

JANUARY 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Marker 126 Travel Center honored  
with Iowa Venture Award

New year, smarter home

Comforting casserole recipes

Prairie Energy Cooperative members receive patronage ► See Page 5



# CONTENTS



VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 1

3

## STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Celebrating a  
diamond anniversary

3

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Fire HD 10  
Plus Tablet

10

## TECHNOLOGY MATTERS

New year,  
smarter home

14

## SAFETY MATTERS

Using a  
generator safely

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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Marta Smigowska, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could win \$100!

# CELEBRATING A DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



Whether you're celebrating a birthday or a historic anniversary, 75 years is a major milestone. At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

(IAEC), January 1948 was important because it marked the first month we published a statewide newspaper for member-consumers, titled "IRECA News." Sharing news and happenings from when IAEC was known as the Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the monthly tabloid quickly became a trusted and valuable source for information as more rural Iowa homes and businesses were receiving electricity through rural electric cooperatives.

An editorial in the first issue exactly 75 years ago reads:

*"The editors will do everything their knowledge and zeal will allow to make the publication foremost in its field. They hope to present material which will so inform members they will be inspired to contact others who ought to unite with us and to convince outside readers the cooperative system merits their wholehearted support."*

## Remaining steadfast in our mission

While the name and format of our monthly statewide publication have changed a few times over the decades, our commitment to our readers has not. We remain faithful to the legacy of providing valuable information to Iowa's electric cooperative member-consumers about co-ops, rural economic development, energy efficiency, industry trends and electric safety. We also make the magazine more enjoyable by including recipes, contests and reader-submitted cover photos.

And in a world shifting to digital platforms, we prefer to mail a printed magazine each month because it breaks through the digital noise and gets read. According to a scientifically valid readership survey we conducted in 2020, 87% of those who receive our magazine take time to read it each month. In fact, 44% of those who receive this magazine spend 10 minutes or more reading our 16 pages of content each month! We simply can't get that kind of engagement in a digital format.



But we do embrace digital technology when it makes strategic sense. A few years ago, we scanned every hard copy of the statewide publication in our central files and digitized the pages of each monthly issue to preserve our archive for generations to come. I enjoy history and learning about the past in order to guide our future, so I am grateful for the ability to

access and search 900 monthly issues with the click of a mouse.

## Energy topics stay at the forefront

Reading through our archive, I have seen many topics over the decades that are cycling back in the news today, including stories on nuclear technology, supply chain concerns and generating enough electricity to meet the growing electric demand of consumers. We'll look back on some of those headlines throughout the year as we celebrate our diamond anniversary.

I like to think that those first editors would be proud of where we stand 75 years later, carrying the torch they ignited so long ago. May this monthly publication continue to provide useful information to member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives for another 75 years! Our cooperative system indeed merits your wholehearted support.

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

# Win a Fire HD 10 Plus Tablet

This 10.1-inch, full HD, 32 GB tablet boasts a display that is 10% brighter than previous generation, with more than 2 million pixels. Enjoy your favorite apps like Netflix, Facebook, Hulu, Instagram and more through Amazon's Appstore. Ask Alexa to play videos and music, open apps, make calls or send messages, check the weather, access compatible smart home devices and more.

## Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Jan. 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the \$100 gift card for a local business from the November issue was Jeff V. Collins from Guthrie County REC.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JAN. 31!**

# MARKER 126 TRAVEL CENTER HONORED WITH IOWA VENTURE AWARD

The Iowa Area Development Group (IADG), on behalf of Iowa's rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and independent telecommunication companies, recently honored several distinguished Iowa companies with the Iowa Venture Award.

IADG established the Iowa Venture Award in 1988 to recognize and honor entrepreneurial leadership and accomplishment in rural Iowa. Recipients of the Iowa Venture Award are nominated by the members and sponsors of IADG. Companies and organizations are evaluated and selected based on the contribution they have made to their community and the state of Iowa. Factors include capital investment, job creation and leadership.

This year, seven companies were honored at the awards ceremony. Among these seven companies stands Marker 126 Travel Center, proudly powered by Prairie Energy.



