

● APRIL 2025

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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printed on April bills**

**Ways co-ops build
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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Shirley Kellenberger, a Lyon REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

MY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE JOURNEY BEGAN WITH AN ACRONYM

BY JIM MILLER



Growing up on a farm in northwest Iowa near Fonda, I learned early on what “REC” stood for – rural electric cooperative. It was the power to light the farrowing house, a security light to illuminate the farm and power to keep the oven on for Mom’s pies. Back then, my acronyms were PE (physical education) – which I taught at a local school before coming home to farm – and farm terms like USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture).

Acronyms give way to serving local members

Little did I know that when my local district director for Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association (ECA) asked me to run for our board of directors 17 years ago, I’d begin to learn a whole new set of acronyms on my journey in the electric cooperative world.

My first year as a co-op director was like learning a foreign language. PAC (Political Action Committee), IAEC (Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives) and NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) filled my conversations, and the list goes on. Our Calhoun County ECA manager at the time, Roxanne Carish, was patient with my questions, as were our seasoned board members who encouraged my education in cooperative responsibilities to serve our members. I began attending classes and learning this new language, and I am proud that I achieved the national Director Gold Credential through NRECA.

I was flattered five years ago when statewide director Steve Seidl of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative asked if I would consider running for the state board. I am honored to represent District 5 on IAEC’s board, where I now serve as board president.

Every decision is for co-op members

A big influence in my co-op philosophy is this quote on Calhoun County ECA’s boardroom wall: “Every decision I make shall be based on what is best for the members-owners of this cooperative.”

This quote is why I am a proponent of attending the classes and conferences offered to directors, where I continuously add industry language to my vocabulary. It is also why I prepare for my local and state board meetings. How can I make the best decisions if I am not prepared and haven’t done my due diligence?

Advocating for co-op members

Recently, I was asked what I hope to accomplish as president of the IAEC board, and my answer came from a conversation with Darrin Lynch from CFC (National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation). He said, “Jim, in my opinion, Iowa has one of the best, if not the best, statewide organizations in the country.” My hope is that IAEC continues to set the standard for integrity and service.

And while hope is not a strategy, I know our statewide association can continue to operate at a high level because we

have incredible leadership and staff. My fellow IAEC board members are willing to put in the time and effort to serve our members successfully.

But we don’t do it alone. It’s why I appreciate fellow directors who advocate for important electric issues with their state and federal legislators. We need each of you as co-op members to be committed and engaged with your local and state boards. Let us know your questions, and share your thoughts and needs with us so we can best represent you.

After 17 years as a co-op director, the acronyms now flow freely: ROFR (Right of First Refusal), G&T (Generation and Transmission Cooperative), RTO (Regional Transmission Organization) and so many others! But sometimes, my wife Rae stops and reminds me that not everyone knows the industry lingo. It’s a good reminder to be steadfast in sharing our industry knowledge in a way others will understand as we proudly provide safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable power energy to those we serve.

Jim Miller is the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association.

EDITOR’S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A CUISINART® ELECTRIC SKILLET!

The Cuisinart® electric skillet is a versatile cooking appliance. A temperature probe adjusts from warm to 450 degrees F. The nonstick cooking surface is ideal for low-fat or no-fat cooking and is big enough for family orders of pancakes or fajitas with friends!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month’s contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than April 30. You must be a member of one of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to win. There’s no obligation associated with entering, we don’t share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the Amazon Kindle from the February issue was **Jeff Beal**, a **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY APRIL 30!

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 17	Board meeting
APRIL 18	Office closed for Good Friday
APRIL 18	Lineworker Appreciation Day
MAY 15	Board meeting
MAY 26	Office closed for Memorial Day

You can access your account information at any time using SmartHub on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com or through the SmartHub app for mobile devices. Use SmartHub to report outages to save time and ensure that it goes directly into our system to notify us. You can also call our office at 866-242-4232 for account information or to report service-related concerns.



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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BE READY FOR STORM SEASON

BY KEVIN WHEELER



With the excitement of spring also comes perfect conditions for severe storms. Access Energy Cooperative crews are always prepared and standing

by to respond if power outages occur in our area. When severe storms cause power disruptions, our line crews take all necessary precautions before they start working on any downed lines. We also encourage members to practice safety and preparedness to protect your family during storms and outages.

