

● APRIL 2022

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Meet Prairie Energy
Cooperative's
scholarship winner**

**Demonstrating
commitment to
community**

**Spring forward with
salad recipes**

Lineworker Appreciation Day: Celebrating the power behind your power ▶ See Page 4

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ART DIRECTOR
Joel Clifton

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Linda Eastman, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100!

ENDING THE RURAL ENERGY TAX

BY KEVIN CONDON



Even with all the news about income taxes at the Iowa Capitol this year, there are still more tax issues the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) is pushing

our elected officials to address. After years of education and advocacy from Iowa's electric cooperatives, rural Iowans and others were mistakenly left out of a tax exemption established in 2018.

Oversight costs rural co-op members

With the explosion of digital and online transactions, Iowa legislators grappled with appropriately applying sales and use taxes. In an attempt to keep true to Iowa's longstanding approach of taxing outputs and not inputs for business and industry, a catchall definition for most for-profit, corporately organized businesses (e.g., investor-owned utilities) was created in 2018. Other organizations, including not-for-profit electric cooperatives, were to be spelled out elsewhere for the tax exemption. Unfortunately, electric co-ops and the 650,000 Iowans we serve were unintentionally left off the list.

IAEC estimates that co-op member-consumers have paid nearly \$300,000 more each year because their electric cooperatives are assessed the digital goods sales tax. Since the tax went into effect in 2019, that overall number is likely more than \$1 million. It will only continue to grow with the further transition to digital goods and services, as well as the responsibility to protect co-ops from cybersecurity threats.

Correcting the tax policy

Iowa's electric co-ops are working hard to ensure another legislative session doesn't adjourn without

correcting this oversight. We are working with Iowa lawmakers to support HF 2520, which will fix the tax exemption mistake. We believe a zip code shouldn't dictate whether you pay higher taxes on goods and services necessary for your utility to conduct business and provide your power. Paying more on your energy bills because of your address isn't a fair way to apply the sales and use tax.

Monitoring other energy issues at the statehouse

In addition to tax policy, Iowa's electric co-ops are on the lookout for legislation that could make affordable and environmentally responsible power more difficult to provide. One such bill (HSB 697), which didn't survive in the statehouse, would have attempted to create a scheme where a select group of individuals

could create a solar farm to benefit a select few and, in turn, shift the costs of the infrastructure onto their fellow co-op neighbors. Another bill we're monitoring (SF 2321) would strip landowners of their property rights by prohibiting them from deciding how they want to use their land, based on a corn suitability rating score.

Whether ending the rural energy tax or trying to prevent poorly crafted bills mentioned above, Iowa's locally owned electric co-ops will always advocate for the member-consumers we serve. In addition to our commitment to provide electric service to you, we also want to keep decision-making local and your hard-earned money in local communities.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win an electric string trimmer

This Craftsman Weedwacker V20 makes caring for your lawn a breeze! It is 20-volt max, battery operated and cordless. The string trimmer easily doubles as an edger with a simple twist of the telescoping pole.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than April 30. 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 portable power station from the February issue was Dan Ries, T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY APRIL 30!

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ANNOUNCED



Anna Wirtjes, daughter of Kristi and Greg Wirtjes of Forest City, was chosen as Prairie Energy Cooperative's winner of the \$1,000 Basin

Electric Power Cooperative scholarship. Anna is a senior at Forest City High School and is involved with the National FFA Organization, student council, band, cross country and has been on the academic high honor roll as well as student of the month. Her future plans include attending Iowa State University to major in elementary education with a minor in psychology to achieve a child life specialist certification. Congratulations, Anna!

THE POWER BEHIND YOUR POWER



Office: 2099 Highway 3 West - P.O. Box 353
Clarion, IA 50525

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sunday and holidays

Phone:
1-515-532-2805 (local) or
1-800-728-0013 (24/7)

Email: prairieenergy@prairieenergy.coop

Facebook: facebook.com/PrairieEnergyCooperative

Website: www.prairieenergy.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

You've likely noticed Prairie Energy Cooperative's (PECO) crews out and about, working on power lines and other electrical equipment in our community. It's no secret that a lineworker's job is tough - but it is a job that's essential and must be done, often in challenging conditions. As we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 11, we want to share some interesting facts about electric lineworkers.

