



Employees recognized for years of service

Franklin REC is pleased to recognize the following employees for their years of service (left to right): Karen Ringleb, office manager/accountant, 30 years; Tom Demro, crew chief/lineman, 5 years; Jens Hovenga, inventory/warehouseman, 5 years; and Brenda DeYounge, First Call/Exede representative, 10 years. Not pictured: Al Fink, crew chief/lineman, 30 years. Congratulations and thank you!

Housing Trust Fund monies available

If you live in Franklin or Worth Counties and meet certain income guidelines, Homeward, Inc's Housing Trust Fund might be the answer to helping you pay for your home's minor repairs or improvements or for down payment assistance.

Homeward's Minor Repair Grant Program is in place to assist extremely low-income homeowners with minor repairs. In addition, rental and utility deposits are available.

The Home Improvement Grant or Loan Program can help with electrical work, heating and cooling systems, energy-efficiency improvements, structural repairs, and a number of other home improvements.

If you are looking for down payment assistance, contact Homeward about the Down Payment Grant or Loan Program.

For more information, contact Cheryl Rhead, program director, at 515-532-6477 or homeward@mchsi.com. You can also visit Homeward's website at homewardiowa.com.

Note: Income guidelines and certain requirements apply within the Housing Trust Fund.



SPARKS of news

Board room highlights

At their most recent meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved submitting \$44,254.66 of work orders and special equipment to RUS for reimbursement.
- Appointed a delegate and alternate for various meetings held in conjunction with NRECA's annual meeting.
- Approved writing off \$7,172.54 of uncollectible accounts.
- Approved updates to the tariff and net metering program.
- Authorized the board president to sign documents with USDA for a pass-through loan of \$720,000 for expansion of a local business.

Annual meeting

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, April 7, for your Franklin REC annual meeting to be held at the Franklin County Convention Center. A meal will be served from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m., and the meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you!

Deadlines for youth approaching

Youth Tour. High school sophomores and juniors in the Franklin REC area have until March 2 to apply for a FREE trip to Washington D.C.

Scholarships. Several scholarship opportunities sponsored by Franklin REC are available. Deadlines are quickly approaching. Visit us at franklinrec.coop or call us at 641-456-2557 for details.



We love our communities

“To move forward, you have to give back.” This quote from Oprah Winfrey reflects the special bond and obligation that ties your electric cooperative to the communities we serve. Because it’s February, we can’t think of a better time to express how much we love serving you and your community.

When we helped to bring electricity to rural Iowa many years ago, quality of life improved. Through the years, other issues needed to be tackled, and we have been at the forefront, helping to address some of those issues. We want to help meet the long-term needs of your community to ensure it continues to thrive.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy, equally important is our mission to enrich your life. This focus to benefit the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. We understand that electricity is a critical need, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community.

Over time, our co-op has evolved to meet your changing needs, thereby improving the quality of life for everyone. And that means many different things. It means programs for Iowa’s youth, such as education scholarships or the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. It means donating time and resources to community programs.

Our community-focused programs and other giving projects have helped build fire stations, fed hungry families, enabled those in need to keep the lights on, and so much more – and we couldn’t do any of this without you.

As a local business, we are proud to power your life and bring good things to the communities we serve. We hope you will continue to guide our efforts by sharing your perspective as we plan for the future. While the larger environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same. Working together, we can continue to do good things.

Help keep lineworkers safe

It’s nearing 5 p.m. on a workday. Your boss wanted that last-minute report and your kids need to be picked up. You jump in your car and on the way you approach a work zone. You don’t have time to slow down so you rush through it and ignore the orange work zone signs.

You’re having a garage sale and you think posting a sign on a utility pole won’t hurt. Everyone does it, right?

But either of these scenarios could injure or kill one of our lineworkers.

The job of an electric lineworker is not easy. Lineworkers take great pride in providing safe and reliable service, but their job involves working on and around live power out in the elements. We ask you to do your part to keep them safe:

- 1. Slow down and move over in work zones.** Cars or trucks that go too fast not only endanger workers on the ground but can also put a lineworker working high up in a bucket in danger by causing it to move or sway.
- 2. Do not post anything on a utility pole,** especially with staples, nails, or tacks. These can puncture insulated gloves or other protective clothing and expose workers to high voltages.
- 3. Never plug a generator into any wall outlet.** The power that back feeds into the electric line could electrocute a utility worker.

We appreciate your help in keeping our employees safe.

“ Please be patient when the power goes out. Workers need to efficiently and **safely** restore power.”



2020 rebate changes

On April 1, 2020, we will be adjusting the following rebates:

- Central Air: > SEER 15 \$50/unit; > SEER 16 \$100/unit
- Lighting: We will no longer rebate CFL bulbs or T8 or T5 fixtures. We will rebate LED bulbs and fixtures for retrofit only, not new homes or structures.
- Water Heaters: We will no longer rebate solar water heaters. In addition, low-flow shower heads and sink aerators will not be given to members purchasing a water heater.

Remember that we have added an EV charger rebate and an additional \$100/ton to the air source rebate if you install automatic gas backup (subject to future load control). Contact us to discuss rebate opportunities.

RURAL Act signed into law

In December, President Trump signed into law the RURAL Act, protecting more than 900 electric cooperatives throughout the nation from the risk of losing their tax-exempt status when they accept government grants for disaster relief, broadband service, and other programs that benefit co-op members.

The RURAL Act was a top legislative priority for cooperatives in 2019 because of the profound threat to the business model of not-for-profit co-ops. Tens of thousands of co-op leaders, employees, and members across the country rallied to advocate passage of the bill.

Lawmakers passed the popular bipartisan legislation in the final hours of the 2019 session as part of a larger tax and spending bill that funds the government through September 2020.

The bill's passage fixes a prob-



lem created in 2017 when Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which redefined government grants to co-ops as income rather than capital. That change made it difficult for many co-ops to abide by the 15% limit on non-member income to keep their tax-exempt status. The RURAL Act once again exempts grants from being counted as income and is retroactive to the 2018 tax year.

Without the fix, some co-ops would have had to start paying taxes this spring after receiving grants in 2018 or 2019 to repair storm damage, bring high-speed internet to rural communities, or invest in renewable energy and energy-efficiency programs. Many co-op leaders feared they would have to raise rates for members to pay the new taxes.



Save energy in home office

More people are working from their homes instead of commuting to offices. If you're one of them, consider these energy-efficient features for your home office:

- If you will be away from work for more than two hours, shut down your computer. Turn it off when you're finished for the day.
- Enable the power management features on your computer. These are the features that automatically put your computer into standby mode when it's not in use.
- Shut off printers, copiers, scanners, and other large equipment when they are not in use. Plug them into one power strip to shut them off with one flick of the switch. If you often forget to turn them off, use a power strip with a timer to power down each night.
- When buying new equipment, look for the Energy Star label on all computers and printers. Choose equipment that performs more than one operation—like a printer that also scans and copies, for instance. You'll have fewer devices to plug into the wall.
- Though you may be home all day, it's a waste to heat the whole house when you are spending time in only one room. Instead, lower your home's thermostat and use a portable space heater just for your office while you're working.

Contact your Touchstone Energy cooperative for more energy-saving ideas. We're here to help!

PILLOW TALK SAFETY

Taking your cell phone to bed with you can do a lot more harm than interfere with your sleep.

For more information, visit:

[SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

Develop energy-efficiency habits

Forming a new habit may take time. But developing energy-efficiency habits is worth it when one considers the potential time and money saved.

For energy-efficiency changes that are easy to implement, consider the following:

- For all types of home cooling systems, you can reduce energy use by increasing the temperature when you are away. However, home heating is different. If your home has a heat pump, the most efficient option is to keep it constantly set to a moderate temperature. For other types of home heating systems, you can save money by adjusting the temperature when you are away from home.
- Electricity demand is at its highest in the afternoon and early evening. You can save money and ease stress on the electric grid by doing activities that require lots of energy in late evening or at night.
- If you are in the market, consider purchasing efficient Energy Star appliances.
- Turn off or unplug electronics you are not using. Use power strips so that you can turn multiple electronics on and off at once.
- Use efficiency settings on televisions, computers, and other electronics.
- Consider plugging your computer and television into smart power strips. Smart strips sense when a computer is in sleep mode and when a TV is turned off. The smart strip will turn off all related electronics.
- Upgrade caulk, weather stripping, and insulation. If your home leaks air, you are losing money and wasting energy.
- Change water heater settings to 120 degrees. Much of the energy a water heater consumes goes to storing the water at the selected temperature.
- When you leave a room, turn off lights, fans, and electronics that are not in use.

Contact Chad Foster, Franklin REC energy advisor, at 641-456-2557 for an energy assessment and for more ideas on making energy efficiency a habit.



Turn thermostats down in the winter and up in the summer. Dress in layers to stay warm or use fans to stay cool.

Nominate a veteran for an expedition



Do you know a combat-wounded or training-injured veteran with a VA disability rating? If so, contact Franklin REC to nominate them for a 2020 CoBank/No Barriers expedition. Nominees may be from any branch of service.

A brief nomination form will need to be filled out, and the

veteran must complete the CoBank/No Barriers application. More information is available on the No Barriers page on CoBank.com.

Although nominations will be accepted through April 15, 2020, the program will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis so it is important to submit nominations, and veterans to complete their applications, as soon as possible.

Once applications are received, nominees will be contacted by No Barriers to begin the next steps in the process. Additional information about No Barriers and its veterans (Warriors) expeditions and what they entail may be found on the No Barriers website at nobarriersusa.org/no-barriers-warriors/overview/.



Congratulations!

Martha Stadlander, Thornton, won a Canon photo printer from *Living with Energy in Iowa* magazine. Each month the magazine has an Editor's Choice Contest, and Martha entered the December contest.

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