

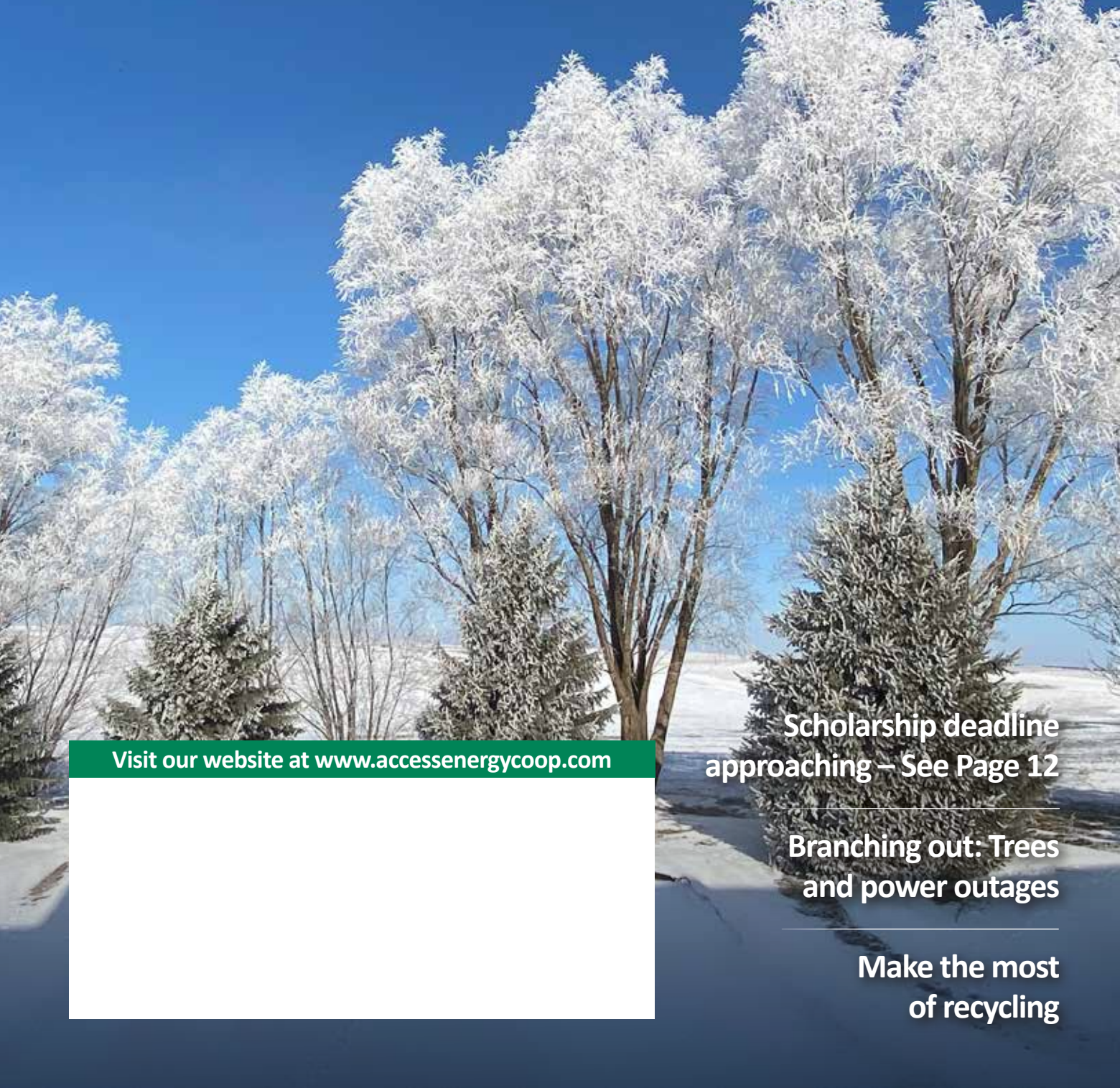
# living with energy

IN IOWA



FEBRUARY 2021

2021 Access Energy Cooperative nominating committee for board elections ▶ See Page 5



Visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)

Scholarship deadline approaching – See Page 12

Branching out: Trees and power outages

Make the most of recycling

**EDITOR**  
Ann Thelen

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Joel Clifton

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**  
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## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Turn off kitchen, bath and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing. When replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

Source: energy.gov



# living with energy IN IOWA

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Cooperatives of Iowa  
www.touchstoneenergy.com

## CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2021

### Features

#### 6 Branching out: Trees and power outages

Trees are one of the top causes of power outages. Learn how Iowa's electric cooperatives work throughout the year to minimize damage from trees and other vegetation.



6

#### 8 Recipes for Valentine's Day

Just in time for Valentine's Day, we've assembled a delicious collection of foods featuring a red ingredient. You'll adore these recipes from Iowa's co-op cooks. **PLUS:** Find out how you can receive a \$25 credit on your power bill!



8

#### 10 Make the most of recycling

The list of recycling rules is long and complicated, but a way to help master them is to try three different types of thinking.



10

### Favorites

#### 3 Statewide Perspective

Feel the love: Your electric co-op cares about you

#### 14 Energy Efficiency

Which kitchen appliance should you upgrade?

#### 3 Editor's Choice Contest

Win a Breville Juice Fountain

#### 15 Out Back

Problems with an arthritic hip

### ON THE COVER



Congratulations to Rhoda Van Ravenswaay, a North West REC member, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue of *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine! A night of dense fog in January led to beautiful frosty scenes across Iowa. To have your photo considered for a future cover, email high-res images to editor@livingwithenergyiniowa.com. If we select your photo, you'll be awarded with \$100. ⚡

# Feel the love: Your electric co-op cares about your safety and education

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

We hope you enjoy flipping through the pages of this magazine every month and find the content useful in your daily life. Your local electric co-op covers the cost to produce, print and mail this publication to you every month, but have you ever wondered why?

Your electric co-op invests in this publication because it has just one mission – to serve you, the member-consumer. Fulfilling this mission requires ongoing communication, and one of the most cost-effective ways to reach people is through printed media. We know you're bombarded every day with messages, and it can be exhausting. Messaging on TV, radio and social media can be fleeting and easy to ignore. Your co-op sends *Living with Energy in Iowa* to you every month to break through the clutter and to keep you informed.



we have an obligation to help you use energy wisely and safely.

Our publication team works hard to provide high-quality content each month. Our editor and art director care deeply about the stories they work on, and we are always mindful of using our budget prudently. Crafting this publication is a job we do not take lightly; we aim to earn your trust with every issue.

And in the pages of every issue, you'll find valuable tips on how to save energy and money, how to stay safe around electricity, local news about rural economic development, and emerging trends and technologies in the electric industry. Your local electric co-op is an energy partner you can trust for honest information.

## A mission to keep readers informed

You may also notice what's *not* included in this publication –

advertising. Years ago, Iowa's electric cooperatives made the strategic decision to make *Living with Energy in Iowa* ad-free to maintain the utmost editorial credibility and integrity. Our mission is solely to keep you informed.

And while sending you a high-quality magazine every month involves a prudent financial investment, your co-op knows it is far more costly to have an uninformed membership. Communicating frequently is an essential business function that helps your co-op achieve its mission of powering lives and empowering communities.

Thank you for spending time with us every month and for being an educated and informed member of your local electric co-op. As Valentine's Day approaches, we hope you feel the love! ⚡

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

## Printed materials are effective

Our research tells us that print is an effective way to draw attention to information. According to our 2020 magazine readership survey, almost 9 out of 10 people who receive this magazine take time to flip through the pages each month, and 44% of recipients spend more than 10 minutes reading the magazine. We think that's money well spent to reach as many co-op member-consumers as possible.

In fact, one of the seven core principles that guides all electric co-ops is specifically focused on education, training and information. Electric co-ops invest in high-quality education and training for employees and our elected directors because we know that informed leaders make better decisions. We also invest in educating and informing our member-consumers because what's in *your* best interest is in *our* best interest. As your local electric utility,

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# Win a Breville Juice Fountain

Take your goals for healthy eating to the next level with nutritious, wholesome juice! Breville's Juice Fountain uses advanced Cold Spin Technology to quickly extract every bit of fresh, healthy juice without heating ingredients, which preserves maximum nutrients. A two-speed electronic control accommodates custom juicing, including leafy vegetables, soft fruit, denser fruits and harder vegetables. ⚡



## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Feb. 28, 2021. 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 ecobee Smart Thermostat from the December issue was Karl Pinegar, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**March 15** Scholarship deadline

**March 31** Photo contest deadline  
for 2022 calendar

Even when 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, paying your bill, and 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](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop](https://facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop)

**Twitter:** [twitter.com/AccessEnergyC](https://twitter.com/AccessEnergyC)

**E-mail:** [contactus@accessenergycoop.com](mailto: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

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# Committed to a co-op culture for all

BY KEVIN WHEELER

Over the years, you've heard me expound on why and how Access Energy Cooperative is different – because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Access Energy Cooperative, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunities in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

## Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families, as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Access Energy Cooperative was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member

has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in Access Energy Cooperative's director elections annually, and we invite all members to participate in the co-op annual meetings to weigh in on discussions that set co-op policies and priorities.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

## Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and efficient service, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your *local* electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Access Energy Cooperative was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you – the members we proudly serve – is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all. ⚡

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

## Board appoints nominating committee for election of directors



Marvin Larson



Larry White



Robert Chesnut III

Your board of directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative, and a nominating committee has been appointed to begin the process of selecting nominees to run for the three seats that will be up for election at the 2021 Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 3.

Each of our three districts will elect a director to fill a position for a term of three years. Terms that will expire with this year's annual meeting to be held Tuesday, Aug. 3, are:

- **District 1:** Marvin Larson
- **District 2:** Larry White, and
- **District 3:** Robert Chesnut III

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.

The following members have been appointed to the 2021 Nominating Committee:

### District 1

- **Brandon Ledger**, Stockport
- **Kenneth Whitham**, Fairfield
- **Joe Heckethorn**, Stockport

### District 2

- **Bob Wilson**, Mt. Pleasant
- **Randy White**, Mt. Pleasant
- **Bob Scarff**, Mt. Pleasant

### District 3

- **Tim Myers**, New London
- **Dean Mabeus**, Wever
- **Myrna Folker**, Donnellson

Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the Nominating Committee or our office. Further information on the board election process can be found online at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). ⚡

## Save the date!



**2021**  
Access Energy Cooperative  
**Annual Meeting**  
of Members

Aug. 3, 2021 • 5-8 p.m.

Everything is FREE!

## Win \$50 in Access Energy Cooperative's photo contest

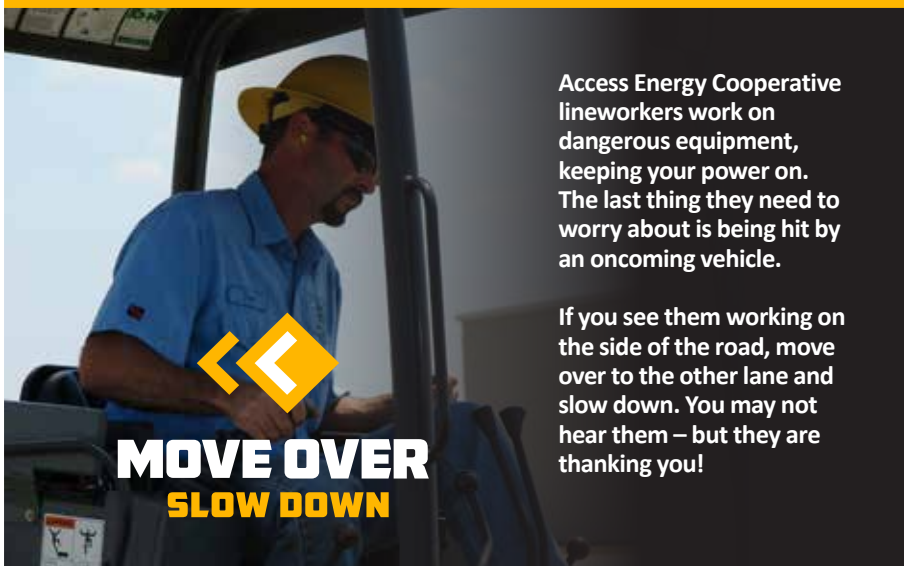
We are holding our annual photo contest



with selected entries to be used in the 2022 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Each photographer whose entry is selected as one of the 13 featured photos will win \$50. Submit all entries by March 31, 2021, to:

**PHOTO CONTEST, C/O  
ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE  
PO BOX 440  
MT. PLEASANT, IA 52641**

Visit [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) for complete rules. ⚡



**MOVE OVER  
SLOW DOWN**

Access Energy Cooperative lineworkers 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. You may not hear them – but they are thanking you!

# Branching out:

## Trees and power outages

BY ANN THELEN

Nearly six months after Iowa's historic derecho, the weather phenomenon that wreaked havoc on parts of the state continues to make headlines. Recalling the power outages and massive destruction from trees and winds, statewide leaders ushered in the new year by remarking on the storm.

"Iowans are well-accustomed to the extremes of Mother Nature's temper, but the derecho in August was unlike anything we've seen. Hurricane-force winds recorded as high as 140 miles an hour raged across our state," said Gov. Kim Reynolds in her 2021 Condition of the State Address in January. "Over one-third of our counties impacted; 584,000 households left without power; thousands of homes damaged. It was a disaster of unprecedented scope."

Maj. Gen. Ben Corell delivered his condition of the Iowa National Guard address to the Iowa Legislature and detailed how the Guard provided more than 200 soldiers and airmen to communities hit by the hurricane-force derecho. Their focus was on supporting power restoration in Linn County, and Guard members removed over 1,400 loads of debris totaling more than 15,000 tons from 593 city blocks.

### A top cause of outages

While the storm caused unprecedented damage, it also reinforced the role trees and other vegetation can play in disrupting safe and reliable electric service in all types of weather. It's why Iowa's electric cooperatives rigorously implement strong vegetation management programs.

"Trees are one of the top two causes of outages. In the past two years, they have been the No. 1 cause of outages," says Jeremy Richert, CEO and executive vice president, Maquoketa



Valley Electric Cooperative. "On average, it also takes nearly twice as long to restore power to member-consumers from tree-related outages."

Richert cites data gathered from analyzing every outage at the co-op, which serves 14,000 members in nine east-central Iowa counties.

"The average time to restore power to member-consumers from an outage that is not tree-related is 1 hour, 12 minutes," he explains. "That's compared to an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes for every outage caused by trees."

Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative's vegetation management program includes a

systematic, planned program where every area within its service territory is examined annually as part of the co-op's drive-by inspection program. This program identifies where trees and other vegetation are growing too close to power lines and equipment, and those trouble spots are trimmed or sprayed by the co-op's maintenance crews.

In addition, the co-op uses technology to identify system faults that cause blinks but not necessarily outages, such as branches rubbing against power lines. By continually tracking those things in real-time, crews can take care of issues before they become bigger problems.



