



Guthrie County REC

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative



OCTOBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

6 reasons electric co-ops  
are great places to work

Guthrie County REC  
operations update

Perfect pork recipes

Guthrie County REC supports local honor flight ► See Page 5



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## ON THE COVER

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

# FOSTERING IOWA'S GROWTH: HOW COOPERATIVES ARE SHAPING LOCAL ECONOMIES

BY CHUCK SODERBERG, DAVE HOLM AND MURRAY WILLIAMS



In the heart of the Midwest, Iowa is known for its sprawling fields, tight-knit communities and a spirit of collaboration that has long been a hallmark of its success. While often associated with agriculture and its iconic cornfields, the state boasts a different kind of growth story – one driven by cooperatives. Co-ops are more than businesses; they are pillars of empowerment, resilience and sustainable development that are shaping Iowa's local economies.



Many Iowans associate cooperatives with agriculture; however, co-ops also include rural electric service, credit unions, rural telephone, farm credit, petroleum and more. Co-ops are not-for-profit organizations that are owned and democratically controlled by their members. In fact, nearly one out of every two Iowans is a member of a cooperative.

## Commitment to rural communities

As part of National Co-op Month, Gov. Kim Reynolds has declared October as Co-op Month in Iowa. During this month, cooperatives of all types and from all industries reaffirm their member-owned mission and commitment to the communities they serve.

In a state where rural communities hold a special significance, cooperatives play a pivotal role in

keeping these areas vibrant and alive. Rural cooperatives extend essential services such as energy, financial services, connectivity and healthcare to regions that might otherwise be overlooked.

Collectively, Iowa cooperatives pay more than \$75 million in property taxes to Iowa communities each year. Property taxes paid, especially in rural counties, have a big impact on county budgets and help support critical infrastructure. By pooling resources and sharing expertise, these cooperatives provide a safety net, effectively turning adversity into opportunity.

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives remain committed to powering lives and strengthening their communities. Locally elected co-op directors make informed decisions on behalf of their fellow members and neighbors to ensure reliable, affordable service for years to come. The average household served by an electric cooperative pays about \$5.25 a day for power, which is an incredible value in a world

increasingly reliant on electricity and connectivity. Locally owned and governed electric co-ops also embrace an "all-of-the-above" generation strategy as they face potential reliability challenges due to federal mandates.

## A better future for everyone

The cooperative movement in Iowa is a testament to the power of community-driven endeavors. It embodies the spirit of collaboration, the commitment to sustainability and the pursuit of shared prosperity. As co-ops continue to shape local economies and empower communities, they remind us that growth is about fostering a better future for everyone. It's a future that Iowa's cooperatives are helping to build, one collective effort at a time.

*Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president/general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives; Dave Holm is the executive director of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives; and Murray Williams is the president and CEO of the Iowa Credit Union League.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# WIN A \$100 GIFT CARD!

To celebrate National Cooperative Month, we're giving away a \$100 gift card to your choice of a hometown business. It will be good for a restaurant, hardware store, gift shop, grocery store, beauty salon or other local business that's vital to your community.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Oct. 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Amazon Fire 32-inch Smart TV from the August issue was Eugene VanMeeteren, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.



ENTER ONLINE BY OCT. 31!

# LEADING LITTLE CHARGERS: LOCAL VOLUNTEER SHANNON NEFF-MUELL

BY ZACH FINN

In the heart of Guthrie Center and its surrounding communities, Shannon Neff-Muell stands out for her commitment to making a positive impact since moving to the area in 2009.

"Shannon began impacting the community immediately in a positive way with her can-do attitude," says Laura Robson, a friend who nominated Neff-Muell for this year's Shine the Light award recognition. "The first was by dreaming of having a better playground at our local daycare center. With Shannon at the helm, a volunteer committee created a donkey basketball tournament that raised funds for this project in one night!"

In late August, Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) proudly presented a \$250 check to Neff-Muell and the Little Charger Early Learning Center in appreciation of her concern and passion for the community. As board president of Little Charger, she has led the way, planning fundraising events and getting the community on board with a new facility.

"Early on, Shannon saw a considerable need for a larger childcare facility in order to provide the community, and



Shannon Neff-Muell, center, accepts a check from Guthrie County REC CEO Cozy Nelsen to benefit Little Charger Early Learning Center. Also pictured is Laura Robson.

its children, with adequate options for care," Robson says. "She immediately got to work building a team of passionate volunteers around her to determine the best plans for the new facility."

The project broke ground after only two years of planning. To date, with the help of state and local grants, corporate donations and individual local contributions, she has successfully raised nearly \$1.4 million toward the \$2.2 million target.

"To see how the community has rallied behind us and this expansion project has been incredible," Neff-Muell says. "It is most definitely a team effort, and I'm so proud of the hard work that has been done."

## Ongoing commitment to community

Shannon led many other fundraising events for the childcare center, including daddy-daughter and mother-son dances, murder mystery dinners, and even a 90s party with a Britney Spears impersonator.

"In addition to being able to raise funds through these events, our goal has always been to provide an opportunity for families to have a fun experience together," Neff-Muell says.

Neff-Muell's multiple years of involvement with the Guthrie Center Chamber of Commerce, including

serving as president in 2021, and on the local Lions Club International chapter, further highlights her commitment to the entire community.

"I think it's important to volunteer and give back to your community because your town is only as good as the care and effort that those who live there put in," she says. "My goal is to strengthen our town and support Guthrie Center families and businesses for years to come. I think we are well on our way to reaching that goal."

*Zach Finn is a contributing writer to Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.*



**Guthrie County REC**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Shannon Neff-Muell speaks during the 2022 Celebrate Guthrie Center event, highlighting the goals of Little Charger Early Learning Center.



# GUTHRIE COUNTY REC SUPPORTS LOCAL HONOR FLIGHT

Honor flights have become synonymous with celebrating America's veterans. The flights invite veterans to share in a day of honor at our nation's memorials in Washington, D.C. Guthrie County REC recently supported the Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight #24 with a \$500 donation toward their Sept. 13 flight. Eight veterans from Yale, Panora, Guthrie Center and Coon Rapids spent the day visiting monuments, Arlington National Cemetery and touring Washington, D.C.

Honor flights are free to veterans and are wholly supported through donations and sponsorships. The Brushy Creek Area Honor Flight Hub is a collection

of Iowa counties that fundraise and organize each local flight. Veterans from World War II, the Korean War,

the Vietnam War and veterans of any service era who are critically ill are eligible to participate.



Pictured from left to right: Jalen Spack, Guthrie County REC Line Foreman and member of the Omar B. Shearer American Legion Auxiliary Unit 124 of Guthrie Center; Legion Members Ron Baier and Pat Moylan; and Guthrie County REC CEO Cozy Nelsen presenting the donation check.

## OPERATIONS: WORKING FOR YOU

BY JOSH OLTMANN



The temperatures have finally cooled off, which makes our line crew days working outside much more tolerable. No matter what's

happening with the weather, our focus is on you.

We've had another busy year here at the co-op. As part of our effort to improve reliability, we've rebuilt 13.1 miles of overhead line, replaced 0.33 miles of underground line at Lake Panorama and tested 771 poles, which resulted in rejecting 21. Wooden poles have a shelf life of about 30 years, and when they weaken, they are more prone to breaking during extreme winter weather. We test poles because we'd rather replace them now than wait until they fail and cause prolonged outages.

Our members' interest in solar continues to climb, and over the year, we've added four new solar meters onto our system to date. If you're interested in solar, contact us at the co-op before making any decisions;

we can guide you through what to expect. Additionally, we added 33 new services and rebuilt another 13 services across our territory.

### Looking ahead

For the remainder of the year, crews will be rebuilding the last 3.4 miles of line near Dawson. We are also anticipating the arrival of two substation transformers that will be placed in our new Mockingbird substation near Hamlin and Bluejay substation near Perry. We also have two sets of breakers to install in our Woodward and Adair substations.

Finally, a new housing addition near Stuart will keep crews busy connecting new members to our lines. We expect more than 50 houses to be added and hope to start this project before the snow flies in earnest.

We are happy to be busy serving our members. Since this is National Co-op Month, please thank our lineworkers if you see them out and about; a smile or friendly wave goes a long way to acknowledge their work.

*Josh Oltmann is the line superintendent for Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative.*




Guthrie County REC Lineman Todd Tinken and his daughters Bailey and Blair throw candy while Line Crew Foreman Jalen Spack drives the utility truck during the Guthrie County Fair Parade on Sept. 2.



Guthrie County REC Lineman Jordan Terwilliger with son Blaine and friend Landon Booth sit on the utility truck to throw candy along the parade route.





# IOWA STUDENT PLACES IN NATIONAL CONTEST

## FOR CREATING ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE HISTORY WEBSITE

BY ANNE GARDINER

From the 50 states. From international affiliates, including South Korea, China, American Samoa, Singapore and Guam. More than 2,600 students. 1,500 projects completed. 54 medals. One Nashua student – Caleb Sinnwell.

In July 2022, Sinnwell, a then-sophomore at Nashua-Plainfield High School, began researching

the background of rural electric cooperatives. He dove into the short- and long-term impacts of their creation to develop a website for the National History Day National Contest.

He spent months researching, conducting interviews and developing the website, titled:

“With the Flip of a Switch on the Rural Frontier: REA Lights the Way.”

Along with meeting numerous deadlines, his first National History Day contest hurdle was districts in Cedar Falls. After taking first place, he moved onto the state contest in Des Moines, where he again took first place.



### Lifelong interest in electricity

Sinnwell, who has attended Butler County REC meetings since he was a child, has always found electricity and the formation of cooperatives interesting.

"This was my opportunity to learn so much more about how my family receives electricity and why it is so very important to all of us, even though most times it is taken for granted," he explains. "This was such an interesting event in history that I wanted to share it with everyone."

Growing up, Sinnwell heard stories from his grandparents about his great-grandparents and the number of challenges they faced living and working on the farm with no electricity.

"I also thought it was interesting that electricity existed but for the more heavily populated areas, and farmers were being left in the dark," Sinnwell says.

**"Rural electric cooperatives brought electricity to rural America. The progression of that is probably one of the largest modern marvels that has ever happened to the United States."**

**- Craig Codner, Butler County REC CEO, during an interview with Sinnwell on Feb. 16, 2023**

### Learning from the experts

Included on his website are interviews with Craig Codner, CEO of Butler County REC; Duane Rieckenberg, board president of Butler County REC; and Carl Heyenga, retired operations manager of Butler County REC. Heyenga set poles with the first Butler County REC crews who brought power to east-central rural Iowa.

"Interviewing Craig, Duane and Carl was fascinating. It opened my eyes to the hard work Carl faced digging holes and getting electricity to the farmers who wanted it desperately," Sinnwell says.

How the REC board of directors, elected by the co-op membership,



functions is something that Sinnwell already understood. But throughout his research and interviews, he learned more about rural electric cooperatives as innovators.

"They are always doing their best to support the local communities and rural vitality," he shares.

### Appreciation all around

Butler County REC is proud of Sinnwell and his dedication to telling the rural electric cooperative story. He earned a bronze medal at the National History Day National Contest at the Xfinity Center at the University of Maryland in June for his website. This is the third year in a row that Sinnwell has taken home a medal from the contest.

"RECs do so much more for us in ways I never even thought, and I

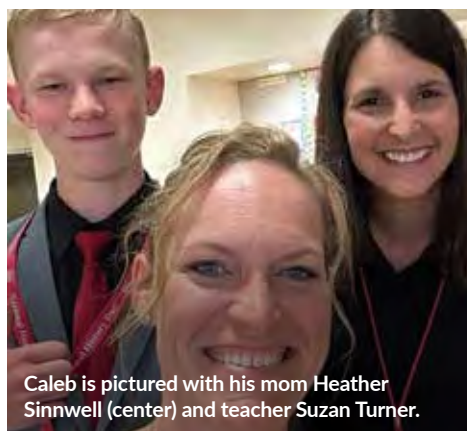
am so proud that Butler County REC is where my family receives its electricity because I know they truly care about us and our future," he says.

Sinnwell is a high school junior this year. He is the son of co-op members Josh and Heather Sinnwell, who live in Nashua. You can view his website at [bit.ly/3qYnjAq](http://bit.ly/3qYnjAq).

*Anne Gardiner is the public relations specialist for Butler County REC.*

**"It was a never-ending delight to see how happy and excited people were when they first turned on a switch and saw their own electric light."**

**- Ernest Neal, Iowa farmer and co-op organizer in 1934, quoted in Butler County REC's Aug. 2011 newsletter**



Caleb is pictured with his mom Heather Sinnwell (center) and teacher Suzan Turner.



Caleb's three National History Day National Contest medals.





# PERFECT PORK RECIPES

## BBQ PORK CHOPS

- 1 can tomato soup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon instant minced onion
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 6 pork chops

Combine first seven ingredients into a sauce. Brown chops on both sides, pour off excess fat. Pour sauce over chops. Cover and simmer for about 1 hour. Serves 6

Jane Fetter • Chelsea  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## BREAKFAST SOUFFLÉ

- 1½ pounds pork sausage
- 9 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3 cups milk
- 1½ teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 slices bread, crumbled
- 1½ cups cheese, shredded

Brown sausage and drain. Mix eggs, milk, mustard and salt. Stir in sausage, bread and cheese. Pour into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate covered overnight. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Serves 8

Rebecca Hancox • Plano  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## COUNTRY-STYLE RIBS

- 2½ pounds country-style pork ribs
- ½ cup white vinegar
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup Karo white corn syrup
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

Brown ribs in microwave for 1½-2 minutes on each side, depending on the size of your microwave, to pull off some of the grease before baking. Place ribs in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients into a sauce and pour over ribs. Bake covered at 325 degrees F for 1½ hours. Serves 4

Audra O'Neill • Wall Lake  
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

## GROUND PORK CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 pound cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 5 cloves garlic
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- noodles or rice

Brown pork, then add cabbage. Add remaining ingredients and cook for 5 minutes. Serve over noodles or rice.

Karen Wingert • Panama  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative



## PORK TACOS WITH PINEAPPLE SALSA

- 4-5 pounds boneless pork loin
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits
- ½ jalapeno pepper, chopped
- juice of half a lime
- ½ red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro
- 2 cups rice, cooked
- tortillas
- sour cream

Rub brown sugar, salt, pepper, paprika, oregano and red pepper flakes over pork loin. Bake covered at 250 degrees F for 4 hours. Shred meat. Combine pineapple, jalapeno, juice of half a lime, onion and cilantro to make a salsa. Serve pork, rice and salsa in tortillas with sour cream.

**Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## HAM ROLLS

- 2½ pounds ground ham
- 2½ pounds ground pork
- 1 pound ground beef
- 2 cups cracker crumbs
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 cans tomato soup, undiluted
- 2¼ cups brown sugar
- ¾ cup cider vinegar

Combine ham, pork, beef, cracker crumbs, eggs and milk. Mix and form into rolls or balls. Combine dry mustard, soup, brown sugar and cider vinegar into a sauce. Spoon sauce over ham rolls and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Rolls can be frozen either before or after baking. An alternative is to make into smaller rolls or balls and serve as an appetizer. Serves 10-15

**Jo Growth • Plainfield  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SLOW COOKER HAM SLIDERS

- 2 boneless hams, thinly sliced
- 1 cup honey
- 2 cups brown sugar
- cheese slices
- 2 dozen slider buns

Set crockpot on low, spray with nonstick spray. Add ham, honey and brown sugar. Cook for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Layer ham and cheese slices of your choice on slider buns. Serves 10

**Nancy Hemann • Parkersburg  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## PORK CARNITAS

- 1½ tablespoons salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 pounds pork butt, cut into 4-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons cooking fat
- ½ medium onion, roughly chopped
- 1 cup water
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup green onions, sliced into ½-inch pieces
- juice of half a lime

Mix 1 tablespoon salt with pepper. Use mixture to season the pork butt evenly. Melt the cooking fat in a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the pork (be sure not to overcrowd) and brown all sides, 3-4 minutes per side. Remove pork from the pot and set aside. In the same pot, reduce heat to medium-low, add onion. Cook and stir for 4-5 minutes, until translucent. Add water, garlic, chili powder and cinnamon. Increase heat to medium-high, return the pork to the pot and bring to boil. Cover pot with a lid or tightly wrapped foil. Transfer to oven and bake at 350 degrees F for 2½ hours, turning the meat after each hour. Pork should be fork-tender when done. Transfer pork to a bowl and shred, discarding any excess fat. Incorporate cooking liquid from the pot, then add green onions and lime juice. Season with the remaining ½ tablespoon salt. Serves 4-6

**Amy Rudolph • Renwick  
Boone Valley Electric Cooperative**

### WANTED:

## SOUP & STEW RECIPES

### THE REWARD:

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

### Deadline is Oct. 31

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.



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

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

### MAIL: Recipes

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# 6 REASONS ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE GREAT PLACES TO WORK

BY PAUL WESSLUND AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

The electricity in your home can seem like an impossible miracle to explain. But one way to understand it is to think about the variety of skills and types of jobs it takes to make power happen.

That kind of thinking can also be handy if you or someone you know is looking for a promising career.

Running electric utilities today takes just about every skill imaginable. Some jobs call for the physical ability to climb a utility pole and for others, the technical know-how to create intricate

cybersecurity systems. Some require the interpersonal skills of talking with a co-op member about how they can lower their electric bill.

Other roles may require logistical knowledge to deliver essential equipment through a challenging supply chain.

An industry that depends on such a vast range of abilities offers job seekers a variety of career opportunities. Here are six reasons electric co-ops are a great place to work.



*"I appreciate the co-op philosophy that focuses on the seven cooperative principles, keeping members first and foremost in all decision-making. These principles guide us in everything we do, and it reflects on the success of the electric cooperative business model since 1938. I am part of a community working here and can reach out to any other electric cooperative in Iowa with any questions. 'Iowa Nice' shines brightly working in electric cooperatives."*

**Jeni Kolsrud**

IT Manager  
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative

**1 Stability.** You can count on homes and businesses needing electricity now and in the future. Energy careers offer excellent benefits and paths for career advancement. Employees typically stay in the industry for more than 15 years.

**2 Excitement.** While utility work is reliable, it's also at the cutting edge of innovation. Electrification is the centerpiece of the push for greener energy. The number of electric vehicles is doubling every year, which means new workforce skills are needed to figure out how to keep all those cars and trucks plugged in and charged up. Two of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are wind turbine technician and solar voltaic installer. More than \$120 billion a year is being spent to modernize the U.S. electric grid to manage new patterns of electricity use.



*"I've worked for the cooperative for 20 years. In this time, I have witnessed electricity become increasingly important to our daily lives, from improving basic health and well-being to facilitating services like online banking to ordering groceries. Cooperatives are dedicated to their member-consumers. We are always working to improve the reliability of our distribution system and serve our members."*

**Jason Gibbs**

Manager of Member Services  
Clarke Electric Cooperative





*"The past 10 years working at the cooperative have been the most enjoyable of my working career. The opportunities to increase my knowledge and skills are invaluable. The atmosphere is like a family. Networking with my peers at other cooperatives has proven to be extremely helpful. Supporting our member-owners instead of working for 'customers' has been refreshing, and the cooperative principles, including concern for our communities, make us stand out."*

**Sarah Newton**

Director of Finance/  
Administrative Services  
Southwest Iowa REC

**3 Variety.** The skills needed in the utility industry range from an advanced college degree to trade school, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. And the variety of positions is staggering – accountants, social media managers, IT specialists, engineers and human resources professionals, to name a few. There are more unique positions as well, such as drone operators to inspect power lines, data analysts to coordinate the flow of electricity and power plant operators to oversee electricity generation.

**4 It's local.** Maintaining electric service needs to happen locally. That means that much of the work takes place near your hometown. Not only can a utility worker make a living and raise a family in the area they choose to live, if they decide to move to another part of the country, there will likely be energy career opportunities there as well.

**5 Satisfaction.** Any lineworker will tell you when they've just climbed down from a pole in the middle of the night during a rainstorm, there's no better feeling than knowing the power outage you've just restored brought light and heat back into the homes of hundreds of people. The same goes for the utility truck dispatcher back at headquarters or the media specialist getting the word out about the status of power restoration. Utility workers can know they're powering their neighbors and the nation.



*"I enjoy the variety of each day. I have satisfaction in helping members daily and with long-term planning for our cooperative. Co-op employees are usually long-standing, which means I can have long-term relationships with my co-workers."*

**John Endelman**

Operations Manager  
Butler County REC

**6 Not-for-profit business model**  
The people behind the power at your electric co-op get to know even higher levels of job satisfaction. Electric co-ops offer a unique business model led by the members who use the electricity.

*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.*



*"One of the reasons I like working for a co-op is the opportunity to work with a dedicated team with a common goal of improving our members' lives. It is also rewarding to see the positive results from the improvements we have made to our distribution system over the years."*

**Pat Hyland**

System Controller  
East-Central Iowa REC



*"The best part of working in the cooperative world is being a part of a great team. Every job at my co-op is specialized, and every employee is committed to serving our members to the best of their ability. It's extremely satisfying to be a part of a dedicated and talented group of people who positively impact our local communities."*

**Nate Hopwood**

IT Manager  
T.I.P. REC



*"I am honored to be able to work for an electric cooperative that serves the community in which I live. I love that decisions are made locally by a board of member-directors and that we are able to provide our members with safe and reliable power at the lowest possible price."*

**Katie Stadheim, PHR, SRM-CP**

HR Director  
East-Central Iowa REC



# COZY UP TO COLDER WEATHER (AND SAVING MONEY)

Now that fall has arrived, it's a great time to work on prepping your home for winter while the temperatures are still warm. Here are a few things you can do to improve the efficiency of your home and save a little money, too.



An HVAC contractor or energy auditor can test ductwork and make sure it is properly sealed, which can reduce energy costs and improve comfort.

- 1 Clean the gutters.** Clogged gutters and drains can form ice dams that can lead to water seeping into your home and all sorts of extra energy costs. Run water through the gutters to check for misalignments that could cause water damage.
- 2 Keep the outside air out and the inside air in.** Use caulk to seal cracks and openings between stationary house components like a door frame and weatherstripping to seal components that move, like an operable window.
- 3 Show your furnace some TLC.** Clean your furnace annually each autumn to reduce sediment buildup that can cause it to run less efficiently or possibly become a fire hazard. It's also a

good idea to have it inspected annually to check for any potential problems. Changing your furnace filter regularly will aid airflow and energy efficiency.

- 4 Get your ducts in a row.** A home with central heating can lose about 20% of the air that moves through the duct system. Properly sealing and insulating them can reduce your energy bill.
- 5 Light the way.** Shorter daylight hours mean more reliance on interior and exterior lighting. Replace your outdated incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LED or other ENERGY STAR® products. Motion sense lights outside or lights on auto timers can also make sure you have light when you need it without wasting energy.

## October is National Co-op Month

Co-ops come in all shapes and sizes, but they each have a common goal: to provide goods or services for the members of the co-op.

Electric co-ops, including Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), exist to serve their members. Our priority is to provide affordable, reliable energy to our local communities. Because we're led by you, the members we serve, we can evolve to meet your needs.

Co-ops like Guthrie County REC help communities grow by promoting economic empowerment, fostering community engagement and supporting the unique needs of co-op members. "Concern for Community" is one of our core principles – and being community-focused is essential to everything we do.

Your satisfaction is our number one goal. It's why we were formed many years ago to fulfill a uniquely local purpose. We've come a long way since then, and your needs continue to evolve. That's why we'll never stop growing for you!

**CO-OPS  
GROW  
COMMUNITIES**

## PEPPERONI ROLLS

Ingredients: Pepperoni, pizza dough, mozzarella cheese, marinara sauce

- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Roll out dough and cut into long, 1-inch strips.
- Place cheese and pepperoni in a line along the strips.
- Roll each strip and place on parchment paper-lined baking sheet.
- Cook 20 minutes or until dough is complete baked/golden brown.
- Serve warm with side of marinara sauce. Makes 4 servings.



**Guthrie County REC**

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

1406 State Street, Guthrie Center  
641-747-2206 • 888-747-2206  
www.guthrie-rec.coop

**pork**  
October is National  
Pork Month



## REMINDERS

Heat rates go into effect Oct. 1 for electric heat users.

GCREC members who have heat meters should turn them back on for the winter heating season.



**Guthrie County REC**

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# SMART BREAKER BOXES

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Every home has an electrical panel, otherwise known as a breaker box. The design hasn't changed much over the years, but through recent innovation, the smart technology-enabled electrical panel is becoming a worthwhile energy efficiency upgrade. Many consumers are upgrading to smart breaker boxes to make their home electrical systems safer and more reliable.

Smart breaker boxes can operate on their own or in conjunction with a standard electrical panel. It's recommended to hire a qualified electrician to install the smart panel, which can be done using a home's existing electrical wiring and infrastructure.

## Integrated functionality and real-time updates

Many smart breaker boxes are designed to easily connect to other smart devices in your home. With the capacity to remotely monitor and adjust energy consumption, these devices provide several advantages that make them a worthwhile investment for anyone looking to consume less energy.

One advantage is convenience for homeowners to monitor and control how much energy they use. With smart circuit breakers, you can receive real-time data that allows you to pinpoint appliances or devices that consume excessive energy. This

real-time tracking allows consumers to adjust their energy use where needed, which ultimately saves money on monthly energy bills, reduces energy waste and is good for the electric grid.

## Load management at your fingertips

Smart breaker boxes are all about managing your electrical load. While the technology to track how much energy a home uses has been available for years, the ability to control how that energy is used is new. A smart breaker box can reveal how much power each circuit is using and turn each one on or off. Some smart breaker boxes allow you to establish schedules based on importance, such as refrigeration and heat to be on 24/7, but less important loads like Wi-Fi or the television to turn off during scheduled times or when no one is home.

Smart breaker boxes offer additional benefits for those with home solar systems. Smart breaker boxes help solar energy systems run more efficiently by determining how much energy is being used and how it can be stored. Through intelligent load management, they can provide longer battery backup life for those with energy storage. Additionally, integration with other smart home devices, like thermostats and virtual assistants, further enhances the connected-home ecosystem.

## Safety enhancements

Safety in electrical devices is highly important to consumers, and smart breaker boxes provide enhanced safety features that consumers appreciate. Smart breaker boxes can identify abnormalities and other potential electrical problems, then quickly shut off power supply if a circuit shorts or becomes overloaded to help avoid electrical fires and other dangers. Many smart breaker boxes include surge protection to help protect against power spikes and other issues.

## Applications for electric utilities

Smart breaker boxes aren't just for consumers – electric utilities are using them, too. For electric cooperatives, smart breaker boxes also offer a range of benefits. A primary advantage of these devices is that they allow for more efficient and reliable energy distribution. With the ability to remotely monitor energy use and detect faults within the system, electric cooperatives can quickly respond to issues and minimize outage times for consumers. This ultimately manages the grid more efficiently.

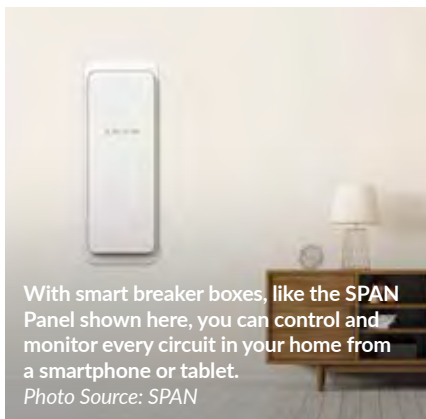


Smart breaker boxes, like the hardware-agnostic Lumin Smart Panel shown here, turn standard panels into smart panels by providing comprehensive energy control and extending whole-home backup.

Photo Source: Lumin

There's no denying that smart home technologies have changed how we use our homes, and smart breaker boxes are no exception. Smart breaker boxes help both consumers and electric utilities in multiple ways. With advanced safety features, real-time energy tracking and control, and the ability to use energy more efficiently, these devices are a smart investment for anyone who wants to make their home's system more reliable, safer and cost effective.

*Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*



With smart breaker boxes, like the SPAN Panel shown here, you can control and monitor every circuit in your home from a smartphone or tablet.

Photo Source: SPAN



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## DETAILS RELEASED FOR IOWA HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The 2023-2024 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

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

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

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

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. The start date is Oct. 1, 2023, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit [humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply](https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply). To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

### Income Maximums

Household Size	Annual Gross Income
1	\$29,160
2	\$39,440
3	\$49,720
4	\$60,000
5	\$70,280
6	\$80,560
7	\$90,840
8	\$101,120

**Note:** For households with more than eight members, add \$10,280 for each additional member.

# PRESERVING IOWA'S AWARD-WINNING CULINARY HISTORY

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I never know what to expect when I check my email. If you're like me, sometimes the inbox contains a reply (yeah!) from someone I'm trying to contact. There's also plenty of junk mail, but sometimes there's something interesting – and unexpected – like this:

**Subject: 4-H Project**

**Date: May 30, 2023**

Hello Ms. Darcy Dougherty Maulsby,

My name is Kathleen Mosher. I am a freshman in high school and a member of the ENP Bearcats 4-H club in Hardin County, Iowa. This year, I read your book, "A Culinary History of Iowa." After reading your book, I decided to cook my way through all of the recipes listed in the book and keep a journal of my progress as a 4-H project.

I am writing to ask if I have permission to display your book and use the recipes contained in the book for the 4-H project I described above? The book and project would be on display at our county fair in July at the Hardin County Fairgrounds.

Within minutes, I replied to Kathleen. "I think your 4-H project sounds terrific (what a creative idea!). You are certainly welcome to display my book and use the recipes for your 4-H project."

## Hands-on experience builds confidence

This correspondence got me thinking about my own experiences as a member of the Lake Creek Go-Getters 4-H club, when I entered a variety of foods in the Calhoun County Expo each summer. These experiences expanded my culinary skills, but they also built my confidence.

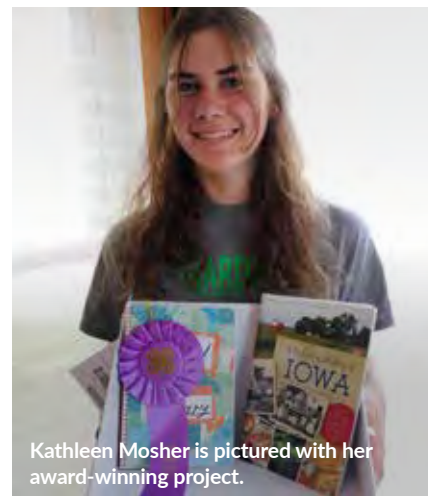
So did a college internship at Living History Farms during the summer of 1995. Clad in calico skirts, buttoned-up blouses and aprons sewn on a treadle sewing machine, I learned to milk cows by hand, transform homegrown vegetables into delicious side dishes, and bake bread and cookies in a wood-fired cookstove at the 1900 farm.

About halfway through that summer internship, my supervisor announced she was leaving for an appointment that morning and was putting me in charge of cooking the day's dinner for about eight staff members and volunteers at the 1900 farm. I panicked. "You'll be fine!" she shouted as the squeaky screen door clattered behind her.

During the next three hours, I discovered she was right. I got the meal cooked on time, and the hungry farmhands appreciated the food. My fear of "I can't" transformed into "I can." That's an attitude I've embraced far beyond the kitchen.

## Cooking transcends time

Something unexpected also happened along the way. As I prepared the pot



Kathleen Mosher is pictured with her award-winning project.

roast, fresh lettuce salad, creamed peas, bread (with butter I had churned) and cake in that hot kitchen, I felt a connection with my Grandma Fern, who grew up on a farm in Webster County, and my Grandma Katherine, who grew up in West Point, Nebraska, in the early 1900s.

That's the amazing thing about cooking – it transcends time and brings people of all ages closer, especially when meals include treasured family recipes. But what happens when the cooks who knew these recipes (from kringla to kolaches) are gone?

That's a big part of why I wrote "A Culinary History of Iowa." I'm thrilled that Kathleen's 4-H project based on my book took top honors at the 2023 Hardin County Fair, plus it received a blue ribbon at the Iowa State Fair, along with the Outstanding Food and Nutrition Award.

Well done, Kathleen! If your efforts are any indication, young Iowans will help carry on our state's culinary traditions for years to come.

*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

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for members of  
Iowa's electric  
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October 2023

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