

JUNE 2026

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**"Shine the Light" on  
a community volunteer**

**Backyard BBQ recipes**

**2026 Access Energy Cooperative  
scholarship winners announced**

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### ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Jill Hannasch, a Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# CLASS IS ALWAYS IN SESSION FOR IOWA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

BY KATRINA DAVIS



When the lockers are empty and the final school bell rings, summer announces a well-earned break from homework and schedules. While classrooms

may quiet down, learning doesn't take a season off in the world of electric cooperatives.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, we see education not as an obligation, but as an investment that pays dividends in reliability, innovation and service to co-op member-consumers. The electric utility landscape is constantly evolving, shaped by new technologies, changing regulations and growing expectations from the communities we serve. Staying ahead requires more than experience; it demands a commitment to continuous learning.

That's where our training and education programs come in. As the director of education and training at the statewide trade association, my role is to provide high-value learning opportunities for our member electric cooperatives.

## Investing in employees and directors

Throughout the year, we bring co-op employees together for workshops, conferences and hands-on training opportunities designed to sharpen skills and spark new ideas. Whether it's a lineworker mastering the latest safety practices, a customer service representative navigating emerging member needs or a manager exploring new operational strategies, each session builds confidence and capability.

But learning doesn't stop with employees.

Cooperative board directors, who are locally elected member-consumers, also dedicate time to expanding their knowledge. Through director-focused events, they dive deeper into the complexities of the energy industry, from governance responsibilities to emerging policy issues. Just as importantly, these gatherings create a space for connection. Directors from across the state share perspectives, challenges and solutions, strengthening not only their individual co-ops but the cooperative network as a whole.

## Continuous commitment

There's something fitting about this work continuing through the summer months. While students may take a break, co-op leaders and employees are leaning in by asking questions, exchanging ideas and preparing for what's ahead. It's a reminder that learning isn't confined

to a classroom or a calendar. It's a mindset. And that mindset matters.

Because when cooperative teams are well trained and well informed, they're better equipped to serve you. They make smarter decisions, respond more effectively to challenges and help ensure your co-op remains strong for generations to come.

As you enjoy the pace of summer with longer days, family time and a bit of rest, know that behind the scenes your electric cooperative is still doing its homework. And Iowa's electric co-ops invest in education and training because we believe in the power of knowledge to build a brighter future.

After all, in the cooperative world, learning is always in season.

*Katrina Davis is the director of education and training for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A CHARBROIL BISTRO PRO TABLETOP GRILL!

Grill like a pro – even in tight spaces! The Charbroil® Bistro Pro™ tabletop electric grill heats up to 500 degrees F fast, delivering deliciously seared flavors. Its 180-square-inch cooking area makes it ideal for small patios or on-the-go cookouts. Enjoy easy, electric-powered grilling with convenience.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than June 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 \$100 Spring Spruce Up gift card from the April issue was **John Hoffman**, a **Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 18	Board meeting
JULY 3	Office closed for Independence Day
JULY 7	Board election voting packets mailed and online voting begins
JULY 16	Board meeting
AUG. 3	Online voting ends at 4:30 p.m.
AUG. 4	Annual Meeting of Members at 5 p.m.
AUG. 20	Board meeting

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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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## POLITICS: A NECESSARY PART OF THE COOPERATIVE LANDSCAPE

BY KEVIN WHEELER



Politics means different things to different people. Some enjoy following every development, while others prefer to keep

their distance. Regardless of where any of us fall on that spectrum, one thing remains true here at Access Energy Cooperative: politics matters. Whether decisions are being made at the local, state or federal level, the outcomes can directly affect our members, our operations and the future of the cooperative model.

Because of that, we make it a priority to stay informed and engaged. It is essential for your cooperative to understand what is happening in the political arena so we can evaluate potential impacts and ensure that elected officials understand how their decisions could affect the people we serve. Just like many of our members who spend time cultivating gardens, crops or livestock, we are constantly cultivating relationships – only in our case, it's with policymakers on both sides of the aisle.

**Advocating for our members' best interests**

Our goal is simple: protect and advance the best interests of our members. That mission guides every conversation we have and every issue we monitor. We work to ensure that legislation supports safe, reliable, efficient and responsible electric service, and that the cooperative voice is heard clearly and consistently.

We are fortunate to have strong support at the national level as well. Our national association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), works tirelessly in Washington, D.C., representing cooperatives from 48 states. For three years running, NRECA has been

recognized as the "Most Trusted Trade Association," a distinction that reflects the credibility and integrity they bring to the table. When other organizations ask NRECA CEO Jim Matheson how they maintain that level of trust, his answer is straightforward: "We tell the truth."

**Building trust through relationships**

That commitment to honesty and transparency is the same approach we take locally. Cooperative leaders from across the country regularly travel to Washington, D.C., sometimes more than 1,500 strong at the same time, to ensure lawmakers understand the real-world impact of their decisions. These visits help reinforce a message we share with every elected official: our doors are always open, and we hope you will use us as a resource.

The value of these relationships shows up in meaningful ways. At the state level, it's not uncommon for officials to reach out directly, even from the floor of the legislature, to ask questions or seek clarification on issues that affect rural Iowans. That level of trust doesn't happen overnight; it's built through years of open communication, reliability and a shared commitment to serving the public.

**Staying engaged for the future**

Whether you enjoy politics or would rather avoid it, the reality is that it will always be part of the cooperative model. Policies shape the environment in which we operate, and staying engaged ensures that your cooperative can continue to provide safe, reliable and efficient power. We take that responsibility seriously, and we will continue working every day to make sure your interests are represented wherever decisions are being made.

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

# DIVIDENDS ARE TO BE DISTRIBUTED

Each member of Access Energy Cooperative has a dividend account at the cooperative where your dividend allocations accumulate. When the board allocates margins, your portion is added to your dividend account. Notices are then printed on your bill to let you know how much was allocated to your account.

In 2026, the board approved a dividend payment to members in the amount of \$1,087,407. If you were a member of the cooperative during 2006, 2007, 2010 and/or 2025, you may receive a dividend payment.

Dividend checks for those not signed up to receive dividends as bill credits will be available to pick up at the annual meeting on Aug. 4. Any checks not picked up will be mailed after the annual meeting. Checks will be sent to the most current address we have on file. The cooperative will not be printing checks for amounts under \$5. These amounts will be added to next year's refund.



Members also have the option to receive their dividend payment(s) as a bill credit. Members signed up to receive their dividends as bill credits will receive their dividend payments on their July bill.


**To take advantage of this option, please call our billing department or email [billing@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:billing@accessenergycoop.com).**

## 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 April.

- 1,675 miles driven
- 4,276 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 724.6 total kWh for charging
- \$90.60 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 95.70 gallons of gas equivalent
- \$267.00 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 ⚠️

Protect your accounts by enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA) wherever possible. MFA adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second step — like a code sent to your phone or an authentication app — beyond just your password. Even if a scammer steals your login information through phishing or data breaches, MFA can stop them from accessing your account. Choose app-based authentication over text messages when available, as it's more secure. Taking a few minutes to turn on MFA for email, banking and additional online accounts can significantly reduce your risk of identity theft and financial loss.



*Source: [staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org)*

# SHINE THE LIGHT ON LOCAL VOLUNTEERS



**NOMINATE A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER BY JUNE 30**

Three winners will each receive \$3,000 for their chosen charity or nonprofit

The Shine the Light contest is celebrating its sixth year of recognizing volunteers who make a lasting difference in communities across Iowa. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa, the statewide contest highlights individuals whose dedication, compassion and leadership strengthen local nonprofits, charities and community organizations.

Each June, member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are invited to nominate outstanding

local volunteers through the contest website. Again this year, three winners will be selected and each will receive a \$3,000 donation for their chosen charity or nonprofit organization. Nominations are open June 1-30 to volunteers of all ages, and past nominees who did not win may be nominated again. Entries require a short explanation of how the nominee has made a positive impact in the community.

As the Shine the Light contest enters its sixth year, here's a look back at the winners and charities recognized during the past five years.

## 2021



### Suzanne Askelsen | Ballard Education Foundation

Suzanne Askelsen of Cambridge was nominated by her mother, Carol Gilbert, a Midland Power Cooperative member. Suzanne was recognized for her work with the Ballard Education Foundation, serving on the steering committee and as the first president for four years. She helped identify sponsors and lead fundraising efforts while balancing life as a mother of six.

### Marlene Walthart | Emmet County Animal Shelter

Marlene Walthart of Estherville was nominated by Dawn Eveleth, a member of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, for her work with the Emmet County Animal Shelter. Alongside her husband Larry, she has volunteered at the shelter for years and helped establish a nearby can redemption center to raise money for the facility.