### Beyond what's just below power lines

“Whether it’s a derecho, thunderstorm, ice storm or wind, it’s often the trees that are larger and a bit farther out, which cause more problems than the vegetation right below the lines,” Richert explains. “They might not look that close, but when they go down in a weather event, they fall onto the line, breaking poles and pulling the lines down.”

He adds, “This is why it’s so important for us to maximize and clear out the right-of-way as much as the property easement allows so that we can stop trees from falling onto power lines and equipment.”

During the derecho, 51% of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative’s outages involved trees and accounted for 73% of the total time member-consumers were without power. Richert says the trees would have eventually been a problem with or without a derecho.

### Managing trees in every season

T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative, which serves more than 6,300 member-consumers in east-central Iowa, also felt the impact of the derecho. Like electric co-ops across the state, maintaining a strong vegetation management is a necessity in every season.

“Our vegetation management program to inspect our entire system on annual cycles – cutting and spraying where necessary – has improved the number of outages and the duration of outages,” explains, Dean Huls, general manager, T.I.P. REC. “For safety and reliability of service, it’s imperative we have a strong program.”

Although trees are an everyday problem for power lines and equipment, storms draw attention to the problem.

“With the derecho, over 80% of our outages and infrastructure damage were from trees,” Huls says. “When looking at our system map from the derecho, it’s easy to see where the damage was from straight-line winds, and the rest of the damage was from trees. The trees caused most of our outages. Crews spent all day – day-after-day – clearing trees before power could be restored. Many out-of-state lineworkers who were helping with restoration efforts said they have never before in their

career spent so much time clearing trees.”

Trees and shrubbery have an important place in our communities. Your local cooperative works hard to make sure trees also have a positive role in the overall safety and reliability of electric systems. Contact your electric cooperative if you have questions about its vegetation management plan. ⚡

Ann Thelen is the editor of *Living with Energy in Iowa*.

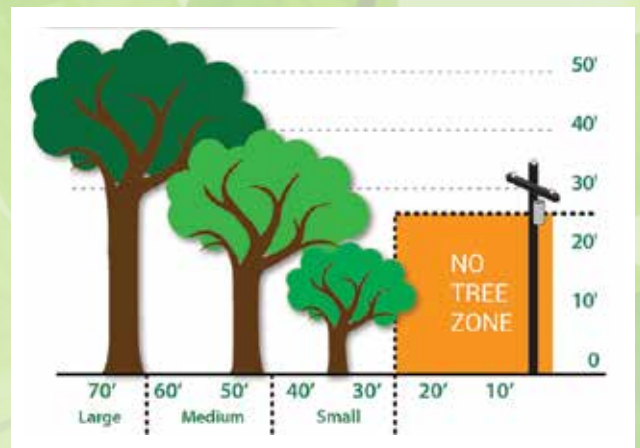
## SAFETY MATTERS

Downed power lines and equipment can still be energized, and if contact is made, it can result in serious injury or death. In the event of outages with damage, always check with your local electric cooperative before cleanup begins.

Tree limbs that grow near power lines can be unsafe. Never trim trees near power lines; if you see a tree growing too close to power lines, contact your electric co-op to report it so trained staff can prune for you.

### PLANTING TIPS

Before deciding to plant a tree, contact your local electric cooperative. The staff can advise proper placement to ensure the tree will not become a future hazard to electric equipment.



Some electric equipment is visible overhead, but some utility services also may be buried in the ground on your property. Iowa law requires that you always call 811 a minimum of two days (excluding Saturday, Sunday and legal holidays) in advance to schedule underground utility lines to be located and marked before initiating any digging or excavating project. If an underground utility line is hit while digging, it can cause serious injuries, disrupt service to entire areas, and potentially result in fines and repair costs. ⚡

RECIPES WITH RED  
FOR  
**Valentine's Day**



## Chocolate Covered Cherries

- 1/3 cup white corn syrup**
- 1/3 cup margarine, softened**
- 1 pound powdered sugar**
- 3 jars maraschino cherries, drained**
- 9 ounces semi-sweet chocolate**
- 3 1/2 tablespoons paraffin**

Mix together corn syrup, margarine and powdered sugar. Wrap mixture around cherries and chill thoroughly. It is important the cherries are drained very well, and the mixture is wrapped around them well. Flatten in your hand and then wrap. Refrigerate on wax paper or non-stick sheets. Melt semi-sweet chocolate with paraffin. Dip the first mixture into the chocolate and paraffin mixture using a fork or other slotted utensil. Keep chocolate over hot water while dipping. Store finished cherries in refrigerator or cool place. If you have extra chocolate, drop in peanuts, mix well, set up on wax paper to cool.  
*Yield: approximately 80 pieces*

**Sonya Colvin • Ames • Consumers Energy**

## Cherry Cheesecake

- 12 graham crackers, crushed**
- 1/4 pound margarine or butter**
- 8 ounces cream cheese**
- 1 cup powdered sugar**
- 1 tub whipped topping**
- 1 can cherry pie filling**

Combine crackers and margarine. Press into a 9x9-inch pan or 10-inch pie plate. Mix cream cheese and powdered sugar. Mix in whipped topping and spread mixture over crust. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Spread cherry pie filling over top. *Servings: 6-9*

**Leora Van Middendorp • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Strawberry Pear Salad

- 3 ounces strawberry Jell-O**
- 29 ounces canned pears, drained (save juice)**
- 8 ounces cream cheese**
- 1 cup whipped topping**

Dissolve Jell-O into boiling pear juice. Remove from heat. In a blender, combine pears and cream cheese, blend until smooth. Add whipped topping and hot Jell-O. Stir together, then pour into serving bowl. Chill to set, at least 6 hours. *Servings: 6-8*

**Kamie Meyer • Lester • Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Berry Cream Muffins

- 1/4 cup butter, softened**
- 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided**
- 1 egg**
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 1/4 cups flour**
- 3 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup half & half cream or milk**
- 1 cup vanilla or white baking chips**
- 1 cup fresh raspberries or strawberries**
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar**

In a large bowl, cream the butter and 3/4 cup sugar. Beat in egg and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Add to creamed mixture, alternating with half & half cream. Stir in baking chips and berries. Fill greased or lined muffin cups 3/4 full. Combine brown sugar with remaining 2 tablespoons sugar for topping and sprinkle over batter. Bake at 375 degrees F for 25-30 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan. *Yield: 1 dozen*

**Adria Nester • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

**CELEBRATING WITH CHOCOLATE**  
According to History.com, the Valentine's Day tradition of giving a box of candy was started in the 19th century by Richard Cadbury, a scion of a British chocolate manufacturing family.



## Sweetheart Mousse

- 2 3-ounce packages cook and serve vanilla pudding
- 5 cups milk, divided
- 1 6-ounce package cherry Jell-O
- 16 ounces cream cheese

In saucepan, cook pudding and 4 cups milk to boiling. Remove from heat. Sprinkle with Jell-O and stir until dissolved. Cool for 10 minutes. In bowl, beat softened cream cheese and remaining 1 cup of milk. Gradually add the Jell-O mixture into the cream cheese mixture. Mix well then pour into Jell-O mold. Refrigerate overnight.  
*Yield: 10-12 servings*

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## Sweet Strawberry Nut Loaf

- 1 cup honey
- 1¼ cup oil
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 20 ounces frozen strawberries
- 1¼ cup nuts
- powdered sugar glaze
- red food coloring

In large bowl, mix together liquid ingredients, including strawberries. Add dry ingredients and mix together. Fold in nuts. Bake in two greased and floured loaf pans at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Top with powdered sugar glaze colored with red food coloring.

Penny Sue Haley • Keswick  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## Sweetheart Bars

- 1 cup butter
- 1½ cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2¼ cups flour
- 1½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 can cherry pie filling
- powdered sugar icing

Cream butter and sugar; add eggs and vanilla. Beat well. Add dry ingredients, beat well. Reserve 1½ cups batter; pour the rest into a greased 10x15-inch pan. Spread pie filling over top. Drop remaining batter over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 35 minutes. Frost with thin powdered sugar icing.

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

## Cherries in the Snow

- 6 egg whites
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2½ cups sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoon vanilla, divided
- 6 ounces cream cheese
- 8 ounces whipped topping
- 2 cups mini marshmallows
- 21 ounces canned cherry pie filling

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Beat egg whites until stiff; add salt and cream of tartar. Gradually add 1½ cups sugar and beat, add 1 teaspoon vanilla. Spread in 9x13-inch buttered pan. Put in pre-heated oven, then turn off oven at once. Leave in oven 8 hours or overnight. Do not open oven during the 8 hours. For the topping, beat together cream cheese, 1 cup sugar and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Fold in whipped topping and marshmallows. Spread mixture on top of meringue. Top cream cheese mixture with pie filling.

Minerva Small • Maurice  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## Wanted: Recipes with fresh fruits and vegetables! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Fresh fruit and vegetables are the foods of summer! Celebrate the onset of sunny skies and warmer days with your favorite recipes. If we run yours 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](http://www.livingwithenergyiowa.com).

The deadline is Feb. 28, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **Please also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

**EMAIL:**  
[recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

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

### COLORS ARE SYMBOLIC

The National Confectioners Association says around 65% of Americans believe that the packaging of Valentine's Day candies and chocolates should be red and pink.

VALENTINE'S DAY FUN FACTS

### PETS ARE ADORED

According to the National Retail Federation, 27% of people celebrating Valentine's Day in 2020 said they were also buying gifts for their pets.

VALENTINE'S DAY FUN FACTS

### PETALS OF PERFECTION

It's likely no surprise that roses make up the most popular Valentine's Day bouquets.

VALENTINE'S DAY FUN FACTS

### SEALED WITH LOVE

Approximately 144 million greeting cards are exchanged industry-wide every year for Valentine's Day in the U.S. alone, according to Hallmark.

VALENTINE'S DAY FUN FACTS

# Make the most of recycling

## Tips to mastering the recycling process



BY PAUL WESSLUND

Can I recycle my mail with the stapled paper and plastic envelope windows? Do I need to break down cardboard boxes before putting them in the recycling bin? Or should I just give up on recycling because it's way too complicated?

Three of every five U.S. households have curbside recycling pickup, according to a study by the Sustainable Packaging Coalition. Another 14% have curbside service available but do not subscribe.

