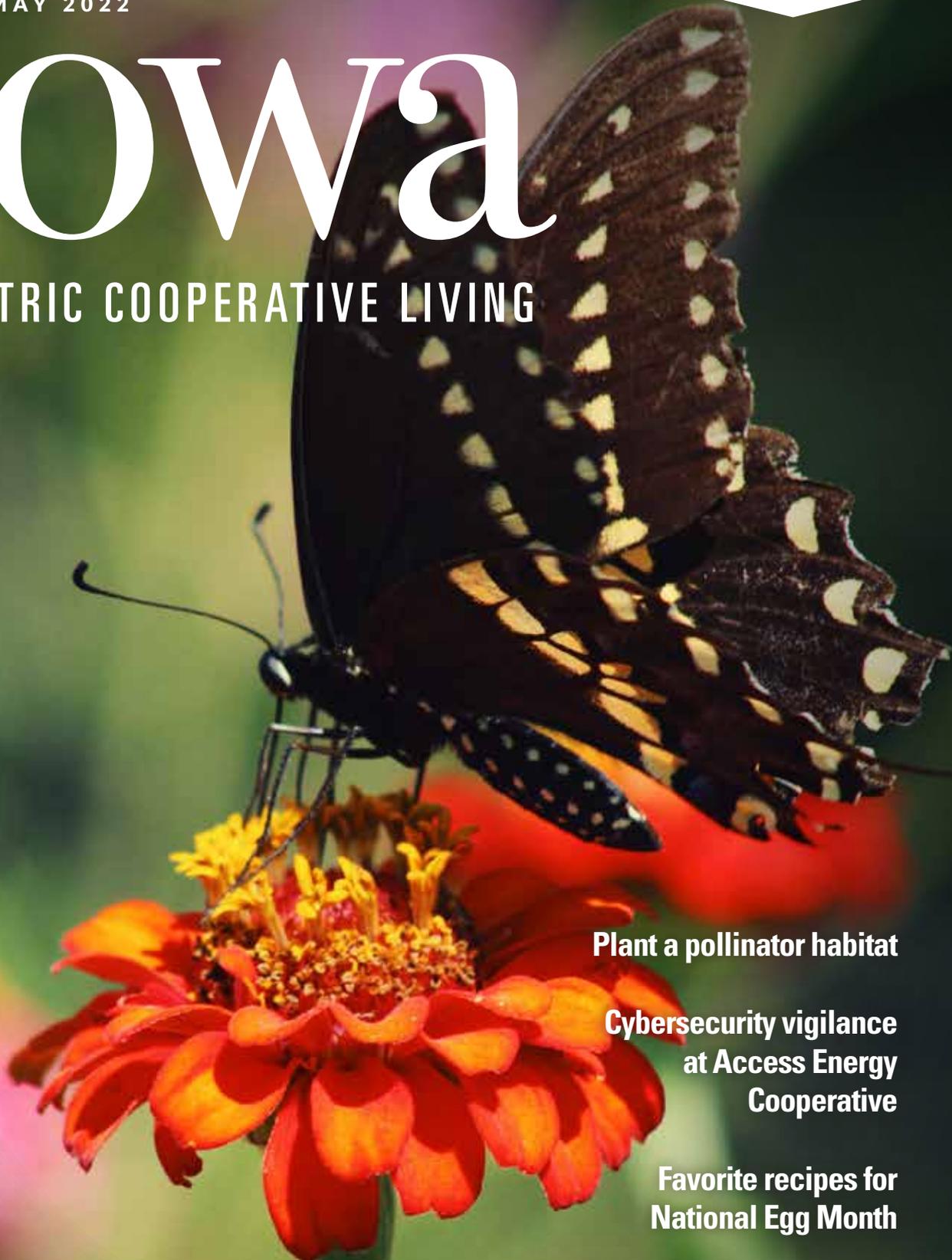


MAY 2022

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



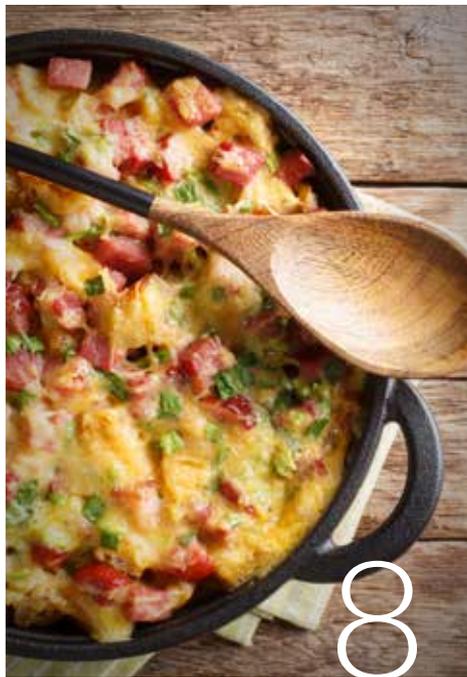
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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Hollie Nelson, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

LET'S SHINE THE LIGHT ON COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS AGAIN IN JUNE

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



It can be intimidating to try something new, but what a joy it can be when you succeed! We felt this way when Iowa's electric cooperatives launched a

new statewide contest last year to celebrate our cooperative commitment to community.

Our first-ever Shine the Light contest received 39 fantastic nominations celebrating the efforts of incredible Iowa volunteers. We managed to select three finalists and each received a donation to their local charity and were featured in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. It was an honor to learn more about these individuals and the impact they've made in their communities.

Contest returns in 2022

I'm excited to share the Shine the Light contest is back again this year, and we want to thank you for making our debut such a success last summer! Member-consumers, employees and retirees of any Iowa electric cooperative are eligible to nominate a volunteer in their community during the month of June at www.IowaShineTheLight.com. Nominated volunteers do not need to be co-op member-consumers, and minors may be nominated with their guardians' consent. Non-winners who were nominated last year are eligible to be nominated again this year.

Three nominated volunteers will ultimately be selected, and each will receive a \$2,000 donation to their charity and be featured in the September issue of our magazine. To nominate someone for the contest, simply fill out the entry form at www.IowaShineTheLight.com any time

in the month of June. You'll need to provide basic contact information for you and your nominee and answer the following question in 500 words or less: **How has your nominee made a positive difference in the community, and why do they deserve to be recognized?**

The cooperative difference

You may be wondering why your electric utility is investing in this program. Electric cooperatives are more than just a utility – we are locally owned and governed by the people who use our services. Additionally, we are driven to improve quality of life for the people and communities we serve, and we are guided by seven cooperative principles, including “concern for community.” Investing in

our communities and celebrating local volunteers is just one way we fulfill our cooperative mission.



I encourage you to start thinking about a friend or neighbor who is making a positive difference in your area. Nominating them for the contest is a great way to shine the light on their efforts and to let them know how much they are appreciated.

I look forward to being inspired by your wonderful essays again this summer as nominations filter in during June. Learn more about the contest rules and guidelines at www.IowaShineTheLight.com.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a beef bundle!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away a beef bundle, including \$50 in beef and grocery certificates plus a box filled with summer grilling essentials, courtesy of the Iowa Beef Industry Council.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the NutriBullet from the March issue was Kris Ogburn, Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 8	Mother's Day
MAY 30	Office closed in observance of Memorial Day
JUNE 18-24	Youth Tour
AUGUST 2	Annual Meeting of Members

You can access your account information 24 hours a day, every day, on our website or through our SmartHub app for mobile devices. You can also call our office to report service interruptions and request account information at 866-242-4232.



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

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Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
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WE STAND VIGILANT AGAINST POTENTIAL CYBERSECURITY THREATS

BY KEVIN WHEELER



The Russian invasion of Ukraine has raised the risk of cybersecurity attacks on electric utilities. Access Energy Cooperative, our transmission power cooperative

Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and its wholesale power provider Associated Electric Cooperative are aware of the situation. We are all in communication with the Department of Energy, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and various security agencies and industry groups.

Access Energy Cooperative's cybersecurity staff and those at Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and Associated Electric Cooperative are on high-alert status. We all monitor cyber activity and continuously prepare to ensure a ready response when and if necessary.

Russia is well known for its cyber operations and has formidable cyber threat capabilities. U.S. economic sanctions against Russia could mean

retaliation by targeting critical infrastructure. Your cooperative has long been aware of this threat and its potential to damage the country's critical infrastructure.

Members can be confident Access Energy Cooperative, Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and Associated Electric Cooperative are monitoring activity and providing layers of protection to prevent an attack on our three-tiered electric system. This focus is aimed at all levels of the three-tiered system, from generation resources at Associated Electric Cooperative to transmission assets at Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative to the Access Energy Cooperative distribution system.

We use a collaborative approach to cybersecurity through Associated Electric Cooperative's Cyber Dome project, which launched in 2021. This program offers 24/7, 365 cybersecurity threat detection, protection and rapid response. We work together to protect the entire system.

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



UNDERSTANDING DIVIDEND ALLOCATIONS AND DIVIDEND PAYMENTS

BY TAMMY SNAVELY



Receiving a dividend payment is one of the primary benefits of being a member of Access Energy Cooperative. Organized as a cooperative, we are owned

and operated by our members, and do not exist to earn profits. Instead, any revenues above the cost of doing business during a given year are considered “margins.”

Each year, these margins are allocated to each member’s dividend account based on their usage for that year. On your May or June bill, there will be a statement showing the amount of patronage dividends being allocated to your dividend account for 2021. The image to the right shows where you can find it on your bill.

The following month, the board reviews the cooperative’s current financial condition. They determine if it is favorable to retire dividends from members’ accounts, and if so, how much will be retired. Dividend checks are then prepared to be handed out at the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 2. Any check not picked up at the meeting will be mailed.

Members now have the option to choose to receive their dividend payments in the form of a bill credit rather than a check. If you wish to set your dividend account up to receive a bill credit instead of a check, please contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to finance@accessenergycoop.com.

Members who have closed their account with the cooperative have the option to receive the amount in their dividend account as a discounted lump-sum payment or choose to receive payments at the normal retirement cycle which is currently

Page 1 of 2

Account Number 123456-001
Billing Date 05/05/2022 Due Date 06/04/2022

Billing Summary	
Amount Due Last Billing	76.52
Payments	76.52 CR
Balance Forward	0.00
Current Charges	74.40
Total Amount Due	74.40
After Due Date Pay	75.50

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

YOUR TOTAL PATRONAGE DIVIDEND ALLOCATION FOR 2021 IS \$108.32. PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

Dividend statement on your bill

Messages
Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com and sign in to your account for more information on dividends.

22 years. If you close your account and are interested in receiving a lump-sum payment, please contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to finance@accessenergycoop.com.

If you have a change of address, please keep the cooperative informed of where your dividends can be sent. To update your address, submit questions or receive further information about patronage dividends, visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, contact our finance department at 866-242-4232 or send an email to finance@accessenergycoop.com.

Tammy Snavely is the chief finance officer for Access Energy Cooperative.

WIN A \$25 BILL CREDIT IN MAY OR JUNE!

Each member who signs up to receive dividend payments as bill credits in lieu of checks will be entered in a drawing to receive a **\$25 bill credit**. Members who are signed up by May 31 will be entered into the June 1 drawing. Those who sign up in June will be entered into the July 1 drawing.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Access Energy Cooperative strives to exceed members’ expectations for service, including resolving issues and complaints promptly and courteously. Our employees who receive member telephone calls and office visits are qualified and trained in screening and resolving complaints. They will also provide identification to the caller to enable them to reach that employee again if needed.

Access Energy Cooperative is required to notify its members of the address and telephone number below where a cooperative representative qualified to assist in resolving the complaint can be reached for assistance available from the Iowa Utilities Board.

If a member complaint is related to service disconnection, safety or engineering standards, or renewable energy and Access Energy Cooperative is not able to resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 877-565-4450, by writing to 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069, or by email to customer@iub.iowa.gov.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, USDA, its Mission Areas, agencies, staff, offices, 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.

Program information may be made available in language other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Mission Area, agency, or staff office; the USDA TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY); or the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form, AD-3027, *USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form*, which can be obtained online at www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027, from any USDA office, by calling 866-632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of the alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
- (2) **Fax:** 833-256-1665 or 202-690-7442;
or
- (3) **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

THANK YOU TO OUR ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Our administrative professionals were honored in April for their dedicated service to the cooperative. Thank you for exceeding members' expectations for safe, reliable and efficient service!



Back row from left to right: Marva Crowl, Gina Smith, Kassie Bulen, Diane Magnani, Cherity Wibben, Courtney Williamson and Carol Baylor.

Front row from left to right: Shelby Ruby, Jennifer Helling, Tammy Davis, Kaley White and Aimee Sanderson.

NEW EMPLOYEE

WELCOME, KALEY WHITE!

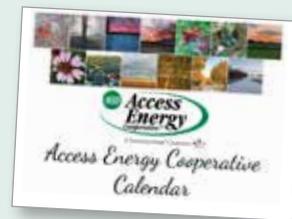
If you visit the office to pay your bill or bring us a question, you will be greeted by Kaley White. She recently was hired as a customer service representative.

Access Energy Cooperative is proud of our team and how we provide you with safe, reliable and efficient service.



PHOTO CONTEST

CALENDAR PHOTO CONTEST: WIN UP TO \$100!



The photo contest for this year has closed and winners are being selected. Thank you for so many wonderful entries!

But where one door closes, another opens – so don't stop taking photos! Spring is a beautiful time to take colorful photos. **We are already accepting photos for the 2024 calendar.** Entries can be submitted to mktg@accessenergycoop.com until March 31, 2023.

Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos in the Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Winners will be awarded \$75, plus an additional \$25 bill credit, if they are a member of the cooperative.

Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.

REC DAY ON THE HILL

Access Energy Cooperative joined nearly 200 employees and elected directors from Iowa’s locally owned rural electric cooperatives (RECs) at the Iowa State Capitol to advocate for important issues during the annual REC Day on the Hill on March 22.

“Our advocacy day on the hill is an important opportunity to personally touch base with our elected officials and share a local perspective on issues that impact rural Iowa and rural economic development,” says Roger Solomonson, board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Thank you to the legislators who took the time to speak with us about the digital sales tax inequity that Iowa’s electric cooperatives hope to resolve in the 2022 Legislative Session. We deeply appreciate the work of the House and the Senate on this issue and urged them to come to an agreement on a bill to send to Gov. Kim Reynolds for her consideration to restore tax equity for co-op members in rural Iowa.



Several electric cooperatives, including Access Energy Cooperative, displayed booths in the rotunda providing information about economic

development, electric vehicles, digital metering advancements, investments in technology, lineman safety innovations and vegetation management work.



H A P P Y
Mother's Day!

CHARGE YOUR ELECTRIC VEHICLE AT THE COOPERATIVE

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

A ChargePoint electric vehicle (EV) charging station is available for public use at Access Energy Cooperative. It is located in the parking lot in front of the office in Mount Pleasant.

The current rate to use the charging station at is our regular single-phase rate for electric service, 10 cents per kWh.

If you have questions about charging EVs or if EV is right for you, visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com under the “Going Green” button for a section with information on EVs.



FAVORITE EGG

RECIPES



CELEBRATE NATIONAL
EGG MONTH!

BAKED OMELET ROLL

- 6 large eggs
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- salsa for serving if desired
- Optional toppings: fried bacon, browned onions, browned bell peppers, sausage, black olives, spinach, tomatoes, broccoli**

Line an 11x14-inch rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper (large enough piece to overlap all edges with no seams in the middle). In a large bowl, beat eggs with electric mixer until frothy. Beat in flour until smooth, then milk, salt and pepper until well-blended. Pour into the prepared pan. Ensure the mixture stays inside the parchment paper. If desired, add optional toppings. Bake at 450 degrees F for 20 minutes or until eggs are set and top is puffed and golden brown. Remove from oven, sprinkle cheese on top. Roll up from the narrow end and place seam side down on a serving plate. Cut crosswise into slices. Top with salsa if desired. Can also serve more toppings on the side. *Serves 4-6*

Cheryl Schelling • Orange City
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SALMON QUICHE

- 1 tablespoon butter or oleo
- ⅓ cup green onions, sliced
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup milk or cream
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 14¾ ounces canned salmon
- 6 ounces Swiss cheese, shredded
- 9-inch pie crust

In a small skillet, melt butter and sauté onions until tender-crisp. Set aside to cool. In a large bowl, combine eggs and milk, beat until smooth. Add salt, paprika, pepper and sautéed onions, mix well. Drain salmon and reserve liquid. Remove skin and flake salmon. Remove bones. If desired, bones can be crushed and added to flaked salmon for added calcium. Stir in salmon and then reserved liquid. Spread cheese in bottom of unbaked pie crust. Pour salmon mixture over the cheese. Bake at 375 degrees F for 45-50 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the middle comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 6-8*

Mary Witting • Keosauqua • Access Energy Cooperative

IMPOSSIBLE QUICHE

- ½ pound bacon, ham or sausage, cooked and drained
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon dry onion
- 3 eggs
- ¾ cup Bisquick
- 1½ cups milk
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon dill weed

Sprinkle meat, cheese and onion into a greased 8-inch pie plate. Blend remaining ingredients until smooth. Pour over cheese mixture. Bake at 400 degrees F for 30 minutes until brown and a knife comes out clean. Let stand for five minutes. *Serves 4-6*

**Veronica (Ronnie) Heun • Duncombe
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

PEACH OVERNIGHT EGG/FRENCH BREAD BAKE

- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 large cans sliced peaches, drained
- 8-10 slices French bread
- 5 eggs
- 1½ cups milk
- cinnamon sugar

Boil butter, brown sugar and water for seven minutes. Pour into 9x13-inch pan and top with peaches. Add a layer of French bread slices. Mix eggs with milk then pour over bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Let sit out at least 30 minutes before baking. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar and bake covered at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes. Remove lid and bake 30 minutes more. *Serves 12-15*

**Ruthann Murphy • Dougherty
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative**

GOLDEN EGG CASSEROLE

- 10 eggs
- 2½ cups milk
- 2 cups frozen shredded hash browns
- 8 ounces cheese, shredded
- 1 pound sausage, cooked and drained, or cooked ham, cubed

Whisk the eggs and milk. Add hash browns, shredded cheese and cooked sausage or ham. Pour into a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 40 minutes when the egg casserole will be golden brown. Casserole can be served for breakfast, brunch or an evening meal. *Serves 12*

**Twyla Godbersen • Arthur
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

CRESCENT ROLL EGG CASSEROLE

- 2 cans crescent rolls
- 1 pound sausage, browned and drained
- 2 8-ounce packages Monterey Jack cheese, cut into ½-inch cubes
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 4 eggs, slightly beaten

Press one can of crescent rolls in the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch pan. Put sausage on crust (can substitute 24 ounces of small smokies). Place cheese cubes on top of meat. Mix salt, pepper, Parmesan cheese and eggs. Pour over cubed cheese and meat. Cut one can of crescent rolls into strips and arrange in latticework on top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-40 minutes, until knife inserted comes out clean. Let sit a few minutes before cutting.

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

EGG CUCUMBER SALAD

- 6 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 small cucumber
- 3-4 scallions
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill
- 1-2 teaspoons mayonnaise
- salt and pepper, to taste

Finely chop eggs, cucumber, scallions and dill. Combine all ingredients. Enjoy on a slice of bread or as a side salad.

Nina Greiman • Garner • Prairie Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

FAVORITE FAMILY DINNER RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

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

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave.,
Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992



HOUSE HUNTERS: GETTING THE MOST FOR YOUR HOME

BY LES O'DELL

Across the nation, the real estate market has been red-hot with demand for homes exceeding supply and, in many areas, homes selling faster and for more money than ever before. Even in cases where sellers anticipate numerous offers and a quick sale, they still benefit from efforts to get the highest selling price possible.

"I think there are a lot of sellers who overlook trying to get the most money for their home. Even in a hyperactive market, you still should try to get top dollar," explains Jason Gelios, author of "Think Like a Realtor."

There are many ways to help a home sell quickly and for top dollar. A little bit of effort can translate into a better buyer experience and a higher selling price.

Change your perspective

"When selling, it is best to stop thinking of it as 'your home' and more like a product with the goal of appealing to as many prospective buyers as possible," says Jonathan Faccone, a real estate

investor and developer. "It's easy to become emotionally involved, but it's best to remember that any renovations are meant to net you the most money, not for your own personal satisfaction."

Experts say it benefits the seller to have someone else provide feedback about your home.

"One of the best things a homeowner can do when looking to sell is to invite a non-partial, third-party to give their honest opinion about the house," Gelios says. "Get someone who is not afraid to tell the truth, walk the home and give their impressions."

Upgrade to sell

To get the most for your home, upgrades may be in order. But how do you decide what to renovate and how much to spend? Real estate investor Jordan Fulmer says market research is as important for sellers as it is for buyers.

Jason Gelios, author of "Think Like a Realtor," talks with a family about potentially putting their home on the real estate market. Gelios says some basic investments before listing a home can provide a large return.

"Look at the houses in your area – essentially your competition – and see what kind of features and finishes they have," he says. "Good research will help sellers not only decide what to do, but also not to over-do renovations and improvements."

Almost without exception, real estate professionals say sellers should primarily focus on two areas: the kitchen and bathrooms, but especially the kitchen.

"Home sellers should make the kitchen top priority," Gelios explains. "As the heart of the home, sellers should make updates to the cabinet



hardware, lighting fixtures and even update appliances. This will not only bring the best offer from a home buyer, but it will also lead to a faster sale.”

Neutral colors – shades of white, beige and gray – are best for kitchens, and you should avoid bright colors. If upgrading appliances and fixtures, don’t invest in luxury items. Changing cabinet knobs, putting in under-cabinet lights and other little things that are inexpensive make everything look new and make the house easier to sell.

Make a strong impression outside

Many experts say to initially focus on what potential buyers see first. Whether in-person or online, a home must capture attention. Known as curb appeal, the general attractiveness of a house from the street or the sidewalk is a priority.

Fulmer says the way a home looks when a prospective buyer arrives sets a precedent for the rest of their visit. Often homes need to be power washed or freshly painted. At minimum, give the front door a touch-up.

Don’t ignore the top of the home, Fulmer adds. If the roof is still in good condition, he recommends having it professionally power washed to remove any streaks or stains and make it look almost new.

Likewise, improving the looks of the front of your home without paying

attention to the rest of the property is akin to only ironing the collar and cuffs of a shirt. The backyard, outbuildings, decks and patios need to look their best and can be attractive to potential buyers, as a way of bringing the inside outside.

Declutter and deep clean inside

The initial impact when someone enters a home may be the only impression they take away with them. For that reason, brokers encourage decluttering, deep cleaning and home staging.

“This isn’t a costly investment, but it requires time and effort,” explains Chase Michels, a realtor in the Midwest. “A cluttered house will make a large room appear small and cramped. Cleaning and decluttering your home could help you see up to a \$2,000 price increase.”

Decluttering means more than shoving items in a closet. Instead, move personal items like photo albums, collections and even out-of-season clothes off-site. Then, the home needs to be cleaned.

Sellers should strive to present the home in its best light for listing photos as well. An estimated 80% of home shoppers review properties online before looking in person. For that reason, it’s best practice for all photographs used in marketing the property be professionally done.

Many recommend using the services of a home stager, a professional who can make a property look “picture perfect” through consultations with residents or by bringing in furniture to make an empty house look like a home.

Help buyers feel at home

The goal is to help house hunters feel welcome so they can imagine themselves living in the home.

“Fragrances are important. We always recommend a vanilla scent,” Fulmer says. “Also consider having refreshments available. Whether it be drinks or a self-serve coffee station, small gestures can make potential buyers’ viewing experience more enjoyable. The more comfortable they feel, the more they will want to live there and the more they will be willing to pay for it.”

Letting buyers know “inside” information also is important – things like what internet service is available, if there is hardwood under the carpet and which walls are non-load bearing and potentially could be removed as part of future remodel.

Taking the right steps to prepare a home for sale can make a big difference in how quickly the home attracts buyers and how much they are willing to pay. It takes some work but is worth it.



CURB APPEAL

BY LES O'DELL

The old adage that “there is not a second chance to make a first impression” is true not only for people, but for homes, too. That’s why the way a house looks from the road or street – often called curb appeal – is especially important.

“You must invest a little to make your home flawless in the buyers’ eyes,” explains Dan Belcher, CEO of Mortgage Relief. “Consider first and foremost the curb appeal. Upgrading the front door, installing new light fittings or adding plants can make it more enticing to potential purchasers.”

Simple landscaping pays off

Curb appeal, especially when it comes to landscaping, does not have to be complicated, according to Sheila Schrader of Schrader Landscape Design.

“When I am working with a client who knows they are selling their home, I actually encourage them to simplify their landscaping and make sure that it looks like it’s easy to maintain,” she says.

Schrader recommends choosing plants that have their peak bloom or color when the house is going onto the market. There are also curb-appeal benefits to putting plants in decorative containers near the front door and along sidewalks.

“It’s bright and an easy investment to bring color into your landscape. Plus, you can take those with you when you move to your new home,” she says.

Schrader said the outdoor areas of the home should be staged just like the interior. She suggests cleaning up gardens and flower beds and adding new cushions to outdoor furniture to help people picture themselves in the landscape.

Lawncare shouldn’t scare

Jason Gelios, author of “Think Like a Realtor,” agrees that curb appeal – from the lawn to the way the home’s exterior looks – is incredibly important.



“If home buyers pull up to a house and feel it will take thousands of dollars to clean up a yard or remove branches and dead trees in the backyard, they’re not going to care if the inside of the house is updated,” he explains. “Landscaping is huge, especially in rural areas.”

He adds that curb appeal does not just mean what can be seen from the road, street or sidewalk; it’s the entire property.

“It’s the front, it’s the back, it’s any out-buildings, it’s everything. It all matters,” he says.

Paint makes a cost-effective upgrade

Chase Michels, a real estate consultant,

explains paint is a great investment to enhance curb appeal.

“Painting the exterior is a cost-effective upgrade for a home that can potentially increase the value of your home by 2-5%,” he says. “Selecting the right paint will give your home a clean look, attract a wide range of buyers and help improve its value.”

Michels suggests neutral colors like white or cream for the exterior and using a color for railings, trim and accents for a fresh look.

“Even if you decide against a complete paint project, consider painting the door an eye-catching color to make a great first impression,” he adds.

CO-OP CEO TO CONGRESS: DIVERSE ENERGY MIX CRUCIAL TO RELIABLE POWER

BY ERIN KELLY, NRECA

Electric cooperatives are increasing their investment in renewable energy, but baseload resources like coal and natural gas must continue to be part of the mix to ensure reliable, affordable power for rural America, the leader of Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) told a House panel April 5.

“As we look to the future, intermittent resources, such as wind and solar, must continue to be complemented and supported by always-available baseload energy resources like coal and natural gas,” stated Bill Cherrier, executive vice president and CEO of the generation and transmission co-op, in his testimony before the House Agriculture Committee. “System reliability depends on the ability to blend intermittent sources like wind and solar with firm, flexible and dispatchable electric capacity.”

CIPCO, which serves nearly 300,000 residents and more than 13,000 commercial and industrial accounts across Iowa, has a diverse portfolio that includes wind, solar, hydropower, landfill gas, natural gas, coal and purchases on the market.

“CIPCO’s generation portfolio has evolved significantly, with wind growing from 4.1% in 2010 to 29.9% in 2021 and coal dropping from 58.4% to 29.3% during that same time period,” Cherrier said at a hearing reviewing the 2018 Farm Bill’s impact on renewable energy opportunities in rural America.

Moving ahead, the co-op recently deployed the 100 MW_{AC} Wapello Solar, LLC, and the 54 MW Independence Wind power purchase agreements and is moving forward on an additional 100 MW_{AC} solar project in eastern Iowa. At the same time, CIPCO recently invested \$85 million in its existing Summit Lake Generating Station near Creston, adding efficient reciprocating natural gas engines to serve peak



Bill Cherrier testifies before the U.S. House Agriculture Committee on April 5.

electric demand, Cherrier said.

“This investment complements our intermittent wind and solar resources while ensuring the baseload generation necessary to meet the 24/7 power needs of Iowans and businesses in CIPCO’s service territory,” he added.

As co-ops seek to add more renewable energy, it’s “critical that policymakers work constructively with industry to achieve these objectives while maintaining the exceptional reliability and affordability that American families and businesses expect and deserve,” Cherrier said.

He urged Congress to approve direct federal payments to co-ops to put them on a more equal footing with for-profit utilities, which have long received tax incentives to invest in renewable energy projects. At present, co-ops cannot access those incentives because they do not pay federal income taxes.

“The federal tax-credit structure prevents not-for-profit electric cooperatives like CIPCO from taking advantage of the tax benefit to directly build and own wind and solar generation assets,” Cherrier testified. “For cooperatives to reap any benefit for this transition, we must work with

third parties that develop and own these assets.

“Direct-pay tax incentives would level the playing field for all electric providers, allowing co-op-member systems and member-owners down the line to have equal access to a diverse power supply mix,” he added.

Cherrier also urged Congress to boost rural America’s economy by passing legislation to allow electric cooperatives to refinance federal Rural Utilities Service (RUS) loans at lower interest rates without penalty.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, of which CIPCO is a member, is calling on lawmakers to approve the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act, which permits co-ops to refinance their RUS electric loans without facing costly prepayment penalties. An average co-op with typical RUS debt could save \$2 million per year in interest payments at today’s interest rates.

“This essential step will give co-ops the flexibility to best manage their financial circumstances while focusing on cooperatives’ long-term stability and that of the communities they serve,” Cherrier said.

CREATE A POLLINATOR HABIT IN 5 EASY STEPS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

This spring, make a positive impact on the environment and beautify your landscape by planting a pollinator habitat.

The flash of a colorful butterfly and the buzz of a bumblebee traveling between flowers bring extra beauty and enjoyment to gardens. Planning your garden or landscape to include plants that attract and sustain butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects will increase the diversity of what you see and enjoy. You will also be doing your part to help preserve butterflies, honeybees and pollinators threatened and in decline.

Pollinators help plants reproduce by carrying pollen from one flower to another and can include bats and birds, but most importantly, bees and butterflies.

Pollinators are vital to creating and maintaining the habitats and ecosystems that many animals rely on for food and shelter while facilitating reproduction in 90% of the world's flowering plants.

Without pollination, we would not have the grains, fruits, nuts and vegetables that comprise more than one-third of global food production.

With these five easy steps, you can create a haven for pollinators and have your yard buzzing with activity!

STEP 1 Pick your location

Butterflies and other pollinators like to bask in the sun and some of their favorite wildflowers grow best in full or partial sun with some protection from the wind. The size of your pollinator habitat will depend on how much of your yard you want to devote to growing these beneficial plants. Even a small space can have a big impact on pollinators!

STEP 2 Know your soil type and sunny hours

The soil type and the amount of sunlight it gets will help determine the



Through the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium (monarch.ent.iastate.edu), electric cooperatives are working to restore declining populations of the monarch butterfly. You can help, too, by planting a pollinator habitat!



plants you can grow. Your local garden center or nursery can provide tips on the best plants for your property.

STEP 3 Choose your plants

Pick varieties of milkweed (Monarch caterpillars feed exclusively on the leaves of milkweed, the only host plant for this iconic butterfly species) and wildflowers native to Iowa. Focus on selecting perennials to ensure your plants come back each year and don't require much maintenance. Remember, pollinators need nectar in the spring, throughout the summer and even into the fall. Choosing plants that bloom at different times will help you create a bright and colorful garden that you and pollinators will love for months!

STEP 4 Prep and plant

From converting spaces of your yard to raised flowers beds, think of a pollinator habitat as a canvas for creating. Plant flowers in clumps rather than single plants. Add nutrient-rich compost or soil to improve the success of your garden.

STEP 5 Wait, watch, water and weed

Butterflies and other pollinators will soon flutter into the garden as plants develop and flowers bloom. Weeding and watering your garden will keep it healthy. Keep in mind that milkweed may take a couple of seasons to start producing flowers.

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

ENTERTAINMENT FALLS SHORT

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I admit to having more than a few channel choices on my television. When you hear that someone has more than 500 channels at their disposal, your first thought may be, “She needs to get a life.” Your second thought may be, “I’ll bet she has lots of great options for her television viewing pleasure!” You would be wrong.

Just keep flipping

Despite the plethora of channels laid out before me, very few offer any quality entertainment. I scroll through “Make your tomatoes the largest they’ve ever been,” and “Watch our demonstration of the world’s best vacuum cleaner, the Suck-It,” or whatever. Having to sit and watch a half hour of these shows rates right up there with a root canal and cleaning out the fridge. On the same day. Even when you take out all the shopping channels (which clears out a lot of them), there’s a dearth of anything I want to watch. Just the descriptions of each show can keep me flipping for 20 minutes:

- *“In the world of 2050, alien pods take over unsuspecting citizen homes ...”* Nope.
- *“Investigators work on a case of a murder so grotesque ...”* Next channel.
- *“Lisa finds out her boyfriend has another family on the side ...”* Seriously?

Turn up the volume

Even these aren’t as bad as a type of show I loathe above all others: The Whispering Show. You’ll find it in golf, which no one in our household watches. But you also find this phenomenon on hunting shows, of which my husband Kent binges with abandon.

The setting is usually a tree stand, or a couple of guys sitting in a blind or behind a big rock. I’m never sure if someone is actually filming them or if they have the camera set up so that



they’re filming themselves.

What makes it even more bizarre is that these folks have tromped through underbrush for the past 10 minutes, scaring away anything that remotely resembles prey. But once they get into position, it starts ... (Insert loud whispering here, only half of which you can understand.)

Guy 1: “Did you see that?”

Guy 2: “What?”

Guy 1: “Did you see that buck?”

Guy 2: “What?”

Guy 1: “Over there; he’s looking at us!”

Guy 2: “What?”

Guy 1: “Wait, I have to adjust the camera. Are we downwind? How many

points do you think he is? Is it the same one we saw last month? Are you ready? Can you see him? Can we get a shot off?”

Guy 2: “What?”

This will go on for the better part of an hour, and most of the time the deer has little to worry about. Watching this painful spectacle is about as exciting as a curling match. But I still know plenty of people who are glued to them.

So, my quest for quality television continues. I just might have to settle for growing bigger tomatoes.

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, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter.



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