

● MAY 2023

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



SPECIAL INSERT:

**Prairie Energy
Cooperative 2022
Annual Report**

See the financial standing of your cooperative ► See Page 6A

CONTENTS



VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 5

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Stay safe during
the spring season

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a \$100 gift card to a
local garden center

10

FEATURE ARTICLE

Your guide to growing
delicious tomatoes

14

CONSERVATION MATTERS

Conservation supports
monarch butterflies

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

ART DIRECTOR
Joel Clifton

**IAEC EXECUTIVE
VICE PRESIDENT**
Chuck Soderberg

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS**
Erin Campbell

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Roger Solomonson, District 3 – President
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President
Kenny VandenBerg, District 1 – Secretary/Treasurer
Deena Moore, District 4 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Tony Lem, District 2
Jim Miller, District 5
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase ***Iowa Electric Cooperative Living*** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

© Copyright 2023, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Kate Hindin, a Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

STAY SAFE DURING THE SPRING SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



May is Electrical Safety Month, and it's a great opportunity to share some safety tips as many Iowans spend more time outdoors planting

crops, doing yardwork or enjoying the springtime weather. Take a few moments to review the following safety precautions with your family this month.

Safety in the field

As you head into the fields this season, always keep a 10-foot clearance between equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and make sure any workers are also aware.

Plan your route between fields and on public roads to avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to avoid contact with a line.

If equipment comes into contact with a power line, assume the line is energized and deadly. The operator should NOT get off the machinery unless in immediate danger. If the operator touches the ground and the equipment at the same time, they will become a channel for electricity.

Instead, the operator should stay on the equipment and immediately contact the local electric utility or 911 to report the incident so electricity can be shut off safely before exiting.

When thunder roars, go indoors

There is no safe place from lightning when you're outside. It's important to be aware of weather forecasts and watch for developing thunderstorms, as lightning can strike many miles ahead of a storm front. If you hear thunder, seek shelter immediately



because it indicates lightning is within 10 miles. Authorities warn against outdoor activity until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder is heard. Sign up for free county emergency notifications at www.alert.iowa.gov.

Call before you dig

Spring is prime time for landscaping projects and home improvement projects. Remember to contact Iowa One Call at least two business days before you dig so underground utilities can be properly located and marked. It's the law, and it could just save your life! Buried utility lines are everywhere, and an underground utility line is damaged every few

minutes in the U.S. because someone decided to dig without calling 811 first.

Move over or slow down

We need your help keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road to work safely; their families thank you!

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a \$100 gift card to a local garden center!

It's gardening season! Whether you are planting a vegetable garden or a pollinator habitat, it's rewarding to create the perfect backyard oasis. To help your garden grow or add plants for the beneficial pollinators, we're giving away a \$100 gift card from a local nursery!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 31, 2023. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified. The winner of the Kitchen Aid Cold Brew Maker from the March issue was Philip Orndorff from Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

NOMINATE A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER IN JUNE

Your nominee could win \$2,500 for their local charity

Iowa's electric cooperatives are excited to announce the return of a statewide contest, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. Called **Shine the Light**, the contest will accept nominations in June and award three winners with a \$2,500 check to their local charity or community organization.

"We're excited to once again provide this cooperative effort to shine the light on local volunteers," says Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the Shine the Light contest will accept contest entries online during the month of June. In addition to receiving a \$2,500 donation for their charity or nonprofit of choice, the winners will also be featured in the September issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

How to nominate

Member-consumers, employees and retirees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers. If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative in Iowa, you're a co-op member-consumer and invited to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-consumer. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians.



Step 1:

Go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com from June 1-30 to make a nomination and to review the contest rules.

Step 2:

As a nominator, provide your contact information and answer the following question in 500 words or less.

How has your nominee made a difference in the community, and how might their local charity/nonprofit use the \$2,500 donation?



ENTER TO WIN

WIN \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED COVER PHOTO

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you with \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution. To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.



HAMBLLEN WINS MAGAZINE CONTEST FOR YOUTH TOUR



This year, Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine once again sponsored a Youth Tour essay contest. Of the entries received, one winner is chosen to join the Iowa Youth Tour group to attend

the electric cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., in June.

The contest was open to high school sophomores, juniors and seniors whose families are served by Iowa electric cooperatives. Students who attended all three of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' 2022 Iowa Youth Leadership Academy sessions in October were also eligible to enter.

We're pleased to announce that **Shay Hamblen** has won this year's essay contest! She attended our Iowa Youth Leadership Academy sessions in October. Her parents are members of Western Iowa Power Cooperative and her older sister Danielle attended Youth Tour in 2014, sponsored by Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative. In fact, it was Danielle's experience that inspired Shay to enter the essay contest.

To enter the contest, eligible participants were asked to tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in their community (in 250 words or less).

Hamblen wrote, "The issue I believe affects the quality of life in my community the most is the detachment we feel from each other due to being addicted to our cell phones. We are able to talk to people from almost anywhere thanks to the technology advancements since the 20th century including computers, emailing and cell phones.

Almost everyone I know owns a cell phone that they use on a daily basis. Every day we wake up and the first thing we do is check our phones. Throughout the day we check it out of habit, when you sit down for lunch instead of having a conversation with a peer or coworker you pull out your phone and mindlessly scroll. It's like a pacifier for us, whenever we are uncomfortable or are not being stimulated enough, out comes the phone. We lose touch with those in our lives the more time we spend on our devices.

Whether for better or worse, the cell phone has changed the way our communities function. Most have a sense of anxiety when they have lost their phones; it controls us even if we wish it didn't. Some studies even show the link between the overuse of cell phones and depression. I can't help but wonder what the consequences for spending so much time glued to a screen might be or how much the constant dopamine hit we get from checking the notifications changes our brain chemistry and how damaging it could be for our personal relationships."

SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS IN YOUR COUNTY

It's the season for severe weather. To make sure you stay weather aware, it's a great idea to sign up to receive important weather and emergency notifications in your area. One service to consider is Alert Iowa, which is the State of Iowa's official emergency notification system.

Through Alert Iowa, state and local officials use a single, statewide notification system that provides local control of how and when to disseminate emergency and public safety messages to residents.

There are three ways to sign up for county alerts:

