

● FEBRUARY 2024

Iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Centro, Inc. honored with
Venture Award**

**Students: Apply for
the 2024 Youth Tour**

Soup and stew recipes

Franklin REC annual meeting details ▶ See Page 12

CONTENTS



VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 2

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Meet IAEC's new board president

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a Café™ Express Finish toaster

14

SAFETY MATTERS

Cybersecurity begins with proactive measures

15

OUT BACK

For the love of book clubs

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Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine (ISSN: 2770-8683) is published monthly by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, a not-for-profit organization representing Iowa's member-owned local electric cooperatives. Association address: 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. The phrase **Iowa Electric Cooperative Living** is a mark registered within the state of Iowa to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. The magazine does not accept advertising.

Editorial Office
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Telephone: 515-276-5350.

Email Address
editor@ieclmagazine.com. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine does not assume responsibility for unsolicited items.

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

Postmaster
Send address changes to *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine, 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48, Des Moines, IA 50322-2992. Periodicals Postage Paid at Des Moines, Iowa, and at additional mailing offices.

Change of Address
Every local electric cooperative maintains an independent mailing list of its members, so please send your change of address directly to your local electric cooperative's office. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine cannot make an address change for you.

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Libby Teunissen, a Lyon REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

NEW STATEWIDE BOARD PRESIDENT IS NO STRANGER TO THE CO-OP BOARD ROOM

BY KENNY VANDENBERG



We've all heard the saying that when one door closes, another door opens. It certainly applies to my life as the door to cooperative service opened for me when I retired a while back. Thirteen years ago, I was asked to consider serving on the Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative board in Albia. As a lifelong resident of Monroe County, I thought it would be a great opportunity to serve my community and learn more about my local electric cooperative.

After serving on the local co-op board for several years, I had an opportunity to put my name on the ballot for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' (IAEC) board. I was eager to join the statewide board and expand my industry knowledge and working relationships with others, including our state and federal legislators. Formed in 1942, IAEC is the statewide trade association for Iowa's electric cooperatives, and it provides several services to its member co-ops, including legislative representation, regulatory oversight, training and education services, safety programs, communications support, and advocacy.

Productive and proactive leadership

Serving on the IAEC board for more than five years, I was honored to take the helm as board president in December. I truly enjoy the camaraderie of working with my fellow statewide directors and the statewide staff. We are productive and proactive in dealing with the issues at hand. In the first half of 2024, the IAEC board will be focused on hiring our next executive vice president/general manager, as Chuck Soderberg plans to retire in July. Identifying the right executive to lead us into the future is one of the statewide board's most important tasks.

This is an unprecedented time of change for the electric industry, and experienced leadership is crucial to successfully navigate the challenges ahead. I look forward to meeting with the directors and managers of Iowa's electric cooperatives throughout the year to learn more about how the statewide association can support them in their mission to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity for their local member-owners.

Strengthening lines of collaboration

Additionally, I have been serving on the board of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives for four years. I'd like to explore more ways for these two statewide cooperative associations to collaborate for the benefit of their members while promoting the cooperative business model.

If you had asked me several years ago what I'd be doing after retirement, I couldn't have imagined that I would be serving in this capacity. But these leadership opportunities all started because I was willing to say yes to a local call to serve. I'm thankful for the family and friends who encouraged me along the way.

Here's my advice for my fellow cooperative member-owners throughout Iowa: Don't be afraid to answer the call to serve your local cooperative. Look for an open door in your local community and walk through it! Your next adventure awaits.

Kenny Vandenberg is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and a director at Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A CAFÉ™ EXPRESS FINISH TOASTER!

For busy mornings, this innovative two-slot toaster has an Express Finish mode. Just push a button and the extra heating elements kick in, toasting bread to your preferred doneness in just 60 seconds. It also has three other preset functions – bagel, reheat and frozen – plus eight browning levels for customized control. Distinguished by sleek designer finishes, this Café appliance from GE features a beautiful cast aluminum housing with brushed copper accents.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 29. 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 HappyLight® Duo Light Therapy and Task Floor Lamp from the December issue was Eugene Sieren, a T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 29!

TRAILBLAZING JOURNEY TOWARD INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ON FRANKLIN REC LINES

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



It was an honor to nominate Centro, Inc. for the Iowa Area Development Group's (IADG) Venture Award in 2023. Centro is headquartered

in North Liberty and specializes in custom rotational molding for various sectors. They purchased the last available space in the Hampton Air Industrial Park in August 2022 and went to work immediately to make the space their home!

The facility now houses two rotational molding machines and employs 40 new associates. This expansion aims to bolster production capacity across the Midwest, catering to surging demand and accommodating future business growth. Hampton marks the company's 11th location, now encompassing sites across the U.S. and internationally in Northern Ireland and Brazil.

This recent expansion marks a milestone in the company's growth strategy, serving companies in the agriculture, construction, and lawn and garden industries. With a workforce of nearly 1,200 associates and multiple domestic and international facilities, Centro's growth trajectory demonstrates its market leadership and commitment to meet evolving customer needs.

Franklin REC provides power to the Hampton Air Industrial Park and was instrumental in constructing the speculative building, along with the Franklin County Development Association and Corn Belt Power Cooperative.

"Centro exemplifies the spirit of the Iowa Venture Award by strategically expanding its operations and contributing to job creation and economic development in Hampton and Cascade as well as its headquarters in North Liberty and other locations," says IADG President/CEO Bruce Nuzum. "We commend Centro for its visionary approach to business growth and commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its customers and industries served."

Garrett Thompson is the CEO/general manager of Franklin REC.

About Iowa Area Development Group (IADG)

IADG is the business and community development leader for Iowa's rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and independent telecommunication companies. Since 1985, the partnerships and economic development efforts of IADG and their sponsors have assisted with more than 2,450 projects, generating over \$13.9 billion of capital investment and over 57,500 new or retained jobs for Iowa.

About the Iowa Venture Award

The 2023 awards mark the 35th year that IADG has presented Iowa Venture Awards to individuals and organizations, both large and small, in recognition of their significant contributions to Iowa's economy through entrepreneurial leadership, innovation and the creation of job opportunities. The Iowa Venture Award Hall of Fame, showcasing these 293 companies, can be found at www.iadg.com/halloffame.



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Calls answered 24/7

Secure Pay-by-Phone Number
1-844-344-4370

Website
www.franklinrec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Representatives from Franklin REC, along with Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig and IADG, presented Centro, Inc with the Iowa Venture Award at the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting.



This year's Chili Cook-off winners, pictured from left to right: CEO/General Manager Garrett Thompson (3rd Place), Line Superintendent Scott Hagenson (Champion) and Board Director Dale Schaefer (2nd Place).

NEWCOMER SEIZES VICTORY IN FRANKLIN REC'S INTENSE CHILI COOK-OFF SHOWDOWN

An intense showdown between Franklin REC board of directors and employees ignited as the co-op hosted the third-annual Chili Cook-off. The competition was charged with rivalry as the two-time champion, CEO/General Manager Garrett Thompson, was determined to defend his title against any contender. In the weeks leading up to the event, Thompson dedicated himself to perfecting a new recipe, but mere days before the competition, he was still adding ingredients to perfect the dish.

Despite Thompson's efforts, first-time contender Line Superintendent Scott Hagenson swooped in and claimed

the title of Chili Cook-off Champion. Hagenson's winning entry, dubbed "Porkie's Delight," featured a blend of ground pork, Italian sausage and cottage bacon, creating a spicy and savory mix that triumphed over the other eight chili submissions.

Board Director Dale Schaefer maintained his standing, securing second place with his chili creation. Thompson, now dethroned after a two-year reign as Champion, landed in third place. The dynamic competition showcased the culinary prowess within Franklin REC, with Hagenson's victory adding a new twist to the annual event.

FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the December meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$4,864.96
- Approved a voting delegate and alternate for 2024 National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative meeting
- Approved a voting delegate and alternate for 2024 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) meeting
- Approved 2024 Franklin REC annual meeting nominating committee appointments
- Approved purchase of a skid loader
- Approved write-off of uncollectible accounts
- Approved a donation to NRECA International project
- Approved patronage discount percentage

FRANKLIN REC HONORS MILESTONES



CHACE KLEIN

Crew Chief Chace Klein marks seven years with Franklin REC, continuing to lead job sites and paving the road for the co-op's future.