The work can be heavy, in more ways than one. Did you know the equipment and tools that a lineworker carries while climbing a utility pole can weigh up to 50 pounds? That's the same as carrying six gallons of water. Speaking of utility poles, lineworkers are required to climb poles ranging

anywhere from 30 to 120 feet tall. If you have a fear of heights, this likely isn't the career path for you!

Lineworkers must be committed to their career because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly take a toll. In fact, being a lineworker is listed in the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S.

Lineworkers often work non-traditional hours outdoors in difficult conditions. While the job does not require a college degree, it does require technical skills, years of training and hands-on learning. Did you know that to become a journeyman lineworker can take more than 7,000 hours of training (about four years)? That's because working

with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience and ongoing mental toughness.

Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work. Despite the many challenges, PECO's linemen are committed to powering our local community. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly, and they don't return until the job is done – often days later. That's why a lineworker's family is also dedicated to service. They understand the importance of the job to the community.

Nationwide, there are approximately 120,000 electric lineworkers.

Spanning over our 11-county service territory, PECO has 18 linemen that are responsible for keeping power flowing 24/7, 365 days a year. To do this, they maintain more than 2,000 miles of power lines covering some 1,500 square miles.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing utility poles to repair a wire. Today's lineworkers are information experts who can pinpoint power outages from miles away. Line crews now use laptops, tablets and other technologies to map outages, survey damage and troubleshoot problems.

Being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, but it is essential to the life of our community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hard workers, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.

So, the next time you see a lineworker, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, lineworkers are the power behind your power. Please join us as we recognize them on April 11 and follow the #ThankALineworker hashtag on social media to see how others are recognizing lineworkers.

DIRECTOR EARNS EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT



The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Director Certificate Programs are specifically

designed to help co-op directors understand their roles and responsibilities, stay up to date on key issues and trends in the industry, and prepare for the challenges facing electric cooperatives now and in the future. Director courses are attended throughout the year in conjunction with a variety of

conferences, and in partnership with statewide associations. There are three levels of director certificate programs: The Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate (CCD), the Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) and the Director Gold Credential.

Allyn Waddingham, District 3 director, was recently awarded the highest of these accomplishments with the Director Gold Credential certificate.

Congratulations, Allyn!

NEED A NEW SERVICE OR SERVICE CHANGE?

Contact Prairie Energy Cooperative ASAP to ensure all required materials are on hand and available for your project. With price increases for just about all related equipment, along with increased delivery times for orders currently placed with our suppliers, we recommend contacting the co-op sooner than later to meet with a line design professional for a site visit. They will be able to give updated estimates for any electrical project you are contemplating doing that would require assistance by Prairie Energy.



Prairie Energy Cooperative

will be closed Friday, April 15, in observance of Good Friday. To report an issue with your service, call 800-728-0013. Phones are answered 24/7.

PHILANTHROPY STRENGTHENS RURAL COMMUNITIES

BY KAY SNYDER

The 2021 Okoboji
Entrepreneurial
Institute class.

When you think about your local economy and the businesses and organizations that make it special, you likely think about agriculture, manufacturing and small business. But you should also think about nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, foundations and philanthropic initiatives that make incredible contributions to your community's attractiveness and quality of life.

A big impact for the state

In Iowa, an estimated 30,000 nonprofit organizations are helping individuals, businesses and governments provide vital services to

enrich their communities and serve their residents. Collectively, these organizations are responsible for approximately 9% of Iowa's jobs and more than 8% of state wages.

Their contributions go much further, as these institutions also purchase an enormous amount of goods and services. They provide meaningful opportunities for volunteerism and often attract resources, grants and contributions from well beyond the communities they serve. The reputation of nonprofit organizations plays a vital role in attracting and retaining families, retirees and workers.

Co-ops help nonprofits flourish

Iowa rural electric cooperatives know the importance of these organizations, whether directed at arts and culture, health and human services, education, recreation or other important public services. Your local cooperative's staff volunteer, contribute financially and assist in garnering grants that benefit nonprofits and the co-op members they serve.

