

● AUGUST 2026

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Win \$100 in the 2027
photo contest**

**Why vegetation
management matters**

Cool and crisp recipes

Local teen participates in national Youth Tour ► See Page 10

CONTENTS



VOLUME 79 • ISSUE 8

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

A grateful farewell:
Reflections on Youth Tour

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Westinghouse
pressure washer

5

SAFETY MATTERS

Gas safety around
electrical equipment

14

IN THE COMMUNITY

Co-ops participate in
Guatemala service project

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn
Lorelai O'Hara

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS**
Erin Campbell

**IAEC ADMINISTRATIVE
SPECIALIST**
Cherie Moen

**IAEC EXECUTIVE
VICE PRESIDENT**
Leslie Kaufman

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Jim Miller, District 5 – President
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President
Tony Lem, District 2 – Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Keleher, District 3 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Travis Harris, District 1
Steve Inskeep, District 4
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative –
NRECA Representative
Terry Sullivan, Corridor Energy Cooperative –
Managers' Representative

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

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

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

© Copyright 2026, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Danielle Nasers, Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

A GRATEFUL FAREWELL: REFLECTIONS ON YOUTH TOUR

BY SHELLY YORK



As I look back on this year's Youth Tour, I do so with a grateful heart. This summer marked my 15th Youth Tour, and also my last, as I prepare to retire on Jan. 1, 2027.

While there is a natural sense of closing a chapter, I find myself returning often to a simple thought: Don't be sad that it's over; be glad it happened.

A journey worth celebrating

Since 2010, I have had the privilege of witnessing the growth, curiosity and leadership of Iowa's student delegates. Each year has brought new faces, fresh perspectives, unforgettable moments and tons of laughter. From exploring our nation's history to building lifelong friendships, these experiences have not only shaped the students but have deeply impacted me as well.

Youth Tour has a proud legacy in Iowa, dating back to 1958. For nearly seven decades, electric cooperatives across the state have invested in students by providing them with opportunities to see our nation's capital, better understand civic engagement and develop as leaders in their own right. No doubt this tradition will continue, and I am confident that an even brighter future lies ahead for the program and all who take part in it.

Thankful for the people who make it possible

None of this would be possible without the dedicated chaperones who have shared this journey with me over the years. Their commitment, encouragement and tireless energy have made each trip the best it can be. They have guided, supported and inspired students every step of the way, and I am thankful that I can now call each of them a friend.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to the electric cooperatives that believe in and support this program. Your investment in the next generation is powerful. By providing opportunities like Youth Tour, you are not only enriching individual lives but strengthening the future of our state.

As I step away from this role, I carry with me a collection of great memories, meaningful connections and immense

pride in what Youth Tour represents. While this chapter is ending for me, the impact will continue through each student delegate, each story and each future leader inspired by their Youth Tour experience.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this remarkable journey.

Shelly York is the director of administration and student programs for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.



EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A WESTINGHOUSE PRESSURE WASHER

Tackle the toughest grime with the Westinghouse ePX3100 Electric Pressure Washer designed for an easy and convenient cleaning experience. Delivering 2300 max PSI of pressure (at initial discharge) with up to 1.76 GPM of water flow (without nozzle at minimum pressure), this electric pressure washer has the muscle to scrub away mildew, grease, oil, tar, mud, rust and more from all household surfaces with pure scouring force.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Aug. 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 Charbroil® electric grill from the June issue was **Max McCoy**, a **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY AUG. 31!

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG. 4	2026 Access Energy Cooperative Annual Meeting of Members
AUG. 20	Board meeting
SEPT. 7	Office closed for Labor Day
SEPT. 17	Board meeting

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.

Office: Access Energy Cooperative
1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641
Phone: 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232
Fax: 319-385-6873
Website: www.accessenergycoop.com
Facebook: facebook.com/AccessEnergyCoop
Email: contactus@accessenergycoop.com
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577

Payments can be placed in dropbox by flag pole in front of office. Visa, MasterCard and Discover accepted.
Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call): 8-1-1

General Manager/CEO: Kevin Wheeler

Editor: Kimberly Davis

Officers and Directors:

Marvin Larson, District 1, President
mlarson@accessenergycoop.com

David Hollingsworth, District 1, Vice President
dhollingsworth@accessenergycoop.com

Michael Holtkamp, District 3, Secretary
maholtkamp@accessenergycoop.com

William Benjamin, District 3, Treasurer
wbenjamin@accessenergycoop.com

Jerry Barker, District 2, Director
jbarker@accessenergycoop.com

Robert Breazeale, District 2, Director
rbreazeale@accessenergycoop.com

Marvin Newton, District 3, Director
mnewton@accessenergycoop.com

Virgil Symmonds, District 1, Director
vsymmonds@accessenergycoop.com

Larry White, District 2, Director
lwhite@accessenergycoop.com

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

WHY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT MATTERS

BY KEVIN WHEELER



There's something timeless about trees. They ground us, remind us of where we've been, and they stretch toward what's ahead. Here in our community, we take pride in the natural beauty that surrounds us. At the same time, we share another responsibility – the responsibility to keep the lights on, to power our homes and businesses, to make sure that when you flip a switch, the energy you depend on is there.

That's why Access Energy Cooperative works every day to strike a careful balance between preserving the beauty we cherish and delivering the reliable electricity you expect.

One of the most important ways we do that is through regular tree trimming.

Keeping lines clear of overgrown vegetation plays a major role in preventing power outages. Severe weather like strong winds, heavy ice or sudden storms can bring down branches and, with them, power lines and poles. Nearly half of all power outages can be traced back to trees and vegetation coming into contact with electrical infrastructure.

That's why you may notice crews from Access Energy Cooperative or our trusted contractors working in neighborhoods throughout the year. Our crews are highly trained and certified, following the latest industry standards to ensure the job is done safely and effectively. Their work might seem routine, but it's anything but – it's a proactive step that helps prevent problems before they start.

And it's not just good practice – it's required. Electric utilities across the country are obligated to manage vegetation near power lines. Scheduled trimming helps remove dead or

weakened limbs and keeps fast-growing trees from becoming hazards.

There's another reason this work matters: safety.

Electricity is a powerful force, and when trees grow too close to power lines, that power can become dangerous. Branches that touch lines – or even come close – can carry electrical current. Children climbing trees in their own yards may not realize the risk. During storms, fallen trees can create hazardous conditions not only for families but also for our lineworkers working to restore service.

There's also a financial reality we can't ignore. Preventative maintenance – like tree trimming – is far more cost-effective than repairing widespread damage after an outage. Left unchecked, overgrown vegetation can lead to more frequent disruptions and higher costs for everyone. A thoughtful, strategic vegetation management program helps keep those costs down for our members.

You can help, too. When planting new trees, consider their mature height and distance from nearby power lines. Trees that grow up to 40 feet should be planted at least 25 feet away from overhead lines. Larger trees – those that exceed 40 feet – should be planted at least 50 feet away. If you're landscaping near pad-mounted transformers, keep shrubs at least 10 feet from the front and 4 feet from the sides to allow safe access.

At the end of the day, we all want the same thing: a community that's safe, resilient and beautiful. At Access Energy Cooperative, we're proud to be part of that effort. Our roots run deep here, just like the trees we work to care for.

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

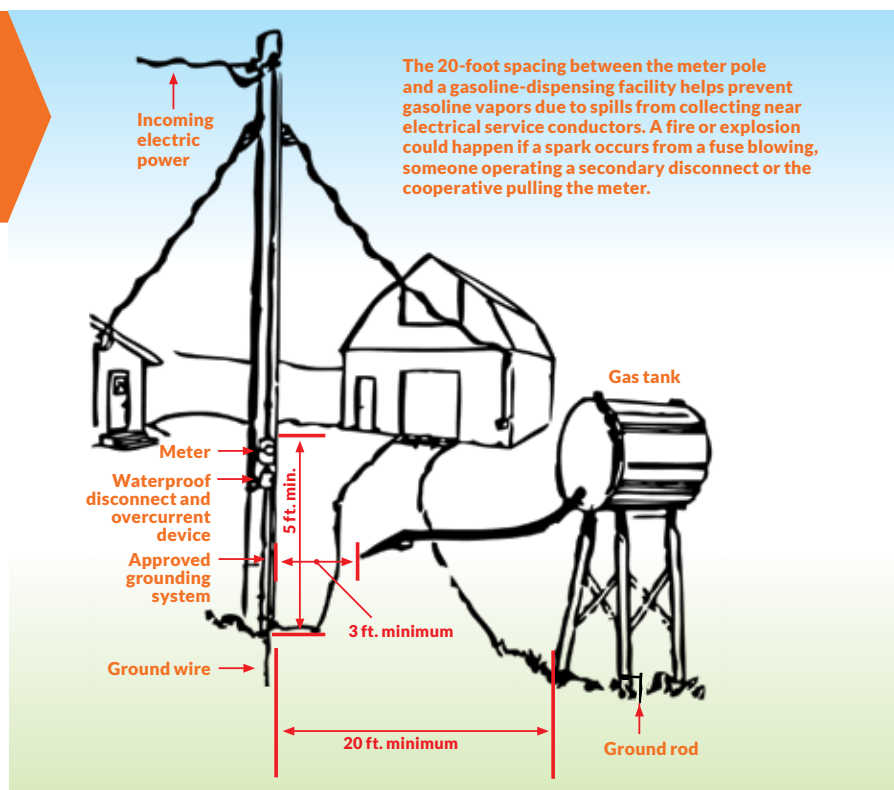
PRACTICE SAFETY WITH GASOLINE DISPENSING FACILITIES NEAR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

One of the most common safety violations found near electrical lines is the location of the gasoline dispensing facilities in relation to the meter pole or buildings.