Marker 126 is a new travel center that recently opened at mile marker 126 on Highway 20 near Fort Dodge. Owners Kevin and Sheila Stumpf had a vision for a travel destination that provides a high-end experience for all types of travelers. Marker 126 is a family operation, including their daughter and son. The travel center opened in September with an impressive slate of ever-expanding amenities. In addition to gas, diesel and offerings of a convenience store, Marker 126 houses Table 126, offering nutritious meals made from locally sourced fresh ingredients, the Brew 126 coffee shop

and a creamery serving ice cream.

Sheila designed the building, which includes indoor and outdoor seating, a fireplace area with comfortable chairs and a loft for meetings or groups to gather while traveling. Plans are in the works for electric vehicle charging stations, a dog park and a play area for kids. Additional possibilities for the interchange include a trucker campground. Prairie Energy has worked with the Stumpfs throughout the planning and building phase. Prairie Energy, Midland Power and Corn Belt Power supported this facility through our Revolving Loan Funds.



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# SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR TWO POSITIONS ON THE PRAIRIE ENERGY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) is a member-owned cooperative governed by a board of directors that you elect. As a member, one of your most important roles is to participate in the election of directors, and you can become more involved in your co-op by serving on that board.

Two positions on PECO's seven-member board of directors will be open for election in 2023. The three-year terms of Ryan Eekhoff, District 2, and Marion Denger, District 5, will expire.

- **District 2 townships:** Buffalo, Bingham, Wesley, Orthel, Britt, Garfield, Prairie, Boone, Erin and Liberty
- **District 5 townships:** Iowa, Scott, Lincoln, Blaine, Morgan, Wall Lake, Vernon, Oakland, Blairsburg, Williams and Alden



## Board member qualifications

Candidates must be PECO members receiving electricity in the townships listed. In conjunction with these requirements, a board member is expected to attend monthly board meetings, generally held on the last Tuesday of each month, and various information and training meetings throughout the year. Because the board of directors is responsible for establishing the policies and rates under which the cooperative operates, it is important that directors can devote adequate time to these activities. To learn

more about director requirements and expectations, visit our website at [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop).

If you are a member in either district and are interested in serving on the board of directors, call the office at 515-532-2805 or 800-728-0013.

## PATRONAGE RETURNED TO MEMBERS

Prairie Energy Cooperative has always been not-for-profit. As a member of the co-op, you share in the excess revenue and the return of that excess revenue to members, called patronage. As new funds continue to come in, the original funds can be paid back to members in the form of patronage retirement.

This year, members who purchased electricity from the co-op in 2006, 2007 and a portion of 2008 are receiving a refund (patronage) for those years, totaling \$569,395.85. This retirement was returned in the form of a check, which you should have received last month. If you received a check and noticed that the name and/or address needs to be updated, or the check is in the name of a deceased member, please call our office immediately at 515-532-2805.



## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW ACCEPTED

A \$1,000 scholarship opportunity is available each year through our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

These scholarships are considered an investment in the economic future of rural areas. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience, and

a statement of education and career goals. The scholarships must be used for educational costs, and the student must attend college in the fall of the school year for which the scholarship is awarded.

Seniors and college students can obtain an application through our website at [www.prairieenergy.coop](http://www.prairieenergy.coop) or by contacting our office at 515-532-2805.

**Applications are due by Feb. 17.**



# PROTECTING AMERICA'S ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC POWER

BY CONGRESSMAN RANDY FEENSTRA  
AND CHUCK SODERBERG

**Editor's Note:** The following column was published in *The Hill* as an op-ed in late November to educate Congressional leaders about reliability concerns within the electric industry. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has a strong legacy of working with Iowa's elected officials and policymakers to raise awareness about issues affecting the safety, affordability and reliability of power for the cooperative member-consumers we serve.

In today's world, electricity is essential. American families rely on electricity daily to heat and cool their homes, wash their clothes, cook their meals, charge their phones, turn on the lights and connect to the world. And while it might seem like magic, electricity is not generated out of thin air. We expect the lights to turn on when we flip a switch and our phones to charge when we plug them into an outlet. Our energy policies must reflect these expectations and ensure that our families, businesses and communities have access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

Over the last few years, green-energy absolutists and federal policymakers

have prioritized an untenable, unrealistic and costly energy agenda over commonsense policies to power our country and provide American families with reliable, affordable energy. This detrimental agenda for American-made energy at the highest levels of government has caused gas increases and volatile electricity costs. Even worse, these policies have the potential to be particularly catastrophic for our rural communities, farm families and main street businesses.