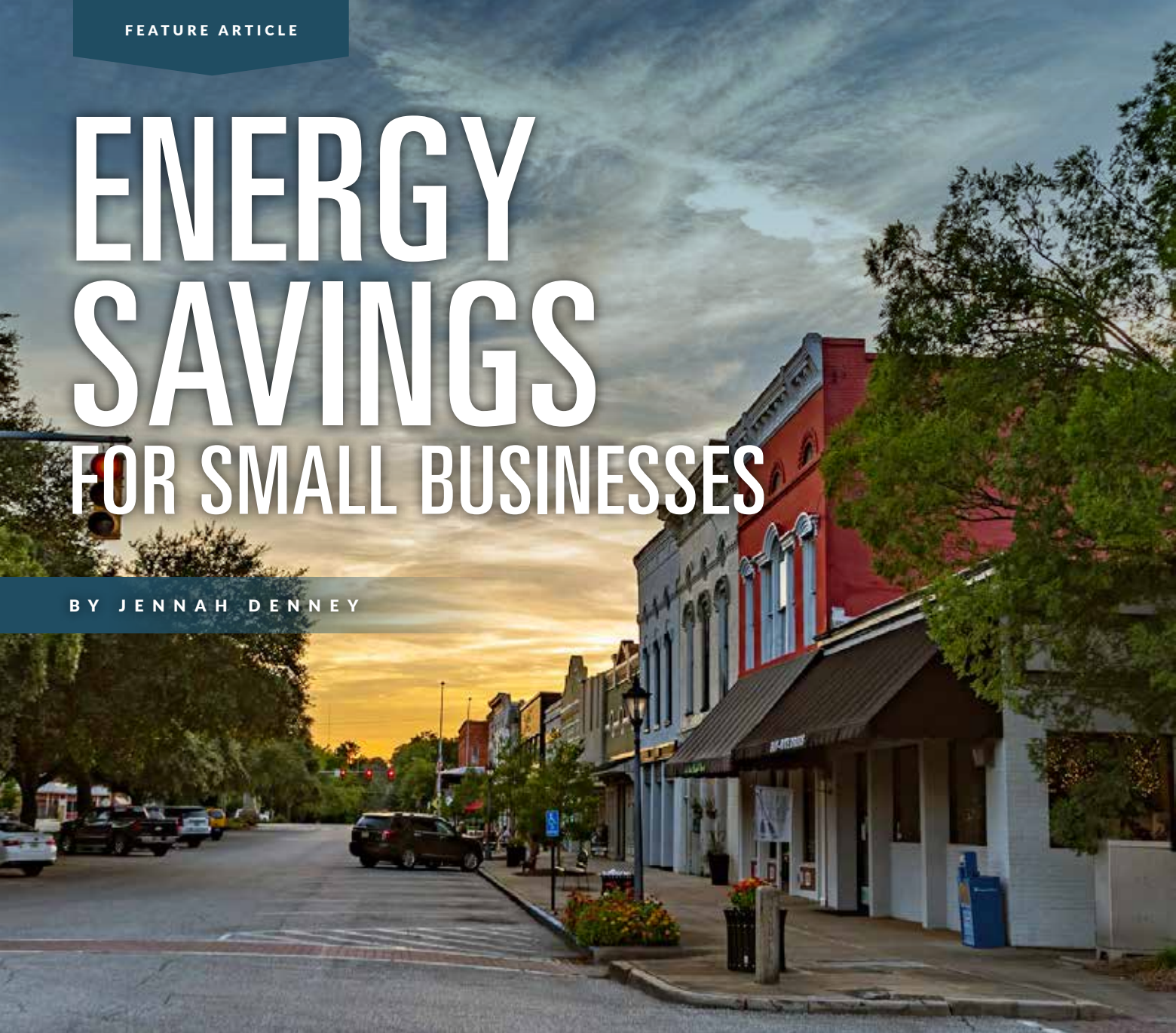
- 1 Create a profile through your county's website opt-in page
- 2 Download the Smart911 app and create a customized profile
- 3 Send a text message to opt-in

Scan this QR code to learn if your county is participating and sign up to receive free alerts via text message, email and/or voice message.



ENERGY SAVINGS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

BY JENNAH DENNEY



Electric cooperatives are proud to serve small businesses that are essential to our local communities. As costs for pretty much everything continue to rise, small business owners are feeling strained. Luckily, there are steps Iowa's small business owners can take to conserve energy – and save money.

Many small businesses are in commercial buildings smaller than 50,000 square feet. These buildings use 44% of the energy consumed by commercial buildings in the U.S. According to the Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR® program, small businesses in the

U.S. collectively spend a staggering \$60 billion on annual energy costs. Additionally, a survey conducted by the National Federation of Independent Business found that energy costs are a top-three expense for more than a third of the nation's small businesses.

Small businesses can reduce their energy costs by taking advantage of competitive rates, prioritizing upgrades to increase efficiency and making simple changes to how they do business. Doing so can directly affect a business's bottom line and make it more competitive in the current market.

Here are a few areas small business owners can focus on saving energy and money.

Lighting. Many small businesses, like offices and retail stores, depend greatly on lighting, which can be a significant expense. There are two ways to increase the efficiency of your business's lighting system: install energy-efficient bulbs and fixtures and change how you use lighting.

New LED bulbs use less energy and last much longer. LEDs come in various options and prices, making them great replacements for older, inefficient bulbs.

Encourage employees to turn off lights when they're not being used. You can also install light switches with sensors so lights automatically turn off when no one is in the room.

Equipment and appliances. Turning off office equipment and devices can help save energy and money. Computer monitors can add up to \$30 to an office's energy bill if left on during evenings and weekends.

Restaurants typically use up to 10 times more energy per square foot than other commercial buildings. To save money, it is important to have energy-efficient food service equipment.

Additionally, kitchens in many other kinds of small businesses use microwaves, coffee makers and refrigerators, which should be considered when reviewing overall energy use.

Heating and cooling systems.

Heating and cooling account for a large portion of a small business's energy bills.

Tracking energy use and maintaining the heating and cooling system can help small business owners save on energy bills. The system should be inspected annually, and filters should be replaced regularly. If the system needs replacing, consider alternative options like a heat pump

with a seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) of 13 or higher. Your local electric co-op can offer advice on efficient heating and cooling equipment.

Air leaks and insulation. Just like our homes, small businesses have windows, walls, a roof and insulation as part of their building envelope. Air leaks can lead to higher bills. Leaks are typically found around windows, doors, walls and the roof. Seal these areas for additional energy savings.

Water. Efficient use of energy and water go hand in hand. In most cases, gas or electricity is used to heat water, which costs money. The more heated water your business uses, the more you can save by determining how to use water most efficiently. Lowering the water temperature between 110-120 degrees is an easy way to save on water heating.

Transportation. Many businesses can recognize fuel savings and lower the total cost of fleet ownership and transportation networks by switching to electric vehicles (EVs).

EVs have lower maintenance costs because they are more reliable than internal combustion engine vehicles. This is because EVs have fewer mechanical parts that can break, and they often provide better data to allow for more proactive maintenance. Depending on your



Photo: Ford Motor Company

transportation needs, EVs may be able to offer better energy savings for the long term.

In conclusion, small businesses can take simple steps to better control how much energy they use *and* how they use it. Not sure where to start? Ask your electric co-op if they offer energy audits, which can identify areas to save the most energy.

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

Scan this QR code to learn more about resources available through the Iowa Energy Efficiency Assistance Program for Rural Small Businesses.



Photo sourced from Pixabay.com.



Small businesses can reduce their energy costs by making upgrades to increase efficiency and making simple changes to how they do business.



Many small businesses have kitchens that include microwaves, coffee makers and refrigerators. These appliances should be considered when reviewing overall energy use.



Tracking energy use and maintaining the heating and cooling system can help small business owners save on energy bills.



SWISS STEAK

- 2 pounds round steak, 1-inch thick
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oil
- 4 medium onions, sliced
- 1 medium green pepper, seeded and sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup celery, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chili sauce
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

Serve with mashed potatoes or rice

Dredge steak in flour, salt and pepper. Brown in hot oil on both sides. Remove when brown. Add onions and sauté. Return meat and add green pepper, celery, garlic, sauce and water. Bring to boil then reduce heat. Cover and simmer 1 hour until tender. Cut into 6 slices, serve on platter with sauce poured over. Serve with mashed potatoes or rice.

**Holly Heeren • Alexander
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative**

BEST EASY BEEF AND BROCCOLI STIR-FRY

- 3 tablespoons cornstarch, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons water, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pound boneless round steak or charcoal steak
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 small onion, cut into wedges
- 4 cups broccoli florets
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- rice
- toasted sesame seeds, optional

In bowl, combine 2 tablespoons cornstarch, 2 tablespoons water and garlic powder until smooth. Cut beef into 3-inch strips. Add beef to cornstarch mixture and toss. In a large skillet or wok, stir-fry beef in 1 tablespoon oil until beef reaches desired doneness. Remove from skillet and keep warm. Stir-fry onion in remaining oil for 4-5 minutes until softened. Add broccoli and cook for 3 minutes until tender but still crisp. Return beef to pan. Combine soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger, remaining 1 tablespoon cornstarch and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water until smooth. Add to skillet, cook and stir for 2 minutes. Serve over rice and garnish with toasted sesame seeds, if desired. Serves 4

Diane Peebler • Danville • Access Energy Cooperative

NOTICE OF

ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

MEETING TO BE CONDUCTED USING MAIL VOTING

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Prairie Energy Cooperative will be held at the Cooperative offices in Clarion, Iowa, at 2 p.m. on June 7, 2023, to take action upon the following matters:

1. The reports of officers, directors, and committees, which will subsequently be made available to the members to view;
2. The election of two (2) directors of the Cooperative for a term of three years each, which election will be conducted by mail-in ballot only;
3. All other business which may legally come before the meeting or any adjournment or adjournments thereof.

In connection with the election of directors scheduled for this meeting, the following members have been

nominated for Director by the Committee on Nominations appointed by the Board of Directors of the Cooperative pursuant to the Bylaws.

THREE-YEAR TERM (Two to be elected)

District 2: Ryan Eekhoff

District 5: Marion Denger
Robert Ritter

As previously noted, the format of the meeting will not provide for in-person attendance by the members. All voting and action will be conducted by mail vote. You are urged to take the time to complete and return the mail ballot. The results will be published in our newsletter following the meeting.

DATED this 8th day of May, 2023.

– **Donald Christopherson,**
Secretary/Treasurer

REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee of Prairie Energy Cooperative duly appointed by the Board of Directors, hereby nominates the following members of the Cooperative for the office of Director for the term specified, all to be elected at the Annual Meeting to be held June 7, 2023.

THREE-YEAR TERM (Two to Be Elected – One from Each District)

District 2: Ryan Eekhoff

District 5: Marion Denger
Robert Ritter

DATED at Clarion, Iowa, this 6th day of April 2023, and posted on the 8th day of May 2023 in the office of the above-named Cooperative.

– **Jerry Norris**
Nominating Committee Chairman

RYAN ECKHOFF — DISTRICT 2 INCUMBENT



Ryan Eekhoff and his wife Lori live in Erin township. They have three children, Marissa, Wyatt and Alizabeth. Eekhoff currently works at First Citizens Bank in Kanawha as a loan

officer and is also a third-generation farmer.

His hobbies include spending time with family, raising and working with show cattle, and helping coach youth softball and basketball teams. Eekhoff is a member of the Hancock County Extension Council and an active member of the Britt Christian Reformed Church.

Eekhoff says he wants to be nominated to the board of directors because he would like to create a better understanding of how our local electric cooperative works and how the co-op can best provide safe, reliable and affordable power to members.

MARION DENGER — DISTRICT 5 INCUMBENT



Marion Denger and his wife Cindy farm in Vernon township. They have one son, Robert. Denger has been a member of the cooperative since 1980. He is the past-president

and current National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) liaison to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) and an NRECA director. He is also employed as a federal crop and hail adjuster.

Denger enjoys woodworking, fishing and hunting. He serves as the Vernon township clerk.

“The opportunity to represent the cooperative’s District 6 member-owners on the IAEC board of directors and the NRECA board adds value and brings much needed insight on issues concerning legislative and regulatory items,” he shares.

BOB RITTER — DISTRICT 5 NOMINEE



Bob Ritter and his wife Judy have lived in Vernon township since 1966. They have two daughters, Kristin and Jacqueline, and four adult grandchildren. After farming for 52 years, he is semi-retired and enjoys hobbies, such as flying,

cruising in the Corvette and landscaping.

Ritter’s community activities include the Wright County Republican Central Committee, serving as a board member for the Iowa Army of Pink (501c3) as well as serving on the Wright County Farm Bureau board.

The Ritters have been members of Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) since 1966. Now that he has more free time, he would like to learn more about how the electric cooperative works for member-consumers and interacts with the surrounding communities. Ritter states that his family’s service has always been excellent and affordable and being on the PECO board of directors deserves a commitment that he would like to make.

OPERATIONS AND ENGINEERING UPDATES FROM 2022

BY BUTCH NOREM



Report card

Outage index information is reported through a Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI) score. We track from the time the outage is

reported until it is restored, and this is periodically reviewed and analyzed to look for ways to reduce the time it takes to restore power.

For those members who experienced an outage in 2022, the average time out of service was 72.37 minutes. This figure includes outages due to loss of power supply (substations) and those outages that were unplanned with



our membership. The Average Service Availability Index (ASAI) shows Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) power was on nearly 99.982% of the time in 2022. This metric shows your co-op was extremely reliable in delivering power across our system.

Supply chain challenges becoming par for the course

We continued to face challenges for material and equipment in 2022. Delivery times for wire, transformers and other line materials continue to take months instead of weeks, and equipment delivery time is even worse.

Prior to COVID-19, ordering new, large line trucks took only **one** year from signing an order to receiving a new unit. We are now adjusting to delivery dates closer to **five** years for same equipment. The cost for said equipment is now closer to \$500,000 when, 10 years ago, it was \$300,000. To help manage this ongoing challenge, PECO is remounting some current units on new chassis, which cuts delivery times in half. This process is monitored to ensure your cooperative's dollars are spent wisely.

Butch Norem is the director of operations/engineering for Prairie Energy Cooperative.

TECHNOLOGY AND SECURITY

BY BILL HICOK



As a small rural electric cooperative, Prairie Energy Cooperative works hard every day to bring new technology to our members. It can be a fine line between security,

convenience and managing what risks come with technology. We want the cooperative to have as many tools as possible to bring the most reliable and affordable electric service possible to our members. We must also weigh the risks and rewards of each tool.

One tool we're always evaluating is cloud storage. The cloud is a very convenient place to store information that needs to be easily accessible, but there are also real concerns to consider.

Data security. Is your data truly private on the cloud? Do employees of the company storing your information have access to it? Is it encrypted?

Shared servers. Is your information stored on shared servers? Does malware/ransomware from another user have a chance to infect your data? Does the third party take the responsibility for ransomware?

Background checks. We know our employees and have background checks, does the third-party service do it for their employees? Do they require it? Can they prove that they have been done? Do they have a policy to keep them current? Do they take responsibility for any data breach?

So, before you decide to store information in the cloud, ask some of these questions. They may help you decide if the risk is worth the reward.

Bill Hicok is the information systems manager for Prairie Energy Cooperative.

HELPING YOU UNDERSTAND DEMAND

BY CHAD CHAPMAN AND DARREN JOHNSON



Chad Chapman

While you may be familiar with the kilowatt-hour (kWh) consumption portion of your electric bill, the concept of a demand charge or time-of-use billing may be more unfamiliar. Many electric utilities have started using these types of charges, while others are still evaluating.

Consumption versus peak demand

The consumption of kW is the amount of power that was delivered for a certain length of

time. As an example, if you have a 1,000-watt (1 kW) space heater running for one hour, essentially you were just billed for 1 kWh in that month's billing period. If you had five space heaters running for an hour, you will be billed for 5 kWh.

Everything that is plugged in has a power usage registered in watts. Demand is

what your whole property is drawing at a given time. Peak demand would be the largest amount of wattage drawn on our grid at a specific time. An example of this would be in the evening when everyone is cooking, doing laundry and running those space heaters.

Managing electric demand

Peak demand is challenging for generation companies to deal with. They must make sure that there is enough power available to the consumers as they need it, without creating excess. That excess power cannot be used, and it becomes wasted.

