

● SEPTEMBER 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



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Shine the Light winners**

**Plug-in solar:
What you need to know**

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Tefna Greiner, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

CORE VALUES DRIVE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AT THE STATEWIDE LEVEL

BY JIM MILLER



Last month, I traveled across the state with the leadership team of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) for our

district meetings with member cooperatives. During our visits, we talked about our foundational values and how they impact everything we do for Iowa's electric cooperatives and the member-consumers they serve.

An organization's mission should define what it does and why it exists. IAEC's mission is to serve, support and advocate for our members by providing expertise and collaborative leadership.

Living our core values

Our core values are the fundamental beliefs and guiding principles that dictate IAEC's culture and standards for employees and board directors:

- **Integrity:** We build relationships based on trust and honesty.
- **Leadership:** We work as a unified team and lead by example.
- **Excellence:** Our work is performed with excellence and empowered through innovation.
- **Service:** We support our members with superior service in a timely manner.

When we talk about these statements and internalize them, it helps IAEC employees and board members make consistent and strategic decisions.

This column is my farewell message, as my term as a board director at Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association expires later this month. I have had the incredible privilege of serving my local cooperative as a director for 18 years, and I

often reflect on a quote that is written on the boardroom wall:

Every decision I make shall be based on what is best for the member-owners of this cooperative.

This quote is why I always prepared diligently for my local and state board meetings so I could make the most informed decisions.

A heartfelt thank you

As my term on the local co-op board comes to an end, so too does my service on the statewide board. I have truly enjoyed serving on the IAEC board for almost five years and as your statewide board president for the past two years.

I commend the outstanding staff at IAEC for their professionalism and expertise. I see IAEC's core values of integrity, leadership, excellence and service at work every time I come to the statewide office.

As I step back from electric cooperative service, I must

acknowledge my fellow statewide board directors. They greeted me with camaraderie and friendship from the very beginning, and our rapport has continued to grow. The IAEC boardroom is centered on mutual respect and trust because we focus on what unites us.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Rae. She has been so supportive of my electric cooperative service for 18 years, and I could not have accomplished this work without her.

While my leadership comes to an end, I am excited for what the future holds for electric cooperatives in Iowa. Please know that you are well represented on the IAEC board by a team of directors and employees who embody statewide core values and cooperative values every day. It has been my honor to serve my fellow co-op members in this capacity.

Jim Miller is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, whose term ends this month.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A 13-QUART AIR FRYER OVEN

Meet your ultimate cooking companion! The Cosori air fryer oven features 11 functions packed into a stainless-steel housing with a 13-quart capacity. This versatile oven is designed to make cooking a breeze with 50 chef-made recipes included to inspire your culinary creations. From baking to roasting, this is one oven to rule them all. The large capacity is perfect for cooking for a crowd or meal-prepping for the week.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Sept. 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 Bose portable speaker from the July issue was **Evelyn Beavers**, a **T.I.P. REC** member-consumer.

LOCAL STUDENTS COULD WIN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ATTENDING WEBINAR SERIES

Iowa's electric cooperatives are proud to continue their long-standing commitment to supporting the next generation of leaders. For decades, they've invested in high school students through scholarships, leadership programs and the electric cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

That commitment continues this fall with the return of the **Iowa Youth Leadership Academy**, a free, two-part webinar series designed for high school students in rural communities. Held throughout October, the virtual program will focus on advocacy, leadership and the cooperative business model – key themes reflecting the mission of electric cooperatives to empower communities.

The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is open to all high school students who live in areas served by electric cooperatives. The following sessions will be hosted via Zoom and last approximately 45 to 60 minutes each:

- **Sunday, Oct. 4, 7 p.m.**
Why Cooperatives Matter and How to Effectively Advocate
- **Sunday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m.**
Being a Leader



STUDENTS:
Are you interested in service, advocacy or leadership?

Attend our webinar series in October for a chance to win a college scholarship! Learn more at IowaYouthTour.com




Students can attend from their own device or participate at their local co-op office, if available.

At the end of each live session, one attendee will be selected at random to win a **\$500 scholarship**; students who attend both sessions will be entered into a bonus drawing for a **\$1,000 college scholarship**. All students who register online at IowaYouthTour.com receive a special box of co-op goodies in the mail.

During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by our

lineup of speakers and presenters. Participants will learn how to advocate for issues that are important to them and build leadership skills from a dynamic speaker.

The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is a great opportunity for students interested in public service, government or leadership. It offers a meaningful way to connect with local cooperatives and explore future career paths in rural Iowa.

To register or learn more, visit IowaYouthTour.com or contact your local electric cooperative.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR HOLIDAY PHOTOS!

It's the end of summer, but we're already planning ahead and looking for a cover image for the December issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Submit your winter or holiday-themed rural Iowa images, and if we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100. The photos must be clear and in high resolution.

ENTER TO WIN!

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.**



USDA TO PROVIDE FEDERAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT IOWA COMMUNITIES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that Iowa will receive \$31.2 million in Rural Development funding, including \$27.5 million to the Floyd County Medical Center. The funds will benefit Iowans in Bremer, Butler, Floyd, Hancock, Linn, Montgomery, Story, Webster and Woodbury counties.

Details on the USDA awards for electric cooperatives include:

Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC): \$1 million to fund a pass-through loan from Butler County REC to United Equipment Accessories Inc. This project will purchase equipment and buy an existing facility to help the industrial

manufacturing company expand business in Waverly. The project is expected to create 18 new jobs.

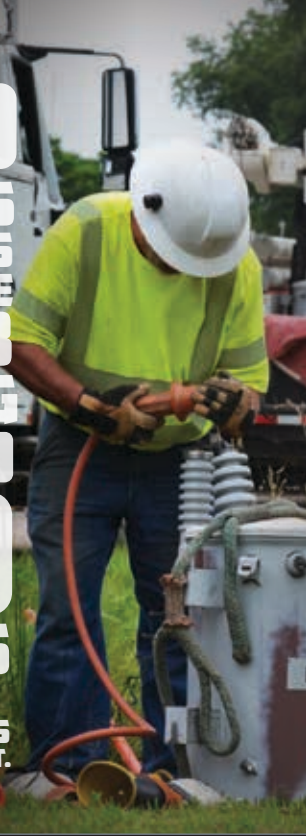
Corn Belt Power Cooperative and Prairie Energy Cooperative: \$1 million and \$300,000, respectively, to help finance the Belmond Community Hospital's expansion in Garner.

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO): \$824,682 to fund a pass-through loan from CIPCO to Mid-States Material Handling & Fabrication Inc. This project will purchase equipment to increase production capacity at the manufacturing facility in Nevada and create eight new jobs.

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative: \$300,000 to replenish



an existing Revolving Loan Fund administered by the cooperative. The initial loan from the funding will partially finance construction costs to expand the fire station and emergency medical services for the city of Lawton.



7,200 VOLT LINES
16 YEARS ON THE JOB
RESTORING POWER TO 500 MEMBERS

BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT.

HIS JOB IS DANGEROUS ENOUGH.
 When you see utility crews at work, slow down and move over. You have the power to protect a life.

MOVE OVER SLOW DOWN

FALL SAFETY STARTS WITH ELECTRICAL AWARENESS

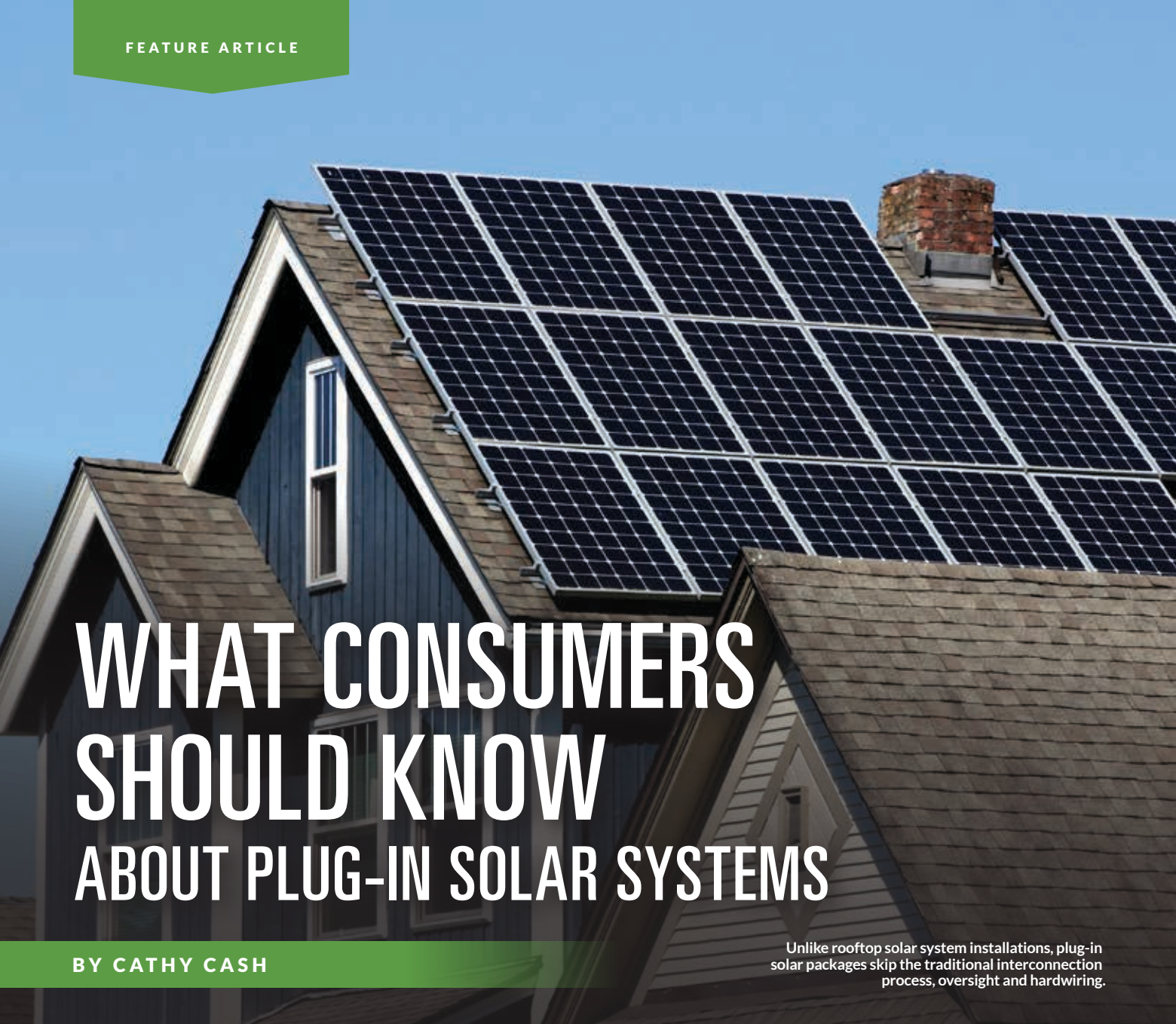
September brings harvest season and cooler weather, making it a busy time for farm work and outdoor projects. Whether you're operating large equipment in the field or tackling projects around your home, a few simple precautions can help keep you and your family safe around electricity.

Call 811 before you dig. Whether you're installing a fence, planting trees or starting another outdoor project, always contact 811 at least a few business days before digging to have underground utility lines marked.

Give power lines plenty of space. Combines, grain augers, tractors and other tall equipment should stay at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines. Lower equipment before moving and always look up before raising it.

Stay alert around overhead lines. As you work outdoors this fall, be aware of power line locations. If equipment contacts a power line, stay inside if possible and call 911 and your electric cooperative immediately.



A large array of solar panels is installed on a residential roof. The panels are dark and rectangular, arranged in a grid pattern. The roof is made of brown shingles. A brick chimney is visible on the right side of the roof. The house has blue siding and a white window frame. The sky is clear and blue.

WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLUG-IN SOLAR SYSTEMS

BY CATHY CASH

Unlike rooftop solar system installations, plug-in solar packages skip the traditional interconnection process, oversight and hardwiring.

It seems easy enough. You set up a solar panel or two and its small generator-type device outside, plug the thing into a wall socket in your house, and before you know it, electricity is flowing and lowering your power bill.

These portable, DIY solar energy systems can generate several hundred watts and are marketed like appliances that only require a regular outlet. But as plug-in solar becomes more popular, consumers should be aware that these products require important safety considerations.

So, what should you know about behind-the-meter, plug-in solar kits?

Safety comes first

First, these systems have the potential to put lives and property at risk. Electric utility leaders note that almost all of these devices lack U.S. safety requirements, such as certification under UL codes or standards. UL has only recently developed a safety certification for plug-in solar systems.

Unlike rooftop solar and electric vehicle charger installations, these plug-and-play packages attempt to bypass existing interconnection protocols, oversight and inspections.

If a home's wiring is not up to snuff to support plug-in solar, the consumer

wouldn't know because they didn't call a licensed electrician to install the equipment or an inspector who could spot that hazard.

That can be dangerous on multiple fronts, leading to overheated wires in a residence, property damage, fire and even worse, serious or deadly electrical shock.

"Plug-in solar introduces real safety risks at the consumer-member level," said Jeffrey Groenewold, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) senior energy solutions manager. "Existing residential wiring standards were not designed for generation through standard outlets,

so plug-in solar increases the potential for fire and shock hazards.”

A charged solar system can backfeed, or send electricity back to the grid, and re-energize power lines without your electric cooperative’s knowledge. This could be fatal for lineworkers.

“The evolving plug-in solar industry must work to ensure these systems are properly managed and controlled to prevent unintended backfeed,” said Groenewold. “This is critical to protecting cooperative lineworkers and keeping them safe when they are out working to restore power.”

Unplugging the system does not eliminate its risk. Contact with the power cord energized by the solar panels can cause devastating injury.

Will Morris, a consultant to NRECA Business and Technology Strategies Group, underscored that these systems are not harmless appliances and should not be treated as such, especially around children.

“When we were growing up, our parents taught us if you would just unplug a blender or an iron or something like that, you’re putting that device in a safe state. With this, it is the complete opposite,” he said. “If somebody has this on their patio plugged into an exterior outlet and they unplug it and drop it in a puddle ... you can get 800 watts going to you. That can be a real bad day.”

Weighing the costs and benefits

Then there’s the affordability factor. Is plug-in solar really a good deal?

The equipment for this behind-the-meter energy resource can cost a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, but its output, even in areas with plenty of sunshine, will shave only an estimated 40 to 80 cents per day off your power bill, according to industry experts.

“I would be very surprised if in our markets plug-in solar makes financial sense because the average cooperative consumer rates are pretty low,” said Morris. “It would take a long time to recover that investment.”

European apartment dwellers who face very high electricity rates have been eagerly buying “balcony solar” for a while and expect to pay off their investment in a couple of years, he said.

In Germany, where rates are particularly high, the plug-and-play packages are designed within the country’s safety mandates and must be registered with the grid operator.

“So, the German utility knows when that device is being utilized and that they have potential for energy to flow back into the grid,” he said.

But in the U.S., states are at various stages of potentially regulating plug-in solar to ensure safety.

“We’re at the Wild West phase of it right now,” Morris said. “You can buy a system and plug it in. It’s like buying a hairdryer, except the hairdryer is UL certified.”

Members are encouraged to contact their electric cooperative for knowledgeable advice on plug-in solar and to inquire about requirements for installing such a device.

“The bottom line is if you’re looking to lower your electric bill with some behind-the-meter device, please let your electric cooperative know,” said Groenewold. “Co-ops have a variety of programs to partner with you to save money and to do it safely.”

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





LEMON CREAM CHICKEN

- 2½ pounds chicken thighs, boneless and skinless
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- parsley, to taste
- paprika, to taste
- creole seasoning, to taste
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup cream
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese

Place chicken in a greased baking dish. Sprinkle liberally with seasonings. Mix butter, lemon juice, garlic and cream. Spread over chicken. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 375 degrees F for 45 minutes, or internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Serves 4

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ELEGANT CHICKEN

- 4 chicken breasts
- 8 bacon slices
- 4 ounces chipped beef
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ teaspoon paprika

Wrap chicken in bacon. Cover bottom of 8x12-inch dish with chipped beef. Place chicken on top. Mix sour cream and soup, then pour over chicken. Sprinkle on paprika. Bake at 275 degrees F for 3 hours. Serves 4

Karen Bruns • Fonda
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

YUM CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 6 chicken breasts
- 6 slices Swiss cheese
- 1 package Stove Top dressing
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½ can water
- ½ can milk

Place chicken in a 9x13-inch pan. Layer cheese on top of chicken. Mix dressing, soup, water and milk. Spread mixture over cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Let sit 5 minutes before serving. Serves 6

Jane Person • Batavia
Access Energy Cooperative

CRANBERRY ORANGE CHICKEN BREAST

- 4-6 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
- 1 cup bread or cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- milk, for dipping
- oil
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- ½ cup cranberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup water

Flatten chicken breasts. Mix crumbs, cheese and garlic salt. Dip chicken in milk, then crumb mixture. Brown in oil, then place in 12x8-inch baking dish. Mix sugar, corn starch, cranberries, orange juice and water. Bring to boil, then pour over chicken. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Serves 4-6

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

STICKY CHICKEN RICE

- 2 cups uncooked rice
- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- olive oil
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- garlic, minced, to taste
- dash of sriracha
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons corn starch or arrowroot powder
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 12-ounce bag frozen green beans or broccoli
- Garnish: avocado, sesame seeds

Wash and drain rice, cook according to package instructions. Meanwhile, cut chicken into strips or chunks. Season with paprika, chili powder, onion powder, garlic powder, oregano, salt and pepper. Cook chicken and seasonings in olive oil. Once chicken is cooked, add soy sauce, honey, rice vinegar, sesame oil, minced garlic, sriracha and ginger. Coat the chicken with sauce mixture. In a small bowl, stir together corn starch or arrowroot powder and water. Stir until the sauce thickens slightly, then add to pan. Add frozen green beans or preferred vegetables. Cover and continue cooking until vegetables are done. Plate the sticky chicken over cooked rice and garnish with avocados and sesame seeds.
Serves 4-6

MacKenzi Harger • Nevada
Consumers Energy

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 small head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 cup ham, finely cubed
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded

Heat butter and oil in pan. Add cauliflower and cook 8-10 minutes, until crisp tender. Add garlic and onion, cook for 1 minute. Stir in flour, then whisk in broth. Bring to a boil and cook until cauliflower, onions and garlic are tender. Cool and then puree in blender. Return to pan and stir in chicken, half and half, ham, mustard, salt and pepper. Heat through. Add cheese and stir until melted.
Serves 6-8

Joyce James • Prescott
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

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



SPICY CHICKEN TAGINE

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pat butter
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1½-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 red chilies, seeded and chopped
- 3 fresh rosemary sprigs
- 1-2 cinnamon sticks
- 8 chicken thighs
- 6 ounces dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons clear honey
- 1 14-ounce can plum tomatoes, with juice
- water, as needed
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- rice or couscous, optional

Heat oil and butter in medium-hot cast iron skillet or iron pot. Add onion, ginger and chilies until soft. Add rosemary sprigs and cinnamon sticks. Add chicken and brown on both sides. Add apricots and honey, then stir in tomatoes with juice. Add water, if needed to cover skillet bottom and apricots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer gently for 35-40 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and basil, stir. Serve over cooked rice or couscous. *Serves 4*

George M. Clifford • Farmington
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

MEATLESS MEALS

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

To ring in the new year, we want to share your favorite wintertime **meatless meals!** From sheet pans and casseroles to soups and savory salads, send us your favorite vegetarian meals for a chance to be featured in our January 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
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322



MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their sixth-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

The judging committee reviewed essays from 83 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Ellen Campbell**, who is recognized for bringing comfort and connection to others through **Stitch & Chatter**; **Bill and Megan Gleeson**, who are recognized for supporting families facing pediatric cancer through the **Rally For Reid Foundation**; and **Belinda Seay**, who is recognized for her compassion and dedication to serving others through **Monroe County Helping Hands**.

These three winners have been awarded a \$3,000 donation to their charity. The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities.

Learn more at
www.IowaShineTheLight.com.



Stitch & Chatter receives a Shine the Light contest donation for Ellen Campbell's (right) volunteer efforts.

STITCHING TOGETHER A STRONGER COMMUNITY

ELLEN CAMPBELL'S VOLUNTEER SPIRIT BRINGS COMFORT AND CONNECTION TO OTHERS

BY SARAH OLTROGGE

For Ellen Campbell of Panora, volunteering has always been about bringing people together to help others. Now, her dedication has earned statewide recognition.

Ellen joined Stitch & Chatter after retiring from Panorama Schools in 2015, seeing it as a way to keep busy and be productive at the same time. What began with borrowed sewing machines has grown into a thriving volunteer group with members from towns as far away as Jefferson that create quilts, pillowcases, doll clothes and other handmade gifts for people throughout the community.

Handmade with care

"Each and every member is a delight to be around," Ellen said. "Without them, none of this could happen. We talk about who should be given a quilt, then invite the community to view them and see who will receive them. Probably the most rewarding part is the delivery of the quilts to so many people."



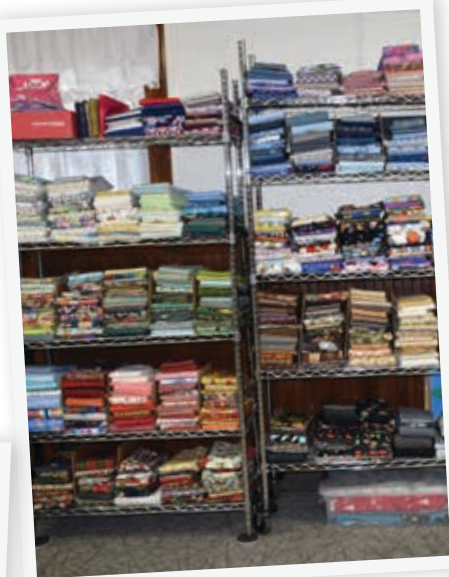
Ellen Campbell (left) shares information with a fellow volunteer.

The group relies on donated fabric and grant funding to support its work, providing handmade items to organizations, including Children's Clothes Closet (Three C's), medical facilities and others in need. She also helps organize donations, write grants and coordinate the group's annual quilt showcase, where community members can see the finished projects before they are distributed.

In her nomination letter, Guthrie County REC member Luann Waldo said Ellen's leadership and commitment made her an easy choice for the nomination.

"Ellen likes to keep busy. She is very good at organizing whatever task is put before her," Luann shared of her longtime friend. "She has a talent of recruiting people to help her, but she never asks anyone to do anything that she won't do herself."

Luann added that the quilts are "made with love for fellow



citizens. It's a gift that shows the recipient someone cares about and for them."

Inspiring others to serve

Ellen hopes the recognition inspires others to get involved in their own communities.

"I would encourage others to find a group in their community they could join and discuss how they could help someone," she said. "Maybe random acts of kindness to a neighbor, business or even family member to bring a smile to their face."

To learn about Stitch & Chatter, visit www.panorafcc.org/stitch-and-chatter.

Sarah Oltrogge is the communications content supervisor for Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

A HEART FOR HELPING OTHERS

BELINDA SEAY'S COMPASSION AND DEDICATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MONROE COUNTY FAMILIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Selfless. Irreplaceable. Angel walking among us.

These are the words nominators used to describe Belinda Seay of Moravia and her volunteer work at Monroe County Helping Hands, located in Albia. Belinda was nominated by three members of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative who work with her at Helping Hands.

Sharon Cunningham, site director of the thrift store and local food pantry, shared, "Belinda has been a wonderful volunteer for us for the last 10 years. She is the clothing supervisor and supervises many other volunteers. She works tirelessly to make sure the clothing donations we receive are sorted and hung for distribution to our shoppers, which are at least 600 every month."

Fellow volunteer Marnie Starr said, "I am not surprised by her 10 years of service as she has also been a nurse for 30 years and a Christian all her life. Compassion is one of the best volunteer traits to find in a person, so this is her wheelhouse. I have personally witnessed unselfish acts of concern from Belinda for the welfare of others. She has a true altruistic spirit."

"Belinda, during these 10 years, volunteers four days a week. She also stops at a store on her way to Albia from Iconium to bring in donated dairy to the food bank. She is dedicated, selfless and goes above and beyond to help others. Her sense of humor and patience help purchasers and the rest of the volunteers to be their best," remarked nominator Pat Merrick.

Helping Hands at work

Monroe County Helping Hands was established in 1985 and currently



Belinda Seay (second from the left) accepts a Shine the Light contest donation for Monroe County Helping Hands. She is pictured with her nominators.

operates out of an older building in Albia that was previously a laundry facility. There is a constant need for maintenance, and the \$3,000 Shine the Light donation will help to keep the facility in good working condition while also stocking the shelves of the food pantry section.

The thrift store is open to the public and operates on donated clothing and household goods from the community. The proceeds from thrift store sales benefit the food pantry, allowing Monroe County Helping Hands to purchase food monthly from the Food Bank of Iowa. The food pantry serves more than 200 people in need each month, and no one who asks for assistance is turned away.

A spirit of service

And what makes Monroe County Helping Hands such a longstanding blessing in the community are volunteers like Belinda. Marnie shared, "Belinda has a genuine concern for people. All people. She is invaluable and her dedication is priceless and irreplaceable."

Belinda has endured some difficult challenges recently, and her faith sustains her. She shared, "My biggest faith is in God. Without his grace and his mercy, I would not be the person I am today."

To learn more, find Monroe County Helping Hands, Inc. on Facebook.

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



Belinda Seay.

See Page 14 for the article on Bill and Megan Gleeson's Rally For Reid Foundation.

UNDERSTANDING EV TRENDS

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Electric vehicles (EVs) have undergone a notable shift over the past year. New policies, changing consumer demand and decisions by automakers are shaping the current EV market and what may come next.

The market adjusts

One major turning point came with the expiration of the \$7,500 federal EV tax credit in September 2025. The effect on new EV sales was immediate. Transaction prices effectively rose across the board and lease deals that previously made EVs more accessible largely disappeared.

Sales figures show two clear trends.

In late 2025, many people rushed to purchase EVs before the tax credit ended. This resulted in a 44% spike in sales. Afterward, EV sales quickly declined. In early 2026, Americans purchased 212,600 EVs, a 28% drop compared to early 2025. The EV market share also fell to 5.8%, down from a high of 7.5%. But that decline might be slowing.

With more leased vehicles being returned and resold, the used EV market is growing, with a reported sales increase of 12% in early 2026. New EV price tags have also dropped more than 12% since demand slowed.

Another trend we're seeing is that automakers are adjusting their focus. Ford is shifting part of its EV battery production to manufacture batteries for other uses, such as data centers and electric utility equipment. In May, the "Ford Energy" group was created to concentrate on these efforts.

General Motors is also making changes, with a sharper focus on self-driving vehicle technologies. While these shifts are a result of slower EV sales, both companies continue to manufacture EVs.

Even with slower sales, new, lower-cost EV models are becoming more available.



Pricing for some new EV models, including the Chevy Bolt, is expected to start under \$30,000. Photo Source: Chevrolet



The 2026 Chevy Equinox EV starts at under \$35,000 and can travel up to 319 miles on a single charge. Photo Source: Chevrolet



One area where EV growth remains strong is commercial and delivery fleets. Amazon is rolling out thousands of electric delivery vehicles manufactured by Rivian, which are now a common sight in many communities. Photo credit: Rivian

The 2026 Chevy Equinox EV starts at under \$35,000 and can travel up to 319 miles on a single charge. Pricing for some newer models, including the Nissan LEAF and the Chevy Bolt, is expected to start under \$30,000. These lower prices might help more drivers consider EV options.

Looking ahead

Outside the U.S., EV sales continue to grow. Around the world, one out of every four new vehicles sold in 2025 was an electric model, and experts expect that number to keep rising.

One area where EV growth remains strong is commercial and delivery fleets. Companies such as Amazon, UPS and FedEx, are adding electric vans and trucks to their daily operations. Amazon is rolling out thousands of electric delivery vehicles manufactured by Rivian, which are now a common sight in many communities. Fleet vehicles are a good fit for electrification because they follow set routes,

return to a central location each day and can charge overnight. This makes costs more predictable and easier to manage. Companies are expected to continue investing in EV fleets to reduce fuel costs and meet long-term goals.

Even with slowed sales, EVs represent a meaningful and growing source of electricity demand. The U.S. Department of Energy projects that in rural areas, home-based Level 1 and Level 2 charging could meet approximately 82% of EV electricity demand by 2030.

While the pace of EV adoption in the U.S. remains uncertain, electric co-ops are well positioned to adapt. By planning ahead and staying flexible, co-ops will continue to provide reliable, affordable power while supporting members as their energy needs evolve.

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

TEACHING KIDS TO SAVE: FROM LIGHT SWITCHES TO LIFELONG HABITS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Teaching your children to build good energy habits saves money on your electric bill today and sets them up for a lifetime of smart energy use. Here's how to get your family started on a household energy-saving adventure.

Safety first

When it comes to electricity, start with safety basics. Secure cords so appliances, lamps or other plugged-in items can't be pulled down. Use outlet covers and safety plugs to keep little hands from getting injured.

As they get older, teach children not to stick things in outlets. When they are old enough to use outlets, let them know they should never unplug something by pulling the cord. When playing outside, educate them to stay away from downed power lines, keep a safe distance from all electrical equipment and avoid the dangers of electricity near water.

Teaching energy habits

Keeping safety in mind, you can teach age-appropriate energy habits.

Turning off fans and lights when you leave a room is always a good habit to instill. Fully powering down TVs, computers and gaming systems reduces energy waste.

Keeping the refrigerator door open is a common energy waster for kiddos and some adults. Show them they can take a quick look inside and scan their options. If they need time to decide what they want, they can close the refrigerator while making up their minds.

Closing your home's doors is another way to keep heated or air-conditioned air inside. I wonder how many kids these days are asked if they were born in a barn or if they would even know what you mean?

Hot water is another area where families can save. In addition to



Reduce energy waste at home by teaching children how to fully power down electronics, such as gaming systems and TVs.



To avoid wasting energy, teach children to quickly look inside the refrigerator for options and then close the door while they decide on a snack.



Building positive energy habits with your children can start with small steps, including turning off lights when leaving a room or installing energy-efficient bulbs.

reducing wasted water, using less hot water helps lower your energy bill. Heating water is typically the second-highest energy use in a home behind heating and air conditioning. Reduce energy use by turning off the water while hand-washing dishes, taking short showers and not overfilling the bathtub.

Gamify your bill

Review the electric bill with older children. Be sure to focus on energy use, which is shown in kilowatt-hours on your bill.

It's also a good opportunity to teach budgeting and household finances. If you save money on the electric bill, you may be able to do something fun with that money instead. Consider

a trip to mini golf, getting ice cream or choosing a longer-term goal to fund a weekend family trip.

Make it a game. Consider a family reward for using less energy than the previous month or the same month of the previous year, or an individual reward for the person who guesses how many kilowatt-hours you used that month. The winner gets to pick the movie for family night.

Exploring energy efficiency and conservation with your children doesn't have to be a chore. Find fun ways to build lifelong energy habits and save energy around your home.

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

MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

RALLY FOR REID FOUNDATION

**BILL AND MEGAN GLEESON
HONOR THEIR SON'S LEGACY
BY HELPING FAMILIES FACING
PEDIATRIC CANCER.**

BY JIM WILLIAMS

Feature continued from Page 11

Bill and Megan Gleeson faced every parent's nightmare when they were told their 2-year-old son had cancer. Their son, Reid, died in 2020 when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer. Megan was nominated for Shine the Light by Kathy Wunderlich, who is a member of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.

Reid was an active and fun-loving boy who had a special love for garbage trucks. He would spend time on the 12th floor of the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital overlooking Kinnick Stadium and would watch Hawkeye football games and participate in the iconic Wave tradition. Reid would also point out all the green and yellow garbage cans around the stadium. He would watch for garbage trucks and identify which companies they belonged to during family car trips.

During a stay at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for treatment, Reid toured two garbage and recycling centers, as well as the McNeilus Companies facility where garbage trucks are made. During his fifth birthday party, the city of Davenport organized a garbage truck parade past his house in his honor.

Turning loss into a legacy

As a legacy to their son, the Gleesons founded the Rally For Reid Foundation

to support other families facing this devastating diagnosis. The Foundation helps provide support for the entire family, allowing families to stay together during the difficult times they are facing.

"We felt a great loss and emptiness after we lost Reid," Megan said. "After we started the Foundation and started to receive messages from the families it benefitted, it helped fill that void and gave us a sense of purpose."

The Foundation supports the Stead Family Children's Hospital and a variety of research efforts dealing with pediatric brain tumors. Its mission is to provide support for families and children affected by pediatric cancer and to raise funds for vital research.

Supporting families when they need it most

The Foundation has funded several programs to assist with travel expenses and ensure families have access to meals at the hospital so they can stay with their child without having to leave or skip meals. It also provides Family Care packages with essential items and comforting treats to help keep family spirits up during treatment at the hospital.

Brady Gleeson (Reid's brother) participates in the Rally For Reid Golf Event in early August.



Reid Gleeson died when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer.

To date, the Foundation has helped more than 300 families, raised nearly \$250,000 and provided care packages to nearly 200 families of children battling cancer.

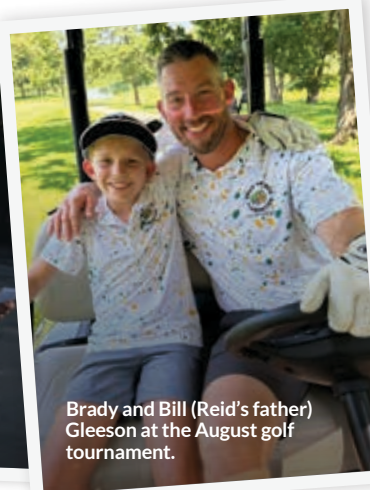
At the hospital, Reid's Story Corner is located in the Janice and Bruce Ellig Children's Library, where Reid loved to spend time reading books and doing puzzles. The activities were a welcome distraction for Reid during his four-to-five-hour chemo treatments.

To learn about the Rally For Reid Foundation, visit www.rallyforreid.org.

Jim Williams is the communications director for Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.



Megan Gleeson, Reid's mother, addresses the golfers at the start of the Rally for Reid Golf Event.



Brady and Bill (Reid's father) Gleeson at the August golf tournament.

NEVER FORGET

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Would you believe about one-third of Americans are too young to have any personal memories of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks? It's also hard to fathom that 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of that horrendous day.

In 2001, I was working from my home near Grimes that Tuesday morning, writing articles for AgWeb.com. My landline phone rang shortly before 9 a.m. My colleague demanded that I turn on the TV.

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I went to the living room and grabbed the remote control. Like millions of other Americans, I watched in disbelief as a second airplane hit the World Trade Center. I couldn't turn away as more updates came in. Something hit the Pentagon! A plane crashed in Pennsylvania! What next? Would one hit Chicago? Omaha?

In the days ahead, we learned that terrorist attacks had left nearly 3,000 people dead in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

A day no one will ever forget

I recently asked my friends and acquaintances about their memories of 9/11.

"I was working in the Sac County courthouse," said JoAnn Ellerbrock of Lytton. "I heard the breaking news on the radio when the first plane hit. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Our son was in college. I remember calling to check on him. It was kind of like when I was in grade school, and our superintendent told us President Kennedy had been shot."

Jon Hollatz, a Garner-area farmer, was hauling old-crop corn to town. "The news came across the radio tuned to KWMT 540 AM in the '69 Ford straight truck. My grandpa and I turned on the TV during the lunch hour. That day reminded him of Pearl Harbor in 1941."

Katie Daniel, whose family farms in Carroll County, was eating breakfast when the morning news was interrupted. "It sounded like an accident involving one of the World Trade Center towers. Within minutes, the second plane came, and terrorism was mentioned. I was in disbelief the rest of the day and was praying through it all."

Sac City-area farmer Gary Langbein was headed to the Clay County Fair when he heard the news on the radio. "We found out it was not an accident. A lot of people at the fair were watching all the TVs for sale at the vendors' booths. I remember some people were worried that the fair might get hit."

For Lake City-area farmer Barb Richardson and her husband, Eric, Sept. 11 started as an ideal day to chop corn silage. "The weather was so perfect. Not too hot, and the sky was a bright blue with the prettiest puffy clouds. When the first plane hit, I heard the news over KWMT.



We only had AM radios in those straight trucks. It sounded like a tragic accident. And then the next plane hit the towers, and the third into the Pentagon. My mother-in-law videotaped the news broadcasts, so we could watch them later."

Melanie (Hjelm) Bloom, the ag teacher and FFA advisor at Sioux Rapids High School, was a senior at Iowa State University. "Some friends met me after class and filled me in. I remember how quiet the campus was, maybe an hour after the attacks happened. The phone lines were so busy it was hard to get a call home."

Remembering why it still matters

What a different world that was.

Today, a quarter century later, we must never forget the tragic day that changed America. We must continue to share our memories so those born after 9/11 learn its significance and enduring legacy.

What are your memories of 9/11? Email 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.

Visit our website at www.ieclmagazine.com

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