

JANUARY 2022

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

2022 youth program  
deadlines

Energy efficiency  
made easy

Slow cooker  
recipes

Nominations for Access Energy Cooperative director candidates ► See Page 5



# CONTENTS



6



8



10

VOLUME 75 • ISSUE 1

3

## STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Steadfast vision  
and support

3

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Fitbit  
Versa 2™

14

## SAFETY MATTERS

Safety tips for  
the new year

15

## OUT BACK

New Year's sledding  
family tradition

**EDITOR**  
Ann Thelen

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Joel Clifton

**IAEC EXECUTIVE  
VICE PRESIDENT**  
Chuck Soderberg

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF  
COMMUNICATIONS**  
Erin Campbell

**IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
Roger Solomonson, District 3 – President  
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President  
Kenneth VandenBerg, District 1 – Secretary/Treasurer  
Neal Heldt, District 7 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer  
Tony Lem, District 2  
Deena Moore, District 4  
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative  
Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

*Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine (ISSN: 1935-7176) 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](http://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 2022, 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.



\* A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Chip Doolittle, a Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could win \$100!

# THANK YOU FOR STEADFAST VISION AND SUPPORT

BY RAND FISHER



The opportunity to author this statewide perspective was a timely invitation. I couldn't say no to the chance to offer a final commentary, and most importantly,

share my thanks and appreciation for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' support in my service as president of the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) these past 25 years.

## Crisis brings leadership

In the early 1980s, a gut-wrenching recession grabbed ahold of the Midwest. As farmers faced foreclosures, factories closed their doors and entire communities struggled, Iowa rural electric cooperative leaders came together to fashion plans for recovery and a brighter future.

By 1985, IADG was established with a mission of restoring hope, fostering investment, creating new jobs and enhancing community vitality. United in purpose, Iowa cooperatives committed to becoming leaders in economic development.

Following a crisis, individuals and organizations often revert to the status quo. They forget, or worse yet, give up on the investments and commitments that led them onward and upward. Fortunately, cooperative leaders are different. They take measured steps and then double down on what works and serves the best interests of their members.

## A 25-year long blessing

IADG was well-established and its economic development leadership and accomplishments were highly regarded by 1997. The organization was also amid its first executive transition. During the process, I received a call encouraging me to

consider becoming a candidate to lead the organization forward. Apparently, there were some rural electric cooperative leaders that felt my familiarity with business and community development, government and utilities might be a good fit.

I feel so fortunate for my selection 25 years ago. The opportunity to lead the efforts, services and support Iowa rural utilities make in advancing economic development for our state has been a true blessing.

## Cooperative vision creates success

Economic development participation and engagement don't come without risk. It often draws naysayers and skeptics and always comes with an abundance of public scrutiny. Thankfully, the investment that Iowa cooperatives have made in economic development has been rewarded by adding and diversifying power sales, welcoming new members and helping the communities they serve to revitalize and prosper.

During my tenure at IADG, cooperative leaders have held steadfast to their values of "cooperation among cooperatives" and "commitment to community." They have continued working together, creating new partnerships and a rich toolkit for continued business and community development success.

Change and transition are once again underway at IADG. The board of directors has chosen Bruce Nuzum, an IADG veteran, as the new president and CEO. He is well prepared with a rich skillset and capacity for hard work. His background and experience will allow him to hit the ground running. He also has a tremendous team to help him. Saying farewell to IADG stakeholders has been made easier by his selection.

Please accept my thanks, gratitude and best wishes for all you have made possible. Most of all, please remain committed to economic development.

*Rand Fisher is the president of the Iowa Area Development Group. He will retire on Jan. 31.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# Win a Fitbit Versa 2!



Start the new year in style and by tracking your fitness activity. The Fitbit Versa 2™ health and fitness smartwatch includes a Daily Readiness Score, Alexa Built-in, sleep tools and more. The winner can select from three colors – Black/Carbon Aluminum, Stone/Mist Grey Aluminum or Petal/Copper Rose Aluminum.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Jan. 31, 2022. 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 gift card from the November issue was Debra Martin from Access Energy Cooperative.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JAN. 11	Legislator Welcome Back Reception in Des Moines
FEB. 3-4	Momentum is Building energy efficiency training
FEB. 28	Youth Tour application deadline
MARCH 9	Youth Tour interviews
MARCH 15	Lineworker Scholarship deadline
MARCH 15	Scholarship deadline
MARCH 22	REC Day on the Hill with legislators
MARCH 31	Photo contest deadline

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



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

**Office:** Access Energy Cooperative

1800 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 440  
Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

**Phone:** 319-385-1577 or 866-242-4232

**Fax:** 319-385-6873

**Call Before You Dig (Iowa One Call):** 8-1-1

**Website:** [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com)

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

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

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

**Office Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Call our office 24/7: 319-385-1577.

Payments can be placed in dropbox under flag pole.  
Visa and MasterCard accepted.

**General Manager/CEO:** Kevin Wheeler

**Editor:** Kimberly Davis

**Assistant Editor:** Cheryl Wibben

**Officers and Directors:**

Marvin Newton	District 3	President
Marvin Larson	District 1	Vice President
Robert Chesnut III	District 3	Secretary
David Hollingsworth	District 1	Treasurer
Fred Hickenbottom	District 1	Director
Jerry Barker	District 2	Director
Robert P. Smith	District 2	Director
Larry White	District 2	Director
Michael Holtkamp	District 3	Director

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## ARE PORTABLE SPACE HEATERS EFFICIENT FOR MY HOME?

BY KEVIN WHEELER



Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. Unfortunately, some people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home,

which can really take a toll on energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

### Proactive energy efficiency solutions

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home.

If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose-fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot. Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

### When to use space heaters

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months.



Only use a space heater in small spaces that you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table.

### Space heater safety

If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating. Place the heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, area rugs provide additional insulation and maintain warmth.

If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com). Or call us at 866-242-4232. We're here to help you manage your energy use.

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



# CALL FOR DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

Your Board of Directors is elected by and from the membership of Access Energy Cooperative. Three seats are up for election, one in each of the three districts. Each board member is elected to a term of three years. Terms that will expire with the 2022 annual meeting to be held Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2022, include:



Fred Hickenbottom



Robert P. Smith



Marvin Newton

**District 1, Fred Hickenbottom**

**District 2, Robert P. Smith**

**District 3, Marvin Newton**

The Board of Directors will be appointing a Nominating Committee this month to select candidates to run for the expiring terms. Anyone interested in running for a seat on the board may contact a member of the Nominating Committee. The contact list will be posted in our office, on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) and in the newsletter; or you can call our office at 1-866-242-4232.

To serve on the Access Energy Cooperative Board of Directors you must meet all the qualifications as specified in the cooperative Bylaws, Section 3 as summarized below.

No member shall be eligible to become or remain a Director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is:

- Not a bona fide resident of premises served by the Cooperative.
- In any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members.

- Within two (2) years preceding a Director candidate nomination was an employee of the Cooperative.
- Within seven (7) years preceding a Director candidate nomination has received benefit from any collective bargaining agreement with the Cooperative.
- A close relative of a Director or employee of the Cooperative, with close relative being defined as: spouse, cohabitant, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister, brother, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and natural, step, and adopted children.
- Within fifteen (15) years preceding a Director candidate nomination been convicted of a felony whether by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, plea of guilt or plea of nolo contendere.
- The full-time employee or agent of another Director or employee.
- The full-time employer or principal of another Director.
- The incumbent of or candidate for an elective public office other than on a school board, board of supervisors, township trustee, township clerk or member of the state legislature.

When a membership is held jointly, either one, but not both, may be elected a Director, provided, however, that neither shall be eligible to become or remain a Director or hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless both shall meet the qualifications herein above set forth.

## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Six \$1,500 awards, one in each of the cooperative's three districts, are available through the Access Energy Cooperative scholarship program. Applicants must be a high school senior receiving post-secondary education. Parents or legal guardians must be members of the cooperative. More details can be found at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

Applications can be found:

- At all area high school guidance counselor offices
- By visiting our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com), downloading the application and either faxing, mailing or bringing it to our office; the form can also be submitted online
- By contacting the Access Energy Cooperative headquarters office in Mt. Pleasant at 866-242-4232

Applications are due in our office March 15. Winners will be chosen and announced at their senior awards ceremonies.

### When are the scholarships given?

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





## ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE LINeworker SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Up to two \$2,000 scholarships will be awarded per year to students enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a one- or two-year electric lineworker program, such as the Northwest Iowa Community College Powerline program in Sheldon or the Utilities/ Lineman Program at State Technical College in Linn, Missouri.

Complete details can be obtained on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com).

## SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS: WIN A FREE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

What do 1,500 high school students, our nation's capital and electric cooperatives have in common? The answer is the electric cooperative Youth Tour, of course!

It takes place June 18-24, when hundreds of electric co-ops across the country send participants to Washington, D.C., for a chance to learn about the cooperative

business model and enjoy a full week of sightseeing.



Access Energy Cooperative sends two students each year. If you're a high school sophomore or junior interested in traveling to Washington, D.C., to experience a once-in-a-lifetime trip, visit our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) to download or submit an application.

Thank you  
for your  
dedication to  
our members!

**120**  
years  
of dedicated service recognized

Kim Davis  
Diane Magnani

Jim Mills  
Jenn Helling

Bob Ruby  
Kevin Wheeler

## CONGRATULATIONS

Access Energy Cooperative congratulates **Jim Mills, Sheryl Dorn and Bob Ruby** on their recent retirements!

Jim retired as the safety director/ assistant operations manager after 30 years of service to our members. Sheryl retired

after 23 years as the director of administrative services. And Bob retired as a serviceman technician after 20 years.

Thank you for your dedication to the members of Access Energy Cooperative. We wish you the best in your upcoming plans!



Jim Mills



Sheryl Dorn



Bob Ruby

**We are pleased to announce the following changes made in response to the retirements:**



**Kurt Lowenberg** has stepped up to accept the vacant position of safety director/assistant operations manager and began training for his new duties in December. Kurt has been with the cooperative since May 2012, most recently serving as district foreman.

**Jennifer Helling** will be moving into the position of customer service manager and began her training duties in December. She has served the cooperative for 10 years, most recently as the billing supervisor.





# THANK YOU

Thank you to the members who attended the Member Advisory Committee meeting in December. We are happy we were finally able to

meet again in person, and appreciate the time you took to share your views with the board and staff of the cooperative.



## MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN

If you see them working on the side of the road, move over to the other lane and slow down. You might not hear them, but they are thanking you!



## WIN UP TO \$100 IN THE ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE PHOTO CONTEST!

We will award \$75 to each photographer whose entry is selected as one of the 13 featured photos for the calendar. If the winning entry is submitted by a member of Access Energy Cooperative, they will receive an additional \$25 bill credit!

Horizontal photos work best so that artwork does not need to be

cropped to fit on a calendar page. Entries should be high-resolution files so they can be enlarged correctly, and judges give preference to full-color photos.

Submit all entries by March 31 to [mktg@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com).



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

## HELP OTHERS BY CONTRIBUTING TO RECare

RECare is a program where members help other members in need. You may make a one-time contribution to the RECare program, or you may add an amount each month to your monthly electric bill. Just one dollar a month will help others.



This program is administered by the Iowa Community Action Program, and recipients must meet their guidelines.