Growing your awareness

So, what can you do? Think about how and when you're using your electricity. Could you wash or dry that load of laundry later in the evening? Could you set your dishwasher to run in the middle of the night instead of right after dinner? Do you need to charge your electric car as soon as you get home at 5 p.m., or could it wait until 10 p.m.? You can also find ways to make your home as efficient as possible.

If you have questions about energy efficiency or want to learn more about peak demand and time-of-use billing, reach out to our member services department.

Chad Chapman and Darren Johnson lead member services for Prairie Energy Cooperative.

CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BY TODD FOSS



Prairie Energy's goal is to provide long-term improvement in the economy, including job creation and retention, diversification of the economy, improving the skills of the rural workforce, and upgrading the public

infrastructure to improve the health, safety and medical care of rural residents. This goal is accomplished through our economic development programs, which offer joint venture loan financing to provide low-interest loans for business creation, location and expansion. We work with local communities and development groups to bring new businesses to our service area.

Prairie Energy, along with Corn Belt Power Cooperative, passed through \$2.36 million in federal loans to help Iowa Specialty Hospital Clarion boost services for its maternity center expansion in June 2022.

Prairie Energy, Midland Power and Corn Belt Power Cooperatives partnered together, each lending \$250,000 from their respective revolving loan funds to Marker 126 Travel Center on Hwy. 20 near Fort Dodge. Marker 126 opened in September 2022 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. They were also the recipients of the Iowa Venture Award.

Todd Foss is the manager of business/community development.

MILESTONE YEARS



25 YEARS

TIM SLAICHERT

Assistant Operations Coordinator – Staking Technician



10 YEARS

SCOTT MUHLENBRUCH

Foreman



10 YEARS

MATT McDERMOTT

Lineman



5 YEARS

SARAH OLSON-MCLAUGHLIN

Office Manager



5 YEARS

TIM MARIENAU

CEO



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

BY TIM MARIENAU



It's hard to believe that I have been the manager at Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) for more than five years. As I move into my sixth year with the cooperative, it also marks

PECO's 83rd year serving members and our community. These milestones are opportunities to reflect on our experiences and the cooperative's accomplishments over the years.

PECO is a small cooperative that continues to change and grow in many ways that will lead us into the future. In recent years, we have seen changes in technology, electrical distribution infrastructure, huge inflation costs, supply chain issues, depleting workforce numbers and a push for more renewable energy sources. However, during these changes and challenges, there are opportunities that can benefit our membership by providing safe and reliable power at affordable prices in our world today.

Setting realistic expectations regarding renewable energy

There has been a lot of talk lately about when America will transition to a 100% renewable electric grid. Some utilities, states and cities have announced plans to be fully powered by renewable sources by a specific date, as reducing carbon emissions is gaining more traction. As we talk about a clean energy economy, setting realistic expectations about the timeline is important.

As economic conditions allow, electric co-ops are incorporating more renewable sources of generation into the

energy mix. An all-of-the-above energy approach favors the incorporation of renewable resources like wind and solar to work alongside traditional reliable sources of energy like oil and natural gas. For PECO, adopting a strategy incorporating renewable energy sources must be done in a way that protects the interests of our members today and into the future.

Enduring affordability

While the cost of most things has increased 20 times or more over the past 75 years, electricity has remained very affordable. The average cost per kilowatt-hour has only doubled since the 1930s.

Being locally owned and governed, we exist to improve the quality of life for our members who own the cooperative. We help our members use energy wisely through energy efficiency programs, rebates and incentives so you can spend your hard-earned money on other things. We work hard to control local costs and invest in technology and innovation to improve service and efficiency to keep rates as low as possible.

Co-op ownership and engagement

At PECO, we often say that those who receive electricity from the co-op are also owners of the co-op, but what exactly does that mean? If you own your home or car, you have the keys and can access your property anytime. As a part owner of our co-op, you don't exactly get a set of keys to the office, but you do receive meaningful benefits.

One of the most important benefits of being a co-op owner is having a voice in how the co-op operates. Member-owners like you democratically elect our

local board of directors, who must also be member-owners. These directors serve your local interests in governing the cooperative.

Over the past three years, we have discussed and examined new ways to engage with our membership. Although we have moved away from the in-person portion of our Annual Meeting, we began a new chapter in 2022 by having more member appreciation events during the year. This will continue in 2023.

The business portion of the Annual Meeting will still be held with minimal changes. We will video record the meeting and provide the ability to vote. If any member wants to voice an opinion, there are many ways, such as our member appreciation events, writing, emailing and calling the cooperative any time of the year.

Our employees and directors

A cooperative functions most effectively with committed and informed leadership. Your board of directors is democratically elected from the membership to represent your interests and to provide long-term vision and direction.

Strong leadership is essential to our cooperative and we are fortunate to employ many hard-working people who manage the day-to-day operations to keep your lights on.

We hope to see you at our annual Member Appreciation Day on July 19 at the Red Shed in Clarion. The 83rd Annual Business Meeting will be held on June 7 and will be posted on PECO's Facebook page and website.

Tim Marienau is the CEO of Prairie Energy Cooperative.

2022 PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE FACTS

Total miles of line energized:
2,089.91 miles

Patronage distributions:
\$1,484,783

Average number of meters per mile of line:
2.08 meters

Total number of members:
3,186 members

Total kWh purchased by PECO:
322,278,993 kWh

Average number of members per mile of line:
1.52 members



82ND ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

June 1, 2022

Members can find 2021 Annual Meeting minutes on Page 12 of this issue.

The 2022 Annual Meeting of the Members of Prairie Energy Cooperative was held at the office of Prairie Energy Cooperative in Clarion, Iowa, at 2:00 P.M. on the 1st day of June, 2022.

The meeting was called to order by Marion Denger, President of the Cooperative, who presided, and Donald Christopherson, Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative, acted as Secretary of the meeting and kept the minutes thereof. He noted that the meeting was being recorded so the members could view it on the Cooperative's website and Facebook.

Secretary Donald Christopherson announced that there were a sufficient number of members represented by mail ballot so a quorum of the members was deemed present for the conducting of Director election and amending the Articles.

The Chairman noted that the record of those voting by mail would be accepted in lieu of a roll call.

The Chairman appointed Attorney Dennis L. Puckett to serve as parliamentarian for the meeting.

The Chairman then stated that the Notice of the Annual Meeting of Members was mailed to all members. Said Notice and proof of mailing were ordered to be attached to these minutes and made a part hereof by reference.

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Members held June 2, 2021, were not included in the Annual Meeting packet, so they will need to be approved by the members at the next meeting. In the meantime, the Chairman directed them to be placed in the records of the Cooperative.

The Chairman introduced Attorney Dennis L. Puckett. Mr. Puckett stated that the next order of business was the election of two Directors for a term of three years each. Mr. Puckett noted the individuals that served on the Nominating Committee for the 2022 Annual Meeting as follows:

District 3

Leroy Cooper, Gary Steenblock

District 7

Alice Scharf, Dan Housken

Directors Marion Denger and Ryan Eekhoff served as advisory members.

He then presented the Report of the Nominating Committee for the 2022 Annual Meeting, nominating the following members for the position of Director of the Cooperative.

Two to be elected: one from each district, three-year term

District 3

Allyn Waddingham, Nina Greiman

District 7

Donald Christopherson

Attorney Puckett noted that no nominations by Petition have been received.

The Chairman had previously appointed Alice Scharf, Dan Housken, Gary Steenblock, and Leroy Cooper as Inspectors of Election (Tellers). A vote was had by mail ballot and the ballots were previously delivered to the Inspectors who proceeded to count them.

Attorney Puckett next explained that the Board of Directors had recommended a change in the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation that if adopted, the deadline for a nomination by Petition, which is presently 15 days prior to the meeting at which an election is to be conducted, would be changed to 60 days prior to such meeting. The change would allow more time for the preparation and distribution of annual meeting materials, including the ballot and allow more time for members to vote by mail. The full text of the Amendment was provided to the members with the notice of the meeting. Attorney Puckett explained the proposal.

A vote was had by mail ballot and the ballots were previously delivered to the Tellers who proceeded to count them.

The Certificate of Inspectors of Election was then presented and read, certifying that the following members, having received the highest number of votes cast, had been duly elected Directors of the Cooperative to hold office for the term specified, and until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Two to be elected: one from each district, three-year term

District 3

Allyn Waddingham

District 7

Donald Christopherson

Attorney Puckett congratulated the winners and directed the Secretary to annex the Certificate of Inspectors of Election to the minutes of this meeting, and thereupon declared such members duly elected Directors of the Cooperative to hold office for the term specified, and until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Attorney Puckett then presented the results of the voting on the Amendment.

He indicated that 97% of the members voting had voted in favor of the Amendment. It was declared that the Amendment had received the requisite support for adoption and the Cooperative Articles of Incorporation would therefore be amended as follows:

Amend Section 2 of Article VII of the Articles of Incorporation by changing the requirements for nominations by Petition, so the third paragraph of said section shall read as follows:

"Any twenty (20) or more of the members may make other nominations in writing over their signatures not less than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting 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."

The Chairman directed the Secretary to annex the Certificate of Inspectors of Balloting to the minutes of this meeting.

The annual report of General Manager Tim Marienau was then presented.

The annual report of the Chairman was presented.

The Chairman stated that there was no unfinished business and he provided closing comments.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned.

OVERVIEW OF PECO FINANCIALS

BY LORI DEMUTH



Prairie Energy Cooperative's (PECO) financial records were audited by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA) of Rochester, Minnesota. The balance sheet

and related statements of operation, members' equity, cash flow and other financial statements are reviewed. In their opinion, "the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Prairie Energy Cooperative, as of Dec. 31, 2021, and 2022, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America." CLA presented the audited financials to the PECO board of directors at its April 2023 board meeting.

PECO's overall year-end margin for 2022 was **\$4,441,170**. Out of that, the operating margin was \$502,473. This operating margin indicates how the co-op is doing financially with revenue,

power cost, operating expenses, long-term debt, depreciation, etc. The rest of the margin is explained by our "bucket" categories in the green box above.

We receive credits/dividends from certain organizations we do business with, including Basin Electric and Corn Belt. These two cooperatives provide the power we need to distribute to our member-consumers. As a distribution cooperative, we do not generate any power.

The two non-cash items from Basin Electric and Corn Belt are a paper allocation to us where they promise to pay us in the future. When we receive these allocations, which may be up to 30 years, we will then retire to our membership. PECO directors

have approved to retire Corn Belt's \$1,193,065 to our membership in 2023 as we received this in 2023. Member-consumers should receive a credit on bills in late spring or early summer.

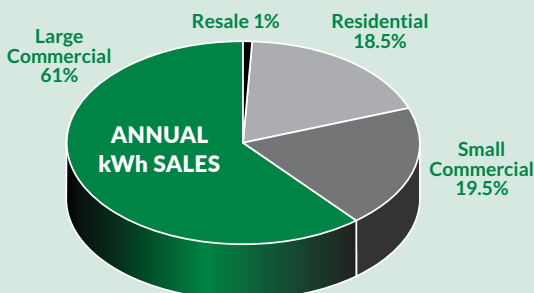
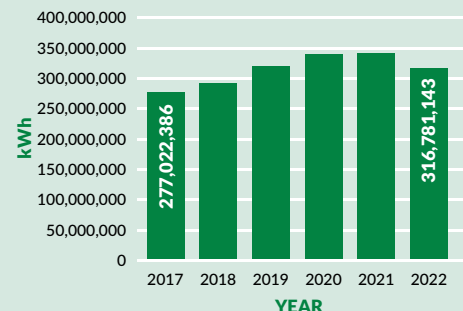
That leaves PECO with two buckets. After we have determined what is required by the Iowa Code, our bylaws and articles of incorporation, the directors then allocate a portion of those two buckets to the membership. This is a promise to pay in the future, not to exceed 15 years according to board policy.

Paying patronage dividends (capital) is one of the biggest differences between a member-owned cooperative and an investor-owned utility. In 2022, PECO's board of directors retired \$1,484,783 in

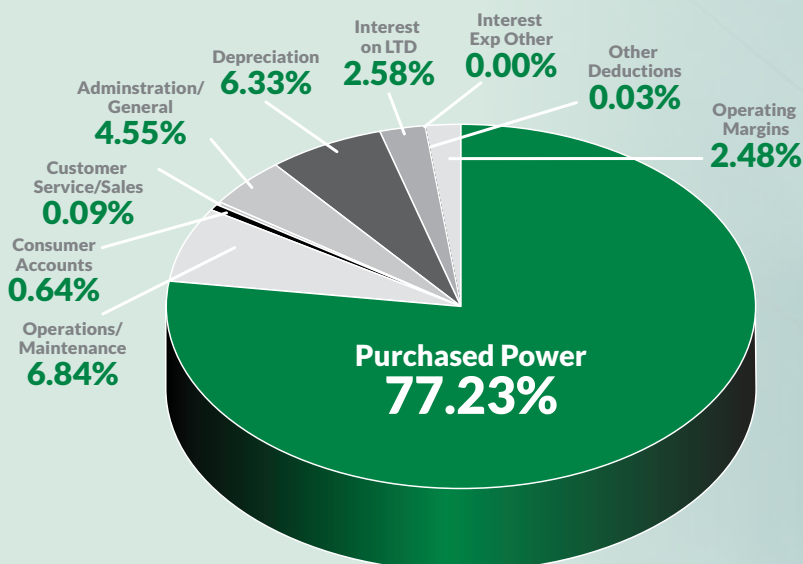
Margin bucket categories

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (our super G&T)	\$ 2,316,134 (non-cash)
Corn Belt Power Cooperative (our local G&T)	\$ 1,193,065 (cash)
Corn Belt Power Cooperative (our local G&T)	\$ 234,489 (non-cash)
Non-operating margins, other capital credits, etc.	\$ 195,009
Operating margins	\$ 502,473

ANNUAL kWh SALES



WHERE THE DOLLARS GO



patronage dividends to our membership. This includes:

- \$884,137 allocated in cash to PECO from Corn Belt from 2021. We passed that on to the membership in May 2022 as a credit on your bill.
- \$567,959 returned to the membership as checks in December 2022. This is our promise to pay member-consumers from our operating margins and non-operating margins from the remaining 2006 balance, all of 2007 and part of 2008.
- \$32,687 was retired for estates during the year.

Our 2022 electric revenue from selling electricity was \$29,589,671 with 316,781,143 kWh sold. Power costs from those kWhs was \$22,891,044. Our peak with Corn Belt was June 2022, at 51,990 KW, but PECO's substations had individual high peaks in October 2022 due to grain drying.

Our Willemssen Community Solar array produced 186,571 kWh for the year. The energy produced from the array goes back to the grid, which helps reduce our energy costs from Corn Belt.

In 2022, we had a decrease in operating revenue of \$2,250,949 due to a handful of Commercial & Industrial accounts not running at 100%. PECO continued seeing increased prices for electrical material and many production and shipping delays. The cost of fuel was \$51,000 more than in 2021. We received bill credits for our power supplier and used them to offset expenses in 2022, this is why the sales expense is a negative \$120,528. Reducing expenses creates higher operating margins.

Lori Demuth is the finance director for Prairie Energy Cooperative.

FINANCIALS

INCOME STATEMENT	2021	2022
Revenues		
Operating Revenue	\$31,890,772	\$29,639,823

Expenses		
Purchased Power	\$24,888,252	\$22,891,044
Operations and Maintenance	\$1,889,249	\$1,057,112
Consumer Account Expense	\$317,152	\$338,221
Sales Expense	\$255,012	\$(120,528)
Administrative & General	\$1,181,000	\$1,348,575
Depreciation	\$1,826,812	\$1,875,504
Interest	\$732,014	\$765,702
Other Deductions	\$11,008	\$12,623
Total Expenses	\$31,100,499	\$28,168,253

Margins Assignable		
Operating Margins	\$790,273	\$502,473
Non-Operating Margins	\$2,099,999	\$3,542,203
Total Margins Assignable	\$2,890,272	\$4,441,170

BALANCE SHEET	2021	2022
Assets		
Net Utility Plant	\$39,691,198	\$41,431,200
Investments	\$17,516,258	\$20,132,652
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$4,537,497	\$2,149,018
Notes Receivable	\$2,566,671	\$5,069,738
Accounts Receivable	\$2,724,559	\$2,483,714
Materials & Supplies	\$930,179	\$998,235
Current & Accrued Assets	\$75,466	\$211,336
Deferred Debits	\$267,585	\$226,505
Total Assets	\$68,309,413	\$72,702,398

Members' Equity & Liabilities		
Equity & Margins	\$33,956,786	\$36,927,118
Long Term Debt	\$29,627,829	\$30,774,636
Notes & Accounts Payable	\$2,138,853	\$1,838,776
Other Current & Accrued Liabilities	\$2,117,919	\$2,014,342
Deferred Credits	\$468,026	\$1,147,526
Total Equity & Liabilities	\$68,309,413	\$72,702,398

PECO BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Ted Hall, Forest City
District 1

Townships: Crystal, Ellington, Fertile, Forest, German, Grant 150, Grant 174, Linden, Madison and Mount Valley



Scott Hasty, Kanawha
District 4

Townships: Amsterdam, Belmont, Boone 250, Grant 272, Lake, Luverne, Liberty 270, Magor and Norway



Donald Christopherson, Duncombe
District 7

Townships: Clear Lake 391, Freedom, Fremont, Hamilton, Hardin, Independence, Marion, Otho, Sumner, Washington, Webster 369 and Webster 370



Ryan Eekhoff, Britt
District 2

Townships: Bingham, Boone, Britt, Buffalo, Erin, Garfield, Liberty, Prairie, Orthel and Wesley



Marion Denger, Dows
District 5

Townships: Alden, Blaine, Blairsburg, Iowa, Lincoln, Morgan, Oakland, Scott, Vernon, Wall Lake and Williams



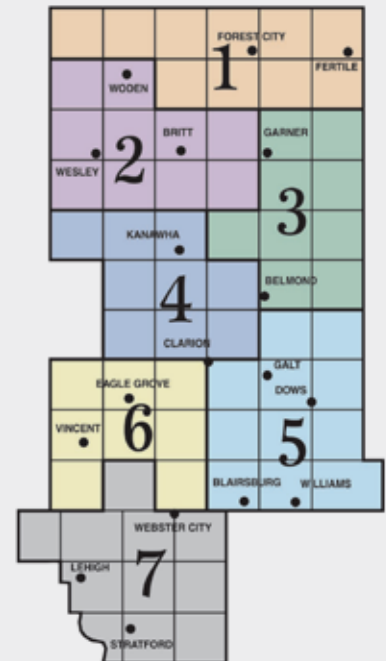
Allyn Waddingham, Meservey
District 3

Townships: Avery, Clear Lake 194, Concord, Ell, Grimes, Pleasant, Twin Lakes, Union and Wisner



Joshua Amonson, Woolstock
District 6

Townships: Cass, Colfax, Eagle Grove, Dayton, Newark, Norway 289, Troy and Woolstock



Your board of directors, leadership team and employees are looking forward to 2023 with our continued growth and serving our member-consumers. We have a high level of dedication and commitment to you. We are proud to serve you every day.



Cut and mail in with payment.



Prairie Energy Cooperative

P.O. Box 353
CLARION, IOWA 50525
Phone: 515-532-2805

VOID

Gift Certificate

This certificate entitles _____
to \$50.00 off your next energy bill.

Account # XXXXXX *Required for redemption*

EXPIRES AUGUST 31, 2023

Not redeemable for cash. Redemption value not to exceed \$50.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections.



No duplicates will be issued.

BEEFY ITALIAN ROLL-UPS

- 12 ounces cottage cheese
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1 4-ounce can mushrooms
- 16 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded, divided
- 1 pound deli roast beef, sliced
- 12 flour tortillas
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce

Combine cottage cheese, seasonings, mushrooms and 8 ounces mozzarella cheese. Put slices of roast beef on tortilla, top with spoonful of cheese mixture and roll up. Spread half jar spaghetti sauce on bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Place beef rolls seam down, then pour remaining spaghetti sauce on top. Bake at 375 degrees F for 30 minutes. Top with remaining cheese and bake 3-5 minutes until cheese is melted.

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

LOBIA STEAK

- 1½ pounds round steak
 - 1 tablespoon shortening
 - 1 medium onion, chopped
 - 1 medium green pepper, chopped
 - 1 can green beans, drained
 - 1 can mushrooms, drained
 - 1 cup ketchup
 - 1 8-ounce can tomato paste
 - ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
 - ¼ teaspoon oregano
- Serve with rice, mashed potatoes or Chow Mein noodles

Cut steak into bite-sized strips and brown in shortening. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until meat is done and tender. Serve on rice, mashed potatoes or Chow Mein noodles.

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

BEEF STEAK SUPREME

- 2 pounds round steak
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- oil
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 can beef broth
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup sour cream

Cut steak into six serving size pieces. Coat steak in flour, salt and pepper. Set aside leftover flour mixture. Brown steak on both sides in heated oil. Add onions, broth and water. Cover and simmer at least 1 hour until meat is done. Add sour cream to flour mixture, then stir into broth mixture for gravy. Serves 4-6

Barb Sowers • Fredericksburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

SLOW COOKER BARBECUE BEEF RIBS

- 5 pounds beef ribs
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 cup ketchup or barbecue sauce
- 1 cup unsalted beef broth
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Place ribs in slow cooker, then scatter onion and garlic over ribs. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over ribs. Cook on low for 10 hours. Serves 6

Janet McCune • Homestead
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

CAST-IRON SKILLET STEAK

- 3 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1 pound New York strip or ribeye steak, 1-inch thick

Sprinkle steak with 2 teaspoons salt, let stand 45-60 minutes. Preheat cast-iron skillet over high heat until extremely hot. Sprinkle remaining teaspoon salt in bottom of skillet. Pat beef dry with paper towels then place steak into skillet. Cook 1-2 minutes until steak is easily moved. Flip over, placing steak in a different section of skillet. Cook 30 seconds and then begin moving steak, occasionally pressing slightly to ensure even contact with skillet. Continue cooking, turning and flipping 1-2 more minutes until cooked to desired degree of doneness, 135 degrees F for medium-rare, 140 degrees F for medium and 145 degrees F for medium-well. Serves 1-2

Kathy Steele • Hedrick • Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

SCHOOL NIGHT RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31

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

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

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

MAIL: Recipes

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



A MATTER OF TASTE: YOUR GUIDE TO GROWING DELICIOUS TOMATOES

BY CHASE SMOAK

Tired of losing tomatoes to unwanted garden pests? Worried you'll need to sacrifice excellent taste for improved yield? Take a deep breath and relax. This year, you can have your tomato and eat it, too. With the help of a few new varieties and field-proven tactics, you'll be on your way to growing the best tomato crop yet.

If you want to grow delicious, homegrown tomatoes this year, simply focus your attention on these three stages of gardening: planning, preparing and protecting.

Stage 1: Plan

Planning for a successful tomato harvest starts with choosing the right varieties to grow in your garden. A nonprofit organization called All-America Selections (AAS) may have the answer. The group tests new varieties before they hit the market, and their trial notes will tell you

everything you need to know.

How does it work? Professional horticulturists across the country volunteer to grow test plots of new tomato varieties and compare notes on disease resistance, yields and taste alongside established varieties.

"Our judges rate taste and texture first, then everything else second," says Diane Blazek, executive director of AAS and the National Garden Bureau. "You can have the most prolific, cute, unique new tomato, but if it doesn't taste good, nobody wants it."

Stage 2: Prepare to plant

Your tomato garden needs access to full sun (6-8 hours a day) and should have good drainage. Tomato plants hate wet feet and often succumb to root rot when left in waterlogged soils. They do, however, need regular watering throughout the growing

season, so select a spot with easy access to water. Irrigating deeply but infrequently strengthens plants and encourages deep, healthy root systems for hot summer days.

Avoid planting where tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplant and other solanaceous crops have been grown within the past three years. Many pests overwinter in the soil adjacent to plants and will terrorize unsuspecting gardeners.

Once you've selected the right spot, make sure to test your soil and amend the ground as indicated. Check with your local extension office or garden center to help you arrange a test and interpret the results. Tomatoes are nutrient hogs that require a good supply of nutrients from start to finish, so you'll likely need to fertilize before and during the growing cycle.

Adequate moisture is necessary for nutrient uptake. Drip irrigation works well and doesn't soak leaves, which often leads to disease issues.

And don't forget to deal with weeds. They are an often-overlooked source of tomato pests. After clearing the site of any weeds, spread mulch 3-4 inches deep and keep it a palm-width away from the bases of tomato stems.

Planting should only begin after the last frost date for your area.

Stage 3: Protect

Like the rising of the sun, pests – insects and diseases – are to be expected in every garden. The good news is they can be controlled or even avoided with commonsense management.

- **Monitor and identify.** Get to know your garden and what lives in it. Talk to your local extension office for a precise understanding of the

insects and diseases to watch out for.

- **Make an evaluation.** If you do spot harmful pests or damage on tomatoes, evaluate whether real damage is being done to the landscape. Set thresholds to guide your treatment decisions. For example, you may decide there's little benefit to treating a pest problem if there is less than 10% damage to the plant.
- **Choose a wise treatment.** If treatment is necessary, use the least toxic measure first. Proper watering, plant spacing and fertilization can help prevent or reduce the number of pests. Mechanical means are another option that requires the physical removal of pests and can be useful for small populations. For example, hornworms are easily removable by hand-picking, and aphids are often washed away by a water hose.

If these approaches fail, reach out to your local extension agent or garden center for advice on pesticides and follow all label directions. Pesticide labels are the law, and many chemicals may be unethical or even illegal to use on fruit-bearing plants.

Enjoy the pursuit

Gardening should be an enjoyable escape from the fast-paced world we live in. It's an opportunity to serve as good stewards of the land, so when the time comes, we pass on something a little better to the next generation. If you really want to experience all that gardening has to offer this summer, focus on using it to produce memories instead of a crop. If you do, you'll find everything begins to taste a little sweeter along the way.

Chase Smoak is a special contributor to Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

HERE ARE A FEW 2022 AAS WINNING TOMATO VARIETIES FOR IOWANS TO CONSIDER GROWING THIS SEASON.



Celano. A national winner, Celano is an early-producing, high-yielding, grape-type tomato for your patio or garden. According to AAS trial notes, Celano developed fruit much earlier and produced much longer than comparable varieties. Deep-red, oblong tomatoes typically weigh a little over half an ounce and taste sweet. As for disease resistance, this variety has superior tolerance to late blight. Transplants should be spaced at least two feet apart in the garden and will benefit from staking.



Purple Zebra. If you want a tomato that looks just as good as it tastes, search no more. According to AAS, Purple Zebra is a national winner with fruit that is "firm in texture, complex in flavor and has a taste more sweet than acidic." This variety has high resistance to tomato mosaic virus, verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt and late blight. Start seeds indoors 4-6 weeks before the last frost for best results. In the garden, space transplants no less than two feet apart or, if using containers, select 5-gallon pots with drainage. This variety produces 150-200 green-striped, purple tomatoes and requires staking. Most gardeners can begin harvesting tomatoes 80-85 days after transplant.



Pink Delicious. A regional winner for the Heartland (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota), Pink Delicious has everything heirloom enthusiasts love and less of what they don't. The large, pink fruit emerges earlier than comparable varieties, tastes delicious and is less prone to cracking. Gardeners will benefit from this tomato's improved seed germination and superior disease resistance. In the garden, space Pink Delicious at least 3 feet apart and provide staking. Gardeners can expect to harvest fruit after 84 days if growing from transplants or 114 days if growing from seed.

81ST ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

June 2, 2021

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Members of Prairie Energy Cooperative was held at the office of Prairie Energy Cooperative in Clarion, Iowa, at 2:00 P.M. on the 2nd day of June, 2021.

The meeting was called to order by Marion Denger, President of the Cooperative, who presided, and Donald Christopherson, Secretary/Treasurer of the Cooperative, acted as Secretary of the meeting and kept the minutes thereof. The Chairman noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had caused the Board to make the difficult decision to conduct this year's annual meeting differently by restricting attendance and completing the essential business of the Director election by mail. He noted that the meeting was being recorded so the members could view it on the Cooperative's website and Facebook.

Secretary Donald Christopherson announced that there were a sufficient number of members represented by mail ballot so a quorum of the members was deemed present for the conducting of Director election.

The Chairman noted that the record of those voting by mail would be accepted in lieu of a roll call.

The Chairman appointed Attorney Dennis L. Puckett to serve as parliamentarian for the meeting.

The Chairman then stated that the Notice of the Annual Meeting of Members was mailed to all members. Said Notice and proof of mailing were ordered to be attached to these minutes and made a part hereof by reference.

The Chairman noted that the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Members held June 3, 2020, were included

in the packet mailed to members. He noted that the members would approve these minutes at a future meeting.

The Chairman introduced Attorney Dennis L. Puckett. Mr. Puckett stated that the next order of business was the election of three Directors for a term of three years each. Mr. Puckett noted the individuals that served on the Nominating Committee for the 2021 Annual Meeting as follows:

District 1

Gary Ludwig, Bernal Hanna

District 4

Austin Charlson - Chairman

Rodney Legleiter - Secretary

District 6

Zachary Klaver, Kelby Ryerson

Directors Donald Christopherson and Allyn Waddingham served as advisory members.

He then presented the Report of the Nominating Committee for the 2021 Annual Meeting, nominating the following members for the position of Director of the Cooperative.

Three to be elected: one from each district, three-year term

District 1

Ted Hall

District 4

Scott Hasty, Barb Moore, Jeremy Brogaard

District 6

Josh Amonson

Attorney Puckett noted that no nominations by Petition have been received.

The Chairman had previously appointed Bernal Hanna, Gary Ludwig, Austin Charlson, Rodney Legleiter, Kelby Ryerson, and Dennis Puckett as Tellers. A vote was then had by

mail ballot and the ballots were previously delivered to the Tellers who proceeded to count them.

