

JUNE 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Access Energy Cooperative  
offers paperless options

Three surprising facts  
about energy efficiency

Picnic and potluck recipes

Access Energy Cooperative helps local Habitat for Humanity project ▶ See Page 5



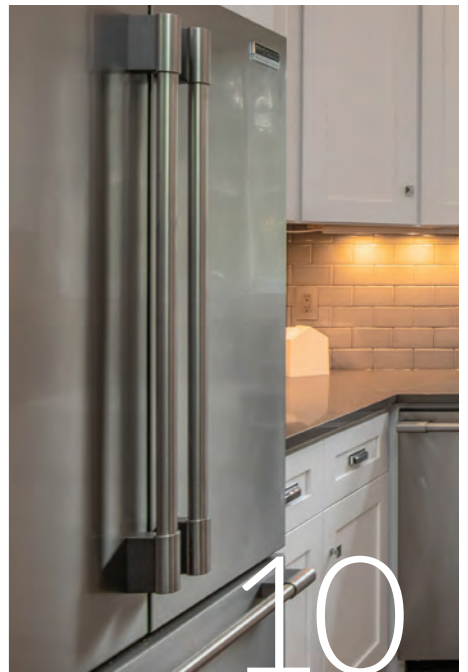
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*Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 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.

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**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**  
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### ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Julie Andresen, 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 receive \$100!

# ENTER A DESERVING LOCAL VOLUNTEER IN OUR 2023 CONTEST

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



Songwriter Jana Stanfield once said, "I cannot do all the good that the world needs. But the world needs all the good that I can do."

We all know at least one person who lives by this credo and makes our neighborhood or community a better place to live. I encourage you to take a few moments this month to enter them in our 2023 statewide Shine the Light contest! Three nominees will ultimately receive \$2,500 donations to their local charities.

## How to nominate a volunteer

Member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate a local volunteer at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com) during the month of June. (If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative, you are a member-consumer!) In 500 words or less, tell us how your nominee is making a difference and how their local charity might use the donation. Our panel of judges will review all entries and select three winners this summer. We'll announce the winners after Labor Day and feature them in the September issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

## Celebrating community commitment

Why is your power utility participating in this effort? Your electric cooperative is locally owned and governed by you, the members it serves, and is mission driven to improve quality of life. Your co-op is also guided by seven cooperative principles, including concern for community. Our annual Shine the Light contest is a fun way to celebrate the people who give back.

**Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$2,500 for their charity!**

Contest entries accepted at [IowaShineTheLight.com](http://IowaShineTheLight.com) during the month of June



Think of a neighbor, friend or family member who goes above and beyond to serve. These unsung heroes deserve recognition for their efforts, and this contest is a great way to show your appreciation.

*Erin Campbell is the director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

Time is running out, so make sure to nominate someone by June 30 at [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.IowaShineTheLight.com).

The person you nominate could receive a \$2,500 donation to their local charity!

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win LED string lights!

Light up your backyard oasis with LED string lights. These warm white lights add flair and ambience to a porch, gazebo, fence, balcony and more. We're offering three sets of lights in this month's contest! The ETL-certified, high-efficiency bulbs save more than 90% energy versus other incandescent bulbs.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than June 30, 2023. 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 Smart Lock from the April issue was Dan Langel from North West REC.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 15	Board meeting
JUNE 18	Father's Day
JULY 2	Access Energy Cooperative 85 <sup>th</sup> anniversary
JULY 4	Office closed for Independence Day
JULY 6	Annual Meeting voting materials mailed Director election online voting available
JULY 20	Board meeting
AUG. 1	5 p.m. Annual Meeting of Members

You can access your account information 24/7, year-round on our website at [www.accessenergycoop.com](http://www.accessenergycoop.com) 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.

## BEAT THE PEAK

BY KEVIN WHEELER



If you look around your home, you likely have more devices and equipment that require electricity than ever before. Our connected lives are increasingly dependent on more electricity to function. At the same time, as demand for electricity rises, Access Energy Cooperative must deliver an uninterrupted 24/7 power supply – regardless of market conditions or other circumstances.

As you would expect based on your family's habits, electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand. Access Energy Cooperative must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy needs of all members during times of highest energy use or "peak hours." These peak times are typically in the morning as people start their day and in the evening as people return to their homes.

What you may not know is that electric utilities, including Access Energy Cooperative, typically pay more for electricity – either from a power plant or from another utility with excess power – during those morning and evening "energy rush hours." In addition, the demand for electricity is even higher when it's especially cold outside, when heating systems must run longer to warm our homes.

### Understanding peak demand

If the "peak times" concept is a bit puzzling, here's an easy way to think about it: it's like a major concert. We know costs go up when there is strong demand for tickets (or electricity), and both are subject to the basic economic laws of supply and demand. When a lot of people want the same thing, it's more expensive. When they don't, it's cheaper – like a bargain matinee or an "early bird" special at a restaurant.

### Saving energy during peak times

During peak periods when the cost to produce and purchase power is higher, we encourage you to take simple steps to save energy, such as turning your thermostat up a few notches, turning off unnecessary lights and waiting to use large appliances during off-peak times.

You can also save energy by plugging electronics and equipment, such as computers, printers and TVs into a power strip, then turn the power strip off at the switch during peak hours. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings to sync up with off-peak periods. When we all work together to reduce energy use during periods of high electricity demand, we can relieve pressure on the grid and save a little money along the way.

Another benefit of this time-of-use approach to electricity use allows greater control over your bill. Reducing the peak impacts the power-supply cost to every co-op member. This is particularly noticeable as energy costs have risen across the U.S. Collectively, everyone conserving energy and making small changes can truly make a difference.

Remember, taking simple steps to save energy throughout the day and shifting energy-intensive chores to off-peak evening hours is a smart choice for you and our community.

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

## HOW YOUR CO-OP WORKS

### ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION AND BYLAWS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

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

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Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
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# SMART THERMOSTATS

BY ALAN RAYMER



Cooling and heating your home typically account for a large portion of your energy bills. Smart thermostats can help keep cooling and heating costs

in check, with ENERGY STAR®-certified models saving about 8% on annual energy costs.

Smart thermostats are becoming more affordable (as little as \$70!) and offer a variety of bells and whistles. The average model will allow you to set custom temperature schedules, adjust the settings from anywhere via your phone, and over time, learn your cooling and heating preferences.

Your new smart thermostat will come with step-by-step instructions, but this project typically involves shutting off your heating and cooling system at the breaker panel, removing the old thermostat, installing the new smart thermostat and connecting it to your home Wi-Fi.

To be safe when switching to a smart thermostat, remember to carefully read the installation instructions before you get started.

*Alan Raymer is the member services representative for Access Energy Cooperative.*

# NOMINATING COMMITTEE NAMES BOARD CANDIDATES

**DISTRICT I**



David Hollingsworth



Thomas Kientz



Jerry Barker



Allan Woline



Loren Holtkamp



Michael Holtkamp

**REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Nominating Committee of Access Energy Cooperative, duly appointed by the Board of Directors, hereby nominates the following members of the Cooperative for the office of Director for the ensuing term of three (3) years each, all to be elected at the Annual Meeting to be held August 1, 2023.

**THREE-YEAR TERM**  
(Three to be elected)

<u>DISTRICT NO. I</u>	David Hollingsworth	Thomas Kientz
<u>DISTRICT NO. II:</u>	Jerry Barker	Allan Woline
<u>DISTRICT NO. III:</u>	Loren Holtkamp	Michael Holtkamp

DATED at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023 and posted on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023, in the office of the above-named Cooperative.