Reasons to recycle are both environmental and financial. Recycling 10 plastic bottles, for example, saves enough energy to power a laptop computer for more than 25 hours, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Recycling can also help out with your tax bill. Local governments pay for disposing home and office waste, traditionally by burying it in a landfill. But if some of that waste could be sold for reuse, the income would reduce the cost of the waste management program.

The list of recycling rules is long and complicated, but a way to help master them is to try three different types of thinking:

**1 Think like a sorter:** When your curbside bin gets emptied, it's taken to a Materials Recovery Facility where it is dumped onto a conveyor belt where workers pull off items that will gum up the next step in the process, a large screen that jiggles items into a different bin. Think about items that might cause problems with sorting.

**2 Think local:** There are about 300 Materials Recovery Facilities around the



country, and many of them have different equipment, meaning every community has its own set of rules for what can be recycled.

Find out who handles recycling in your community, and they will have a list of what can be recycled. And of course, there's an app for that. Two popular apps are Recycle Coach and ReCollect.

Just type in your zip code to learn how your local recycling program treats individual items.

**3 Think like an accountant:** You might be thinking, it sounds like I'm doing the work for the recycling program. And you are. You could just dump anything and everything in your recycling bin and let the workers sort it out. They would do that – for a price. You can help keep recycling costs low by following the rules.





**Here are some of the most-wondered-about recycling rules:**



**Mail:** With one exception, all mail can go in the bin. Staples and plastic windows get sorted out by the machinery. The exception is magazines wrapped in plastic – that kind of shrink wrap is better handled by supermarkets, which specialize in recycling bags and other plastic “stretch wrap” around food, paper towels and other products.



**Food containers:** When you’re done with the peanut butter jar, no need to rinse it out. It can go right in the bin.



**Cardboard boxes:** The only reason to break them down is to save space in your bin. They’ll get well crushed in the truck that picks them up.



**Pizza cartons:** Don’t leave crusts or garlic butter containers in them, but recycling equipment can handle a greasy pizza box just fine.



**Plastic bottle caps:** Screw the lid back on, and recycle both the bottle and cap.



**Plastic straws:** Can be recycled, but smaller items tend to fall off the conveyor or through the screen sorters and onto the floor, where they get swept up and hauled off to a normal landfill.



**Labels:** You don’t need to remove them.

If you want to take the next step in recycling, think about the big picture – the point is to reduce the waste from your home into the world. First, reduce – if you don’t really need to buy something, don’t buy it. Second, reuse – bags and wrapping paper, for example, can have more than one life.

Remember, recycling helps our environment but can also reduce the cost of local waste management programs. Check with your local waste management program to learn more about recycling rules in your community. ⚡

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. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation’s landscape.

## Recycling in Iowa

Iowa’s citizens, local governments, business and industry have proactively worked together to protect Iowa’s environment by reducing waste, recycling, manufacturing recycled goods and buying recycled-content products. This collaborative effort has built an impressive recycling industry that creates and retains higher wage jobs and businesses. To find Iowa-specific recycling information, visit the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ website: [www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Waste-Planning-Recycling/Recycling](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Waste-Planning-Recycling/Recycling). ⚡



**YARD TRIMMINGS CURRENTLY MAKE UP OVER**

**13% OF WASTE SENT TO LANDFILLS.**

**RECYCLING 1 GLASS BOTTLE**



**SAVES ENOUGH ENERGY TO POWER A COMPUTER FOR 30 MINUTES OR A TV FOR 20 MINUTES.**



**IT TAKES 114**



**20-OUNCE BEVERAGE BOTTLES TO MAKE ENOUGH FIBERFILL FOR A SLEEPING BAG.**



**EVERY DAY, U.S. PAPERMAKERS RECYCLE ENOUGH PAPER TO FILL A**

**15-MILE-LONG TRAIN OF BOXCARS.**



## STUDENT LEADERS

## Access Energy Cooperative scholarship program

Available to high school seniors: \$9,000 in scholarships is available to high school seniors. Six \$1,500 awards, two in each of the cooperative's three districts.

Applicants must be high school seniors receiving post-secondary education, and their parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative.

Where to obtain an application:

- At area high school guidance counselor offices
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mt. Pleasant at 866-242-4232
- By visiting our website and:
  - Downloading the application and either faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office; or
  - Submitting the form online

Applications are due in our office March 15, 2021.

Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.

### When are the scholarships given?

\$500 of the \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded to recipients at the completion of their first semester of post-secondary education, with proof of enrollment for the second semester. The remaining \$1,000 will be awarded after completion of the third semester, with proof of enrollment of the fourth semester.

For more information, and applications, visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). ⚡

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

## Contractor news

Brady Bennett with Wilderness Land Management will be working as a contractor for Access Energy Cooperative in the areas around Batavia and Bonaparte. If you ever have a question about a serviceman representing the cooperative, please call our office at 866-242-4232. ⚡



## IN THE NEWS

## Electronic newsletter is now available!

Along with providing you – the members of Access Energy Cooperative – with pertinent information regarding what is happening at your co-op and in the utility industry, we are required by the Iowa Utilities Board to provide you with certain publications and educational information throughout the year. The member newsletter is the most economical tool available for us to communicate with our members.