## **Local model empowers Iowans, ensures abundant supply**

As opposed to states like California, whose one-size-fits-all energy policies

impose production restrictions that lead to blackouts and high costs, Iowa is home to 48 locally owned, community-focused electric cooperatives that prioritize reliability and affordability for the more than 650,000 Iowans and 210,000 businesses, homes and farms that they serve.

Thanks to local governance and diversified power generation sources, the average co-op member household in Iowa pays about \$5 a day for electricity and Iowa electric cooperatives have returned more than \$300 million to their member-owners in the form of retired capital credits. These low costs and attractive



returns are only possible due to a commonsense management approach that empowers electric cooperatives to invest in the most productive and cost-effective power sources for their member-consumers. We urge national policymakers to do the same.

To support a robust cooperative ecosystem and expand abundant supplies of affordable electricity, lawmakers must prioritize economic and energy certainty for electric cooperatives by advancing an all-of-the-above American energy strategy that prioritizes permitting reform and provides low-interest capital for community development projects.

### **All-of-the-above energy strategy is critical**

Reliable and affordable electricity generation requires source flexibility and policy malleability. In other words, Congress should embrace an all-of-the-above energy agenda that ensures that Iowans can access affordable electricity when and where they need it, while simultaneously investing in renewable energy sources that are abundant in Iowa like wind power.

To date, Iowa electric co-ops have invested in 33 wind farms, over a dozen utility-scale and community-based solar projects, four landfill gas projects, five methane digesters and multiple hydroelectric stations to complement more traditional power sources like natural gas and coal. Some co-ops are also looking at small-scale nuclear technology as another dispatchable power generation option.

Additionally, Iowa electric co-ops have interconnected roughly

2,200 member-owned generation installations as a demonstration of support for an all-inclusive generation mix, even from non-utility locations. By allowing local cooperatives to determine the best, most comprehensive energy strategy for their consumers, our families, farms and businesses benefit from lower costs, energy security and vital investments in our rural communities.

### **Prioritizing permitting reform**

Congress needs to prioritize federal regulatory and permitting reform. While a great deal of buzz was generated during the end of September over this issue, we are confident that a serious debate is needed over how the federal government can facilitate the development of critical energy and transmission projects. As firm believers in local control, we believe the value of energy infrastructure is best determined by those who will benefit from a particular project. Allowing utilities and the people they serve to have a voice in where a transmission line might be located and who might pay for it is important. The federal government isn't always in the best position to tell the American people what is in their best interests locally.

### **Strengthening rural economies and communities**

We need to protect and strengthen the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program, which powers economic and community development and keeps families and good-paying jobs in rural Iowa. This program provides zero-interest loans of up to one million dollars to local utilities and cooperatives, which

are then tasked with passing this funding along to small businesses and community organizations to support initiatives that create jobs, enhance economic opportunity, revitalize main streets and aid small businesses in rural America.

Ensuring that our rural communities have access to the capital and credit they need to strengthen long-term economic vitality and attract new residents and businesses to populate small, vibrant towns must be a top priority of the 118th Congress and the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization.

Electric cooperatives play a crucial role in delivering safe, affordable and reliable electricity to hundreds of thousands of Iowans and tens of millions of Americans. In both the long and short term, the largest threat to our nation's energy producers and electricity distributors remains federal overreach and unrealistic mandates. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Congress to eliminate red tape that hinders their ability to power our businesses, homes, hospitals and farms and to instead provide them with the flexibility to streamline baseload power generation and diversify their power sources.

Our laws must allow electric cooperatives to do what they do best: power our local economies and provide our thriving communities with reliable, affordable electric power that we all rely on every day.

*Congressman Randy Feenstra represents Iowa's 4th congressional district, and Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*







## BAKED GOULASH

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded, divided
- 1 24-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 8-ounce package elbow macaroni, cooked and drained
- 1 teaspoon basil
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Brown beef and onion, drain. In large bowl, combine 1 cup cheese and remaining ingredients. Add beef and onion to pasta and sauce mixture. Place in 9x13-inch baking dish and top with remaining 1 cup cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 20-25 minutes until done. Serves 6-8

Connie Betts • Woodbine  
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

## BEV'S CASSEROLE

- ¼ pound cooked chicken, turkey or ham
- 1 cup uncooked macaroni
- 1 cup cheese, cut up
- 1 can cream of mushroom or chicken soup
- 1 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons onion, chopped

Mix all ingredients together and put in a 9-inch square baking dish. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Make this simple casserole with leftover chicken, turkey or ham. Add a salad and your next meal is ready. Serves 6

Rhonda Benton • Rowan • Prairie Energy Cooperative

## CHICKEN PASTA OVERNIGHT CASSEROLE

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 6-8 dashes tabasco sauce
- garlic salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 2 cups Colby Jack cheese, shredded, divided
- 1 7-ounce package shell pasta, uncooked
- 3-4 cups chicken, cooked and cubed
- 1 can water chestnuts, sliced and drained
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, sliced
- 1 small bag frozen mixed vegetables

Put soups in mixing bowl and beat to smooth. Add milk, 1 cup at a time, until absorbed. Add seasonings and stir well. Add 1 cup cheese and remaining ingredients, stir until well mixed. Pour into buttered or sprayed 9x13-inch casserole dish. Cover tightly with saran or Press-n-Seal wrap. Refrigerate overnight. Set out 1 hour before baking. Bake covered with foil at 325 degrees F for 1½ hours. Uncover and add remaining 1 cup cheese. Cook for 30 minutes more for light browning. Serves 10-12

Belinda Fink • Cambridge • Consumers Energy



## UPSIDE DOWN PIZZA CASSEROLE

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion, chopped or minced
- 1 16-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- sliced pepperoni, optional
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Parmesan cheese

Brown beef with salt, pepper and onion, drain. Mix beef with spaghetti sauce and pepperoni, if desired. Layer the meat mixture in a 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over meat. Make a crust by mixing flour, eggs, milk and oil. Pour the crust mixture over top. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 6-8*

**Judy Jackson • Hedrick**  
Access Energy Cooperative

## BUSY DAY CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 can mixed vegetables
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 pound cheese, shredded, optional

Brown beef with butter, drain grease. Put in 10x10x2-inch glass baking dish. Add potatoes, salt, vegetables and soup. Mix well and cover. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, or until potatoes are done. If desired, top with cheese and melt in the oven for a few minutes. *Serves 9*

**Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison**  
Access Energy Cooperative

## CABBAGE CASSEROLE

- 1 medium head cabbage
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1½ cups milk
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Cut up and cook cabbage, then place in casserole dish. Combine butter and flour and cook 2 minutes. Add milk, cream cheese, salt and pepper. Stir until cream cheese is melted. Pour mixture over cabbage. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Serves 4-6*

**Lori Collingwood • Ladora**  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## CHEESEBURGER QUICHE

- ½ pound ground beef, browned
- ⅓ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup milk
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1½ cups cheese, shredded
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper
- pie shell, optional

Mix ingredients together and place in pie pan, with or without pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for 35 minutes. *Serves 4*

**Rebecca Hancox • Plano**  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

## HAM/CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 1 box Rice-a-Roni wild rice
- ½ small package frozen peas
- 1½-2 cups ham, diced
- 1½-2 cups rotisserie chicken, bite-sized pieces
- 2 cups cheese, shredded
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- croutons

Prepare wild rice according to package directions. Mix all ingredients together except for croutons. Place in a greased 9x13-inch casserole pan. Top with croutons (can substitute with diced bread mixed in melted butter). Bake at 350 degrees F for 1-1½ hours, or until hot and bubbly. *Serves 12*

**Deb Wentzien • Lincoln**  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

**WANTED:**

## BEEF RECIPES

**THE REWARD:**

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

**Deadline is Jan. 31**

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

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

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

**MAIL:** Recipes

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# NEW YEAR, SMARTER HOME

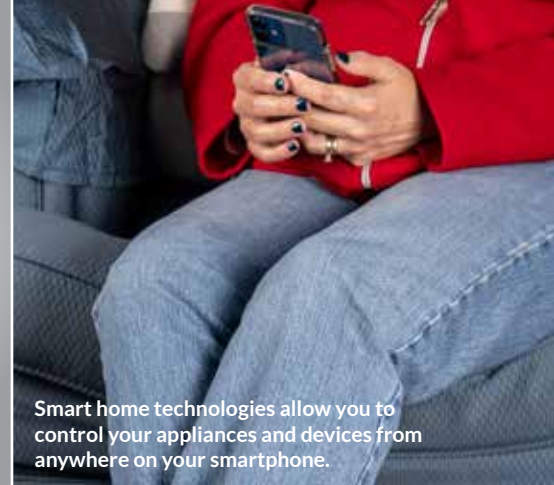
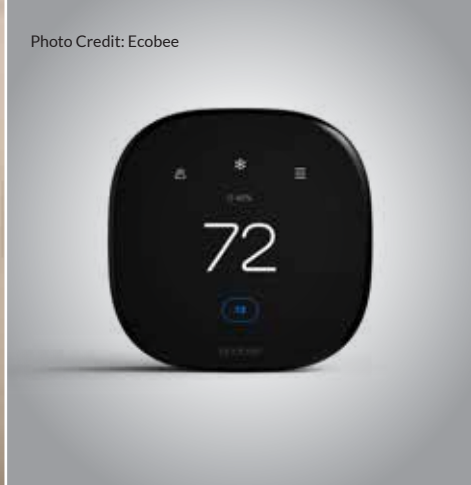
BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE







Smart window coverings, such as these Serena Smart Roller Shades, can help save energy in the winter and summer with app capabilities and preset schedules.



Smart home technologies allow you to control your appliances and devices from anywhere on your smartphone.

You've probably heard the term "smart home" a lot in recent years. If you're curious about what makes a home smart, how it can boost energy efficiency and help you save money, you've come to the right place.

"Smart" was originally an acronym for self-monitoring analysis and reporting technology. It refers to technology that can be programmed for automation or controlled remotely using Bluetooth or Wi-Fi from a smartphone app or online. A smart home is one with automated control of appliances and systems, such as lighting fixtures and heating and cooling systems.

There are multiple reasons people choose to automate their homes, including convenience, energy efficiency and security. Just because a product is smart doesn't mean it's energy efficient. Added connectivity, lights and touchscreens can actually increase your energy use. Always look for the ENERGY STAR® logo when shopping, which certifies the products meet standards for energy efficiency.

Energy savings typically come from automating the systems, devices and appliances in your home to use less energy or use energy when it costs less. Here are a few ways you can start implementing smart technology at home.

### Smart upgrades for the entire home

Because heating and cooling account for the most energy use in a home, these systems are the best place to look for energy savings.

Smart thermostats offer features and functionality that can help you

save energy and money without thinking about it, including learning preferences and automatically setting temperatures. Geofencing is a feature that uses your phone's location to gauge your distance from home and adjusts the temperature accordingly.

Smart thermostats also let you control the thermostat from anywhere with an internet connection, and automatic software updates use new algorithms to maximize energy savings. Features vary by product, so be sure to choose one that's right for you.

Smart window coverings are increasing in popularity and availability. They can help save energy both in the winter and summer by operating based on the temperature of the room or a preset schedule.

Smart lighting can help you remotely control lights in your home based on occupancy or a preset schedule. Lighting also can be paired with home security systems.

You can use smart outlets and power strips to control devices from outside the home or manage use based on load. For example, you can plug your computer and devices into a load-sensing power strip that turns off peripheral devices, such as monitors and printers, when your computer is not in use.

### Smart streaming for the living room

Many people use Wi-Fi to stream TV shows and movies. Smart TVs with built-in streaming functionality offer the most efficient way to stream content. If your TV cannot connect to the internet for streaming, opt for

a streaming media player, such as Roku or Apple TV. They use 15 times less energy than a gaming console to stream the same shows and movies.

### Save on suds in the laundry room

Smart washing machines can be scheduled for off-peak energy times (when people in your community use less energy), which is helpful if your electric rate is based on the time of day energy is used. Smart clothes dryers can shut off automatically when your clothes are dry.

### Smart savings in the kitchen

There are many options for smart appliances in the heart of the home. Smart refrigerators offer energy-saving features, such as notifications when the door is left open. Some models have digital screens that show the fridge's contents to keep you from opening the door.

Smart ovens let you preheat when you are on your way home or check if you forgot to turn off the oven when you are away. Toasters, range hoods, microwaves and countertop ice makers are among the growing list of additional smart kitchen gadgets available.

More smart home technologies are on the horizon, bringing more ways to operate the various systems, devices and appliances in your home. As you think about ways to make your home smarter, remember to look for products that use the same smart home apps, which will make these new technologies even easier to manage.

*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.*

## SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR ANNUAL MEETING

### ARTICLE VII, Section 2 states:

Candidates for election to the Board of Directors shall be nominated by a Nominating Committee, which Committee shall be elected by the Board of Directors. Said Nominating Committee members so elected shall nominate candidates for election to the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting of Members following the meeting at which said Nominating Committee members are elected.

Any twenty (20) or more members may make other nominations in writing over their signatures not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting at which directors are to be elected, and the Secretary shall post the same at the same place where the list of nominations by the Committee is posted; such nominations so made by such members to be subject to the same service requirements as nominations by the Nominating Committee heretofore prescribed.

Members voting at the annual meeting of members shall vote only for candidates from the district in which said member resides or receives service. The election of the directors shall be by ballot, and each voting member shall be entitled to cast one vote for each director to be elected from that member's district.

Members may vote by mail-in ballot, to the extent that the same is consistent with the Bylaws of the Cooperative and if the Board of Directors has authorized such voting prior to the meeting at which the election is to occur. The election of directors shall be subject to ratification by a majority of all members present at the Annual Meeting of Members, and directors elected shall qualify and take office immediately following the Annual Meeting of Members.

## ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TRIP TO D.C.



At Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO), one way we invest in the next generation of rural Iowa leaders is by participating in the national electric cooperative Youth Tour program. We're looking for high school students with a passion for government and public service to apply for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to our nation's capital in June.

One student will be selected from eligible candidates to attend the 2023 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., from June 17-23, along with 40 other student leaders from Iowa. The Iowa Youth Tour group will join hundreds of students from across the country as they learn more about electric cooperatives and American history and come home with a greater understanding of their role as an American citizen.

Students will also learn about U.S. government and meet with their members of Congress. On the trip, students take in the sights of D.C. as they visit monuments, museums and historical landmarks. Students who go

on Youth Tour often call it the trip of a lifetime!

We are now accepting Youth Tour applications until March 23. High school sophomores and juniors from PECO's 11 counties are eligible to apply. The student must be a current high school student. The application process consists of completing our application form, which includes an essay question.

You can download our form at [www.prairieenergy.coop/youth-tour](http://www.prairieenergy.coop/youth-tour) and contact Chad Chapman, member services at [cchapman@prairieenergy.coop](mailto:cchapman@prairieenergy.coop), or Darren Johnson, member services at [djohnson@prairieenergy.coop](mailto:djohnson@prairieenergy.coop), for more information, or call the office at 515-532-2805.

For more than 60 years, Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have been sending deserving students to D.C. This program is a great resume builder for student leaders and a wonderful opportunity to kickstart a passion for government affairs or advocacy. Make sure to apply for Youth Tour 2023 by March 23!