Chairman Randy White

Secretary Myrna Folker

IN THE COMMUNITY

# CO-OP ASSISTS WITH LOCAL HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT

Access Energy Cooperative has partnered with the local Habitat for Humanity to provide electric water heaters for housing projects. As a proud supporter of this local effort, which contributes to the needs of our communities, Alan Raymer, Access Energy Cooperative member services representative, delivered the water heater for the 2023 Jefferson County project.



## STUDENTS JOB SHADOW AT COOPERATIVE

Access Energy Cooperative is a proud supporter of our communities and the professional development of local youth. Students exploring career choices recently visited the co-op. **Mattias Luitjens** from WACO High School job shadowed in our Information Technology department. **Hunter Gregory** and **Landan Lowenberg** visited the cooperative to explore a career in linework.



**Mattias Luitjens**



**Hunter Gregory (left) and Landan Lowenberg visit with Kurt Lowenberg (right), safety director/assistant operations manager with Access Energy Cooperative.**

## CONGRATULATIONS LINEWORKER SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!



**Payton Stevens**



**Vegas Watson**

**Congratulations to Payton Stevens and Vegas Watson for being awarded a 2023 Access Energy Cooperative \$2,000 Lineworker Scholarship!** Stevens will graduate from Central Lee High School, and Watson will graduate from New London Community High School. Both plan to enroll in lineworker technical school training.

## PRIVACY POLICY

### INFORMATION WE COLLECT

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

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

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

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

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

member-consumers/customers will be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures and possible termination.

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

### RIGHT TO BE INFORMED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# SMARTHUB MAY BE THE ANSWER

If you have questions about your bill, finding answers may be easier than you think!

Access Energy Cooperative members can use SmartHub on our website or via an app to access information on your bill, energy usage, billing history and so much more.

Members can view their actual data through detailed graphs and monitor daily consumption anytime on SmartHub. Seeing data helps members recognize usage patterns and identify times and ways to cut back on energy consumption. This information empowers users to save both electricity and money.

Some of the helpful things you can do with SmartHub include:

- Access your account anytime you want
- View, print or download billing statements
- Pay your bill
- Monitor your energy usage
- Receive email or text notifications regarding your bill
- Report power outages
- Sign up for paperless billing

*To sign up for paperless billing, you must first have a SmartHub account. We are happy to answer any questions you have. Call us at 866-242-4232. Or you can email our billing department at [billing@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:billing@accessenergycoop.com).*

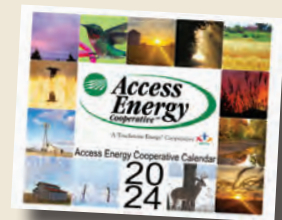


## ENROLLING IN PAPERLESS BILLING IS EASY!

- Log in to your SmartHub account.
- Select My Profile from the menu bar at the top.
- Choose the link on the left side, "Update My Paperless Settings."
- Under "Paperless" on the right, switch the button to "on" to activate the change.



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



When one door closes, another opens. The photo contest for this year has closed and winners are being selected. Thank you for so many wonderful entries!

But don't stop taking photos! We are already accepting photos for the 2025 Access Energy Cooperative calendar. Summer is a beautiful time to take colorful photos. Horizontal photos work best for calendar entries. Submissions can be sent to [mktg@accessenergycoop.com](mailto:mktg@accessenergycoop.com) before March 31, 2024.

Thirteen photos will be chosen as featured photos and winners will be awarded \$75, plus an additional \$25 bill credit if they are a member of the cooperative.

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

## SAVE THE DATE 2023 ANNUAL MEETING AUG. 1

Save the date for our Annual Meeting!  
You could win a \$500 bill credit!

The grand prize is a \$500 bill credit. The member drawn must be present to win. If the member is not present at the meeting at the time of the drawing, no grand prize will be awarded. However, if the \$500 bill credit is not awarded, it will be added to the 2024 grand prize.

**Tuesday, Aug. 1 at 5 p.m.  
McMillan Park, Mt. Pleasant**

# Picnic & POTLUCK Favorites



## CALICO BEANS

- ½ pound bacon
- ½ cup onions
- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 1 15-ounce can lima beans, drained
- 1 15-ounce can pork and beans, drained
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- ⅔ cup brown sugar
- ⅓ cup sugar

Brown bacon and crumble. Brown onions in bacon drippings. Mix ground beef, bacon and onions in a 2½-quart casserole dish or a slow cooker. Add beans, ketchup, dry mustard, vinegar, brown sugar and sugar. Stir and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour or for 2 hours in a slow cooker. If desired, add ham or sausage to ground beef. *Serves 12*

**Karla Cose • Glidden  
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative**

## MACARONI SALAD

- 1 pound macaroni
- 1 red or green pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 carrots, shredded
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 16-ounce package cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup vinegar

**Add garnishes (tomatoes, parsley), if desired**

Cook macaroni and drain. Mix with green pepper, onion, carrots, celery and cheddar cheese. Use less cheese if desired. Make a dressing by mixing mayonnaise, sugar, sweetened condensed milk, salt, pepper and vinegar. Pour dressing over salad and chill. Stir before serving.

**Cindy Snider • Seymour  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.**



## ITALIAN BEEF FOR A CROWD

- 25 pounds arm or chuck roast
- 5 packets Italian dressing mix
- ¼ cup oregano
- ¼ cup garlic powder
- 2 jars pepperoncini buns
- cheese

For one roaster, cut roast into 1-pound chunks. Add dressing mixes, oregano, garlic powder and pepperoncini. Cook at 225 degrees F for 14 hours. Shred and serve with buns, au jus and cheese. *Serves 75*

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids • Lyon REC

## FESTIVE SALAD

- 1 large bunch Romaine lettuce
- 1 red apple
- 1 pear
- 6 green onions
- ¾ cup cashews
- ¾ cup raisins
- ¾ cup feta cheese, optional
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ½ cup canola oil (or preferred oil)
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds

Cut up lettuce. Cut apple, pear and onions into bite-size pieces. Mix lettuce, apple, pear, onions, cashews, raisins and feta cheese, if desired. Set salad aside. Make a dressing by mixing sugar, lemon juice, mustard, vinegar, oil and poppy seeds. Add dressing to salad mixture right before serving. *Serves 8-10*

Cindy Tripp • Panora • Guthrie County REC

## SUNSHINE JELL-O SALAD

- 1 3-ounce package orange Jell-O
- 1 3-ounce package cherry Jell-O
- 1 3-ounce package lime Jell-O
- 4 cups boiling water, divided
- 3½ cups cold water, divided
- 1 3-ounce package lemon Jell-O
- 4 cups whipped topping

Prepare orange, cherry and lime Jell-O flavors separately by dissolving each package in 1 cup boiling water and then adding 1 cup cold water. Pour each flavor into a separate 8-inch square pan. Chill to firm. Once firm, cut into ½-inch cubes. Set aside a few cubes of each flavor for garnish. Dissolve lemon Jell-O in 1 cup boiling water and then add ½ cup cold water. Chill until slightly thickened. Blend in whipped topping. Mix in orange, cherry and lime Jell-O cubes, except those set aside for garnish. Put Jell-O mixture in a glass bowl. Garnish with reserved cubes on top. Chill until firm. *Serves 16*

Sonya Colvin • Ames • Consumers Energy

## CHOCOLATE-FILLED CUPCAKES

- 2½ cups unsifted flour
- 2½ cups sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup cocoa
- ½ teaspoon plus a pinch of salt, divided
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 cup hot tap water
- 2 eggs, slightly stirred
- 1 cup coconut oil, melted
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 cup butter, softened, divided
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4¼ cups powdered sugar, divided
- 2 egg whites, stiffly beaten
- ½ teaspoon almond, orange or hazelnut extract

Sift together flour, 2 cups sugar, baking powder, cocoa and ¼ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Dissolve baking soda in hot water. Then, in a separate bowl, mix dissolved baking soda together with eggs, coconut oil, buttermilk and 1 teaspoon vanilla. You may substitute the buttermilk with 1 cup whole milk mixed with 1 teaspoon white vinegar. Pour batter into paper-lined muffin tins, filling ⅔ full. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Cool completely before filling cupcake centers.

For filling, mix ½ cup sugar, whole milk, ⅔ cup butter, ¼ teaspoon salt, water and ½ teaspoon vanilla. Beat for 7 minutes or until very smooth. Add ¼ cup powdered sugar and beat 3-5 more minutes. Stuff the filling into a cake decorator tube and fill each cupcake in the center until you are just able to see the filling peek out. Take a frosting knife and scrape off any excess filling.

For frosting, cream together 1¼ cups powdered sugar and 1⅓ cup butter. Add the beaten egg whites remaining, 1¼ cups powdered sugar, pinch of salt, ½ teaspoon vanilla and either almond, orange, hazelnut or any preferred flavor. Beat until smooth. Use a frosting decorator or knife to frost the cupcakes. Store in refrigerator. Keeps well for two to three days or longer in a freezer. *Makes 12-18 cupcakes*

Sue Leerhoff • Clarksville • Butler County REC

WANTED:

## PORK RECIPES

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

Deadline is June 30

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





# THREE SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

BY PAUL WESSLUND

*Americans are more energy efficient than you might think. And you may also be surprised to learn that we can do even better with some innovative thinking and by controlling hidden power users.*

*Electricity touches our lives nearly every minute of every day, making up about 5% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). So, it makes sense to use it wisely, whether you're concerned about how it affects the environment or you want to save money - or both.*

*Here are three surprising facts about energy efficiency that can help you make the best use of your electricity.*

## 1 PROOF OF EFFICIENCY

A little-known way of measuring efficiency performance is with a statistic called the "energy intensity index." It shows how much energy it takes to produce a dollar of the economy's GDP. Another term that's been used for that idea is "energy productivity."

Whichever term you use, the indexes show that Americans are getting better at creating more economic activity with less energy - energy intensity is down and productivity is up. Way up.

The numbers show that energy intensity is about half what it was 30 years ago. That's because we're making strides in a range of ways,

from building codes to light bulbs to motor vehicle mileage. And these improvements are expected to continue. The Department of Energy projects energy intensity will decline by 30% over the next 30 years.

## 2 OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

The old phrase "you have to spend money to make money" is catchy because, at first, it sounds like it doesn't make sense. But when it comes to appliances that consume a lot of energy, it can make dollars and sense.

From dishwashers to computers, energy efficiency is improving dramatically every year as



technology, federal rules and plain old competition give you a better bang for your buck. In fact, if your refrigerator or dishwasher is more than 10 years old, the money you can save on energy use for a new appliance could pay for itself in just a few years.

The yellow Energy Guide labels found on products at your appliance store will tell you how much you can save with a new purchase. Another way to compare the old to the new is to search “flip your fridge” on Google or another online search engine. It will take you to an ENERGY STAR® calculator that will compare the energy use of your current appliances to what’s available in stores.

## 3 SLAYING VAMPIRES

Did you know you could be spending \$100 to \$400 a year on energy you don’t even need? That frightening fact even comes with

scary names—phantom power or vampire electronics. It’s the TV and video game console that draw power so they’re ready to turn on instantly. It’s the digital clocks. It’s the computers and phones plugged in even though they’re fully charged.

Getting rid of phantom power can be tricky. You probably don’t want to regularly shut off your wireless router or constantly reboot your smart TV. But you can plug several devices into a power strip and turn them off when they are not being used. Or smart power strips are available that will do that for you. When you’re shopping for new electronics and appliances, look for the latest ENERGY STAR®-rated models that take vampire loads into account. It is also worthwhile to take a notepad through each room of your home and list anything that’s plugged in. This helps you figure out which energy users you might be able to control without causing too much inconvenience.

Phantom power costs do add up, but it’s also true that your home has much bigger energy users. If you’re

concerned about energy costs, ensure your heating and cooling system is up to date and working efficiently, and your windows and doors aren’t leaking air.

Your electric co-op can advise you on the most effective steps for energy savings. After all, they’re your local leading authority on home energy use. And that’s no surprise.

*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.*



Phantom power is energy consumed by electronics and appliances when they’re in standby mode but not being used. Photo Source: Louis Poitras



The latest energy intensity index shows that we’re getting better at creating more economic activity with less energy. Energy intensity is down, and productivity is up. Photo Source: Peter Magera



# EFFICIENCY TIPS FOR RESIDENTIAL WELL PUMPS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

If your home's water comes from a well, you are responsible for maintaining the well, ensuring drinking water is safe and paying for the electricity needed to run the well pump. There are efficiency measures you can take to ensure the well is energy efficient and is running at optimal levels.

**Get your well system inspected.** If you're concerned about how much you pay to pump water from your well, start with an inspection. Well pumps are put to work daily, and parts will wear over time. Even when things are working well, regular maintenance can improve efficiency and increase the system's lifespan.

One of the most common causes of increased energy use is underground water line leakage between the pump and the home. Water lines can freeze, break or be damaged by digging or a vehicle driving over underground lines. Other issues can include waterlogged pressure tanks and malfunctioning equipment.

Proper system design and sizing can save energy. Ask a professional if your well equipment is appropriately sized for your needs. In some cases, adding a variable-speed drive can save energy. Keep in mind, well systems don't last forever. Consider design and sizing before your existing system fails.

**Save money by lowering your water use.** The less water you use, the less energy your well uses. Here's how you can conserve water and electricity in your home:

- **Toilets.** Check your toilet for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If the color appears in the bowl without flushing, your toilet has a leak. This is likely caused by a worn flapper, which is an inexpensive and easy do-it-yourself fix.

If your toilets were installed before 1994, they are likely using more



Only run your washing machine with full loads to save water and energy.



Switch to a low-flow showerhead with flow rates of less than 2 gallons per minute for maximum water efficiency.

Photo Sources: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

than 4 gallons per flush, which is well above new energy standards of 1.6 gallons. The average family can save nearly 13,000 gallons per year by replacing old, inefficient toilets with WaterSense-labeled models.

Another option is the tried-and-true plastic bottle method. Place sand or pebbles into a 1- or 2-liter bottle and put it in the toilet tank (you can also buy toilet tank bags). This results in less water filling the tank and less water being flushed.

- **Dishwasher.** If you wash dishes by hand, start using your dishwasher instead. New ENERGY STAR®-certified dishwashers use less than half the energy it takes to wash dishes by hand. According to the Department of Energy, this simple change can save more than 8,000 gallons of water each year.
- **Washing machine.** Run your machine only with full loads to save water and energy. You may also consider upgrading to an ENERGY STAR®-

certified washing machine, which uses about 20% less energy and about 30% less water than regular washers.

- **Showerheads and faucets.** Get leaky showerheads and faucets fixed. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water per year.

Aerators are inexpensive devices that reduce the amount of water flow. For maximum water efficiency, look for faucet aerators with no more than 1 gallon per minute (GPM) flow rates and low-flow showerhead flow rates of less than 2 GPM.

Understanding proper well system design, maintenance and water conservation will help save energy and money all year.

*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.*

# BUILDING ENERGY EFFICIENCY INTO YOUR HOME

BY LES O'DELL

Energy efficiency continues to be a major factor in home design. While better energy bills may be the driver for some homeowners, energy efficiency has many benefits, such as making homes more comfortable, providing a more even temperature or improving quality of life.

“There are a lot of beneficial unintended consequences that happen when you improve the efficiency of a home,” explains Todd Abercrombie, owner of Midwest Building Performance.

“For instance, moisture management, prevention of mold, improvement of indoor air quality and more.”

To accomplish energy conservation, contractors and consumers take a variety of approaches. This may include looking for higher efficiency kitchen or bathroom appliances, using LED lighting throughout homes and implementing water-saving features as well as tankless water heaters.

Some of it even comes down to the building materials used during construction or how a home is laid out.

“People want better windows, better insulation and better roofs,” says Donna Youngquist of R&D Custom Homes. “Customers may even want zone systems on their HVAC units to control the temperature in different rooms. This is so that an underutilized room is not heated or cooled as much as rooms that are used more often.”

## Benefits of a home energy audit

To make any residence – new construction or an existing home – more energy-efficient, builders suggest a complete energy audit, which looks at various factors that unnecessarily cost consumers money.

“An audit looks at the big picture and analyzes things such as insulation in the attic and walls to pinpoint all of the various gaps and cracks that might need to be sealed,” Abercrombie says. “It’s helpful to



Photo provided by Andrew Brindley, H-E Homes

have diagnostic equipment such as a blower door and infrared cameras.”

Additionally, an audit will look at heating and cooling systems as well as other systems, including lighting, appliances and electronics.

## Value during new construction

Energy efficiency is critical to be kept in mind even during new construction.

“I’ve done blower door tests even before installation to make sure we’re getting things right,” Abercrombie explains.

“There are certain things you just cannot get to after the house is buttoned up with drywall, windows and doors.”

Energy efficiency is all about paying attention to details. While sometimes it is about product selection, it is often how things are installed and

considering other factors which often get missed during the rush to construct a home.

One place that often gets overlooked when it comes to efficiency is insulation in the ceiling of the home. Abercrombie calls it “leaky ceiling syndrome” because when builders think of an efficient house, they often think about what they can do to make the walls more airtight, but they frequently ignore the ceiling plane.

“The area between the ceiling and the attic doesn’t get sealed as well as it should,” he explains. “This is the most important boundary in the home, and we have more leakage there than we do in the walls.”

*Les O’Dell is a special contributor to Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.*



# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR GENERATING POWER

BY JENNAH DENNEY



Offshore wind farms provide many of the same benefits as land-based wind farms, including renewable energy production for domestic use and creating new employment opportunities. Photo Source: Nina Ali



Photo Source: Trico

The ways electric cooperatives power communities have changed over time. These changes will continue as advantageous economic conditions and technological innovation keep moving the nation's electric grid toward increased use of renewable energy sources.

The electric grid's efficacy and durability depend on several sources of power generation, and electric co-ops have invested in cutting-edge technologies to meet and predict consumer-members' energy needs. Your electric cooperative continuously monitors new technologies, develops strategies for adapting to them, and shares best practices with fellow co-ops.

Several revolutionary technologies for creating electricity are reshaping the future of power generation. The following are a few that are currently on electric co-ops' radars.

## Offshore wind

Offshore wind farms provide many of the same benefits as land-based wind farms. And because the ocean provides more than enough space to install several turbines, offshore wind is positioned miles out at sea, barely visible from the land and away from sea routes and ecologically sensitive areas.

Often wind speeds offshore are higher than on land. The wind is stronger, steadier and less turbulent than on land. Slight changes in wind speed result in substantial improvements in energy production. For example, a turbine operating in winds of 15 mph can produce twice as much energy as one operating in winds of 12 mph.

## Battery energy storage

Of course, renewable energy solutions have their challenges. We need electricity around the clock, yet we don't have sunlight and wind 24 hours a day. This means we need greater investments in energy storage projects to leverage electricity created through renewable sources. Energy storage will

play an essential role in enabling the grid to be more flexible and resilient.

Energy storage is expected to expand significantly in 2023, following robust growth in 2022. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, developers and power plant owners plan to increase utility-scale battery storage capacity in the U.S. nearly fourfold in the next three years, reaching 30 gigawatts (GW) by the end of 2025.

## Small nuclear

Nuclear energy has been a source of power generation for a long time, constituting approximately 15% of the fuel mix for 661 electric co-ops in the U.S. In total, 93 commercial nuclear reactors are operational in 28 states.

Many in the industry are keeping an eye on the development of a new wave of nuclear power plants that may be on the horizon, known as small modular reactors (SMRs).

SMRs can generate carbon-free, reliable baseload power on a footprint comparable to that of a conventional coal-fired power plant. SMRs currently being developed in the U.S. come in various sizes, technological options, capabilities and deployment situations. These advanced reactors, ranging in size from 10 to 300 megawatts (MW), can be used for power generation, to process heat, desalination and other industrial applications. SMRs also provide numerous other benefits, including lower capital expenditures, siting flexibility and the capacity for additional power expansions.

As our nation's energy sources continue to shift, electric co-ops remain committed to exploring the best sources and technologies for their local communities and the consumer-members they serve.

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

# SAVOR THE JOY OF IMPERFECTION

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Do you ever wonder why some life lessons take so long to learn? For me, one of those lessons has been progress, not perfection.

When I was a kid, this was the time of year I should have been working hard to prepare my many 4-H fair projects for the Calhoun County Expo. Oh sure, I took care of my pigs daily, but some of my cooking entries and other fair projects always seemed to become last-minute, mad-dash scrambles.

As odd as it sounds, I wasn't procrastinating because I was lazy. It was because I was afraid my work wouldn't be good enough. If it wasn't perfect and if I didn't get a blue ribbon (or qualify for the Iowa State Fair), my efforts were wasted – or so I thought. My parents didn't raise me to be a perfectionist. For some reason, though, I put all that ridiculous pressure on myself.

## A contest "date"

That's why the perfectionist in me was shocked when my friend David Tallman from Cherokee recently shared a humorous story with me. A number of years ago, his mother encouraged him to enter a *Taste of Home* magazine cooking contest sponsored by the *Cherokee Times* newspaper. The rules specified that each recipe had to include Dromedary dates. David wasn't interested, but his mom persisted.

On a lark, he decided to doctor up a cornbread mix. In addition to following the directions on the box, he mixed in a can of chopped green chilies, an 8-ounce bag of shredded taco cheese and a box of chopped dates. Then he poured the batter into cast iron pans shaped like ears of corn.

He found an attractive wicker basket and lined it with corn-themed fabric and clear plastic wrap. He arranged a dozen date/cornbread sticks in the basket, along with individual packets of jelly and honey, and dropped his contest entry off at the local newspaper office.



"My dad was an administrative dietician, and he always said if your food is unappealing to the eye, no one will want to eat it," David says. "I kept that in mind."

Would you believe David won first prize? His award included a case of chopped Dromedary dates and an imitation pewter, daily-bread-themed plate.

"Even months later, women would congratulate me on my winning recipe," he says. "Their husbands loved it whenever they made that date/cornbread."

Ironically, some contest organizers seemed a little miffed that a man had won. No one bothered to take David's photo for the newspaper – not until three days after the big event.

"I felt that since they didn't bother to take my picture the day of the contest, the prizes didn't mean much to me – plus, I'd made up the recipe as a prank anyway," David says. "I gave the plate to my niece and nephew to encourage them to become good cooks. It worked! My nephew became a certified chef, and my niece is a fantastic home cook."

## A taste of success

An avid home cook myself, I knew I needed to try making date/cornbread sticks. My perfectionist tendency reared its ugly head, though. Oh no – the sticks weren't releasing cleanly from the pan. Did I bake them long enough? Why am I such an incompetent person?

But then I took a bite and savored the wisdom of "progress, not perfection." It's amazing how chopped dates, taco cheese and chilies elevate boxed cornbread mix into a gourmet creation – even if my cornbread didn't look contest-worthy. As David would say, "Who knew it would actually taste so good!"

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*



Scan the QR code  
for the recipe or  
visit [bit.ly/3MdUInf](http://bit.ly/3MdUInf).





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