### Dr. George North | Wilder Park

George North of Allison was nominated by Deb McWhirter, a Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative member, for his work with Wilder Park. A retired dentist and longtime scout leader, George helped develop Wilder Park to provide affordable outdoor recreation opportunities in Butler County.

### Deb Johnson | Greater Fairfield Area Habitat for Humanity

Deb Johnson of Fairfield was nominated by Kathy Brown, a member-consumer of Access Energy Cooperative. An active volunteer, Deb uses her social work background to serve as a family support liaison for Greater Fairfield Area Habitat for Humanity. She is also known as the "Cookie Lady" for baking treats for student workers during home builds.

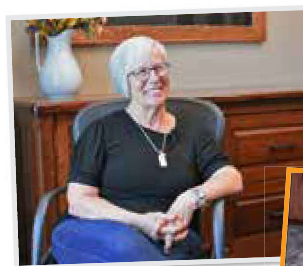
### Sharon Van Beek | Buckets of Joy

Sharon Van Beek of Primghar was nominated by her daughter, Laura Leonard, a member-consumer of North West Rural Electric Cooperative. Sharon has coordinated holiday gifts for children in need for 30 years, continuing a tradition started by her in-laws. Buckets of Joy now distributes up to 250 bags each Christmas filled with clothing, books, snacks and other essentials.

### Nicole Low | Eldora Community Garden

Nicole Low of Eldora was nominated by Midland Power Cooperative member Paul Lawler. Nicole co-founded the Eldora Community Garden to build community and provide fresh produce for people in need. A registered nurse and mother of two, she is passionate about public health and reducing food insecurity.

## 2022



# 2023

## Erica Lindaman | Gift of Giving

Erica Lindaman of Clarion was nominated by members and employees of Prairie Energy Cooperative. A fourth-grade teacher, Erica became involved with Gift of Giving during the pandemic to help provide holiday gifts for children. She now helps coordinate assistance for families needing clothing, food and household items throughout Wright County.



## Betty Thronson | Project Flo

Betty Thronson of New Hampton was nominated by her sister, Shirley Hoffman, a member of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative. Betty and her siblings started Project Flo in 2011 to honor their mother, Florence "Flo" Thronson. Each summer, volunteers repair homes throughout Chickasaw County, with Betty coordinating projects and work teams.

## Heather Weers | Sleep in Heavenly Peace

Heather Weers of Center Junction was nominated by Megan Ruley, a member and employee of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative. Heather founded the Jones County chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace in 2019 and has helped deliver more than 320 beds so children don't have to sleep on the floor.

# 2024



## Judy Hess | Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc.

Judy Hess of Fonda was nominated by Kerry Noethe, a member-consumer of Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association. Judy was recognized for her work with MAGS 4 Fonda, a group focused on improving parks and the local pool. Since starting the organization in 2018, she has led creative fundraising efforts for local projects.

## Doug Pralle | Compassion Flights

Doug Pralle of Hampton was nominated by Madison Alert, an employee of Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative. Doug founded Compassion Flights in 2017 to arrange free air transportation for medical treatment. Inspired by kindness shown to his family during his father's illness, he now works to provide that same support to others.

## Beth Thole | Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion

Beth Thole of Sibley was nominated by Gary and Karen Trei, member-consumers of Osceola Electric Cooperative. As a board member of the McCallum Museum, Beth has helped raise funds and preserve agricultural history through the Osceola County Ag Pavilion, which features a farmhouse, barn and historical artifacts.

## Chuck Bildstein | Chelsey's Dream Foundation

Chuck Bildstein of Anamosa was nominated by Al Reiter of Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative. Chuck founded Chelsey's Dream Foundation in memory of his daughter Chelsey to help families with adoption expenses and emotional support. Since 2014, the organization has helped more than 100 families adopt 141 children.

## Gerry Holtrup | Partners for Patriots

Gerry Holtrup of Hospers was nominated by Molli Griffin, a member-consumer of North West Rural Electric Cooperative. Gerry was recognized for his work with Partners for Patriots, an organization that trains service dogs for disabled veterans. He leads fundraising and outreach efforts and also helps train and place service dogs.