The National Electrical Code (NEC) shows the requirements farm wiring systems should follow. One section of the wiring code covers the requirements for electrical equipment and wiring for all voltages in locations where fire or explosion hazards may exist due to flammable gases or vapors, flammable liquids, etc.

The National Electric Safety Code (NESC) outlines the standards that utilities follow. Because of the hazards that exist in the vicinity of gasoline dispensing facilities, and especially for Access Energy Cooperative personnel working with electricity, the NESC suggests that electric utilities not permit the installation of meter poles or service entrances within 20 feet of a gasoline dispensing barrel or tank, or within 3 feet of any point that could be reached by a gasoline dispensing nozzle. In addition, it is recommended that existing installations with less than required clearances be modified to provide the required clearances.

It is costly for Access Energy Cooperative to change the location



of existing meter poles. Therefore, we ask every member to check to make sure their gasoline dispensing facilities are located at least 20 feet from the meter pole. The end of the dispensing nozzle should not be within 3 feet of the meter pole.

If Access Energy Cooperative discovers a violation of this requirement near our equipment, we have no choice but

to disconnect the electric service at the site until the hazard is corrected.

In addition to these location requirements, please make sure your gasoline dispensing facilities are electrically bonded to the electrical ground of the farm wiring system. Install a ground rod at your gasoline tank and connect the tank to the ground rod and the farm wiring ground.



ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE IS A PROUD SPONSOR OF DRIVE A TRACTOR AT MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION

Many people who visit the Midwest Old Threshers Reunion in Mount Pleasant over Labor Day weekend have never experienced life on a farm. What was once a common way of life is now only a memory to many of the older visitors.

Access Energy Cooperative has been a proud sponsor of the Drive A Tractor event since making its debut at the 2001 Reunion. It has become a very popular event, where visitors of all ages can feel what it is like behind the wheel of a tractor.

The interactive exhibit features antique tractors that have been modified with a kill switch and low-throttle speed and gears. The safety person riding with each visitor can easily reach the kill switch, master clutch and handbrake, making it a fun and safe experience.

YOUTH LEADERS VISIT NATION'S CAPITAL

Search for "Iowa Youth Tour" on Facebook or Instagram to see the group's recent adventures from 2026.

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN



"Going to Washington, D.C., was truly the best experience of my life! I wouldn't change it one bit, except maybe making it longer. I gained so many new friendships that will last a lifetime! Thank you, Guthrie County REC, for believing in me!"

Meranda Gruber
Guthrie County REC

"The electric cooperative Youth Tour 2026 to Washington, D.C., was unforgettable, celebrating our nation's 250th surrounded by towering monuments, heartfelt patriotism, incredible new friends and memories I'll carry forever. I've never been prouder to be an American."

Alena Wilhelm
Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative



Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have been sending high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since 1958! This year, 35 high school students and six chaperones representing Iowa's electric cooperatives journeyed to the nation's capital for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2026 National Electric Youth Tour.

On the weeklong tour, students learned about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government and walked away with a greater understanding of their roles as American citizens. They participated in National Youth Day, visited with their elected legislators and explored the sights around the nation's capital.

Earlier in the year, students applied for the trip through their local electric cooperatives. The Iowa students joined students from cooperatives around the country for the national Youth Tour.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

2027 Youth Tour
June 16-22
www.iowayouthtour.com



2026 PARTICIPANTS

Isla Avery – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
Kennedy Backer – Butler County REC
Thomas Beaver – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Sophie Berends – Grundy County REC
Carson Boswell – Southwest Iowa REC
Julianne Brown – T.I.P. REC
Lainey Cox – Harrison County REC
Garrett Elgin – Heartland Power Cooperative
Mason Ellington – Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
Ben Gelner – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Jenna Grovert – East-Central Iowa REC
Nora Grovert – East-Central Iowa REC
Meranda Gruber – Guthrie County REC
Kaylor Johnson – Consumers Energy
Liv Jones – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Cassie Kakacek – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Bryce Kelly – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Morgan Knapp – Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative
Nat Macias – Lyon REC
Michidel Mercado – Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Gavin Merideth – Prairie Energy Cooperative
Maddie Morey – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Elijah Oetken – North West REC
Jennifer Resch – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Wyatt Schechinger – Nishnabotna Valley REC
Declan Spencer – Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Assoc.
Linz Striegel – Access Energy Cooperative
Brenna Thronsdon – MiEnergy Cooperative
Jaxon Tribolet – United Electric Cooperative
Lucy Vonnahme – Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Alyssa Welbig – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Kirah Whitney – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
Alena Wilhelm – Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative
Grace Wolterman – Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative
Emersyn Zehner – Midland Power Cooperative



SOME OF THE PLACES STUDENTS VISITED DURING THIS YEAR'S YOUTH TOUR:

- Air Force Memorial
- Albert Einstein Memorial
- American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Ben's Chili Bowl
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- Iwo Jima Memorial and Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- National Archives
- Pentagon 911 Memorial
- Renwick Gallery
- Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center
- The National Mall
- The People's House
- Thomas Jefferson Memorial
- U.S. Army Museum
- U.S. Capitol
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- White House
- World War II Memorial



COOL & CRISP
NO-COOK
Summer
FAVORITES

FRUIT SALAD FOR A CROWD

- 1 ripe pineapple
- 1 ripe cantaloupe
- 4 ripe mangoes
- 2 pounds fresh strawberries
- 4 cups seedless green grapes
- 1½ cups fresh blueberries
- 3-5 cups powdered sugar

Cut pineapple and cantaloupe into bite-size pieces. Peel mango with potato peeler and cut into pieces. Cut strawberries into pieces. Add all fruit to a large bowl and add powdered sugar. Stir to form juice. Adjust sugar to taste.
Serves 20

Duane Musser • Parnell
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

DILL PICKLE PASTA SALAD

- 1 16-ounce box rotini pasta
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup sour cream
- ⅓ cup dill pickle juice
- 2 tablespoons dried dill
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups baby dill pickles, chopped
- 1 8-ounce block Colby Jack cheese, cubed
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped

Cook pasta according to package directions, drain water. In a large bowl, combine mayonnaise, sour cream, dill pickle juice (from the pickle jar), dried dill, salt and pepper. Pour dressing over pasta and stir. Add pickles, cheese and onions. Serve immediately or chill for 1-2 hours in the refrigerator. *Serves 12*

Andrea Youngblut • New Hampton
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB LEMONADE

- 4 cups fresh rhubarb, chopped
- 4 cups water, divided
- ¾-1 cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup fresh lemon juice, 4-5 lemons
- ice cubes, for serving

In a saucepan, combine rhubarb, 2 cups water and sugar. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes until rhubarb softens and releases its color. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing gently to extract the liquid. Discard solids and allow the syrup to cool. In a large pitcher, combine the cooled rhubarb syrup, fresh lemon juice and 2 cups cold water. Stir well and taste. Adjust sweetness or dilution by adding more sugar or water as needed. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving with ice.
Serves 6

Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

SUPER SALAD

- 1 pound macaroni
- 1 large green pepper, chopped
- 4 carrots, shredded
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup vinegar
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Cook macaroni, then drain and cool. Add remaining ingredients and stir. *Serves 15-20*

Norma Jean Gamble • St. Charles
Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

CRISP TUNA-CABBAGE SALAD

- 1 5-ounce can tuna, drained
- 2 cups green or red cabbage, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Miracle Whip salad dressing
- 3 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- onion, finely chopped, to taste, optional
- garden-fresh tomato slices, optional

Mix tuna and cabbage thoroughly. Mix mayonnaise, Miracle Whip and yogurt thoroughly. Combine the two mixtures. Add salt and pepper. Add onion, if desired. Can be served on slices of tomatoes. *Serves 2*

Elaine Knoblock • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

COLESLAW — FRESH OR FROZEN

- 6 cups cabbage, shredded
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 ribs celery, chopped
- 1 small green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup white vinegar
- ½ cup water
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 1 teaspoon mustard seed

Sprinkle salt over cabbage and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour, then drain. Add celery and bell pepper to cabbage. Refrigerate while mixing the dressing. In a saucepan, put vinegar, water, sugar and seeds. Bring to boil and then boil for only 1 minute. Remove from heat and let cool for 30 minutes before pouring over cabbage mix. Divide into 12 serving containers to serve fresh, or in freezer bags to freeze. Keeps 2 weeks in refrigerator. If frozen, remove coleslaw for 2 hours before serving. *Serves 12*

Tom and Sharon Sager • Seymour
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

GREEK SUMMER SALAD

- 4-5 potatoes
- 6 medium tomatoes
- 2 cucumbers
- 1 large onion
- 1 green pepper, optional
- ¼ cup salad oil
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- salt, to taste

Boil potatoes, then cool until cold. Dice all vegetables and mix in large bowl. Add oil, vinegar and salt, mix well. Adjust the amount of vinegar, depending on how tangy you like it. *Serves 6-8*

Matt Henry • Sumner
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

SUPER EASY CRISP RUTABAGA PICKLES

- 1 rutabaga
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 4 teaspoons salt
- jalapeño or dried chili pepper, optional

Wash rutabaga well, remove top and bottom and peel. Cut into four equal pieces, then slice into ¼-inch-thick pieces. Put rutabaga and remaining ingredients into a food bag. Shake to mix. Place in refrigerator to soak for 1-2 days, occasionally turning the bag upside down. Celery, turnips and radish would also be delicious. *Serves 4*

Erina Westphal • Guthrie Center
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CLASSIC DELI WRAP SPREAD

- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup honey
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 8-inch tortillas
- Toppings: thinly sliced deli meat, shredded cheese, lettuce, assorted vegetables

Mix mustard, honey and cream cheese. Spread over tortillas and layer with preferred toppings. Roll up tortillas and slice in half. Secure with colored toothpicks.

Steph Messner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

CHRISTMAS CANDY & COOKIES

THE REWARD:
\$25 BILL CREDIT FOR
EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Aug. 31

The holiday season is for baking, sharing and spreading cheer! Send us your favorite **Christmas candy and cookie recipes** for a chance to be featured in our December issue. 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



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



YOUTH TOUR: LOCAL TEEN PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

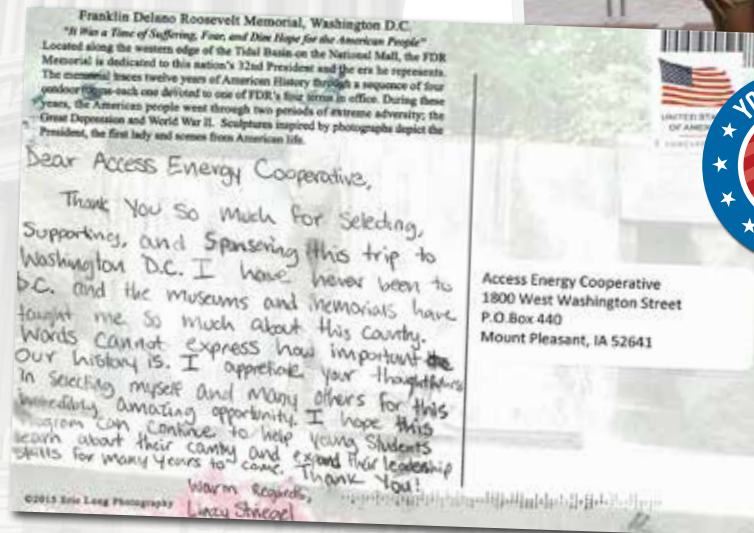
Lynzy Striegel of Mount Pleasant recently participated in the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative. She joined 34 other student delegates from Iowa for the trip in June.

For more than six decades, Access Energy Cooperative has sponsored high school students for Youth Tour, a leadership development program that helps young people discover their voice, build confidence and expand their understanding of civic engagement. While in Washington, D.C., students met with elected officials, explored historic landmarks and even operated their own student-led snack cooperative, gaining hands-on experience in teamwork, responsibility and leadership.

In addition to touring the nation's capital, 2,100 students from across the country gathered for National Youth Day, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, where they heard from inspiring speakers and public figures. This year's program featured Mike

Schlappi, a four-time paralympic medalist and two-time world wheelchair basketball champion, who shared a powerful message about perseverance and leadership: "Just because you can't stand up doesn't mean you can't stand out."

For information about how your high school sophomore or junior can apply for Access Energy Cooperative's 2027 Youth Tour program, [visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) under the COMMUNITY tab.



GETTING STARTED WITH SMARTHUB IS EASY

Don't have a SmartHub account? Create one today. Follow these simple steps:

1. Look up your account number
2. Go to our website: accessenergycoop.com
3. Click "Access Account Online" in the banner at the top
4. Find "Don't have an account? Register now" and click the link to enroll



accessenergycoop.com
319-385-1577 | 866-242-4232
1800 West Washington Street
PO Box 440
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641

SmartHub on the GO!

The app is also available from the Apple App Store and Google Play. Simply use the camera on your smart device to scan the QR code below or search for SmartHub (by National Information Solutions Cooperative).



DIVIDEND CHECKS ARE COMING

As an Access Energy Cooperative member, you own the cooperative. Unlike other electric utilities, we exist to make sure your needs are met – not to make a profit. We work hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. We also strive to earn your trust and excel at providing you with reliable service.

As a member-owner, you share in the margins earned in the form of dividend checks. Dividend payments to members for 2026 are being mailed this month to members who didn't pick up their check at the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 4.

Members also have the option to receive dividend payments as a bill credit. Contact our office if you are interested in setting this up for future dividend payments. Accounts with payments of less than \$5 will continue to accumulate and will be paid in the year they reach or exceed \$5.



If you would like to know more information about dividends, visit www.accessenergycoop.com.

2027 ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE PHOTO CONTEST

Show off your creativity and share your best shots with us! Participate in our annual photo contest for a chance to showcase your talent and win up to \$100. Whether it's capturing breathtaking landscapes, memorable moments or community spirit, we want to see your unique perspective of southeast Iowa.



We will choose 13 photos to appear in the annual Access Energy Cooperative 2028 calendar. Each winning artist will receive \$75 plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.

CONTEST DETAILS

Complete details and rules can be found on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com/photo or use the QR code.



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS ⚠️

One of the best ways to protect yourself from online scams is by using strong passwords. While many people focus on complexity – adding symbols, numbers and capital letters – password length is equally important. A longer password or passphrase is generally harder for cybercriminals to crack than a short, complex one. Consider creating a memorable phrase made up of several unrelated words, and avoid using personal information like birthdays or pet names. Use a unique password for each account and enable multi-factor authentication when possible. Taking these simple steps can help keep your personal information and online accounts secure.

Source: *Utilities United Against Scams*



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 June.

- 1,707 miles driven
- 5,299 total minutes charge time with a Level 2 charger
- 706.7 total kWh for charging
- \$88.30 total cost of electricity at 12.5 cents per kWh
- 97.5 gallons of gas equivalent
- \$400.90 total cost of gas equivalent at \$4.11 per gallon

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



UNDERSTANDING NERC, THE WATCHDOG FOR A RELIABLE ELECTRIC GRID

BY CATHY CASH

The country's electric grid, with its hundreds of thousands of miles of high-voltage power lines, is often described as a bowl of spaghetti. Yet 99.9% of the time, when you flick a switch, the lights come on.

So, who is the bulk power system's chief detangler?

That would be the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the official watchdog of the North American bulk power system. The international nonprofit, known as NERC, sets mandatory reliability standards for all users, owners and operators of the electric transmission grid.

Monitoring the grid

To maintain reliability, NERC oversees and evaluates grid conditions with support from six regional reliability organizations that serve as its on-the-ground partners in identifying potential problem areas. Each summer and winter, NERC releases seasonal grid assessments that evaluate whether electricity supply is sufficient to meet expected demand and highlight regions at risk of shortfalls.

These periodic reports analyze conditions that can increase demand, such as heat waves and severe cold, as well as factors that can constrain generation, including fuel or equipment shortages. They also include recommendations to address current risks and help prevent future problems. When unforeseen threats emerge, NERC issues special assessments as needed.

Each year, the organization also publishes a long-term grid assessment that looks ahead 10 years to identify innovations and emerging challenges that could affect the reliability of the interconnected electric transmission network.



NERC sets mandatory reliability standards for all users, owners and operators of the electric transmission grid.

Providing the electric power industry with timely insight into grid reliability, potential power shortfalls and strategies to address them is essential to keeping the lights on.

Strengthening reliability and security

NERC does more than monitor the grid. The organization holds workshops and technical conferences, trains industry personnel on maintaining a secure grid, and audits owners and operators of the bulk power system to ensure they meet all reliability standards.

NERC also operates the 24/7 Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC), which provides the power industry with the latest information on cyber threats, trends and potential solutions through alerts and advisories. E-ISAC also develops and conducts GridEx, the largest cyber and physical grid security exercise in North America.

Overall, NERC has come a long way from its humble beginnings as an industry-led voluntary grid watchdog. The Northeast blackout of 1965, which affected 30 million people, prompted electric utilities to create the organization to improve coordination across the electric grid.

Today, NERC serves as the nation's Electric Reliability Organization, overseeing the planning and operation of the bulk power system throughout North America. Empowered by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, NERC develops



NERC holds workshops, technical conferences and trains industry personnel on how to maintain a secure grid.

mandatory, enforceable reliability standards backed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Utilities like Iowa's electric cooperatives, for the most part, are not regulated by NERC. Instead, state agencies oversee the distribution power lines that deliver electricity to homes, farms and businesses. However, NERC's oversight of the bulk power system is critical to maintaining reliable service across the country, including rural communities.