Through the support of the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG), your cooperative has played a pivotal role in establishing Iowa's now flourishing network of community foundations. In advocating for legislation that fosters

community foundation formation, training and endowment building, your co-op is helping sustain and strengthen the services and the support of Iowa's nonprofit organizations.

Working together for the greater good

In 2003, IADG formed the IADG Community Foundation (IADG CF), the first community foundation with a statewide focus. IADG CF then formed a meaningful partnership with the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines to serve county-wide community foundations across the state. In all, 38 counties participate in the Iowa Community Affiliate Network (Iowa C.A.N.) for foundation building education, training, networking and support.

Together, these rural-focused community foundations in Iowa C.A.N. make an incredible impact. At year-end 2021, their collective assets for endowment and grantmaking climbed to \$75 million. The contributions and gifts received for the year surpassed \$33 million. Most importantly, these community foundations have awarded their local communities and nonprofits with nearly \$10 million in leveraged grants. In response to COVID-19, the Aug. 2020 derecho and other disasters, these organizations raised more than \$1 million for nonprofit community response.

Community foundations play an essential role in convening crucial community conversations, supporting planning efforts, conducting feasibility studies and spearheading project

fundraising. The accomplishments and contributions of Iowa's community foundations can be seen in everything from bike trails, childcare facilities, education programs, food pantries, health care initiatives, parks, recreation and safety investments. Projects are determined locally and by the voluntary support of caring and committed citizens.

Expanding reach and capabilities

When IADG CF is not busy helping others develop and grow their foundations, attention is focused on expanding the reach and capabilities of its own charitable mission. IADG CF remains uniquely committed to a philanthropic mission focused on economic development, community betterment, civic leadership, entrepreneurship and philanthropy.

Since its inception in 2003, IADG CF has awarded 248 grants totaling \$639,976. In 2021, the IADG CF authorized 15 grants totaling \$68,350. These awards included funding for an Iowa dairy industry economic impact study, scholarship for the Iowa poultry industry, revolving loan fund training workshops, economic development conferences and entrepreneurship program support.

IADG CF also supported the following projects:

- **The Okoboji Entrepreneurial Institute.** A week-long program where 32 college students participate in an advanced study of entrepreneurship. The experience includes seminars with successful entrepreneurs, and business and

community leaders, a simulation, and networking and mentoring to enhance their understanding of entrepreneurship opportunities in Iowa.

- **The 2021 Iowa Rural Summit and Rural Hero Awards.** Nearly 250 rural leaders from every corner of the state attended the fifth-annual summit to discuss challenges and opportunities for rural communities. The Rural Hero awards recognized 14 individuals for their contributions to their community and Iowa.
- **The "Heart and Soul" Program in Postville.** A local effort to develop a comprehensive and inclusive plan to lay the foundation for continued success and growth.
- Establishing or continuing several dental practices that serve communities in rural Iowa.

IADG CF operates with the leadership and support of a volunteer board of directors. The generosity of many people and organizations allows the IADG CF to grow its commitment to philanthropy and be a "Partner in Progress" for Iowa's rural communities. On behalf of its utility sponsors, IADG CF is committed to helping Iowa community foundations flourish and grow.

Learn more about community philanthropy by visiting IADG.com/foundation.

Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.



Community leaders recognized for rural leadership in Iowa as a part of the Iowa Rural Summit.



Main Street Dental in Marshalltown.

LETTUCE SALAD RECIPES

WINTER LETTUCE SALAD WITH POPPY SEED DRESSING

- 1 head romaine lettuce
- 4 ounces Swiss cheese, shredded
- 1 cup cashews
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 1 apple, cored and sliced
- 1 pear, cored and sliced
- ½ cup white sugar
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅔ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds

Tear lettuce into bite-size pieces. In a large bowl, toss lettuce with cheese, cashews, cranberries, apples and pears. In a blender or food processor, combine sugar, lemon juice, onion, mustard and salt. Process until well blended. Add oil slowly, until mixture is thick and smooth. Add poppy seeds and process for a few seconds. Pour dressing over salad just before serving and toss to coat. *Serves 12*

**Carol Van De Stroet • Inwood
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

LAYERED GREEN SALAD

- 1 head lettuce, torn
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup green pepper, diced
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1 package frozen peas, uncooked
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups Miracle Whip
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- 8 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled

Layer the first seven ingredients in a 9x13-inch baking dish or other large non-metal pan. Top with shredded cheese and bacon bits. Make 24 hours ahead or overnight. *Serves 12*

**Carmel Hammen • Clarion
Prairie Energy Cooperative**

BACON AVOCADO SALAD

- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¾ cup red wine vinegar
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 bunch romaine, chopped (about 12 cups)
- ¾ pound bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 medium red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 3 medium ripe avocados, peeled and cubed
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup Gorgonzola or feta cheese, crumbled (4 ounces)

Place first six ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid, shake well until blended. Refrigerate dressing until serving. In a large bowl, combine romaine, bacon, tomatoes and onion. Toss avocados with lemon juice and add to salad. Sprinkle with cheese. Serve with dressing, shaking jar to blend again if needed. *Serves 10*

**Clark DeSmet • Alvord
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

HARVEST APPLE SALAD

- 3 Golden Delicious or Fuji apples, chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup red wine vinegar
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 package torn lettuce
- 1 package crumbled blue cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts or pecans

Sauté apples in vegetable oil until tender. Keep warm. Combine olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper in a large bowl and mix well. Add lettuce, blue cheese and nuts. Just before serving, add warm apples and toss to mix. *Serves 4-6*

Sarah Shaver • Missouri Valley
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

CASHEW LETTUCE SALAD

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 cup oil
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1 teaspoon poppy seed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 head lettuce, cut up
- 1 cup Swiss cheese, grated
- 1 cup cashews

Mix first six ingredients into a dressing and refrigerate. Mix lettuce, cheese and cashews. Pour dressing over lettuce mixture just before serving.

Deanna Underwood • Aplington
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

WILTED LETTUCE SALAD

- 1 pound bacon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups vinegar
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups water
- 1 head lettuce
- salt and pepper, to taste

Chop bacon into 1-inch pieces, fry in pan. Keep $\frac{2}{3}$ grease and add flour to pan to thicken. Add vinegar and water until creamy (add more or less to your liking). Chop lettuce and add to large bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste. Stir in bacon gravy mixture while still warm but not hot. Toss and serve. *Serves 6*

Christine Boecker • New London
Access Energy Cooperative

STEAK SALAD

- 5 cups Romaine lettuce, torn
- 2 small tomatoes, sliced or diced
- 1 yellow pepper, cut into strips
- 1 pound beef flank steak, grilled and sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cranberries
- salad dressing

Layer lettuce, tomatoes, pepper, steak and cheese, then toss. Top with cranberries and serve with your choice of salad dressing.

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

SPEEDY SOUTHWESTERN SALAD

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ranch dressing
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salsa
- 1 package salad greens
- 1 15-ounce can corn, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup tortilla chips, broken
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tomatoes, chopped

Mix ranch dressing and salsa together. In a glass bowl, layer all ingredients in the following order: salad greens, corn, beans, ranch salsa mixture, chips, cheese and tomatoes.

Stephanie Messner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

STATE FAIR-INSPIRED RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is April 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

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

MAIL: Recipes

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10 IDEAS

FOR SUMMER ENERGY SAVINGS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Pull curtains shut during the hottest times of the day to block out sunlight.

Summer fun is just around the corner! Now is the perfect time to start preparing your home for warmer weather. Consider following these 10 tips to help keep your house cool and save on your energy bills this summer.

1 Service your air conditioner

Air conditioning (AC) units work by moving air over fins or coils that contain refrigerant. When the fins or coils get dirty, the unit doesn't work as well and uses more energy.

Whether you have a portable unit, central AC or a ductless/mini-split, cleaning the filter, coils and fins is a great way to get your system ready for summertime. If you are tackling this yourself, always disconnect power to the unit. Central AC systems have two sets of coils, one inside and one outside. Both coils should be cleaned annually. If you hire a professional, they can check refrigerant levels during the process.

2 Seal your window AC unit

If you have a window or portable AC unit that vents through a window, seal the area between the window sashes. Water heater pipe insulation is a great way to seal this spot. It's available at your local hardware store and is easy to cut for a snug fit.

3 Thermostat settings

Keeping your thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature will save you money. If you aren't home during the day or have vacation plans, increase the thermostat by 8 to 10 degrees F. There's no need to cool an empty house!

4 Keep your cool

Before heading to the thermostat to turn down the temperature, try using a fan, changing into lighter clothing and



Turn off your gas fireplace pilot light in the summer.

drinking something cool. These simple steps may be enough to make you comfortable without spending more money to cool your home. Finding the balance between comfort and savings is key.

5 Lock windows

After opening your windows at night or in the morning to let in fresh air, ensure your windows are closed and locked. Doing so reduces gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts. If your locks don't form a tight fit, you may need to add weatherstripping.

6 Weatherstripping and curtains

Sealing and covering windows may seem like a wintertime efficiency practice, yet these help in the summer, too. Windows are typically the least-insulated surface in a room no matter the season!

Add weatherstripping to form a tight seal around the outside of the window. These seals can be found at a hardware store and are easy to install on your own. Another easy way to cool down a room is to close the curtains during the hottest times of the day to block out the sun. Blackout curtains are a thick fabric curtain option that will help keep the room cool and dark.

7 Cook al fresco

Take dinnertime outside to help keep your kitchen cool and your AC from working overtime to counteract kitchen appliances. Some grills have an extra side burner that makes it simple to do outdoor stovetop cooking.

8 Add insulation

While you may associate insulation with cold weather, adding insulation can keep your home more comfortable by keeping cool air in and hot air out. Insulation helps your AC

use less energy to cool your home. As a general rule, if you can see the joists on the floor of your attic, you need more insulation!

9 Turn off gas fireplaces

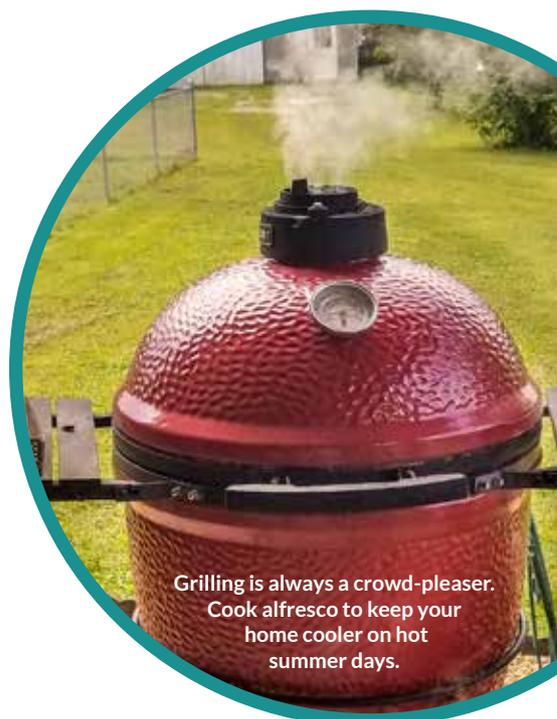
Reducing the amount of heat entering your home can keep it cooler, especially if you don't have AC. If you have a gas fireplace, the pilot light lets off a small amount of heat into the room. Consider turning the entire fireplace off during the summer months.

10 Add shade outside

Planting trees and shrubs strategically around your home can shade the roof, walls and pavement while reducing heat radiation to your home. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, tree-shaded neighborhoods can be up to 6 degrees F cooler in the daytime than treeless areas. Before buying a tree or shrub, check with your city or utility about free tree programs.

Spring is a great time to be proactive about preparing your home for warmer temperatures. Applying a few of these ideas will help keep you comfortable and provide energy savings all summer long!

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.



Grilling is always a crowd-pleaser. Cook al fresco to keep your home cooler on hot summer days.



Keeping your thermostat at the highest-comfortable temperature will save energy and money.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY



John Campbell, Chad Chapman and Zane Tinken serve ice cream to CGD FFA banquet attendees.



Bill Hicok, PECO IT manager, helps package meals.



Darren Johnson, PECO member services representative, volunteers at the event.



Maggie Smith and Sarah Olson-McLaughlin help local FFA students with the Meals from the Heartland assembly line.



Safety/Warehouse Coordinator John Campbell and Apprentice Linemen Jade Prignitz and Trey Swaney help package meals.

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) employees recently volunteered with the Clarion-Goldfield-Dows National FFA Organization chapter (CGD FFA). FFA is an intracurricular student organization that prepares members for leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. The local chapter recently held a degree social, where 35 students were recognized for their

degree accomplishments. Three PECO employees, John Campbell, Zane Tinken and Chad Chapman, volunteered to serve ice cream following the social.

CGD FFA also organized a volunteer event with Meals from the Heartland, a faith-related organization that is made up of volunteers who package meals for delivery to hungry people in Iowa,

across the U.S. and around the world. In just two hours, 125 volunteers packaged 40,392 meals with 864 of those meals donated to the Clarion Food Pantry. PECO employees Maggie Smith, Sarah Olson-McLaughlin, Darren Johnson, John Campbell, Bill Hicok, Jade Prignitz and Trey Swaney volunteered at the packaging event. Visit www.mealsfromtheheartland.org to learn more about the non-profit.

UTILITY APPRECIATION DAY TO BECOME ANNUAL RECOGNITION

On Tuesday, March 8, Iowa Sen. Carrie Koelker (R - District 29 from Dyersville) introduced Senate Resolution 103, which was adopted by the Senate. Sponsoring this resolution is particularly meaningful to Koelker, as she explains on her Facebook post:

"I grew up seeing firsthand the hard work of a lineman atop high voltage power lines 24/7: 365 days of the year no matter the weather condition. It took my father's life at the young age of 43 in 1987.

The Iowa RECs will always have a special place in my heart. When lights go out these hard workers go to work in extreme weather conditions. They're steeped in personal, family, and professional traditions and are often first responders during storms and other catastrophic events. I invite the people of Iowa to be mindful and join me in appreciation for the dangerous work they do for our great state."

The resolution closes by declaring "the Senate designates March 8, annually, as Utility Worker Appreciation Day, and calls upon the people of Iowa to be particularly mindful of the dangerous work done under extreme conditions day in and day out by these dedicated public safety workers and show their appreciation at every opportunity."



Photo Credit: Sen. Carrie Koelker



RECOGNIZING LINEWORKERS ON APRIL 11

Across the state on April 11, Iowa's electric cooperatives also annually recognize lineworkers. In 2015, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association passed this resolution:

"Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen; Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the Second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives, materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's Electric Cooperatives."

BATTERIES ARE BOOMING

BY PAUL WESSLUND

If your smartphone battery has become a large share of your daily thoughts, just wait because the battery market is booming. Innovators are now developing washable and bendable batteries to heat your gloves or be sewn into athletic wear to help track your exercise routine.

Electric utilities use batteries for slightly more practical reasons – to make electricity more reliable and more compatible with renewable energy sources. Also, the booming electric vehicle (EV) market has been made possible by dramatic advancements in battery technology.

Analysts estimate the world battery market value at more than \$100 billion and project it will grow more than 10% annually over the next five years. People need batteries for their phones, laptops, power tools, watches and EVs. They want them to last longer. They want them smaller. They want them cheaper. And researchers and entrepreneurs are busy meeting those demands.

“Big game” ads

EVs – which run on large, rechargeable batteries – are a leading example of the trend. Ten years ago, there were hardly any EVs on the road. In 2020, EV sales hit 3 million, and now there are 10 million on the road worldwide and that growth is expected to continue.

Six of this year’s ads during the NFL’s big game featured EVs. Manufacturers worldwide plan to spend more than half a trillion dollars on EVs and batteries in the next eight years. In the U.S. alone, 13 EV battery manufacturing plants are expected to open in the next five years.

The battery bandwagon brings strong incentives for investments to make batteries even stronger. This cycle of innovation is cutting battery costs too. The price of the most popular type of rechargeable battery is down more than 90% from what it was 10 years ago.

