

living with energy

JANUARY 2020

IN IOWA



Access Energy Cooperative annual meeting election information ▶ See Pages 12-13

**Energy savings
for the new year!**

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

Legislators visit
Access Energy Cooperative

Learn about the 2020
Iowa Caucus Project

Warm up with
soups and stews

Living with Energy in Iowa magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase *Living with Energy in Iowa* is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

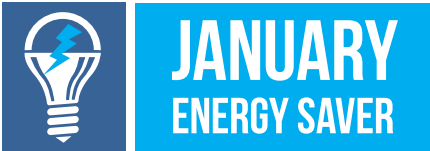
Editorial Office: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350. E-mail address: editor@livingwithenergyiowa.com. Letters may be edited for clarity and length before publication. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website: www.livingwithenergyiowa.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address: Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2020, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



Periodically inspect your dryer vent to ensure it's not blocked. This will save energy and may prevent a fire. Manufacturers recommend using rigid venting material – not flexible plastic vents that may collapse and cause blockages. ⚡



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

living with energy IN IOWA

Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives of Iowa
www.touchstoneenergy.com 

CONTENTS

JANUARY 2020

Features

6 All eyes on Iowa – 2020 Caucus Project

All eyes will be on Iowa in February when the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucuses take place in the heart of the Midwest.



8 Warm up with soups and stews

Soups and stews are the ultimate comfort food. Discover some of our readers' favorite recipes. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



10 Start the new year right with energy savings

New Year's resolutions that involve becoming more energy efficient can be easy to keep all year, and that can be good news for your pocketbook.



Favorites

3 Statewide Perspective

The power of a unified voice

3 Editor's Choice Contest

Win a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker!

14 Energy Efficiency

Momentum is Building

15 Out Back

Snow days are fun for everyone – except mom

ON THE COVER

Brent Koops, a member of North West Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative, captured this iconic Iowa winter shot following a recent year's January blizzard in Sioux County. To learn how your photo could be featured on a future *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine cover, see Page 5 of this issue. ⚡



The power of a unified voice

BY KEVIN CONDON

As the second session of the 88th Iowa General Assembly commences in mid-January, it serves as an opportunity to reinforce our cooperative spirit as we advocate for policies at the Statehouse. While there are many shared values among Iowa's electric co-ops, there is also diversity in our ranks. As we chart a course for our legislative goals, we must speak with one voice to ensure success. Showing Iowa's lawmakers the power of our cooperative commitment is much easier when we approach the Capitol with a unified message.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we nurture a cohesive voice through a robust process designed to engage our grassroots at the various levels of our policy development. Just as our friends from Schoolhouse Rock reminded us, knowledge is power, and thus, communication about what happens under the Golden Dome is critical.

As the session begins, we provide weekly (sometimes daily) updates to our member cooperatives through emails, our *Legislative Action* newsletter and video messages to ensure our members are informed of the most current details and developments in legislation. We gather with our members and their legislators in Des Moines on the first Tuesday of the session to "Welcome Back" lawmakers to the State Capitol. Later in January, IAEC's board members visit with legislative leaders, and many electric co-ops will visit the Statehouse throughout the session to discuss issues of importance with their local legislators. In March, we again show our strength when more than 250 electric co-op advocates ascend to Iowa's Capitol for our annual "Day on the Hill" event.

The state's coffers remained full,



with a nearly \$290 million surplus last year, so it is reasonable to expect lengthy discussions about the budget, the state's spending priorities, and perhaps even the tax code that collects the revenue. Amid the annual debates on things like education and healthcare, Iowa's electric co-ops will again share our unified message of promoting legislation

that allows for safe, reliable and affordable electric service provided in an environmentally responsible manner.

IAEC will support bills that allow utilities to fairly charge rates that cover costs of service, as well as legislation that gives local Iowans the ability to make decisions about their energy future. We will promote legislative efforts that help strengthen the cooperatives' culture

of safety by focusing on responsible management of easements and rights-of-way and proper education of those who perform work near power lines.

Leaders from our member cooperatives have developed these messages through a lengthy process that began shortly after the 2019 session adjourned last May. The IAEC Government Relations Committee met at the end of October, and the board of directors approved the policy agenda at the November meeting. Member cooperatives informed their local legislators about our goals over the final two months of 2019. We are excited to be back at work in 2020 with a consistent, thoughtful, committed and unified voice of Iowa's electric cooperatives. ⚡

Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker!

Make keeping those New Year's exercise resolutions easier with a Fitbit Charge 3 Fitness Activity Tracker! This tracker allows you to better measure calorie burn, understand resting heart rate and more with 24/7 heart rate tracking and a battery life of up to seven days. Choose from more than 15 exercise modes, such as run, bike, swim, yoga, circuit training and more. Set a goal, and access real time stats during your workouts to see how you can keep getting better. ⚡



Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.livingwithenergyiowa.com no later than Jan. 31, 2020. 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 KEURIG® from the November issue was Darlene Stamps from Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 14	Welcome Back Reception for Legislators – State Capitol
Feb. 4	Access Energy Cooperative Capitol Visit
Feb. 28	Youth Tour Application Deadline
March 11	Youth Tour Interviews
March 16	Scholarship Deadline
March 19	REC Day on the Hill
March 31	Photo Contest Deadline

Even if our office is closed, you can call us at 866-242-4232, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for answers to billing and account questions, to pay your bill and to report service interruptions. ⚡



Access Energy Cooperative is dedicated to exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable and efficient service, while being a good citizen in our communities.

Office: Access Energy Cooperative
1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641
Phone: 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232
Fax: 319-385-6873
Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call): 8-1-1
Website: www.accessenergycoop.com
Facebook: facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop
Twitter: twitter.com/AccessEnergyC
E-mail: contactus@accessenergycoop.com
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

Payments can be placed in dropbox under flag pole.
Visa and MasterCard accepted.

General Manager/CEO: Kevin Wheeler
Editor: Kimberly Davis
Assistant Editor: Cherity Wibben
Officers and Directors:

David Hollingsworth	District 1	President
Marvin Newton	District 3	Vice President
Robert P. Smith	District 2	Secretary
Fred Hickenbottom	District 1	Treasurer
Marvin Larson	District 1	Director
Jerry Barker	District 2	Director
Larry White	District 2	Director
Robert Chesnut III	District 3	Director
Marvin Holtkamp	District 3	Director

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

We want to hear from you

BY KEVIN WHEELER

We live in a device-driven world. Our smartphones, tablets, laptops and an assortment of other devices help us communicate and connect. Companies spend billions pushing out a steady drumbeat of messages and information, and we are constantly bombarded with one-way communication. But is anyone listening on the other end?

At Access Energy Cooperative, we are not only listening; we are eager to hear from you. Whether you text us, respond to a survey or social media post, send an email or stop by and chat in person, we thrive on your feedback. Connecting with you helps us keep pace with our community's priorities and needs.

Because we are a cooperative, we have a different way of operating. Access Energy Cooperative exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve. We hope you will consider us more than your energy provider, but instead, as a local business that supports this community and powers economic development and prosperity for the people.

Be sure to attend your annual meeting held every August at McMillian Park in Mt. Pleasant. (Save the date for Aug. 4, 2020!) It is a family fun-filled evening where you can hear from cooperative leaders and visit with your directors about the cooperative.

We conduct a tri-annual survey to gather feedback so that we can plan for new initiatives, technical upgrades and improvements on existing co-op programs and services. We also have a member advisory group that we meet with semi-annually to gain valuable feedback about the cooperative. Our planning is led by local members just like you who understand the needs of the community and are looking out for the long-term interests of the

broader community. In addition, we use Facebook as an additional way of obtaining your feedback.

We are amid significant changes in the energy sector, as technology and the drive for more renewables and a more balanced energy mix is impacting long-term planning. These are complex issues that we will be navigating in the coming months and years. Therefore, it's so important that we hear from you and other community members as we plot our course for the future.

Access Energy Cooperative works to continually learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you – because your electric co-op was built *by* the community, *for* the community. But we can only improve, adapt and effectively plan for the future if we have two-way communication.

For our co-op and community to thrive now and in the future, we depend on hearing from you. I hope you will connect with us and let us know your perspective. You can always reach me directly at 319-385-1577 – I'm listening. ⚡

Kevin Wheeler is the general manager/ CEO for Access Energy Cooperative.



YOUR ACCOUNT

Account information updates

Thank you to all members who participated in the account information update that was sent with your November bill. Keeping your account information up to date could mean faster service restoration in the event of an outage.

It is never too late to update your information. If you have a change in phone number, email or mailing address, or any other information on your account, please let us know right away. We use this information for billing, communications and outage restoration.

Thank you for keeping your account information up to date! ⚡

Thank you, legislators!

Access Energy Cooperative's board and staff would like to thank the legislators who attended our annual fall legislative meeting. This meeting is an excellent opportunity to discuss the upcoming session and issues of concern to the members of Access Energy Cooperative and the energy industry.

Thank you to Reps. Jeff Shipley, Joe Mitchell and Jeff Kurtz, and Sen. Rich Taylor for meeting with us. ⚡



Pictured from left to right: Rep. Joe Mitchell and Larry White, director



Pictured from left to right: (front row) Rep. Jeff Shipley; Kevin Wheeler, general manager/CEO; and David Hollingsworth, director; (back row) Directors Marvin Larson and Fred Hickenbottom



Pictured from left to right: Larry White, director; Sen. Rich Taylor; Reps. Jeff Kurtz and Joe Mitchell



Pictured from left to right: Kevin Wheeler, general manager/CEO; Directors Marvin Larson, Marvin Newton, Fred Hickenbottom and Marvin Holtkamp; and Rep. Jeff Shipley


SAFETY MATTERS




Access Energy Cooperative line workers work on dangerous equipment, keeping your power on. The last thing they need to worry about is being hit by an oncoming vehicle. If you see them working on the side of the road, move over to the other lane and slow down. This little girl wants her daddy to come home safely! You may not hear them – but they are thanking you! ⚡



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**



INTRODUCING A NEW SMARTHUB EXPERIENCE



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

Manage your account like never before with the new, improved SmartHub. The enhanced app design is here now! Usage details are right up front, allowing you to monitor your account quickly and easily. The same SmartHub features – view and pay your bill, contact us quickly and easily – are available at the tap of a button with the new SmartHub.

SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.

All eyes on Iowa – 2020 Caucus Project



BY ANN THELEN

All eyes will be on Iowa in February when the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucuses take place in the heart of the Midwest. In 2020, our country will re-elect or elect a new president, and in Iowa, all U.S. House Representatives and Sen. Joni Ernst are up for re-election.

Through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' grassroots advocacy arm – Iowa Rural Power – cooperative directors and employees have been hard at work. They have been learning more about the process for the Iowa Caucuses and meeting with candidates as they crisscross the state. If you've spotted an individual in a green Iowa Rural Power T-shirt at a political or public event, then you've seen a co-op advocate in action.

The overall goal of IAEC's 2020 Caucus Project is to tell the cooperative story to as many candidates as possible. This grassroots advocacy during the presidential caucus season provides a unique opportunity for Iowans to share the cooperative story on a national stage.

Iowa's electric cooperative members, in all the state's 99 counties, are encouraged to learn more about the process and meet with candidates when they visit your communities.

Here are some facts to know about this prominent time in the political process.

What is a caucus?

A caucus is a gathering of like-minded voters where they discuss party platforms and select delegates and candidates for general elections. Both the Iowa Democratic and Republican parties hold caucuses. The Iowa Caucuses are essentially neighborhood meetings of the major political parties. This year, the Democrats and the Republicans will hold caucuses in nearly 1,700 precincts across the state.

Is a caucus an election?

No. Caucuses are not elections. They are organized and run by the state parties and not state government. They are simply a mechanism where individuals show their support for a candidate and tell the parties what issues matter.

What time do the Iowa Caucuses start?

Each neighborhood caucus starts precisely at the same time – at 7 p.m. on Feb. 3. Participants must be on time. Late-comers are not allowed to participate.

How do I participate in the Iowa Caucuses?

- You must be registered to the party for which you are caucusing. Therefore, you must be a registered Democrat to participate in the Democratic caucus, and you must be a registered Republican to participate in the Republican caucus.
- If you are not registered to a party or are registered to a different party, you can still caucus. You can change your party registration at your precinct caucus.
- You must reside in the precinct where you are caucusing.
- You must be eligible to vote. If you have not registered to vote yet, you will be able to do this at your precinct caucus.
- You must be 18 years old by election day.

Why are the Iowa Caucuses a big deal?

The Iowa Caucuses are the first official contest of the presidential primary season. They are a great indicator of how candidates will perform in other states and give candidates publicity and momentum

At-a-glance – Key dates in the 2020 presidential election

Early states

Iowa Caucuses – Feb. 3, 2020
New Hampshire Primary – Feb. 11, 2020
Nevada Caucuses – Feb. 22, 2020
South Carolina Primary – Feb. 29, 2020

Super Tuesday (Mar. 3, 2020)

Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia

What do electric cooperatives want to achieve with Iowa's 2020 Caucus Project?

- Educate and engage with candidates, regardless of party
- Educate Iowa's member-consumers about advocacy efforts and candidates' stances on rural energy issues
- Tell our story and impact public policy



Electric cooperative members, employees and directors are asking presidential candidates this question:

“How will your energy plan help provide affordable and reliable power to rural Iowa?”

to continue their campaigns. The results of the first-in-the-nation caucuses can make or break a candidate.

Why do Iowa’s electric cooperatives get involved?

Iowa’s electric cooperatives have long recognized the importance of political advocacy and sharing our story with policymakers and elected officials. While not everyone who campaigns for president will win, ultimately, they are all influential public figures and provide a national stage for cooperative issues.

Why are we doing this when there is a sitting president?

Electric cooperatives are nonpartisan organizations. We look forward to sharing our story with anyone in Iowa who will listen, including President Trump and those campaigning to be his opponent. It would be a missed opportunity to not share our story with sitting members of U.S. Congress, mayors and governors – even if they are not elected president. After the caucuses, many presidential nominees will likely return to Iowa and help campaign for down-ballot candidates. ⚡



Find your Iowa Caucus location

Democratic Party of Iowa

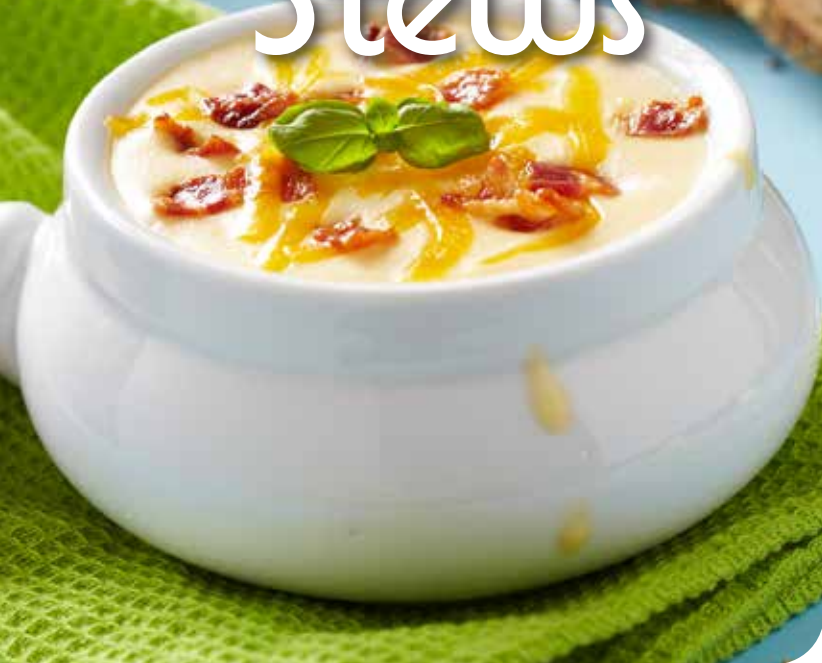
iowademocrats.org/2020-caucuses

Republican Party of Iowa

www.iowagop.org/2020-caucus-locations



Warm up with Soups & Stews



PERFECT PURÉES

To blend ingredients for a smooth and silky soup, remove any whole herbs and spices, ladle a cup or two of the liquid into a measuring cup, then put the rest of the solids and liquid into a countertop blender or food processor. Or use an immersion blender. Blend the ingredients, thinning it out with the reserved liquid as needed.

Cheeseburger Soup

- 1½ cups water
 - 2 cups potatoes, peeled and cubed
 - 2 medium carrots, chopped
 - 1 onion, chopped to taste
 - 1 tablespoon beef bouillon granules
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - 1 pound ground beef, cooked and drained
 - 2½ cups milk, divided
 - 3 tablespoons flour
 - ¼ teaspoon pepper
 - 8 ounces American cheese, cubed
- Optional toppings:** Shredded cheddar cheese, crumbled bacon bits, chopped dill pickles

Combine first six ingredients and boil for 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in cooked ground beef and 2 cups milk; heat through. Then combine flour, pepper and ½ cup milk. Add this to other ingredients and bring to a boil; cook until thickened. Stir in cheese until melted. When serving, top with shredded cheddar cheese, crumbled bacon bits and chopped dill pickles.

Joni Rus • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Ham and Bean Soup

- 2 15-ounce cans great northern beans, drained
 - 2 14-ounce cans chicken broth
 - 4 medium potatoes, diced
 - 1 medium onion, chopped
 - 3 carrots, diced
 - 3 cups fully cooked ham, in bite-sized pieces
 - ¼ cup dried parsley flakes
 - 1 bay leaf
- salt and pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove bay leaf and serve.

Patricia Michels • Panama
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

Baked Beef Stew

- 14.5 ounces diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 cup water
- 3 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 pounds lean beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 2 celery ribs, cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 1 medium onion, cut into chunks
- 1 slice bread, cubed

In a large bowl, combine tomatoes, water, tapioca, sugar, salt and pepper. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into a greased 13x9x2-inch or a 3-quart baking dish. Cover and bake at 375 degrees F for 1¾ to 2 hours, or until meat and vegetables are tender. Yields 6-8 servings.

Linda J. McCarville • New Hampton
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Hobo Stew

- 1½ pound beef roast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 cups carrot chunks
- 4 cups potato chunks
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- 16 ounces green beans, undrained
- 32 ounces tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup minute tapioca
- ¼ teaspoon celery salt
- 1 tablespoon salt

Combine all ingredients well in a large roasting pan. Cover and bake at 275 degrees F for 5 hours. Stir occasionally but try not to open lid too often. Let slowly bake until it becomes a thick, savory stew.

Cherry Marsden • Ankeny • Consumers Energy

Potato Soup

- 6 cups potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 5 cups water
- 2 cups chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup sliced carrots
- ¼ cup butter
- 4 teaspoons chicken bouillon
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 12 ounces evaporated milk
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley

Combine all ingredients in a large slow cooker. Cover and cook 7 hours or until the vegetables are tender.

Jim Krier • Remsen
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

Cheesy Chicken Chowder

- 6 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups potatoes, diced and peeled
- 1 cup carrots, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup peas
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- ⅓ cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced

In a 4-quart saucepan, bring chicken broth to a boil. Reduce heat and add potatoes, carrots, celery, peas, onion, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Meanwhile, melt butter or margarine in saucepan. Add flour and mix well. Gradually stir in milk. Cook over low heat until slightly thickened. Stir in cheese and cook until melted. Add to broth mixture along with chicken. Cook over low heat, stirring until heated through.

Vicky Converse • Fredericksburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative



Search our online recipe archive for thousands of recipes from Iowa's co-op cooks.

www.livingwithenergyiowa.com/recipes

Chicken and Bacon Chowder Soup

- 1 pound sliced bacon
- 3 cups celery, diced (optional)
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 4 cups potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cups carrots, sliced
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups chicken, cooked and diced
- 2 10¾ ounce cans condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 3 cups half and half milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cook bacon until crisp or use already cooked bacon; crumble and set aside. Place uncooked carrots, celery, potatoes and onions in crockpot. Add broth, chicken, soup, milk, bacon, salt and pepper. Stir well and cook on low medium heat most of the day. Can be started in the morning in a slow cooker and cooked on low-medium all day.

Dianne Riley • Osceola
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.



Wanted:
Recipes
to celebrate
spring!

The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Welcome warmer weather with fresh spring recipes, filled with favorite seasonal ingredients like rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries, spinach and more. If we run your recipe in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at www.livingwithenergyiowa.com.

The deadline is Jan. 31, 2020. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions.

EMAIL:

recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com (Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your e-mail message.)

MAIL:

Recipes

Living with Energy in Iowa
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

RICHER STOCK

For a richer flavor when making vegetable stock, brown the vegetables in a tablespoon of butter before adding the liquid to the pan.

SOUP TIPS

FINISH WITH A GARNISH

Garnishes are easy, attractive and delicious ways to elevate soup and add texture. Ideas for garnishes include fresh herbs, freshly grated cheese, pesto, cream or homemade croutons.

SOUP TIPS

FREEZER STARS

The best soups for freezing include bean soups and chilis, broth-based soups made without cream or milk, puréed soups, grain and wild rice soups, and vegetable soups.

SOUP TIPS

NUTTY AND SWEET

Adding the rind from a Parmigiano-Reggiano or grana cheese to a simmering soup can give it a nutty, sweet flavor.

SOUP TIPS

Start the new year right with energy savings

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN



Photo: Consumers Energy

1

Dial in savings.

Now: The first place to start is your home thermostat. In most homes, the most substantial portion of the energy bill goes toward heating and cooling. Setting back your thermostat by 7 to 10 degrees for 8 hours a day can save you up to 10% a year on heating and cooling. In the winter, you could aim for 56 F at night and when no one is at home, and 68 F when you're up and around. If you're used to a warmer house, it may mean throwing on a sweater or pair of slippers. It should be noted this tactic is not as effective for some homes with radiant heat systems.

Later: Make sure to adjust your air conditioning settings next summer. If you have a manual thermostat and don't always remember to adjust it, consider purchasing a smart thermostat, or at least one that's programmable.

The new year marks a great time to begin new habits. Approximately 6 in 10 people make New Year's resolutions. The bad news is that less than 1 in 10 people keep those resolutions. However, once you get started, resolutions involving becoming more energy efficient can be easy to keep all year-long, and that can be good news for your pocketbook.

These five energy-saving measures can be done right away and help you plan for greater savings down the road.



Photo: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

2

Set refrigerator and freezer temps for efficiency.

Now: Make sure your refrigerator and freezer aren't set to a colder temperature than needed. The fridge should be at 38 F to 40 F, and the freezer compartment should be 5 F. If you have a separate chest freezer, set it to 0 F. Also check your water heater setting. You should aim for a setting of 120 F.

Later: Old refrigerators and freezers can use a lot of electricity. If yours was made before 1993, you could save upward of \$65 a year with a new ENERGY STAR® model. If you eliminate a second refrigerator or freezer, you can save even more, especially if they are stored in your garage.

3



Photo: Marcela Gara, Resource Media

Maximize the heat you've got.

Now: Look around each room and make sure the vents and radiators aren't blocked by furniture or other objects. If the floors feel cold even when the room is warm, put down area rugs for additional warmth. Open curtains and blinds to let the sunshine in, and close them at night.

Later: Enlist the help of an energy auditor or HVAC specialist to test for duct leakage and ensure your whole system is balanced and running efficiently.



4

Make bright moves with your lights.

Now: The obvious first step is to make sure lights are turned off when they're not in use. You can do this manually or employ one of the many automated strategies. If you're still using incandescent bulbs, you could switch the five most-used bulbs to LEDs and save about \$75 per year. LEDs last much longer and use about 25% as much energy. Prices on LED bulbs have decreased in the past few years, and you can save more if you buy them in packs.

Later: Over time, plan to replace all your old incandescent bulbs and consider smart lighting options that can be programmed to turn off when a room is not in use.

5

Eliminate drafts.

Now: Look carefully around your home for signs of air leaks. If you have a gap under an exterior door, you can block it with a towel or better yet, install some weather stripping. Make sure windows are sealed with caulk. You can also seal areas around plumbing and wiring penetrations.

Later: Have an energy auditor do a blower door test, which is the best way to identify all air leaks.

Taking some of these easy steps now should provide some quick energy savings. To save even more, you'll need a plan that includes the "later" steps we've shared above. An energy audit can help you determine a much better plan, and your electric co-op may be able to provide an audit or recommend a qualified local auditor. ⚡

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

YOUTH TOUR

Upcoming deadlines for Access Energy Cooperative programs

Please check out our website at www.accessenergycoop.com for complete details on the following programs:

Access Energy Cooperative Scholarship Program

\$9,000 in scholarships is available to high school seniors. Six \$1,500 awards, two in each of the cooperative's three districts. Must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative. Application deadline is March 16, 2020.

Youth Tour Program

Must be high school sophomore or junior interested in traveling to Washington, D.C.; submit an application by Feb. 28, 2020; and attend a personal interview at our office March 11.

Applications can be obtained:

- At all area high school guidance counselor offices
- By contacting us at 866-242-4232
- By visiting our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, and downloading the application and either faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office; or submitting forms online. ⚡

ANNUAL MEETING



Aug. 4, 2020 @ 5 p.m.

**Access Energy Cooperative
Annual Meeting
of Members**

Everything is FREE!

LEGAL TOPIC

Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the

Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

Access Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. ⚡

HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

2020 board election

Your board of directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative. Three seats are up for election, one in each of the three districts. Each board member is elected to a term of three years. Terms that will expire with the 2020 annual meeting to be held Tuesday, Aug. 4, are:

- **District 1** – David Hollingsworth
- **District 2** – Jerry Barker
- **District 3** – Marvin Holtkamp

In order to serve on the Access Energy Cooperative board of directors you must be a member of the cooperative and a bona fide resident of a premise served by the cooperative.



**David
Hollingsworth**



**Jerry
Barker**



**Marvin
Holtkamp**

The board will be appointing a Nominating Committee who will select candidates to run for the expiring terms. Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the Nominating Committee, which will be posted in our office, on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com – and in these pages – or you can call our office at 866-242-4232. ⚡

Annual meeting legal notice

Pertaining to provisions set forth in RUS Bulletin 1790-1, we are providing you with a summary of the following prior to a meeting of the 2020 Nominating Committee.

ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE BYLAWS. ARTICLE III.

Section 2(a). Election and Tenure.

The members of the Board of Directors shall be elected from three Districts, numbered One (1), Two (2) and Three (3). The geographic areas of the three Districts shall be established by the Board of Directors and described in the By-Laws. The Districts shall be apportioned, and reapportioned as necessary, by the Board of Directors, so that the Districts contain as nearly as possible an equal number of members.

At each Annual Meeting of Members, one, and only one, Director from each of Districts One (1), Two (2) and Three (3), shall be elected for the term of three years, and until their respective successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Members attending and voting at an Annual Meeting or voting by mail or other electronic means as approved by the Directors as provided in the Articles of Incorporation shall vote only for candidates from the district in which they reside. The election of directors shall be by ballot, and each voting member shall be entitled to cast one vote for each director to be elected from that member's district.

Section 2(b). District Boundaries.

Directors shall be elected from districts beginning with the election held at the 1990 Annual Meeting and as scheduled in the Articles of Incorporation. The three (3) districts will be comprised of the following territories:

District I: DAVIS: Salt Creek Twsp; JEFFERSON COUNTY: Blackhawk, Buchanan, Cedar, Center, Des Moines, Liberty, Locust Grove, Penn, Polk and Walnut Twsp; KEOKUK COUNTY: Steady Run Twsp; VAN BUREN COUNTY: Bonaparte, Cedar, Farmington, Harrisburg, Henry, Lick Creek, Union, Village and Washington Twsp; WAPELLO COUNTY: Competine, Pleasant and Washington Twsp; WASHINGTON COUNTY: Brighton and Franklin Twsp.

District II: HENRY COUNTY: Center, Jackson, Jefferson, Marion, Salem, Scott, Tippecanoe, Trenton and Wayne Twsp; JEFFERSON COUNTY: Lockridge and Round Prairie Twsp; LEE COUNTY: Cedar, Marion and Pleasant Ridge Twsp; LOUISA COUNTY: Elm Grove Twsp; WASHINGTON COUNTY: Marion and Washington Twsp.

District III: DES MOINES COUNTY: Burlington, Concordia, Danville, Pleasant

Grove, Union and Washington Twsp; HENRY COUNTY: Baltimore, Canaan and New London Twsp; LEE COUNTY: Charleston, Denmark, Franklin, Green Bay, Harrison, Jefferson, Van Buren, Washington and West Point Twsp.

Section 3. Qualifications.

No member shall be eligible to become or remain a Director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is not a bona fide resident of premises served by the Cooperative, or who is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members, or who within two (2) years preceding a director candidate nomination was an employee of the Cooperative, or who within seven (7) years preceding a director candidate nomination has received benefit from any collective bargaining agreement with the Cooperative, or is a close relative of a director or employee of the Cooperative, with close relative being defined as: spouse, cohabitant, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and natural, step, and adopted children, or within fifteen (15) years preceding a director candidate nomination been convicted of a felony whether by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, plea of guilt, or plea of nolo contendere, or who is or becomes the full-time employee or agent of another director or employee, or who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of another director, and no person shall take or hold office as a Director who is the incumbent of or candidate for an elective public office other than on a school board, board of supervisors, township trustee, township clerk, or member of the State legislature; provided, however, that nothing in this Section contained shall, or shall be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors. When a membership is held jointly, either one, but not both, may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless both shall meet the qualifications herein above set forth. Before the meeting of the committee on nominations for directors each year, the Board of Directors shall determine whether any director has ceased to be a bona fide resident of premises served by the Cooperative, and any director found by a two-thirds vote of all directors not to meet the residence requirement or any other qualifications of this Section, may continue to hold office only

until the next annual meeting at which time the vacancy shall be filled by the members.

Section 4. Nominations.

It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than one hundred sixty (160) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which Directors are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of three members from each District from which a Director is to be elected. No member of the Board may serve on such committee. The committee shall prepare and post, at the principal office of the Cooperative, at least ninety (90) days before the meeting, a list of these candidates nominated for Director from each District from which a Director is to be elected, and the list shall include at least two candidates for each Director to be elected. Any fifteen or more members from a District from which a director is to be elected, acting together, may make other nominations for Director from their District by petition not less than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting, and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Secretary shall mail with the notice of the meeting, or separately, but at least ten days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of Directors to be elected from each District, and the names and addresses of the candidates from each district, specifying separately the nominations made by the committee and the nominations made by petition, if any. The ballots to be used for the election of Directors shall list the names of the candidates from each District nominated by the committee and the names of the candidates from each District nominated by petition, if any. The names of nominees shall be posted and listed on the ballots by District in alphabetical order.

The statement mailed by the Secretary shall also inform the members of the manner in which they may vote by mail or other electronic means as provided in this Section. Any member may cast their vote in person, by mail or by other electronic means, as may be approved by the Directors, for directors. A member voting shall mark the ballot in the manner instructed, selecting a number of candidates equal to the number of directors to be elected from that member's district. Upon completion, the ballot shall be delivered to the Cooperative or its representative in the manner instructed. When such ballot is received from any member in advance of the meeting, or at the meeting if voting in person, it shall be accepted and counted as a vote for directors by ballot of such member at such meeting. The provisions of this Section shall not be mandatory in the case of a recall of one or more directors as provided in Section 6 of Article IX of the Articles of Incorporation. 🌱

Efficiency is coming to 2020 Momentum is Building conference

Energy efficiency technologies and demonstrations for contractors and building trades professionals are the focus of the 2020 Momentum is Building (MIB) conference, scheduled for Feb. 6 and 7 in West Des Moines.

The conference provides attendees with continuing education credits, networking opportunities, presentations by recognized industry energy efficiency and building trades experts, along with exhibits on state-of-the-art technologies.

Sponsored and organized annually by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives® of Iowa, MIB offers an opportunity for members of Iowa's construction industry to learn more about the local service benefits available from locally owned electric cooperatives, serving nearly 650,000 Iowans in all 99 counties.

Speakers for the event include keynote Sandra Adomatis, owner of Adomatis Appraisal Service, speaking on high performance appraisals used by builders, appraisers, and energy organizations around the country; Mike Foti, president of Innovate Building Solutions and Innovate Home Org, a "DMG" (digital marketing geek) who uses construction industry and business knowledge to help contractors increase profitability and work efficiency; Steve Gilbert from Rural Housing 360; Ryan Meres from Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET); Darren Meyers from International Energy Conservation Consultants, and many others. Scott Siepker, the "Iowa Nice Guy," will close the conference with his classic Iowa insights.

"Helping inform local contractors about cutting-edge energy efficiency and beneficial electrification

technologies, both new and improved, is important to our co-op members," says Angela Catton, manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, one of the event organizers.

"We're excited about this year's Game of Thrones theme and our interpretation of the Iron Throne. The series has really risen to an iconic status over the last couple of years and we think attendees will really enjoy the references, even if they haven't seen the show."

For the 2020 conference, one item receiving notice already is the Iron Throne constructed by Scott Schlegel, headquarters maintenance superintendent – utility operations for Central Iowa Power Cooperative. The throne was recently debuted at the Iowa Association of Energy Efficiency's annual summit, where attendees enjoyed sitting in the throne wearing one of three building trades-oriented crowns.

Schlegel, who enjoys creative construction challenges, purchased most of the tools used as key pieces on the throne from an Amish auction in the Hazelton area, spending around \$20.

"The throne was a fun project. You can take a picture of it, but you need to look at it from all different sides because there are little things you don't notice the first, second or third time," he says. "It's an art piece."

The Iron Throne will be auctioned at the end of the conference. Proceeds benefit the MIB scholarship fund to pay for students who would like to attend future MIB events. Preview pictures of the throne can be seen on the Momentum is Building Facebook page.

MIB 2020 will be held at the Sheraton West Des Moines. Registration for the event is available online at momentumisbuilding.com. For more information about the event, please contact your local rural electric cooperative. ⚡



Snow days are fun for everyone — except mom

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I recently heard a young mom talk about what a horror snow days had become ... trying to find a sitter if she had to go to work; the misery of getting kids dressed to play outside; the in-fighting that went on between her offspring.

I know, I know ... snow days are supposed to develop into playful days in the snow with hot chocolate waiting afterward, or maybe doing crafts together around the kitchen table.

That's in Hallmark commercials, folks. Here's what a real snow day looks like:

6:40 a.m. The kids who couldn't be burned out of bed on a school day stick their heads in the bedroom door and crow, "School's canceled!" I can hear them opening cereal boxes and flipping the television on. They're fighting over what to watch, and all the while, the volume – both kids and television – is getting louder.

7 a.m. I crawl out of bed after hearing a giant crash. Fruity cereal is ground into the carpet, the TV is blaring, and no one owns up to the crash. I wonder what I'm going to find down the road that is irretrievably broken.

9:10 a.m. All three boys have snarfed down enough cereal, surely, to cover them until lunch. They want to go outside. I send them to round up snow pants, extra socks, boots, dry mittens and stocking caps. This only buys me about 5 minutes, as I know they'll come dragging back, claiming they can't find anything.

9:50 a.m. Everyone is clothed, wrapped around, snuggled in, zipped up and ready to go outside. It's not my problem if no one can put



their arms down. Son No. 2 declares he has to go to the bathroom. The process is reversed for him, and then Son No. 3, who decides he needs to go, too.

10:25 a.m. They're all outside. Finally. I contemplate locking the door. Time for a cup of much-needed coffee and a quick glance at the news.

10:30 a.m. I knew it was too good to be true. The door flies open and stays open. Four little heads are looking through the doorway. I'm the only mom home on this snow day, and so our house is obviously going to be the hangout. With a promise to make hot chocolate later, they trudge back out to the snow fort that's under construction.

Noon: By lunchtime, there have

been five "ins and outs" through the kitchen – searches for buckets and shovels, bathroom unswaddlings, some drinks for the snow fort. As they traipse in for lunch, I throw together some sandwiches, chips and carrot sticks. They all leave the carrots on their plates.

The afternoon is a virtual repeat of the morning until, by 5 p.m., I'm exhausted.

When the weather person says, "Looks like everyone's back to school tomorrow," I do a feeble little cheer. Then I clean the cereal out of the rug. ⚡

Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.



INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST

*You inspire us to find solutions, so we can provide the energy and savings you need.
Being part of a Touchstone Energy cooperative means we're always listening to make our communities a better place.*

What's here today, has never been better. To learn more, visit [TouchstoneEnergy.com](https://www.touchstoneenergy.com)

YOUR SOURCE OF POWER. AND INFORMATION.

Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperatives of Iowa
www.touchstoneenergy.coop