# HOW ELECTRIC VEHICLES IMPACT THE GRID

BY KATHERINE LOVING

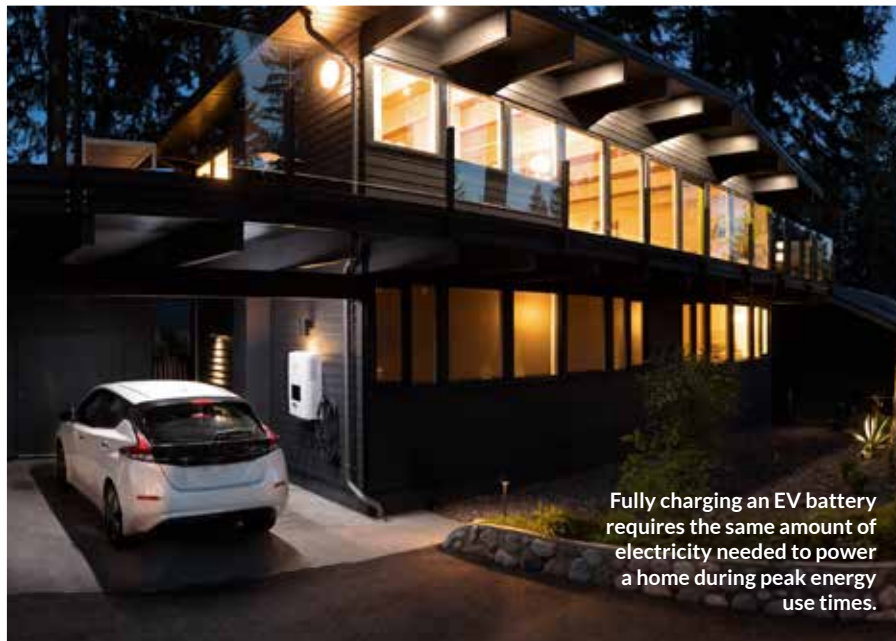
There was a record increase in electric vehicle (EV) sales last year, and experts predict that by 2035, many major vehicle manufacturers will only produce electric models. With this increase comes the need for more electricity to power EVs.

A 2021 Department of Energy study showed that increased electrification, or replacement of direct fossil fuel use with electricity, would account for a 38% increase in electricity demand by 2050 – and EVs will play a major role in this increased electrification. These shifts will significantly impact the nation's grid, which means power supply and grid infrastructure must be carefully planned to accommodate the increased need for electricity.

## The realities of EV charging

EV charging presents new challenges in maintaining the electric grid. Fully charging an EV battery requires the same amount of electricity needed to power a home during peak energy use times. However, EV charging is a concentrated pull of energy over an extended period, which can add stress to the local power grid by increasing the amount of electricity a utility has to provide. Additionally, the neighborhood transformer needs adequate capacity to handle the increased load. EV charging can shorten the lifespan of transformers by straining and overloading their capacity if they are not matched to a neighborhood's energy needs.

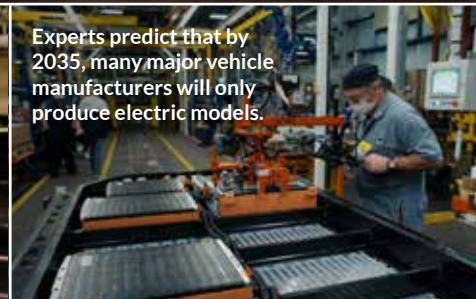
Electric cooperatives are currently identifying ways to manage this new pattern of electricity use, though exact strategies will vary based on each utility's unique needs. Analyzing energy load patterns or identifying where and when the local grid has spikes in demand can provide electric co-ops with data on where to place higher-capacity transformers. This analysis can also provide a picture of overall energy use and patterns to help forecast energy consumption for the



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Last year saw a record increase in EV sales.



Experts predict that by 2035, many major vehicle manufacturers will only produce electric models.

future. Planning system maintenance and upgrades are also part of that long-range forecasting; however, this has been recently complicated by supply chain issues with transformers, as wait times are upward of one year.

## Coordinating helps ease demand

EV owners can play a role in reducing energy costs and system stress associated with charging. Check with your local electric co-op to see if they offer an EV charging rate. Typically, an EV rate incentivizes charging during the night when electricity demand and wholesale energy rates are lower. Charging at night is also a great way to ease demand in your neighborhood, even without a special EV rate.

Another potential change on the horizon is a new energy peak time. EV drivers that plug in to charge as soon

as they return home from work would create even more electricity demand during this busy time of day. But if EV drivers use a timer to schedule charging at night, the electricity demand could be spread over a more extended period to reduce stress on the grid. This would be especially beneficial for neighborhoods with multiple EV drivers.

EVs are only expected to increase in number. Electric co-ops and EV owners both have roles to play in accommodating increased demand. If you own an EV, let your electric co-op know so they can better plan energy demand for you and your neighbors.