The Certificate of Inspectors of Election was then presented and read, certifying that the following members, having received the highest number of votes cast, had been duly elected Directors of the Cooperative to hold office for the term specified, and until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Three to be elected: one from each district, three-year term

District 1

Ted Hall

District 4

Scott Hasty

District 6

Josh Amonson

The Chairman congratulated the winners and directed the Secretary to annex the Certificate of Inspectors of Election to the minutes of this meeting, and thereupon declared such members duly elected Directors of the Cooperative to hold office for the term specified, and until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Chairman Denger introduced Manager Tim Marienau. The annual report of General Manager Tim Marienau was then presented.

The annual report of the Chairman was presented.

The Chairman stated that there was no unfinished business and he provided closing comments.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned.

MARCH GOES OUT LIKE A LION

Severe storms ripped through eastern Iowa on March 31, with the National Weather Service confirming the storm system produced 16 tornadoes, including an EF4 tornado near Keota in Keokuk County. Gov. Kim Reynolds would later issue a disaster proclamation for 18 counties, including Appanoose, Cedar, Clinton, Davis, Delaware, Des Moines, Dubuque, Grundy, Iowa, Jackson, Johnson, Keokuk, Linn, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Wapello and Washington.

High winds and tornadoes caused more than 16,600 electric cooperative outages, with most of the distribution system damage occurring in the service territories of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative, Linn County REC, Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative and T.I.P. REC. Central Iowa Power Cooperative's transmission system was also impacted, as the generation and transmission cooperative reported approximately 50 poles downed or damaged.

Within two hours of the storm passing, crews had made significant progress, with just 4,500 outages remaining statewide later that evening at 9 p.m. For T.I.P. REC based in Brooklyn, the damage rivaled the August 2020 derecho storm as a tornado near Sigourney took down about 5 miles of poles and three-phase conductor.

During storms, the cooperative principle of Cooperation Among Cooperatives is on full display, with unaffected area co-ops stepping up to help their neighboring co-ops restore power more quickly. Thanks to the following cooperatives for providing mutual aid to T.I.P. REC:

- Access Energy Cooperative
- Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
- Consumers Energy
- Pella Cooperative Electric Association
- Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative



And special thanks to the following cooperatives for providing mutual aid to Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative:

- Butler County REC
- East-Central Iowa REC

Spring and summer often bring severe storms and other hazards. Always put safety first by staying away from all downed power lines and taking other precautions. You can find more safety tips on Page 3 of this issue.

CONSERVATION EFFORTS NEEDED TO SUPPORT MONARCH BUTTERFLY POPULATION RECOVERY

The past year was a difficult one for the eastern monarch butterfly. According to a report released in April, monarchs occupying forest canopy in their wintering grounds in Mexico decreased by 22%, down from approximately 7 acres in 2021 to a little under 5½ acres during the winter of 2022-2023. Scientists estimate that a long-term average of 15 acres is needed to sustain the eastern monarch population and its continental migration.

The report, produced annually by the World Wildlife Fund in collaboration with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas, the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, is based on annual surveys that go back to the 1990s. The surveys provide critical data to assess the status and trends of the North American Eastern monarch population and inform conservation practices in Mexico, Canada and the U.S. The goal is to maintain a long-term average of 15 acres of occupied forest canopy during the winter, which shapes objectives for establishing breeding habitat in the Midwestern states, including Iowa through the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium.

Many factors contribute to the decline of monarch butterflies. In addition to habitat loss in their wintering grounds, the availability of breeding habitat with milkweed plants and blooming forbs in the Midwest is also critical to the species' long-term survival. Milkweed is the only plant that monarch butterflies will lay their eggs on, and it is also the primary food source for monarch caterpillars.

The international announcement comes at a pivotal time for monarch conservation, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's re-evaluation of the monarch's status under the Endangered Species Act slated for 2024.



Fortunately, there are steps that Iowans can take to help support the monarch butterfly population. One of the most important things is establishing appropriate habitat around homes, businesses, farms and even ditches. This can be as simple as planting a few milkweed plants in yards and gardens or as involved as establishing more extensive pollinator habitat.

An updated mobile app to track habitat establishment, HabiTally, is available as a free download for iOS and Android devices from the App Store and is designed to improve data collection about monarch habitat.

"As we work to protect our natural resources and improve water quality in rural, suburban and urban settings, Iowans are also ensuring that habitat is available for pollinators and wildlife in their communities," says Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig. "Pollinators like the monarch are

important to the ongoing productivity of Iowa agriculture."

A recent article in the journal *BioScience* integrates years of Iowa State University monarch research, showing how adding habitat will help conservation efforts. The findings estimate that the state's monarch conservation plan can potentially increase the size of the breeding monarch population in Iowa and the Midwest by 10-25% per generation.

To learn more about the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, visit iowamonarchs.info and follow @IowaMonarchs on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Are you interested in improving your land for wildlife?
Scan the QR code below to find local resources in your county.



THE STORY OF THE TATTERED OLD FLAG

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

If there's one thing I've learned in more than 20 years as a writer, never assume you know the real story simply based on how things appear.

I was thinking about this when a lady told me a story about a tattered flag and her older brother Bob, who had served with the U.S. Marine Corps in the Korean War. Bob drove a tank in the "Forgotten War."

Bob never wanted to talk about what he, his younger brother and their fellow service members had seen and experienced in that brutal war. He just wanted to live a quiet life back home in northwest Missouri, where he farmed for many years.

It did anger Bob, though, that people sometimes called Korea a conflict rather than a war. Still, this never stopped him from living the motto of every Marine – *semper fidelis* (Latin for "always faithful"), as he raised the American flag on his farm every morning and lowered it every night. Even when the elements took a toll on the flag, Bob still raised and lowered the stars and stripes daily.

Memories of sacrifice, heroism

Like many of his generation, Bob's world changed forever following June 25, 1950, when roughly 75,000 soldiers from the North Korean People's Army poured across the 38th parallel – the boundary between the Soviet-backed Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the north and the pro-Western Republic of Korea to the south. North Korea wanted to conquer South Korea and unify Korea under a communist regime. This invasion was the first military action of the Cold War.

By the time the war ended in July 1953, approximately 5 million soldiers and civilians had died. The Korean peninsula is still divided today.

The war sometimes came up when a childhood friend and fellow Marine who had also served in Korea stopped by the farm to chat with Bob. They'd talk about Bob's younger brother, who was



barely 17 years old when he served with a frontline infantry unit of more than 200 men in that war. This brother was one of only four men in that unit who survived a massive attack. The childhood friend was part of the search and recovery mission that found him.

By all accounts, Bob's brother was a goner, but that friend insisted he wasn't leaving him behind. He credited the freezing cold, prayers from the teenaged infantryman's mom and dad, and the grace of God for keeping Bob's brother from bleeding to death.

A meaningful ritual

I wonder if these thoughts sometimes raced through Bob's mind as he faithfully raised his tattered American flag each morning and lowered it each evening.

People often noticed Bob's flag as they drove by on the paved road near his farm. Sometimes they'd offer to

buy him a new flag. His response was always the same. "Thank you kindly, but it's important to me to leave this flag this way."

It wasn't until a niece (who was visiting Bob's younger sister) asked to photograph Bob raising the flag one morning that his family began to learn why that tattered flag was so important to Bob, who was now 88. There were tears in Bob's eyes as he spoke about the many torn lives and broken families that resulted from that ugly war in Korea. He knew he and his brother were among the blessed ones who got to come home.

So, when you see American flags flying this Memorial Day, don't be offended if a few are a little tattered. There might be much more to the story than you ever realized.

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.prairieenergy.coop



WE FOLLOW OUR DREAMS

Join Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in celebrating
the power of human connections.



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives
of Iowa