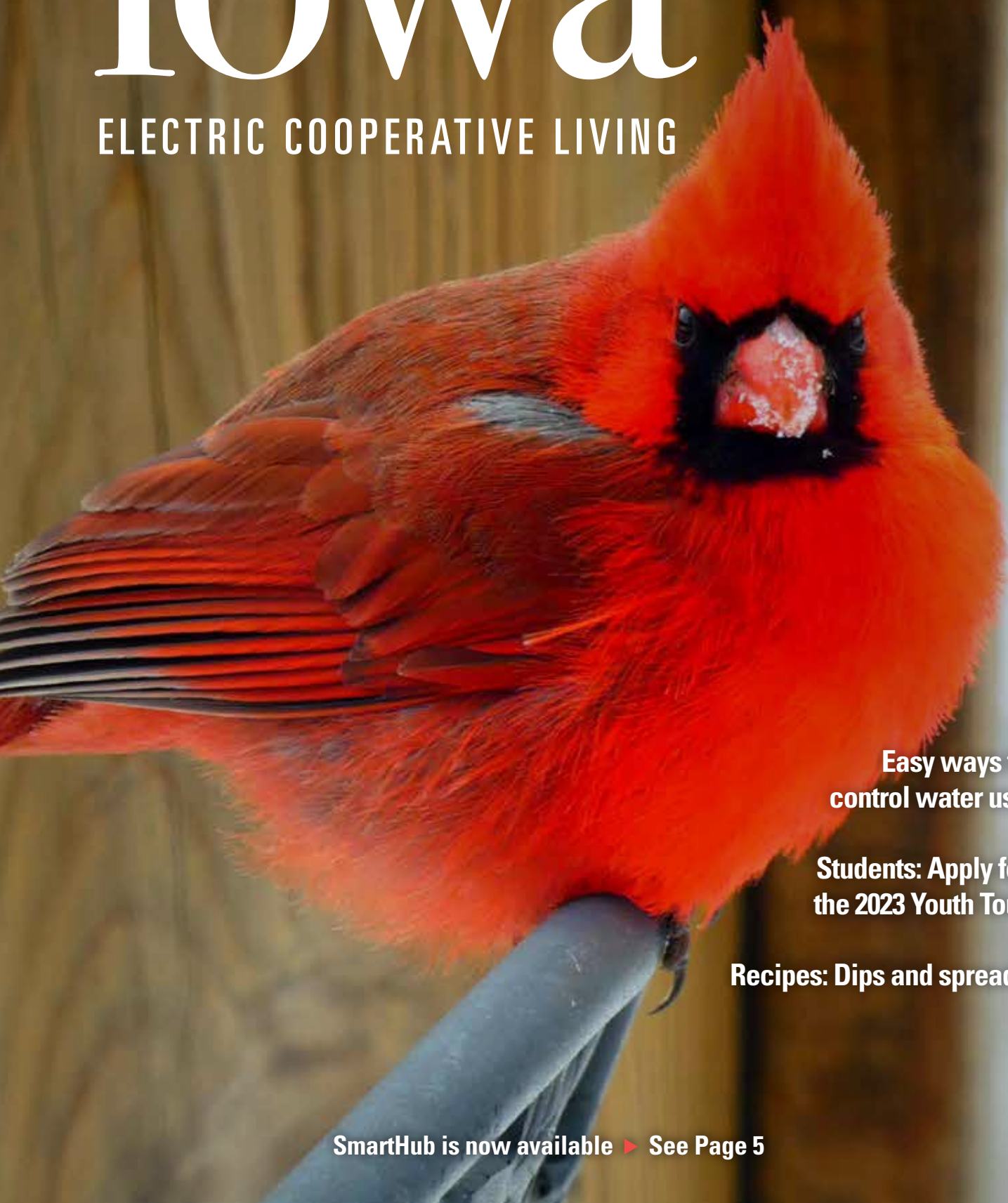


● FEBRUARY 2023

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Easy ways to
control water use**

**Students: Apply for
the 2023 Youth Tour**

Recipes: Dips and spreads

SmarterHub is now available ▶ See Page 5

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Tricia Hart, a Guthrie County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

AN ATTEMPT TO FIX SOMETHING THAT ISN'T BROKEN

BY KEVIN CONDON



On Jan. 9, 134 state legislators were sworn into office at the start of Iowa's 90th General Assembly. Our citizen legislature looks a lot different following the

redistricting process that follows our country's decennial census. It is a year of new beginnings, with about one-third of the representatives and senators starting their first term. Iowa's electric co-ops welcomed our lawmakers back to Des Moines at various events last month. We look forward to continuing our advocacy on March 15 with our annual "REC Day on the Hill" event in the Capitol Building Rotunda.

Electric service territories provide stability

We hope that Iowa lawmakers don't have the wool pulled over their eyes as some special interests attempt to fix something that isn't broken this session. In Iowa, electric utilities work within defined service territories; where you live determines who provides you with electricity. If you live in rural Iowa, you are most likely a member-owner of your local electric cooperative. Nearly 90 years ago, when for-profit power companies provided service in cities across America, they refused to serve rural areas because it wasn't profitable. Farmers and ranchers in Iowa and across America worked together to form locally owned electric cooperatives to power their lives and communities.

In the 1970s, Iowa set boundaries for electric service territories to provide stability for all consumers. Energy providers still adhere to those rules today, which are governed by the Iowa Utilities Board. Every so often, there are calls to "deregulate" the service territories in Iowa. So far, Iowa policymakers haven't fallen for the "competition is good" tagline. That's

fortunate, and here is why: Rural Iowa can't risk what's at stake in a "free-for-all" energy market.

Today, one mile of municipal electric line will connect to nearly 60 meters. Investor-owned utilities will connect to nearly 30 meters over the same distance. Electric co-ops will only connect to four meters per mile on average. A lot has changed since the 1930s, but rural areas continue to be sparsely populated, which means the revenue received per mile of power lines is extremely low compared to towns and cities. Remember, it was this low revenue that prevented investor-owned utilities from serving rural areas so many decades ago in the first place.

Electric service deregulation is bad for Iowa

Full or even partial deregulation of

electric service territory is bad for rural Iowa. Period. And if you don't believe me, look at deregulated states like California, Illinois, Nevada and Oregon. The promises of lower energy bills haven't come to fruition. In fact, deregulated states are seeing rates rise faster than in states like Iowa, which are territory protected. A recent investigation by *The New York Times* concluded that on average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity.

We hope lawmakers won't be fooled by secretive groups that wrap their arguments in a "free market" flag when their proposals will leave rural Iowans holding the bag.

Kevin Condon is the director of government affairs for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a CTECHi Portable Power Station!

The specs of this CTECHi Portable Power Station include 200W, 320Wh LiFePO4 battery backup power supply, fully charged within 3.5 hours, PD 60W quick charge, solar generator for outdoor travel and camping, plus emergency charging of devices at home.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 28!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 28. 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 Tovola Smart Oven from the December issue was Annalee Buffington, Consumers Energy.

BEAT THE PEAK

BY MICHAEL GEERDES



When 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, Grundy County REC 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. Grundy County REC 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.

Understanding peak demand

What you may not know is that electric utilities, including Grundy County REC, 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.

If the "peak times" concept is a bit puzzling, here's an easy way to think about it, and it's similar to 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.

Take control of your electric use

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 down a few notches, turning off unnecessary lights and waiting to use large appliances



during off-peak times. You can also save energy by unplugging electronics and equipment, such as computers, printers and TVs into a power strip, then turn it off at the switch during peak hours. 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 hours is a smart choice for you *and* our community.

Michael Geerdes is the general manager of Grundy County REC.



A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

"Our mission is to provide our members safe, reliable, electric service"



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CO-OP EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

We'd like to congratulate the following employees on their service anniversaries. Their hard work and dedication to Grundy County REC and our members is greatly appreciated!



Brady Codner
Member Service
Advisor
2 years on Jan. 25



Nichole Heaverlo
Consumer
Accountant
3 years on Feb. 3



Karl Nielsen
Lineman
11 years on Feb. 6

Congratulations, Brady, Nichole and Karl!

SMARTHUB IS NOW AVAILABLE!

Life can be fast and hectic but paying your bill doesn't have to complicate things! With our SmartHub web and mobile app, taking care of business will be a breeze. Whether you use the app or the website, you'll be able to manage your account, view and pay your bills, report service issues, receive key notices and monitor your electric usage.

Billing and payments

Paying your utility bill has never been easier! The "Billing and Payments" tab provides a summary of all your registered accounts, including account numbers, billing addresses, due dates, auto pay dates and amounts if you are enrolled, and a **Pay Now** button to make quick payments.

You can also access your billing and payment history and set up Auto Bill Pay.

My profile

The "My Profile" tab allows members to update login information, manage registered accounts, update mailing addresses, manage payment methods

and set up paperless billing.

My usage

The "My Usage" tab provides members with a detailed look at past and current power use, view usage and weather trends, conduct bill and usage comparisons, view average usage and more!

My notifications

SmartHub is a powerful communication tool that allows our members to receive important news and information regarding your account, outages, news and events through the app. Through the "My Notifications" tab, you can decide how you want to be notified about your bill and other cooperative and account updates, by email or text message on your smartphone. Set a threshold to be notified when you are using more electricity than you planned to help stay on top of your energy costs.

Contact us

Not only can you receive notifications from SmartHub, you can now contact us with your customer service requests



or questions! Here you can submit a service or energy audit request and other customer service questions.

DOWNLOAD SMARTHUB TODAY!

Visit www.grundycountyrecia.com and click on the Online Bill Pay button to access the web app. Scan the QR code with your mobile device to download the mobile app.



You will need the following information to register:

- Billing account number
- Last name or business name associated to your account
- Email address

ASK ME ANYTHING:

CO-OP EDITION WITH BRADY CODNER, MEMBER SERVICE ADVISOR



Brady Codner, Grundy County REC member service advisor, has been with the cooperative for two years.

Q: What rebates are available?

A: We currently have rebates available for appliances, air conditioning units, heat pumps and mini splits, lighting, insulation and weatherization items, and water heaters. To learn more about our rebate program, visit www.grundycountyrecia.com/rebate-forms or contact me directly for assistance.

Q: I purchased a Marathon Water Heater through Grundy County REC, is there a warranty on the unit?

A: Yes, there is a lifetime warranty on the tank and a six-year warranty on the parts. To submit a warranty claim, call me at 319-824-5251.

Q: What is one of the most underutilized programs offered by the co-op?

A: Annually, Grundy County REC sponsors

one student for an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., to learn more about the co-op world, history and government. This is a great opportunity that we wish more local students would apply for.

Q: What's your favorite part of working in the electric cooperative world and/or working at Grundy County REC?

A: Grundy County REC is like a family. I enjoy being able to help members save money and find energy solutions that work for them and their current situation.

Have a question or a topic you'd like to learn more about? Email Allyson Miller at amiller@grundycountyrecia.org. Each month, a different department or staff member will be featured in the "Ask me Anything: Co-op Edition" column.

COBANK: FORCES THAT WILL SHAPE THE U.S. RURAL ECONOMY

At the end of 2022, CoBank – one of the largest private providers of credit to the U.S. rural economy – released its 2023 Year Ahead report, “Forces that will Shape the U.S. Rural Economy.” While the financial services firm does not predict an immediate recession, it notes that historically, “inflation above 5% has never been tamed without incurring a recession.”

“As financial conditions continue to tighten, we expect the U.S. economy will steadily soften through the first half of 2023, ushering in a brief, modest recession,” says Dan Kowalski, vice president of CoBank’s Knowledge Exchange. “The unemployment rate could rise as high as 5%, indirectly leading to a decline in consumer spending. Without this softening in the labor market and the associated slowing of wage gains and spending, it will be difficult to stabilize prices.”

The CoBank 2023 outlook report examines several key factors that will shape agriculture and market sectors that serve rural communities throughout the U.S.

1 Global economy: No escaping this slowdown

After two years defined by a strong economic rebound from the pandemic, the global economy will sputter in 2023. A persistent energy crisis in Europe, China’s messy exit from zero-COVID and higher interest rates globally will reduce world economic growth to a crawl. Europe, likely already in recession, will muddle through the winter with sufficient energy supplies. China, much less impacted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, will continue to struggle with the impacts of COVID. Greater Asia will be negatively affected by sliding global demand for goods. Emerging markets will keep the global economy growing in 2023 as advanced economies collectively will be stagnant and could even shrink.

2 U.S. economy: Some pain is necessary

The labor market remains very tight, consumers are still spending aggressively and corporate profit margins have hit record levels despite

high inflation. If a recession is coming, it will take several months for these factors to reverse course, delaying any potential recession until at least second quarter 2023. Even then, it is unclear how readily businesses would lay off workers after experiencing such extreme staffing challenges over the past two years. The structural loss of more than 2 million workers since 2020 is contributing to higher inflation for both goods and services. However, the void their exit left could also cushion the economy from the worst of a downturn in 2023.

3 Monetary policy: More tough decisions ahead

The Federal Reserve’s job will not get any easier in 2023. In nine months, it has raised its federal funds rate from zero to more than 4%. As some economists argue that inflation is falling and the Federal Reserve has done enough, Chair Powell and the Federal Open Market Committee will make even tougher decisions about when to halt rate increases. The trickiest aspect of its inflation

fight is that there is no playbook or rule of thumb to tell when to pause rate hikes. The Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures index, has fallen from its peak of 7% to 6%. That's still much too high for comfort and Chair Powell has said there is greater risk in stopping too early than raising rates for too long.

4 U.S. government: Unique midterm results muddy Farm Bill's path

The 118th Congress convened in January, marking the official beginning of the Farm Bill reauthorization effort. With a Sept. 30 sunset for the current Farm Bill, Congress will have just nine months to pass the next bill. Some interest groups are lined up to address consolidation in farming and agribusiness. Other groups will push policies to direct more resources to small and beginning producers. Ultimately, the Senate will have the upper hand in this debate and the policies that arise in the bill will impact agriculture for the next decade to come.

5 U.S. agricultural economy: Farm margins will tighten

Despite the global pandemic and a steady barrage of disruptive challenges, the U.S. agricultural economy has fared quite well for the last three years. However, in 2023, producers and related industries will begin to show financial strains. A relentless series of adversities, including skyrocketing production costs, steeply higher interest rates and weakening demand, will increasingly pressure farm income and margins. The ongoing drought and increasing political tensions with China – the U.S.'s largest agricultural export market – present additional risk.

6 Grain, farm supply and biofuels: Momentum builds for biofuels

Grain elevators and merchandisers face a mixed picture for the year ahead. The good news for U.S. farmers is that global grain and oilseed supplies are exceedingly tight. Ukrainian grain production and exports are still below average, providing underlying support for grain prices. Ag retailers begin 2023 on strong financial footing but face several challenges. Labor shortages and rising wages will negatively impact margins. Wholesale fertilizer costs will rise during the first half of 2023 as cooperatives absorb higher barge and rail costs and compete with export markets for limited supply. The outlook for biofuels is very strong, supported by positive policy and demand tailwinds from 2022. Ethanol will benefit from greater usage of E15 and growing demand for corn oil.

7 Animal protein: Production to moderate despite a tailwind of enthusiasm

Most U.S. animal protein industry segments have posted phenomenal financial performance over the past three years. However, this era of broad profitability will likely come to an end in 2023. The high costs of feed, labor and construction support the prevailing cautionary attitude toward expanding animal production. On the demand side, consumers are reeling from rapidly declining real wages, a trend that's likely to continue well into 2023.

8 Dairy: Milk supplies to gradually grow as demand base shifts

After a year of stronger profits that allowed producers to pay down debt,

dairy producer margins will come under pressure in 2023. Despite record-high milk prices earlier in 2022, herd expansion has been minimal among the major exporting countries and this trend is expected to continue in 2023. Dairy product prices will eventually moderate in response to the gradual growth in global milk supplies. Domestic demand for U.S. dairy products, particularly higher-priced brands, will face headwinds as consumers trim grocery spending.

9 Specialty crops: Drought, labor shortages, strong U.S. dollar among headwinds

Specialty crop growers and processors face a multitude of headwinds in 2023. Costs of water, labor, fertilizer and other inputs are rising while a strong U.S. dollar and weakening global economy drag on the U.S.'s ability to sell products abroad.

10 Rural communications: Crosscurrents set the stage for the rural communications market

The rural communications market is heading into 2023 with numerous crosscurrents. The increasing importance of broadband helps insulate the industry against economic weaknesses. However, new headwinds are emerging from a weakening economy, tightening capital markets and aggressive network-build activity across a wide range of market actors. The biggest risk to network builds in 2023 will be the tight labor market and ongoing supply chain issues. This is of particular concern for smaller broadband operators competing against larger national telecommunications companies for resources.



Dip & Spread

RECIPES

GAME TIME/HOLIDAY CHILI DIP

- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 30-ounce can chili with beans
- 2 small cans green chilis, chopped
- 1 8-ounce package sour cream
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1½ cups cheddar cheese, grated
- 1½ cups Monterey Jack cheese, grated
- tortilla chips

Chop green onions and set green tips aside. In a 9x13-inch pan, layer chili, green chilis and green onions. Mix sour cream and cream cheese together then spread over the chili layers. Combine grated cheese and add to top of other layers. Cut green onion tips into small pieces and sprinkle over the cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-45 minutes or until heated through. Serve with tortilla chips of your choice. Reheats nicely. Serves 10-15

Natalie Herrington • Nevada • Consumers Energy

CORN BEEF LOG

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce, optional
- 1 can corned beef
- ¾ cup parsley, finely chopped
- crackers

Mix cream cheese, milk, garlic, Worcestershire sauce and hot sauce. With a fork, crumble the corned beef and add to cream cheese mixture. Refrigerate for a couple hours. Divide mixture in half and form into two logs, then roll in parsley. Spread on crackers. Can substitute ½ teaspoon garlic powder for minced garlic.

Dode Westendorf • Waverly
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

VEGGIE DIP

- ½ cup carrots, diced
- ½ cup celery, diced
- ½ cup green peppers, diced
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- crackers

Mix all ingredients together and chill. Serve with your favorite crackers. Switch it up by using any of your favorite veggies for a total of 2 cups.

Karen Heiden • Dows • Prairie Energy Cooperative

PINEAPPLE CHEESE BALL

- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons green peppers, chopped
- 2 tablespoons onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon Lawry's salt
- 1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 cup pecans, chopped

Mix all ingredients except nuts. Roll into a ball, then roll into nuts. Chill several hours or overnight. Serve with crackers.

Carole Ristau • Eagle Grove • Prairie Energy Cooperative

EASY PINEAPPLE SPREAD

- 2 16-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 small can crushed pineapple, drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- 2 teaspoons onion salt
- walnuts or pecans, crushed
- crackers or raw vegetables

Mix cream cheese, pineapple and seasonings together with an electric mixer. Form into one large ball or two smaller balls and roll in pecans or walnuts. Refrigerate for several hours before serving so ball will hold its shape. Serve with crackers of your choice or raw veggies.

Dianne Riley • Osceola • Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

SPUN HONEY

- 1 pound butter, salted or unsalted
- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 8-ounce container heavy whipping cream (1 cup)
- dash vanilla
- dash salt, if using unsalted butter

Place butter in blender. In saucepan, combine honey, sugar and whipping cream. Bring to a boil just long enough to dissolve, stirring constantly. Pour hot honey mixture over butter in blender. Add vanilla and salt, if needed. Puree only until smooth. Pour into storage containers. Let it set up before covering and then place in refrigerator. Enjoy on toast, rolls, crackers, pancakes and popcorn. Makes great gifts! Keep refrigerated. *Yields 5 cups*

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

SPICY HEALTHIER BEAN DIP

- 7-8 ounces canned kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 7-8 ounces canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can spicy chili beans, with sauce
- 3 ripe tomatoes, diced, divided
- ½ red onion, peeled and chopped
- fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 package taco seasoning
- ½ cup water
- 1 2.25-ounce can sliced black olives, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

In a food processor, add beans, a handful of tomatoes, a handful of onion, ¾ of cilantro, taco seasoning and water, pulse until chunky. Fill serving dish with bean mixture; top with the remaining ingredients. Serve with unsalted tortilla chips. To lower sodium level, use no-salt or low-salt beans and taco seasoning. *Serves 8-10*

Sue Madsen • Galva
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

BAKED SPINACH DIP

- 1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 8 slices bacon, fried and crumbled
- ⅓ cup Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- chips or crackers

Drain spinach well. Mix all ingredients and place in a baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-25 minutes or until heated through. Serve with chips or crackers. *Serves 10*

Joanna Schaefer • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SLOW COOKER DIP

- 2 pounds hamburger, browned
- 1 large bottle mild or hot taco sauce
- 1 box Velveeta cheese, cut up
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- crackers or chips

Place all ingredients in slow cooker on high until cheese is melted, then mix. Keep slow cooker on low and serve with your favorite crackers or chips. Dip is also a good baked potato topping.

Ardith Evenson • Archer
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

PICNIC AND POTLUCK RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 28

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

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



OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME: WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS WILL DO AND SEE ON YOUTH TOUR:

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

Enter the contest
by March 25



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THESE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE SPONSORING THE 2023 YOUTH TOUR

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trips this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

Access Energy Cooperative
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Butler County REC
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative
Assoc.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Consumers Energy
East-Central Iowa REC
Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative



ONE IOWA YOUTH TOUR STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A \$1,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP!

During the 2023 Youth Tour this June, a student from each state that participates in Youth Tour will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The Iowa YLC representative will be selected during the Youth Tour trip and will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship.

These young leaders will meet virtually throughout 2023 and participate in leadership training, practice their public speaking skills, attend co-op forums and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

The Youth Leadership Council experience will culminate at the 2024 NRECA Annual Meeting, held in San Antonio, Texas. Here, the group will spend a few days reflecting on the experiences they've had throughout the year, attend informational and entertaining conference sessions alongside electric cooperative leaders from throughout the country, and solidify lifelong friendships and connections!

To enter, you will be required to submit an official entry form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement:

Tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in your community.

Entry forms are available at www.iowayouth.com. You can submit your essay at this website or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by March 25.

Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 17-23 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the ninth year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* 2023 Youth Tour Contest!

Of course, students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops.

However, students can increase their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op.

More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

Our 2023 Youth Tour Essay Contest is open to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior whose family is served by an Iowa electric cooperative AND to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior who attended all three virtual sessions of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy in Oct. 2022. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine will award one all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C., in addition to the Youth Tour trips sponsored by local electric cooperatives. Students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. The winner of the ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* Youth Tour Contest** will be announced on April 4, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives will have chosen their 2023 Youth Tour participants.

Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Franklin REC
Grundy County REC
Harrison County REC
Heartland Power Cooperative

Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lyon REC
Midland Power Cooperative
MiEnergy Cooperative
Nishnabotna Valley REC

North West REC
Pella Cooperative Electric Association
Prairie Energy Cooperative
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Southwest Iowa REC
United Electric Cooperative

DIRECTOR AND EMPLOYEE YEARS OF SERVICE

Grundy County REC is fortunate to have a knowledgeable and dedicated group of directors and employees. We would like to recognize the following service anniversaries celebrated in 2022.



Directors

- Norb Boyle, 10 years
- Matt Kopriva, 3 years
- Jason Paper, 12 years
- Kevin Pruisner, 18 years
- Larry Rohach, 29 years
- David Schmidt, 5 years
- Nick Strohhahn, 4 years

Employees

- Aaron Bird, 15 years
- Jeff Brophy, 2 years
- Brady Codner, 1 year
- Erik Freese, 8 years
- Mike Geerdes, 11 years
- Nichole Heaverlo, 2 years
- Scott Kuiper, 8 years
- Allyson Miller, 2 years
- Karl Nielsen, 10 years
- Tony Sienknecht, 20 years
- Derek Snakenberg, 2 years
- Dan Stelpflug, 2 years

APPLY TODAY – 2023 YOUTH TOUR



Youth Tour 2023 will be June 17-23! Member students who are in their sophomore, junior or senior year are eligible to apply for an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. Participants will learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government.

They will also visit with their congressional representatives and tour popular sightseeing destinations and historic sites. Applications are due by March 1.



Visit www.grundycountyrecia.com/youth-tour for more information.



5 Ways to Save During Winter

Winter weather typically means increased energy use at home. Keep your bills in check with these tips to save energy – and money!

Mind the thermostat. If you have a traditional heating and cooling system, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Consider a smart or programmable thermostat for additional savings.

Get cozy. Add layers of clothing for additional warmth, and snuggle up under your favorite heavyweight blanket.

Don't block the heat. If your air vents or heating elements (like radiators) are blocked by furniture or rugs, your home isn't being adequately heated.

Take advantage of sunlight. Open window coverings during the day to let natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to block the chilly night air.

Block air leaks. Seal windows and exterior doors with caulk and weather stripping to improve indoor comfort and decrease the amount of energy used to heat your home.

IOWA-BASED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES INFORM CONTRACTORS AND BUILDERS AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BY ANGELA CATTON

Energy efficiency is hot. For a myriad of reasons – more affordable renewables, the increase in extreme weather events and lower electricity bills – interest in building energy-efficient homes and upgrading older, inefficient homes is growing.

With more people working from home in recent years, it's not surprising that many homeowners focus on containing their energy costs. A recent National Association of Home Builders survey found that green efficiency was at the top of the list of consumer preferences. In fact, survey respondents said they would be willing to pay more than \$9,000 for more efficient homes.

Sharing efficiency expertise

Iowa's electric cooperatives work to serve as a source of information and expertise to help member-consumers save energy and lower their electric bills. Educating Iowa home builders and contractors about the latest energy-efficiency innovations is another way to help Iowans reach their energy goals.

For more than 30 years, the annual Momentum is Building (MIB) Conference, sponsored and organized by the Iowa Cooperatives for Energy Efficiency, connects Iowa's construction industry with the local services and resources available from Iowa-based electric cooperatives, who serve nearly 650,000 Iowans across 99 counties.

The MIB conference serves as a resource for area contractors to learn how to design and improve homes that are energy efficient, healthy, comfortable and affordable. Electricians, plumbers and HVAC professionals can also earn Continuing Education Unit credits at the conference.

Upcoming conference

During this year's event, held Feb. 16-17 at The Meadows Events



Center, MIB attendees will have opportunities to network with industry professionals, hear from recognized energy efficiency and building trades experts and gain insight into trending technologies. Registration is open at www.momentumisbuilding.com.

Tolu Omotoso, director of energy solutions at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, will kick off the conference by covering the evolving relationship between utilities and their members and how to leverage member-owned smart devices in the home for grid services.

Other topics include sessions on promoting the value of home certifications and how to prepare contractors for large, new federal home improvement subsidies to come online, and employee management best practices for small businesses.

For more information about the conference, visit www.momentumisbuilding.com or call your electric cooperative.

Angela Catton is the manager of member relations and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.

EASY WAYS TO CONTROL WATER USE

BY KATHERINE LOVING

Conserving water at home can result in several downstream benefits and savings. Being mindful of home water use helps preserve the amount of water in our local reservoirs and reduces costs associated with water and wastewater treatment, including the cost of delivering it to the home (for those using a public water service).

Indoor and outdoor water-saving practices


Leaky toilets, showerheads and dripping faucets can waste up to 2,700 gallons of water annually. Home water conservation can simply start by checking your house for any leaks and drips. Another way to conserve water is to limit running water when it isn't necessary. For example, turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth, and defrost food in the refrigerator or in the microwave instead of placing frozen food under running water.

Home gardens are another potential area for water conservation. Thoughtful planning can transform your home garden from a water drain to a water-efficient oasis. This spring, start by planting drought-resistant plants or those with minimal water needs. Group the plants by similar water needs to avoid waste by watering from plant-to-plant. Additionally, a drip irrigation system for plants that require more water can boost efficiency by using less water over a longer period. Alternatively, set lawn sprinklers on a timer to limit water use and place them where the water will only reach plants, not pavement.


Harvesting rainwater with a rain barrel is an excellent option for watering ornate gardens and washing cars.

Energy conservation benefits


Reducing water use at home can also help lower your energy use. The Department of Energy estimates that water heating accounts for about 20%



Harvested rainwater is an excellent option for watering ornate gardens and washing cars.



Turning off the tap while brushing teeth can save up to four gallons of water per minute, or up to 200 gallons a week for a family of four.



Leaky toilets, showerheads and dripping faucets can waste up to 2,700 gallons of water annually.

of a home's energy bill. Switching to an energy-efficient heat pump water heater can save considerable money on electric bills. Heat pump water heaters have higher upfront costs than storage tank models, but tax incentives and potential rebates can offset this cost. Check with your local electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates or a load management program.

If upgrading your water heater isn't an option, there are small changes you can make to increase water heating efficiency. Reduce hot water use by switching to low-flow faucets and showerheads. You can also turn down the water heater thermostat to 120 degrees and insulate hot water lines to increase energy savings.

Additional ways to conserve both water and electricity in the home include upgrading clothes washers and dishwashers to newer, more energy-efficient models. Running these appliances only when full or selecting a "light wash" setting reduces water and electricity use. Washing dishes by hand uses more water than an energy-

efficient dishwasher, so avoid this method when possible.

Well water considerations

If your home uses well water, it's important to be mindful of water conservation. Well pumps run on electricity and can be a source of higher energy bills. Dry, over-pumped wells can cause the pump to run continuously, using excess energy in the process. Malfunctioning well pumps also lead to spikes in energy use. Regular maintenance can help identify problems, such as leaks and faulty intake, which can lead to increased use of both water and electricity.

There are a variety of changes – some large, some small – that can help you conserve water at home. Regardless of how you do it, thoughtfully managing water use can protect our water supply and make significant changes on energy bills.

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.

HISTORY HIDDEN IN A HILLSIDE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Just about the time I say nothing surprises me anymore, something catches me completely off guard. I had one of those “wow” moments recently, thanks to an archaeologist at the Sanford Museum in Cherokee.

I heard that Mark Anderson was giving a program in November about an 1850s-era sod dugout house and farmstead in Sac County. My schedule didn't allow me to attend, so I asked Mark if I could interview him over the phone a few days later.

Not only did he agree, but after a fascinating conversation, he said he'd be happy to meet me at the dugout site for a tour. This was too good to pass up, especially since Mark had special access to this property, which isn't open to the public. He conducted an extensive archaeological survey in 1996-97 on a 49-mile stretch from Moorland to Early (including this site), in preparation for the expansion of four-lane Highway 20.

Awe-inspiring experience

I just couldn't get over how the visible remains of an 1850s pioneer dugout and claim shanty were right here in the North Raccoon River Valley – an area I've driven by many times through the years.

Even more mind-blowing was the fact that people had inhabited this area for centuries.

“Prehistoric people hung out here 2,000 years ago when they were in the area to hunt, fish and gather other provisions, including edible plants, fibers for making baskets and other woven items, and rocks for tool making,” Mark noted when we visited the site in late November.

As we stood on a knob above the point where the land slopes down to the river, just west of the 1850s-era dugout, I couldn't believe I was here, right where those pioneers and prehistoric people had been. Mark's excavations had revealed debris from



Mark Anderson, the archaeologist at the Sanford Museum in Cherokee, and his dog are shown here in front of what used to be an 1850s-era dugout house in Sac County.

ancient chipping stone tools, as well as Sioux quartzite, at this spot.

“This was the hearthstone the prehistoric people used,” he explained as his mini-Australian Shepherds, Marley and Bruce, roamed nearby. “This choice was no accident. Sioux quartzite absorbs heat well without shattering.”

Realities of archaeological artifacts

What's especially fascinating when you hang out with archaeologists is how straightforward they are about their work.

“We dig up other people's garbage,” Mark said. “We're glorified garbage people.”

Karl Pilkington, an author and host of a travel documentary series, summed

it up this way: “It's interesting to see that people had so much clutter even thousands of years ago. The only way to get rid of it all was to bury it, and then some archaeologist went and dug it all up.”

To an archaeologist like Mark, a river crossing like the one in Sac County can be a jackpot of archaeological artifacts (a.k.a. “old garbage”). This makes me wonder if my garbage will ever interest someone far in the future.

In any case, I'm fascinated by the “hillside history” we explored that remarkable afternoon in Sac County.

“This site is just awesome,” Mark said. I couldn't agree more.

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

Visit our website at www.grundycountyrecia.com

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