Manufacturers around the world plan to spend more than half a trillion dollars on EVs and batteries in the next eight years. The Kansas City Assembly Plant shown here is Ford’s first U.S. plant to assemble batteries and EVs.



Photo Source: Ford



Photo Source: Tesla

Utility use of large battery systems, like the Tesla Megapack, is adding efficiency and reliability to the nation’s electric grid.

Batteries aid renewable energy use

Utility use of large batteries adds efficiency and reliability to the nation’s electric grid.

Utilities, including locally owned electric cooperatives, use batteries in several ways. They can smooth out voltage and frequency differences that damage equipment and affect power quality. Batteries can also make better use of the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources. By storing excess solar energy produced during the day when electric demand is low, batteries can make that sun power available for use at night when electric demand is high.

Utility-scale battery capacity jumped 35% in 2020, tripled in the past five years, and by 2023, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports electric utilities will have 10 times the battery capacity they had in 2019.

EIA reports that much of that increase comes from battery systems located near large solar projects, making it easier to store electricity produced by solar panels.

One especially innovative use of batteries came in 2020 when a heatwave strained California’s electric supply. The state’s energy manager asked businesses and homeowners with batteries to supply emergency power. More than 30,000 responded, including backup power owners and EV charging providers.

Whether used for making electricity more reliable or a fun new gadget to track our fitness habits, battery technology will continue to play a major role in our future.

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.

APRIL FOOLS' FAILS

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

I come from a long line of failed pranksters. Practical jokes backfire; carefully wrought capers fizzle. We just haven't figured out the knack, I guess.

When my sister Amber and I were about 10 and 8, we decided to trick our 2-year-old brother Brendan, who had an inexplicable fear of custard. Yes, the pudding-like substance that I'm not sure he'd ever tasted. Taking advantage of his toddler naivete, we told him to "open your mouth and close your eyes, and you'll get a surprise that will make you wise."

The only ones surprised were Amber and I when Brendan threw up all over and we had to clean it up.

My Grandpa Beyer had a dubious tradition of calling his kids on their birthdays at the brink of day and bellowing a truly off-tune version of "Happy Birthday." His daughter's birthday is on April 1; when she answered the phone, he went through his routine, only to be scolded roundly by some unhappy woman on a wrong number who didn't find this funny at all. To be fair, neither did Grandpa.

Classroom joke backfires

But the prank that I remember most, the one where I was hoisted on my own petard, so to speak, is an April Fools' joke from second grade.

Bradley was a kid in my class who was intent on eating my lunch. Well, not my whole lunch, but any sweet thing my mom had packed that day. He was particularly partial to small candy bars that would occasionally end up in my "The Partridge Family" lunchbox, and I'm sure he had the nose of a bloodhound. He never bothered me on the days when I had raisins or grapes.

He'd amble up to me as the first recess bell rang and say, "Can I have your candy bar/cookie?"

"No!" I'd exclaim with all my second-grade righteousness on fire. "Bring your own!" I knew full well that Bradley had



a well-stocked "Star Trek" lunchbox of his own, so I wasn't having any of it.

This went on for the better part of the school year, but once April 1 rolled around, I had the perfect solution.

I took a miniature chocolate bar – the flat kind – and pushed the waxy wrapped chocolate out of the outer wrapper. I removed the chocolate and replaced it with a piece of cardboard the exact same depth that I had cut from an old shoebox. I re-wrapped the chocolate and pushed it back into the outer wrapper. It was sublime! Bradley would never know the difference!

April 1 arrived, and I went off to school with two candy bars – my own and the faux version. As Bradley galloped over to me at recess and asked for my candy bar, I feigned compassion and

said that just this once, he could. He couldn't believe his ears! He grabbed the preferred candy bar from my hand, ripped it open, and snarfed up the chocolate.

Something was wrong here. Where was the cardboard?

I had given him the real candy bar!

Well, you can surmise that I felt like an idiot, but Bradley never caught on, and pride would never allow me to 'fess up.

I never again tried to trick anyone with food; however, I'm wondering how my kids would react to me calling them at dawn and singing "Happy Birthday"?

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



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