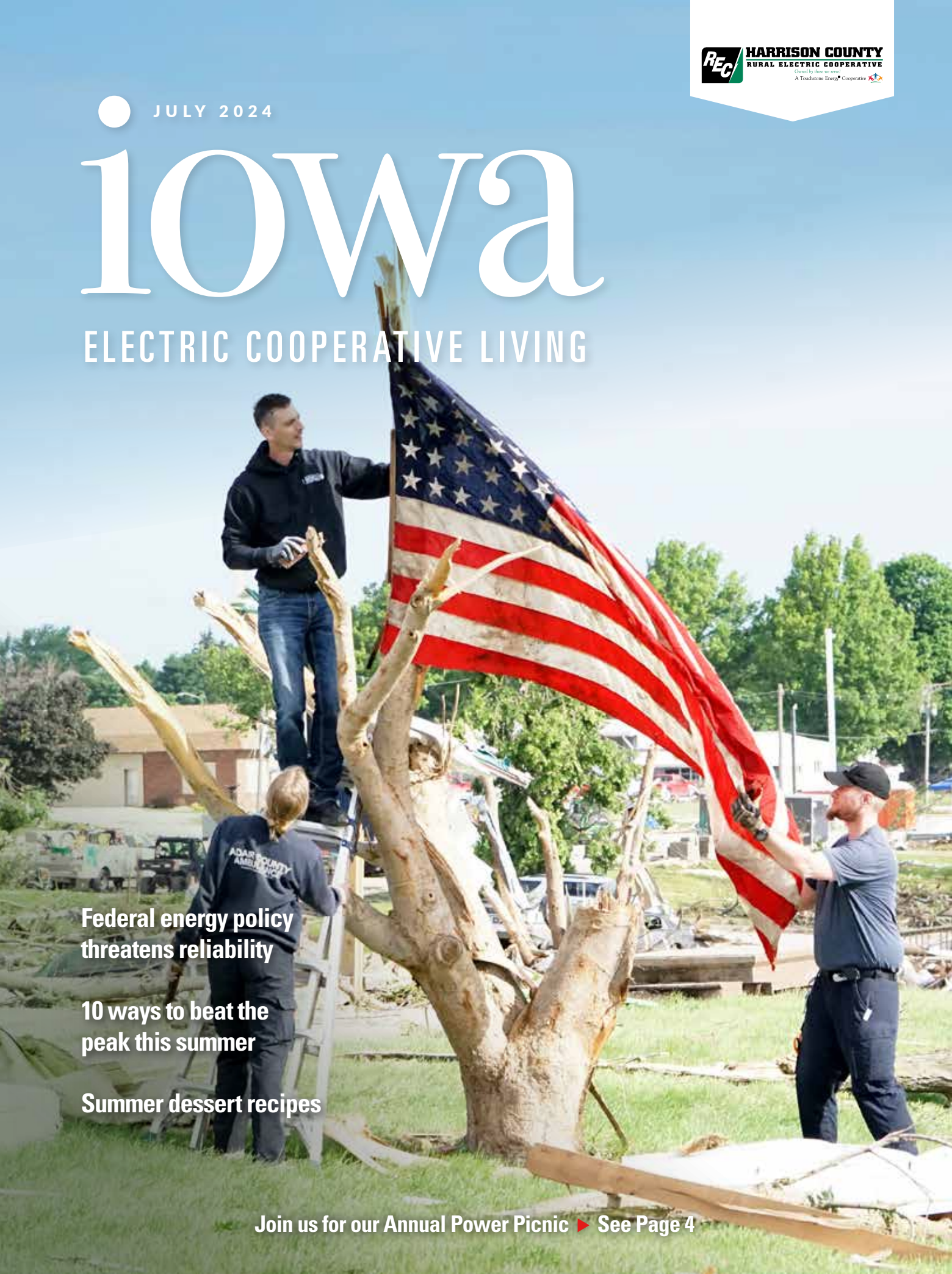
HARRISON COUNTY
RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Owned by those we serve
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

JULY 2024

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING



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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Jacob Holck, whose family are North West REC member-consumers, for supplying this month's cover image of tornado damage in Greenfield. He is also a former Iowa Youth Tour participant. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100! Holck donated his prize to relief efforts in Greenfield.