Therefore, we are required to provide you with *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine in one format or the other each month. **We are happy to announce that you can now choose whether you prefer to receive it as a printed magazine, an electronic copy – or both.**

- If you wish to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter, all you have to do is set up a SmartHub account. SmartHub is available on our website or as an app to download on your mobile device. Once you have a

SmartHub account, you will automatically receive an electronic version of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine emailed to you at the address you provide in your SmartHub account.

- We will not automatically remove you from the list to receive a printed copy if you sign up for SmartHub. If you are signed up for SmartHub and no longer wish to receive a printed copy of the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine, please call us at 866-242-4232 or send an email to us at [mktg@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com).
- If you are a SmartHub user and do not wish to receive the electronically mailed monthly magazine, simply check the box in your SmartHub account in the On Demand Notifications, indicating that you do not wish to receive it emailed. This cannot be done with the mobile app. You will continue to receive a printed copy.

Please continue to enjoy reading the *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine in the format you choose! ⚡

## ENERGY NEWS

## Electric vehicle charging station

Access Energy Cooperative has installed a Level 2 Chargepoint electric vehicle charging station in the parking lot in front of our office in Mt. Pleasant and it is available for use.

### Who can use it?

The charging station is available for public use, but you must have a Chargepoint account. If you do not have a Chargepoint account, it is easy to download the app and set one up. Or you can call the number on the screen at the charging station, and they can remotely set things up for you and remotely start a charge.

Any electric vehicle can charge at a Chargepoint charging station, including

a Tesla vehicle with the adaptor that came with the vehicle.

### How does the charging station work?

It's easy! Simply swipe your Chargepoint card or the app on your mobile device across the screen of the charging station and follow directions on the screen to start a charge. Or just call the 800 number on the screen, and a Chargepoint team member will help get you started.

To watch a video that shows just how easy it is to charge with our charging station, visit Access Energy Cooperative's website or <https://bit.ly/31Rqx8z>.

# What causes blinking lights?

Blinking lights and brief power interruptions are frustrating. Momentary power interruptions or “blinking lights” are most often caused by uncontrollable circumstances. Wind, trees, lightning, birds, animals, equipment failure and humans can all disrupt the normal flow of electricity both momentarily and longer. Trying to find the exact cause of the blinks sometimes resembles trying to find a needle in a haystack, which equally frustrates the line crew.

While blinks can be annoying, they show that an electrical system is working exactly as designed. When a breaker in your house or business senses a power problem, the breaker trips and power flow stops until someone resets the breaker. Breakers on Access Energy Cooperative’s power lines are designed to sense a problem on the lines, stop power flow momentarily and then automatically reset – potentially avoiding a much longer outage.

Before digital clocks and computers, blinks oftentimes went unnoticed. In today’s world, flashing digital displays and loss of computer data are a



disruption to our lives. Access Energy Cooperative member-owners need to protect computers and other sensitive electronic equipment by buying and using uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems. These relatively simple and inexpensive measures will go a long way toward increasing power reliability and protecting fallout from blinks.

Members also need to notify the cooperative when blinking light problems repeatedly occur. Then, be patient and give line crews a chance to find and correct the problem. We all want the same thing – high quality, reliable electric service. ⚡

# Help others by contributing to RECare

RECare is a program where members help other members in need. You may make a one-time contribution to the RECare program or you may enclose an amount each month with your monthly electric bill. Just \$1 a month will help others. This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines. ⚡



To have an amount deducted from your monthly bill, send the form below to:

**RECare**  
**c/o Access Energy Cooperative**  
**P.O. Box 440**  
**Mount Pleasant, IA 52641**

## Member Authorization Form

I would like to make a (check one):

One-time contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (That will be added to my bill)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Account # (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

# installed at cooperative office



## How much does it cost?

The current rate to use the charging station at Access Energy Cooperative is our regular single-phase rate for electric service at \$0.10 per kWh. Vehicles may park for up to four hours while charging. Vehicles parked in designated

charging spots longer than four hours will be charged an “escalation fee” of \$5.00 per hour for as long as they are parked in the charging spot. The Chargepoint app can be set up to notify you when your four hours are close to being up and when your car is done charging.

## Additional information is available on our website

If you have questions about charging electric vehicles, or whether or not an EV is right for you, visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com), click on the “Going Green” tab, and then on the “Electric Vehicles” link. ⚡

# Which kitchen appliance should you upgrade?

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

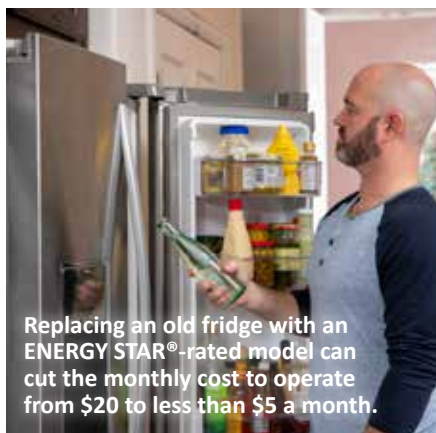
If your home improvement budget calls for upgrading just one kitchen appliance this year, which appliance replacement will help reduce your energy bills the most?

It may seem like the oldest appliance should go first. That may make sense if you want the looks and features of a newer oven or dishwasher. But with most appliances, the energy savings you get from a new one will take several years to pay for itself with the energy saved.

The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator. An older fridge can cost about \$20 to run every month. Replacing an old fridge with a new ENERGY STAR®-rated model can cut that down to less than \$5 a month. The ENERGY STAR® label certifies that the appliance saves energy. New refrigerators will include an additional label, the Energy Guide label, which shows how much energy it uses annually and compares that to the most and least efficient models available. It's also possible to measure how much energy your fridge is using with a kWh meter. Energy auditors use these meters to measure energy use for common household appliances. Sometimes the energy use of an older fridge can be reduced by replacing the seal around the door.

## Style counts

When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts. A top-freezer



Replacing an old fridge with an ENERGY STAR®-rated model can cut the monthly cost to operate from \$20 to less than \$5 a month.



Photo Credit: General Electric Appliances

setup is the most efficient, while a lower-freezer unit offers medium savings, and a side-by-side style is the least energy efficient.

If your goal is to save money on your energy bill, resist the urge to keep the old fridge in the basement or garage – that won't help you reduce your energy use. An old fridge in an uninsulated garage on a hot summer day can use *a lot* of energy. Maybe you just need more freezer space. If so, we recommend the most efficient freezer you can find. You can find recommendations on [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

## Second choice

If your current fridge is in good condition, another appliance you may want to consider upgrading is the dishwasher. With most of us spending more time at home these days, chances are you're using your

dishwasher more than you used to.

It's smart to consider energy use as you look at replacing appliances because most new appliances use much less energy than they did in the past. Manufacturers have found innovative ways to reduce appliance energy use without sacrificing performance. The federal government began tightening appliance standards in the 1980s and has continued as technological innovations became more cost-effective.

As with any major purchase, be sure to read customer reviews for any brands and models you're considering, and look for additional opportunities to save money, like an upcoming Presidents' Day appliance sale. ⚡

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

# Problems with an arthritic hip

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

My mom has always said that getting old ain't for sissies. Now that I'm in my sixth decade of life, I must concur. But it doesn't help when you deliberately make things harder for yourself than is strictly necessary.

Case in point.

I've been hobbling around with an arthritic hip, an issue that has necessitated physical therapy, drugs, shoe inserts, a cane and my newest perfume, mentholated "heating" salve that can, if applied in the wrong places, make you hop across the bedroom in a crazed manner, hip or no hip. But I digress.

## A trip to the doctor

On a recent appointment with the doctor, I needed to remove my jeans to put on a pair of tissue paper shorts that could easily have fit me and at least two other hip sufferers at the same time. I stared at them in disdain. "All the cool kids are wearing them," the nurse said with a laugh. I began thinking unfriendly thoughts of sticking mentholated salve where the sun doesn't shine.

She left the room, and I started to get undressed. I had worn a pair of lace-up shoes that were difficult to get on and tied, what with a hip that wouldn't cooperate in the simplest bending-over movements. It had taken me 10 minutes to get them on that morning, but I had wanted to wear them because they had good traction. If that doesn't make me sound like an old geezer, nothing will. However, the thought of wrestling with them again made me tired immediately.

My jeans were tight around the bottom, which meant I wouldn't be able to take them off without removing the shoes. Or would I? Maybe I could squeeze the legs around the shoes so that they could be left on.



## A new meaning for "hip hop"

In the back of my mind, I knew this was a fraught situation. But if worse came to worst, I would just push the shoes off while they were trapped in my pants. It immediately became apparent that my tight bottoms weren't going to slide over a pair of tennis shoes. I slid the waist down, turning the pants inside out, thinking I might be able to pull the pants off without pulling the shoes off in the meantime, a delusion to which I had become attached.

No go. I had a pair of pants, inside out, hanging off my legs with my shoes still on. I tried using one foot to push the other shoe off and had such a surge of pain, I quickly abandoned that idea. What was left? I stood up, clutching my cane, and bumbled around, trying to dislodge the shoes that were stuck halfway up the leg of my pants. No dice. I was sweating and panicky and utterly out of ideas. I had given "hip hop" a whole new meaning.

At that point, there was a knock on the door, and the nurse stuck her head in and took in the situation. "Uh, looks like you need more time," she said.

"No, I don't need more time. I need some help," I snapped. "Could you pull these pant legs off? I thought I could get them off over my shoes," I added lamely.

She smirked – I saw it. I imagined her telling the other nurses over lunch what an idiot I was, hopping around like a lame rabbit in the examining room.

In my head, I re-worked the story to make myself into a sort of fashionable convalescent heroine. Battling painful hip. Cortisone shots. Brandishing an old-lady cane. Hey, it's what all the cool kids are carrying this year. 🦋

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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.



# LESS GARAGE TIME

Electric cars have fewer moving parts compared to internal combustion engine vehicles. As a result, EVs require less maintenance and have lower maintenance costs.

- Idaho National Laboratory

**CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CO-OP FOR MORE INFORMATION.**



Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa