lines, are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus. When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they're more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Co-op employees are not only at risk only when their vehicles are parked and repairs are underway. Lineworkers frequently have to drive slowly along the shoulder of roads to pinpoint broken power lines or failed transformers, especially in darkness or conditions that interfere with visibility.



Many state transportation agencies, including Iowa, have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op's advertising, publicity and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them even more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting, such as flashing strobe lights and lighted detour

arrows, can attract attention from a distance. Reflective "work zone ahead" signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation.

Remember, 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; their families thank you!

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





# SPRING-INSPIRED RECIPES



## ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 cups asparagus, cut into 1 to 1½-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- toasted sesame seeds, optional

Stir broth, cornstarch and soy sauce in a small bowl until the mixture is smooth. Heat oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus, ginger root and garlic and stir-fry until crisp-tender. You can substitute ginger root with ½ teaspoon ground ginger. Add broth mixture to the skillet. Cook and stir until the mixture boils and thickens. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired. Asparagus can be substituted with broccoli, cauliflower or baby carrots. Serves 4

Tammy Neubauer • Ida Grove  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## FRESH CILANTRO DIP

- ½ bunch cilantro
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can black olives, minced or chopped
- 1 small jar pimentos
- 5 banana peppers, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- nacho chips

Mix all ingredients together and serve with nacho chips.  
Serves 12

Jenny Hall • Woodbine  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

## HAM MACARONI SALAD

- 3 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 cup cooked ham, chopped
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 1¼ cups mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Prepare macaroni according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cold water until cool. Combine remaining ingredients, then add macaroni. Mix until blended. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours. Serves 8-10

Bryce and Kelly Godbersen • Odebolt  
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

## RHUBARB CUSTARD PIE

- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter, divided
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups rhubarb, diced
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- cinnamon

Cream together 1 tablespoon butter, sugar and nutmeg, then mix in eggs. Fill unbaked pie shell with diced rhubarb, then add custard mixture. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix ½ cup butter, flour, oatmeal and brown sugar into a crunch topping. Break topping into chunks over top of pie. Bake pie at 350 degrees F for 30 more minutes then sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 8

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison  
Access Energy Cooperative



## KALE SALAD

- 8 ounces kale, finely cut
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 medium apple, chopped
- ½ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup bacon, crumbled
- poppy seed dressing, optional
- Mandarin oranges, optional

Mix all ingredients and top with poppy seed dressing, if desired. Cranberries can be substituted with Mandarin oranges. *Serves 4*

Audrey Kreykes • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## ASPARAGUS AND SPRING PEA SOUP

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 cups water or broth
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and sliced
- 2 cups green peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped, optional

In a large saucepan, add butter, onion, celery and garlic. Cook over medium heat until veggies soften, stirring frequently. Stir in choice of liquid (water, vegetable broth or chicken broth). Add asparagus and peas. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 15 minutes, until asparagus is tender. Puree using blender or an immersion blender. Strain through a sieve if needed. Add salt and lemon juice to warm soup. Ladle into soup bowl and pour a drizzle of canned coconut milk into bowl. Top with fresh dill, if desired. *Serves 6*

Anita Doughty • Ankeny  
Consumers Energy

## TERRI'S PASTA SALAD

- 5 ounces dried rotini noodles
- 3 cups broccoli florets, chopped
- 3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In a large pot, cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Add broccoli and cook for 3 more minutes or until pasta is done. Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, honey and garlic. Add pasta mixture, pepper, onion, almonds and basil. Toss to combine. Gently stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. You can substitute goat cheese with feta, fresh Parmesan or pearled mozzarella. *Serves 4-6*

Lori Kautzky • Perry  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

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



## STRAWBERRY RHUBARB UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1 cup rhubarb, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 cup strawberries, hulled and halved
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

Combine rhubarb, strawberries and melted butter. Spread evenly across the bottom of a 9-inch round cake pan that has been greased and lined with parchment paper on the bottom. Set aside while making cake mixture. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Cream room temperature butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add eggs, vanilla and milk and beat. Mix with dry ingredients then pour over the strawberry and rhubarb topping. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen cake. Place serving plate over pan and invert cake onto the plate. Remove the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Serve warm or at room temperature with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. *Serves 12*

Kristin Goddard • Charles City  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

### WANTED:

## FALL APPLE RECIPES

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

**Deadline is May 31**

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

**EMAIL:** [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

**MAIL: Recipes**

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322



# 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.



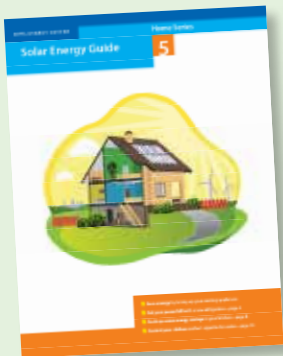
# BEWARE OF SOLAR SCAMS

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](https://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).



## 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)

### 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.*



## 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.

# ARE YOU ON OUR LIST OF “LOST” MEMBERS?

Each year, hundreds of capital credit checks go unclaimed because they are returned to Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) due to outdated addresses or remain uncashed. If you were a CVEC member in 2010 or 2011, you may have a capital credits check waiting for you!

## What are capital credits?

One of the benefits of being a member of a not-for-profit electric cooperative is that any earnings left after expenses and reserves are returned to members as capital credits, also known as patronage dividends. These credits reflect your share of ownership in the cooperative.

## Help us find these members

- If you find your name on the list: Contact CVEC at 641-932-7126 to verify your address, phone number and Social Security Number associated with the account. Once verified, we'll mail you a replacement check.
- If you know someone on the list: Let them know! They'll need to contact CVEC to claim their capital credits.
- If the person on the list is deceased: The executor of their estate should reach out to CVEC for guidance on closing out the patronage dividends.

<b>B</b> BAKER WES BERGMAR SCOTT M BJORNSON RYAN R BRIGGS GARY B OR SHONA LEE BROTHERS ESTATE CATHARINE M BROWN AARON C BROWNEE CHRISTY	<b>D</b> DUNAWAY MEGAN M DYE LARRY P OR IRMA J	<b>J</b> JOHNSON JERRY D JONES DERICK J	<b>M</b> MESSAMAKER ESTATE WAYNE MORRIS ESTATE AMBER M MORROW RHONDA L MUDRA ROBERT E MULLINS BILL R MYERS PEGGY A OR RALPH T MYERS SHELLEY M	<b>S</b> SCHRAGE DENNIS W SINCLAIR AAHRON M OR KATHLEEN SHERROD SMITH MELIA M STANLEY PHILIP L OR SHERRI STEVENS RALPH SUMMERS DARRELL G
<b>C</b> CASEY BETTY CHILDS RANDY L CHINA INN AARON PAN CONNOR RICHARD OR CHRISTINE CRALL ESTATE IRENE CRAWFORD JAYSON R	<b>E</b> EMERSON RICHARD OR DONNA	<b>K</b> KAFAWAIN FRED KNOWLES ESTATE EILEEN KNOWLES KASSI J KRUSEL JIM	<b>P</b> PAGE ASHLEE I PARADISE MICHELLE L PAXTON ESTATE JANICE L PAYTON TORI K	<b>T</b> THOMAS SHAUNA L
<b>D</b> DAVIS CYNDI DELLAVEDOVA DENIS OR VIRGINI DENATO ESTATE JANICE DOBSON RONALD L	<b>F</b> FARLESS KATRINA M FORCE SHAWN A	<b>L</b> LAST ENTERPRISES LORA ROBINSON LEE DEBORAH K LITTLE RERUNS CANDLES JODY GARG LOFTIS SAM LUCK OF THE DRAW OUTFITTERS RANDALL MILLER SR	<b>R</b> REITSMA ESTATE ROBERT B REMAX PROGRESSIVE REAL ESTATE ROBERTS SARA JO ROLFES 6 LLC DAN/AMIE ROLFES	<b>V</b> VAUGHN PATRICK NOEL VICHIT SAM P VICKERMAN SUSAN L VOERTMAN TODD R OR SANDY
<b>H</b> HANSON STEPHEN C HILLMER RICHARD P HOEKMAN MARY HOVEY PERCY J HOWIE ESTATE OLIVE HUGHES KEITH H OR CHERYL L	<b>G</b> GARDNER ESTATE CAROLYN GOOD REGINA K	<b>M</b> MACCRACKEN TRUSTEE WILLIAM MAHS JR ESTATE LEONARD R MALLORICK INVESTMENTS LLC TRAVIS HOUGHLAND	<b>S</b> SALDANA DANIEL C SCHOEBERLEIN ROGER OR LISA	<b>W</b> WAKEFIELD MICHAEL C WEEKS RICHARD D WILKINS JENNA D WILSON ESTATE WANDA J WOOD ROBERT W WOOLLUMS ESTATE BETTY

## CVEC'S YOUTH TOUR REPRESENTATIVES SELECTED

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative (CVEC) is proud to announce that Cassidy Thompson and Logun Ostermeyer have been selected to represent the cooperative during the 2025 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity allows students to explore our nation's capital, develop leadership skills and gain a deeper understanding of electric cooperatives.