TOM DEMRO

Crew Chief Tom Demro commemorates 10 years with Franklin REC, overseeing projects and laying the groundwork for the future of the cooperative.



JOHN SNYDER

Board Director John Snyder celebrates 10 years of representing Franklin REC members and actively advocating for rural electric cooperatives.

DONATE⁺ + BLOOD

Save someone's life with a drop of your blood!

Thursday

22

February
2024

11:00-3:00pm
At Franklin REC
1560 HWY 65, Hampton

Scan QR or call Franklin REC at 641-456-2557 to set up your appointment today!

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME: WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!



SOME OF THE THINGS STUDENTS WILL DO AND SEE ON YOUTH TOUR:

- Albert Einstein Memorial
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Boat cruise on the Potomac River
- Ford's Theater
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
- Holocaust Memorial
- Iwo Jima Sunset Parade
- Korean War Veterans Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Mount Vernon
- The National Mall
- U.S. Capitol tour
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- Washington Monument
- Washington National Cathedral
- White House
- World War II Memorial

Enter the essay contest by March 25



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THESE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE SPONSORING THE 2024 YOUTH TOUR

All of the electric co-ops on this list are offering one or more all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trips this year, so check your co-op's website or call the office for more details.

Access Energy Cooperative
Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
Butler County REC
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Assoc.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Consumers Energy
East-Central Iowa REC
Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative



ONE IOWA YOUTH TOUR STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A \$1,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP!

During the 2024 Youth Tour this June, a student from each state that participates in Youth Tour will be chosen to serve on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). The Iowa YLC representative will be selected during the Youth Tour trip and will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship.

These young leaders will meet virtually throughout 2024 and into early 2025 and participate in leadership training, practice their public speaking skills, attend co-op forums and engage in community activities like voter registration drives.

The YLC experience will culminate at the 2025 NRECA Annual Meeting, held in Atlanta, Georgia. Here, the group will spend a few days reflecting on the experiences they've had throughout the year, attend informational and entertaining conference sessions alongside electric cooperative leaders from throughout the country, and solidify lifelong friendships and connections!

To enter, you will be required to submit an official entry form plus a short (250-word maximum) essay in response to this statement:

Tell us about an issue that impacts the quality of life in your community.

Entry forms are available at www.iowayouthtour.com. You can submit your essay at this website or email it to youthtour@iowarec.org. Entries must be received by March 25.

Iowa's local electric cooperatives are just getting started on their selection process for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from their areas to earn an all-expenses-paid trip for the June 15-21 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, there always are more qualified student candidates from these co-ops (as well as deserving students from co-ops that aren't participating in the Youth Tour program) than there are openings on the trip. However, one of those students, for the 10th year in a row, will have the opportunity to win a trip through the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living 2024 Youth Tour Contest*!

Of course, students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. However,

students can increase their chances of winning a trip by entering the magazine's contest right after they enter the one for their electric co-op.

More than 1,800 students from across America take part in the weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital. Participants will travel to Washington, D.C., meet their U.S. representatives and senators, and watch history come alive as they explore museums, memorials and monuments. They'll also meet student leaders from nearly every state and hear dynamic speakers during Youth Day. Best of all, students will make friendships that last a lifetime and become part of a group that has more than 50,000 alumni in every walk of life, including U.S. senators and CEOs.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

Our 2024 Youth Tour Essay Contest is open to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior whose family is served by an Iowa electric cooperative AND to any Iowa high school sophomore, junior or senior who attended all three virtual sessions of the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy in October 2023. *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine will award one all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. Students at participating co-ops first should apply for the Youth Tour through their electric co-ops. Then, to enhance your chances of earning a trip, we encourage you to enter this contest too. If you're chosen as the winner of a trip sponsored by your local electric cooperative, you'll become ineligible to win the trip sponsored by *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine and IAEC staff will judge all essays anonymously. The decision of the judges will be final. The winner of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living Youth Tour Contest* will be announced on April 4, which is after all sponsoring local electric cooperatives will have chosen their 2024 Youth Tour participants.

Farmers Electric Cooperative (Greenfield)
Franklin REC
Grundy County REC
Guthrie County REC
Harrison County REC

Heartland Power Cooperative
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
Lyon REC
Midland Power Cooperative
MiEnergy Cooperative

Nishnabotna Valley REC
North West REC
Pella Cooperative Electric Association
Prairie Energy Cooperative
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

Southern Iowa Electric Cooperative
Southwest Iowa REC
T.I.P REC
United Electric Cooperative
Western Iowa Power Cooperative



BACON POTATO CHOWDER

- 8 slices bacon (½ pound)
- ½-1 cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups potatoes, chopped
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 1 can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1½ cups milk
- cheddar cheese, optional

Cut bacon into ½-inch pieces. In a 3-quart saucepan, cook bacon over medium heat until browned. Add onion and continue cooking, 2-3 minutes until tender, drain. Add potatoes, water, salt and pepper. Continue cooking 15-20 minutes until potatoes are tender.

Reduce heat to low, stir in soup, sour cream and milk. Continue cooking, 3-5 minutes, stirring occasionally until heated through. Season to taste and top with cheese, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

**Peg Visser • Sheldon
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

CREAMY SQUASH SOUP

- 7 pounds butternut or other winter squash variety
- 2 large, sweet onions, chopped
- olive oil
- water
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary
- ½ teaspoon sage
- 1 tablespoon salt, or to taste
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional

Bake butternut squash whole at 350 degrees F for approximately 1 hour, until soft when poked with a large fork at the stem end. Remove from oven and let cool. Cut open and remove seeds. Winter squash, if used, will need to be cut in half before baking cut-side down until tender.

Sauté onions in enough oil to keep from sticking. Sauté on high at first to get hot, then on low until onions are clear. Stir more frequently after onions are clear. Sauté until brown and caramelized (do not burn). Blend 1½ cups squash with ⅓ of the onions with just enough water to be smooth and mostly pourable. Repeat two more times. Stir all batches together in slow cooker or heavy-bottomed soup pot. Add rosemary, sage, salt and cayenne pepper, if desired. Simmer for ½ hour or until seasoning flavor comes out. Serve piping hot. Leftovers can be frozen. *Serves 6*

**Jacque Minikus • Pisgah
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**



Looking for a new recipe? Search our free archive of tried-and-true recipes from rural Iowa kitchens! Search by keyword, category or main ingredient: ieclmagazine.com/recipes

TATOR TOT SOUP

- 1 32-ounce bag tater tots
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound ham, chopped or cooked bacon
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 5-7 hours. Add more milk during cooking if a thinner consistency is desired. *Serves 6-8*

Stacy Venteicher • Glidden
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

CREAMY CHICKEN TACO SOUP

- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added black beans
- 1 15.25-ounce can no salt added whole kernel corn
- 1 10-ounce can mild diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3-4 chicken breasts, cooked and diced
- 1 ounce taco seasoning
- 1 tablespoon dry minced onion
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- corn chips, optional
- cheddar cheese, optional

Drain and rinse beans, drain corn. Add the first seven ingredients to a slow cooker. Cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in cream cheese, and top with corn chips and cheddar cheese, if desired.

Angie Graeve • Reinbeck
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative

HUNTER STEW

- 2 pounds venison
- 4 carrots
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 4 potatoes, chunked
- 2 cups stewed tomatoes
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup

Chop venison into 1-inch cubes. Cut carrots into 1-inch chunks. Mix all ingredients together in roaster pan. Cook at 250 degrees F for 4 hours.

Jeff Gropper • Chelsea
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

HEARTY HAM SOUP

- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- 2 cups raw potatoes, diced
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 1 10-ounce package frozen peas, thawed
- 1¼ cups cooked ham, diced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon celery salt
- blue cheese wedge, optional

In a heavy, 2-quart saucepan, melt butter. Add onion, potatoes and water. Cover and bring to steam. Lower heat to simmer, then cook about 15 minutes, until potatoes are tender. Stir in flour, then slowly add milk. Cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Stir in peas, ham, salt, marjoram, pepper and celery salt. Let simmer until peas are cooked, about 5 minutes. Serve hot and add a wedge of blue cheese crumbled over soup, if desired. *Serves 4-6*

Marcia Rich • Lockridge
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

TURKEY DISHES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 29

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living • 8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48,
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

INDUSTRY LEADERS SHARE ENERGY INSIGHTS AND TRENDS

In December, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) held its 2023 Annual Meeting at the Sheraton West Des Moines Conference Center with more than 350 registered attendees. At the event, which carried the theme “Powerful Connections,” board directors and employees from Iowa’s locally owned electric co-ops received informative updates from the statewide board and staff, in addition to learning about industry trends and best practices from invited speakers.

Leaders share insights and perspectives on future trends

The IAEC Annual Meeting also provided the opportunity for attendees to learn more about the electric industry and future trends that may impact rural Iowa’s economy and quality of life.

IAEC presented several educational sessions, including hearing from the following industry leaders:

- Author, podcaster and film producer **Robert Bryce** discussed the physical and barriers to a rapid transition from carbon-based energy sources. He provided a realistic forecast about how our electric grid will change in the coming decades.
- **Kavi Chalwa** and **Jeff Kappen** from Bâton Global discussed disorder in geopolitics and how it will influence economic growth on various scales. They provided insights on how Iowa’s electric cooperatives can best navigate these challenges for organizational success.
- **Mark Tiemeier** of the Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO) informed attendees about how changes in the electric generation mix and resources challenge grid operators. Tiemeier is responsible for leading MRO’s annual regional risk assessment.

Editor’s note: The information on the next page is a high-level overview of some points covered during each speaker’s presentation and are the perspectives and opinions of the speakers based on their knowledge and research. Their points address what they believe to be issues or concerns of interest for utilities, including electric cooperatives.

POWERFUL CONNECTIONS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

ROBERT BRYCE



Robert Bryce is a Texas-based author, journalist, film producer, and podcaster. The host of the Power Hungry Podcast, Bryce has been writing about energy, power, innovation and politics for more than 30 years. His articles have appeared in many publications, including the Wall Street Journal,

New York Times, Forbes, Time, Austin Chronicle and Sydney Morning Herald.

Key points

- There are significant land use conflicts when it comes to building more wind, solar and high-voltage transmission. In the past nine years, at least 603 wind and solar projects have been rejected in the U.S.
- Since 2000, the U.S. has reduced CO2 emissions the most of the world's six largest economies. Four countries – the U.S., U.K., Germany and Japan – have reduced emissions, while India and China have increased emissions. In fact, China has increased more than eight-fold over U.S. emissions.

- The U.S. Department of Energy says the nation needs a 57% increase in high-voltage transmission. Currently, there are 240,000 miles of high-voltage transmission in the U.S. From 2008 to 2021, 1,700 miles per year were built in the U.S. At this rate, it will take 80 years to meet the forecasted need for high-voltage transmission.
- Utility product cost inflation is at an all-time high, increasing by 33% since 2020. There is a one- to three-year wait for transformers. Foreign companies dominate the high-power transformer market.
- Since 2008, when then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger mandated renewable energy use, California's electric rates have grown 3.2 times faster than the rest of the U.S.
- China dominates the entire downstream electric vehicle battery supply chain.
- For the first time, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation cited “energy policy” as a threat to the reliability and resilience of the bulk power system.
- Energy security is national security.

KAVI CHALWA



Kavi Chalwa has spent the majority of his career as a strategy advisor and consultant to private and public-sector organizations, supporting them with the development and execution of their global growth strategies. Prior to transitioning into an advisory role, Kavi was in the investment banking industry. Kavi's sector expertise includes energy. His

regional expertise is focused on high-growth markets, especially the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key points

- Recommends businesses and energy providers pursue an aggressive “Iowa and Me” internationalization strategy by:
- Diversifying our trade relationships to target countries that align with Iowa's economic growth clusters and that have high levels of current and projected future alignment to U.S. policies on the Chinese Communist Party.
 - Building relationships with third-country-based investors to attract investment into Iowa-based business, Iowa-based innovation and Iowa-based research.
 - Flexing Iowa's muscle to protect and mitigate downside impacts of restrictive policies on Iowa businesses.
 - Flexing Iowa's muscle to create favorable conditions for accelerating entry into new growth markets for Iowa businesses.
 - Mobilizing the collective power of commodity and association groups to serve as a force multiplier for Iowa businesses.

MARK TIEMEIER



Mark Tiemeier, P.E., MBA, is a highly experienced electrical professional with focused expertise in the power systems and regulatory fields. He has extensive knowledge in modeling transmission components. The Midwest Reliability Organization is a non-profit organization dedicated to the reliability and security of the bulk power

system in the central region of North America, including parts of both the U.S. and Canada.

Key points

- Extreme weather, consumer demand, and changes in technology and generation resources continue to present a rapidly increasing number of challenges to grid planners and operators. Physical and cybersecurity risks also continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace. The top risks to electric reliability are primarily being impacted by the following factors:
- Conventional, baseload generation (e.g., coal) is being retired and replaced with dispersed, variable generation (e.g., wind and solar), tightening reserve margins.
 - Increasingly bold cybercriminals seek to exploit vulnerabilities in utilities' networks to disrupt normal operations of the grid.
 - Extreme weather continues to cause generating resource outages, limiting energy supply at the same time as demand increases.
 - Increasing amounts of generating resources that are physically distant from load is straining transmission capacity and limiting import capability.

JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 2

Spark your excitement for the upcoming Franklin REC annual meeting on Tuesday, April 2, at the Franklin County Convention Center!


There are two options in which you can participate:


- 1** Cruise through our convenient drive-through from 4-5:30 p.m. to quickly submit your voting ballot and redeem a meal voucher.
- 2** Immerse yourself in the traditional meeting experience from 6:30-7 p.m., where you can submit your voting ballot and redeem your meal voucher for a scrumptious meal served by Franklin REC staff.

To streamline your engagement, pertinent details, such as this year's annual report and the slate of nominated candidates, will be featured in the March edition of the *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Additionally, you can expect to receive a separate mailing at the beginning of March that includes your voting ballot, official ballot mailing envelope, meal voucher and more details regarding the annual meeting.

Make a difference! Join in this year's annual meeting and let your voice be heard on Tuesday, April 2.


HOW TO RETURN YOUR VOTING BALLOT: MUST BE ENCLOSED IN YOUR "OFFICIAL BALLOT" ENVELOPE


 **Mail-in ballot:** Insert your completed ballot into the provided return envelope marked "Official Ballot" and mail it to Franklin REC. Mailed ballots must be received at the Franklin REC office by **Monday, April 1**.

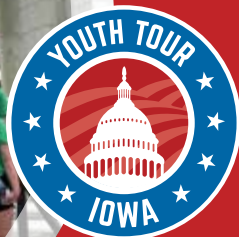
 **Drop-off at Franklin REC office:** Insert your completed ballot into the provided return envelope marked "Official Ballot" and deliver to Franklin REC **by noon Monday, April 1**, or use the drop box located left of the main entry doors.

Address: 1560 HWY 65, Hampton, IA 50441

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

 **Annual meeting drive-through:** Insert your completed ballot into the provided envelope marked "Official Ballot" and bring it to the drive-through portion of the annual meeting on **Tuesday, April 2, from 4-5:30 p.m. at the Franklin County Convention Center**. Bring your meal voucher and receive two free to-go meals provided by Franklin REC.

 **Traditional annual meeting:** Insert your completed ballot into the provided envelope marked "Official Ballot" and bring it to the traditional annual meeting on **Tuesday, April 2, from 6:30-7 p.m. at the Franklin County Convention Center, 1008 Central Ave. W, Hampton, IA 50441**. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. Ballots must be completed and returned to Franklin REC staff by the beginning of the meeting. Present your meal voucher at the entrance to receive a free meal for members and dependent(s) provided by Franklin REC.



Students can apply now for a trip to Washington, D.C., from June 15-21!

Area students interested in government and public service are encouraged to apply. Learn more at IowaYouthTour.com

Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative Iowa Youth Tour Application June 15-21, 2024



Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

High School: _____

I am a high school: Sophomore Junior

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Phone Number: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Email Address: _____

Please complete the following questionnaire:

1. School Activities (Describe your involvement in clubs, groups, organizations, sports, class government, etc.)

2. Community and Extra-curricular Activities (Describe your participation in community organizations, civic groups and statewide or national organizations.) _____

3. Awards and Recognitions (List any achievements, awards, honors and recognitions you have earned in academics, sports, or in the community during high school.) _____

4. What are your favorite hobbies and special interests? _____

5. What are your plans after graduating high school? _____

6. What interests you about the Iowa Youth Tour? _____

7. ESSAY QUESTION. On a separate document, explain in your own words:

Why cooperatives are valuable in rural Iowa.

PLEASE PROVIDE A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FROM A MEMBER OF YOUR COMMUNITY, NOT RELATED TO YOU.

Remit completed applications to: Franklin REC, Christy Mason, PO Box 437, Hampton, IA 50441 or email: cmason@franklinrec.coop.

Deadline for applications: Monday, Feb. 26, 2024

Interviews and testing will be held Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 2 p.m.

CYBERSECURITY BEGINS WITH PROACTIVE MEASURES



Electric cooperatives recognize the evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to the nation's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to our member-consumers, co-ops are taking proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, can disrupt power reliability. That's why electric co-ops continually assess vulnerabilities, monitor emerging threats and implement cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, co-ops ensure a more reliable power supply, reducing the risk of disruptions.

Electric co-ops implement multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for our local communities and the importance of reliability for our members.

Co-ops deploy advanced monitoring and protection systems that

continuously analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and alert security personnel to potential problems. Additionally, co-ops regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks, and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

A collaborative effort

Electric co-ops regularly engage with other co-ops, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay current on the latest threats.

We also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols.

In addition to internal measures, co-ops establish dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so members can easily identify

individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns. Co-op members are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through dishonest claims, messages sent as emails or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the co-op. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help keep our co-op community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Commitment to reliability and security

Electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to the members we serve. Our top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

We will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of our local communities. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid.

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We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution. To be considered, email photos to editor@ieclmagazine.com with "Cover Submission" in the subject line.

Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



FOR THE LOVE OF BOOK CLUBS

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, I'm intrigued by surveys showing that more people (especially younger generations) plan to spend the holiday with friends. It's a different approach that's far less focused on romance.

To me, that's a good reminder of the many forms of caring and love. One of the most inspiring stories I've heard lately came from my friend Marlene Armbrecht, who mentioned she's been a member of a local book club since the fall of 1973.

Once a novel concept

While book clubs are common today, this was a novel concept (no pun intended) 50 years ago.

"All of us were stay-at-home moms or worked part time, so we enjoyed meeting in the afternoon the third Thursday of every month," recalls Marlene, one of the club's original members.

There had been no grand plan to start the club. Arlene Christensen of Lake City and her friend Marilyn Willis (also a Lake City resident) had been reading the new novel, "My Name Is Asher Lev" by Chaim Potok. They decided to invite a few friends to join them.

Within a few years, the club had grown to about nine members, including several newcomers who had moved to Lake City and Rockwell City in the late 1970s. For years, the club met once a month at members' homes. Each member had the opportunity to choose a book every few months. The member who chose the book would purchase copies for her fellow club members, who would then reimburse the hostess at the meeting. The club "modernized" its system when books became available through interlibrary loans at the local library.

Fast forward to March 2020, when club members gathered at Karen Willis's home in Lake City. No one



Marlene Armbrecht (back row, right) is pictured with members of her book club.

knew everything was about to change forever due to COVID-19. As the pandemic spread, club members decided to keep meeting via Zoom video calls – a tradition they still maintain.

"Zoom has allowed several members who had moved out of the area to be active in our group again," says Marlene, who notes that club members are responsible for getting their own books.

The ladies maintain an impressive record book listing the titles they've read through the years. Marlene estimates the total is close to 500 books. No time to read the entire book before the club's next gathering? No worries!

"Everyone is always encouraged to come and just listen," Marlene says. "Sometimes our book discussions are fairly short, but we always share what's going on in our busy lives. What a fabulous support group we were – and still are – for each other!"

A club extending far beyond books

These friends know a book club is much more than books. It's a support system, a second family. Once you're in, you're in for life.



Lake City area book club members in 1986.

"I love these ladies," says Diane Ely of Iowa City. The former Lake City resident is grateful to reconnect with the club, thanks to Zoom. "The richness comes from sharing life experiences. These women feel like extended family."

I had the chance to visit with these ladies this past summer at the Lake City Country Club, where they reminisced, shared updates about their family (including their grandchildren) and looked ahead to the club's 51st year. It's clear their connections become more precious as the years go by.

Author Louis L'Amour once said, "Once you read a book you care about, some part of it is always with you." I love how this truth is also reflected in the cherished friendships that have endured a lifetime, thanks to one remarkable book club.

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



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

February 2024

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