

● JUNE 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Your blueprint for an  
energy-efficient new home**

**"Shine the Light" on  
a community volunteer**

**Camping recipes**

**Win a Blackstone camping griddle ► See Page 3**



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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Nate Fluit, a Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!

# TAKING OUR MESSAGE OF POWER RELIABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ETHAN HOHENADEL



Electric cooperatives exist to improve quality of life for our member-consumers, plain and simple. A big part of our success over

the decades has been our ability to advocate for rural Iowa priorities on state and federal levels.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), we organize legislative fly-ins to Washington, D.C., each year so electric cooperative leaders can talk face-to-face with our elected legislators about timely issues and concerns. We have built a strong reputation for effective grassroots advocacy, and these fly-ins help ensure that Iowa electric co-op employees and directors can speak directly to policymakers about how federal legislation impacts our member-consumers and communities on the local level.

In late April, IAEC coordinated a group of nearly 30 advocates who were able to meet with all six members of the Iowa congressional delegation, including Sen. Chuck Grassley, Sen. Joni Ernst, Rep. Randy Feenstra, Rep. Ashley Hinson, Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks and Rep. Zach Nunn. Our discussions during the individual meetings centered on these issues:

- Requesting continued funding of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan program. Electric co-ops repay these loans with interest as they build a more resilient grid.
- Asking our legislators to oppose cuts to USDA and U.S. Department of Energy infrastructure grant programs as electric co-ops work to deploy new energy technologies, build a more resilient grid and defend against cyber threats.
- Imploring legislators to support Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery programs and mitigation programs that are essential for electric co-ops as they restore power and rebuild the electric system following major storm events in Iowa.
- Asking legislators to support and pass additional permitting reform legislation, so we can keep electricity reliable and affordable for the member-consumers we serve.
- Asking our legislators to optimally fund the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. Over the decades, Iowa's electric cooperatives have served as resourceful intermediaries for these grants and loans, which boost rural economies and create or retain local jobs.

We are grateful to all members of the Iowa congressional delegation and their staff for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with us in their D.C. offices. We were able to share local stories of how federal programs help keep power affordable and reliable for the members we serve, and our group also provided specific examples of rural development success.

It takes a lot of effort to organize these meetings each year, but IAEC's policy and advocacy team believes in the adage that if you're not at the table, you could find yourself on the menu. We are proud to carry on our statewide legacy of advocating for Iowa's member-consumers at the legislative table.

*Ethan Hohenadel is the director of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A BLACKSTONE CAMPING GRIDDLE!

Satisfy your hunger for amazing food with this Blackstone 22-inch Adventure Ready propane griddle. This Blackstone also comes with a matching hard cover to help keep your griddle clean between uses.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than June 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 Cuisinart® electric skillet from the April issue was **Abby Schulz**, a **Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



**ENTER ONLINE BY JUNE 30!**

# SUMMER SAFETY FOR KIDS

Summer weather means more outdoor playtime for kids. Make sure children understand and can spot hazards in order to play safely:

- Fly kites in a large open area like a field and only in good weather. Check for overhead power lines before launching kites to keep them safely away.
- Never climb trees near power lines. Even if branches aren't touching the lines, the weight of a climber could change that. Choose another tree if lines are close by.
- Check the location of electric lines connected to your home, especially if a new deck or home addition makes them closer to reach. Keep long tools stored and secure.
- Call your electric cooperative if there are questions about safe clearance.
- Make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to help prevent electric shock.
- Help kids understand the green metal boxes are not platforms or toys. They contain electrical equipment that connects to underground lines.
- When thunder roars, go indoors! Move inside when a storm threatens.



# PREVENTING COSTLY COPPER THEFT

Copper thefts are frequently making the news across the country, and in many areas, they are reaching epidemic proportions. As the copper market fluctuates, so does the theft activity.

In California, thieves shut down numerous websites operated by state agencies when they ripped copper wire from a mile-long stretch of highway. In Illinois, a man was electrocuted as he attempted to steal copper wire from power equipment. In Washington, copper thefts near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport disabled the approach lighting for one of the airport's runways.

Copper is beneficial. It's flexible and conducts electricity well. It's a staple for utilities and is used to make nearly every type of electronic device. Copper's nontoxic nature and corrosion resistance also make it useful in plumbing.

## A risk to public safety

According to an FBI report, copper thieves threaten critical infrastructure by targeting electrical substations, cell towers, telephone lines, railroads, water wells, construction sites and vacant homes for lucrative profits.

Copper theft from these targets disrupts the flow of electricity,

telecommunications, transportation, water supply, heating, and security and emergency services. It also presents a risk to both public safety and national security.

These crimes can result in death, with regular reports of thieves being electrocuted while removing wire from utility poles or substations. It also threatens the lives of utility workers by disconnecting critical safety devices.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that metal theft costs U.S. businesses around \$1 billion annually. Some states and cities have taken measures to combat metal theft, such as requiring scrap yards to check the identification of any individual who sells them scrap metal, note the license plate of the vehicle used to transport the metal, maintain the information on file, pay the seller with a check instead of cash, or retain the scrap metal for a designated amount of time to allow law enforcement an opportunity to identify stolen materials before it is recycled.

## Preventing copper theft

Laws have been toughened over the past 20 years, and now all 50 states have statutes in place to reduce copper theft. You can also help. If you see something suspicious, call 911.

**YOU CAN HELP  
PREVENT  
COPPER  
THEFT!**

If you see suspicious activities, please call. Together, we can cut down on copper theft and other crimes that threaten public safety!

**CRIME  
STOPPERS**  
800-452-1111



# IOWA CO-OP LEADERS MEET WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Nearly 30 representatives from Iowa's electric cooperatives traveled to Washington, D.C., in late April to take part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) annual Legislative Conference. They joined more than 2,000 co-op leaders from across the country to hear updates on key legislative priorities and advocate for policies that support reliable, affordable electricity. Bipartisan support was emphasized during the event, with speakers including Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa) highlighting the importance of cooperative partnerships in shaping effective energy policy.

Following the conference, the Iowa delegation met with all six members of the state's Congressional Delegation to discuss critical issues such as fully funding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDLG) program and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan program. They also urged lawmakers to oppose cuts to USDA, U.S. Department of Energy and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs that



Iowa electric cooperative advocates met with Sen. Joni Ernst (pictured, third from left).



The Iowa group also met with Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (pictured, bottom left).



strengthen grid resilience, and to support permitting reform that enables timely infrastructure improvements. Face-to-face meetings allowed local co-op leaders to share real-world examples of how federal support – such as REDLG or FEMA disaster

mitigation funds – directly benefits rural Iowans. The group expressed appreciation to Iowa's elected officials for taking time to listen and support cooperative priorities.

[Read more on Page 3 of this issue.](#)

## 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.

To be considered, email photos to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com) with "Cover Submission" in the subject line. Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



**RECEIVE \$100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO**

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

**IOWA'S ELECTRIC  
CO-OPS MAINTAIN  
ENOUGH POWER LINES**



**TO WRAP AROUND THE EQUATOR  
2.5 TIMES.**





# YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT NEW HOME

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Prioritizing energy efficiency when building a new home can create future savings and make living more comfortable. It might cost a little more upfront, but it will pay off in the long run.

Let's explore two approaches: Following an energy efficiency certification plan or adding energy-efficient designs and equipment to your construction project.

There are several efficiency certifications available for new-construction homes that may qualify for discounted homeowner's insurance, tax credits and other incentives.

## Boosting savings of efficiency certifications

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification ensures the home uses less energy while prioritizing sustainable resources and healthy indoor air quality. LEED-certified homes use 20% to 30% less energy than the average home – with some homes saving up to 60% – and can cost the same as non-LEED homes with proper planning, according to the U.S. Green Building Council.

Passive House Certification requires the home to be so efficient it needs little to no heating and

cooling equipment while remaining comfortable for its occupants. To achieve up to 90% less energy use than the average home, the certification focuses on maximizing the efficiency of the building envelope – all components that separate the indoors from the outdoors – including proper insulation levels, air sealing and high-efficiency windows.

ENERGY STAR® NextGen Certification for New Homes recognizes houses that are 20% more efficient than the average home and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% to 80%.



Although various certifications are available, you don't have to follow a set guide.

### Incorporating efficiency principles

In addition to integrating a certification into your home, consider adding these energy efficiency principles to your new home build.

■ **Advanced framing.** Advanced framing techniques maximize the amount of insulated area and save on material costs in wood-framed homes. This technique can save up to \$500 for a 1,200-square-foot home and \$1,000 for a 2,400-square-foot home on material costs, between 3% to 5% on labor costs and up to 5% on annual heating and cooling costs, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Choose a contractor who is familiar with these techniques, and check with your local building officials to ensure compliance with local codes.

■ **Orientation to the sun.** The importance of a home's orientation is often overlooked. According to the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, homes oriented to the sun's path use less energy for heating and cooling to reduce energy bills and improve comfort.

■ **Attic insulation.** If you are building or buying a new home that doesn't allow options for orientation or framing, you might be able to request higher insulation levels in the attic. Increasing the insulation levels likely won't cost much more for materials and labor, but it can help you use less energy and save money in the long run.

■ **Heating and cooling equipment.** By using energy modeling tools that calculate the home's heating and cooling needs, equipment can be purchased in the correct size. Investing in a more efficient building envelope that is well-insulated and air-sealed can reduce the home's heating and cooling load, making it possible to have a smaller, less expensive heating and cooling system. This saves money on equipment costs and lowers energy use.

Optimizing the efficiency of a new home requires a whole-house approach. Analyze all systems and how they work together to ensure maximum efficiency for a safe and comfortable home.

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



Properly insulating while building a home can reduce the expense of your heating and cooling equipment and lead to long-term energy savings.



Following an energy efficiency certification plan gives you step-by-step resources to ensure your home maximizes comfort and savings.



Consider framing techniques, insulation levels, and heating and cooling equipment to maximize your new home's energy efficiency.

## EFFICIENCY ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR NEW HOME PLAN

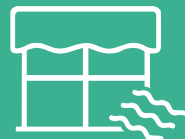
A few thoughtful additions to your building plans can make a big difference in how efficiently – and comfortably – you'll live for years to come.



### Seal it tight.

Thorough air sealing around doors, windows and ductwork prevents drafts

and reduces energy loss. Proper air sealing can lead to savings on heating and cooling costs and improve indoor air quality.



### Choose the right windows.

Select ENERGY STAR®-certified windows with a low U-factor

and the appropriate solar heat gain coefficient for Iowa. This helps enhance insulation and can lower energy bills.



### Plan smart lighting.

Use LED lighting throughout the home, and install fixtures with occupancy sensors or smart switches. These strategies

can reduce lighting energy consumption by 10% to 90%.



### Select efficient appliances.

Choose ENERGY STAR-rated appliances, such as refrigerators, dishwashers

and washing machines, to decrease energy use by 10% to 50% and reduce utility costs.



### Add a programmable thermostat.

Installing a programmable or smart thermostat can save up to 10% annually

on heating and cooling expenses by adjusting temperatures when you're asleep or away.



## BREAKFAST HASH

- 1 16-ounce package bacon, chopped
- 1 20-ounce package hash browns
- 16 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 2-3 red and green peppers, chopped
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 3-4 eggs

Cook chopped bacon in cast iron skillet over campfire or stove on high heat. When cooked, drain some grease, if desired, then add hash browns. Continue cooking, adding cheese and peppers. Stir occasionally until hash browns are almost ready and cheese is melted. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add eggs and stir, cooking eggs until set. Serves 3-4

Ben Sinclair • Brooklyn  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## HAMBURGER MEAL IN A PACKET

- 1 large ground beef patty
- 1 slice onion
- ¼ cup carrots, cut small
- ½ cup potatoes, cut small
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- 1 teaspoon water

Put beef patty on a large sheet of aluminum foil. Top with onion, carrots and potatoes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add margarine and water. Close packet and grill or bake at 350 degrees F for 50 minutes. Serves 1

Pat Lynch • New Hampton  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

## HICKORY SMOKED BAKED BEANS

- 1 pound hamburger
- 1 pound bacon
- 1 32-ounce can pork and beans
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 3 tablespoons liquid smoke

Brown hamburger and fry bacon separately. In a large bowl, combine both beans, hamburger and bacon and mix well. Add remaining ingredients and cook 6-8 hours in slow cooker.

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## SAUSAGE AND PEPPERS FOIL PACKS

- 8 Italian sausage links
- 4 bell peppers, thinly sliced
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- fresh parsley, chopped

Heat grill to high. Grill sausages 3 minutes per side, until charred. Divide sausage between four sheets of foil. Top with peppers and onions. Drizzle each with olive oil, then season with salt and pepper. Fold foil to close into packets and grill for 13-15 minutes, until peppers and onions are tender and sausage is cooked. Garnish with parsley. Serves 4

Marta Smigowska • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy



## CAMPERS' DELIGHT

- 2 envelopes instant chicken and noodles soup mix
- 5 cups water or chicken broth
- 1 can chicken
- 2 cups Bisquick mix
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Mix the chicken and noodle soup mix with water or broth until dissolved. Add the canned chicken and bring soup mixture to a rolling boil in a large camping pan, 6 quarts or larger. Meanwhile, mix the Bisquick with milk and vegetable oil following the biscuit recipe. Drop the dough on top of the soup by spoonful. Lower the temperature, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Mark Smith • Osceola  
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## CRESCENT ROLL CAMPFIRE TREATS

- 1 package crescent rolls
- butter
- filling options: pudding, pie filling, whipped topping, chocolate, peanut butter, etc.

Butter the end of a dowel rod. Press a crescent roll around the buttered end, sealing any holes by pressing the dough together. Roast over the campfire until golden brown and the dough slides off the dowel rod easily. Fill with your choice of filling. Be creative!

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## BASQUE REGION POTATOES

- $\frac{1}{2}$  pound bacon, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 12-ounce package Little Sizzlers link sausages, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 8-10 medium size potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2 12-ounce cans/bottles beer
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Heat a cast iron Dutch oven over campfire. Add bacon, sausages and onion. Fry until cooked through. Stir in the potatoes and peppers. Add one can of beer and cover. Stir often and add additional beer as needed. Serve when potatoes are tender. Salt and pepper as desired. Serves 6-8

Deb Foster • Greene  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

## BEST BURGERS

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 pound ground beef
- condiments
- buns

Mix all ingredients together and form into four patties. Cook on grill or stove top. Serve with condiments and buns. Serves 4

Debra Bartholomew • Ollie  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## CAMPFIRE DUTCH OVEN SCRAMBLE

- 1 pound ground breakfast sausage
- 1 dozen eggs
- 3-4 potatoes, cubed
- 1 8-ounce package shredded cheddar cheese
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Cook sausage in the bottom of an open Dutch oven over a fire. No need to drain the grease. Meanwhile, beat eggs in a bowl. Add potatoes on top of sausage and pour eggs on top. Cover with cheese. Place lid on Dutch oven, cover with coals and bake for 25-45 minutes, depending on the heat. Check the doneness of the eggs after 25 minutes and cook longer if needed. Potatoes can be substituted with sweet potatoes or one bag of shredded hash browns. Serves 8

Tefna Greiner • Packwood  
Access Energy Cooperative

## CAMPING BISCUITS AND GRAVY

- 1 pound bulk breakfast sausage
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon butter
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 8 premade biscuits

Crumble sausage and cook in frying pan on stove or campfire. Add flour, stir and cook for 2 minutes. Add milk, stirring constantly. Bring just to a boil, then lower to medium heat and continue to stir until desired thickness. When ready to serve, add butter and thoroughly stir into gravy. Season with salt and pepper if needed. Split biscuits and spoon hot gravy on top. Serves 8

Richard Foreman • Birmingham  
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

## HARVEST SEASON FAVORITES

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

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

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# POWERING ON: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MAJOR RESTORATION EFFORT

BY ANGELA CATTON

When Winter Storm Nyla's ice, snow and gusty winds toppled 11 miles of transmission lines and rendered 20 substations inoperable on March 19, the staff at Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) knew they were facing one of their most significant challenges in recent history.

NIPCO – a generation and transmission cooperative – supplies wholesale electric power to seven distribution cooperatives covering 6,500 square miles in western Iowa. These distribution cooperatives supply retail power to more than 30,000 member-consumers.

“We started getting reports of damage Wednesday morning,” explains Matt Washburn, NIPCO executive vice president and general manager. “By noon, we realized this wouldn't be a typical outage response.”

The storm wreaked havoc across Crawford, Harrison, Monona, Shelby and Woodbury counties, with Harrison and western Monona counties bearing the brunt of the damage. Thousands of member-consumers served by NIPCO member cooperatives faced outages lasting up to 84 hours, including those in Onawa and surrounding areas.

The restoration effort would require strategic and well-timed behind-the-

scenes coordination across multiple departments at NIPCO and tapping external partners. While NIPCO routinely updates and practices its documented emergency response plan for widespread damage and prolonged outages, carrying it out in a real-world situation felt both familiar and unnervingly unpredictable.

## **Glimmers of hope in the darkness**

As soon as the weather cleared, NIPCO crews began assessing the damage. The cooperative contracted with a local pilot to get aerial views of damaged lines in harder-to-access areas. Washburn immediately recognized the co-op would need extensive support.

“In a situation like this, you quickly realize the value of the cooperative model,” Washburn explains. “A few phone calls set in motion a cascade of support that would have been impossible to coordinate without our existing relationships.”

Support arrived from East River Electric Power Cooperative (Madison, South Dakota) with eight crew members and Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Humboldt) with 15 crew members. Contractors from Watts Electric were redirected from routine upgrade work to restoration efforts, bringing the total to 43 transmission lineworkers. Each team provided specialized equipment to

navigate difficult conditions like thick mud from melting snow and ice.

Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO), based in Cedar Rapids, and L&O Power Cooperative, based in Rock Rapids, offered access to their surplus replacement poles, conductors and specialized equipment inventories, helping NIPCO overcome supply challenges.

## **Spotlighting communications efforts**

NIPCO's communications team informed member cooperatives and the public through news releases, social media and a storm update page on their website.

At the end of the first day, there were a lot of end-users still in the dark, both literally and figuratively. The communications team asked Washburn if he would livestream a message via NIPCO's Facebook page. It was raw, unedited and authentic.

Within hours, Washburn's video update was viewed nearly 3,000 times; by the next morning, that number had more than doubled.

Washburn became the face of the restoration effort, recording twice-daily video updates from the field shared across social media, with some updates garnering almost 25,000 views.



Seeing the work being done and showing that getting the power back on was personal to the entire team working on the restoration built a strong coalition of support from those without power. The team's commitment to keeping crews safe was on display, and the videos gave member-consumers information, hope and heroes to root for throughout the storm's aftermath.

### Support from state partners

By the second day, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) contacted state emergency management officials to request a disaster declaration.

"The response from the state was immediate," notes Scott Meinecke, IAEC director of safety and loss control. "Gov. Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation on March 20 for five of the heaviest-hit Iowa counties that gave us access to additional resources and established a clear channel for ongoing state support."

The proclamation temporarily suspended regulatory provisions related to hours of service for disaster repair crews and transportation requirements for disaster repairs.

### Let there be light

NIPCO's transmission network was designed with multiple pathways to

deliver power, allowing operators to reroute electricity around damaged sections. However, NIPCO's Vice President of Engineering and Operations Jayme Huber explains, "Winter Storm Nyla brought down three transmission lines that support the looped system, rendering the system serving western Monona County and Harrison County inoperable."

By Saturday evening, crews had repaired the transmission mainlines, restoring power to several substations by redirecting electricity through intact portions of the system while repairs continued. This redundant design feature allowed NIPCO to announce system functionality at 9:10 p.m. on Saturday, March 22, less than four days after the monumental storm.

### Power and gratitude

At its April 29 meeting, NIPCO's board of directors unanimously passed a resolution of appreciation for all who contributed to the restoration.

"These aren't just workers; they're neighbors helping neighbors," says NIPCO Board President Louis Reed, who also serves on Western Iowa Power Cooperative's board. "Some of these folks put cooperative members before their own families. That deserves more than just a thank you."

As NIPCO completed final repairs in early April, staff began documenting lessons learned to improve future emergency response.

"Every crisis teaches you something," reflects Washburn. "This experience truly reinforced that the cooperative difference isn't just marketing language – it's a tangible advantage when facing challenges of this magnitude."

For the communities served by NIPCO and their member distribution cooperatives, that advantage meant the difference between days and potentially weeks without power. As one Onawa resident commented on social media: "There are not enough THANK YOUS to say for all you are doing ... After seeing the downed lines between Turin and Onawa today, it could have been so much worse. Situations like these only make us stronger. Go Team Power!"

That spirit – embodied in NIPCO's "Power On" message throughout the crisis – represents both the literal restoration of electricity and the enduring resilience of rural Iowa communities coming together to support the cooperative model that serves them.

*Angela Catton is the vice president of communications and development for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative.*



Heavy coatings of ice on transmission lines paired with high winds produced galloping lines that brought down scores of transmission structures in the NIPCO system.



Melting snow and ice created muddy conditions that trapped trucks and slowed restoration efforts.

Line crews took a quick break for lunch, served buffet-style off a truck bed.



Transmission structures were snapped in half and lying on the ground in west Monona County.



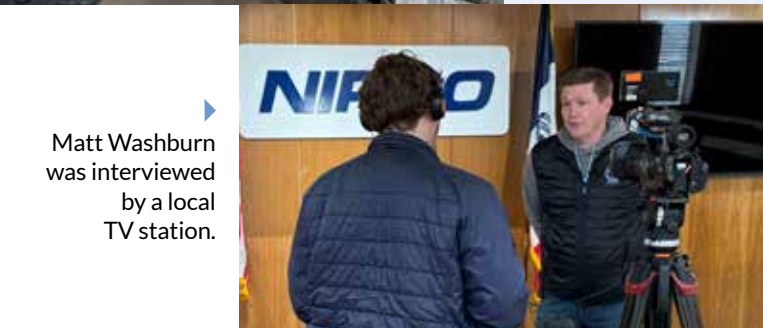
# POWERING ON: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MAJOR RESTORATION EFFORT



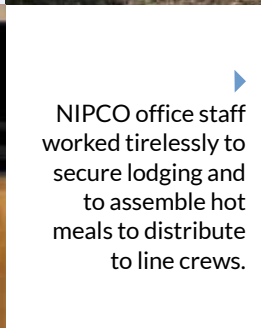
◀ Crews worked together to ready a replacement structure.



◀ NIPCO office staff staged lunch for crews in the field. Local businesses donated food and other support to the crews.



▶ Matt Washburn was interviewed by a local TV station.



▶ NIPCO office staff worked tirelessly to secure lodging and to assemble hot meals to distribute to line crews.



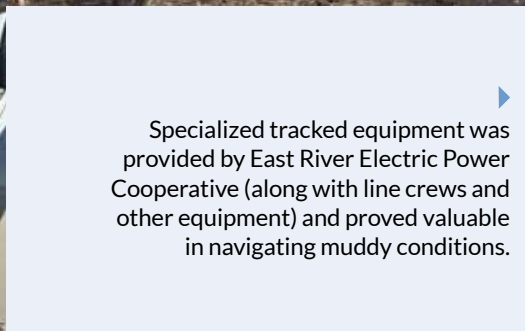
◀ Mutual aid in the form of lineworkers and equipment was provided by Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



▶ Scott Meinecke, director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, discussed conditions with NIPCO Crew Foreman BJ Hetzel.



◀ Fields became mud pits, with heavy equipment repeatedly becoming stuck.



▶ Specialized tracked equipment was provided by East River Electric Power Cooperative (along with line crews and other equipment) and proved valuable in navigating muddy conditions.





# IOWA VENTURE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year since 1989, Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) and its electric cooperative members have recognized the entrepreneurial spirit and capital investment of growing businesses and the leadership of organizations that support Iowa's rural economy.

With a new presentation format, three of this year's Iowa Venture Award recipients were honored in early April in conjunction with the annual meetings of Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative and Corn Belt Power Cooperative (Corn Belt Power). These winners join an impressive list of 293 entities who have been honored with this distinguished award.

## **Phil Dornbier Trucking, Inc.**

*Nominated by Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO)*

Founded in 2004 by Phillip and Michelle Dornbier, Phil Dornbier Trucking started at home. As the company grew, it expanded to a commercial space in downtown Garner in 2018. However, the Dornbiers knew the next step in their vision was to build a dedicated facility for their operations and acquired land in Garner's Touchstone Energy Park in December 2023. The new headquarters was designed to consolidate the firm's operations under one roof and support their growing team and fleet. This modern facility, completed in 2025, features updated offices, an in-house repair shop and a wash bay as well as an area dedicated to drivers during their rest breaks.

To help this growing business, PECO and their power provider, Corn Belt Power, teamed up and utilized the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan Program to provide financial backing.

## **Fairfield by Marriott Sioux Center**

*Nominated by North West Rural Electric Cooperative*

Founded in 2001 by Henry Byl and Randy Vreugdenhil, Summer

View Partners has grown into a successful hotel management company, now overseeing eight properties with 170 team members across Iowa and Minnesota. The company was nominated for their commitment to delivering exceptional hospitality and contributing to the economic vitality as part of the recent construction of the Fairfield by Marriott in Sioux Center. This 76-room hotel features meeting rooms, a wellness center and pool.

The new hotel, which opened in May 2024, significantly enhances Sioux Center and the surrounding area, providing high-quality accommodations for visitors and supporting local businesses, schools and organizations.

North West REC installed Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations as part of its infrastructure support for the facility.

## **Iowa Central Community College – Storm Lake**

*Nominated by Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative*

Established in 1966, Iowa Central Community College (ICCC) is dedicated to providing high-quality education and training to residents throughout the region. ICCC has grown to serve communities across Fort Dodge, Storm Lake and Webster City, with five campus locations. With 85% of students staying in the region after taking classes and training, ICCC provides vital support to businesses throughout the region.

ICCC was recognized for both their vision and the accomplishment of constructing a new \$10 million, 24,000-square-foot state-of-the-art learning center in Storm Lake. The new learning center has become a vibrant hub for both education and workforce skills development. It prominently features ICCC's advanced nursing program. The facility also hosts a daytime career academy for high school students, evening adult literacy programs and



Fairfield by Marriott Sioux Center was honored for its new hotel.



Phil Dornbier Trucking, Inc. was honored for its new facility in Garner's Touchstone Energy Park.



Iowa Central Community College was honored for building a state-of-the-art learning center in Storm Lake.

has future growth plans for welding and electrical trades training.

Leveraging the USDA Rural Development Grant and Loan Program, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative sponsored two successful applications to help secure \$2.3 million in low-interest funding, which helped the center become a reality.

## **Honoring the winners**

A video dedicated to each of these recipients can be found as part of IADG's Venture Award Hall of Fame at [www.iadg.com/hall-of-fame](http://www.iadg.com/hall-of-fame).

As part of the award's new format, IADG will present one additional Venture Award at an annual meeting later this year.

# NOMINATE A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER BY JUNE 30

## Your nominee could win \$3,000 for their local charity

Iowa's electric cooperatives are excited to announce the return of a statewide contest, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. Called "Shine the Light," the contest will accept nominations in June and award three winners with a \$3,000 check to their local charity or community organization.

"We've been truly inspired by the growth of this contest in our first five years," says Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. "So many people throughout the areas served by Iowa's electric cooperatives deserve to be recognized for making a positive impact."

Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the Shine the Light contest will accept contest entries online during the month of June. In addition to receiving a \$3,000 donation for their charity or nonprofit of choice, the winners will also be featured in the September issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

## How to nominate

Member-consumers, employees and retirees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers. If you receive electricity from an electric cooperative in Iowa, you're a co-op member-consumer and invited to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-consumer. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians. Nominees from previous years can be nominated again for another chance to win.



### Step 1:

Go to [www.iowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.iowaShineTheLight.com) from June 1-30 to make a nomination and to review the contest rules. You can also learn about past winners of the contest.

### Step 2:

As a nominator, provide your contact information and answer the following question in 500 words or less.

**How has your nominee made a difference in the community, and how might their local charity use the \$3,000 donation?**



# THANKS, DAD

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

There's a saying that almost any man can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad. I've been thinking a lot about my dad lately as I take a more active role in the management of my family's Century Farm in Calhoun County.

Growing up on the farm, my dad was always teaching me. Sometimes this involved rural culture appreciation – also known as tagging along to the farmers' co-op in Lake City or Snyder Implement.

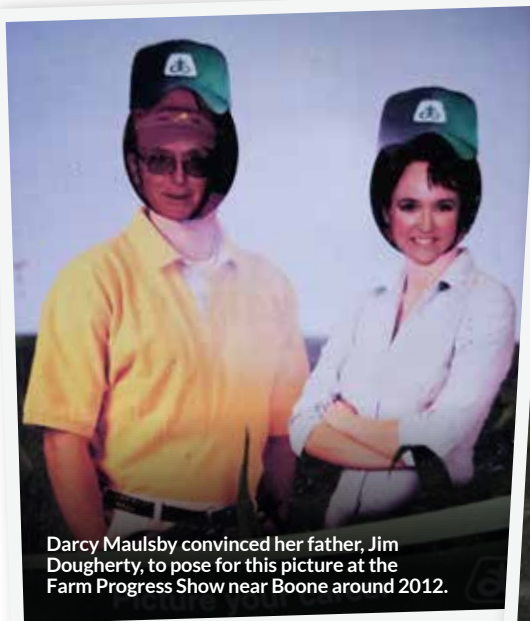
Often, his lessons revolved around tough love. I'll never forget one muddy, cold afternoon at chore time. It was my job to feed the hogs that lived in a dirt lot southeast of the barn. I put on my muck boots, filled two 5-gallon buckets with corn, and prepared to run the gauntlet. Hungry hogs show no mercy.

I was nimble – until I heard that dreaded sucking sound. When I lifted my foot up to take the next step, my boot stayed behind. I plunged face-first into an ooze of mud and manure. Those hogs trampled me in their delight to devour the spilled corn. Shocked, stunned and scared, I could think of nothing better than yelling and crying.

## **"Be a man!"**

My dad came running from the barnyard to see what was wrong. After sizing up the situation, this flustered, annoyed farmer did the only thing he knew to do. "Be a man!" he shouted. In some circles, this unconventional advice is better known as "cowboy up." No matter what you call it, this taught me the power of grit, instead of crumbling when life gets tough.

You'd think I'd have taken this to heart, but you'd be wrong. Part two of my dad's lessons in tough love



Darcy Maulsby convinced her father, Jim Dougherty, to pose for this picture at the Farm Progress Show near Boone around 2012.

occurred following an incident at Mark's Super Valu in Lake City when I was in high school. I was shopping by the milk cooler when a crazed customer crashed a shopping cart into my back and my ankles. Ouch is an understatement, although I was more surprised than hurt.

I told my dad about it when I got home. In my naivety, I assumed he'd show exceptional concern and compassion. Instead, he said, "Didn't you hear it coming?" Yeah, I admitted, I had heard a strange ruckus. "Well then, pay more attention to your surroundings." Message sent; message received. Situational awareness is a skill that still serves me well.

## **Leaving a legacy**

Through the years, I learned it was probably smart to listen to my dad. When I went to college, I didn't know what I wanted to study, although I showed some ability with writing and communication. My dad (an Iowa State University alum) suggested I enroll at Iowa State and study ag journalism. He figured my experience as a farm kid would help me carve a niche.



Jim Dougherty (1937-2019) and his dog, Libby, took a break on the front steps of his farmhouse in 2014.

He was right. That education helped prepare me for a career that has allowed me to generate an income, launch a side gig as a book author, enjoy lifelong learning, take advantage of opportunities for travel (across Iowa and around the world) and build friendships I treasure.

Lest you think my dad knew everything, not all his advice was solid. "Stay off that damn internet," comes to mind.

I can still hear my dad's voice in so many ways. Although he died at age 82 in October 2019, I'm grateful a part of him lives on through me. That's how it should be. Good fathers provide and guide. The best leave a legacy of wisdom and love that endures.

Do you have stories of your father? Share them with me at [yettergirl@yahoo.com](mailto:yettergirl@yahoo.com).

*Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).*

Visit our website at [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com)



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