Electric cooperatives that participate in NERC activities advocate for regulations that help co-ops plan, maintain and operate a reliable electric grid.

Why it matters to co-op members

So, how does NERC affect you as a member of an electric cooperative?

NERC helps ensure the electric grid remains reliable, secure and resilient for the millions of people who depend on it every day. By developing and enforcing reliability standards, monitoring the bulk power system and identifying emerging risks, NERC plays a vital role in supporting the safe delivery of electricity across North America.

For electric cooperative communities, NERC's work provides greater confidence that homes, schools, farms and businesses will continue to have reliable power around the clock.

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

MORE COMFORT, LESS WASTED ENERGY

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Everybody wants a comfortable home. Did you know energy efficiency upgrades not only help you save energy but can make your home more comfortable, too? If you find yourself continually returning to the thermostat on cold winter days or unable to find relief from the heat on summer days, these are signs your home may need an efficiency upgrade.

No matter the home, energy-efficiency upgrades often start with the same basic principle: Keep outside air from coming in and keep conditioned indoor air from leaking out. Insulation, air sealing and duct sealing, along with HVAC upgrades can dramatically improve your home's comfort.

Seal air leaks to improve comfort

A fully insulated home, including the attic, walls and floor, is more comfortable. It's like a blanket for your home. Air sealing is a lesser-known upgrade that keeps air from entering and exiting through cracks and gaps. Some air sealing can be done from inside the home, such as using expanding foam around plumbing pipes, adding gaskets to outlets on exterior walls, caulking around windows and weatherstripping doors.

Attics and crawl spaces offer additional opportunities to reduce air leakage. In the attic, sealing gaps around top plates, open soffit areas, cove ceilings and balloon framing helps keep conditioned air where it belongs. In the basement or crawl space, seal around plumbing pipes, vents and electrical wires. If you need help, contact a local contractor.

As a self-proclaimed energy geek, I wasn't surprised that my first project after my husband and I bought our first home was to air seal and insulate. We sealed and insulated the attic, walls and rim joists in the basement. The difference was immediate. Our house felt cozier, and the temperature swings from the furnace cycling on and off were dramatically reduced.



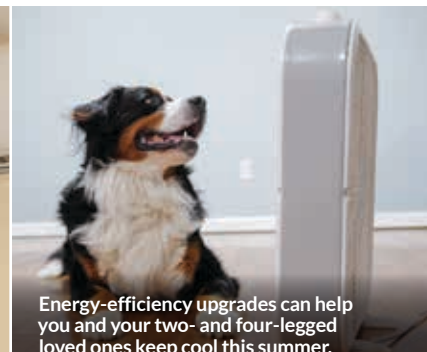
If you are in the market to upgrade your HVAC system, consider an energy-efficient heat pump.
Photo Source: Bonneville Power Administration

Another unexpected benefit was a noticeable reduction in outside noise. We lived about 15 minutes from the airport and close to a busy road. When the windows and doors were closed, we could barely hear the airplanes, and the traffic noise became almost unnoticeable.

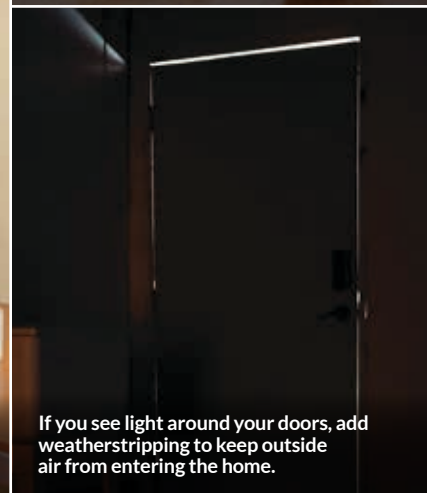
Upgrade your HVAC system for year-round comfort

Duct sealing can also improve your home's comfort. If there are leaks or disconnections in your ductwork, the air you paid to heat or cool may not reach the rooms where it's needed, creating hot or cold spots. An HVAC professional can inspect your ducts to make sure they are properly connected and sealed.

Air sealing and duct sealing can also improve indoor air quality by reducing the amount of dust, pollen, mold and other allergens entering your living space from the attic or crawl space.



Energy-efficiency upgrades can help you and your two- and four-legged loved ones keep cool this summer.



If you see light around your doors, add weatherstripping to keep outside air from entering the home.

Upgrading to a heat pump can also boost comfort and efficiency. Heat pump technology is often about three times more efficient than electric resistance heat because it moves heat with refrigerant rather than generating it. Whether you're replacing an electric or gas heating system, a heat pump can provide efficient heating and cooling throughout the year.

If you already have a heat pump or any forced-air HVAC system, schedule annual maintenance and change the air filter regularly to keep it operating efficiently.

Improving your home's comfort doesn't always require a major renovation. A few strategic energy efficiency upgrades can help your family stay comfortable year-round while lowering energy costs.

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

IOWA LINEWORKERS TO BRING POWER AND OPPORTUNITY TO GUATEMALA

This September, seven Iowa electric cooperative lineworkers will join fellow cooperative lineworkers from Colorado and Oklahoma on a mission that extends far beyond building power lines.

Together, the 18-member volunteer team will travel to rural Guatemala through NRECA International's electrification program, bringing electricity to two remote villages for the first time.

Their work will provide reliable electric service to approximately 100 homes, a school and a newly constructed health center, creating

opportunities for education, health care and economic development that many families have never experienced.

For these lineworkers, the trip is an opportunity to use their professional skills to make a lasting difference for families living in communities without access to electricity.

Electricity changes daily life in countless ways, from providing lighting for students to study after dark to allowing health care providers to refrigerate medicines and safely care for patients. Access to reliable electricity also creates

new opportunities for businesses and improves overall quality of life.

More than bringing power

The project's impact won't stop when the lights come on.

While in Guatemala, the team will also complete a community service project by helping equip an elementary school kitchen so it can prepare meals for local children and supplying a new community health center with much-needed equipment and resources. These improvements will continue serving families long after the lineworkers return home.

Iowa electric cooperative linemen selected for the Guatemala team:



Adam Hawkins
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative



Weston Held
Prairie Energy Cooperative



Jeremy Jochims
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative



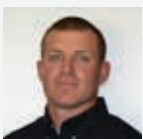
Scott Meinecke
Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (Iowa team leader)



Jackson Rice
Heartland Power Cooperative



Jeremiah Ruby
Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative



Cody Stackhouse
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Cooperative members and friends can help support this effort by making a tax-deductible contribution to the Oklahoma Energy Trails Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Even a \$25 donation can help purchase supplies for the school kitchen and health center, directly improving life for families in these rural communities.

Donations may be made by mailing a check to:

Oklahoma Energy Trails Foundation

PO Box 54309

Oklahoma City, OK 73154

Please write "Guatemala" in the check memo.

Readers can simply scan the QR codes accompanying this article to make an online donation or watch a short video showcasing the communities and the impact this project will have for local families.



Scan the QR code to make a donation.

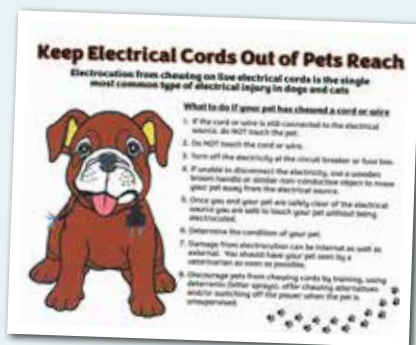


Scan the QR code to watch a video.



2026 ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SAFETY POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

As promised, we are featuring the winning posters in the safety poster contest in the magazine as they will appear in the 2027 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Calendars can be picked up at our office for those who were not able to attend the Annual Meeting of Members. This month's featured winners include:



March 2027

Rhonda Wellik | Mount Pleasant

Keep electrical cords out of pets' reach.



April 2027

Rhett Pieper | Wever

If you see a fallen power line, leave it be.



May 2027

Allie Hammes | Libertyville

General Electric Safety

STAFF PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to Jenn and Shelby, Access Energy Cooperative employees who have been promoted to new positions. Jenn has been serving the cooperative as customer service manager and has been promoted to the accountant. Shelby has been serving members as a customer service representative and will move up to customer service supervisor.



Jenn
Accountant



Shelby
Customer Service Supervisor

We are excited about these changes as Jenn and Shelby continue to help provide safe, reliable and efficient service to the Access Energy Cooperative members.

NEW APPRENTICE LINEMAN JOINS ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE



Join us in welcoming Isaac, a new apprentice lineman, to the Access Energy Cooperative

team. He will work with our crews as he continues his path to becoming a journeyman lineman. Isaac worked with the crews at the cooperative last summer as an intern prior to completing his line school education.

We are excited to have Isaac serve our members in providing safe, reliable and efficient service!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

August 2026

Visit our website at www.accessenergycoop.com

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY



Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative**. This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®