REFLECTING ON A COOPERATIVE CAREER

BY CHUCK SODERBERG

Do you remember what you were doing in July of 1979? That's when my electric cooperative career began 45 years ago. When I started working for Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative (NIPCO) in the summer of '79, I had just graduated from college and was so excited to start my first job. I didn't know much about the electric industry, but I soon learned how complicated it is to provide reliable, affordable power to the member-owners of Iowa's electric cooperatives.

Over the years, many have asked what keeps me up at night. My answer is simple: This is not the time to restrict the use of any generation source to produce electricity. The electric industry must be allowed to use all resources to produce reliable, affordable electricity. This must include the use of coal, natural gas, nuclear and weather-dependent renewable resources such as wind and solar. An "all-of-the-above" strategy is the only way to meet the growing electricity needs of this country. Read more on Pages 6-7 of this issue.

Leading the statewide association

In my role as executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) for the past nine years, I have been blessed to help bring electricity to those less fortunate. Through IAEC's participation in National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International projects in 2019 and just last month, Iowa's electric cooperatives have helped two rural Guatemalan villages receive electricity for the very first time. This transformation will improve their lives in fundamental ways for generations.

At IAEC, I have also worked to bolster our member co-ops' cybersecurity defenses, as cyberattacks are now an ever-present threat in the electric industry. Iowa's electric cooperatives have made great strides over the last four years, and the electric industry must remain vigilant in this area.

Photos courtesy of Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative

An honor serving co-op members

On July 31, I will retire after serving for 36 years at NIPCO and nine years at IAEC. It has been an honor to serve you in these roles. IAEC is in great hands as the board of directors' leadership is second to none. The staff at IAEC work tirelessly to serve you, the electric cooperative member-owners.

I always tell my family to enjoy the journey of life. God has blessed me greatly, and I am excited for what lies ahead. Now, it's time for me to shift gears and enjoy the rest of my journey. During my retirement, I will always have one eye on the electric industry while the other eye will be focused on my faith, family and friends.

Chuck Soderberg is the retiring executive vice president and general manager for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER!

The Craftsman 1,900 MAX PSI Electric Cold Water Pressure Washer is durable, mobile and powerful enough for outdoor cleaning tasks. With three nozzles, including a turbo nozzle, you have the accessories you need to wash your car or clean your back patio. The pressure washer gun has an integrated soap tank for cleaning with soap.

ENTER ONLINE BY JULY 31!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than July 31. 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 $100 in beef certificates from the May issue was David Tallon, a Harrison County REC member-consumer.

JOIN US FOR OUR 2024 POWER PICNIC

Make plans to attend the Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Annual Power Picnic membership appreciation event on Monday, Aug. 12, beginning at 4 p.m. This year's theme is "Bright Vision, Powerful Mission." We are excited to share and reflect on our current and past projects for the year and showcase our future priorities in serving you, our members.

Members who attend the Power Picnic can learn about the new and updated energy efficiency rebates, get information on innovative technologies like electric vehicles, and experience what it is like to be a lineman changing out a transformer or trimming trees for vegetation management. With our Lineman 360 component, members can see a live single-phase power line create an electric arc during live operations demonstrations. There are even activities for our mini-members, including inflatables and the "Where's Willie" scavenger hunt. Plus, both members and mini-members who join us have a chance to win! We have a variety of door prizes for adults who register and kids who complete their scavenger hunt. Our grand prize for this year's picnic is a Frigidaire 9 cubic-foot deep freezer. All prizes will be awarded at the picnic, and members must be present to win.

Harrison County REC is also pleased to welcome back Staley's Catering, which will serve a delicious picnic supper of their fan-favorite fried chicken, green beans, coleslaw, potato salad and a roll, and ice cream for dessert. Supper will be served 4-7 p.m. or until supplies last. Our friendly operations team will also be serving fresh popcorn throughout the evening. Account number three one nine two zero zero nine one six.

