

● SEPTEMBER 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



**Understanding the
power of hydro**

**Meet this year's
Shine the Light winners**

Tailgating recipes

Know the facts about a solar lease ▶ See Page 13

CONTENTS



6



8



10

VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 9

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Fall into safety this season

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a cordless leaf blower

10

IN THE COMMUNITY

Shine the Light winners

15

OUT BACK

Hope blooms eternal

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ON THE COVER

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

FALL INTO SAFETY THIS SEASON

BY SCOTT MEINECKE



The kids are back in school and harvest season is almost here. Now is an ideal time to review some important safety precautions for fall.

Safety in the field

As you head out to the fields during harvest, always keep a 10-foot clearance between your equipment and power lines. Take time to study where all overhead power lines, poles and guy wires are located on your property and inform your workers about them. Plan your route between fields and on public roads so that you avoid low-hanging power lines; never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path. When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, always use a spotter to help make sure that contact is not made with a line.

If your equipment comes into contact with a power pole or power line, stay in the cab and call your local utility or 911 to report the contact. Keep others away from you or from touching the vehicle. Do not exit the vehicle until an authority tells you the line has been deenergized. If your equipment is on fire and you need to exit, jump clear of the cab with both feet together and shuffle step with both feet on the ground until you are 50 feet away to avoid electrocution.

Look up and live

Cleaning gutters or working on the roof this fall? Always choose a non-conductive ladder made of wood or fiberglass for utmost safety. Pick a safe route to carry the ladder to the work area, and then carry it horizontally rather than upright. Be aware of electrical lines and tree branches in the area where you are working. When using an extension ladder, tie off the top of the ladder whenever possible.

Use the 1:4 lean ratio – the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet the ladder rises – to ensure a stable working platform.

Move over or slow down

We need your help in keeping our lineworkers, engineers and maintenance workers safe on Iowa's roadways. If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road to work safely; their families thank you!

Test your portable generators

Take advantage of the nice weather to run and test your portable

generators before a potential winter power outage. Operate your generator on a stable, dry surface and avoid rainy or wet conditions. Do not use a generator in an enclosed area; make sure the space is well-ventilated and be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be deadly. Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances to the generator, and always allow the generator to cool before refueling. Finally, never plug your portable generator into your home as it can back feed onto the electric grid and endanger our lineworkers.

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A TORO CORDLESS LEAF BLOWER!

The leaves will soon be falling, and a leaf blower is a must-have tool for your yard. This brushless leaf-blower tool provides powerful air speed and 70 minutes of runtime on a single charge. It comes with a 2.0-Ah battery and a Toro battery charger.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Sept. 30. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the pressure washer from the July issue was **Jennifer Meier**, a **T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the July meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$148,165.21
- Approved amending budget for radio system upgrade
- Approved changes to Policies 114, 207, 301 and 304
- Approved estate patronage retirements as presented
- Approved Basin Electric Power Cooperative annual meeting delegate
- Approved a donation to a nonprofit entity

UNDERSTANDING THE FACILITY CHARGE

Have you ever noticed a monthly facility charge on your Franklin REC electric bill?

This charge is the cost the cooperative incurs when providing electricity to each service location. It includes items such as poles, wire, transformers, meters and the overall routine maintenance needed to provide reliable electricity from the substation to your location.



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THE POWER OF HYDRO

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



As we continue our “all-the-above” journey through different energy generation assets, we are covering hydropower this month.

Since the late 1800s, the U.S. has been utilizing hydropower, with the first plant to begin operations in 1882 in Appleton, Wisconsin. However, the origins of this technology go back thousands of years to the ancient Greeks and Imperial Rome. Another early milestone within the development of hydropower occurred in 1849, when an engineer named James Francis developed the Francis turbine. This type of turbine is the most widely used turbine today.



How hydro plants work

Hydro plants utilize the mechanical advantages of moving water to turn a turbine. This turbine is connected to a generator that creates electricity, which is then fed through a transformer. This allows the electricity to be sized correctly to be sent out onto the grid.

Types of hydroelectric plants

There are two types of hydroelectric setups: dams and run of river.

1 Dams: The Hoover Dam is most likely the first hydro dam that comes to mind, and it is a great example. It's engineered to raise the level of water on one side so it can harness energy from the gravitational force of the water flowing through to the lower reservoir.

Some dams are set up to pump water from the lower reservoir back to the high side of the dam to reuse the water's gravitational force.

Fun fact: The Hoover Dam produces up to 2,074 megawatts, which is enough energy to serve 1.3 million people!

2 Run of river: Run of river setups still use turbines and generators like dams, but instead rely on the natural water flow within a body of water. This form of hydro is more susceptible to the natural rise and fall of the water levels, which can make it an intermittent electric source.

Pros and cons of hydro power

Pros: Overall, hydro is a very reliable source of energy that is cost-competitive with other forms of electric generation. It pairs well with baseload power generation and has a minimum carbon footprint while it is producing electricity. Depending on the setup, some dam reservoirs can help communities with flood control.

Cons: The construction of hydro plants can cause disturbances within the natural ecosystem in which it's being placed. Another potential issue to consider is if a dam were to fail, the potential for flooding and devastation down river. In my opinion, one of the biggest downfalls with hydro is the limited geographical locations it can be built. For example, in Iowa we don't have a lot of big rivers nearby to dam up and generate electricity from.

We hope you have been enjoying our “all-the-above” series. If you have any questions or would like to discuss generation assets more, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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

NOTICE: PAYMENT PHONE NUMBER CHANGE

Franklin REC's secure payment phone number has changed to 1-855-940-3953 as of Sept. 9. All saved payment methods associated with your account will be transferred to this new phone number.

GO ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR A SAFE HARVEST

BY ANNE PRINCE

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make it particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

360 awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to act if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain

bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin where portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or you're concerned about the proximity of power lines to existing grain bins, contact Franklin REC at 641-456-2557.

Smart harvest safety tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.



- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

If equipment has encountered overhead lines, the only time to exit is if there is a fire or another immediate danger takes priority. If this happens, prepare to exit the machinery by crossing your arms around your body, and when ready jump out of the vehicle landing firmly on both feet. Continue hopping away from downed overhead power lines until you reach the minimum safe distance from the contact.

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives.

CELEBRATING CO-OP WORKIVERSARIES

Congratulations to three Franklin REC employees celebrating work anniversaries in September. Their continuous hard work, knowledge and skills help power the cooperative into the future!



LESLIE KAUFMAN TAKES THE HELM OF STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

On July 26, Leslie Kaufman began her new role as the executive vice president and general manager (EVP/GM) of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), the statewide trade association serving Iowa's electric cooperatives. After a comprehensive executive search, the IAEC board selected Kaufman to succeed Chuck Soderberg, who retired this summer after nine years of service at IAEC. She is the association's sixth EVP/GM in IAEC's 82-year history.

We sat down with Kaufman during her first week on the job to learn more about her and the plans she has for serving Iowa's electric cooperatives.



Leslie Kaufman is pictured with Chuck Soderberg, former executive vice president and general manager of the the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Q: What compelled you to apply for the EVP/GM position at IAEC?

After previously serving as an association executive, I believe I can positively contribute to an organization at a higher level.

When I saw the posting for the EVP/GM opening at IAEC, I noted the many similarities between the association and the statewide association I was working for at that time, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC). The programming, staff size and structure were very similar, so my skills and experiences fit well with IAEC's model.

IAEC's core values align with my own personal values, so I knew there would be a sense of shared purpose. Our family has traveled to and through Iowa several times over the years, and once we knew of the opening, my husband and I revisited the Des Moines area. We really liked it and felt like it was a place we could easily call home. I am honored by the board's confidence in me to lead IAEC in this next chapter of serving electric cooperative members.

Q: During your initial days on the job, what were your first impressions of IAEC and Iowa's electric cooperatives?

The staff and members that I have met have welcomed me wholeheartedly. The staff is incredibly talented and committed to serving the membership. The IAEC board takes its responsibilities very seriously and wants the organization to provide value to its members.

Q: In your first few months at IAEC, what will be your focus/strategy?

Overall, I want to ensure a smooth leadership transition for members, staff and the association as a whole.

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces. I also want to know members' thoughts on IAEC's services and programs, particularly if IAEC could provide different or additional services to help members succeed. These discussions tie into the association's strategic objective

to evaluate/expand services. Meeting legislative and government leaders and fellow utility and association peers is also a priority.

Q: What would you like to share with readers about your work with cooperatives in Kansas?

For 20 years, I had the privilege of working for cooperative members in Kansas. As president/CEO of the Kansas Cooperative Council (Council), I worked primarily with agriculture cooperatives of all sizes, from single stations to the largest farmer-owned cooperatives in the U.S. The Council also served as an umbrella association for all types of cooperatives in Kansas, including the statewide associations for

A top priority is visiting member cooperatives and meeting with managers and local board members. I want to learn about each co-op, its successes and the challenges it faces.

electric co-ops and credit unions, the Farm Credit system, and telecommunications cooperatives.

The Council supported KEC, the Kansas statewide, in their lobbying efforts and that relationship eventually led me to KEC over six years ago. While at KEC, I led the organization's advocacy efforts, including public policy development, lobbying, much of the regulatory work, grassroots outreach and legal activities.

Q: What are some activities and achievements from KEC that you are most proud of accomplishing?

During my first legislative session at KEC, we secured a significant victory for co-ops related to service territory protection. In Kansas, municipalities can unilaterally annex co-op electric service territory and displace the co-op. If the area taken was prime for development, but service had not yet been extended into the territory, the co-op was not compensated for that lost opportunity. We capitalized on some unexpected opportunities and succeeded in moving legislation providing notice and an opportunity to bid to remain the service provider. If not allowed to do so, the legislation

My goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative.

created a 10-year window in which the co-op could receive a percentage of revenues from new services that developed in the annexed area.

We secured another significant legislative victory for electric cooperatives, statutorily reversing a decision from the Kansas Corporation Commission that would have required electric utilities to assume liability for marking underground lines they did not own or control and may not have known even existed. We advanced legislation recognizing the electric utility's responsibility for marking extends only to lines the utility owns or controls.

I led the effort to launch an adopt-a-legislator program to connect legislators who did not have co-op service territory in their district with an electric cooperative. Beneficial and meaningful relationships

were forged across party lines and geographic boundaries, fostering greater understanding of cooperatives and the issues they face. Members and lawmakers are truly enjoying opportunities to work together.

Q: Tell us about your family.

My husband Mike is a band and music teacher at a small, rural school. He teaches in the town I grew up in, but I had graduated and left for college before he was hired at the school. He had already committed to teaching the 2024-25 school year when I was offered the EVP/GM position at IAEC, so he will finish out this school year in Kansas and then join me full-time in Iowa.

We have two children. Our oldest, Jared, is married to Megan, and they live in Fairmount, Indiana. Jared is an assistant pastor, and Megan is a social worker. Our daughter Emily is also an assistant pastor and works at a church in Brookings, South Dakota.

Q: What attractions in Iowa are you looking forward to experiencing?

We have already attended an Iowa Cubs game and look forward to seeing more games. We also hear great things about the farmers markets in the Des Moines area. I want to go to Pella Tulip Time next spring.

Q: Do you have a mantra or words to live by?

Professionally, my goal is to do my best each and every day to ensure that Iowa is the best place to operate an electric cooperative, be a co-op member or work for a cooperative. As a 4-H alum, their motto, "To make the best better," still resonates with me and reminds me that there is always something more that can be done to improve a program, service or process. Another favorite saying is from a sign a friend has on her office wall. It's very simple: "Work hard and be nice."

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



Leslie Kaufman (second from right) is pictured with her family, which includes her daughter Emily (left), son Jared and his wife Megan (center), and husband Mike.



TAILGATE BITES

STUFFED HOT PEPPERS

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- ½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
- ½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 6 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder

15-20 mini sweet peppers or hot peppers

Mix all ingredients except peppers. Cut peppers in half lengthwise and remove seeds. Spread cheese mixture in pepper halves. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20-30 minutes. If using sweet peppers, add some chopped hot peppers to the cheese mixture if desired.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

RANCH CHICKEN

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs
Lawry's Seasoned Salt, to taste
- 1 cup ranch style dressing
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Trim excess fat off chicken. Season with Lawry's and place in bowl. Pour ranch dressing over chicken and sprinkle with pepper. Allow to marinate for 1-2 hours or cook immediately. Grill on a wood pellet grill until internal temperature is 165 degrees F. Serves 4-6

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SIMPLE CHEESE DIP

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 block cheese
- 1 can pizza sauce
- tortilla chips

Cook ground beef, then combine with cheese and pizza sauce in a slow cooker. Heat until melted. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 12

Rebecca Hancox • Plano
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

GRIDIRON GUACAMOLE

- 3 avocados, pitted
- 1 small jalapeño, finely chopped, remove seeds if desired
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped plus more for serving
- ¼ cup small white or red onion, finely chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, optional
- tortilla chips

In a large bowl, mix avocados, jalapeño, cilantro, onion, lime juice, salt and nutritional yeast, if desired. Slowly turn bowl as you run a fork through the mixture to ensure guacamole stays chunky. Continue until desired consistency is reached. Top with additional cilantro and serve with tortilla chips. Serves 6

Jeffrey Hedquist • Fairfield
Access Energy Cooperative

CHILI SAUCE FOR HOT DOGS

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups ketchup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 can kidney beans

Brown ground beef, onion and garlic, drain. Add remaining ingredients and simmer until heated. *Serves 16-20*

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

TAILGATE PARTY MIX

- 4 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 4 cups Corn Chex cereal
- 2 cups cheese crackers
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 4 cups cheese popcorn

Mix cereal and crackers together. Melt butter and add taco seasoning, stir well. Pour over cereal and stir until evenly coated. Microwave 3 minutes. Cool for 30 minutes, then stir in popcorn. Store in air-tight container.

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

TAILGATE BRUNCH ENCHILADAS

- 2 cups ham, fully cooked and cubed
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 10 8-inch flour tortillas
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon salt

Combine ham and onion. Place about ½ cup of mixture down the center of each tortilla. Top each with 2 tablespoons cheese. Roll up tortilla and place seam side down in a greased 9x13-inch pan. In a bowl, combine flour, milk, eggs and salt. Stir well, then pour over tortillas. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 25 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes. Sprinkle with any remaining cheese and bake 3 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. *Serves 10*

Mary Beth Peiffer • Cedar Rapids
Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative

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



SLOW COOKER SHREDDED CHICKEN NACHOS

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 1-ounce packet taco seasoning
- 1 15.5-ounce can corn, drained
- 1 15.5-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup salsa
- ½ lime, juiced
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced for garnish
- tortilla chips or cooked rice

Place chicken breasts in bottom of slow cooker. Season the tops of the chicken with half of the taco seasoning. Pour the corn, beans, salsa and remaining taco seasoning on top of the chicken. Cook on low for 6-8 hours, or until chicken is cooked through and the internal temperature has reached 165 degrees F. Remove the chicken to shred, then return to slow cooker. Stir in the lime juice and garnish with fresh cilantro. Serve immediately over tortilla chips or a bed of rice. *Serves 4*

Theresa Hays • Redfield
Guthrie County REC

WANTED:

BREAD WINNERS

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

Deadline is Sept. 30

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



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

MAIL: Recipes
Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
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MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

Judy Hess is pictured second from the left.



COMMUNITY BEACON JUDY HESS AND THE MAGS REVITALIZE FONDA

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

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

The judging committee reviewed essays from 75 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Judy Hess**, who is recognized for community dedication and innovation through Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc.; **Doug Pralle**, who is recognized for his generous efforts through Compassion Flights; and **Beth Thole**, who is recognized for her commitment to preserving the area's agricultural heritage.

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

Learn more at www.iowaShineTheLight.com.

When Kerry Noethe heard about the Shine the Light contest, one name stood out instantly: Judy Hess. As the vibrant founder of Moms and Grandmas for Fonda Inc. (MAGs), Hess represents the heart and soul of community dedication and innovation.

"I've always admired the group's dedication," Noethe shares. "Judy has always been a good leader. I've been part of volunteer programs in the past, and I know how important it was to me when my children were young. Keeping people aware of the community and showing it's a good place to live is valuable even though we're a bedroom community.

Judy is always looking for new ideas, and she's just a great motivator."

Amanda Johnson, a dedicated member of MAGs, highlights the group's profound connection to their hometown.

"I think we have a lot of pride about our hometown of Fonda," Johnson says. "Our kids and our grandkids are really important to us, so it's just a no-brainer to do things that benefit our community and our kids."

For Noethe, now a grandmother herself, the value of a thriving community is deeply personal.



“My grandchildren are 16 and 13, and they have been coming to Fonda since they were babies,” she explains.

“Our little towns are just dying out. We want to keep Fonda a place where our kids can play and enjoy our town, keeping it a community where people want to live and raise their families.”

Maintaining community spirit and vitality

Hess launched MAGs in 2018, and the group’s momentum has been unstoppable ever since.

“We put the group together in 2018, setting up the pool. We put everything toward the youth,” Hess explains. “We gave them a freezer and refrigerator to use. We added a slide, lawn chairs, a water filler and a drinking fountain in the park. We’ve organized various fundraisers for the group.”

Every MAGs project relies on volunteer efforts, donations and grants.

“I got some people together,” Hess recalls. “Everyone was excited about it, and we started doing fundraisers. We have Chicken Bingo, and we’ve organized different community events and hosted a father/daughter dance.”

Other fundraising events feature a variety of activities, including festive Christmas events, an exciting rodeo and many more community gatherings.

MAGs is raising funds to replace the outdated public basketball court. The new court, projected to cost \$78,000, will feature a regulation-size VersaCourt floor with official markings and new baskets. Hess hopes the project will be completed by 2025.

Hess and MAGs are significantly impacting Fonda, turning it into a more vibrant and welcoming community. Their unwavering commitment ensures that the town remains a cherished place for current and future generations.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



WHERE HOPE GROWS WINGS

FLYING THE COMPASSIONATE SKIES WITH DOUG PRALLE

Doug Pralle is pictured with his airplane.

BY RYAN CORNELIUS

Doug Pralle has been flying since 2008, but his journey into the skies started much earlier, rooted in an emotional childhood memory.

“When I was a kid, my Dad died at an early age,” Pralle recalls. “I found some of his pilot books. He was training to be a pilot. I think, as an 8-year-old, it kind of tied me to him. Once I got old enough and could afford it, I got my license.”

One particular childhood memory stands out, shaping his future endeavors.

“My Dad was in a hospital in Chicago, and the doctor gave us his limo to take to a Cubs game. As a kid, you remember that stuff. His kindness created a spark in me,” Pralle reflects.

That spark ignited a spirit for giving back. In 2008 and 2009, Pralle flew a local child and his mother to Rochester for cancer treatment.

“Years later, I started thinking about ways to give back and use some of the skills we built over time, so we started Compassion Flights,” he says.

Wings of hope

Compassion Flights, a nonprofit organization, offers free flights to those in need of medical care. Pralle and Compassion Flights fly patients from

Iowa to surrounding states, working with other groups for longer trips.

The process of applying for a compassion flight is simple. Those in need or who know someone in need can visit www.compassionflights.com, fill out an online flight request, and get a response directly from Pralle or his wife.

When Pralle isn’t flying for Compassion Flights, he’s working his day job as a crop duster, spraying fields with an airplane or helicopter, and farming with his brother. The nonprofit operates entirely on donations.

“We are here for everyone,” Pralle emphasizes. “We work 100% on donations. No one takes any wage. My spray business pays for most of the bills, from the lighting and heating. When people donate money, they donate it directly to a flight.”

Each flight costs about \$500, depending on various factors. Despite the costs and the challenges, Pralle remains committed to his mission.

“Our motto is ‘Where Hope Grows Wings,’” he says. “We’re trying to help somebody not think about what’s actually going on in their life. We want to just get them away from everything for a little bit.”

Through Compassion Flights, Pralle offers more than just transportation – he provides a lifeline – a moment of relaxation and a twinkle of hope for those navigating the toughest times of their lives.

Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



FRANKLIN REC MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN ENERGY TRAIL TOUR

This summer marked the 35th annual Energy Trail Tour season. More than 120 electric cooperative member-owners from western and north-central Iowa participated in the excursions to learn about electric generation and meet the people responsible for delivering electric power to their homes, farms and businesses. The tours, which departed from Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) in Le Mars, led passengers through the Dakotas to learn about and see, firsthand, where their energy comes from and have some fun along the journey.

Franklin REC members who participated in tours visited electric generation facilities and subsidiaries operated by both Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric) and Western Area Power Administration, which power Franklin REC's lines.

Highlights of the tours

Oahe Power Plant and Dam: The first electric generation stop on the three-day journey brought tour guests to Pierre, South Dakota. It helped participants understand the process of hydroelectric generation and the innovation of the rolled-earth dam that created Lake Oahe, the fourth largest reservoir in the U.S. Water generated from the Missouri River Dam system served as the original power source for homes and farms in the region until electric demand surpassed generation capacity in the 1970s, creating

the need to source other energy generation resources.

Antelope Valley Station: The tour included an overview of the model room and a guided walking tour of the coal-fired power plant owned and operated by Basin Electric. The walking tour included stops at the turbine deck, control room, boiler and observation deck on the 17th floor. Participants learned the process of electric generation from coal resources and the investments made by Basin Electric in environmental control technologies to reduce emissions at their facilities.

The Coteau Properties Company Freedom Mine: Tour guests learned how lignite coal is produced at a surface mine and how the land is returned to its original state. A guided drive-through tour took members through active mining areas where they witnessed giant earthmoving equipment in action. The Freedom Mine delivers approximately 16 million tons of coal and reclaims about 600 acres of mined land annually.

Great Plains Synfuels Plant: The trip also offered insight into operations at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant and how coal can be refined into synthetic natural gas and a variety of other products, including anhydrous ammonia, carbon dioxide and diesel exhaust fluid. Basin Electric owns and operates the Great Plains Synfuels Plant through its for-profit subsidiary, Dakota Gasification Company.



In addition to the educational portion of the tour, members enjoyed good food, great fellowship and a few surprise stops along the way.

Energy Trail Tour participants also learned about wind generation and renewable energy resources in America's energy mix. The tour provided a "mobile classroom" on the process of wind generation and how it contributes to an all-of-the-above generation mix that provides reliable and affordable energy to cooperative members.

Over three educational and fun-filled days, members gained a deeper understanding of the cooperative difference, the history of rural electric cooperatives, the seven Cooperative Principles that guide all cooperatives, and the Touchstone Energy® brand's four foundations of service: Integrity, Accountability, Innovation and Commitment to Community. Memories and friendships were made while gaining a deeper appreciation for how reliable power is generated and delivered to the light switch.

If you would like a chance to participate in this experience next summer, follow Franklin REC's *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine for more information regarding the opportunity to enter the drawing in the spring.

2024 tour members included: Franklin REC members John and Bev Coombs and Jeff and Karla Rooney.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Effective May 22, 1991, the Iowa Utilities Commission passed a ruling requiring all non-rate regulated utilities to post the following notice to its membership:

If a member has a question or concern regarding his/her electric service, please write or call Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative at 1560 Highway 65, PO Box 437, Hampton, Iowa, 50441-0437 or 641-456-2557. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day and 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Labor Day to Memorial Day.

If your complaint is related to Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative's service rather than its rates, and Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Commission by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 877-565-4450; by writing to 1375 E. Court Ave, Room 69, Des Moines, Iowa, 50319-0069; or by email to customer@iuc.iowa.gov.

LANDOWNERS: KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE SIGNING A SOLAR PROJECT LEASE

If you're a landowner in rural Iowa, you may have received solicitations in the mail offering land lease options for proposed solar projects. Often, these letters offer attractive per-acre rental payments for various phases of a long-term proposed project, promising steady and predictable income. However, like with all contracts, the devil is in the details. Before signing an agreement, we encourage you to do some homework and seek legal counsel to protect your rights.

Most of these letters are coming from companies outside of Iowa looking to lease land for future solar projects. We have noticed that many of these letters refer erroneously to Iowa law; referencing legislation (Senate File 2356) that did not pass last session. In fact, Iowa's electric cooperatives and other groups registered in opposition to the legislation due to its likely negative impact on electric co-ops and our members.

Some solicitations falsely claim local support for their solar initiative or that the electric output would somehow

benefit your neighbors or the local electric cooperative. We have also seen letters that deceptively include endorsements attributed to the Iowa Farm Bureau, whose legal team is working to remove these perceived endorsements.

Please consult your legal counsel prior to signing any agreement or contract. Your legal counsel can help explain the benefits and disadvantages of these agreements, answer any questions you have and help negotiate fair and equitable terms. These are long-term agreements that can give the solar company exclusive options and control of your land for decades. Spending some extra time upfront to better understand the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement can save you significant time, money and headaches in the future.

For more information, we encourage landowners to reach out to Garrett Thompson, CEO/general manager at Franklin REC. You can contact him directly at 641-456-2557 to learn more about these proposed projects.

WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES

We welcomed two new employees to Franklin REC this summer!



Nick Nelson joined the line crew as an apprentice lineman following his graduation from Des Moines Area

Community College with a degree in electric utility technology. A native of Rockwell, Nelson seized the opportunity to kick-start his career and grow his skill set with our co-op's crew. In his free time, he enjoys being outside hunting, fishing and golfing.



In early July, **Tessa Haller** came on board as our new consumer accountant. Haller, a familiar face in

the Hampton area, brings 14 years of banking experience to Franklin REC. She appreciates the personal atmosphere at the co-op and the variety of tasks she encounters every day. Outside of work, she enjoys time with her family, volunteering on various community boards, reading, quilting and baking.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM STEPHANIE TERRONES' YOUTH TOUR EXPERIENCE



Franklin REC's 2024 Youth Tour participant, Stephanie Terrones, had a memorable experience visiting the nation's capital during this year's event in Washington, D.C. She enjoyed the action-packed itinerary that kept her busy from sunrise to well beyond sunset. Terrones had the opportunity to meet with delegates, visit historical sites and make friends

from across the U.S. She strongly encourages fellow youth to seize the opportunity to represent Franklin REC at the Youth Tour event.

Iowa Youth Leadership Academy registration is now open!

Franklin REC is pleased to once again offer a virtual opportunity for students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model during a webinar series in October.

Register at www.IowaYouthTour.com for a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship! Attend one session, receive a \$10 gift card. Attend two sessions, receive a \$20 gift card. Attend all three sessions, receive a \$100 gift card. Attendance gift cards are provided courtesy of Franklin REC.

ENJOY THE VIEW

As part of Franklin REC's Operation Servant Leadership program, the co-op built and stained five benches to donate to Franklin County Conservation. The group placed the benches along walking trails at four different parks. Go for a stroll and enjoy the fall view while seated at a park bench donated by Franklin REC located on trails at WKW Park, Robinson Park, Mallory Park or Maynes Grove.

Thanks to J & T Machine and Tool, Co. for creating and donating to nameplates for the benches.



MEET THE 2024 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Beth Thole is pictured in the back row, second from left.

KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE BETH THOLE IS COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

BY KELLY SLAGTER

Continued from Page 11

Gary and Karen Trei, members of Osceola Electric Cooperative, immediately thought of Beth Thole when they read the 2024 Shine the Light contest description in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. Thole's enthusiasm and dedication to remembering the past and educating future generations are things to be admired.

"Working with Beth is never dull," explains Karen. "When you volunteer for Beth, you never know which job you'll end up doing or who you'll end up working with."

As a retired teacher, Thole's passion for education lives on in her vision for a pavilion to educate residents of Osceola County about the area's deep agricultural heritage. The Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion on the county fairgrounds began taking shape seven years ago when Thole's research led her to realize the trials and determination of previous generations.

"It's important to keep that history alive and teach the people coming after us what their forefathers did," Thole explains. "The pavilion uses pictures and artifacts from donors to create exhibits that tell stories and trigger memories."

Bringing the community together
Since the Osceola County Agriculture Pavilion began, Thole and the

Agriculture Pavilion board have coordinated several events to unite the community and raise funds for the museum. The success of these events, which were entertaining and educational, is a testament to the integral role of each community member. Fundraisers included an escape room at a historic schoolhouse, cemetery headstone tours with local actors to bring the stories alive, tractor rides, auctions and dinners. Other donations, such as lumber and building materials, have also been abundant.

"When people bring something to donate, they often stick around to help set it up," Thole says.

Her vast knowledge of people within the community has brought together many volunteers, both young and old.

"Osceola Electric Cooperative is happy to contribute to educating the

community on our county's history," says Jeff TenNapel, general manager of Osceola Electric Cooperative.

For one of the exhibits, electric cooperative linemen assembled vintage material to recreate infrastructure, portraying what it looked like when electricity first came to rural Osceola County in the 1940s and 1950s. The display sits out front of the 100-year-old Agriculture Pavilion building as a reminder of how rural electrification dramatically improved the lives of farmers and their families.

Thole and the Agriculture Pavilion board have many ideas for using the \$3,000 donation; among them are purchasing tables for upcoming events and a smart TV to aid in the exhibits.

Article contributed by Kelly Slagter, customer service representative/communicator, Osceola Electric Cooperative.



HOPE BLOOMS ETERNAL

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

If you had to guess, how much of Iowa was once covered with prairies? It's roughly 80%, by some estimates.

This tidbit of information was shared in the Master Conservationist program I completed this summer through Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach. Inspired to learn more, I attended a prairie field day in mid-July at ISU's Horticulture Research Station near Ames. About 75 of us toured a remnant prairie, a reconstructed prairie and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' prairie seed production project, all of which help attract pollinators, protect soil and water quality, and provide an array of other benefits that give me hope for the future.

I was also awestruck by the beauty of ISU's prairie. Purple coneflowers and other native Iowa plants created a kaleidoscope of colors across a shallow valley framed by an oak tree more than 300 years old.

A place for prairie flowers

I was thinking about prairie plants when I recently reconnected with my friend Jennifer Welch, an urban conservationist with the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District in central Iowa. When I asked her about her post on Facebook, in which she asked friends to donate vases for a flower project, she was happy to tell me more.

"I started seeding prairie everywhere I could, including open spaces and along the lanes, after we moved to our farm in 1997," she explains. "I love finding any patches, even small ones, to transform the landscape into its native habitat."

Today, these areas flourish with everything from purple prairie clover plants to tall, yellow compass plants, with their distinctive sandpaper leaves that point north and south (hence the name).

"Our native landscaping is amazing," Jennifer adds. "It's so adaptable and hardy. It's also ever-changing and dazzles us with God's creativity."

Earlier this summer, Jennifer spent an hour harvesting some of her prairie flowers. Then she and the ladies in her Bible study group (called the Bittersweet Road, named for the road near Jennifer's home) designed about 45 vases of flowers filled with bee balm, gray-headed coneflower, pale purple coneflowers and other blooms.

Jennifer dropped off the bouquets at the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center the next morning. She visited with a resident named Richard, who loved his prairie flower delivery.

"He recalled how his father started growing flowers when he was 55, and then he grew flowers, too," Jennifer says. "So, the bouquet made him smile."

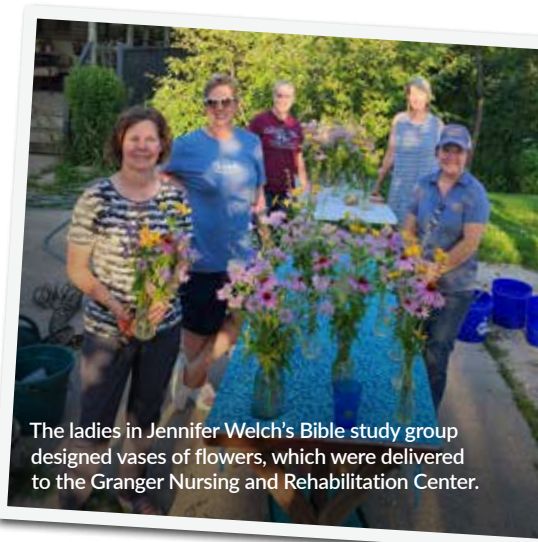
Small acts of kindness can change the world

Jennifer has often seen this kind of "flower power" since she started her flower ministry in 2021. She enjoys hearing the stories recipients share about their gardening and flower memories. Sometimes, they want to talk about the person they plan to share their bouquet with.

Talk about a win-win. Jennifer finds fulfillment by sharing her flowers with others and educating people about Iowa's landscapes and ecosystems – all while bringing people more joy.

"I love to surprise people with flowers and bouquets. It makes them feel special, seen, valued and loved," she says. "It also makes me feel good to help them know they are seen, special, valued and loved by God."

Life is what you make of it, and Jennifer makes the most of her land and her prairie plants. It also



The ladies in Jennifer Welch's Bible study group designed vases of flowers, which were delivered to the Granger Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

proves that no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

While it's easy to sometimes lose faith in people in today's challenging world, sometimes a simple act of kindness – like a small bouquet of prairie flowers – is all it takes to help hope bloom again.

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



A flower recipient enjoys his prairie flower delivery from Jennifer Welch.



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives.

September 2024

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