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NOVEMBER 2025

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Prep now for
winter savings**

**Be aware of
energy scams**

Perfect pie recipes

Win a holiday cookie press set ► See Page 3

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Patty Ferguson, an Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc. member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES DELIVER STRONG MESSAGE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY JAY CEPERLEY



In late September, ahead of the government shutdown, staff from six Iowa electric cooperatives and the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with Iowa's Congressional offices. The team met with Sen. Chuck Grassley, staff from the five other congressional offices, and key policy experts from the U.S. House Agriculture Committee and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). This group focused their conversations on the issues facing Iowa electric cooperatives and the communities we serve.

Focus on FEMA

One of the main topics discussed was the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025, a bill aimed at improving how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) responds to disasters. The legislation proposes streamlining the process for electric cooperatives to access federal funding after storms and other emergencies.

The Iowa team emphasized that these reforms would reduce financial strain on co-ops and strengthen the resilience of rural communities. They also explained to congressional offices that without FEMA support, Iowa electric co-ops will have to recover the cost of storm recovery through increased rates.

Economic development programs

Co-op advocates also underscored the vital role the U.S. Department of Agriculture plays to help fund infrastructure projects and support

local economic development. Programs like Rural Utilities Service electric loans provide low-interest financing that allows Iowa electric co-ops to upgrade and maintain the electric grid. These improvements are critical for ensuring reliable, affordable electricity in rural areas, where the cost of infrastructure is often higher due to lower population density.

Additionally, our team discussed the value of the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program, which helps Iowa electric co-ops go beyond electricity by supporting broader community development. Through REDLG, Iowa electric co-ops can offer loans or grants to local businesses, schools and hospitals which are used to create jobs, expand services and strengthen rural economies. The fly-in group shared several real-life examples of how these initiatives

have made a difference in their Iowa communities. These stories help lawmakers see the tangible value of continued federal investment in rural infrastructure and development.

Conversations that count

The Iowa electric co-op staff members brought extensive experience and shared firsthand how these federal programs benefit electric co-ops and the communities we serve. Despite the looming threat of a government shutdown, our team delivered compelling stories and clear policy asks for the programs most critical to Iowa's electric cooperatives.

The momentum from these discussions will carry into the spring, when Iowa electric co-op representatives return to Washington in greater numbers for NRECA's 2026 Legislative Conference.

Jay Ceperley is the advocacy coordinator for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A HOLIDAY COOKIE PRESS SET!

Just in time for seasonal baking, win a Williams Sonoma cookie press set and Goldtouch® Pro nonstick cookie sheet. This prize is perfect for spritz or decorated drop biscuit cookies. Designed to work with 13 interchangeable discs, the cookie press set is simple to use. Plus, this durable tool is made of aluminum alloy with a durable stainless-steel pusher and discs.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Nov. 30. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the Worx electric leaf mulcher from the September issue was **Julie Sturm**, a **Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!



LIHEAP APPLICATION PERIOD IS OPEN

The 2025-2026 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. Additional countable income and/or income verification not listed above may be required for eligibility determination.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026. The start date is Oct. 1, 2025, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit hhs.iowa.gov and search for **LIHEAP**. To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

BRINGING HOME TRADITION:

IOWA FAMILIES KEEP THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS GROWING

For many Iowa families, the holiday season wouldn't be complete without bundling up and picking out a real Christmas tree together. Choosing the perfect tree at a local farm has become a cherished family tradition filled with laughter, hot cocoa and memories that stretch across generations.

Behind those postcard-perfect evergreens are the dedicated members of the Iowa Christmas Tree Association, an organization that helps growers across the state share knowledge, improve their craft and keep this holiday tradition thriving. Growing Christmas trees is no small feat. It typically takes 6 to 12 years for a tree to reach harvest size, though some growers allow more time for larger or premium trees.

Recognizing the value of working together, a group of Iowa growers formed the association in 1963. Today, it includes approximately 190 member families, from seasoned tree farmers selling thousands of trees each year to newcomers just planting their first seedlings.

More than 100 member farms sell trees directly to customers through "choose-and-harvest" operations, where families can stroll through rows of evergreens and cut their own tree. Most farms span just 3 to 8 acres, showcasing that small, family-run operations can make a big impact on Iowa's holiday landscape.



Iowa growers typically cultivate eight tree varieties, such as Scotch and white pines, Fraser and Canaan firs, Blue Spruce and Douglas fir, while also exploring additional species like red pine or spruces adapted to local conditions. With so many options, families can find a tree that perfectly fits their home and holiday style.

Each December, these farms do more than sell trees. They help families celebrate tradition, support local agriculture and keep Iowa's Christmas spirit growing strong. And as you make your way to a tree farm this season, you'll often pass through rural communities powered by local electric cooperatives, where neighbors work year-round to keep the lights bright for every holiday memory.

To find a nearby tree farm visit iowachristmastrees.com.

ENTER TO WIN

WIN \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED 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 \$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. Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



TOP 10 HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

Before you deck the halls, take a moment to check the cords, outlets and candles that make the season sparkle. Amid the glow of twinkling lights and festive cheer, it's easy to overlook small details that can make a big difference in keeping your home and family safe. These simple precautions will help ensure your celebrations stay merry, bright and worry-free.

1 Inspect electrical decorations for damage before use. Cracked or damaged sockets, bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious shock or start a fire.

2 Do not overload electrical outlets. Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday fires. Avoid overloading outlets and plug only one high-wattage item into each outlet at a time.

3 Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights. More than three strands may not only blow a fuse but can also cause a fire.

4 Keep trees fresh by watering daily. Dry trees are a serious fire hazard.

5 Use battery-operated candles. Candles start almost half of home decoration fires.

6 Keep combustibles at least 3 feet from heat sources. A heat source that was too close to decorations was a factor in half of home fires that began with decorations.

7 Protect cords from damage. To avoid shock or fire hazards, cords should never be pinched by furniture, forced into small spaces such as doors and windows, placed under rugs, located near heat sources, or attached by nails or staples.

8 Check decorations for certification label. Decorations not bearing a label from an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Intertek (ETL), have not been tested for safety and could be hazardous.



9 Stay in the kitchen when something is cooking. Unattended cooking equipment is the leading cause of home cooking fires.

10 Turn off, unplug and extinguish all decorations when going to sleep or leaving the house. Unattended candles are the cause of one in five home candle fires. Half of home fire deaths occur between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Source for statistics:
National Fire Protection Association

DID YOU KNOW?

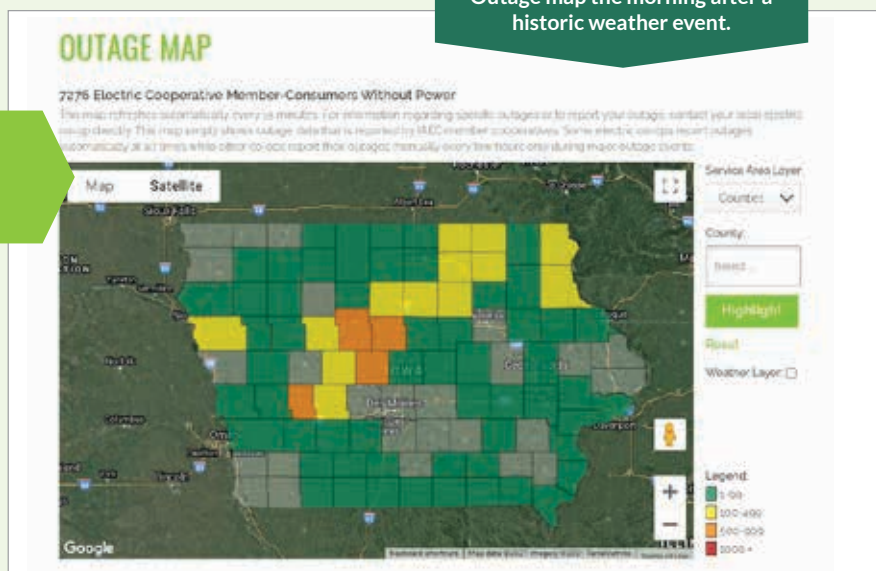
STATEWIDE OUTAGE MAP

www.iowarec.org/outages

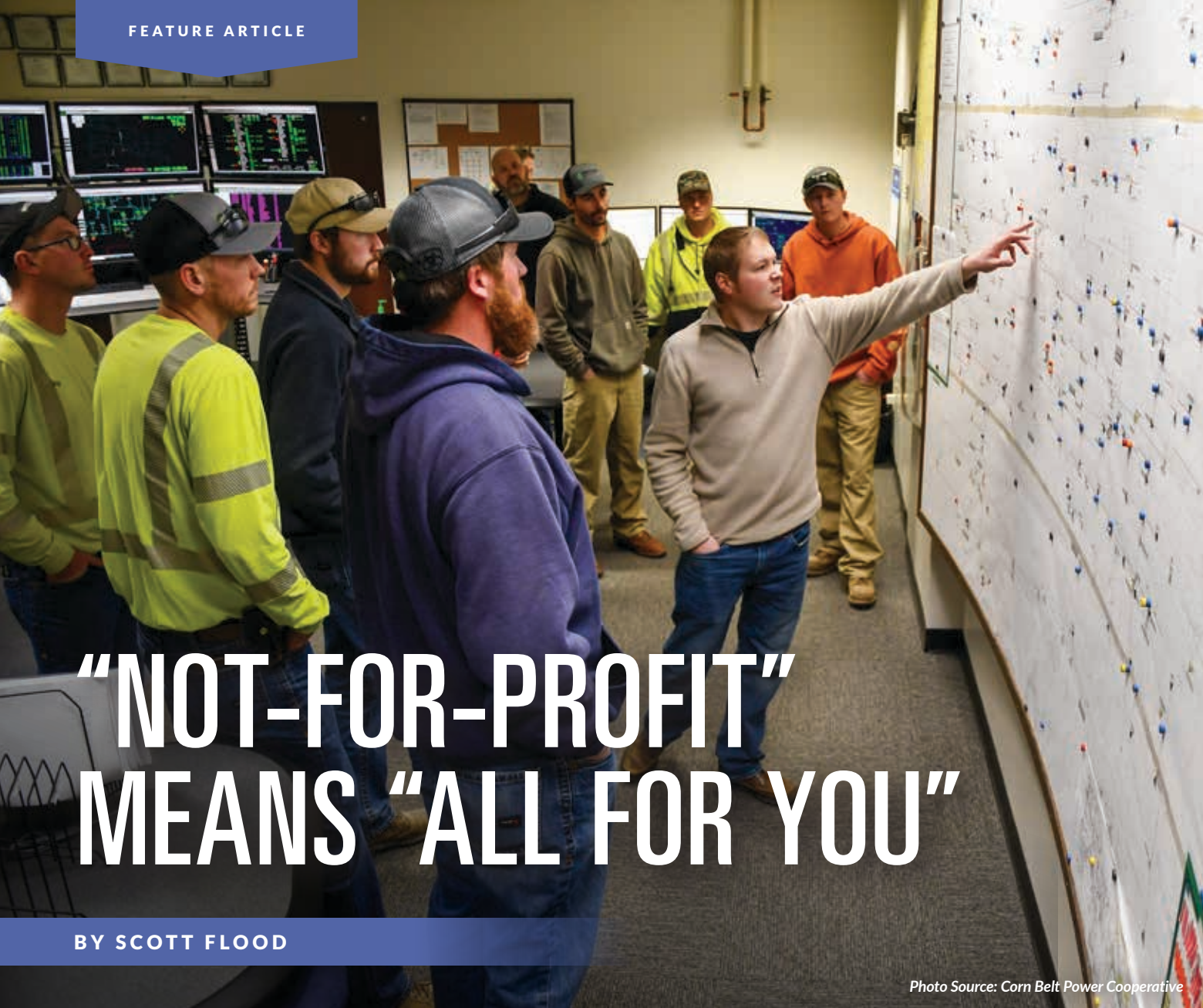
The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) maintains a statewide outage map. The map refreshes automatically every 15 minutes and shows outage data that is reported by IAEC member cooperatives. Most electric co-ops report outages automatically while a few co-ops report outages manually every few hours only during major outage events.

For information regarding specific outages or to report your outage, always contact your local electric co-op directly. It's also important that your local co-op is notified if your phone number or other contact information changes.

Outage map the morning after a historic weather event.



If you see downed power lines, stay away from the lines and poles. Always assume the lines are energized and report any damage to your local electric cooperative.



“NOT-FOR-PROFIT” MEANS “ALL FOR YOU”

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Photo Source: Corn Belt Power Cooperative

It's hard to imagine what our daily lives would be like without electricity. Every year, our dependence on what travels across poles and wires to our homes and businesses grows. We act as though electricity has always been there, take its presence for granted and can't imagine life without it. Even the shortest power outage manages to turn our world upside-down.

Powering rural America

But 90 years ago, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the executive order that created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), nobody in America's small towns and wide-open spaces took electricity for granted. That's because most of them didn't have access to it.

As the 19th century drew to a close, wealthy investors were starting electric utility companies in cities from coast to coast. Building power plants and installing power lines was costly, so investors focused their efforts in places with the highest population density. Few gave any thought to rural America. Built-up areas offered more customers in smaller spaces, which helped those utilities become highly profitable. Running power lines to serve a handful of consumers spread across so many thousands of acres just didn't make economic sense, so most utilities ignored them. After all, they couldn't make as much money serving those places.

Long after their city cousins became accustomed to enjoying the wonders of electric lighting and the earliest home appliances, folks in more remote areas could only dream about the convenience. The REA was created to change that discrepancy, providing a source of expertise and financing for a new concept in energy: the rural electric power cooperative.

What makes co-ops different

Besides the areas each served, the most important distinctions between those big utilities and the new co-ops involved who owned them and their purpose. As the name implies, investor-owned utilities are owned by people who buy stock in the utilities. The primary goal of those utilities is

to make money to distribute to their investors through dividends and generate higher per-share prices to increase those investors' wealth.

Electric cooperatives are built and owned not by investors, but by the very people they serve. They're led by boards of local residents who are elected by their neighbors to represent them and are responsible for acting in the members' best interests.

The primary goal of a co-op isn't to make money, but to provide a safe and reliable source of electricity at a cost the local community can afford. As not-for-profit organizations, electric cooperatives receive money from members when they pay electric bills, then use most of that money to purchase and deliver electricity. They typically set aside some money for the future and for emergency needs. And, because they employ local people who patronize local businesses, much of the money they earn stays in the communities they serve, boosting the local economy.

Focused on members, not profits

Most co-ops purchase electricity on the wholesale power market and sell it to members at only a slight markup designed to cover the costs associated with operating the co-op and maintaining the infrastructure for delivering power. That's why co-ops don't make more money when you use more power or when wholesale prices increase. It's also why electric co-ops are dedicated to helping their members reduce energy consumption and lower their power bills.

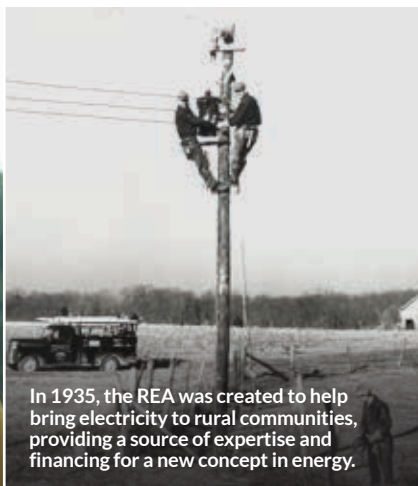
When co-ops earn more than they pay out in wholesale energy and other costs, they keep some the extra money in reserves or return it to their members through what are known as capital credits.

Because co-ops exist to serve their members and not profit-hungry investors, they have an obligation to keep the price of electricity as low as possible. When members spend less for their electricity, they have more money to use on what's important to them.

Co-ops also work to support the area's economic health through activities designed to bring new employers to the community and help existing businesses expand. That's particularly important because many of the areas served by co-ops face economic challenges. Nationwide, one in four households on co-op lines has an annual income below \$35,000, making affordability a key priority.

When the leaders of investor-owned utilities make decisions, their first thought is how those choices will affect the price of their company's stock. When co-op leaders make decisions, they're focused on doing the best thing for their members. Instead of trying to impress Wall Street, co-ops want to make sure they're meeting your needs for power at the best price possible. That's because they're truly not for profit – instead, they're for you and your neighbors.

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



In 1935, the REA was created to help bring electricity to rural communities, providing a source of expertise and financing for a new concept in energy.



Photo Source: Central Iowa Power Cooperative.



Photo Source: Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.



The primary goal of a co-op isn't to make money, but to provide a safe and reliable source of electricity at a cost the local community can afford.



TEXAS PECAN PIE

- 3 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 cup white corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup oleo, melted
- 1 cup pecans
- 1 9-inch unbaked pie shell

Mix eggs, sugar, corn syrup, salt, oleo and pecans together and pour into pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. If desired, top with pecan halves. *Serves 8*

Emily Taylor • Hawarden
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

OATMEAL NUT PIE

- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick butter or margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- dash salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup quick oatmeal
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup nuts
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white syrup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut flakes
- 1 unbaked pie shell

Melt the margarine and mix with brown sugar. Add eggs, salt and vanilla. Add remaining ingredients in order given. Pour into pie shell and bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes. *Serves 6-8*

Lea Bradley • Mount Pleasant
Access Energy Cooperative

BLACKBERRY PIE

- 2 unbaked 9-inch pie crusts
- 4 cups fresh blackberries
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons Clearjel or cornstarch

Roll out one pie crust and transfer it into a 9-inch pie plate. Combine blackberries, sugar, water, lemon juice and Clearjel or cornstarch in a saucepan. Cook until just thickened, stirring constantly. Pour filling into pie shell. Roll out the other crust to a diameter of 11- to 12-inches and gently lay over the top. Trim edges evenly, then tuck under and crimp. Poke four or five vent holes in the top of the crust with a fork. Bake at 350 degrees F for approximately 25 minutes. *Serves 8*

Robert Kirchner • Donnellson
Access Energy Cooperative

HONEY PIE

- 1 cup honey
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- dash nutmeg
- 1 unbaked pie shell

Bring honey to a boil. Beat in eggs, then add butter, vanilla, pecans and nutmeg. Pour into pie shell and bake at 325 degrees F for 25 minutes, or until set. *Serves 6*

Betty Wulf • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

COCONUT PIE

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup margarine
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ¾ cup coconut, divided
- 2 packages sugar-free vanilla instant pudding
- 3¼ cups cold milk
- 5 drops coconut extract
- whipped topping
- 2 tablespoons toasted coconut

Mix flour, margarine, powdered sugar and ¼ cup coconut. Press in 9-inch pie pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 15 minutes. Cool completely. Mix pudding mix, milk and coconut extract. Stir in ½ cup coconut and spread mixture in cooled crust. Top with whipped topping and toasted coconut. Chill before serving. Serves 6-8

Carol Horras • Williamsburg
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

EASY CHOCOLATE AMBROSIA PIE

- 1 cup cold milk
- 1 teaspoon Knox gelatin
- 1 4.5-ounce package instant chocolate pudding
- 1 pint vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 graham cracker pie crust
- optional toppings: whipped topping, chocolate shavings

In large bowl, mix milk and gelatin. Stir in chocolate pudding and ice cream. Pour into pie shell and chill until firm. Serve with whipped topping and chocolate shavings, if desired. Serves 6

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

PUMPKIN PIE — DAIRY-FREE

- 2 cups pumpkin, canned or fresh
- 1 cup brown sugar, lightly packed
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup soft tofu, drained and crumbled
- 2 cups soy milk
- 1 prebaked pie crust

Add pumpkin, sugar, salt, cinnamon and pumpkin pie spice into a bowl. Whisk together until well mixed. Add tofu and milk to a blender. Cover and blend on high for 15 seconds until smooth. Pour blender mixture into the pumpkin mixture. Whisk together for about 30 seconds until well mixed. Place the pie crust on a cookie sheet to collect any spills. Pour the pumpkin mixture into the crust. With a spatula, scrape out the bowl and smooth the top of the pie. Cover crust edge to keep from burning. Bake at 375 degrees F for 1 hour, or until knife inserted halfway between center and edge of pie comes out clean. Let pie sit for 30 minutes before serving or chill until ready to serve. Note substitutions: pumpkin pie spice can be substituted with ½ teaspoon ginger and ¼ teaspoon nutmeg. Soy milk can be substituted with oat or almond milk. One 10-inch pie serves 8 and two 8-inch pies serves 16

Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

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



CHERRY ALMOND MOUSSE PIE

- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk, divided
- 1 1-ounce square unsweetened chocolate
- ½ teaspoon almond extract, divided
- 1 9-inch pastry shell, baked
- 1 10-ounce jar maraschino cherries, drained
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 3.4-ounce package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 cup whipped cream
- ½ cup toasted almonds, chopped
- chocolate curls

In a saucepan over low heat, cook and stir ½ cup milk and chocolate about 5 minutes, until chocolate is melted and mixture is thickened. Stir in ¼ teaspoon almond extract. Pour into baked pastry shell, set aside. Reserve eight whole cherries for garnish. Chop the remaining cherries, set aside. In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese until light. Gradually beat in water and remaining milk. Add pudding mix and remaining extract, mix well. Fold in whipped cream. Stir in chopped cherries and almonds. Pour into pie shell. Chill for at least 4 hours. Garnish with whole cherries and chocolate. Serves 8-10

Teresa Mowrer • Guthrie Center
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

WANTED:

PASTA & PIZZA NIGHT RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Nov. 30

We want your **pasta and pizza night recipes!** Whether it's your go-to recipe for a family game night or a cozy dinner for two, send us your favorite cheesy, saucy and savory dishes. Recipes will appear in our March issue. 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
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PREP NOW FOR WINTER SAVINGS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Just as you pull out your winter gear before you need it, prepping your home for the coming season is a great idea. You'll be thankful you prepared in the fall for colder weather when you receive your first winter bill.

The following steps can be taken now to use less energy at home before the winter chill sets in. They also help lower strain on the electric grid during extreme winter weather when energy use is at its peak in your community.

Add layers for comfort and savings

First, consider your home's layers. Just like layering up those winter

flannels, down jackets with waterproof and wind-stopping shells, plus gloves and hats, your home needs layers, too. Air sealing and insulation protect your home from the elements while locking in the warm air to keep you cozy. The same applies to hot weather, making air sealing and insulation a year-round efficiency upgrade.

To offset the costs, federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades are available through Dec. 31, 2025. Homeowners can claim a total of 30% of the cost of installation, up to \$3,200. Tax credits are available for insulation, heat pumps, air conditioning systems

and more. There's even a tax credit for electrical panel upgrades, which might be needed to accommodate new energy-efficient equipment.

There's also a \$150 tax credit for an energy audit, which allows a professional to help determine what your home needs and how to prioritize potential projects. Visit energystar.gov for more information.

Tackle DIY upgrades this fall

When it comes to do-it-yourself (DIY) projects, there are a few upgrades you can take care of yourself. Lock in savings with window cleaning

and maintenance. Make sure sash locks and window cranks are in good working order and cleaned of any dirt and leaves. Debris can keep them from closing snugly. The crevice tool attachment on a vacuum cleaner, combined with a small, dry scrub brush or an old toothbrush, works great. The locks should pull the top and bottom window sashes together tightly. For casement windows, the locks should pull the window tightly to the frame.

Although it might not seem like a significant difference, reducing airflow through and around windows can make your home more comfortable in the winter. Replacing broken or nonfunctional sash locks can be a reasonable DIY project, but it's best to avoid doing it when the winter winds are blowing. Also, use caulk to seal all gaps around the window trim. If you have operable storm windows, make sure they close.

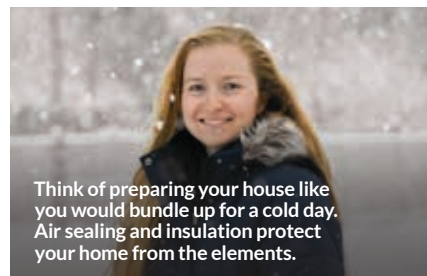
Stay on top of equipment maintenance

If you have a forced-air heating or air conditioning system, replace the filter. First, turn the system off to check it. If your filter is dirty, leave it in place until you have a replacement. Running your system without a filter can send any dust or dirt in the ductwork directly into the components and damage your equipment.

Also, stocking up on filters can save you money. I bought a 12-pack of filters for \$72 – \$6 each. A similar filter sold separately was \$10. Don't see a bulk pack at your local hardware store? Ask at the customer service desk. They may be able to order them for you.

It's always a good idea to look for opportunities to protect your home from the elements and maintain your equipment before the cold of winter.

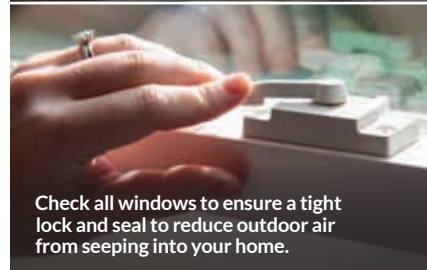
Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Think of preparing your house like you would bundle up for a cold day. Air sealing and insulation protect your home from the elements.



Filters should be checked every three months and replaced if needed.



Check all windows to ensure a tight lock and seal to reduce outdoor air from seeping into your home.

STAY WARM AND SAVE ENERGY THIS WINTER

Want to stay cozy without breaking the bank? These smart tips can help you save money and energy during the cool fall and cold winter months. Some are quick daily habits, while others are simple, low-cost steps that can add up to big savings.

10 TIPS FOR SAVINGS:



Let the sun in. Open curtains on south-facing windows during the day to bring in free heat, and close them at night to keep out the chill.



Cover drafty windows. Apply clear plastic film or add heavy drapes to block cold air and reduce energy loss.



Adjust the thermostat.

Turn it down when you're asleep or away to cut heating costs by up to 10% a year. A programmable or smart thermostat makes it easy.



Seal up leaks.

Use caulk or weatherstripping around doors, windows and utility cut-throughs to keep warm air in and cold air out.



Keep your heating system in shape.

Schedule routine maintenance and replace furnace or heat pump filters regularly for top performance.



Make fireplaces more efficient.

Close the damper when not in use, and if your fireplace is just decorative, seal the flue to stop heat from escaping.



Save on water heating.

Set your water heater to 120 degrees F for comfort, safety and energy savings.



Choose LED holiday lights.

ENERGY STAR®-certified strings use less power, last longer and keep your home festive.



Invest for the long run.

Upgrade insulation, replace drafty windows or install a high-efficiency heating system for lasting savings.



Think year-round. Carry these habits into spring and summer for energy savings in every season.

Contact your local electric cooperative for more energy-saving ideas, programs and services.

METAL WHOLESALE RECOGNIZED WITH IOWA VENTURE AWARD

The Iowa Area Development Group (IADG), in collaboration with its rural electric cooperative partners, recently honored Metal Wholesale with an Iowa Venture Award. The presentation was made in conjunction with the annual meeting of Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative (SIEC) in Bloomfield.

This year marks the 37th year that IADG has presented Iowa Venture Awards to individuals and organizations, both large and small, in recognition of their contributions to Iowa's economy through entrepreneurial leadership, innovation and job creation. To date, 297 entities have received the Iowa Venture Award.

Growth and expansion

Founded in 2015 by brothers Wilson and Abram Weiler in Bloomfield, Metal Wholesale began production of metal roofing materials for agriculture, commercial and residential use. Ten years later, the company has expanded to six manufacturing locations across four states with an additional facility under construction in Wyoming. Metal Wholesale products are distributed through a dealer network of lumberyards servicing 15 states throughout the Midwest.

As the company grew, it added logistics, trucking and supply chain divisions under the name Metal Capital. The company's headquarters remain in Bloomfield, where it employs 45 people and has a total workforce of 107.

Recognized for vision and innovation

Metal Wholesale was nominated for the award by SIEC for its entrepreneurial vision and community expansions. To help support the growing business, SIEC leveraged the USDA Rural Development Grant and Loan Program to provide financial



Front row, from left: Abram Weiler, president, Metal Wholesale; Wilson Weiler, CEO, Metal Wholesale; and Bruce Nuzum, president/CEO, Iowa Area Development Group.

Back row, from left: Greg Proctor, manager/CEO Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative (SIEC); and SIEC board directors Alan Bodkins, Earl Trachsel, Darrell Downing, Travis Harris, David Yahnke, James Schooley, Ryan Davis and Jason Wells.

backing for new equipment and the launch of two new product lines.

"Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative proudly nominated Metal Wholesale to receive a 2025 Venture Award due to their entrepreneurial vision, innovative spirit and their ability to inspire others," said Greg Proctor, manager and CEO of SIEC. "It has been a pleasure to watch the story of Metal Wholesale unfold, and I am so happy our co-op has been able to play a small role."

This is the fourth Iowa Venture Award presented this year. The other recipients included **Phil Dornbier Trucking, Inc.**, nominated by *Prairie Energy Cooperative*; **Fairfield by Marriott Sioux Center**, nominated by *North West Rural Electric Cooperative*; and **Iowa Central Community College - Storm Lake**, nominated

by *Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative*. Those winners were featured in the June issue of this magazine.

Visit www.iadg.com/hall-of-fame to learn about previous Iowa Venture Award recipients.

ABOUT IADG

IADG is the business and community development leader for Iowa's rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and independent telecommunication companies. Since 1985, the partnerships and economic development efforts of IADG and their sponsors have assisted with more than 2,750 projects, generating over \$14.2 billion of capital investment and more than 65,000 new or retained jobs for Iowa.

HOW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CAN INNOVATE WITH AI

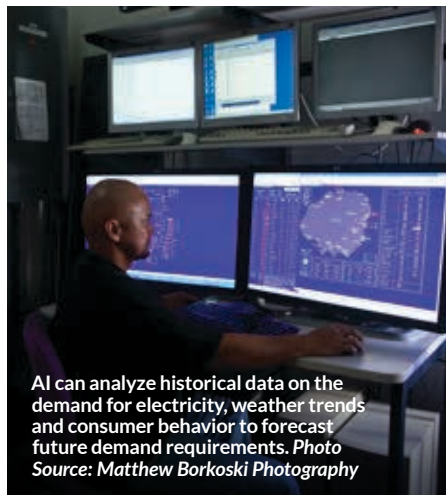
BY SHANE SCHWARTZ

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a trendy, high-tech buzzword for the exclusive domain of data scientists and Silicon Valley firms. Today, electric cooperatives across the country are discovering how AI – particularly generative AI and large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Gemini – can transform the way they power their local communities. From improving reliability and safety to enhancing member services and streamlining daily operations, AI is helping electric co-ops do more with less.

Cooperatives are known for wearing many hats, from utility operators to first responders, to local economic development engines. But for many co-ops, limited staffing and tight budgets can make it difficult to explore new technologies.

AI tools, especially LLMs, now offer copy-and-paste workflows that anyone can use. AI can act as a digital assistant – automating routine tasks, analyzing data and accelerating insights without any coding skills required. Even for experienced programmers, AI offers value. But the real innovation is that now, anyone at an electric co-op can access the benefits of advanced analytics and automation. While the specific tools and datasets may vary, most AI applications follow a simple process:

- 1 Gathering data:** Relevant information can be pulled from internal systems or spreadsheets.
- 2 Understanding data:** AI can be used to summarize, structure or flag any potential issues in the dataset.
- 3 Applying a prompt:** A tested prompt can ask AI to perform a specific task or analysis.
- 4 Putting AI to work:** AI-generated insights or outputs can be utilized to inform business decisions or create deliverables.



AI can analyze historical data on the demand for electricity, weather trends and consumer behavior to forecast future demand requirements. Photo Source: Matthew Borkoski Photography



AI can quickly scan SCADA, automated meter data or voltage datasets to detect unusual patterns.

These tasks often take just a few hours to complete. Yet the time saved and the ability to tackle previously out-of-reach projects can have long-lasting, positive impact across multiple departments.

Let's take a look at some of the most promising applications for AI.

Load forecasting and peak prediction

AI can analyze historical data on the demand for electricity, weather trends and consumer behavior to forecast future demand requirements. With simple prompt-based tools, electric co-ops can generate accurate predictions and help to plan for high-demand periods.

Anomaly detection and phase identification

AI can quickly scan SCADA systems, automated meter data or voltage datasets to detect unusual patterns and identify issues such as early signs of equipment failure before they escalate into power outages.

Vegetation management

By combining satellite imagery, LiDAR data and AI-powered image recognition, co-ops can assess and prioritize vegetation encroachments more efficiently

to proactively prevent disruptions and reduce manual fieldwork.

Safety and compliance

AI can draft job hazard analyses, summarize safety reports or even generate site-specific assessments – all in minutes. This supports a safer work environment for all co-op employees while easing the documentation burden on safety staff.

Back-office productivity

LLMs are also proving useful in administrative tasks: crafting job descriptions, summarizing long reports and analyzing social sentiment around topics such as new rates and co-op services.

AI certainly isn't a cure-all, but it is a powerful tool when applied thoughtfully. For electric cooperatives, it's not about chasing tech trends – it's about solving real-world problems, reducing strain on limited resources and delivering more value to co-op communities. As AI tools become easier to use and more tailored to the needs of rural utilities, the path forward is clear: co-ops are positioned not just to adopt AI, but to shape how it's used to better serve their members.

Shane Schwartz writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL ENERGY SCAMS

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Electric cooperatives across the country are urging members to stay alert as utility-related scams continue to evolve. Fraudsters are becoming more aggressive and more convincing – using impersonation, false urgency and digital deception to extract payments or personal information from unsuspecting individuals.

Common scam tactics

Reports of scam calls, fake energy rebate offers and phony disconnection threats have increased in recent months. These schemes often begin with a phone call, text or visit from someone claiming to represent your local electric cooperative. The tactics vary, but the goal is always the same: to pressure the member into acting quickly before they have time to verify the request.

Some scammers demand immediate payment, threatening that your service will be shut off within minutes. Others offer too-good-to-be-true incentives like rebates or free equipment installations – if the member provides banking information or pays an upfront fee. In many cases, scammers can even manipulate caller ID to appear as though the call is coming from a trusted electric cooperative number.

How your cooperative protects you

Iowa's electric cooperatives want members to know they will never call and demand immediate payment. They will never ask for banking or account information over the phone, nor will they pressure a member to act without the opportunity to verify the situation. If someone claiming to be from your cooperative insists on urgency or payment through nontraditional means, it's a red flag.

These scams can arrive in the form of emails, text messages or QR codes



Scammers are becoming more aggressive and more convincing – using impersonation, false urgency and digital deception to extract payments or personal information from unsuspecting individuals.



If you suspect you've been targeted by a scammer, don't hesitate to hang up. Call your electric cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website.

designed to look like real payment portals. Typically, the links redirect to fraudulent websites that steal sensitive data. The scammers may also encourage members to pay through untraceable methods like prepaid debit cards, mobile apps or cryptocurrency – methods legitimate utilities never use.

One concerning trend involves scammers visiting homes unannounced, posing as utility or co-op workers conducting inspections or installations. Without proper identification or appointment confirmation, these visits should always be treated with caution.

Stay informed and protect others

Education and awareness remain two of the most powerful tools in this fight. Members are encouraged

to talk with family, friends and neighbors about the warning signs of scams. Sharing information helps others stay safe and contributes to a stronger, more connected community.

If something doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to hang up, close the message or refuse entry. Call your electric cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website. Member service professionals are available to assist.

Electric cooperatives were built on trust, service and community. By working together and looking out for one another, members and cooperatives alike can help expose fraud for what it is – and ensure that scammers are left in the dark.

Jennah Denney writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

ORPHAN TRAIN TO IOWA: A LEGACY OF FAMILY

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

As we head into the holidays, 'tis the season for family gatherings. The descendants of Ethel Staley got a head start in early September in western Iowa, and I was invited.

No, I'm not a Staley. I am interested in the family's orphan train heritage, though. I had reached out to Ethel's son Russell to see if I could interview him about his mother's life-changing journey to Iowa.

He invited me to the Staley's chicken dinner (oh, that delicious broasted chicken!) at St. Patrick's Church in Dunlap on Sunday, Sept. 7, followed by a program about Ethel and her siblings' orphan train history. He even invited me to the Staley family reunion on Sept. 6 in Denison. "My oldest sister, who is 101 years old, is flying in from Longview, Washington," Russell added.

When I walked into the lobby of the Cobblestone Inn that Saturday evening, I felt right at home. Within minutes, Russell's younger brother Roger invited me to join the family photo and listen as the relatives (including four of Ethel's children) reminisced about their family's unique heritage.

Ethel's story started decades before in the tiny village of Cold Brook, New York. Her parents, George and Eva Barney, had six children. Eva died in childbirth with the last child in 1903, and George didn't have the resources to raise his young family alone. He contacted the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in New York, which took in four of his children in February 1904.

By March 10, 1904, the Barney kids (Elmer, 11; Alta, 9; Ethel, 7; and Edgar, 20 months) boarded a west-bound "orphan train" with other children and Rev. H.D. Clarke, a CAS agent. The Barney kids, along with 11 other children, arrived in Dunlap a few days later.



Leo Staley married Ethel Barney Malone on Sept. 14, 1915, at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Charter Oak.

Recalling Iowa's orphan train heritage

The orphan train movement transported roughly 200,000 orphaned, abandoned and impoverished children from crowded East Coast cities to rural communities in the Midwest from 1854 to 1929. Some, like the Barney children, were technically "half orphans," who had one parent still living.

The goal? Provide these children with a better life and offer a source of labor for the growing West. Orphan train children were "placed out" in nearly every state. Roughly 10,000 orphan train children arrived in more than 300 Iowa communities during the 75-year history of the orphan train movement.

When an orphan train arrived, the children were presented to the community. When a family selected a child, the orphan train agent and the head of the household signed an agreement that the family would take full responsibility to care for the child until he or she reached adulthood.

A story of second chances, hope and resilience

Resin and Elizabeth Malone selected Ethel and took her home to their farm.



Ethel Barney Malone (who would become Ethel Staley following her marriage) was 16 in this picture (circa 1912), and her brother Elmer Barney Malone was 19.



An estimated 2 million people alive today are descendants of orphan train riders. Among them are members of the Staley family, shown here at a reunion in Dunlap on Sept. 7, 2025.

The Malones later took in Elmer, as well. (Alta and Edgar were also taken in by families in the Dunlap area.)

When Ethel was a teenager, she met a local boy, Leo Staley, who was playing baseball with the Willow Township team. The couple married on Sept. 14, 1915, at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Charter Oak. The local newspaper reported that more than 500 guests attended their reception.

The young couple farmed south of Charter Oak and had 10 children. The Staley family members I met in western Iowa this past summer are among the estimated 2 million orphan-train-rider descendants alive today.

While most orphan train riders' stories have been lost to history, the legacies of Ethel (1896-1990) and her siblings live on. They remind us of the incredible power of resilience, courage and love. For that, I'm grateful.

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.ieclmagazine.com

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