**Cassidy Thompson**, a senior at Albia Community High School, is the daughter of Michelle and Darwin Thompson of Albia. She is an active student

involved in cheerleading, show choir, theater, tennis, solo and ensemble, and also serves as a wrestling manager. Outside of school, Cassidy dedicates

time to her community by volunteering at events such as community cleanups, caroling at the Victorian Stroll, reading to nursing home residents and mentoring young cheerleaders. When asked what issue she would discuss with a member of Congress, she highlighted her passion for the arts: "I would want to talk about school funding for the arts. Music is something many students love and have a passion for, but our show choir and music activities are going downhill."



**Logun Ostermeyer**, a junior at Albia Community High School, is the son of Katie and Kyle Popson of Albia. He is involved in basketball, tennis,

band, jazz band and show band. While he did not provide a specific quote, Logun

shared his enthusiasm for the trip and his commitment to representing CVEC and his community with respect and gratitude.

From June 15-21, Cassidy and Logun will travel to Washington, D.C., joining approximately 40 other students from Iowa and over 1,400 high schoolers nationwide. The Youth Tour experience includes visiting historical landmarks, engaging with elected officials and learning firsthand about the legislative process and the impact of electric cooperatives.

CVEC is proud to sponsor this program each year, made possible through the support of its membership. Investing in the next generation of leaders and giving back to our communities remains at the heart of our cooperative's mission.

**Congratulations, Cassidy and Logun!**  
We know you'll make CVEC proud.



# LATHROP & SONS SUPPLY: LOCAL ROOTS AND LOCAL SERVICES

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

For decades, the Lathrop family has been a cornerstone of Monroe County – first in farming, then construction and most recently in retail. In October 2023, they opened Lathrop & Sons Supply on the grounds of the former Albia Sale Barn, answering a long-standing community need for a local farm and construction supply store.

“We’ve been in this business a long time and kept finding ourselves going out of town for things,” says Michael Lathrop, who runs the business with his wife Jill, and alongside his parents, Dean and Nathalie Lathrop; his brother Chad and sister-in-law Macey; and their children, including Michael’s son Jag and Chad’s son Stetson. “We all agreed Albia needed a place like this.”

The site holds special meaning for the Lathrop family – Dean’s first job as a teenager was at the original Albia Sale Barn. While the old barn was removed, the original veterinary clinic on the property now houses the store. It’s a small but symbolic way the family is honoring the town’s past while building for the future.

Today, the store offers a compact but comprehensive retail space packed with essentials. The shelves are stocked with fencing products, cattle supplies, feed bunks, culverts, PVC piping, oil and other items that are often hard to find locally. Although the building isn’t large, the store is designed to be efficient.

“We can be as competitive as the big box stores because we keep our overhead low,” he says. “That allows us to offer quality products at very reasonable rates.”

## From the field to the sales floor

The retail store complements the Lathrops’ other ventures, including their construction business, which specializes in site prep and civil work. Their experience in farming and



construction helps to inform their product selection and know what works and what doesn’t.

That hands-on credibility has built trust over the years, starting with some of their earliest clients.

“Larry Kendall was one of our very first customers,” Michael shares. “He’s still a customer today and someone I’ve always looked up to. He really helped us get started and provided good advice.”

The Lathrop family runs the store themselves, with help from a dedicated team that includes Ray Mahon, Chad Cloyed, Creighton Mihalovich and Blaine Stout, who also assists with store operations. Everyone wears different hats and steps in where needed. There are no time clocks – just trust and commitment.

Their customer-first approach is equally straightforward and dependable.

“We’re not flashy, but if someone needs something, we’ll make sure they get it – even after hours,” Michael adds. “We offer delivery on request, and we’re always available by phone if someone’s in a pinch.”

## Committed to community

Beyond business, the Lathrops are committed to giving back. They actively support the Monroe County Fair, local youth sports, FFA programs and Albia Community Schools.

“Monroe County has always supported us, and we try hard to give back,” Michael says. “We’ve had a lot of repeat business already, which tells us we’re doing something right. People are happy they no longer have to drive out of town for the supplies they need.”

That spirit of hard work and adaptability extends across the entire family. Chad and Macey, for example, run Sweet Pickin’s, a seasonal strawberry patch, with their son Stetson. Chad is also active in the deer hunting industry.

“We just feel we’re a very diverse family,” Michael says. “And we know we have to be to make all this work.”

Lathrop & Sons is more than a business – it’s a family operation rooted in service, community and getting the job done right.

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

# 5 ESSENTIAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

BY ABBY BERRY

Every May, National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your local electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May but also year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

**1 Be vigilant.** Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

**2 Use surge protectors.** Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness



National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home.



Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity.

over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

**3 Practice safe power strip use.** Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

**4 Avoid contact with water.** It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)



The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying.

should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

**5 Educate family members.** One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



# HONORING IOWA'S HOMETOWN HEROES

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Faces capture attention. That's something I learned early in my journalism career when I was trained to take pictures of the people I featured.

I think about this each time I drive through Auburn. As I roll along Highway 71 through the heart of this Sac County town, I see patriotic banners featuring pictures of local men and women who served in the U.S. military. The black-and-white images – some with smiling faces, some with sober expressions – grace the streetlight poles.

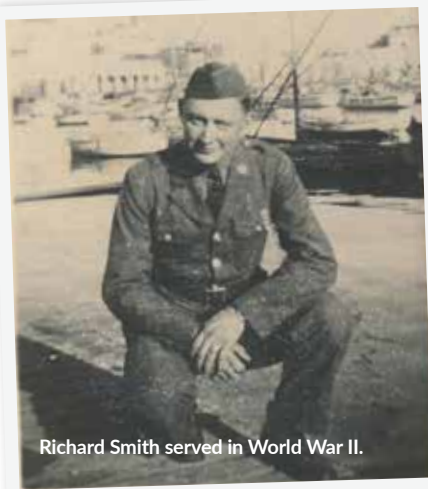
I've always wondered about the stories behind these captivating banners, so I contacted my friend Donetta (Smith) Stewart. For the past 17 years, she has been the librarian at the Auburn Public Library. She's also one of the keepers of knowledge in this small town of roughly 300 residents.

Donetta's uncle, Richard Smith, is featured on a banner southeast of the library. "Dad didn't talk much about Richard when I was growing up," says Donetta, referring to Don Smith, Richard's younger brother. "It was only later in life when I started asking more questions that he started telling me more."

## Remembering a life cut short

Richard was born to Frank and Janet Smith on Dec. 23, 1919. He attended country school and graduated from Auburn High School in 1936. The likeable, easygoing young man was farming with his father when the U.S. entered World War II.

As his buddies began enlisting, Richard wanted to join the service, too. When Janet pleaded with him to stay home, he honored his mother's wishes. Uncle Sam came calling, however, in 1941. Richard was drafted into the U.S. Army and completed basic training at Camp Claiborne in Louisiana.



While his Auburn buddies served stateside, training other soldiers, Richard was sent to England and then Africa, along with the Red Bull Infantry Division. Richard was on the front lines when Erwin Rommel (a German field marshal known as the "Desert Fox") launched the Battle of Kasserine Pass on Feb. 14, 1943.

The next day, Feb. 15, Richard was killed in action. He was just 24 years old. "Dad always said that after Richard died, the laughter went out of the house," Donetta says.

After the war, one of Richard's commanding officers traveled to the Smith farm to pay his respects and fill in some gaps. "He told Frank that one minute Richard was there, and the next minute he was gone," Donetta explains.

## Honorable legacies live on

Richard was buried near Carthage, Tunisia, in the North Africa American Cemetery, which contains the remains of more than 2,800 war dead. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, including Jane Barto, coordinator for the Auburn Historical Society (AHS), he now has a banner along Pine Street in his hometown.



It's one of 23 banners that the AHS and the City of Auburn installed in November 2024, in time for Veterans Day. "It's important to honor this heritage," says Jane, who was inspired by similar banners she'd seen in Arlington, Nebraska. "There's something very personal about putting faces with the names."

The Auburn banners feature local men and women who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. They include Jane's father, Floyd Barto, an Army veteran, and her uncle, Frank Lee, who helped the Allied forces liberate the Auschwitz concentration camp in early 1945. "My uncle said the human suffering was beyond description and wouldn't talk about his war experiences," Jane says.

That's why the banners are so important, she adds. They draw people in and start the conversation about these veterans' stories.

"We get so many positive comments," Donetta says. "Richard and the other local heroes are not forgotten."

*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

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# SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A large white utility truck is parked on a dirt road. Two workers wearing yellow safety vests and white hard hats are standing in the bucket of the truck, which is raised. The truck has "Touchstone Energy Cooperatives" written on its side. In the background, there are orange traffic cones and a green field under a clear sky.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative  
*The power of human connections*