### You can use SmartHub to enroll in RECare!

To have a monthly amount deducted from your electric bill:

1. Log in to your SmartHub account. Go to the Billing & Payments tab. Select RECare, and follow instructions; or
2. Send the form below to:

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

## MEMBER AUTHORIZATION FORM

I would like to make a (check one):

☐ One-time contribution of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Monthly contribution of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(That will be added to my bill)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

# SLOW COOKER RECIPES

## EASY BEEF STEW

- 2 pounds stew meat
- 1 26-ounce can tomato soup
- 1 soup can water
- ½ onion, chopped
- 3 large carrots, sliced
- 3-4 potatoes, peeled and diced
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon vinegar

Place all ingredients in slow cooker for 5-6 hours on high, or 6-8 hours on medium. You can substitute 1½ pounds browned ground beef, 1-2 tablespoons cooking wine and a few shakes of Worcestershire sauce in place of stew meat; or canned carrots and potatoes in place of fresh, adding canned items toward the end of cooking time.

LeAnn Lamaak • Britt • Prairie Energy Cooperative

## SLOW COOKER SPAGHETTI SAUCE

- ½ pound ground beef
- ½ pound ground sausage
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 28-ounce can chopped tomatoes
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 6-ounce can tomato paste
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

In large skillet, brown the beef and sausage over medium-high heat with onion and garlic until cooked through. Drain grease if necessary. Combine in slow cooker with the rest of the ingredients, and cook on low for 6-8 hours. Serves 8

Theresa Hays • Redfield  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

## MANGO CURRIED CHICKEN

- 1 onion, sliced
- 4 frozen chicken breasts (2 pounds)
- 1 mango, cubed or 1½ cups frozen mango cubes
- 1½ cups cubed butternut squash, frozen works best
- 1 14-ounce can coconut milk
- 1 4-ounce jar red curry paste
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 5-ounce bag fresh spinach or kale
- 2 cups cooked rice, wild rice works well
- 1 skinless, seedless roasted red pepper, diced
- 2-3 limes, cut in half

Spread slow cooker with desired oil. Layer floor of slow cooker with onion slices. Layer frozen chicken breasts over onion slices. Place mango (if using fresh, add core for flavor) and squash on top of chicken. In a separate container, stir together coconut milk, curry paste, salt, ginger and turmeric then pour over slow cooker mixture. Cover slow cooker and cook on high for 4 hours or low for 6-8 hours. Using two forks, shred chicken. To serve: Fill bowls with spinach or kale. Using an ice cream scoop, place rice on top of spinach. Pour chicken mixture over rice and add red pepper to the top. Squeeze lime over all. Serves 4-6

Anita Doughty • Ankeny • Consumers Energy



## CABBAGE-HAMBURGER SOUP

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 small head cabbage, chopped
- 2 14.5-ounce cans diced tomatoes
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- ½ cup water
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Greek seasoning

Sauté onions in oil; add ground beef and cook until just done. Add garlic and simmer 1-2 minutes. Add hamburger mixture and remaining ingredients into slow cooker. Cook on low for 4-6 hours, on high for 2-4 hours, or until desired tenderness. The longer it stews, the tastier it is! *Serves 8-12*

Ruthann Murphy • Dougherty  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## CHILI CON CARNE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¾ cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 16-ounce can tomatoes, cut
- 1 16-ounce can dark red kidney beans, drained
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

In a skillet, cook beef, onion and garlic until the meat is browned. Drain off fat. Put mixture in slow cooker, stir in green pepper, undrained tomatoes, beans, tomato sauce, chili powder, basil, salt and pepper. Cover and cook on low setting for 8-10 hours. *Serves 4-6*

Carole Ristau • Eagle Grove  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

## CHILI FOR BAKED POTATOES

- 2 pounds hamburger
- 2 cans chili style beans
- 1 15-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- water

Brown hamburger and drain. Put all ingredients in slow cooker and cook all day on low. Add water as needed.