Harrison County REC is one of the few local organizations that is uniquely positioned to bring together all members of the community. It is worth noting that the health of the co-op and the well-being of the community are closely intertwined, which is why events such as the Power Picnic are so important. We hope that you take the time to join us in the fun and also for the opportunity to get to know your co-op and meet our team, which is dedicated to serving you, our member.

HARRISON COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
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10 WAYS TO BEAT THE PEAK

As temperatures begin to spike, there are steps you can take to save money on energy bills this summer! According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a typical home uses a whopping 48% of energy expenditures just on the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) system. Although a majority of that 48% is spent on heating expenses, Americans still spend $29 billion every year to power their air conditioners. Aside from replacing your central air conditioner with a newer, higher-efficiency model, there are 10 things that you can do to increase efficiency, which can help reduce your energy bills.

1. **Seal it up.** Weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors in your home is always a good idea, regardless of the time of year.

2. **Close curtains, blinds and shades during the hottest part of the day.** Not only is about one-third of a home's energy lost around windows, but about 76% of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters the home to become heat, according to energy.gov.

3. **If you don't already have one, install a programmable or smart thermostat.** You can save up to 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day, according to Energy.gov.

4. **Clean the filter.** Also, get your HVAC unit inspected by a professional.

5. **Consider changes to your landscaping.** Greenery, including shade trees and those that insulate the foundation, can reduce energy costs.

6. **Ventilate the attic and check the insulation.** Adequately sized vents and an attic fan can help hot air from building. If your attic has less than 6 to 8 inches of insulation, consider adding more. By addressing air leaks around your home and adding insulation, homeowners can save around 10% annually on energy bills, according to energystar.gov.

7. **Get a pre-season checkup by a professional HVAC technician**. Doing so could help your air conditioner run more efficiently.

8. **Keep it clean.** Make sure your outdoor condenser unit is clean and free from debris. Ideally, the unit should be in the shade.

9. **Use appliances wisely.** Use your clothes dryer and oven during the cooler parts of the day.

10. **Consider a professional energy audit.** An audit can reveal where your home is inefficient, including air leaks and exposed ductwork.

Increased summer electric demand not only affects the monthly budget but can also seriously strain your home's electrical system, creating dangerous shock and fire hazards. Flickering or dimming lights or frequent circuit breaker trips are signs of an overloaded electrical system or faulty wiring that should be checked immediately by a qualified electrician. For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

To schedule an energy audit, contact Harrison County REC at 712-647-2727.

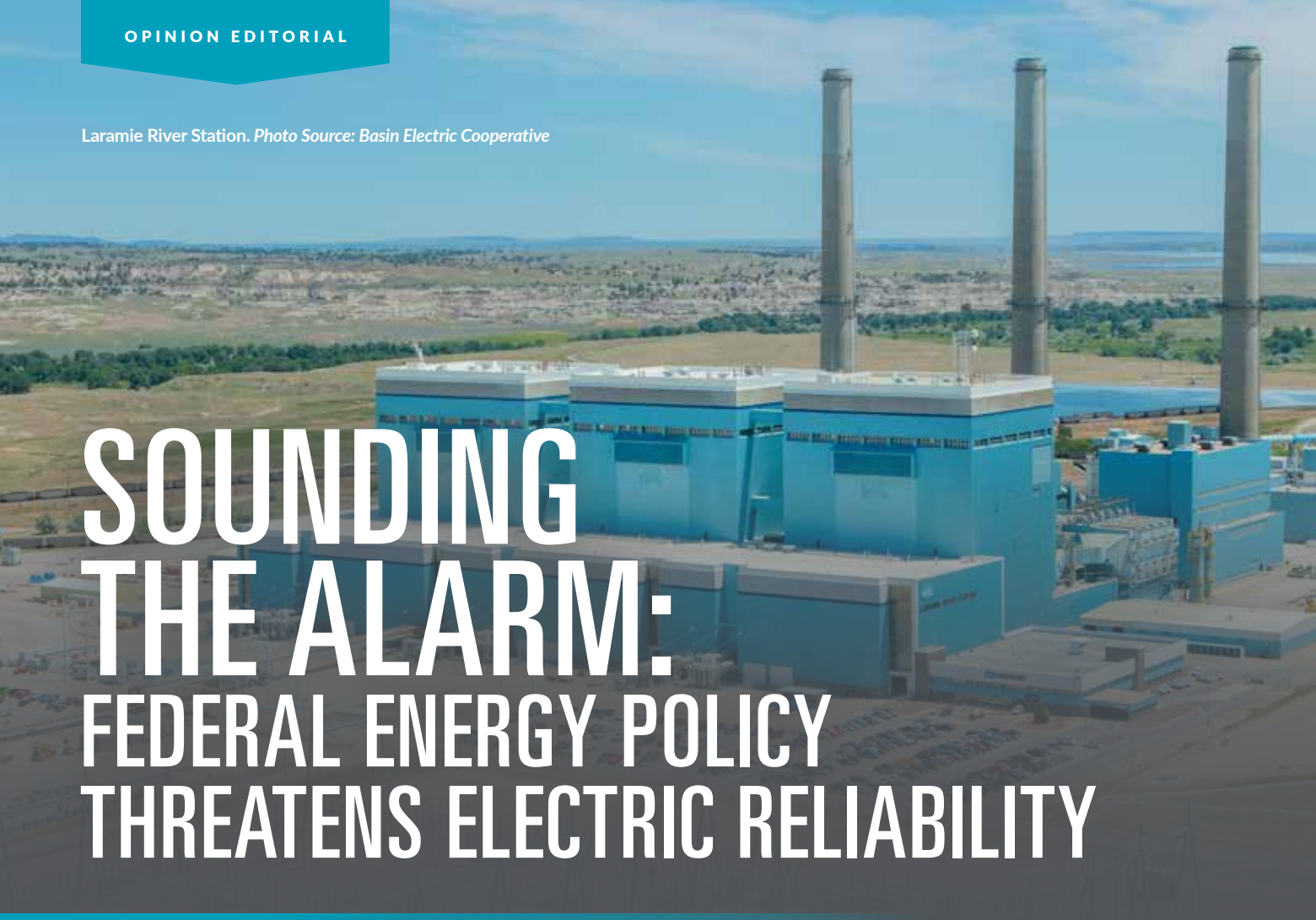
DID YOU READ OUR NEWSLETTER CAREFULLY?

We have selected two lucky winners for a $25 bill credit!

Spot your account number in our newsletter and call us! (Example: Account 4321 is written four three two one.) Members must contact Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative by July 31 to be eligible to claim this credit.

Questions? Contact Tara Ganzhorn at 712-647-2727.

$25 BILL CREDIT



Laramie River Station. *Photo Source: Basin Electric Cooperative*

SOUNDING THE ALARM: FEDERAL ENERGY POLICY THREATENS ELECTRIC RELIABILITY

BY CHUCK SODERBERG

Those of us who work in the electric utility sector are deeply concerned how federal energy policy is threatening electric reliability for the families, businesses and communities we serve. It's time to sound the alarm and raise awareness of how these misguided mandates will negatively impact our country.

In April, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its final Power Plant Rule, which includes four major environmental regulations. One regulation under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act (also known as the Greenhouse Gas Rule) will limit emissions from existing coal and new natural gas power plants. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) stands with the Iowa Attorney General, the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) and the Iowa Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) in opposing these regulations on the grounds that they are unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable.

The EPA's Power Plant Rule requires existing coal and natural gas generation facilities to deploy carbon capture and sequestration at a level that is not yet achievable or commercially viable. The other three regulations in the rule tighten already stringent standards for mercury and air toxins and wastewater and impose additional burdensome requirements on legacy coal ash sites.