*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.*

Photo credit: Ford

# HOW TO SAFELY USE A GENERATOR

Before using a portable generator, it's essential to understand the potential dangers associated with using them, such as their production of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, colorless and tasteless poisonous gas that is called the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like CO alarms. Follow these tips when using a generator.

- **Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator.** Be sure you understand the directions before hooking up the generator.
- **A generator is a temporary power source.** It should never be used as a permanent solution.
- **Maintain adequate ventilation because generators emit CO.** It's against fire code to operate a generator in your home, garage or other enclosed building. Place it in a dry location outdoors. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent CO from entering the home.
- **Never plug a portable electric generator into a wall outlet or connect directly to a home's wiring.** This can energize utility power lines and injure you or others working nearby. Electrical back feed can also damage the generator and home electrical equipment.
- **Turn off the generator and allow cooling before refueling.** Gasoline and its vapors may ignite if they come in contact with hot components or an electric spark. Store fuel in a properly designed container in a secure location away from the generator or other fuel-burning appliances, such as water heaters. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located nearby.



Photo: Honda

- **Protect your appliances.** Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit. Remember, generators are for temporary usage, so prioritize your needs.
- **Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions.** Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- **Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.** Many generator components are hot enough to burn you during operation.
- **Use proper extension cords.** Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.
- **Shut down the generator properly.** Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- **Remember maintenance between uses.** Drain the gasoline from the generator while it is being stored. It's also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality, and to start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

For more information, visit Safe Electricity at [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org)



# HOW TO LIVE TO BE 115

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Ever get into one of those conversations where you think, “How did that THAT topic come up?”

It happened during a luncheon at the 2022 statewide rural electric cooperative (REC) annual meeting in Des Moines. As we finished our salad, the conversation turned to cigarettes, of all things. A gentleman from eastern Iowa mentioned he quit smoking years ago but still craves a cigarette now and then.

He recalled the cigarette machine in the lunchroom at the American Institute of Business (AIB) in Des Moines when he was a student there in the 1970s. Those cigarettes were \$0.50 a pack, higher than the typical \$0.35 or \$0.40 at local stores. But hey, they were handy. AIB even placed ashtrays outside the classrooms for extra convenience.

While I’ve never been a smoker, I chimed in with a memory from the 1991 Iowa REC Youth Tour. As we flew to Washington, D.C., I remember how one of the livelier participants got busted for messing with the ashtrays in the armrests.

The former smoker commented that when he flew in years past, he was seated in the smoking section, which was usually in the back six or so rows. (Not sure how that kept the smoke away from the other passengers. Go figure.)

“It seemed like everyone smoked back then,” added another gentleman at our lunch table. As everyone nodded in agreement, the conversation turned to health and longevity as we enjoyed fruit pie for dessert. The former smoker recalled a hard-working local contractor in his area who smoked a pack of cigarettes a day and drank a fifth of whiskey for good measure. He lived to be about 93 years old.

## Wise words from a supercentenarian

I mentioned I’m from Lake City, the



Darcy Dougherty Mulsby with Bessie Hendricks of Lake City at her 110th birthday party. Bessie turned 115 in November.

same hometown of the oldest person in America and the fourth oldest living person in the world – Bessie Hendricks. Bessie and I share a Nov. 7 birthday. Bessie was born in 1907 and turned 115 this past November. Her lifetime has seen 21 presidents, the sinking of the Titanic and two world wars.

A few years ago, I visited Shady Oaks Care Center in Lake City to interview Bessie and her adult children. When I asked her secrets to longevity, the retired farm wife credited hard work. She also advised to “stay away from doctors.”

Bessie takes hardly any medication and still enjoys listening to her family

sing “You Are My Sunshine.” (She used to sing along but turning 115 does come with some limitations.) Much to my delight, Bessie also enjoys eating dessert.

If you ask doctors to explain supercentenarians (people who are 110 or older), they’ll usually say a lot of this longevity is due to good genes. While we can’t do much about our genes, we can make a New Year’s resolution to stay positive, just like Bessie.

And for good measure, ditch the cigarettes, but don’t skip dessert.

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


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