

## Foreman retires after 40 years

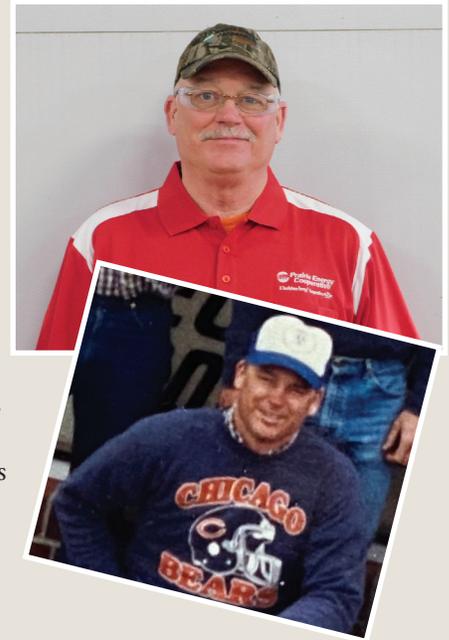
Brian Ring began his employment with Wright County REC on November 11, 1980, as an equipment operator. Ring was trained on the job and learned from coworkers before being promoted to lineman, then lead lineman, and eventually foreman when Wright County and Hancock County RECs consolidated in 2000 to form Prairie Energy Cooperative.

When asked what his favorite thing was over his past 40 years here, Ring replied with “building line and working with the guys daily, as well as the membership.”

Brian and his wife Nancy have three children, Kevin, Matt, and Sara, and six grandchildren. Plans for retirement include spending more time with the grandkids, traveling, woodworking, and putting more miles on the bike.

Everyone at Prairie Energy thanks Brian for his many years of service and wishes him all the best in his retirement!

*Top: Brian Ring, 2020;  
bottom: circa 1991*



## Seeking candidates

At the June 3, 2020, annual meeting of the members, director terms in Districts 2 and 5 will expire. To be considered eligible for election, members must reside or receive electric service from Prairie Energy at a location within the district in which they are seeking election. If you are interested in serving on the board of directors, contact one of the following nominating committee members:

**District 2:** Ryan Eekhoff  
720 180th Street  
Britt IA 50423  
507-370-1161

Jared Wellik  
410 310th Street  
Woden IA 50484  
515-928-7665

**District 5:** Ronald Lentz  
3112 Washington Ave  
Dows IA 50071  
515-852-3302  
515-571-4399 (Cell)

Jerry Norris  
PO Box 307  
Dows IA 50071  
515-852-4499



## Stay in the know

At your Touchstone Energy cooperative, we are constantly striving to improve our operational efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible to you.

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive information about other important programs, events, and activities.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's possible that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. We recognize that many members now use a cell phone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

We will never share your information with any third parties. We use it only to send important information to you. Please take a moment to confirm or update your information by contacting our office. By doing so, you will be helping us improve service and efficiency so we can better serve you and all members of the co-op.

## Electrify your lawn care



Spring is just around the corner. If you're in the market to upgrade your lawn care equipment, consider electric (or battery-powered).

### Lawn mowers

Electric lawn mowers have come a long way. Newer cordless electric mowers are more expensive than gas-powered mowers, but much of the upfront cost can be recovered because electricity is less expensive than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines. Cordless electric mowers typically range from \$200 to \$500.

### Trimmers

Cordless electric string trimmers are a great option for most lawns. New versions of electric trimmers are improving and are now considered worthy competitors of gas-powered models.

Cordless electric trimmers are much quieter and easier to use. Most batteries last about 30 to 45 minutes. Costs can vary depending on your needs, but you can find a quality version for about \$100.

### Leaf blowers

After cutting and trimming your lawn, you'll need to clear off those walkways and patios. Consider a cordless electric leaf blower.

Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver, but they don't offer quite as much power as gas-powered and corded blowers. Costs for a cordless electric blower vary depending on power and battery quality. You can purchase a dependable model for about \$150 and up.

If you're looking to electrify your lawn care equipment, search online for the latest reviews. You could be well on your way to Lawn of the Month.

## Census 101: Make it count

President Thomas Jefferson directed the nation's first census in 1790. Today, the U.S. Constitution requires that everyone in the country, including the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories, be counted every 10 years.

The results of the census are used for a variety of reasons including to reapportion the U.S. House of Representatives; to determine how federal funds and grants are dispersed; for public safety and emergency preparedness plans; and businesses consult the data to decide where to build factories, offices, and stores, which creates jobs and fosters economic development.

Census invitations will begin in mid-March. The census can be completed online or by phone in English and in 12 additional languages. The official Census Day is April 1. By mid-April, a paper questionnaire will be mailed to every household that has not yet responded. If necessary, participants can also respond in person beginning in mid-May.

It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census information that identifies an individual or business. The Bureau will never ask for your Social Security number, bank or credit card account numbers, money or donations, or anything on behalf of a political party.

To make sure you and everyone you know is counted, visit [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov).

## Downed line danger

If you see a downed power line, always assume the line is energized and deadly. This also applies to any electrical equipment, including pad-mounted transformers (“green boxes”) or other utility cabinets or fenced substations.



**In an accident with a downed line or other utility equipment,** do not get out. You could be electrocuted. Call 9-1-1.

**If you must leave a vehicle due to smoke or fire,** jump out with your feet together and without touching the car or truck. Then hop (making sure both feet land at the same time) at least 30 feet to safety, so you are less likely to enter two different voltages of electricity at the same time, which causes shock and electrocution.

## What is right-of-way?

A right-of-way, when it comes to utilities, is an agreement that allows a utility to use or access a piece of property according to the terms of the easement.

Easements are areas designated for overhead and underground utility access and are usually defined when a lot or neighborhood is first platted. Easements are implemented because it is more efficient and less expensive to run utility lines straight through neighborhoods than it is to run them around parcels of land.

Having right-of-way means that utilities can access the area to fix a utility-related problem or to perform maintenance.

Easements outline general property rights by others while right-of-way (as its name implies) is a specific property right.

Workers who service utility lines should arrive in a marked vehicle and have proper identification. If you have any concerns, please call us.

*Q: Who decides whether an electric utility can cut down a tree near a power line?*

A: The choice is primarily made by the electric utility, subject to state and local requirements and laws, safety codes, and limitations specified in rights-of-way agreements.

*Q: The power lines near my house don't seem to be anywhere near the trees. Why is the utility trimming my trees?*

A: Electric utilities are required to maintain the appropriate clearance between trees and transmission lines at all times.

*Q: Why can't I stop the utility from cutting down or trimming the trees in my yard?*

A: An electric utility is granted an easement or a right-of-way on private property to build and maintain electric power lines. The terms of a utility right-of-way are specified in rights-of-way agreements, and these agreements are usually attached to a property deed.

## TRIMMED TREES = BETTER SERVICE



### When you see us trimming trees near power lines, know that we are doing so because:

- **Tree and foliage overgrowth** can interfere with power distribution.
- **Power lines** can give off a spark or arc that may land on a nearby branch and ignite.
- The lights in your house may flicker when tree branches brush power lines during **high winds**.
- **Stormy weather** can cause nearby limbs to break off and land on power lines.
- Unobstructed power lines make it easier and **safer** for lineworkers to **maintain equipment** or **restore power**.



*L to R: Directors Ted Hall and Josh Amonson, Office Manager Sarah Olson-McLaughlin, Director Allyn Waddingham, Representative Ann Meyer, Director Donald Christopherson, Representative Mike Sexton, Senator Tim Kraayenbrink, Manager of Business/Community Development Todd Foss, Director Scott Stecher*



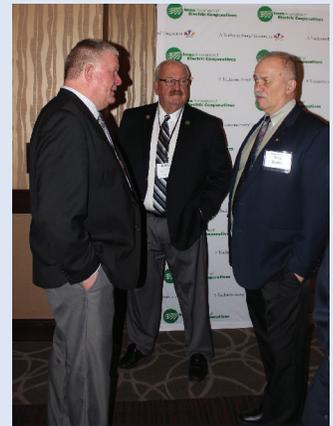
*L to R: Director Ted Hall; Manager of Business/Community Development Todd Foss; Directors Allyn Waddingham and Scott Stecher; Office Manager Sarah Olson-McLaughlin; Representative Terry Baxter; Directors Marion Denger, Donald Christopherson, and Josh Amonson*

## Iowa's electric cooperatives discuss important issues at legislative reception

Nearly 200 directors, managers, and employees from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with more than 80 state legislators on January 14 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception in downtown Des Moines. Other guests of honor included: Secretary of State Paul Pate, Iowa Utilities Board Member Nick Wagner, and Iowa Department of Revenue Director Kraig Paulsen. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance, and FUEL Iowa, hosted the annual reception.

The event provided an opportunity to meet with legislators at the beginning of the state legislative session to discuss issues regarding the commitment to reliability, commitment to community, and commitment to safety shared by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including energy-related items central to Iowa's rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, electric co-op directors, managers, and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues. Iowa's locally owned rural electric cooperatives work hard to provide affordable, reliable, safe, and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans every day.



*Directors Scott Stecher and Marion Denger discuss issues that affect cooperatives with State Representative Terry Baxter.*

## Commitment to community

IT Manager Bill Hicok (pictured) volunteered for a day with students from Newman Catholic School, as well as North Iowa Area Community College, to share his knowledge of networking and to participate in the school's capstone training. Hicok shared his extensive IT knowledge with students, helping to give them a better understanding of local networks and to gain some insight into their futures in IT.



## Prairie Energy member wins drawing

Congratulations to Robert Ruter of Kanawha! Robert was randomly chosen as the winner of a Fitbit Charge 3 for the Editor's Choice Contest in the January 2020 issue of Living with Energy in Iowa magazine. Look for your chance to enter and win on Facebook and in future issues of the magazine.



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