

● MAY 2025

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**New rebates and energy
efficiency opportunities**

**What to know if you're
considering solar energy**

Spring-inspired recipes

Win \$100 in beef certificates ▶ See Page 3

CONTENTS



VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 5

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Shine the Light on a
community volunteer

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win \$100
in beef certificates

14

SAFETY MATTERS

Essential tips for
electrical safety

15

OUT BACK

Honoring Iowa's
hometown heroes

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS**
Erin Campbell

**IAEC EXECUTIVE
VICE PRESIDENT**
Leslie Kaufman

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Jim Miller, District 5 – President
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President
Tony Lem, District 2 – Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Keleher, District 3 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Travis Harris, District 1
Steve Inskeep, District 4
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Marion Denger, Prairie Energy Cooperative –
NRECA Representative
Terry Sullivan, Linn County REC –
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 2025, 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 Emerson Landas, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

HELP US SHINE THE LIGHT ON LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND DESERVING CHARITIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



We are gearing up for year five of our statewide Shine the Light program, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. During the month of June, member-

consumers and employees of Iowa electric cooperatives are invited to nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference in their Iowa communities. Three winning volunteers will each receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity and be featured in the September issue of this magazine.

Your nomination makes a difference

Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination. Simply enter some basic contact information for you and your nominee and answer this 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 \$3,000 donation?

The success of our Shine the Light program depends on co-op member-consumers who take the time to nominate a friend, neighbor or relative who deserves to be recognized. If you have nominated a volunteer in a previous year and they weren't selected as a winner, you are welcome to nominate them again.

Additionally, I will share that the judges who read through all the volunteer nominations respond positively to essays that tell a story and draw in the reader. A little creativity can help your nomination stand out in a crowded field!

A diverse impact statewide

In the first four years of the program, our 12 winners (three winners each year) represent a diverse group of charities and nonprofits. Some of the winners have included an education



Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination.

foundation, an animal shelter, a community garden, a local food and furnishings closet, an agricultural pavilion and an air transportation service for medical treatments. You can see our past winners at www.IowaShineTheLight.com to learn more about these incredible groups. We are continuously impressed with the range of volunteer activities and local organizations that are nominated each year.

Many of these organizations are small operations that don't have the resources to seek major funding or media attention. Beyond the monetary

donation, the Shine the Light program has been helpful in spreading the word about the great work being done by some incredible volunteers.

Thank you for considering the nomination of someone in your community who should be celebrated for their volunteer efforts and for helping us shine the light on these deserving organizations. Make your nomination online from June 1 through June 30 at www.IowaShineTheLight.com.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

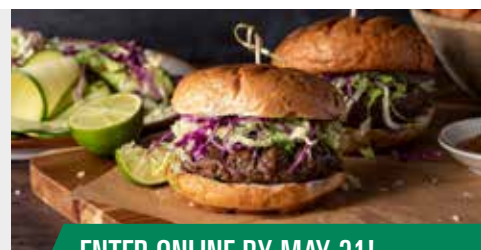
WIN \$100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away \$100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 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 landscaping from the March issue was **Jeanie Hall**, a **Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

NEW REBATES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY OPPORTUNITIES

BY BRADY BOELL



At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), we're dedicated to helping you make the most of your energy dollars. We've enhanced our rebate programs with increased savings and expanded opportunities to better serve our member-owners and promote smarter energy use. Whether upgrading your appliances, improving your heating and cooling system, or making your home more energy efficient, RVEC has rebates and resources to help you save.

Updated rebates

Our rebate program has been revamped to align with evolving technology, member needs and our energy efficiency goals. These updates include increased rebate amounts and a broader range of qualifying upgrades.

Visit www.rvec.coop to explore the complete list of available rebates.

Start with a home energy audit

Not sure where to begin your energy-saving journey? A home energy audit is the perfect first step! RVEC offers energy audits to help you:

- Pinpoint areas where energy and money are being wasted.
- Discover the most impactful energy-efficient upgrades for your home.
- Maximize your rebate opportunities.

Simple energy-saving tips

Small changes can result in significant savings. Here are a few quick and effective strategies to improve energy efficiency:

1. Upgrade to ENERGY STAR® appliances.
2. Register for SmartHub to monitor your daily and monthly energy use.

3. Seal air leaks and improve insulation.
4. Install a programmable thermostat to optimize heating and cooling.
5. Switch to LED lighting for long-term savings.

We're here to help

At RVEC, we want to make energy efficiency simple and affordable for our member-owners. Call us today at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211 to schedule an energy audit or to learn more about how you can maximize your rebates and savings.

Thank you for being a valued member-owner of RVEC. Together, we can use energy more wisely to build a brighter, more sustainable future for everyone.

Brady Boell is the director of safety and member services for Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative.



Office Address

Headquarters
PO Box 486 /
28725 Hwy 30
Glidden, IA 51443



Phone: 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211

Fax: 712-659-3716

Hours: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday

Website: www.rvec.coop

Email: info@rvec.coop

Follow us on Facebook!



Directors

David Onken, President Glidden
Jeff Cranston Odebolt
Mark Ludwig Breda
Karen Werner Schaller
Steve Schable Carroll
Adam Handlos Glidden
Dave Schroeder Coon Rapids

Keaton Hildreth, interim CEO

RVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

INSTALLING ON-SITE GENERATION? NOTIFY RVEC FIRST

If you're considering installing an alternative energy system – such as solar panels or a wind turbine – you must notify Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) before construction begins. This ensures a safe and reliable connection to the electric grid for both you and RVEC.

For the safety of our crews and your property, all member-owners planning to install a generation facility connected to the electric grid must submit written notification to RVEC at least 30 days before construction. Your notice should include details such as the type of facility (e.g., solar panels, wind turbines) and the expected completion date.

Alternative energy production facilities include solar, wind, waste management, resource recovery, refuse-derived fuel, agricultural crops or residue and wood-burning systems designed to generate electricity.

Have questions? Contact RVEC at 712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211. We're here to help ensure your project's success and safe integration into the grid.

NOTICE OF MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The following information is provided in preparation for the business-only Annual Meeting of Members on Sept. 17, 2025.

Any person, firm, corporation, or body politic may become a member of the Cooperative by:

- Applying for a membership certificate in the Association.
- Agreeing to purchase electric energy from the Cooperative as hereinafter specified.
- Agreeing to comply with and be bound by the Articles of Incorporation of the Cooperative and the By-Laws and any amendment thereto and such rules and regulations as may from time to time be adopted by the Board of Directors, provided, however, that no person, firm, corporation or body politic shall become a Member unless and until he/she or it has been accepted for membership by the Board of Directors or Members.

No person, firm, corporation, or body politic may have more than ONE membership in the Cooperative.

A husband and wife may jointly become members, and the above provisions' foregoing provisions may accept their application for joint membership.

No member of this Association may own more than one membership, and each member shall be entitled to one vote and not more at all corporate meetings. Votes shall be cast by member-owner and not by proxy.

REPRESENTATION

The business and affairs of the Cooperative shall be managed by a Board of seven (7) Directors who must reside in and receive service from the Cooperative at a location within the district they represent. The number of Directors whose terms expire at such meeting shall be elected to hold office for three (3) years or until their respective successors have been elected and qualify. The election of the directors shall be by ballot, and each voting member shall be entitled to cast one (1) vote for each director to be elected.

MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting, as specified in the Articles of Incorporation, shall be held each year at such times as determined by the Board of Directors. Special meetings of the Cooperative's members may be called and held as provided for in the Articles of Incorporation. All Annual Meetings shall be held at locations specified in the Notice of the meeting determined by the Board of Directors.

NOMINATIONS

It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than ninety (90) days before the date of a meeting of the Members at which Directors are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of seven (7) Members of the Cooperative who shall be selected to give equitable representation on the committee to the geographical areas served or to be served by the Cooperative. No officer or Member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed a member of such committee. The committee shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least sixty (60) days before the meeting a list of nominations for Directors. Still, any twenty (20) or more Members may make other nominations in writing over their signatures not less than forty-five (45) days before the meeting. The Secretary shall post the same at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. The Secretary shall also mail with the notice of the meeting a statement of the number of Directors to be elected and separately show the nominations made by the committee on nominations and nominations made by petition.

RVEC BOARD APPROVES ALLOCATION

The patronage allocation of \$1 million for 2024 has been applied to all Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) member-owners' patronage accounts that received service last year. Your allocation amount is shown on your bill.

Deferred patronage allocations are revenues exceeding the operating expenses of the cooperative, which are shown in the books as margins. This is allocated back to member-owners as patronage and is in proportion to the amount you paid to the cooperative for electric service in 2024.

At present, the patronage has no cash value and cannot be used in payment of electric bills, or any other bill owed to RVEC. Even if you move off our lines, the patronage cannot be paid to you until that year is approved to be refunded by the board of directors.

The only time patronage can be refunded, other than the board of directors approving a general refund to all member-owners for a particular year, is if the owner is deceased. The executor must complete the required paperwork. Estates are usually refunded several



times per year when approved by the board of directors.

Please keep RVEC informed when you have a change of address. This ensures any future patronage checks will come directly to you.



"MOVE OVER" TO PROTECT ROADSIDE CREWS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Iowa state law requires motorists to move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, which are usually well-marked. Electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they often work along remote stretches of roads, frequently in adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

Move over laws vary

The danger of work zone crashes led every state to adopt "move over" laws that require drivers to lower their speed and switch lanes when possible to protect emergency vehicles. The goal is to provide an added safety buffer and minimize the potential for accidents. Drivers caught violating the laws can face penalties such as significant fines.

Unfortunately, the Journal of Road Safety reports that just 14 states' "move over" laws protect other types of service vehicles, such as construction trucks and utility vehicles. That means drivers in those states are under no legal obligation to give lineworkers that added margin of safety.

In accordance with Iowa state law, motorists must move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle

stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

Distracted driving poses additional risks

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers' attention away from the road. The most common is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles per hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they'll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.

The design of today's vehicles contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Geography can also be a factor. Co-ops serving rural and remote areas often have power lines along hilly roads. Locals accustomed to driving those roads at fairly high speeds may be startled and have little time to react when they encounter a work crew past a hill or around a curve.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op's ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

Maintaining focus is essential

Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers, such as reconnecting high-voltage power lines, are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus. When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they're more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Co-op employees are not only at risk only when their vehicles are parked and repairs are underway. Lineworkers frequently have to drive slowly along the shoulder of roads to pinpoint broken power lines or failed transformers, especially in darkness or conditions that interfere with visibility.



Many state transportation agencies, including Iowa, have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op's advertising, publicity and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them even more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting, such as flashing strobe lights and lighted detour

arrows, can attract attention from a distance. Reflective "work zone ahead" signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation.

Remember, 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; their families thank you!

Scott Flood writes on energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





SPRING-INSPIRED RECIPES



ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 cups asparagus, cut into 1 to 1½-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- toasted sesame seeds, optional

Stir broth, cornstarch and soy sauce in a small bowl until the mixture is smooth. Heat oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus, ginger root and garlic and stir-fry until crisp-tender. You can substitute ginger root with ½ teaspoon ground ginger. Add broth mixture to the skillet. Cook and stir until the mixture boils and thickens. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired. Asparagus can be substituted with broccoli, cauliflower or baby carrots. Serves 4

Tammy Neubauer • Ida Grove
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

FRESH CILANTRO DIP

- ½ bunch cilantro
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can black olives, minced or chopped
- 1 small jar pimentos
- 5 banana peppers, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- nacho chips

Mix all ingredients together and serve with nacho chips.
Serves 12

Jenny Hall • Woodbine
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

HAM MACARONI SALAD

- 3 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 cup cooked ham, chopped
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 1¼ cups mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Prepare macaroni according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cold water until cool. Combine remaining ingredients, then add macaroni. Mix until blended. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours. Serves 8-10

Bryce and Kelly Godbersen • Odebolt
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB CUSTARD PIE

- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter, divided
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups rhubarb, diced
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- cinnamon

Cream together 1 tablespoon butter, sugar and nutmeg, then mix in eggs. Fill unbaked pie shell with diced rhubarb, then add custard mixture. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix ½ cup butter, flour, oatmeal and brown sugar into a crunch topping. Break topping into chunks over top of pie. Bake pie at 350 degrees F for 30 more minutes then sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 8

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison
Access Energy Cooperative

KALE SALAD

- 8 ounces kale, finely cut
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 medium apple, chopped
- ½ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup bacon, crumbled
- poppy seed dressing, optional
- Mandarin oranges, optional

Mix all ingredients and top with poppy seed dressing, if desired. Cranberries can be substituted with Mandarin oranges. *Serves 4*

Audrey Kreykes • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

ASPARAGUS AND SPRING PEA SOUP

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 cups water or broth
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and sliced
- 2 cups green peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped, optional

In a large saucepan, add butter, onion, celery and garlic. Cook over medium heat until veggies soften, stirring frequently. Stir in choice of liquid (water, vegetable broth or chicken broth). Add asparagus and peas. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 15 minutes, until asparagus is tender. Puree using blender or an immersion blender. Strain through a sieve if needed. Add salt and lemon juice to warm soup. Ladle into soup bowl and pour a drizzle of canned coconut milk into bowl. Top with fresh dill, if desired. *Serves 6*

Anita Doughty • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TERRI'S PASTA SALAD

- 5 ounces dried rotini noodles
- 3 cups broccoli florets, chopped
- 3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In a large pot, cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Add broccoli and cook for 3 more minutes or until pasta is done. Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, honey and garlic. Add pasta mixture, pepper, onion, almonds and basil. Toss to combine. Gently stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. You can substitute goat cheese with feta, fresh Parmesan or pearled mozzarella. *Serves 4-6*

Lori Kautzky • Perry
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



STRAWBERRY RHUBARB UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1 cup rhubarb, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 cup strawberries, hulled and halved
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

Combine rhubarb, strawberries and melted butter. Spread evenly across the bottom of a 9-inch round cake pan that has been greased and lined with parchment paper on the bottom. Set aside while making cake mixture. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Cream room temperature butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add eggs, vanilla and milk and beat. Mix with dry ingredients then pour over the strawberry and rhubarb topping. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen cake. Place serving plate over pan and invert cake onto the plate. Remove the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Serve warm or at room temperature with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. *Serves 12*

Kristin Goddard • Charles City
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

FALL APPLE RECIPES

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY
ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31

Submit your favorite fall apple recipes. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CONSIDERING SOLAR

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE



Often, homeowners conflate installing solar at home with energy efficiency. But what most people don't realize is solar is not energy efficiency. Solar is generating energy. Energy efficiency is finding ways to use less energy. While these are not one in the same, both are thought of as beneficial to the environment and a way to save money.

If you are interested in installing solar, it is important to understand your motivations. It may be saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency can address both motivations.

Here are the five key energy efficiency considerations to evaluate when adding solar to your home.

① Energy consumption Solar systems are sized based on a home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system – which will save money and reduce your home's environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy, and those insulation measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy efficiency projects before installing solar.

② Affordability Consider your overall out-of-pocket expenses. The expected lifespan of a heating and cooling system is 15 to 25 years. Check the age and condition of your HVAC equipment and consider the expenses of replacement.

③ Roofing Consider the age, orientation and shade of your roof. It is more difficult and expensive to reroof a home with solar panels. Evaluate if the roof will need to be replaced before the solar panels need to be replaced.

The best orientation for solar panels is south facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof helps keep your home cool in the summertime but reduces solar energy production.

④ Maintenance A solar system doesn't last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy. Maintenance and repairs may be needed.

⑤ Electric bills and storage Solar is not "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill.

Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in battery storage system, which comes at an additional cost.

During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects lineworkers from injury while making repairs.

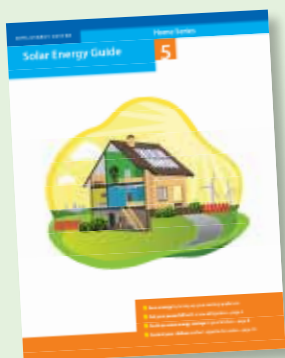
BEWARE OF SOLAR SCAMS

Before working with any vendor, Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage you to do your homework to ensure you choose a reputable provider.



If you have a complaint regarding solar installation or financing, you can complete and submit an electronic complaint at bit.ly/3usfVj7.

Consumers can also call the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 or email consumer@ag.iowa.gov.



SOLAR ENERGY GUIDE

Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to helping member-consumers make educated energy decisions that make sense for their home or business. Before moving ahead with a solar project, contact your local co-op first and also review the Solar Energy Guide for tips and to learn interconnection requirements.

www.iowarec.org/publications/solar-resources

Contact your electric co-op

Solar contractors often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with your co-op's offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, check with your electric co-op for local information rather than relying on what the contractor says.

As with any other system for your home, get bids from three contractors to compare equipment and pricing. Another option may be community-owned solar. Many electric co-ops offer community solar programs. You may have an option to enjoy the benefits of solar without the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



TOP 10 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

- 1 Address energy efficiency.** Implementing energy efficiency measures in advance can help reduce your overall energy or water consumption, and subsequently, the size of your solar system.
- 2 Do your homework before writing a check.** Talk to your electric co-op at the outset of the process. Then speak with credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals that will help guide you through the process.
- 3 Know your co-op's rate structure and policies.** Your co-op will help you understand the rate structure and what type of charges are likely to be incurred. They will also let you know how you will be compensated for the excess, unused energy that is generated by your solar system.
- 4 Analyze your electric load.** Understanding your electricity use and overall energy needs will help determine if solar is a good investment for you.
- 5 Determine costs upfront.** You will likely be responsible for initial upfront costs to install the system, as well as maintenance and repair costs. Doing your homework upfront will help determine if it is economical for your energy needs.
- 6 Research incentives and tax credits.** Visit with your co-op to see if there are financial incentives to offset your investment costs. These are often driven by laws and policies and can vary on the type and size of system.
- 7 Understand responsibilities.** A variety of parties are involved in making a solar project a reality, so it's important to know exactly what tasks and costs you're responsible for.
- 8 Know safety requirements.** Solar is connected to the grid, so it's important that you work with your co-op to ensure you're meeting their requirements to keep the grid reliable and safe.
- 9 Choose a reputable vendor.** It is important to find a reputable installer who will give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check reviews and ask for third-party input.
- 10 Keep thorough records.** Establish a thorough record-keeping process to retain all data and research you gather.

JOIN RVEC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC), our strength lies in the dedication of our member-owners, especially those who take an active role in shaping the cooperative's future. One of the most impactful ways to contribute is serving on the RVEC board of directors. This is your opportunity to be a voice for your community, advocate for members' needs and guide the cooperative toward continued success.

Why serve on the board of directors?

Serving as a director is more than a position – it's a commitment to the members, the cooperative and the community. As a board member, you will:

- **Make a difference:** Represent your neighbors and ensure members' voices are heard in critical decisions.
- **Shape the future:** Help guide policies that impact energy reliability, affordability and sustainability.
- **Develop leadership skills:** Gain valuable experience in governance, strategic planning and decision-making.
- **Support your community:** Advocate for policies that benefit local members and strengthen our cooperative's mission.

What does a director do?

Board members play a crucial role in setting the cooperative's direction by engaging in key responsibilities such as:

- **Strategic planning:** Helping shape RVEC's long-term vision and initiatives.

- **Financial oversight:** Monitoring budgets and ensuring fiscal responsibility.
- **Risk management:** Identifying challenges and maintaining operational stability.
- **Member representation:** Acting as a direct link between the cooperative and its members.
- **Political advocacy:** Engaging with policymakers to support cooperative-friendly policies.

Directors also stay informed on industry trends, emerging technologies and regulatory changes to ensure RVEC remains at the forefront of energy innovation.

How the nomination process works

RVEC's nominating committee plays a vital role in ensuring a fair and democratic election process. This process includes the following steps:

- 1 **Recruitment:** One committee representative from each district helps identify potential candidates.
- 2 **Candidate selection:** The committee reviews eligible members and encourages qualified individuals to run.
- 3 **Nominations:** Interested members can submit their names to the committee for consideration.
- 4 **Petition option:** Members can also seek election through petition nominations.

How to vote

RVEC ensures every member has a voice in the election process.

Members can vote:

- **By mail:** Ballots will be sent to members with clear instructions for submission.
- **In person:** Votes can be delivered directly to RVEC's headquarters in Glidden during regular business hours or placed in the drop boxes in Glidden or Sac City.

Get involved

If you are passionate about making a difference and ensuring a strong future for RVEC, consider joining the board! To learn more or submit your candidacy, contact:

Jill Hannasch

712-659-3649 or 800-253-6211

jillh@rvec.coop

Your cooperative. Your leadership. Your future.

By serving on the board, you help shape the policies and decisions directly impacting RVEC and the community. Don't miss this opportunity to be a leader in RVEC's future!

BOARD ELECTIONS IN 2025: POSITIONS AVAILABLE

At RVEC's business-only annual meeting on Sept. 17, 2025, two board positions will be open for election:

District 1: Currently held by David Schroder

District 6: Currently held by Jeff Cranston

AUTOMATICALLY PAY YOUR BILL

With your permission, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is able to withdraw your electric payment automatically from your bank account. Our bank will accept pre-authorized payments from any bank.

Payments are withdrawn from your bank account on the 20th of each month. At this time, there is no charge for this service; however, if our bank begins charging us, we will begin charging you a fee. If there are insufficient funds in your bank to cover your pre-authorized payment, an insufficient funds processing charge of \$30, plus bank charges, will be applied.

Please contact RVEC if you would like your payments automatically withdrawn from your bank account.

HELP US SHINE THE LIGHT ON COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN JUNE

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) encourages our members to participate in the statewide Shine the Light contest to celebrate local volunteers. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the contest will accept nominations in June and select three winners who each will receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

Member-owners and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers during the month of



June. If you receive electricity from RVEC, you're a co-op member and we invite you 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. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians.

Nominees from previous years can be nominated again for another chance to win.

The three winners will be announced in September and featured in this magazine and on social media.

Go to www.iowaShineTheLight.com to review the contest rules and submission guidelines. Contest entries will be accepted at this website starting on June 1.



PROPERTY TAXES PAID

Property taxes are used to help fund important things, such as education and city and county government. You might not realize it, but your cooperative pays property taxes. Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) receives a tax bill for the poles, wires, transformers, etc., along our lines and another tax bill for the office and warehouse. RVEC pays taxes in the nine counties that we serve.

The table at the right is a breakdown of the property taxes paid in 2024/2025.

County	Taxes Paid
Audubon	\$3,849
Buena Vista	\$161
Calhoun	\$693
Carroll	\$49,277
Crawford	\$56
Greene	\$3,315
Guthrie	\$417
Ida	\$86
Sac	\$22,890

RVEC SCHOLARSHIP WINNER: LUCAS OBERT



Each year, Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative (RVEC) is proud to support the academic

aspirations of young scholars through our scholarship program. This year, Lucas Obert was selected for a \$1,000 scholarship, which was awarded in partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Commitment to education and excellence

An independent panel of judges carefully reviewed the applications before selecting Lucas for this prestigious award. He demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, leadership and dedication to his future career path.

Lucas will pursue a major in political science and international relations and a minor in musical theatre. His passion for global affairs, governance and the arts reflects a well-rounded commitment to civic engagement and creative expression.

Investing in our future

At RVEC, we believe in the power of education and the importance of investing in our youth's future. Scholarships like this one recognize hard work and dedication and reinforce our cooperative's mission of empowering the communities we serve.

We congratulate Lucas on this well-deserved achievement. We wish him the best of luck as he embarks on his college journey and look forward to seeing the impact he will make in his field.

RVEC remains committed to supporting education and providing opportunities for future leaders.

Congratulations, Lucas!

5 ESSENTIAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

BY ABBY BERRY

Every May, National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your local electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May but also year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1 Be vigilant. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2 Use surge protectors. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness



National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home.



Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity.

over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3 Practice safe power strip use. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4 Avoid contact with water. It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)



The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying.

should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5 Educate family members. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

HONORING IOWA'S HOMETOWN HEROES

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Faces capture attention. That's something I learned early in my journalism career when I was trained to take pictures of the people I featured.

I think about this each time I drive through Auburn. As I roll along Highway 71 through the heart of this Sac County town, I see patriotic banners featuring pictures of local men and women who served in the U.S. military. The black-and-white images – some with smiling faces, some with sober expressions – grace the streetlight poles.

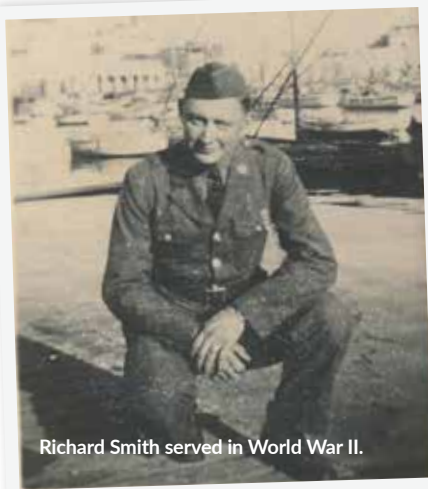
I've always wondered about the stories behind these captivating banners, so I contacted my friend Donetta (Smith) Stewart. For the past 17 years, she has been the librarian at the Auburn Public Library. She's also one of the keepers of knowledge in this small town of roughly 300 residents.

Donetta's uncle, Richard Smith, is featured on a banner southeast of the library. "Dad didn't talk much about Richard when I was growing up," says Donetta, referring to Don Smith, Richard's younger brother. "It was only later in life when I started asking more questions that he started telling me more."

Remembering a life cut short

Richard was born to Frank and Janet Smith on Dec. 23, 1919. He attended country school and graduated from Auburn High School in 1936. The likeable, easygoing young man was farming with his father when the U.S. entered World War II.

As his buddies began enlisting, Richard wanted to join the service, too. When Janet pleaded with him to stay home, he honored his mother's wishes. Uncle Sam came calling, however, in 1941. Richard was drafted into the U.S. Army and completed basic training at Camp Claiborne in Louisiana.



While his Auburn buddies served stateside, training other soldiers, Richard was sent to England and then Africa, along with the Red Bull Infantry Division. Richard was on the front lines when Erwin Rommel (a German field marshal known as the "Desert Fox") launched the Battle of Kasserine Pass on Feb. 14, 1943.

The next day, Feb. 15, Richard was killed in action. He was just 24 years old. "Dad always said that after Richard died, the laughter went out of the house," Donetta says.

After the war, one of Richard's commanding officers traveled to the Smith farm to pay his respects and fill in some gaps. "He told Frank that one minute Richard was there, and the next minute he was gone," Donetta explains.

Honorable legacies live on

Richard was buried near Carthage, Tunisia, in the North Africa American Cemetery, which contains the remains of more than 2,800 war dead. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, including Jane Barto, coordinator for the Auburn Historical Society (AHS), he now has a banner along Pine Street in his hometown.



It's one of 23 banners that the AHS and the City of Auburn installed in November 2024, in time for Veterans Day. "It's important to honor this heritage," says Jane, who was inspired by similar banners she'd seen in Arlington, Nebraska. "There's something very personal about putting faces with the names."

The Auburn banners feature local men and women who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. They include Jane's father, Floyd Barto, an Army veteran, and her uncle, Frank Lee, who helped the Allied forces liberate the Auschwitz concentration camp in early 1945. "My uncle said the human suffering was beyond description and wouldn't talk about his war experiences," Jane says.

That's why the banners are so important, she adds. They draw people in and start the conversation about these veterans' stories.

"We get so many positive comments," Donetta says. "Richard and the other local heroes are not forgotten."

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



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING


The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

May 2025

Visit our website at www.rvec.coop

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A large white utility truck with a bucket lift extended. Two workers wearing yellow safety vests and white hard hats are standing in the bucket. The truck has "Touchstone Energy Cooperatives" written on its side. The background shows a clear blue sky and a green field.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections™