

● AUGUST 2022

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

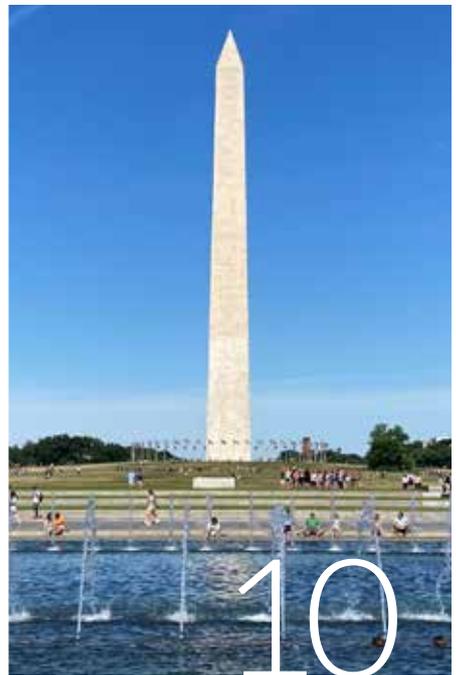
**Dividend checks will be
mailed this month**

**Students attend Youth Tour
in nation's capital**

State Fair inspired recipes

Win up to \$100 in photo contest ► See Page 5

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Oh, the places we'll go!

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Erica Vonk, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

YOUTH TOUR DELIVERS INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE IN D.C.

BY SHELLY YORK



Youth Tour 2022 can be summed up simply by saying, “We’re back!” The pandemic was able to pause the 60-plus year tradition, but it certainly couldn’t

stop it! We were so excited to get back to Washington, D.C., and show 34 Iowa students the nation’s capital and experience all that the Youth Tour has to offer.

To be honest, there was a bit of trepidation on my part. Would I remember how to “do Youth Tour?” Is D.C. ready for large groups? What if we have travel issues? All that worry was for nothing. D.C. was ready, and our travel days went off without a hitch. But the true rockstars of the trip were the 34 high school students chosen by their electric cooperatives for this experience of a lifetime!

We started out with an orientation in Des Moines the night before we left. Most of the students did not know a single other person going on the trip, but that didn’t stop them from jumping right in.

Snack cooperative success

I love touring D.C. with the Youth Tour delegates, but I must admit one of my favorite activities of Youth Tour is working with students to run our own cooperative. Our cooperative provides snacks for chaperones and students. This project is educational and practical, plus it accomplishes a few

things: It provides drinks and snacks at discount prices, and it teaches everyone about starting and operating a cooperative and being a member-consumer.

On the last night of the trip, our snack co-op held an annual meeting where the leadership reported to the members about the co-op’s operations. Margins, or funds remaining after operations are closed, were returned to the members through patronage and capital credits.

Once-in-a-lifetime experiences

Our week in D.C. was full of incredible sights and experiences. From laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, seeing the city from the top of the Washington Monument, meeting with members of Congress, visiting all the monuments and memorials around the district, touring the U.S. Capitol, grabbing lunch at my favorite local eatery (Ben’s Chili Bowl) to joining Sen. Chuck Grassley on his early morning run, we had an unbelievable week. I say without hesitation that we all walked away with a greater understanding of our roles as



American citizens and a greater appreciation for the role of electric cooperatives in our communities. For details about what we did each day, check out our blog at iowayouthtour.blogspot.com.

Save the date

Next summer’s Youth Tour will be held June 17-23, 2023, with orientation the evening of June 17 in Des Moines.

If you know a high school student with a passion for government and public service, encourage them to apply for next year’s trip. Contact your local rural electric cooperative and visit www.iowayouthtour.com for more information.

Shelly York is the Youth Tour director for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR’S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Westinghouse electric pressure washer



Tackle the toughest grime with the Westinghouse ePX3050 electric pressure washer designed for your most easy and convenient cleaning experience yet. Delivering 2,050 max PSI of pressure with up to 1.76 gallons per minute 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 for all household surfaces with pure scouring force.

ENTER ONLINE BY AUG. 31!

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 ice cream maker from the June issue was Molly Bohlen, Butler County REC.



UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG. 16	Board of directors meeting
AUG. 30-31 SEPT. 1	Farm Progress Show in Boone
SEPT. 1 - 5	Midwest Old Threshers in Mt. Pleasant, Drive-A-Tractor sponsor
SEPT. 5	Office closed in observance of Labor Day
SEPT. 15	Board of directors meeting

You can access your account information 24/7 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 YEAR IN REVIEW

BY KEVIN WHEELER



As I summarize my 2021 Annual Meeting report, which is also on our website at www.accessenergycoop.com, I want to first thank Access Energy Cooperative

employees for going above and beyond to serve our members during the pandemic and related issues over the past couple of years. They never hesitated or complained as new information became available and changes were made to working conditions. Between our staff and our board, you have an amazing group of individuals working for you.

While many Midwesterners experienced rolling blackouts (4.2 million at one point), Access Energy Cooperative members did not see any interruption to their service during the storm. Our three-tiered system, which is cooperatively owned from power generation to members, kept the power on. In comparison, our bordering regional transmission operators had to enforce emergency rolling blackouts during this weather event to prevent catastrophic system failure.

Even though we had enough reliable power to endure this polar vortex, our power supplier continually seeks opportunities to enhance reliability. They are exploring installation of a solar farm and more single-cycle natural gas generation to complement their existing generation system.

Reliability through a catastrophic weather event

Old Man Winter made a catastrophic impact on the Midwest in February 2021, bringing a polar vortex with frigid temperatures and an ice storm that extended from the Canadian border into Mexico.

Proactive cybersecurity and supply chain management

To ensure reliability, our team constantly evaluates technological capabilities and efficiencies. Our IT department has collaborated



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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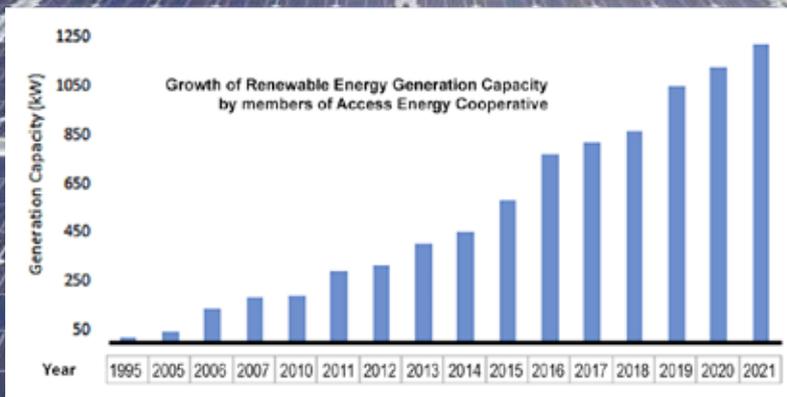
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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

DID YOU KNOW?

SOLAR SPOT

Access Energy Cooperative members have installed generation capacity of greater than 1 megawatt of renewable energy in our system.



with consultants for a complete assessment of our computer and network system for cybersecurity safety measures. Our policies and procedures for identifying theft concerns were dissected and improved.

We continue to manage the ongoing supply chain and purchasing obstacles by instituting plans and forecasting future needs to ensure we have the materials needed to serve our members. This process has resulted in a 20% increase in our inventory. Cost of materials has doubled and, in some cases, tripled. Fortunately, we can store items indefinitely as long as we have space because the materials we use do not have a shelf life.

Decision-making for the future and rate changes

Supporting the future of the cooperative is always at the forefront of decision-making. In May 2021, we made the financial decision to close the Fairfield outpost and consolidate all personnel to our headquarters in Mt. Pleasant. Decisions like this allow us to continue rate stability.

Our last rate increase was in 2016, even though we had a power cost increase in 2017. We have kept our controllable expenses at the same level since 2016. Our power supplier has notified us that we will receive a power cost increase in 2023 and 2024. As much as we do not like to increase rates, Access Energy Cooperative will have a rate increase in 2023, with the very strong possibility of an additional increase in 2024. We will communicate the amount of the increase as soon as we know, so you have as much notice as possible.

Our mission is to serve. Our priority is you. The service and dedication of our employees are evidence that we take our mission seriously and strive to exceed your expectations for safe, reliable, efficient service every day. I want to thank the board and members of this cooperative for the opportunity to work for an amazing organization.

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

HOW CAN YOU HELP RESTORE POWER OUTAGES?

BY DANIEL PHILIPS



Access Energy Cooperative is proud of the reliability of our system, as well as the quick restoration process should a power outage

occur. As a reminder, the quicker you let us know about a power outage, the quicker we can restore it.

For the fastest service, please call us at 866-242-4232. Our Facebook page is not monitored 24/7 and a message posted there may not receive attention as quickly as a phone call will.

Helpful information you can provide

Access Energy Cooperative has placed location tags on all utility poles and ground-mounted equipment owned by the cooperative. If you can capture location tag information near an outage, it could help our crews locate the problem easier and get the power back on quicker.

The photos (above right) show these location tags. They are yellow with six black numbers unique to each structure they are attached to. When



the tags are on a pole, they are usually mounted approximately 5 feet above the ground line and face a road or driveway. Ground-mounted equipment will have tags on the lid or door next to other warning stickers.

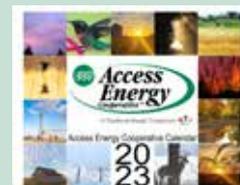
While these tags are a great way to get our crews to the problem area quicker, please always put safety first. Always be aware of downed power lines or damaged ground-mounted equipment before approaching. If you are unsure of any situation, do not go near it.

Daniel Philips is the director of operations for Access Energy Cooperative.

2024 CALENDAR PHOTO CONTEST OPEN

The 2023 Access Energy Cooperative calendars were handed out at the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 2. If you were unable to attend, we have some additional copies that can be picked up at our office.

We are already accepting photos for the 2024 calendar! Submissions will be accepted until March 31, 2023. Send entries to mktg@accessenergycoop.com. Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos in the Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Winners will be awarded \$75, plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.



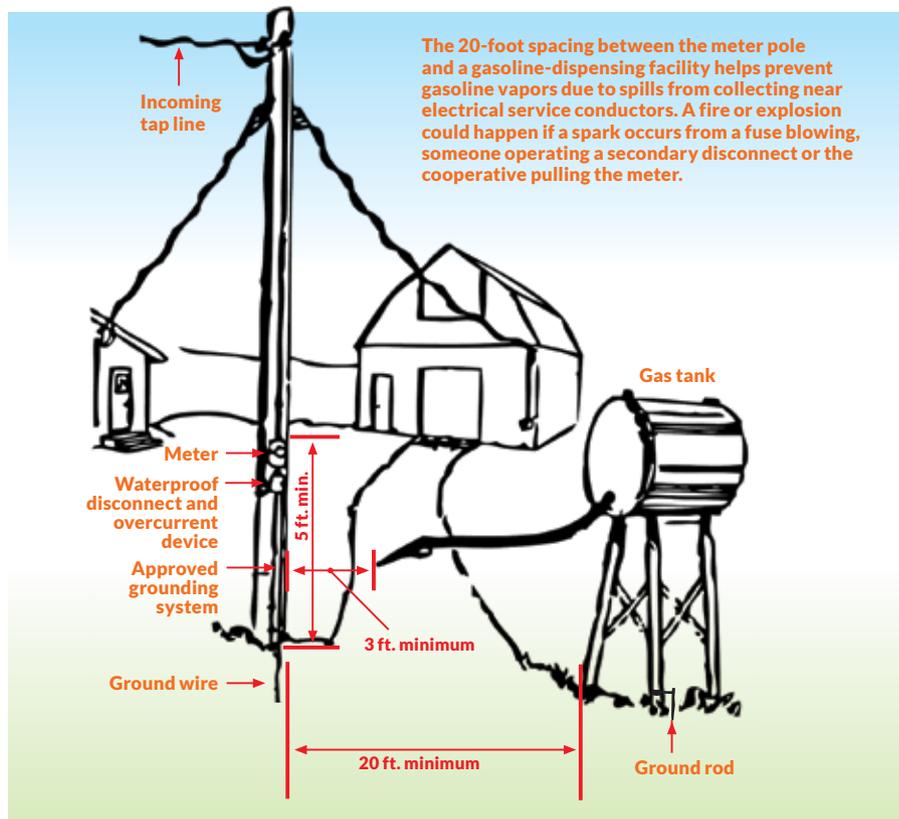
Visit www.accessenergycoop.com for complete rules.

PRACTICE SAFETY WITH GASOLINE DISPENSING FACILITIES NEAR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

One of the most common safety violations found near electricity lines is the location of the gasoline dispensing facilities on the farmstead in relation to the meter pole or farm 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 (NEC) 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 NEC 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 CO-OP RLF LOAN PROGRAM SUPPORTS COMMUNITY GROWTH

Access Energy Cooperative has a revolving loan fund program that was built with grants obtained from USDA. The matching grant money was loaned out to projects in our communities. Once paid back, the cooperative is allowed to keep the money in a revolving loan fund to reloan to other projects in the communities to support economic growth. Access Energy Cooperative used funds in the revolving loan fund this month in support of a local school in the service area.

The Van Buren Community School district requested and was approved for a loan to add a new addition for classrooms, a gym and weight room facilities. Access Energy Cooperative closed on a loan in support of the project, in conjunction with loan financing from Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative and Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative.



Access Energy Cooperative is proud to support local growth and business retention in our communities and will continue to revolve the loan funds for projects that bring new business to our communities, as well as help existing businesses grow and expand.

LOCAL TEENS SPONSORED BY ACCESS ENERGY COOPERATIVE TOUR WASHINGTON, D.C.

Andi Scott and Elsie Lange of Mount Pleasant recently participated in the Youth Tour of Washington, D.C. They spent June 19-24 in Washington, D.C., with 33 other student leaders from Iowa. Their trip was sponsored by Access Energy Cooperative.

Each June, this weeklong leadership development program provides high school students opportunities to learn firsthand about government, the electric cooperative business model and pressing issues in the energy industry. Students met their elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate, toured historic sites and ran their very own snack cooperative.

Andi and Elsie were chosen from applicants representing the entire 10-county cooperative service area to represent Access Energy Cooperative for the 2022 Youth Tour.

Andi will be a senior at Mount Pleasant Community High School in the fall. She is the daughter of Nathan and Danielle Scott.



Elsie will be a junior at Mount Pleasant Community High School. She is the daughter of Nathan and Kelly Lange.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives arranged for Iowa students to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during the tour's visit to Arlington National Cemetery. Elsie was among the students chosen to represent Iowa in this ceremony.

The electric cooperative Youth Tour has been a joint effort of locally owned electric cooperatives, including Access Energy Cooperative, statewide trade associations and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association for nearly 60 years.



DIVIDEND CHECKS WILL BE MAILED

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.

As a member-owner, you share in the margins earned in the form of dividend checks. Dividend payments to members for 2022 are being mailed to members who did not already pick up checks during the Annual Meeting of Members on Aug. 2.

Members now have the option to receive their dividend check as a bill credit.

Contact our finance department 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 our website at www.accessenergycoop.com.

PROUD SPONSOR OF DRIVE A TRACTOR AT MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS

Attend the Midwest Old Threshers event in Mt. Pleasant, Sept. 1-5



THANK YOU, SUMMER HELP!

Access Energy Cooperative appreciates the dedication and hard work of our summer help employees this year. Thank you!



Gavin Veatch is our summer intern in the engineering department. He plans to attend the University of Missouri this fall.



Tyler Simon is our summer help with line crews. He plans to attend Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon.



Colin Mulford is our summer help in the warehouse. He will finish up student teaching at the University of Northern Iowa this fall and has accepted a position in the Washington school system.

STATE FAIR INSPIRED RECIPES

MINI DONUTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour (plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for kneading)
- 1 tablespoon instant dry yeast
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white or brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup buttermilk
- 1 cup milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, melted (plus additional butter for dipping)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

Whisk together dry ingredients. Mix buttermilk, milk and vanilla. Heat this mixture until just lukewarm. Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup melted butter into the milk mixture and stir. Pour wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix. Turn out the dough onto a floured surface and knead for 5 minutes until smooth. Place dough into an oiled bowl and cover. Allow the covered dough to rise for 1 hour.

Punch down the dough and roll to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness. Use a 2-inch circle cookie cutter and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cookie cutter for the center donut hole. Place the cut donuts on a baking sheet that has been lined with parchment. Cover and leave in a warm location to rise for 20 minutes. Bake at 350 degrees F for 8 minutes or until golden brown. Mix the granulated sugar and cinnamon. Dip the hot baked donuts in melted butter then roll in the cinnamon sugar. *Yield 24 donuts*

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

CORN DOG DELIGHTFUL BITES

- 4 hot dogs
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper

Cut each hot dog into six pieces. Mix remaining ingredients until well blended. Grease 24 small muffin tins. Fill with batter $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch from top. Carefully push hot dog pieces into center of batter. Bake at 450 degrees F for 15 minutes, until browned. Cool and enjoy these delightful bites!

Mary Gropper • Chelsea • T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

OATMEAL CREAM PIES

- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups shortening, divided
- $2\frac{2}{3}$ cups brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- 4 cups oats
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1 7-ounce jar marshmallow creme
- 1-3 tablespoons milk

Mix $1\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening together with brown sugar, eggs, vanilla, flour, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and oats. Mix well, then drop cookie-scoop-size balls on a greased cookie sheet, spaced 2 inches apart. Bake at 350 degrees F for 10-12 minutes. Cool. Mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shortening, powdered sugar, marshmallow creme and milk. Spread on the bottom of half of the cookies and top with remaining cookies to make a sandwich.

**Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

NACHO DIP

- ½ pound cream cheese
- ¼ cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- ½ cup Velveeta cheese
- 2 tablespoons milk
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¾ tablespoon taco seasoning
- 2 tablespoons taco sauce
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Microwave cheeses together until melted. Add remaining ingredients and serve in a small slow cooker on low to keep warm. Optional: Add white cooking wine to taste.

Lizzy Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

MONKEY TAILS

- 10 ice pop sticks
- 5 ripe bananas
- 1 16-ounce package semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 10 tablespoons flaked coconut

Peel bananas and halve crosswise. Insert one ice pop stick into the cut end of each banana. Place the bananas on a baking sheet covered in wax paper and place in freezer until frozen, about 2 hours. Melt the chocolate chips and butter in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second intervals for 1-3 minutes, stirring after each melting. Dip the frozen bananas in the melted chocolate, spooning the chocolate over the banana to cover it completely. Roll in coconut if desired. Place the dipped bananas on wax-paper-covered baking sheet and freeze until the chocolate is firm. *Serves 10*

Dave Duit • Nevada • Consumers Energy

EASY CHEEZY CREAM POTATO BAKE

- 3 cups half and half
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 8 ounces mild cheddar or Velveeta cheese
- 1 32-ounce package frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

In a large bowl or saucepan, combine half and half, butter and salt. Cook and stir over medium heat until butter is melted. Then add cheese to mixture until melted. Place potatoes in a greased 13x2-inch baking dish, pour cream mixture over potatoes. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F for 45-55 minutes or until potatoes are tender and top is golden brown. *Serves 12*

Janice Shelton • Indianola
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

COCONUT DREAM PIE

- 2 envelopes Dream Whip
- 2¼ cups cold milk, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 4-ounce packages coconut cream instant pudding
- 1 9-inch baked pastry shell or graham cracker pie crust
- 1 cup toasted coconut

In a large bowl, beat Dream Whip, 1 cup milk and vanilla with electric mixer on high speed for 6 minutes or until topping thickens and forms peaks. Add remaining 1¼ cups milk and pudding mixes, beat on low speed. Then beat on high speed for 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Spoon into pastry shell and refrigerate at least 4 hours. Garnish with toasted coconut. *Serves 8*

Annalee Buffington • Marshalltown • Consumers Energy

APPLE FRITTERS

- 2 medium Granny Smith apples
- 1 cup flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup milk
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- small handful raisins

Peel and cut apples into very thin pieces. Mix flour, baking powder, sugar, egg, milk and salt. Add apples and a small handful of raisins. Drop by tablespoons into deep-fat fryer at 350 degrees F until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. *Yield 20-24 fritters*

Penny Sue Haley • Keswick
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

CHRISTMAS COOKIE AND CANDY RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Aug. 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

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

MAIL: Recipes

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EDUCATING AND DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S COOPERATIVE LEADERS

The Youth Tour was a great experience to meet new people, see parts of our nation's capital, and learn about cooperatives' impact on their communities.

Maddie Schmitz,
Pella Cooperative
Electric Association

Youth Tour is an incredible experience full of so many lasting memories. The people I met on this trip will change me forever. There's something magical about what happened Youth Tour week. It's kind of like we all slipped into the same dream, and then slipped out of it and only we will ever be able to experience and describe what happened in that very special dream.

Elsie Lange,
Access Energy
Cooperative

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Youth Tour was an experience of a lifetime. I am so grateful.

Lily Mayo,
Butler County REC

Youth Tour was eye opening and inspiring. Talking to our senators and our representatives helped me realize they are normal people, but with great responsibility and knowledge. I was amazed by all the sights we got to see.

Leah Langel,
North West REC

Electric cooperatives are focused on all their members, not just those who are in control.

Colton Buell,
Consumers Energy

To learn more about the group's daily adventures, visit the Iowa Youth Tour Blog at iowayouthtour.blogspot.com.



The cooperative system is a very effective way to provide a service, while maintaining membership-owned leadership.

Lucas Wuebker,
Midland Power Cooperative

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

2023 Youth Tour
June 17-23, 2023
www.iowayouthtour.com



2022 PARTICIPANTS

- Elsie Lange** – Access Energy Cooperative
- Andi Scott** – Access Energy Cooperative
- Cadan Evanson** – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
- Riley Troendle** – Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
- Lily Mayo** – Butler County REC
- Nathan Burley** – Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association
- Gabriel Helmon** – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Jayce Reed** – Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Colton Buell** – Consumers Energy
- Teagan Glenney** – Consumers Energy
- Miles Wood** – Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative
- Ethan Blomme** – Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Grace Denning** – Harrison County REC
- Maci Juenger** – Heartland Power Cooperative
- Liz Muller** – Heartland Power Cooperative
- Hannah Grothaus** – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
- Isaac Johnson** – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
- Rayce Meyer** – Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
- Jaina Groen** – Lyon REC
- Amelia Schneidermann** – Lyon REC
- Lucas Wuebker** – Midland Power Cooperative
- Elaina Rosonke** – MiEnergy Cooperative
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- Holland Hunter** – Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
- Henry Bevington** – Southwest Iowa REC
- Alaina Whittington** – Southwest Iowa REC
- Kendra Tracy** – United Electric Cooperative

SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS DID AND SAW ON THIS YEAR'S YOUTH TOUR:

- » Washington Monument
- » World War II Memorial
- » Albert Einstein Memorial
- » Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- » Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- » The National Mall
- » Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- » Holocaust Memorial
- » Ford's Theater
- » Korean War Veterans Memorial
- » Lincoln Memorial
- » Washington National Cathedral
- » Mount Vernon
- » Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- » White House
- » U.S. Capitol



STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE UTILITY SCAMMERS

BY PAUL WESSLUND

In 2021, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received 5.7 million incident reports in the consumer marketplace. About half of those were identified as fraud and a quarter as identity theft. Those statistics don't tabulate utility fraud specifically, but the Better Business Bureau says it receives about 1,000 complaints of utility scams each year.

Some of the most common utility scams include:

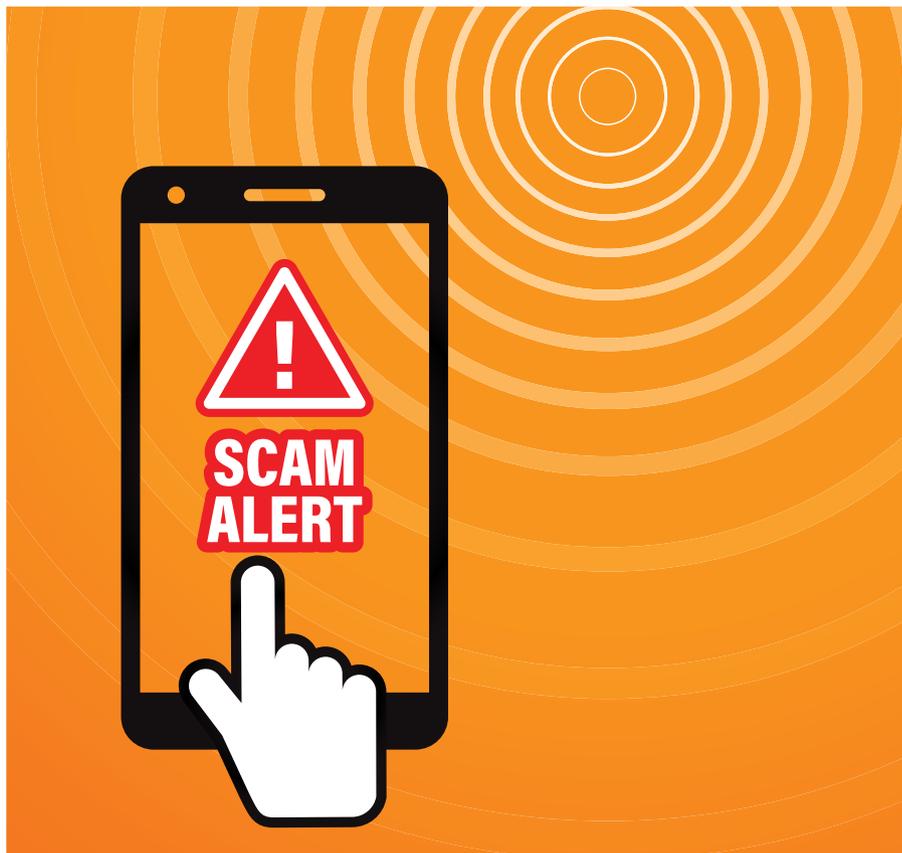
- **A random call.** The caller says you didn't pay your last electric bill, and your power will be cut off immediately – unless you pay right now by credit card over the phone. Caller ID shows it came from the utility; they even told you the exact amount of your most recent bill.
- **An alert that you overpaid your utility bill.** To get the refund, you need to provide your financial information.
- **A friendly couple in uniform knocks on your door.** They claim to be from the power company and are following up on high-bill complaints from your neighbors. They want to look at your utility bill so they can get the information code to make sure you aren't being double-charged.

These real-life stories may seem like obvious scams. Who would ever fall for them? It turns out about one in four people.

Scammers take you by surprise

While most people do the right thing and hang up the phone or contact their utility rather than handing over money or private information, more than \$6 billion in losses to various scams were reported in 2021. According to Utilities United Against Scams, the typical cost for each victim who lost money was about \$500.

Reading about avoiding utility scams makes it sound simple. But the thing about scammers is they take you by surprise. They might be the most



charming people you have ever met. They might be the meanest and most intimidating, bullying you into acting. It can be hard to say “no” in the moment.

Scammers are notorious for recognizing when people are most vulnerable – Christmas, right after a tornado, or with the approach of really hot or cold weather. Fraud reports skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and FTC figures show complaints rising from almost 3.5 million in 2019 to more than 5.5 million in 2021.

Latest trends in utility fraud

Con artists keep up with technology – they'll come at you through email and texting. In one of the top recent scams, you're told to pay by gift or cash card, giving the swindlers the card and PIN number so they can easily access your money. (Note: A utility will never ask you to pay by a gift card.)

Another new scheme tells you to pay your bill with cryptocurrency. Your electric co-op will not require you to pay by bitcoin or similar methods.

The best way to avoid being a victim of a utility scam is to call your electric co-op directly. Scammers will try to rush you into acting, but no billing situation is so urgent you can't check on it.

If you do lose money on a scam, don't be embarrassed. Report it to your electric co-op. The state attorney general is responsible for going after fraud and will want to know about any suspicious schemes. You might even be able to get your money back.

Letting the appropriate contacts know about a scamming operation can help protect others in our communities.

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.

EMERGING ELECTRIC FARMING EQUIPMENT

BY KATHERINE LOVING

It's no surprise that sensitivity to fuel costs and a growing desire for energy independence are driving innovation in electric vehicles. Similarly, these same factors are creating increased interest in electric farming equipment.

Running a farm is traditionally dependent on oil and gas to keep machinery operating. Fuel costs impact the bottom line of agricultural production and are a major driver of food prices and farming revenue.

One significant new change for farming equipment is the trend of switching fossil fuel-powered equipment to electric equipment.

Electric tractors are now commercially available from multiple manufacturers and niche, electric-only companies. There are many benefits of replacing diesel motors with electric motors. Highly efficient electric motors can operate at 90% thermal efficiency, which helps provide cost savings over time, compared to diesel motors that operate at 30%-40% thermal efficiency.

Challenges in battery life

But there are significant barriers to electric farming technologies. Electric tractors cost about a third more than traditional tractors. Battery life for electric tractors typically ranges from three to six hours depending on hauling weight and workload, which can be a nonstarter for many larger

Electric tractors are now commercially available from multiple manufacturers, like the John Deere SESAM shown here, as well as from niche, electric-only companies.



Photo Credit: John Deere

farms where tractors are expected to run all day doing heavy-duty work.

While battery life can be problematic, advancements have been made over the last few years. Some tractors can carry two batteries, allowing for a mid-day switch without returning the tractor to a charging point. At this stage of development, electric tractors are likely better suited to smaller farms or vineyards.

Additional electric and renewable options for the farm

Utility terrain vehicles tend to look more like their gas-powered counterparts in terms of capability

and price, making them a more accessible entry into electric equipment on the farm.

The future of farm electrification may be focused on renewable energy, either in the form of solar power or waste heat recovery systems. There is ongoing research into the feasibility of placing solar panels on farms coupled with a battery storage system, then using that system as a fuel source for electric tractor batteries. Solar power is already being used to directly power autonomous precision sprayers for row crops.

There are still limitations on the heavy-duty use of electric farming equipment. Still, research and development will continue until these electric technologies are on par with their diesel or gas counterparts.

With more time and investment, electric farming equipment will likely become more widespread in the coming years.

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

Some farmers are switching to electric tractors, but many continue to utilize diesel-powered tractors. Electric tractors lack the battery power many farmers need for a long day of working in the fields.



NEW OUT BACK CONTRIBUTOR

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living is pleased to welcome Darcy Dougherty Maulsby as our new Out Back contributor. As a fifth-generation farmer, business owner, author, marketing specialist, historian and speaker, Darcy helps businesses uncover their “wow” stories and share those stories to inspire people to dream bigger, revitalize their rural communities and change the world for the good, one story at a time.

Darcy is proud to be part of a farm family that operates a Century Farm in Calhoun County near Lake City and Yetter. She is an electric cooperative member and also serves as president of the Calhoun County Corn Growers, a director with the Calhoun County Farm Bureau and an Iowa Soybean

Association District Advisory Committee member.

She is also passionate about helping people preserve local history. She serves as board president of Central School Preservation in Lake City, vice president of the Calhoun County Historic Preservation Commission, and is a member of the Titanic Historical Society and the Lincoln Highway Association.

Thank you to Valerie Van Kooten

We would also like to thank Valerie Van Kooten for serving as the Out Back author for the past eight years. We appreciate the monthly content she provided for our readers. Her musings and observations certainly brought smiles and chuckles over the years.



VISIT US AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR!

The Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa are pleased to once again sponsor the 4-H Exhibits Building at the 2022 Iowa State Fair.

If you're planning a visit to the Iowa State Fair from Aug. 11-21, make sure to stop by and see us in the air conditioned 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest corner of the fairgrounds.

Electric co-op staff from across the state will hand out plastic hard hats and suckers for the kids while supplies last. Kids can also try on some lineworker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station!

We look forward to connecting with our co-op members at the Iowa State Fair this summer. Please stop by our booth and say hello!



IN THE COMMUNITY

Stop by and see us during the #IowaStateFair! Iowa's electric cooperatives are handing out suckers and **hard hats** in the 4-H Exhibits Building on the southwest end of the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO!

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When I was volunteering one Saturday morning this summer at Central School, the museum in my hometown of Lake City, a high school friend and his family stopped by. They live in Orange County, California, not far from Disneyland. It was great to meet the whole crew, who wore matching blue T-shirts with "Oh! the Places We Go..." in yellow letters.

I wondered what it's like for my friend's California kids to experience small-town Iowa. Then I started thinking about how I couldn't wait to get away from rural Iowa 30 years ago when I graduated from high school.

Growing up in rural Iowa

I grew up on a farm between Lake City and Yetter, a child of the 1980s Farm Crisis. While no one ever explicitly told me to avoid an ag career and move to the city, the message was implied. When I left Lake City, though, I was still a farm girl at heart, thanks to my years as a Lake Creek Go-Getters 4-H Club member and the national awards I won with the horticulture team from the Southern Cal FFA chapter.

Plus, I had seen a bit of the wider world already. Around my junior year in high school, my parents encouraged me to write an essay and send it to the Calhoun County REC, which was accepting entries for the Iowa Youth Tour competition. That essay earned me an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., that summer.

I took my first airplane ride. I got to meet with Iowa's Congressional delegation. (The one who stood out to me was Rep. Fred Grandy, mainly because I remembered him as "Gopher" on *The Love Boat* TV show.) I even started to get the idea that good communication skills could pay off.

I went on to earn journalism and mass communication and history degrees at Iowa State University before starting my own marketing



JUNE 1991

and communication business in 2002. Since then, I've become an author and have published seven books of non-fiction Iowa history. I'm regularly asked to share my stories during ag career days at local middle schools. I always tell the kids that writing skills opened up amazing opportunities for me starting in high school, thanks to that winning essay and the Iowa Youth Tour.

Now I've come full circle and am grateful to be your new columnist for *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*. If you like stories of Iowa farming, food, history and rural living, we have a lot in common. Thanks for joining me on this journey. Oh, the places we'll go!

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



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for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

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