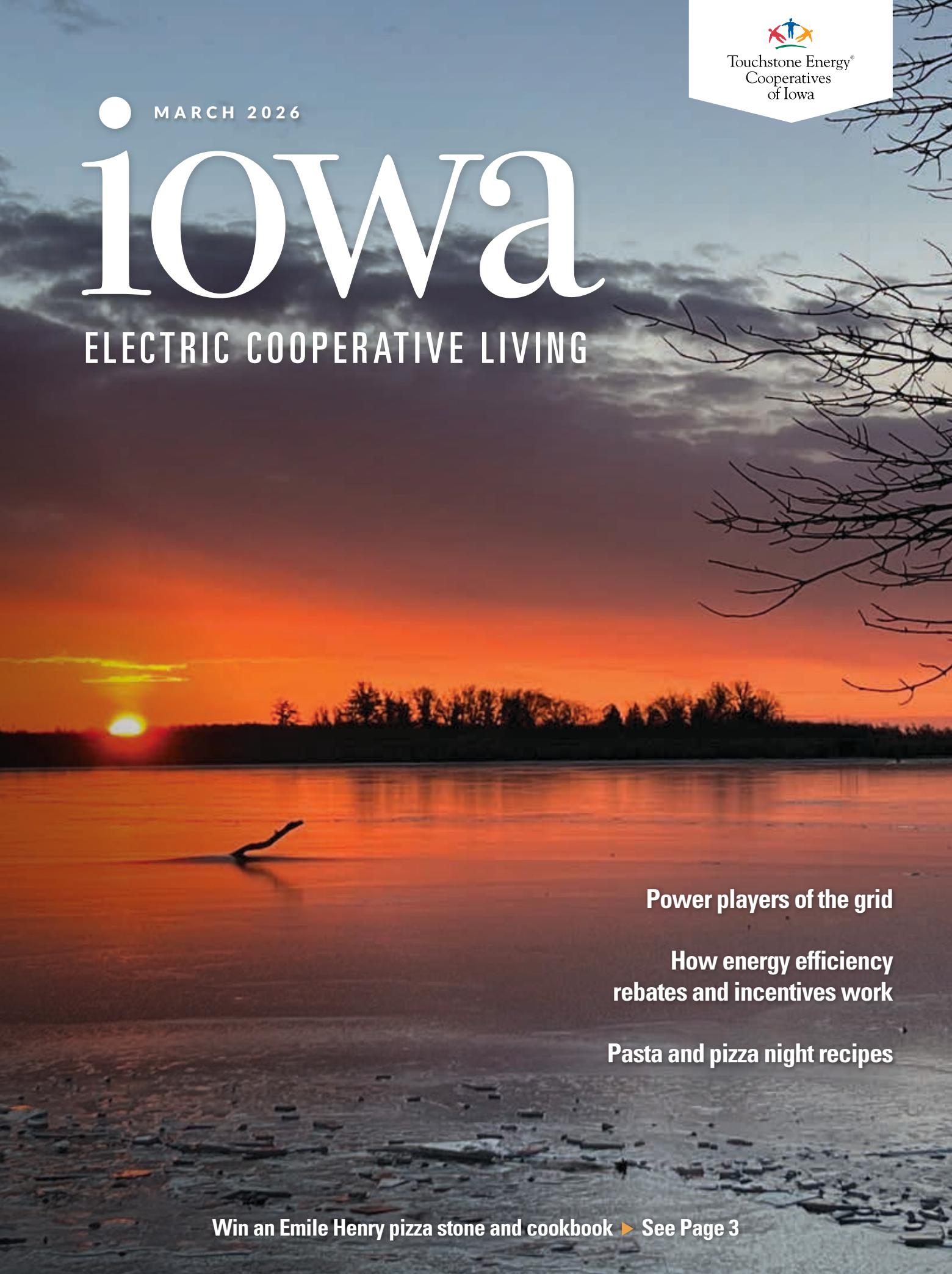

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa

MARCH 2026

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Power players of the grid

How energy efficiency rebates and incentives work

Pasta and pizza night recipes

Win an Emile Henry pizza stone and cookbook ▶ See Page 3

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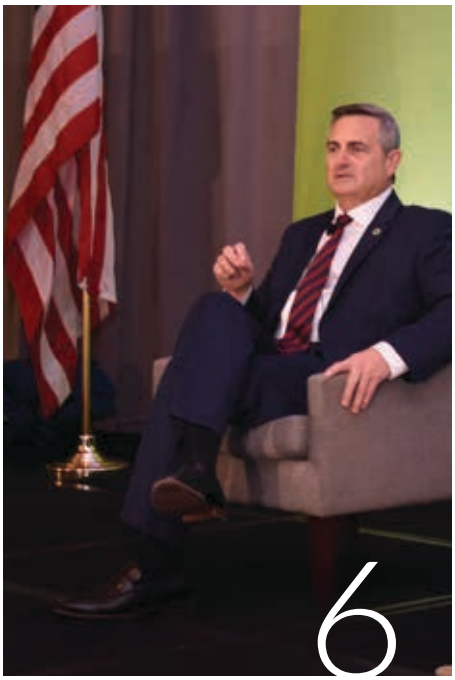

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ON THE COVER
Special thanks to Stacey Snyder, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CHAMPION UTILITY WORKER SAFETY

BY JAY CEPERLEY

As we enter the month of March, Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to recognize and celebrate the essential work of utility workers across our state. Iowa Utility Worker Appreciation Day, observed each year on March 8, offers an important opportunity to honor the dedication, professionalism and service of the men and women who keep our communities connected, safe and reliably powered. These workers respond at all hours, often in hazardous conditions, to restore electricity and maintain the systems that power modern life. Their commitment ensures that Iowa families, farms and businesses receive dependable service every day.

A longstanding commitment to safety

Iowa's electric cooperatives have always maintained a strong and unwavering commitment to safety. This priority is deeply rooted in our mission of powering lives and informs how we serve our members, support our employees and protect the communities we operate in. We have consistently championed initiatives that improve the safety of Iowans, including hands-free driving legislation designed to reduce distracted driving, as well as the "Move Over, Slow Down" law, which requires motorists to move over and slow down when passing work vehicles on the roadside. These efforts reflect a broader goal: ensuring that not only utility workers, but all community members, can work and travel safely throughout our state.

With the 2026 Iowa Legislative Session fully underway, Iowa's electric cooperatives are actively engaged at the Capitol to ensure that our members' voices are heard. Safety remains one of our highest priorities, shaping not only our daily operations but also our advocacy efforts.

Strengthening protections for utility workers

This year, our ongoing commitment to safety is reflected in new legislation proposed by Iowa's electric cooperatives that would increase penalties for individuals who threaten, harass or assault utility workers while they are performing their duties. Lineworkers are often required to enter unpredictable, high-risk environments to restore power, post for disconnection and trim vegetation. When they encounter hostile or aggressive behavior, the dangers they face increase significantly. Because Iowa law requires these workers to respond in such situations, they deserve the strongest possible legal protections already given to other public servants like first responders, corrections officers and healthcare workers.

Regardless of the outcome of this year's legislation, Iowa's electric cooperatives will continue advocating for robust protections for utility workers. Our commitment to safety remains steadfast. These efforts reflect our longstanding mission: to champion safety, support our workforce and serve the best interests of the communities we proudly power.

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

March 8 is Iowa Utility Worker Appreciation Day

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN EMILE HENRY PIZZA STONE AND COOKBOOK!

Finished with Emile Henry's proprietary glaze, this 16-inch pizza stone produces perfectly crispy crusts. The piece withstands exceptionally high heat, so it can be used in the oven or on the grill. Plus, chef and author Alexandra Stafford showcases pizza in her latest cookbook. Each recipe focuses on seasonal ingredients and is paired with a complementary salad.

Visit our website and win!

ENTER ONLINE BY MARCH 31!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than March 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 Ninja Crispi Air Fryer from the January issue was **Ray Netherton**, a **North West REC** member-consumer.

IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES PROVIDE MUTUAL AID SUPPORT IN MISSISSIPPI

At the end of January, three Iowa electric cooperatives sent 13 linemen and vehicles to Twin County Electric Power Association in Mississippi to help restore power to the co-op's members following a devastating ice storm on Jan. 25.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) received the call for mutual aid assistance on Jan. 30, and the safety team immediately went to work reaching out to member co-ops who could help. "The co-op in need was specifically looking for tracked equipment to navigate muddy conditions in the aftermath of the ice storm," said Scott Meinecke, IAEC director of safety & loss control.

Three Iowa electric cooperatives were able to send resources immediately:

- **Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative,** based in Wilton, sent four linemen, two bucket trucks and a tracked digger.
- **Midland Power Cooperative,** based in Jefferson, sent five linemen, one bucket truck, one pickup and one digger.
- **Woodbury Rural Electric Cooperative,** based in Moville, sent four men, one bucket truck, one digger and one tracked skid loader.

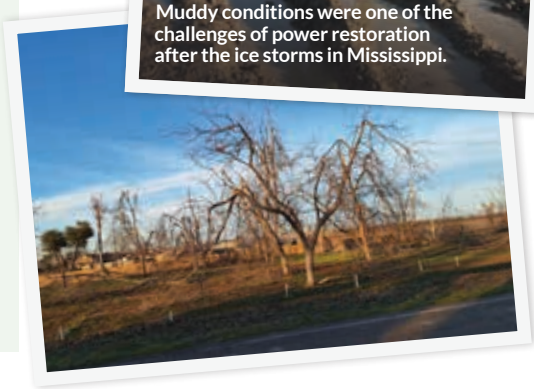
Once the crews arrived at the Mississippi co-op, they quickly began assisting with power restoration. The Iowa linemen made good progress each day and appreciated the Southern hospitality. The tracked equipment was especially helpful as they navigated muddy field conditions to reach utility poles.

What is mutual aid?

Mutual aid is a longstanding system of collaboration in which electric utilities help one another during major, multi-day outages to restore power quickly and safely. When storms and other disasters have hit Iowa, electric cooperatives throughout the state have benefited from mutual aid.

Think of it like neighbors helping neighbors, but on a national scale. If a storm knocks out power in your area and your local crews can't reach everyone fast enough, utility companies from nearby states – or even across the country – may send lineworkers and other utility personnel, trucks and supplies to lend a hand. This support continues until everyone's power is restored.

Muddy conditions were one of the challenges of power restoration after the ice storms in Mississippi.



ENTER TO WIN

SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

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.

PLEASE NOTE:
To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line. **Please include your address and the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.**

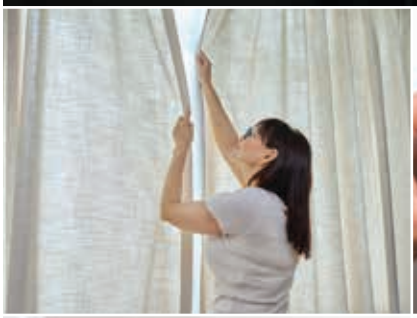
RECEIVE $100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

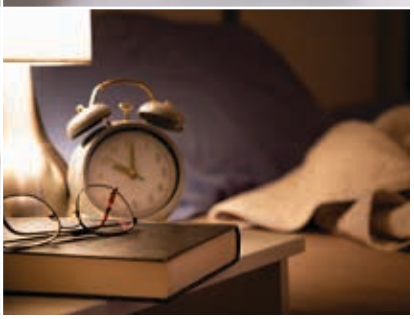
SLEEP BETTER, AND USE LESS ENERGY OVERNIGHT

Small changes to your nighttime routine can make a big difference for both your sleep quality and your energy use. By creating a cooler, darker and more comfortable environment, you'll not only rest more soundly but also reduce unnecessary electricity use overnight.

The good news? You don't need expensive upgrades or major lifestyle changes to see results. A few intentional adjustments before bed can help your body wind down while keeping energy waste to a minimum. Try these tips:

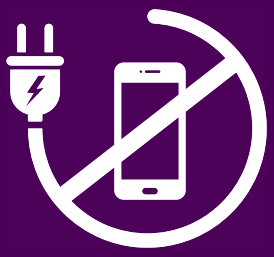
- **Lower the thermostat at night.** Temperatures at 68 degrees and lower support better sleep.
- **Use fans.** Ceiling or box fans improve air circulation and lower the need for air conditioning. In cooler months, use ceiling fans in a clockwise rotation to distribute warm air.
- **Dim the lights.** Dimming the lights after sunset supports natural sleep rhythms and uses less electricity. Warmer-colored light bulbs are also better for supporting sleep.
- **Keep it dark.** A dark, cool bedroom is ideal for better sleep, and it often means less lights, appliances and systems running overnight.
- **Block disruptions out.** Blackout curtains or thick shades keep outdoor light out and help regulate room temperature, keeping bedrooms darker, cooler and more comfortable.





Safety Tip

Never bring your electronics to bed with you. Charging your phone or laptop while it's on or under a pillow or blanket – where airflow is blocked – can cause it to overheat and catch fire. Charge it on a hard, flat surface instead.



SafeElectricity.org

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Reliable and affordable electricity is the cornerstone of America's national security and our economy. As electricity demand skyrockets, we urge policymakers to continue working with electric cooperatives to prioritize grid reliability and pursue smart energy policies that help set our nation on a more stable path."

- Jim Matheson, CEO, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

A NATIONAL VIEW WITH LOCAL ROOTS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Mike Partin
President of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Leslie Kaufman
Executive Vice President and General Manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

In 2025, Mike Partin was elected president of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). He began working for the members of Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative in central Tennessee in 1998, has served as CEO since 2015 and has represented Tennessee on the NRECA board of directors since 2019. NRECA is the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives across the U.S.

During the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) annual meeting in December, Partin sat down with Leslie Kaufman, IAEC executive vice president and general manager, to discuss important energy topics. More than 375 Iowa cooperative leaders and directors were in attendance to engage in the discussion. We are pleased to share a snapshot of the discussion with *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* readers.

Leslie Kaufman: Mike, you serve as both president of NRECA and CEO of your local electric cooperative. Why is it so important for cooperative leaders to be involved at the state, regional and national levels?

Mike Partin: Engagement matters because this industry is changing fast. Whether you're a director or a staff member, you don't come to the table just to hear reports. You come to make a difference. If we think we're on an island as one cooperative, we're doing our members a disservice. The best ideas come from learning what other cooperatives are facing and how they're responding. Electric cooperatives serve nearly 60% of the nation's landmass, and rural areas, including places like Iowa, are growing. To stay ahead, we have to lean into leadership, training and collaboration. That's how we remain drivers of innovation in our communities.

Kaufman: As you travel across the country, what common challenges or trends are you hearing about from electric cooperatives?

Partin: One big issue is data centers. They're moving into rural America, and that creates opportunity but also risk. We need to have reliable energy capacity to serve those loads. A key question is also how to serve that load without shifting costs onto existing members. Those agreements must be structured carefully.

Cybersecurity is another growing concern. A decade ago, we weren't talking about ransomware. Now it's a real threat. On the East Coast, some cooperatives recently went into major storms unable to access their systems and maps because of cyberattacks. That's something no cooperative can afford.

Workforce development is also a top priority. How do we recruit, train and retain good people, especially as experienced workers retire and younger employees come in with different expectations?

Kaufman: From an advocacy standpoint, what are the top priorities for NRECA right now?

Partin: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reform is at the top of the list. The system is broken. Currently, cooperatives can wait five or six years for reimbursement after a major disaster, forcing them to borrow just to stay afloat. That's not sustainable.

We're pushing legislation that would require FEMA to act within 120 days and reimburse interest if delays continue. Of the 435 congressional districts, 433 experienced a disaster declaration in the last decade, so this issue affects everyone, including Iowa. That's why cooperative leaders are actively talking with their elected officials and helping move this forward.

Kaufman: You stepped into the NRECA presidency during a new presidential administration. How does that affect the way NRECA operates in Washington, D.C.?

Partin: One of the biggest challenges is policy whiplash. Our industry, especially generation and transmission cooperatives, makes 60- to 80-year investments, but national energy policy often swings dramatically from one administration to the next. That uncertainty makes planning harder.

What we're seeing now is more recognition that electricity is foundational. Data centers, manufacturing and national defense all depend on reliable, baseload (24/7) power. Energy security is national security. That understanding gives us a chance to push for policies that support an all-of-the-above approach to generation and faster permitting for needed infrastructure.

Kaufman: You've talked about some powerful moments you've experienced in leadership. Is there one that really stands out?

Partin: One that still gives me goosebumps is seeing lights come on for the first time in a village in Guatemala through the electric cooperative international program. Walking up a ridge at night and seeing that village lit up reminds you of why this work through the NRECA International Program matters.

Another moment was being at the White House and seeing one of my linemen standing behind the President of the U.S. No matter your politics, that's a powerful reminder that the people who keep the lights on matter.

Scan the QR code to learn how Iowa's electric cooperatives support international electrification.

Kaufman: Partnerships are critical in Washington. Who are some of the key allies cooperatives work with?

Partin: Depending on the issue, we partner with municipal utilities, investor-owned utilities, farm organizations like Farm Bureau and homebuilders. Strategic alliances help open doors and amplify our voice. For three years running, NRECA has been named the most effective trade association in Washington, D.C., but that effectiveness comes from collaboration. Relationships matter.

Kaufman: From a CEO perspective, what keeps you up at night?

Partin: Safety, without question. We know how to build lines and restore power, but keeping employees safe is the responsibility that weighs heaviest. Am I doing enough? Am I setting the right tone? Am I leading by example?

That concern doesn't change when I put on my national hat. Whether at the local or national level, leadership means making sure people go home safe at the end of the day.

Kaufman: With all the challenges facing the industry, what gives you hope?

Partin: The people. When I attend director trainings or emerging leader programs, I see how committed electric cooperative folks are. They all "signed up" to make a difference.

This is not a stale industry. There's innovation everywhere, from technology to workforce development to global electrification. I truly believe there's never been a more exciting time to be part of America's electric cooperatives.

Electric cooperatives were founded to power possibility, and that mission continues today, from Iowa's rural communities to villages halfway around the world. As Partin reminded attendees, the cooperative model works because it puts people first and because leaders are willing to step up, engage and shape the future together.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

RASPBERRY-CHIPOTLE BARBECUE CHICKEN PIZZA

- 1 thin ready-made pizza crust
- ¼ cup red raspberry preserves or jelly
- ¼ cup hickory smoke flavored barbecue sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ground chipotle chili powder
- 6 ounces chicken, cooked and cubed
- 2-3 tablespoons onion, chopped
- 1½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Place pizza crust on a pizza pan. Mix preserves, barbecue sauce and chili powder. Spread mixture evenly over dough. Top with chicken, onion and cheese. Bake at 425 degrees F for 12-20 minutes, until cheese is melted and pizza crust edges are golden brown. Raspberry preserves can be substituted with Concord grape jelly. *Serves 4, two pieces per person*

Mary Grossman • Carroll
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

SPINACH AND CHICKEN PESTO PIZZA

- 1 ready-to-serve, 12-14-inch pizza crust
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup pesto
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 cups fresh baby spinach leaves, washed
- 1 cup chicken, cooked and diced
- ¼ cup roasted red bell peppers, chopped and drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- hot pepper flakes, to taste

Place pizza crust on an ungreased pizza pan and brush the edges with olive oil. Spoon pesto onto the middle and spread evenly out to the crust. Top with mozzarella, spinach, chicken, red bell peppers, garlic salt and hot pepper flakes. Bake at 425 degrees F for 10-12 minutes, or until crust is golden brown. *Yield: 6 servings*

MacKenzie Rutter • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TOMATO AND FETA BAKED PASTA

- 12 ounces rigatoni pasta, cooked and drained
- 1½ cups ham, chopped
- 4 large plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup feta cheese
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- 1½ teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 cup half and half
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Place cooked pasta in a buttered 9x13-inch dish. Mix ham, tomatoes, cheese and thyme. Spread over pasta, then pour half and half over top. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake at 375 degrees F for 20 minutes. Stir and continue baking 40 minutes longer. *Serves 6*

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

GOAT CHEESE MUSHROOM PASTA

- 1 8-ounce box of your favorite pasta
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ red onion, diced
- 1 package baby bella mushrooms, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 4 ounces plain goat cheese, cubed
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme

Boil noodles until al dente. While boiling, place a pan on medium heat, add olive oil and onion. Cook until translucent, then add mushrooms. As the mushrooms soften, add garlic and sauté for another 30 seconds. Place the goat cheese in the pan and add heavy cream. Add rosemary and thyme. Once goat cheese is combined with the cream to create a smooth sauce, toss drained noodles into the pan and coat. *Serves 3-4*

Monika Olmstead • Huxley
Consumers Energy

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

UPSIDE DOWN PIZZA

- 1½ pounds ground beef, pork or turkey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- optional vegetables: mushrooms, onion or green pepper (chopped)
- pepperoni
- 1 16-ounce jar spaghetti sauce
- 1 cup flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- Parmesan cheese

Brown meat with salt, pepper and optional vegetables. When the meat is cooked, drain fat. Mix the meat with pepperoni and spaghetti sauce. Add mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Mix together flour, eggs, milk and oil into a pizza dough. Sprinkle the mozzarella cheese on meat mixture in baking dish then top with dough. Finally add parmesan cheese. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. *Yield: 12 servings*

Judy Jackson • Hedrick
Access Energy Cooperative

SALMON PASTA

- 1 12- or 16-ounce salmon filet
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ package Gustare Vita tagliatelle (8 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup white wine
- ⅓ cup sundried tomato paste
- 1 12.5-ounce jar alfredo sauce
- fresh basil, optional for garnish

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place salmon on prepared baking sheet. Pat salmon dry with paper towel. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Bake at 425 degrees F for 4-6 minutes per half inch thickness, until 145 degrees F and salmon flakes easily with fork. Meanwhile, cook tagliatelle according to package directions in a large pot of boiling salted water. Drain, reserving ½ cup pasta water. Return pasta to the pot and keep warm. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add butter and sauté onion until translucent. Add garlic and cook about 30 seconds, until fragrant. Pour in wine and simmer until reduced by half. Stir in sundried tomato paste and alfredo sauce. Cook until heated through. Add sauce to cooked pasta and toss until coated. If sauce is too thick, add reserved pasta water until desired consistency. Flake salmon into large pieces and gently stir into pasta. Garnish with fresh basil if desired. *Serves 4*

Pam Dick • Dexter
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CHICKEN ORZO

- 2 chicken breasts
- salt
- black pepper
- paprika
- onion powder
- red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1½ cups orzo pasta
- 1 16-ounce can chicken broth
- spinach leaves, to taste
- splash heavy cream
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan

Cut chicken into large serving size pieces and add seasonings to taste. Sear chicken on both sides in medium skillet, then lower heat and add butter. Cover and continue until cooked through. Remove chicken and brown garlic and onion in the drippings. Add orzo, allow to toast while stirring. Add chicken broth, spinach and heavy cream. Stir slowly on medium heat while distributing all evenly. Add chicken and cook on low until orzo is done and all flavors have permeated throughout. Serve topped with parmesan cheese. *Serves 4*

Marilyn Alfers • Neola
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

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I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream! We're looking for your favorite **ice cream recipes** – anything from homemade blends to desserts with ice cream or tasty toppings. Selected submission will appear in our July issue to celebrate National Ice Cream Month. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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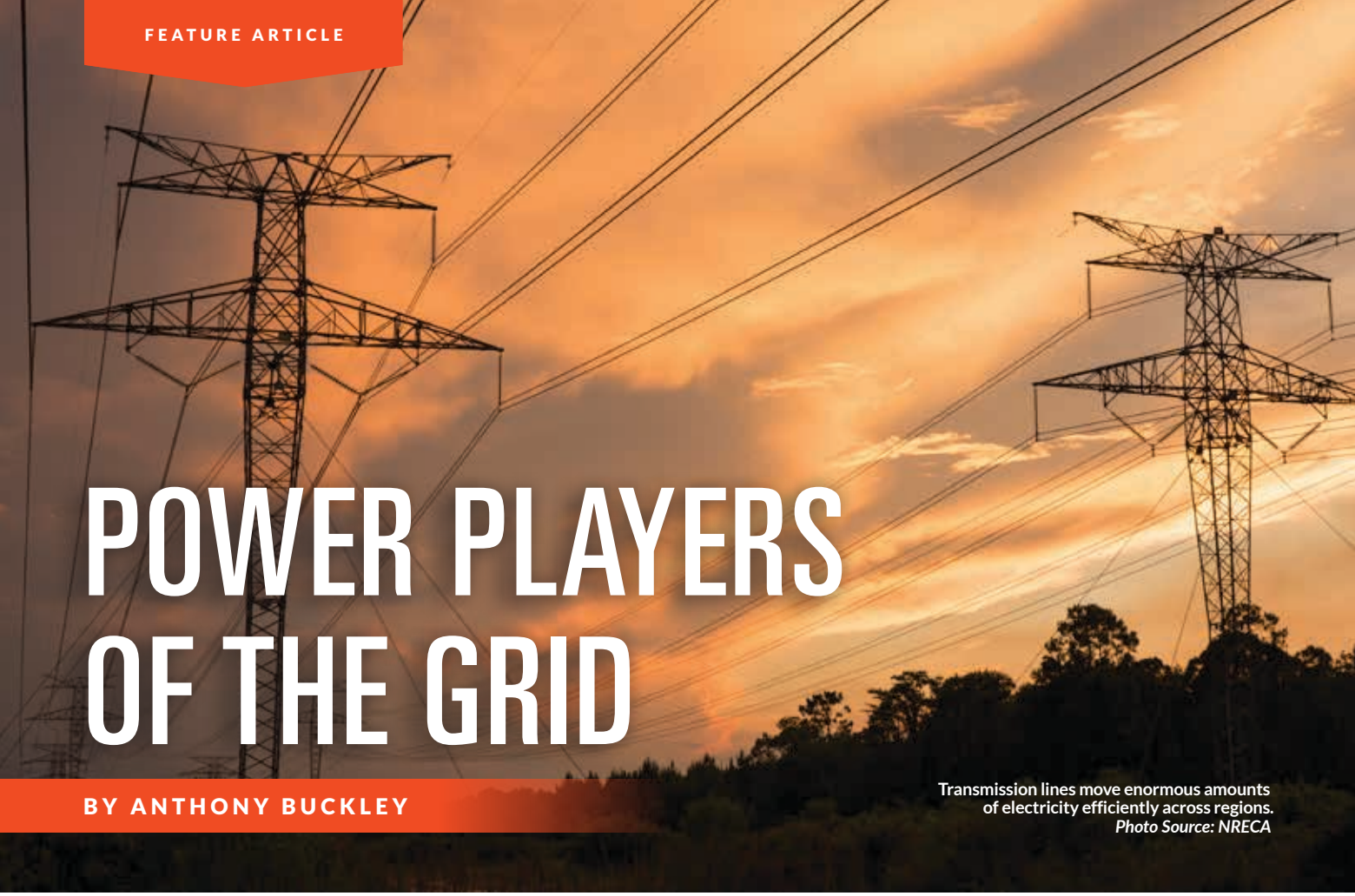
FEATURE ARTICLE



POWER PLAYERS OF THE GRID

BY ANTHONY BUCKLEY

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. *Photo Source: NRECA*

Every time you flip a switch, you're connecting to one of the most complex systems ever built, also known as the North American electric grid. Often called the largest interconnected machine in the world, this network spans the U.S., Canada and parts of Mexico. It includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night.

But how does electricity actually get from a power plant to your home? And where do electric cooperatives fit in? Let's break it down.

The U.S. electric grid has three major components: generators, transmission and distribution. Each plays a critical role in delivering electricity where and when it is needed.

Generators: Making the power

In the U.S., most power plants produce electricity by burning fossil fuels or by harnessing renewable resources like solar, wind and water. To ensure that enough electricity is generated to keep the lights on at an affordable price, two main structures exist.

The first is a "vertically integrated" model, where in some regions, a single utility owns everything from power plants to power lines and delivers electricity directly to consumers.

In other areas, a second model is used. Instead of one company making and delivering power, many companies sell electricity in a competitive market. Utilities buy electricity from these generators and deliver it to consumers like you. In this model, a group called a regional transmission operator (RTO) or independent system operator (ISO) helps keep everything running smoothly. They make sure enough power is available every second of the day. This system is called a wholesale market, and it lets utilities buy extra power when they need it.

Most electric cooperatives don't own large power plants. Instead, they purchase power through long-term contracts, wholesale markets or from their generation and transmission cooperative (G&T), a member-owned utility that serves multiple co-ops in a designated region. G&T cooperatives are owned by distribution co-ops like yours. There are 64 G&T cooperatives across the U.S., and they often own power plants and transmission lines. G&Ts also plan for the future by investing in new generation sources, building infrastructure and integrating renewables, all while staying true to the cooperative model: member-focused, not profit-driven.

Once electricity is generated, it doesn't stay at the power plant. It begins a long journey to reach homes, farms and businesses. Power must travel across regions to where it's needed most, and that's where the transmission system comes in. These high-voltage lines act like energy superhighways, moving electricity efficiently over hundreds of miles before it's stepped down for local distribution and, ultimately, for the devices you use every day.

Transmission: The energy superhighway

Transmission lines move enormous amounts of electricity efficiently across regions. Most distribution co-ops don't own these transmission lines, but they rely on their G&T cooperative to handle this part of the journey. G&Ts make sure power gets from the plant to your local co-op.

However, the electricity carried by transmission lines cannot be used as is because the voltage levels are too high. That's the job of the distribution network, which is the final step that brings power to your lights, appliances and devices.

Distribution: The last mile

The distribution network is the "last mile" segment of the electric grid and delivers generated energy from the transmission network to consumers. The high-voltage power from transmission lines is converted to lower voltages that home appliances, electric vehicles and personal devices can use. This is where your electric cooperative comes in to keep local lines maintained and power flowing to members 24/7.

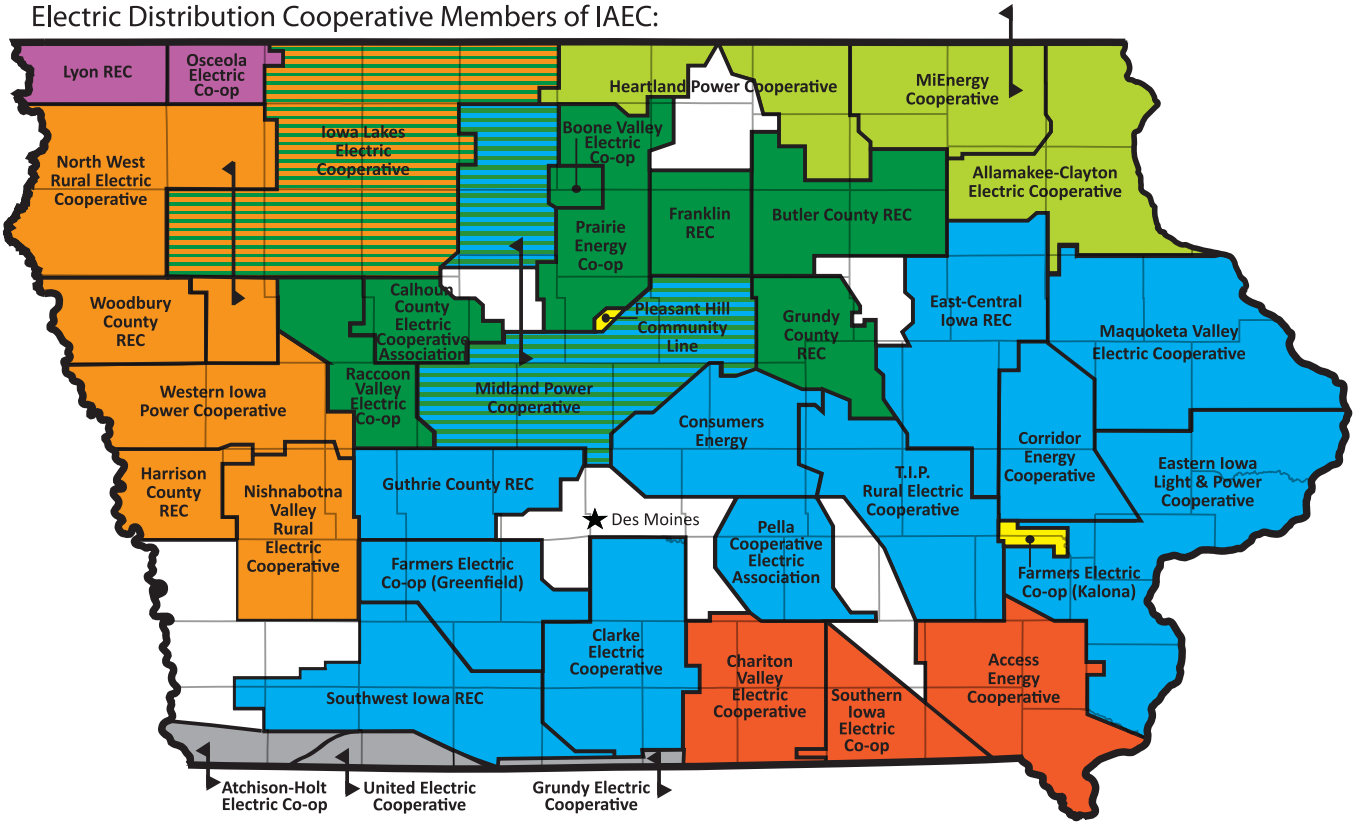
Understanding how power moves from generation to your home helps explain why reliability and affordability depend on teamwork and collaboration between your local co-op, its G&T partners and the broader grid. Together, co-ops are preparing for tomorrow's challenges, so you can count on safe, reliable power for years to come.

Anthony Buckley writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The complex electric grid includes thousands of generators, hundreds of thousands of miles of transmission lines and millions of miles of distribution power lines all working together to keep the lights on day and night. *Photo Source: NRECA*

Your local electric co-op maintains distribution power lines to keep electricity flowing to members 24/7. *Photo Source: Dairyland Power*

Electric Distribution Cooperative Members of IAEC:



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HOW ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES AND INCENTIVES WORK

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

One of the most common questions electric cooperatives receive about energy efficiency rebate programs is, "Why would the company that sells me energy want me to use less of their product?"

Helping consumers save energy is a powerful tool for electric co-ops. Instead of building or paying for more power generation to meet rising needs in the local community, co-ops create programs that help people save energy in their homes and businesses.

Rebates provide financial incentives for people to use less energy in their homes by reducing the costs of efficiency upgrades, such as insulation, new HVAC systems, water heaters or other appliances. This helps your electric cooperative save money by eliminating or delaying the need to buy additional power or build new power generation facilities. Using less energy also helps lighten the load on existing generation and transmission infrastructure that delivers power to your home through your electric cooperative.

How energy efficiency rebates work

Your cooperative and other local organizations may offer efficiency programs with special incentives for home upgrades, such as rebates paid after a project is completed. State and federal tax credits may also allow you to reduce the amount of taxes you owe for completing eligible home purchases or upgrades. Federal energy efficiency tax credits ended Dec. 31, 2025. If you completed any upgrades before that date, you can still apply for credits on your 2025 federal filings.

Energy efficiency programs are funded through a variety of sources, including surcharges on customer utility bills, grants, and state and

federal funding. Some states and regions are required by law to provide energy efficiency programs.

If you are planning to purchase new appliances, equipment or complete an efficiency upgrade, do your research first. Ask your electric cooperative if they offer energy efficiency programs. Also check with your state energy office, which might have additional programs to help. The Inflation Reduction Act allocated federal funds to state-administered programs, including home efficiency rebates and home electrification and appliance rebates, to help residents with retrofits such as windows, insulation, air sealing, HVAC equipment and appliance upgrades.

There are also income-eligible programs available for energy assistance and weatherization, such as the U.S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program, typically administered by a local community action agency.

Steps to apply for rebates and incentives

Once you identify a rebate, tax credit or financing option you're interested in, review the criteria carefully. Criteria can vary by program, so make sure you know the eligibility requirements before making a purchase to avoid missing out on energy-saving opportunities.

Some programs require preapproval before you begin a project. Proof of existing equipment or conditions may be required, such as insulation levels or window types. You may also need to schedule an energy audit conducted by a program representative or photo documentation.

If your project meets the requirements of any available programs, you can proceed with installation. You will likely need to fill out an application and submit a final invoice to prove the project is complete. You may also need to submit pictures or have an inspection from a program representative.

Once approved, your rebate will typically be issued as a bill credit or check, depending on the source.

Participating in a rebate program can help you lower your energy use, save money and improve comfort in your home. It can also help your electric cooperative and the electric grid. Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about available rebates and incentives.

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

WHERE BELOVED CLASSICS MEET NEW DISCOVERIES

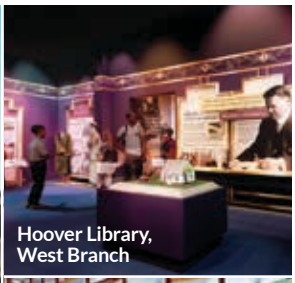
BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

The 2026 Iowa Travel Guide has arrived! Uncover farm-fresh flavors, endless trails, must-visit destinations and countless other surprises waiting to be discovered across the state. Let curiosity lead you somewhere unexpected.

A new year brings fresh reasons to explore the Hawkeye State, and the 2026 Iowa Travel Guide is your go-to source for inspiration. Whether you're planning a weekend escape, a family road trip or a longer stay to truly soak in the scenery, the guide highlights both the timeless experiences Iowans love and the exciting new attractions debuting across the state.

White Water Festival, Charles City

Hitchcock Nature Center, Honey Creek


Hoover Library, West Branch

Field of Dreams, Dyersville

Children's Museum, Sioux City

Timeless Iowa experiences

Iowa's classic charms remain at the heart of every journey. Scenic byways wind through rolling farmland and vibrant small towns, while welcoming main streets invite visitors to shop local, savor comforting Midwest cuisine and meet the people who make each community unique. Miles of trails, tranquil lakes and iconic parks continue to offer space to slow down and reconnect with nature, no matter the season.

From historic communities to beloved outdoor destinations, these familiar experiences form the foundation of what makes Iowa a place travelers return to year after year.

What's new for 2026

What makes 2026 especially exciting is the wave of new experiences opening statewide. Communities have been busy investing in attractions that blend innovation with Iowa's deep-rooted heritage. Travelers can look forward to new museums and interactive exhibits that bring history, science and culture to life in engaging ways. Expanded arts venues and revitalized downtown districts are creating fresh hubs for live performances, galleries and festivals, adding even more energy to Iowa's cultural landscape.

Outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty to celebrate as well. New trail segments, park improvements and outdoor recreation expansions are making it easier than ever to hike, bike, paddle and explore. From enhanced riverfronts to upgraded camping and park amenities, Iowa continues to prioritize outdoor access for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Major League Baseball returns to Iowa in August when the Minnesota Twins and Philadelphia Phillies will meet for an exciting game at the Field of Dreams in Dyersville. The game will take place on a field next to the famed movie site.

Flavor, fun and family adventures

Food lovers will discover new flavors alongside familiar favorites. The 2026 guide highlights a growing number of farm-to-table restaurants, craft breweries, wineries and distilleries that showcase Iowa's agricultural roots in creative ways. New dining concepts and tasting experiences are popping up across the state, giving travelers even more reasons to plan a culinary adventure.

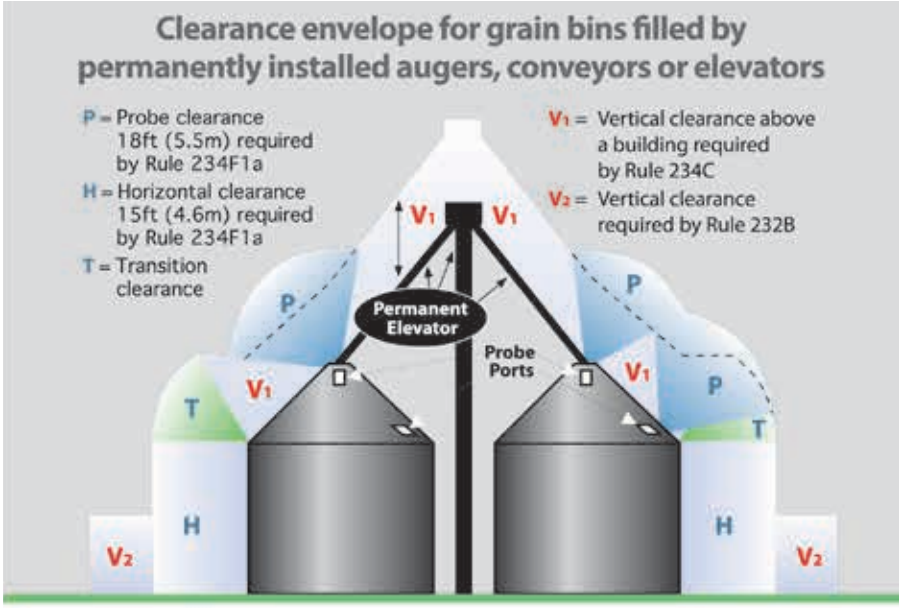
Families and multigenerational travelers will also find fresh attractions designed with everyone in mind. New entertainment venues, expanded zoos, family centers and hands-on experiences ensure there's something to spark curiosity for kids and adults alike. These additions pair seamlessly with Iowa's trusted family favorites, creating trips that balance nostalgia with discovery.

The 2026 Iowa Travel Guide brings all of this together in one resource. Inside, you'll find trip ideas, seasonal highlights, regional itineraries and insider tips to help you plan an unforgettable experience – whether you're revisiting a beloved destination or discovering a corner of the state for the first time.

This year, let Iowa surprise you. From cherished traditions to what's brand new in 2026, adventure is waiting around every corner.

Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.

Scan the QR code to download or order the free 2026 Iowa Travel Guide.



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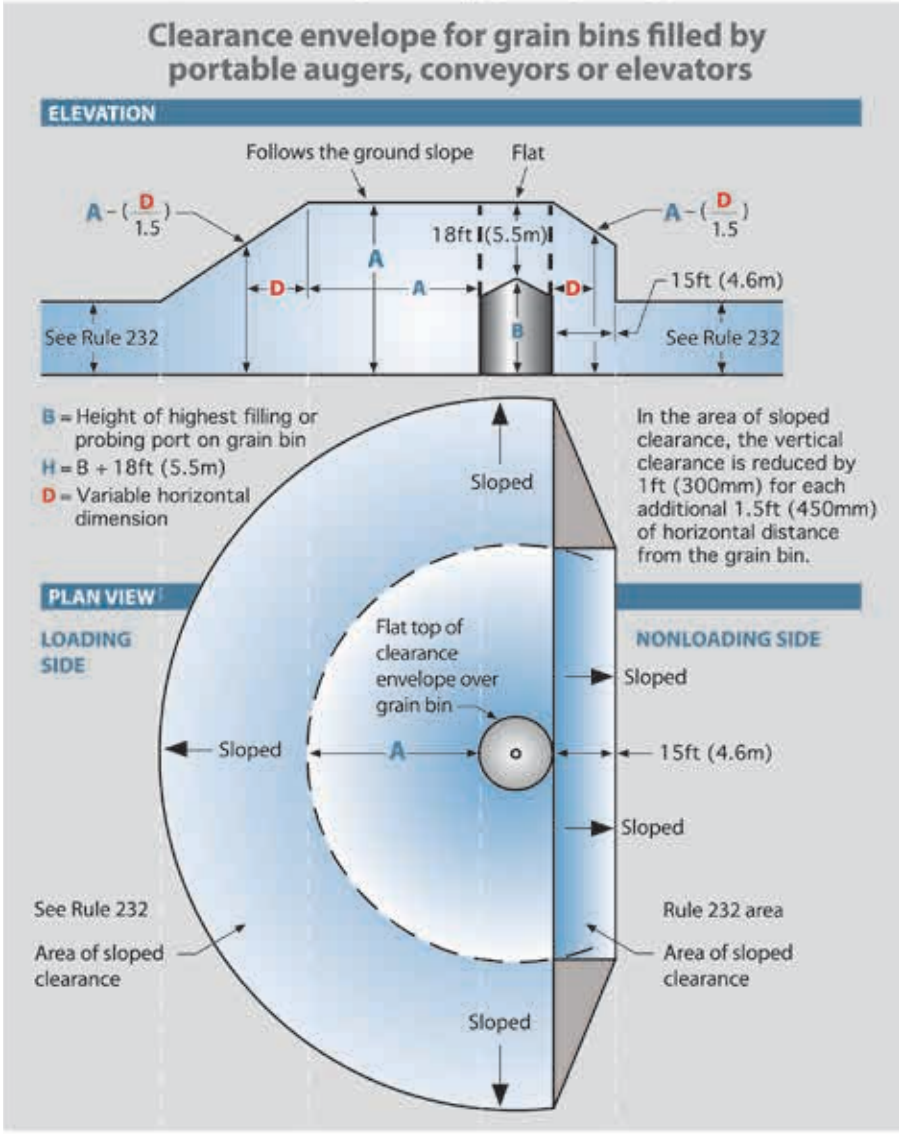

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MAINTAIN PROPER CLEARANCE AROUND GRAIN BINS

The state of Iowa requires specific clearances for electric lines around grain bins, with different standards for those filled by portable and permanent augers, conveyors and elevators. According to the Iowa Electric Safety Code found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 199 – 25.2(3) b: *An electric utility may refuse to provide electric service to any grain bin built near an existing electric line which does not provide the clearances required by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) C2-2023 "National Electrical Safety Code," Rule 234F. This paragraph "b" shall apply only to grain bins loaded by portable augers, conveyors or elevators and built after Sept. 9, 1992, or to grain bins loaded by permanently installed augers, conveyors, or elevator systems installed after Dec. 24, 1997.* The Iowa Utilities Commission has adopted this language.

Your local electric cooperative is required by the Iowa Utilities Commission to provide this annual notice to farmers, farm lenders, grain bin merchants and city and county zoning officials. The drawings on this page show the required clearances, but your co-op's policies may be more restrictive. If you have any questions concerning these regulations – or what needs to be done before you begin placing a new grain bin or moving an existing one – please call your electric co-op for help.

These drawings are provided as part of the Iowa electric cooperatives' annual public information campaign and are based on the 2023 Edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. To view the actual drawings, refer to that publication.

Every care has been taken for the correctness of the contents of these drawings. However, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member cooperatives accept no liability whatsoever for omissions or errors, technical inaccuracies, typographical mistakes or damages of any kind arising from the use of the contents of these drawings, whether textual or graphical.

LUCKIER THAN A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

A Maple Bacon Onion Cheese Dip was served at the meeting (recipe below).

A recent meeting of the Adaza Thursday Club at Carol Hardy's home in Lohrville.

March is a time to celebrate all things Irish, including proverbs like "a good friend is like a four-leaf clover; hard to find and lucky to have."

I've been thinking about the clubs that have thrived in Iowa's small towns and rural neighborhoods, like the Friendly Club my grandma and mom belonged to. While many of those clubs are memories now, I was lucky to be a guest at Carol Hardy's home in Lohrville for the January meeting of the Adaza Thursday Club.

My friend Lou Blanchfield tipped me off that the club is 100 years old. I asked how one becomes a member. "Your mother-in-law invites you!" joked Lou, noting that her mother-in-law Margaret's grandmother was a charter member.

True to the club's name, members still gather on the first Thursday of the month in each other's homes. Their club has even outlived Adaza itself.

Keeping Adaza alive in spirit

Adaza's story began in 1881. Around this time, the railroad put in a stub track southeast of the new Calhoun County town of Lohrville, at a little spot called Cottonwood. When a landowner named Captain Albert Head stepped off the train in 1882, he looked at Cottonwood and said, "Ain't it a daisy?"

That offhand comment transformed Cottonwood into Adaza, which grew to include general stores, a grain elevator, creamery, hotel, blacksmith, bank, lumberyard, post office, school and two churches.

Adaza started fading by the 1920s. The Methodist Episcopal Church disbanded in 1924. Undeterred, a group of ladies met at Ruth Baldridge's home on Aug. 6, 1925, and created the Adaza Thursday Club. They elected club officers, set dues at 25 cents a year, and established roll calls and programs for upcoming meetings.

Through the decades, club members also hosted picnics, wedding showers and baby showers with skits and plenty of homemade food. New members were advised to wash their windows and bleach their porch steps before hosting club. For many years, Irene Rossmanith, followed by Pat Schmitt, dutifully recorded the club's activities, submitting this Adaza news to local newspapers.

The club endured, even as Adaza dwindled to a ghost town. By 1981, dues were $2 a year – "still a bargain for nine or 10 get-togethers with friends and neighbors," noted "The History and Memories of Adaza: 1881-1981."

Still gathering, still connected

While many of those friends and neighbors are gone, the ties that bind are strong. Jane (Hardy) Beschorner, Marty (Guess) Hennesy and her sister Ann (Guess) Gemberling, are second-generation club members. Most members today reside in a 10-mile radius of Adaza.

Dues ($5 a year) are donated to food pantries, the high school after-prom party or flowers for club members who are ill. While members still enjoy refreshments at meetings, gone are the ornate glass snack-set trays that every good hostess used back in the day.

Sometimes this fun bunch schedules field trips to area orchards, wineries or the local care center, where they visit club member Barb Winkelman, who's almost 99.

Other times the ladies get crafty. A few years ago, they had a jewelry-making workshop to transform Swarovski crystals into earrings and necklaces. The crystals were extras from the chandeliers at the renovated Community Memorial Building in Lake City. Club members donated the jewelry to support fundraisers for this historic gem.

Newer members like Marilyn Parker appreciate how the club helps them get to know more people. All the members treasure their deep friendships – gifts that are hard to find and lucky to have. "It's fun, and we like each other," said Jane Beschorner. "Why wouldn't we keep getting together?"

Were there any clubs like this in your neighborhood? Share your stories with me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

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

Scan the QR code for the Maple Bacon Onion Cheese Dip recipe pictured above.

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