How to prepare

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends the items below as a starting point for storm and disaster preparedness. You can also visit www.ready.gov for additional resources.

- ✓ Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (e.g., diapers and toiletries).
- ✓ Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies, including towelettes, soap and hand sanitizer.
- ✓ Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked with pain relievers, bandages and other medical essentials, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- ✓ Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and a portable, battery-powered radio or TV.

- ✓ Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.

In the event of a prolonged power outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avoid damage from potential power surges and will also help prevent overloading circuits during power restoration. Leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, ensure it's rated to handle the amount of power you need, and always review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Stay informed

Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for storm and emergency information. Check the outage map on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com for local outage updates.

If you experience an outage, please don't report it on Facebook. Call our outage reporting number at 866-242-4232 or report it on SmartHub. This is the fastest, most reliable way to let us know if your power is out.

Make a storm safety plan today – storm preparedness is always our best defense.

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

**\$25 BILL CREDIT
DRAWING WILL BE
HELD MAY 31**

Each member who is signed up to receive 2025 and future dividend payments as bill credits, in lieu of checks, will be entered into a drawing to receive a \$25 bill credit. If you are already signed up, you do not need to sign up again.

DIVIDEND ALLOCATIONS ARE PRINTED ON APRIL BILLS

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 governed 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."

Annually, these margins are allocated to each member's dividend account based on their usage for that year. Once the allocation is processed, there will be a statement on your April electric bill showing the amount of dividends being allocated to your dividend account for 2024. The image above shows where you can find it on your bill. The following month, Access Energy Cooperative's board of directors review 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 and will be handed out at the annual meeting of members on Aug. 5. Any

Page 1 of 2

Account Number 123456-001

Billing Date 04/05/2025 Due Date 05/04/2025

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 2024 IS \$133.81. PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

Dividend allocation statement on your bill

check not picked up at the meeting will be mailed.

Get your dividend payment early

Members have the option to choose to receive their dividend payments in the form of a bill credit, rather than a check. By signing up for bill credits, you will receive your dividend payment in July, rather than waiting for a check in August. If you wish to receive a bill credit instead of a check, contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to finance@accessenergycoop.com.

Members with closed cooperative accounts

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 20 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.

Address updates and questions

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, contact our office at 866-242-4232 or send an email to finance@accessenergycoop.com.

HOW PATRONAGE DIVIDENDS WORK

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit and operate at cost. Patronage dividends are one of the benefits of being a member of a cooperative.

1.
Members pay their bills, and the co-op tracks their business with the cooperative each month.



2.
The co-op pays operating expenses throughout the year and allocates any remaining margins to patronage dividends.



3.
When financial conditions permit, the co-op board votes to retire (pay) patronage dividends to the members.



4.
The co-op distributes to members their share of the patronage dividends as a bill credit or check.



WAYS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BUILD STRONG BOARDS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Photo Source:
Harrison County REC

The role of an electric cooperative board extends far beyond making decisions in a meeting room. It requires forward-thinking strategies, local advocacy, active engagement and a commitment to ongoing improvement. Co-op directors continuously participate in education and training opportunities, which enhance their skills and strengthen their knowledge of a complex industry.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' recent annual meeting, Richard Fagerlin of Peak Solutions and Dr. Keri Jacobs from

the University of Missouri-Columbia explored the essential qualities of high-performing cooperative boards and the steps directors take to ensure their long-term success. Hundreds of directors from Iowa's electric cooperatives attended the meeting.

Understanding the big picture

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that effective boards do more than meet and make decisions. They ensure the sustainability of their cooperative and prepare for future challenges. A key theme of their presentation was "future-proofing" the board – ensuring

that today's decisions position the cooperative for long-term success.

To serve the needs of electric co-ops and the member-consumers they serve – today and in the future – electric cooperative boards ask:

- What does our cooperative need from its board today?
- How can we best position ourselves for future leadership?
- How do we ensure a smooth transition when current board members step down?



Photo Source: Franklin REC



Richard Fagerlin (left) of Peak Solutions and Dr. Keri Jacobs from the University of Missouri-Columbia presented information about high-performing cooperative boards at IAEC's recent annual meeting.

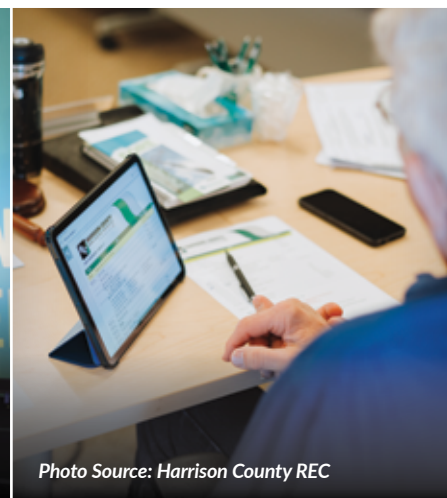


Photo Source: Harrison County REC

Seven habits of effective board members

Fagerlin and Jacobs highlighted several common challenges boards face and seven ways board members are most effective in serving member-consumers' local needs.

- 1 Knowing their job.** Board members understand their responsibilities before, during and after meetings. This includes preparing adequately, staying engaged, and recognizing the difference between operational and strategic roles.
- 2 Finding the right balance of engagement.** Some directors may want to overreach and micromanage staff, while others leave decision-making to a few dominant voices. Striking the right balance is critical to effective leadership.
- 3 Ensuring equal participation.** Effective boards ensure that all members contribute to discussions. When one or two individuals dominate conversations, the board loses valuable perspectives and diversity of thought.
- 4 Prioritizing co-op needs.** Directors prioritize the cooperative's interests over personal motivations. An effective board remains united in its commitment to the organization's long-term success.
- 5 Passing the torch.** Board members must recognize when it's time to step aside for new leadership. Bringing in fresh perspectives while maintaining institutional knowledge is fundamental to the cooperative business model.
- 6 Maintaining confidentiality.** Board members understand what can and cannot be shared outside the boardroom. Ensuring consistent messaging strengthens trust within the cooperative and the broader membership.
- 7 Valuing diverse opinions.** Strong boards avoid the assumption that "everyone thinks like me" and foster productive discussions. The best boards value diverse opinions and encourage open dialogue.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

Electric cooperative directors play a vital role in guiding the co-op's governance and strategic direction. Elected by the membership, they represent the interests of co-op member-consumers and ensure the co-op operates in alignment with its mission, values and the 7 Cooperative Principles.

Their responsibilities include setting policies, maintaining financial stability and shaping the co-op's long-term

vision. Directors stay informed on industry developments, oversee the CEO's leadership and engage with the community. They also support programs that enhance local economic development.

While directors do not manage daily operations, they provide high-level oversight to keep the co-op delivering safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable power to its members.

Ensuring long-term success

One of the central themes of the discussion was the need to future-proof the board. This means taking proactive steps to ensure the board evolves alongside the cooperative and the industry.

Some of the key strategies electric cooperatives take to future-proof their boards include:

- **Regular board assessments.** Evaluating the board's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Director development.** Providing ongoing education and training opportunities.
- **Succession planning.** Identifying and mentoring future board members to ensure smooth transitions.
- **Engaging in strategic discussions.** Moving beyond day-to-day operations and focusing on long-term goals and sustainability.

The power of good governance

Governance plays a crucial role in board effectiveness. Fagerlin and Jacobs distinguished between Big G Governance (formal structures, bylaws, and processes) and Little G Governance (culture, behavior and interpersonal dynamics). While having sound policies and procedures in place is essential, the board's culture and communication style can make or break its effectiveness.

For instance, agenda setting plays a key role in board productivity. Boards strive to make agendas that allow for meaningful strategic discussions. Balancing high-level strategy with operational details prevents boards from getting stuck in the weeds.

The board and CEO relationship

The relationship between the board and the cooperative's CEO or general manager is vital to success. The board's role is to provide advice and accountability rather than micromanage operations. Future-proofing means boards position themselves as supportive partners for leadership rather than obstacles to progress.

One emerging challenge is the governance knowledge gap – the increasing complexity of electric cooperative management versus the time board members have available to stay informed. While cooperative managers work full-time in the industry, directors often serve on a part-time basis. To bridge this gap, directors commit to continuous learning and strategic thinking.

Leading the cooperative of the future

The success of cooperatives depends on strong, well-functioning boards that adapt to changing times. By focusing on purpose, process and performance, cooperative boards ensure they remain effective and future-proofed for the challenges ahead.

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that board leadership is a journey, not a destination. The best boards never stop learning, growing and adapting to meet the needs of their cooperative and its members. With the right mindset and commitment to excellence, today's boards lay the foundation for a thriving, sustainable future.

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



PAD THAI WITH SHRIMP

- ½ pound rice noodles
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ pound shrimp (may substitute chicken or pork)
- 4 scallions or green onions, chopped
- ½ cup peanuts, coarsely chopped
- 1 3.5-ounce box pad thai sauce
- 2 cups bean sprouts
- cilantro
- lime wedges

Soak noodles according to directions. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add egg, scramble lightly 20 seconds. Add shrimp, stir until cooked. Add 2 tablespoons oil and rice noodles. Stir fry 5-7 minutes. Add scallions, peanuts and pad thai sauce. Stir one more minute, add bean sprouts. Garnish with cilantro and lime wedges. *Serves 4*

Diana Thorn • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy

MEDITERRANEAN LEG OF LAMB

- 4-5 pounds leg of lamb
- 3 cloves garlic
- salt
- pepper
- oregano
- 1 cup water
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce

Cut slits in lamb and insert slivers of garlic. Season with salt, pepper and oregano to taste. Roast in a shallow pan at 325 degrees F for 2½ hours. Drain excess fat from juices in pan. Combine water and tomato sauce and pour over lamb and roast 30 minutes more. Baste with sauce occasionally.

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

KOREAN BEEF

- 1 pound ground beef
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- rice, cooked

Cook meat and garlic, drain somewhat. Add the remaining ingredients, except rice. Simmer to blend flavors. Serve over rice. *Serves 4*

Grant DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ASIAN BEEF AND CABBAGE STIR FRY

- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ onion, diced
- ½ head cabbage, diced
- 1 cup carrot, shredded
- ½ red pepper, diced
- 2 teaspoons ginger
- 4 cloves garlic
- soy sauce, to taste
- Japanese barbecue sauce, to taste
- rice or ramen noodles
- green onions, optional
- sesame seeds, optional

Fry hamburger and onion, drain. Add cabbage, carrots, pepper, spices and sauces. Cook until tender. Cook noodles according to package instructions and add when finished. Cook until flavors are blended. Top with green onions and sesame seeds, if desired.

Barb Walter • Alton
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

NORWEGIAN KRINGLES

- 6 egg yolks
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4½ cups flour, divided
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients together except ½ cup flour. Chill overnight or several hours. Then, if needed, add additional ½ cup flour and roll into pencil thin figure eights. Bake on greased cookie sheets at 400 degrees F for about 7 minutes, or until slightly brown. Spread with butter to serve.

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

EAST INDIA PARTY MIX

- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon whole mustard seed
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ cups Rice Chex
- 1½ cups Corn Chex
- 1½ cups Crispix
- 1 cup peanuts
- 1 cup cashews
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup M&M candies

Add mustard seeds to melted butter and cook until seeds pop. Remove from heat and stir in Worcestershire sauce. In large bowl, mix all cereal and nuts. Sprinkle curry and cinnamon on cereal mixture. Pour butter and sauce over top, mix well to coat. Put in shallow pan and bake at 250 degrees F for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool completely, then stir in chocolate chips and candies. Store in airtight containers. Works well with gluten-free cereals.

Mabel Fisher • Sigourney
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

SPINACH AND CHEESE MANICOTTI

- 1 15-ounce container ricotta
- 2 cups mozzarella, shredded, divided
- ¼ cup Romano cheese, grated
- 1 10-ounce package frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced, plus more for garnish
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- black pepper, to taste
- 14 manicotti shells
- 4 cups marinara sauce, divided

Combine ricotta, 1 cup mozzarella, Romano cheese, spinach, parsley, egg, salt and pepper. Stuff ¼ cup mixture into each shell. Spread ¾ cup marinara sauce in a 9x13-inch pan. Arrange shells on top and cover with marinara sauce to submerge all pasta. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Top with remaining 1 cup mozzarella and bake uncovered for 15 minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley. Serves 7

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



CHICKEN CURRY

- ½ cup yogurt
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 whole chicken, cut up
- 5 tablespoons olive oil (or vegetable oil)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- ½ teaspoon ginger
- pinch garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 6 peppercorns
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 cup water
- 2 potatoes, cubed
- basmati rice
- frozen peas, optional

Mix yogurt and salt. Remove skin from chicken. Coat chicken pieces with yogurt mixture and set in bowl 30 minutes. Sauté chicken pieces in oil until brown. Mix onion, green pepper, ginger, garlic powder, cardamom, coriander, cumin, peppercorns, cinnamon stick, turmeric, tomato sauce and water. Place chicken in slow cooker and pour sauce mixture over chicken. Add potatoes and cook until chicken is tender and potatoes are cooked. Thawed peas can be added at the end, if desired. Serve over basmati rice. Serves 4-6

Sheila Arney • Marshalltown
Consumers Energy

WANTED:

GARDEN-FRESH RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is April 30

Submit your favorite recipes using fresh garden produce. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

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



The exterior of a new modern farmhouse home features vertical siding, a front porch and natural wood columns. Steel shed roofs over the windows add contrast and interest.
Photo Source: Hibbs Luxury Homes



HOW THE OLD FARMHOUSE WENT MODERN

DESIGN TRENDS FOR RURAL HOMES

BY JIM WINNERMAN

Many are familiar with interior decorating styles known as mid-century modern, contemporary or simply modern. Less familiar may be a more recent approach known as “modern farmhouse,” a trend in home decor and design evoking a feeling of warmth and comfort.

The origin of the farmhouse can be traced to Germany and Scandinavia, where they were built to house farm workers. Then, it was not a style but a necessary shelter for a way of life. Farmhouse architecture arrived in the U.S. in the 1700s. Since then, farmhouses have undergone various iterations, from being purely functional as they were in Europe

to slowly morphing into various styles of interior and exterior design adopted by everyday families.

Today’s popular modern farmhouse version grew out of the show “Fixer Upper,” hosted by Chip and Joanna Gaines from Waco, Texas. It aired for five seasons on HGTV (Home and Garden Television), a network focusing on reality programming based on home improvement and real estate.

Their show premiered with each episode featuring a home they were renovating. As their engaging personalities and decorating style aired featuring one home after another, their personal

appeal and approach to interior design gained popularity.

Prominent features included architectural elements, like the use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, and an open and airy floor plan conducive to a comfortable lifestyle. The decor was an eclectic mix of furnishings and accessories. Color choices were warm and neutral hues that did not overwhelm a room.

Because it was an approach that could be used inside a home of any architectural style, it had immediate and widespread public appeal. They ventured away from the pure countryside approach of

simplicity, function and nostalgia characteristic of earlier farmhouse decor and introduced a more relaxed way of living and entertaining. The design features smooth, clean lines and materials while retaining the rustic charm of historic farms. By 2016, the Gaines had unexpectedly created a new trend that soon had its own name – modern farmhouse.

Designs based on personal interpretation

Modern farmhouse design can incorporate a traditional wooden kitchen table set in a large kitchen with vaulted ceilings and wooden accent beams, while the overall design is sleek, functional and bright.

Farmhouse style is a combination of the best of old and new. It remains rustic, yet it is chic, contemporary, country and modern at the same time.

The practical part of modern farmhouse design is frequently expressed through open shelves in living spaces. In family rooms, shelves contain family heirlooms and collectibles. In the kitchen, clear glass cabinet doors display everyday functional utensils, like dishes, textiles and other practical objects, as well as rustic cooking decor.

Early farmhouses did not have walls made from drywall like those found in most new and existing homes. Walls were shiplap, beadboard or tongue-and-groove boards, and using the same material today is an important part of modern farmhouse decor. Painted in shades of white and installed vertically or horizontally, either approach delivers the coziness found in the charm of historic farms.

The most important room in the house

Although stainless-steel kitchen appliances would not seem to fit the modern farmhouse approach to decor, they are easily incorporated into a kitchen that features the clean, straight lines of Shaker cabinets, shiplap walls and other natural elements like soapstone sinks.

Similarly, modern farmhouse design does not usually incorporate busy, repetitive patterns on furniture,



This kitchen features a center island with vintage style turned foot legs and a built-in low cabinet to display large pieces of cookware. Natural elements include a wood plank floor and stone surrounding the alcove. Photo Source: Jim Winnerman

walls or draperies; however, kitchens can again be an exception. It is not unusual for a subtly patterned tile backsplash to be used above the oven, where a geometric design works well and does not compete with white subway tile installed nearby.

A kitchen island styled as a table with rustic turned legs beneath its countertop, copper drawer knobs and pulls, and a butcher block surface all work anywhere in a modern farmhouse kitchen.

When looking for basic design materials, look for historical pieces or items that could be found in nature. Examples include wood, slate, marble, soapstone, brick, aged brass, cast iron and tin. Most importantly, both comfort and function are goals in modern farmhouse decor, versus aesthetics, trends or a consistent sense of design.

Modern farmhouse exterior

While interior decor for a modern farmhouse design is popular when existing homes are remodeled, builders, architects and contractors of new homes have been quick to add a modern farmhouse exterior aesthetic to their portfolios.

Considerations for an exterior design include the siding and color, roof, lighting and the entrance that greets guests from the curb to the front door.

As for color, the same approach applies outside as it does inside. Neutral hues, such as whites, creams and beiges, are commonly used



A coastal farmhouse living room on Cape Cod features sea blue accents, a sliding barn door into the utility room, a light gray wood plank floor, sea foam green chairs and a contemporary painting of a beach scene. Photo Source: Jim Winnerman

for a clean and fresh exterior. That palette provides a background that easily incorporates elements such as natural stone on a portion of the facade, wooden shutters and wooden porch railings and posts that evoke a rustic, familiar feel.

A combination of vertical or horizontal siding is often blended with cedar shingles under the roof peaks to add interest and texture. Vintage barn-style lantern light fixtures or industrial lighting are popular near the front door. Nothing exudes a modern farmhouse exterior like a welcoming, comfortable front porch.

A front door can be contrary to an overall paint scheme. Pale colors work, but almost any color can add texture and interest to the entrance. Having a door in a pleasant shade of red, yellow or blue is more welcoming, which conveys a happy vibe to arriving guests.

Finally, incorporating the true meaning of modern farmhouse design into the exterior means using metal barn-style roofing to create additional color and texture contrast. However, traditional shingles can also be used with metal shed roof accents above window overhangs or for just the porch roof.

Top it all with a wooden sliding barn door replacing a traditional front door, add a picket fence in the front yard, and turn that house into a modern farmhouse home.

Jim Winnerman is a guest contributor for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

FORD LIGHTNING EV

As part of a research project, Access Energy Cooperative is tracking data from the cooperative's Ford Lightning electric vehicle to share with members. The following is the data for January.

- 728 miles driven
- 1,523 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 265 total kWh for charging
- \$33.10 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 41.6 gallons of gas equivalent
- \$116.10 total cost of gas equivalent at \$2.79 per gallon

Note: Dollar values are dependent on electric and gas prices.



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Don't fall for a power restoration rip off. Some scammers will contact you and offer to restore power quickly or in a preferential order if you make an immediate payment. These scams typically occur after major storms or disasters that cause widespread outages. We will never request or require payment to restore power after a natural disaster or storm. If post-storm repairs to customer-owned equipment are necessary, we will advise you to work with a licensed contractor. If any charges are applicable, you will be billed through your account.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams



THANK YOU, 2025 NOMINATING COMMITTEE!



As an electric cooperative, our members have democratic control over who serves on the board of directors, which sets the policies and rates. The Nominating Committee is comprised of members who find other members to run for the board.

Thank you to the 2025 Nominating Committee for your dedication to Access Energy Cooperative and for finding qualified member candidates to run for our board of directors for the upcoming election. The committee included:

- **District 1:** Joe Heckethorn, Dennis Smithburg and Rick Sobaski
- **District 2:** Jeff Bailey, Tina Mullin and Randy White
- **District 3:** Myrna Folker, Dave Lowenberg and Barb Schau.

The committee has nominated the following members to run in this year's election. The election will be held at the 2025 Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 5:

District 1

- **Joseph "Joe" Heckethorn**, Stockport
- **Virgil Symmonds**, Fairfield

District 2

- **Robert "Bob" Breazeale**, Mount Pleasant
- **Mitch Yaley**, Mount Pleasant

District 3

- **Shirley Deck**, Fort Madison
- **Marvin Newton**, West Point

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for Aug. 5 for the 2025 Annual Meeting of Members. Singer Jake McVey is back this year providing entertainment. We'll also have pony rides, inflatables, drive-a-tractor and safety demonstrations. And don't forget the homemade ice cream that follows the free meal!



PREPARE NOW FOR SUMMER SAVINGS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Spring is in the air, and before you know it, summer will be here. There are many ways to get a jump-start on preventing high bills and energy waste this summer.

Add equipment to spring cleaning

Add your cooling equipment to the spring-cleaning checklist. An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charging, airflow adjustment, and condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system's efficiency and lifespan, reducing wasted energy and costs.

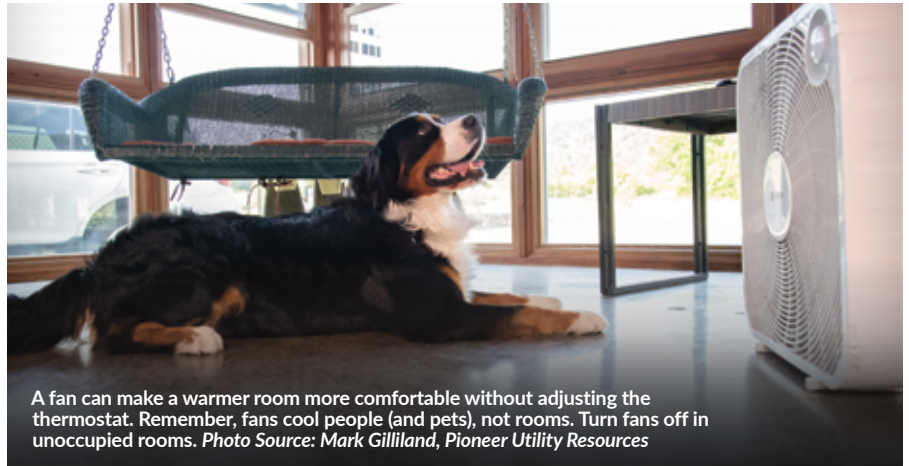
Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter can waste energy by causing your system to work harder. Make sure you have a stack of replacement filters ready to go so you are more likely to replace them as needed. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk.

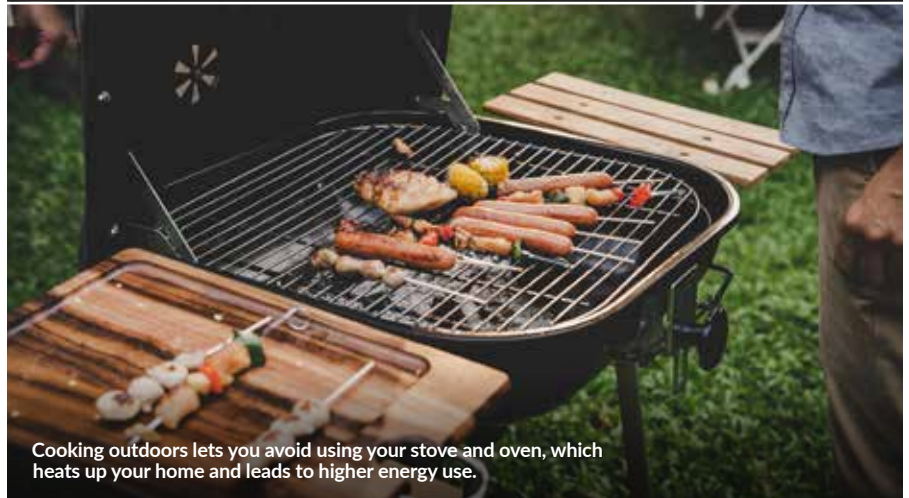
Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, be sure to turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

Keep an eye on thermostat and fan settings

As we transition from cool to warm weather, watch your thermostat settings. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees F when you are home and higher when you are away. You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.



A fan can make a warmer room more comfortable without adjusting the thermostat. Remember, fans cool people (and pets), not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms. Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



Cooking outdoors lets you avoid using your stove and oven, which heats up your home and leads to higher energy use.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the room you're in during the day or when you're sleeping. Using a fan can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, make sure you flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter, and you can maximize the comfort benefit of a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

Consider peak load and cooking outdoors

Another consideration before summer hits is your home's impact

on peak load – when demand for electricity is highest. This typically occurs in the morning when people are getting ready for work or school and in the evening when they return home. Your electric cooperative must manage the energy use of all its consumers, which can be a challenge. Consider starting the dishwasher before you go to sleep or starting a load of laundry outside of your co-op's peak times.

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

WRAPPED IN SAVINGS

Ensuring your home is properly insulated can improve energy efficiency and make your home more comfortable. Insulation acts like a cozy coat that reduces heat loss during winter months and a protective layer that reduces heat gain during summer months.

Many older homes have less insulation than newer homes, but even newer homes can benefit from additional insulation. While it's not the least expensive efficiency improvement, adding insulation and sealing air leaks in your home can provide the biggest bang for your buck in energy savings and overall comfort.

Adding more insulation

The most common areas to insulate are attics, ceilings, crawlspaces or unconditioned basements, exterior and interior walls, floors and ductwork located in unconditioned spaces.

The amount and effectiveness rating of insulation required for each area varies by climate. Many websites like the U.S. Department of Energy or Home Depot provide easy-to-follow recommendations. Visit energy.gov/energysaver/insulation



to learn about recommended R-values for specific areas of the home based on climate zones.

Understanding R-values

It's important to understand how insulation effectiveness is measured. Insulation is rated in R-value, which measures the material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the effectiveness of insulation. The R-value you'll need depends on factors like climate, heating and cooling system type, and which

area of the home you plan to insulate.

Insulation is offered in a wide range of materials from bulky fiberglass rolls to cellulose materials made from recycled paper products. If you're considering installing additional insulation, talk to an expert who can offer guidance on the right materials for your budget, climate and comfort needs.

Investing in proper insulation for your home enhances comfort and reduces energy consumption and demand.

AREA YOUTH SELECTED FOR WASHINGTON, D.C., TRIP



Hudson Gibb

Hudson Gibb of Burlington and Natalie Steele of Lockridge have been selected to attend the 2025 Youth Tour in June. The event is an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative.

Hudson and Natalie will join approximately 40 other Iowa students and more than 1,500 students from across the country who have been selected by their electric cooperative to attend the annual Youth Tour.

Hudson is a junior at Danville High School and is the son of Chase and Jen Gibb. He is involved in a variety of catering businesses, the Southeast Iowa Property Owners and youth group activities.



Natalie Steele

Natalie is a Sophomore at Fairfield High School and is the daughter of Jason and Carrie Steele. She is involved in 4-H, volleyball, babysitting and working on the family farm.

While on Youth Tour, these students will learn about American history and government. They will visit historical sites, including monuments, museums, the U.S. Capitol, federal agencies and other points of interest. They will also have an opportunity to meet with their legislators in the U.S. House and Senate.

Access Energy Cooperative has been a part of the Youth Tour program since 1958 and currently selects up to two students each year to participate in the seven-day trip. The students are selected through an application and interview process.

SAFETY FIRST — CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG







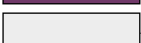
Ensuring safety is crucial for professional excavators, such as construction workers and contractors. Beneath every site lies a network of utility lines – electric, water, gas and telecommunications. Striking these lines can cause costly delays, expensive repairs, service disruptions to the community, and, most importantly, serious injury or death. Contacting 811 before digging helps prevent these risks.

Iowa law requires anyone planning to dig to contact Iowa One Call – 811 or 800-292-8989 – at least two business days before starting any digging project.

Color-coded markings

When you contact 811, they will notify relevant utility companies to mark underground lines, free of charge, using colored flags or paint. This process usually only takes a few days.

Different colors are used to mark underground utilities, and each color is universal:

	ELECTRIC
	COMMUNICATIONS, TELEPHONE/CATV
	POTABLE WATER
	SEWER/DRAINAGE
	GAS/PETROLEUM
	RECLAIMED WATER
	PREMARK SITE OF PROPOSED EXCAVATION

Remember, 811 does not locate private utilities. Hire a private locator for systems such as underground sprinklers, invisible fences, data communication systems or gas piping to a garage.

Once utilities are located, wear proper protective gear before digging.



Report Outages with SmartHub

Members, if you experience an outage, contact us through SmartHub, or call 866-242-4232.

SmartHub reports it directly into our system and we are notified.

You can see the status of your outage in the **Track Issue Status** section of Contact Us.



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April 2025

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