Leora Van Middendorp • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## EASY SLOW COOKER CHICKEN TORTILLA

- 3-4 boneless chicken breasts
- 16 ounces salsa
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 can chunk pineapple, optional
- tortillas, optional
- shredded cheese, optional
- sour cream, optional

Put chicken, salsa, beans, corn and pineapple in slow cooker on low for 8 hours, then shred chicken with two forks. This is good by itself, or on a tortilla shell rolled up with shredded cheese and sour cream toppings.

Cynthia Halbmaier • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## FANTASTIC POT ROAST

- 2 2-pound boneless beef chuck roasts
- 1 envelope ranch salad dressing mix
- 1 envelope Italian salad dressing mix
- 1 envelope brown gravy mix
- water
- flour, optional for gravy

Place roasts in a 5-quart slow cooker. Combine dressing mixes and gravy mix in a small bowl. Stir in ½ cup water then pour over meat. Cover and cook on high for 5-6 hours, or on low for 7-8 hours, or until tender. Leftover juices make a good gravy. First, strain and skim fat from the juices. Add 3 tablespoons flour mixed into ½ cup cold water for each cup of juice. Bring gravy to a boil, stirring constantly until thickened. *Serves 12-15*

Elaine Knoblock • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### WANTED:

## EGG SALAD, CASSEROLE AND QUICHE RECIPES

### THE REWARD:

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

**Deadline is Jan. 31, 2022**

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

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

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

**MAIL:** Recipes

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



# 5 TIPS FOR SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY THIS YEAR

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

# 1

Hard surfaces feel colder than soft surfaces. Create coziness to add warmth.

Welcome in the new year by resolving to save energy and money! You don't need a lot of money to save on your energy bills. There are many low-cost, simple adjustments you can make in your home, whether you rent or own.

We all want to afford being comfortable in our homes. If you're having trouble paying your energy bills, you are not alone. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports 1 in 3 households face challenges meeting their energy needs.

Decreasing monthly bills and being more efficient at home is something we all should practice. Here are some budget-friendly energy efficiency tips targeting one of the biggest energy users in the home: the heating system. Heating and cooling account for nearly half of a U.S. home's energy consumption.



## Add coziness to your home

One way you can feel warmer in your home without turning up the thermostat is by making your home cozy.

The way our bodies perceive the temperature of a room is based more on the surfaces in the room than the air temperature. In general, harder surfaces feel colder. For example, your tile floor will feel cooler than your fabric sofa.

Cold floors in a room make us feel colder. Adding an area rug to a hard-surface floor can make us feel warmer, even with the same setting on the thermostat.

The same goes for windows. Windows are typically the least-insulated surface in a room and can feel cold in winter months. Adding or closing curtains can help the room feel warmer.



## Check your windows

Make sure your windows are closed and locked. Locking windows pulls the sashes tighter together, reducing gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts. If your sash locks don't form a tight fit, adjust them or add weatherstripping.

There's a variety of window weatherstripping products available for less than \$20. Most are simple to install and only require tools you most likely already have around the house, such as scissors and a tape measure.

Some are more permanent solutions, and some are intended to be used for one heating season and then removed. Temporary solutions, such as caulk strips, putty, pull-and-peel caulking or window insulation films, can be used if you rent your home and can't make permanent changes.

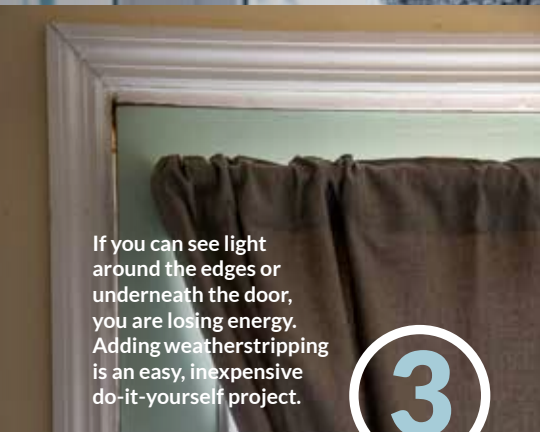




Make sure your windows are closed and locked to reduce gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts.