## Aimee Goeman McKnight | Build a Better Belmond

Aimee Goeman of Belmond was nominated by four member-consumers of Prairie Energy Cooperative. Aimee returned to her hometown in 2020 and became a leader in efforts to rebuild Belmond's community swimming pool. Through Build a Better Belmond, she is helping raise funds to restore the pool as a key community gathering place.



# 2025



Visit [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) to review the contest rules and submission guidelines.

Contest entries will be accepted at this website June 1-30.

Scan the QR code to watch videos featuring each of the winners.





## SMOKED BBQ MAC AND CHEESE

- 1 large bag elbow macaroni
- 1 block Velveeta cheese
- 1 stick butter, cubed
- 1 quart milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3 tablespoons barbeque seasoning
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 2-3 cups Cheez-Its, crushed
- cooking spray

Heat smoker to 275 degrees F. Pour dry macaroni into a 9x13-inch baking dish and place Velveeta in the center of the dish. Spread butter cubes around cheese then pour in milk, heavy cream and barbeque seasoning. Spread shredded cheese over the top evenly. Cover and smoke for 2 hours, then stir well. Sprinkle crushed crackers on top and spray lightly with cooking spray. Sprinkle a dash of barbeque seasoning over the crackers, then return to smoker for 25 minutes. *Serves 6-8*

Chloe Palmer • Lovilia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CORN CASSEROLE

- 1 stick butter
- 1 can corn, undrained
- 1 can cream of corn, undrained
- 1 egg, beaten
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 1 8-ounce carton chive chip dip
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- 1 box Jiffy corn bread mix

Melt butter and add both cans of corn, egg, onion, chip dip and cheese. Mix in corn bread mix. Pour into a greased 9x15-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 10*

Karen Caldwell • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## RANCH COLESLAW

- 4 cups cabbage, shredded
- ½ cup Mexican-style corn, drained
- 1 jalapeño pepper, diced
- 3 tablespoons onion, chopped
- ½ cup cheddar cheese
- ¾ cup ranch dressing
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon celery seed
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Mix all ingredients together. *Serves 6*

Amy Behounek • Chelsea  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## MOLASSES GRILLED PORK TENDERLOIN

- ½ cup molasses
- ¼ cup coarse grain Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1 3-pound pork tenderloin

Combine molasses, mustard, vinegar and seasoned salt, adjust salt to taste. You can also use honey Dijon mustard. Place pork tenderloin on grill over medium-hot coals (splitting the tenderloin in half makes it easier to grill and will cook faster). Cover with grill lid and cook until almost done, meat will be a little pink when cooked on the grill. Brush molasses sauce on pork and cover with lid. Cook until the thickest part of the tenderloin reaches an internal temperature of 160 degrees F, turning once and basting with the reserved molasses. You can double the sauce ingredients to make a dipping sauce. Warm the dipping sauce in the microwave before serving. *Serves 8*

Dianne Roeder • Maurice  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## GRILLED STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE KEBABS

- 8 wooden skewers
- 1 loaf shortcake
- 1 1-pound package strawberries
- whipped cream or ice cream

Soak the wooden skewers in water for at least 2 hours to prevent them from burning on the grill. Cut the cake into 2-inch cubes. Sponge cake or angel food cake can also be used. Wash strawberries and remove the hull. Thread alternating strawberries and cake on each wooden skewer. Place kebabs on the grill and cook for 5 minutes, rotating during cooking. They are done when the cake is toasted. Serve with whipped cream or ice cream.

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## BBQ BITES

- 16 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breasts, diced
- 2 tablespoons corn oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sweet barbeque sauce
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup Dijon mustard
- 40 corn chip cups
- sour cream

In a large skillet over high heat, cook chicken in corn oil until done. Add onion and cook 2 minutes more, or until onion is golden brown. Season with salt and pepper. Add barbeque sauce and mustard. Cook until heated through, stirring occasionally. Divide barbeque chicken mixture into the corn chip cups. Add a dollop of sour cream to each cup.

Deb Bartholomew • Ollie  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## CREAMY BLACK BEAN DIP

- 1 can black beans
- 1 can corn
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- 1 cup red pepper, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup green pepper, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup red onion, chopped
- chips

Rinse and drain black beans and corn. In a medium bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise, vinegar, cumin, chili powder, pepper, garlic powder and salt. Add the beans, corn, peppers and onion. Stir and serve with chips. Serves 8-10

Grant DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## CORN SALAD

- 2 cans yellow kernel corn, drained
- $\frac{1}{2}$  red pepper, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  green pepper, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  red onion, chopped
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 5-ounce package chili cheese flavored corn chips

Mix all ingredients except chips. Chill mixture. Stir chips in just before serving. Serves 10-12

Joanna Schaefer • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## BAR-B-Q BEEF BURGERS

- 1 pound ground beef
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup barbeque sauce, more to taste
- 2 teaspoons prepared mustard
- 1 tablespoon sautéed onion
- buns

Mix ingredients except buns together and form into patties. Grill burgers until done. Toast buns on the grill for the last couple of minutes.

Susan Ausborn • Ventura  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

## COMFORT FOOD CLASSICS

THE REWARD:

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

**Deadline is June 30**

We're looking for your **classic comfort food recipes** – think hearty, warm, simple and nostalgic meals – to usher in the cool fall days. Selected submission will appear in our October issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



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

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine  
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Des Moines, IA 50322

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



# COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY AND YOUTH

Access Energy Cooperative employees are very active in our communities and encourage student career development. Recently, employees participated in the Build My Future event in Burlington to support careers in trades. More than 1,100 seventh-graders attended, experiencing all kinds of interactive activities and a little motivation to try something new.

We sincerely thank the employees of Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative for joining us and for providing their substation training unit, which allowed students to experience hands-on safety and career information.

Some of our employees also traveled to Lee County this month to talk with juniors and seniors from four different schools. Students experienced safety training and employees talked about careers in the electric industry.



## BE ALERT TO AVOID LIGHTNING

Did you know lightning can strike even if it's not raining? Prepare before an outdoor event and know how to protect yourself and your family from lightning.

"Positive" lightning bolts come from the upper parts of thunderstorms, striking up to several miles away. If you hear thunder, then lightning is near. There is no safe place outside.

### Follow these safety rules:

1. Immediately move to a safe shelter: A substantial building or an enclosed, metal-topped vehicle with windows up.
2. Stay in a safe shelter at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.
3. Stay off corded phones, computers and other electrical equipment.
4. Avoid plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets.
5. Stay away from windows and doors and stay off porches.
6. If outdoors: Never lie flat on the ground, never shelter under an isolated tree and never use a cliff or rocky overhang for shelter. Immediately get out and away from ponds, lakes and other bodies of water. Stay away from objects that conduct electricity (e.g., barbed wire fences, power lines, windmills, etc.).

## BUSTING SOME COMMON LIGHTNING MYTHS

- ⚡ Benjamin Franklin's kite was **NEVER** struck by lightning!
- ⚡ Lightning does not always strike the tallest object, only the tallest object in a particular area.
- ⚡ Lightning can strike **ANY** object in its path, not just metal.

# ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE 2026 SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

Access Energy Cooperative held its first-annual Scholarship Award Ceremony, where the 2026 scholarship recipients were recognized and presented with a certificate. Each award recipient will receive a \$1,500 scholarship.

Annually, Access Energy Cooperative awards 12 scholarships of \$1,500 each – four in each of its three districts. The parents or guardians of the applicant must be a member of the co-op. Winners are chosen based on their academics, achievements, community involvement and a submitted application with a few electric industry-related questions.



## IN DISTRICT 1



**Clae Cass** is the son of Kirby and Hayley Cass from Fairfield and plans to attend Southeastern Community College to study business.



**Dain Burkhart** is the son of Kelly and Amy Burkhart from Fairfield and will be attending the University of Iowa to major in electrical engineering.



**Bailey Headley** is the daughter of Craig and Devon Headley from Birmingham and will be pursuing a career in education at Indian Hills Community College.



**Breanna Walton** is the daughter of Justin and Tina Walton from Birmingham and plans to pursue a career as an account specialist.



**In memory of an applicant chosen as a 2026 scholarship winner, a \$500 donation was made to the Emmelia Miller Memorial.**

## IN DISTRICT 2



**Addison Clark** is the daughter of John and Bree Clark from Mount Pleasant and plans to major in biology and psychology at Simpson College followed by medical school to become a pediatric oncologist.



**Rylie Copeman** is the daughter of Jaime Yoder from Mount Pleasant and will be attending the University of South Florida to pursue a career in nursing.



**Morgan Meyer** is the daughter of Tim and Michelle Meyer from Wayland and will be attending the University of Iowa on the pre-medicine track, majoring in biology with a minor in psychology and later applying to medical school to pursue a career as a family physician or a physician's assistant.



**Myah Starr** is the daughter of Tony and Jennifer Starr from Mount Pleasant and will be pursuing a career in radiation sciences at the University of Iowa.

## IN DISTRICT 3



**Addison Dravis** is the daughter of Randy and Sarah Dravis from Burlington and plans to obtain a bachelor's degree in pre-law at Western Illinois University followed by law school at the University of Iowa.



**Zoe Long** is the daughter of Luann Martin from Danville and will be attending Southeastern Community College to study secondary education to become a special education teacher.



**Audrey Sturdivant** is the daughter of Darren and Jamie Sturdivant from Farmington and will be attending Iowa State University to study at the College of Health and Human Sciences majoring in elementary education, while working toward endorsements in mathematics and reading.



**Kamryn Wolkenhauer** is the son of Jim Drain from Danville and plans to attend Georgia Institute of Technology to obtain a bachelor of science in civil engineering.

# THE MODERN SUBSTATION: KEEPING COMMUNITIES POWERED

BY JEFFREY GROENEWOLD

Electric substations sit at the center of power grids and are essential to keeping the lights on in our communities. You've seen them – those tall fenced-in areas filled with metal structures, wires and heavy equipment. They may not look flashy, but they're one of the most important behind-the-scenes components of the grid.

Substations take power from high-voltage transmission lines and convert it to the lower voltages that get distributed on the last-mile power lines you see every day. These lines provide power to your home, farm or business. Every light switch you flip, every well pump you operate and every device you charge depend on a substation doing its job without interruption. These facilities work quietly in the background, yet they shape the comforts of daily life. Iowa's electric cooperatives work 24/7 to maintain and improve these substations.

Substations began as simple switching points that handled basic voltage changes. Early designs used bulky equipment and manual controls. As communities grew, electric demand on the grid grew with them.

## Advanced technology and tools

Today's substations utilize advanced sensors, automated controls and digital communication systems, allowing cooperatives to better manage the grid. These tools help co-ops respond faster to outages, monitor equipment health and manage energy with more precision.

A modern substation protects your community from disruption. It isolates problems, keeps dangerous faults from spreading and supports important line equipment across long distances. When a substation faces a major issue, such as from



Substations serve as the quiet backbone of the electric system.



Electric cooperatives work 24/7 to maintain and improve substations.

a storm or wildlife contact, the impact is immediate. Communities lose power and Wi-Fi, businesses stall, farms lose time-sensitive operations and emergency service communications can face added strain. These events remind us how central substations are to modern life.

## Supporting community growth, changing energy needs

Communities add new homes, businesses, irrigation systems and commercial buildings every year. Each addition increases the load on the grid. That's why co-ops build new substations and upgrade older ones to keep pace with growth, technology changes and safety needs.

Modern substation designs use equipment that requires less strenuous maintenance while improving system protection. Smart-enabled protection devices reduce the time needed to identify and isolate faults. These advanced monitoring tools give co-ops better visibility into real-time grid conditions. For the surrounding community, these investments lead to stronger service and reliability. You experience fewer outages. Your farm or business gains resiliency. Your home appliances run on steadier voltage.

Modern substations also help cooperatives manage costs. Instead of building miles of new line, a well-placed substation can support growing neighborhoods or rural industries with less construction and lower long-term investment.

Substations also support the changing energy landscape. Renewable energy systems, electric vehicles and electrified commercial and industrial operations need modern control points. Modern substations allow co-ops to integrate these resources without sacrificing reliability. They help manage energy across widespread areas and keep the grid balanced during peak conditions.

Substations serve as the quiet backbone of the electric system. When they operate well, communities thrive. When they falter, everything from daily chores to essential services feel the impact.

Electric cooperatives will continue to invest in these facilities to support safe, reliable and affordable service for every member in every community we serve.

*Jeffrey Groenewold writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# INFORMATION WE COLLECT

Access Energy Cooperative will receive and retain information about member consumers/ customers through applications or other forms; transactions with us, our affiliates, or others; from a consumer-reporting agency; and advanced metering infrastructure.

Access Energy Cooperative will limit the use and collection of nonpublic personal information to that which is necessary to maintain and administer financial services, beneficial in designing, operating and maintaining the Cooperative's electric system to offer affordable and reliable electric service.

This information will not be shared with third parties unless: the information is provided to help complete a member-consumer/ customer-initiated transaction; the member-consumer/customer has requested it; the disclosure is required by law, warrant, or court order; or the disclosure is required by banking regulation.

"Third Party" is defined as any person or entity other than: employees of the Cooperative; the Cooperative's designated legal counsel; or any entity contractually bound to the Cooperative to provide billing or collection services for electric cooperative accounts. When member-consumer/customer information is provided to any third parties, that third party must be bound by appropriate confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations.

Access Energy Cooperative limits employee access to member consumer/customer information to those with a business reason for knowing such information. All employees are educated on the importance of confidentiality and member-consumer/customer privacy. Any employee that violates the privacy of our member-consumers/ customers will be subject to

appropriate disciplinary measures and possible termination.

Appropriate physical, electronic, and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure information are put in place to prevent unauthorized access, maintain data accuracy, and to ensure the correct use of information.

### Right to be informed

Information regarding operational aspects of the Cooperative's advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) and related programs will be made available to members as requested.

Member-consumers will be better informed about their electricity consumption.

Member-consumers will have access to information that helps explain available billing rate structures and options, outage information, peak demand, and the impact of energy consumption habits with the AMI.

The purpose of the collection, use, retention, and sharing of energy consumption data shall be made known to the member-consumers in a clear and transparent manner.

Member-consumers will be informed of the available choices and consent options regarding the collection, use, and disclosure of energy consumption data.

Requests to correct inaccurate information will be responded to in a timely manner.

Member-consumers who wish to file a privacy violation complaint have the right to submit the same to the Cooperative for resolution. If not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the Cooperative staff, the same may be submitted to the Cooperative's Board of Directors for a resolution. If the issue is still not resolved to the member-consumer's satisfaction, the member-consumer may pursue alternative remedies.



## REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Nominating Committee of Access Energy Cooperative, duly appointed by the Board of Directors, hereby nominates the following members of the Cooperative for the office of Director, all to be elected at the Annual Meeting to be held August 4, 2026.

### THREE-YEAR TERM

(Three to be elected)

- District No. I** David Hollingsworth  
Denise Munoz
- District No. II** Stephen Bain  
Mitch Yaley
- District No. III** Michael Holtkamp  
Brad Schulte

DATED at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, this 3rd day of March, 2026 and posted on the 17th day of April, 2026, in the office of the above-named Cooperative.

Chairman Randy White

Secretary Barb Schau



# LOW- TO NO-COST WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Saving energy doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. You don't need to spend thousands of dollars or get the newest technology to use less energy. There are several steps to lower energy use, even on a tight budget.

Here are some low- and no-cost ways to save energy around your home.

## Change thermostat settings.

Adjusting the thermostat is an easy way to save. Nudge the thermostat a few degrees closer to the outside temperature, especially on extreme weather days. On the hottest and coldest days, your heating and cooling equipment must work much harder and use more energy to maintain the same temperature. Add an extra layer of clothing or cozy slippers in winter, and lighter layers in summer.

**Address water leaks.** Fix any hot water leaks or dripping faucets. Those tiny drips can add up to big energy waste, not to mention water waste. If you need to hire a pro to fix it, turn the shutoff valve under the sink to stop the leak until you can get it fixed.

**Choose cold water.** Wash clothes in cold water to avoid using the energy required to heat it. Washing on hot or warm settings can really add up, especially if you have a top-load or older washing machine that uses more water.

## Adjust water heater settings.

Adjusting the temperature on your water heater can save energy and money, too. Depending on the water heater, this is either an easy adjustment or something a little more complicated that requires removing access panels. If you don't know how, consult a professional.

**Fill air leaks.** Air sealing is a do-it-yourself, beginner-friendly project that improves comfort and reduces energy waste. For around \$20 and a couple of hours of time, you can fill



Weatherstripping helps seal drafts around exterior doors, which saves energy and improves comfort in your home.



Spray foam seals gaps around pipes to prevent cold air from traveling up through those spaces, causing drafts and wasting energy.



Do-it-yourself, beginner-friendly projects, such as weatherstripping around doors, help lower energy use at home.

gaps, cracks and holes to prevent air from leaking in and out of the home. From the inside of the home, seal the trim around windows and exterior doors with caulk for about \$4 per tube. Buy paintable caulk so you can touch it up when it dries, if needed.

A can of spray foam is about \$5 and seals gaps around plumbing lines. It's great for sealing gaps around pipes under sinks and in the crawlspace or basement. Cold air can travel up through those spaces, causing drafts and wasting energy. Air-sealing these areas earns bonus points for preventing insects and rodents from using these gaps to enter your home.

Spray foam is messy and nearly impossible to remove from whatever it touches, so wear disposable gloves and clothes you don't mind getting dirty, and use drop cloths to protect finished floors. Be careful if you're

working with spray foam overhead. If it gets in your hair, it's not coming out with anything less than a haircut. Move any items and clean surfaces of dust and debris in areas you intend to seal before cracking open a can. Put the can in a cardboard box to carry throughout the house so you don't leave a trail of spray foam.

**Seal exterior doors.** For \$10 to \$15, you can buy weatherstripping to improve the seal on exterior doors. If you can see light around doors or feel a draft between the door and the door jamb when the door is closed, weatherstripping will help.

Try these easy, low- and no-cost improvements to reduce energy waste and improve comfort in your home.

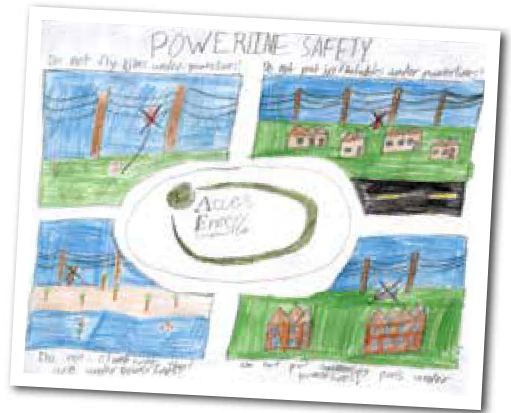
*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

# WINNERS OF THE 2026 ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SAFETY POSTER CONTEST ANNOUNCED

Thank you to all applicants who submitted a poster in the 2026 Access Energy Cooperative Safety Poster Contest! The 14 chosen artists will receive \$100 for their entries, and their posters will appear in the 2027 Access Energy Cooperative Safety Calendar. We will also be featuring the winning posters in the upcoming editions of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Featured on the front cover of the calendar will be this month's featured poster titled "Electrical Safety" submitted by Clayton Thein.

**2026 POSTER CONTEST COVER WINNER!**



MONTH TO BE FEATURED	ARTIST NAME	CITY	PHOTO TITLE	AGE
<b>FRONT</b>	Clayton Thein	New London	Electrical Safety	10
December 2026	Aiden Mullen	Mount Pleasant	Line Safety	12
<b>2027</b>				
January	Keziah Bohman	Mount Pleasant	Electrical Safety	15
February	Bryah Hagerman	Mount Pleasant	A careless touch can cost too much!	14
March	Rhonda Wellik	Mount Pleasant	Keep electrical cords out of pets' reach.	Adult
April	Rhett Pieper	Wever	If you see a fallen power line, leave it be.	12
May	Allie Hammes	Libertyville	General electrical safety	15
June	Hayden Fey	New London	Pools should be put up away from power lines.	10
July	Cindy Searcy	Fairfield	Be aware of your surroundings!	Adult
August	Case Buch	Batavia	Electricity Safety	13
September	Abbie Hammes	Libertyville	Electric pole safety	13
October	Zoe Kasi	New London	The Outlet Upset	12
November	Andrew Mullen	Mount Pleasant	Stay safe with these reasons!	9
December	Ainsley Hudson	Mount Pleasant	Don't leave your Christmas light unattended.	11

## COOPERATIVE ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS AVAILABLE ONLINE

Copies of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Access Energy Cooperative are available to anyone who is interested, either members of the cooperative or the public, in the lobby of our office in Mount Pleasant. They are also available at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) under the "Your Cooperative" tab. You can also call our office at 866-242-4232 to request a copy.



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives

June 2026

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



## “ THE COOPERATIVE ADVANTAGE ”

We do more than keep the lights on.  
We're here to keep our community strong because every member matters.



*For generations, we've powered the growth of our community. And today our cooperative is stronger than ever.*

*Keeping you connected to what matters most.*



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives