

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF  FRANKLIN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

December 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



FRANKLIN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Franklin REC Members,

Once again, thank you to all who attended the second edition of our Member Appreciation BBQ on Oct. 28. It was great seeing everyone. The entire Franklin REC staff and directors thoroughly enjoyed being able to serve our membership with a quality BBQ meal.

In the spirit of full transparency and to let you, our members, know we value your feedback, we would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the most common questions and statements we received on the surveys from the event. For those of you who were unable to attend our event, we passed out a survey to the first 350 vehicles. The survey asked for member feedback regarding the member appreciation events, past annual meetings, as well as an area to leave any comment/feedback. Below are the most common questions/comments, as well as a few that we've covered in the past but feel it's important to cover for those newer to our electric cooperative.

**Q: Why were we not allowed to use vouchers from the first BBQ event held Oct. 18?**

A: This is something we discussed thoroughly in-house, and ultimately it came down to three issues. 1) We had a budget we needed to adhere to. 2) We were unsure how many old vouchers would be used on Oct. 28, which would have made planning that much more difficult. 3) We were trying to avoid running out of food and we wanted those that could not attend the event until later in the day to have the opportunity for a meal, as well.

**Q: Could we elect to receive a bill credit instead of a BBQ meal?**

A: We understand that everyone's preferences and situations are unique, which is why we are trying to give back in different ways. In 2020, the board elected to return \$207,000 dollars to the membership in the form of bill credits on the January 2021 bills (December usage). In the spring of 2021, we also paid out patronage (or capital credits) in the form of bill credits in the amount of \$309,000. To allow for a more personal touch, Franklin REC elected to host this BBQ event so we could give back, while at the same time have a personal interaction with the membership we proudly serve.

**Q: Did the board of directors sell land to the cooperative to build solar arrays?**

A: Franklin REC needed approximately one acre of land for each of our three solar arrays located within our service territory. Ads were placed in numerous outlets **for over a year** asking for interested members willing to sell a single acre of their property. Initially, we did receive interest from members, but unfortunately their properties would not allow for us to maximize the output of the solar panels. For solar panels to be most efficient, we needed land located along a paved road (approx. 350 feet long) to keep as much dust as possible off the panels. The most common issue however, was that the proposed properties were not located along a three-phase line. We learned from the first solar array at our headquarters, to transmit as much energy generated back onto the grid as possible, we needed a three-phase line.

After these options were exhausted, we looked at our service territory maps to define where three-phase lines are located on a blacktop roadway. We then reached out to those members individually and asked if they would be willing to sell an acre of their land for this project. Regrettably, that did not work either.

The board was adamant in erecting these solar arrays for many reasons, but mainly because they would save the membership money in energy cost, as well as help with environmental issues. At this time, two board members stepped up and offered to sell an acre of their land. When the time came to vote on the purchase of land, those directors whose land was offered, left the meeting and abstained from voting to avoid a conflict of interest.

**Q: I'm unsure of what happens at the Franklin REC annual meeting.**

A: Most importantly, the annual meeting allows our members the opportunity to meet and discuss issues and ideas with the board of directors who represent you. Updates are provided, which generally include the financial condition of the co-op, line-build projects, our generation portfolio, the cooperative's community involvement/activities, a presentation from our scholarship awardees and our Youth Tour representative, and much more. It is also a great way to inform our membership of what has happened at the cooperative over the past year and the direction in which the cooperative is headed. Please plan to attend our next annual meeting, tentatively scheduled for April 5, 2022, to receive all the listed updates!

**Q: I have missed hearing the REC reports and Youth Tour participants at the in-person annual meetings the last two years.**

A: Due to the pandemic, Franklin REC altered how we organized our annual meetings. The 2019 and 2020 annual meetings were postponed until April of 2021, at which time a drive-through annual meeting was held. This allowed members to drop off their ballots, receive a free gift, and have a quick chat with directors and employees. Unfortunately, the 2020 and 2021 Youth Tour was canceled due to the pandemic. The Youth Tour to Washington D.C. is offered to a sophomore or junior within our service territory for an educational experience on how cooperatives and our government work. Each year at our annual meeting we ask those participants to give a presentation on their trip and what they experienced. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives did provide an alternative for the youth in 2021 with a new program called the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy. This program consisted of three sessions of webinars that discussed the cooperative model. Franklin REC was fortunate to have two high school students participate and we look forward to sharing more details on that experience in the future.

**Q: Why do you spend money on advertising?**

A: At Franklin REC we take the safety of our employees and members seriously. A majority of our advertising is centered around safety messages including the Move Over, Slow Down law, as well as farm and electrical safety. These advertisements are well worth it if/when we prevent a serious injury or save just one life.

Thank you again to those that attended our event on Oct. 28, and a special thanks to all of those who took the time to fill out and return the survey. If you ever have any issues or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at Franklin REC. We are more than happy to address them.

# Surprise kids with electric toys under holiday tree

The “best toys” lists for the 2021 holiday season include a few items that teach about electricity or use electricity to operate. Here are some child-tested favorites:

**Kidzone Electric Vehicle Bumper Car.** This motorized ride-on is like a mini-bumper car that kids can drive around while colliding into everything in their way. For ages 1.5 to 6 years.

**Electronic Ride-On Excavator.** A little “driver” can move the excavator with his or her legs and slide the levers to operate the motorized digger. The toy has sound effects to mimic a construction rig and includes a 6-volt rechargeable battery and charger. For ages 3 years and older.

**Little Tikes My Real Jam Electric Guitar Music Toy.** A realistically designed electric guitar, case, and strap lets your little one pretend to be a rock star. It includes four “superstar play modes” that play music while your child pretends to strum. Recommended for children 3 years and older.

**Razor Miniature Dirt Rocket.** This scaled-down, electric-powered dirt bike is recommended for children ages 7 and older. For outdoor, off-road adventures, the bike features rear-wheel drive for weight and balance control, which helps with safety and stability.

**National Geographic kits.** The Potato Battery Kit teaches kids about electricity as they build a potato clock with a voltmeter. The Coin Powered Flashlight is an experiment that shows children how to make a battery with coins. They can watch the electric circuit in action when they turn on the flashlight. Astounding Science Experiments teaches little ones about electric engineering. The series includes several other science kits, as well.



THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

At your electric co-op, we're proud to be a part of it, bringing people together by providing energy for all the things you love.

## Deck the halls safely

There's nothing like putting up lights and decorations to put you in the holiday spirit. Safe Electricity offers several tips as you deck the halls this season:

- When decorating outside, look up and around for power lines. Never toss lights or other decorations into trees near power lines.
- Keep ladders, equipment, and yourself at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Match plugs with outlets. Do not force a three-pronged plug into a two-pronged outlet or extension cord.
- Outside, use only lights, cords, animated displays, and decorations rated for outdoor use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use them. Ensure outdoor outlets or extension cords are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).
- Never string more strands of lights together than recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not staple or nail through light strings or electrical cords. Use plastic or insulated hooks to hang lights.
- Do not attach cords to utility poles.

The outside of your home is not the only place where you need to be cautious of electrical dangers. Use care when placing and decorating trees inside your home. Place fresh-cut and artificial trees away from heat sources such as registers, fireplaces, and radiators, and water fresh-cut trees frequently. Turn lights off before you go to sleep—use a timer to help.

For more information on holiday safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org).

# Merry Christmas to you!

Does your Christmas wish list have a new appliance on it? Buy an EnergyStar-rated appliance and you could earn a rebate. Appliance rebates are given for clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, freezers, and refrigerators. Remember EnergyStar saves money and energy.

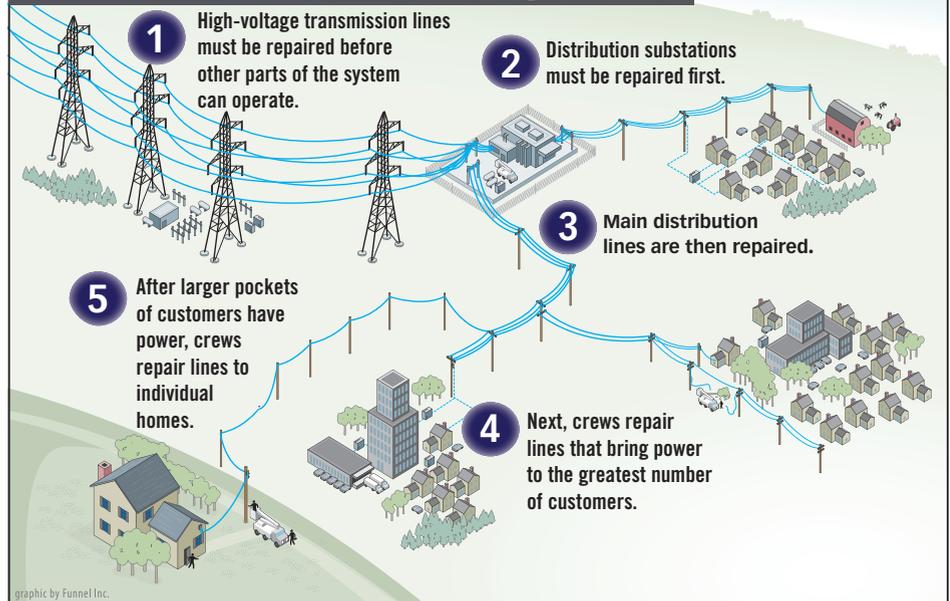
If you need extra lighting to see your Christmas wish list, we have many LED lighting rebates for your home, your yard, your building, and even your holiday lights.

Visit [www.franklinrec.coop](http://www.franklinrec.coop) for rebate forms.

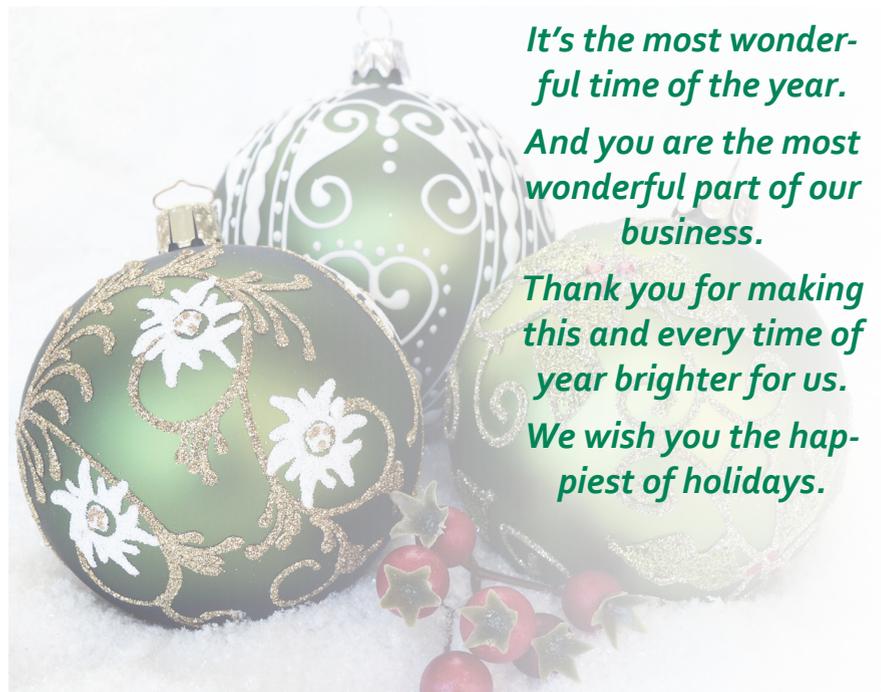


- Dependents of cooperative members are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship for tuition at a two-year or four-year college. Contact your electric cooperative for information.
- Corn Belt Power Cooperative partners with Northwest Iowa Community College (NWICC) in Sheldon, Iowa, to offer four \$500 scholarships. Recipients must be students at NWICC studying Industrial and Commercial Wiring, Powerline, or Powerline Technology. Contact Sheila Van Engen, 800-352-4907 ext. 246, or [svanengen@nwicc.edu](mailto:svanengen@nwicc.edu). Application deadline is March 1, 2022.
- Corn Belt Power also partners with Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville, Iowa, to offer one \$500 scholarship for students enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program. For more information, contact Institutional Advancement, 712-362-0450 ext. 0491, or [institutionaladvancement@iowalakes.edu](mailto:institutionaladvancement@iowalakes.edu). Application deadline is March 1, 2022.

## How line crews restore power



*When a widespread outage occurs, line crews work long hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible. Working from substations to homes results in faster repairs for the most members.*



*It's the most wonderful time of the year.  
And you are the most wonderful part of our business.*

*Thank you for making this and every time of year brighter for us.  
We wish you the happiest of holidays.*

# Students participate in Iowa Youth Leadership Academy

During the month of October, Franklin REC provided local youth the opportunity to explore the cooperative world through the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperative's Iowa Youth Leadership Academy (IYLA).

Franklin REC was excited to have two local youth participate, (pictured left to right) Sam VanHorn and Aiden Zimmerman, both students at Hampton-Dumont-CAL High School. The students attended three webinars at the Franklin REC office and will each be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship after they complete their first semester of post-secondary education.

Each IYLA session covered a different aspect of the cooperative business model and included keynote speakers and employees from cooperatives throughout Iowa and beyond. This program was in lieu of the Iowa Youth Tour, which was cancelled due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Franklin REC is excited to announce that the Youth Tour will return in 2022.



## Member appreciation BBQ held

On Oct. 28, Franklin REC hosted a member appreciation bbq meal prepared by Wholly Smoke BBQ. The event was held as a drive-thru only event at the Franklin County Fairgrounds from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Franklin REC considered the event a success with over 400 members redeeming their voucher for a free meal. This was a great way to give back to the membership! Thank you for attending.



*Franklin REC  
Holiday Hours*

*We will be closed:*

*Friday, Dec. 24*

*Friday, Dec. 31*

*Our phones are  
always answered:*

*641-456-2557*



## Career fair held

Emily Rush (above middle), Madison Alert (right), Cole Marzen, and Chace Klein (left) spent one morning in October at Hampton-Dumont-CAL High School speaking with students about potential careers available at REC, the cooperative business model and how it differs from the for-profit sector, the Youth Tour to Washington D.C., and the scholarships offered through Franklin REC.

## SPARKS of news

### Board room highlights

At their most recent meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved special equipment totaling \$1,335.36.
- Approved the 2022 board meeting dates.
- Approved patronage estate retirements.
- Updated the estate patronage discount percentage, effective Jan. 1, 2022.

### Scholarships Available

Dependents of Franklin REC members are encouraged to visit [www.franklinrec.coop](http://www.franklinrec.coop) for scholarship information.

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