Weatherstripping around windows is a low-cost, easy-to-install solution to ensure warm air does not escape from your home.



If you can see light around the edges or underneath the door, you are losing energy. Adding weatherstripping is an easy, inexpensive do-it-yourself project.



Close a wood-burning fireplace damper when not in use.



Keep your feet warmer by wearing slippers.



### Seal your doors

Weatherstripping doors is an easy do-it-yourself project. Make sure your doors seal tightly and don't allow drafts to pass through around the edges or under the door.

Make sure any doors leading to an unheated space – outside or into a garage – are sealed tightly. If you can see light around the edges or underneath the door, or feel air movement when the door is closed, you know you are losing energy.

Because doors need to open and close easily, expect to do a bit of adjusting after installing weatherstripping. If weatherstripping isn't installed correctly, it can make the door hard to close. Making it too loose defeats the purpose. You need to get it just right.



### Close the damper

If you have a fireplace, make sure the damper is completely closed when not using it. Leaving the damper open is like leaving a window open – it's just harder to see. The air you just paid to heat your home will go right out the chimney.

The only exception is some gas fireplaces need to remain open for gas fumes to exit the home. If you have a gas fireplace, check the owner's manual for more information on the damper position.



### Layer up

Dressing for the season prevents going overboard on your energy use. It can be tempting to adjust the thermostat to increase your comfort. Putting on a sweater or comfy sweatshirt can have the same comfort impact without increasing your energy use. Slippers can be a big help, too, especially when your feet touch a cold floor.

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*

**The next time you consider turning up the thermostat a few degrees, try some of these tips first to stay warm and leave increased energy bills out in the cold.**

# SHINE A LIGHT ON HOME SECURITY

BY PAUL WESSLUND

From street lights to porch lights, studies show that better outdoor lighting reduces crime. But those same reports say that security lighting works best as part of a plan that accounts for what crooks look for.

The basic advice from law enforcement, insurance companies and home security system vendors is not to just flip on the yard light before bed. In fact, you may want to turn it off before turning in because the goal is to make it look like people are home.

Here are six tips to electrify your outdoor lighting technology and increase the security of your home.

- 1 Think like a burglar.** Intruders would rather you not be home, so they watch for signs that people are at work or on vacation. That's why most burglaries happen in the day, and why leaving your lights on all day and night can be an advertisement that no one's home.

Do keep the yard lit while you're up and around to show normal activity. Turning off the porch light at bedtime can be a sign to a potential intruder that someone is in the house. It's also good to pay attention to spots that could cover up a break-in and keep trees and bushes trimmed.

- 2 Light for the right reasons.** Are you trying to light a walkway for guests or keep intruders away from an entrance? Place lights so they achieve your objective. And safety isn't just about reducing crime. A well-lit outdoor space can also prevent trips, falls and other accidents.

- 3 Enlist technology.** Electronic timers and lights that turn on when they sense motion can give the impression that someone's home and can light the sidewalk when you return from an outing. Increasingly, lights and fixtures can be linked to a smartphone so



Photos: Ring

they can be turned on and off while you're out and about.

- 4 Weigh the pros and cons of a home security system.** Security cameras, alarm systems and protection services offer a wide range of conveniences, including fire protection or checking on pets. They can be expensive, so do your research carefully and know your end goals.

- 5 Protect yourself from internet hackers.** Whether it's a security camera or a smart light bulb, internet-connected devices can be hacked by cyber crooks. The basic internet security advice is to have strong passwords and change them regularly, especially on your home's central router. Keep software updated on your devices

and even though it's tempting, don't use social media to tell the world you're on vacation.

- 6 Go old school.** Besides electricity and technology, use people to reduce crime. Invite a police officer to give a safety briefing at a neighborhood meeting. And of all the crime-reducing tips, experts say the best is to get to know your neighbors so they can recognize and report any out-of-the-ordinary activity.

Lighting the path to safety involves making a plan, wise use of technology and a little help from your friends.

*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*



# CHARGE NETWORK EXPANDS TO 49 ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES IN THE MIDWEST

The CHARGE™ brand will extend to western Iowa and southern Illinois with the addition of Iowa generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Humboldt, Iowa) and Le Mars-based Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO), as well as Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association (EECA) in Murphysboro, Illinois.

In addition, the G&Ts' member cooperatives will utilize the CHARGE brand as they build electric vehicle (EV) awareness among their consumer-members.

"This is an incredible boost for CHARGE both in terms of cooperative participation and the opportunity for collaboration," says Nate Boettcher, president of CHARGE EV, LLC. "As our affiliations grow, we leverage the needs of each cooperative to benefit all."

## Powered by electric cooperatives

CHARGE is a national EV charging brand powered by electric cooperatives and invests in EV-focused companies. CHARGE cooperatives are part of a growing brand that signals a nationwide cooperation among cooperatives effort (the 7th Cooperative Principle) to help promote and educate members about EVs.

"The number of available electric vehicle models are increasing each quarter. Our CHARGE affiliation will give NIPCO and our member cooperatives extra support and expertise to answer member questions," says Matt Washburn, NIPCO executive vice president and general manager.

"Being part of a brand that is powered by cooperatives benefits Corn Belt, our members and the consumer-members in our region. There is a great model in place to help facilitate



**CHARGE**  
POWERED BY CO-OPS



collaboration among cooperatives," says Kenneth H. Kuyper, Corn Belt Power executive vice president and general manager.

In addition to joining a national EV brand, CHARGE cooperatives benefit from CHARGE affiliations with EV-focused companies, such as ZEF Energy. ZEF manufactures EV charging units that will work with many cooperatives' existing load management programs. The technology allows members to delay charging their vehicle until evening and overnight hours when electricity prices are lower.

CHARGE EV, LLC, was created in 2020 by 31 electric cooperatives throughout Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin to help promote EV adoption. As electric cooperatives partner with other companies within the EV industry, CHARGE will expand its national charging network throughout rural America. This network will also reveal the hidden gems that are our local communities to EV drivers and their passengers. Electric cooperatives serve more than 42 million people across 48 states.

Learn more at [www.charge.coop](http://www.charge.coop).

# IMPROVE SAFETY WITH SMOKE ALARMS AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR UPGRADES

BY DERRILL HOLLY

If that old smoke detector – discolored, stained with paint or years of household grime – could send you a message silently, it might say “please replace me.” Those lifesaving warning devices designed to alert us to smoke and fire were never meant to last forever.

## Replacing alarms

The National Fire Protection Association and Underwriters Laboratories suggests replacing smoke alarms every 10 years, reports Nicolette Nye, a public affairs specialist with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Both organizations cite sensor degradation rates of 3% per year for their replacement recommendations.

“After 10 years, there would be a potential of a 30% failure rate,” says Nye, who also cited a CPSC recommendation that consumers look for smoke alarms rated or certified by Underwriters Laboratories designated by the symbol “UL” or the Electrical Testing Laboratories, marked with the “ETL” logo.

Both smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are designed with a timeframe or useful lifespan of 10 years, says Shawn Mahoney, a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) technical services engineer.

“Once they start to reach their end of life, consumers may notice alarm signals – typically a chirping sound that is either a low battery or an indication of the device’s end of life, meaning that it’s time the unit was replaced,” says Mahoney.

## Testing and replacing batteries

The NFPA not only recommends that batteries be replaced once a year, but also urges you to test the unit once a month as an added precaution against failure. Chirping, prompted by a drained battery will typically



Photo Source: Scott Van Osdel

stop within seven days and when that happens, the unit stops functioning.

“If you’re just waiting to hear the sound and not testing regularly, there’s a possibility that you’re going to miss it, especially if you have battery-only systems,” Mahoney says.

## Investing in safety

According to the CPSC, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors represent good investments in your family’s safety, says Nye.

“Consumers who have working smoke alarms in their homes die in fires at about half the rate of those who do not have alarms,” she says. “Install working carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home and outside

of sleeping areas. CO detectors are designed to sound the alert before carbon monoxide reaches life-threatening levels.”

## Updating for design and building codes

Design improvements are another great reason to consider replacing of older units. Modern smoke detectors use the best features of past popular models, including ionization, photoelectric and lithium-battery technologies.

Many states have upgraded building codes to require hardwired smoke alarms with battery backup power, and carbon monoxide detectors in all new residential construction.

As fire codes have evolved to require smoke alarms near cooking appliances, manufacturers have improved the technology. Mahoney says they can distinguish between an actual fire in the home and cooking fumes, reducing the incidence of nuisance alarms.

*Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.*



Photo Source: Abi Begum



# NEW YEAR'S SLEDDING FAMILY TRADITION

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

For many years, my family hosted a giant sledding party on Jan. 1, weather permitting, of course. The last few years have not lent themselves well to our party, being brown holidays. But every year in December, we start talking about whether this will be the year we can hold it.

The party always takes place in a field with a hill on my parents' farm, about a half mile from our place. For obvious reasons, it's always better if it has been a soybean year opposed to a corn year – thumping over the submerged cornstalks can be a jolting experience.

Adjacent to the hill is a wooded spot protected in the side of a cliff. It is the perfect out-of-the-way place to have a fire. We call it the “cook spot.”

## **Impromptu party planning**

Most of our best parties are spontaneous. The day before, my sister will text and ask if the cook spot has any tables left, or have cows rubbed against them and destroyed the tables. My mom will report on whether a path to the hill has been bladed. I'll chime in with the status of my 30-cup coffee pot and whether it will perk one more year with the gallons of water needed to offer hot chocolate.

We'll put our respective spouses to work taking care of the above. We'll call and text other family members and a few friends to come around 2 p.m. on New Year's Day and to bring some snacks, sleds and lots of warm clothes. As they drift in, they'll bring their food offerings to the makeshift tables (plywood on sawhorses), and we'll drag stumps and logs to the fire to use as chairs.

## **A memorable ride**

My mom usually stays close to the roaring fire, keeping the water hot. Only once was she lured to foray down the hill with two other friends.



They each sat on the edge of a large inner tube and wound their feet around each other to stay in. The older boys gave them a hard push, and they careened down the hill, sliding up the bank at the bottom and tipping over into the creek.

“I tried to get out,” my mom says. “But our legs were too tightly tangled with each other.” The trio emerged with scratches and a slight concussion, but my mom maintains that the greatest indignity was hearing, as they flew down the hill, a kid yelling, “Mom, those old ladies are going to crash!”

One year, in a magical twist, the sun was dropping around 5 p.m. and it

started to snow – big flakes that you'd see in a Hollywood musical. We stood on the edge of the cook spot, watching the last of the silhouetted sledders make their way down the hill and then head to the woods to warm up.

Over the years there have been bruises and a few broken bones. But if we get a white New Year's this year, we'll introduce the tradition to the newest in the family.

**Bonus:** This year was a bean year.

*Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons, two incredibly adorable grandsons and a lovely granddaughter*



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives.

January 2022

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

# YOUR ENERGY SUPERHEROES

Best in class service is our superpower. We're a local, not-for-profit electric cooperative. We don't have customers, we have members. People aren't just our number one priority, they're the reason we're here.

To learn more about the power of the cooperative difference, visit [TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://TouchstoneEnergy.com)

**YOUR SOURCE OF POWER. AND INFORMATION.**



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives  
of Iowa