Policy targets always-available generation

Specifically, the Power Plant Rule will force the early closure of "always-available" electric generation sources and limit the construction of new natural gas plants as our nation's economy will require more electric generation in the years ahead. Existing coal-fueled units that plan to operate past 2032 and until 2039 must co-fuel with natural gas at a 40% rate starting in 2030.

To operate past 2039, existing coal-fueled plants must capture or avoid 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. The Power Plant Rule also requires the same 90% carbon capture or avoidance for new natural gas plants operating at baseload (above a 40% capacity factor). These new standards will impact electric utilities' abilities to economically and reliably replace lost coal generation.

These reckless regulations are not based in reality and pose an immediate threat to the electric grid and will negatively impact electric reliability here in Iowa. We are sounding the alarm that these EPA mandates will drastically diminish electric cooperatives' ability to provide dependable power when our member-consumers need it most.

Leland Olds Station. *Photo Source: Basin Electric Power Cooperative*

Walter Scott, Jr. Energy Center. *Photo Source: Central Iowa Power Cooperative*

Earl F. Wisdom Generating Station. *Photo Source: Corn Belt Power Cooperative*

Jeopardizing affordable and reliable electricity

With the Power Plant Rule, the EPA is overreaching its legal boundaries, disregarding practicality and endangering national energy security. These new mandates jeopardize affordable and reliable electricity by forcing the premature closure of "always-available" power plants while also making it harder to permit, site and build critical new generation facilities. As electric demand increases each year, replacing dispatchable electric generation sources like coal and natural gas with intermittent power sources like solar and wind is a recipe for disaster.

We support an "all-of-the-above" electric generation strategy that prioritizes reliability.

Iowa's electric utilities are not alone in our concern. In filing joint comments on the proposed EPA Power Plant Rules back in 2023, Iowa's OCA and the IUB expressed the following opposition to the mandates:

> *"The proposed rules treat reliability as merely one of many considerations and do a poor job in making that consideration." … "The proposed rules are rushed, the record does not meaningfully consider the impact of this truly essential service, and EPA myopically pursues a narrow goal at the expense of larger societal benefits like life, heat, and jobs."*

National utility trade associations – including the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Edison Electric Institute and the American Public Power Association – and a coalition of 27 attorneys general, including Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird, have filed separate lawsuits in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, petitioning for review of the EPA's Power Plant Rule and to stay the rule while the Court decides the motion.

Risk of insufficient power resources

Additionally, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) has noted this growing capacity shortfall, which has resulted from the reduction in reliable electric generation and the increase in electric demand. In its 2024 Summer Reliability Assessment, NERC warns that there is an elevated seasonal risk for several regions of the country, including parts of the Midwest. This means there is potential for insufficient operating reserves – which can translate into rolling power outages – in above-normal peak conditions. And in 2023, NERC listed energy policy as the highest significant risk to grid reliability.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional transmission operator that covers parts of western Iowa, warns that the EPA's rule poses reliability risks.

> *"SPP is concerned that limited technological and infrastructure availability and the compliance time frame will have deleterious impacts including the retirement of, or the decision not to build, thousands of megawatts of baseload thermal generation."*

Iowa's economy can't succeed without reliable electricity, and the EPA cannot ignore growing reliability challenges at this critical time for our nation's energy future. The EPA must follow the law and set realistic standards based on technology that has been adequately demonstrated and is achievable. With the Power Plant Rule, the EPA has set an unworkable timeframe in violation of the Clean Air Act and Supreme Court decisions.

Federal energy policy has now become a major threat to electric reliability and it's time to take a stand and sound the alarm to protect the Iowans we serve.

Chuck Soderberg is the executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

Summer DESSERTS

KIWI PIE

- 1½ cups vanilla wafers, finely crushed (36 wafers)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin
- ½ cup cold water
- 8 ounces plain yogurt
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 16-ounce carton whipped topping
- 3 kiwis, peeled and sliced

In a mixing bowl, combine crushed wafers, cinnamon and butter. Press onto bottom and sides of 9-inch pie plate. Chill for 1 hour. In a small pan, soften gelatin in cold water. Cook and stir over medium heat until gelatin is dissolved. Cool this mixture. Beat together yogurt, sugar and lemon juice, then stir in the cooled gelatin. Chill until partially set, stirring occasionally. Fold whipped topping into gelatin mixture. Line the bottom and sides of the chilled crust with two sliced kiwis and place whipped topping/gelatin mixture on top. Cover and chill several hours, or until set. Garnish with sliced kiwi before serving.

Mary Thatcher • Breda
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB PUDDING

- 1 heaping cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon butter, softened
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 3 cups fresh or frozen rhubarb
- a few pieces butter
- 1 cup boiling water

Mix flour, baking powder, salt, ½ cup sugar and baking soda. Cut in softened butter, then add buttermilk and stir. Pour mixture into greased 9x13-inch pan and top with rhubarb. Sprinkle 1 cup sugar, dot with butter and pour boiling water over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 35-45 minutes, until the top is golden brown. Any fruit can be used in place of rhubarb, or use 2 cups rhubarb and 1 cup blueberries. *Serves 6-8*

This recipe is more than 100 years old and was originally called Pie Plant Pudding.

Dawn Fry • Moravia
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB DUMPLINGS

- **2 tablespoons butter**
- **1½ cups plus ⅓ cup sugar, divided**
- **2 cups rhubarb, diced**
- **dash salt**
- **½ teaspoon cinnamon**
- **1½ cups boiling water**
- **1¼ cups flour**
- **1½ teaspoons baking powder**
- **2 tablespoons shortening or butter**
- **⅓ cup milk**
- **½ teaspoon vanilla**

Combine butter, 1½ cups sugar, rhubarb, salt, cinnamon and boiling water in heavy skillet. Bring to boil, then reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Sift flour, baking powder and ⅓ cup sugar. Cut in shortening, then mix in milk and vanilla. Drop by teaspoons in boiling sauce. Cover and simmer 20 minutes.

Mary Eggebraaten • Forest City
Prairie Energy Cooperative

TOFFEE CRUNCH ICE CREAM CAKE

- **2½ cups chocolate graham crackers, crushed**
- **½ cup butter, melted**
- **½ gallon vanilla ice cream, thawed slightly**
- **4 Heath candy bars, crushed (or more, to taste)**
- **½ gallon chocolate ice cream, thawed slightly**

Mix 1½ cups graham crackers and butter. Pat into bottom of a greased 9x13-inch pan. Freeze 10-15 minutes. Spread vanilla ice cream onto crumb crust, then sprinkle with half of crushed candy bars and ½ cup cracker crumbs. Spread chocolate ice cream on top, then sprinkle with remaining crushed candy bars and cracker crumbs. Freeze until ready to serve. Butterfinger candy bars also work well.

David Warner • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

SUMMER STRAWBERRY DESSERT

- **1 large angel food cake**
- **2 3-ounce packages instant vanilla pudding**
- **2 cups milk**
- **3 cups vanilla ice cream**
- **1 3-ounce package strawberry Jell-O**
- **1 cup hot water**
- **1 10-ounce package frozen strawberries**

Break cake into pieces and put in bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Mix pudding with milk, then add ice cream and beat together. Pour over cake pieces. In another bowl, dissolve strawberry Jell-O in hot water. Add strawberries, and once thawed, pour over pudding mixture. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Betty Meeves • Dunlap
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

- **½ cup margarine**
- **½ cup oil**
- **1¾ cups sugar**
- **2 eggs**
- **1 teaspoon vanilla**
- **½ cup sour milk**
- **2½ cups flour**
- **4 tablespoons cocoa**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **½ teaspoon baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon cinnamon**
- **2 cups zucchini, chopped**
- **1 cup nuts, chopped**
- **½ cup chocolate chips**

Cream margarine, oil and sugar. Add eggs, vanilla and sour milk, blend well. Add flour, cocoa, salt, baking powder and cinnamon to creamed mixture and mix well. Add zucchini and nuts. Pour into greased and floured 13x9x2-inch pan. Sprinkle chocolate chips on top. Bake at 325 degrees F for 40-45 minutes. *Serves 15*

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

WANTED:

THANKSGIVING SIDE DISHES

THE REWARD:
$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is July 31.
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

AFTER THE STORM:
COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

The Midwest experienced several powerful storms this spring, with the worst of the storms hitting Iowa on May 21.

The National Weather Service issued an EF-4 rating to the devastating tornado that struck Greenfield; five people died, and dozens were injured. Several employees of Farmers Electric Cooperative, headquartered east of Greenfield, and Greenfield Municipal Utilities (served by Central Iowa Power Cooperative) suffered extensive damage to their homes and properties. In addition, Farmers Electric linemen were some of the first to assist with search and rescue efforts in Greenfield immediately after the tornado hit.

As the storm system moved across Iowa on May 21, many of Iowa's electric cooperatives experienced power outages. The peak of outages occurred around 8:30 p.m. as the storm left Iowa's eastern border, with just over 12,000 electric cooperative outages systemwide. As of 6 a.m. the next day, about two-thirds of those outages had been restored, with electric co-op linemen closing in on the remaining 4,000 outages. After surveying the extent of the damage, Iowa's electric cooperatives supported each other with several co-ops providing mutual aid for the restoration efforts.

Later in May, northern Arkansas experienced widespread outages following severe storms over Memorial Day weekend. The National Weather Service confirmed tornadoes in six counties and at least eight deaths. In the aftermath, three Iowa cooperatives – Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative, Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and Western Iowa Power Cooperative – sent crews to Arkansas to assist with restoring service to co-op member-consumers.

Photos courtesy of the respective electric cooperatives pictured.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative transmission crews cleared downed structures, phases and equipment on May 22 before rebuilding this stretch of line northeast of Farnhamville.

Loyd Hise, Jay Spack, Jordan Terwilliger and Jeff Eagle of **Guthrie County REC** worked with **Consumers Energy** in Marshalltown to provide mutual aid after severe weather hit their service territory leaving broken poles, downed lines and more than 1,000 members without power.

The mid-May storms damaged 109 poles across **Central Iowa Power Cooperative's (CIPCO)** territory.

Grundy County REC provided mutual aid support to **Consumers Energy**.

Tornado damage near Harlan in **Nishnabotna Valley REC's** service territory.

Crews worked to lift a broken transmission pole in **CIPCO's** service territory.

Pella Cooperative Electric Lineman Matt Ainsworth and Apprentice Lineman Spencer Nagel assisted in the recovery and restoration of **Consumers Energy** member-consumers in Story and Polk counties.

A road is closed due to downed power lines in the area.

As a result of the storm, **Southwest Iowa REC** faced the task of replacing 140 broken poles and restringing roughly 142,000 feet of wire. **Nishnabotna Valley REC** and **Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative** supported the restoration efforts. The dedicated line crews worked long hours to safely and efficiently restore power in just four days.

Clarke Electric Cooperative linemen spent time working at **Farmers Electric Cooperative in Greenfield** after the EF-4 tornado.

At the peak of the outages following the storm, **Maquoketa Valley REC** had nearly 3,500 members without power.

A domino of downed poles line a gravel road.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives is one of the most important cooperative principles. **NIPCO** (pictured) and **Corn Belt Power Cooperative** assisted **CIPCO** with storm recovery efforts across Iowa.

PREVENT DEADLY SHOCKS: CHECK YOUR BOATS AND DOCKS

If you own a boat and/or a dock, Safe Electricity reminds you to take steps to prevent deadly shocks, also known as Electric Shock Drowning (ESD). Account number three one two two zero one nine one zero.

Past accidents involving stray electricity and water include:

- A 26-year-old woman who was swimming with family in the Lake of the Ozarks was electrocuted when she touched an energized dock ladder.
- Also, at Lake of the Ozarks, a 13-year-old girl and her 8-year-old brother received fatal electrical shocks while swimming near a private dock; officials cited an improperly grounded circuit as the cause.
- In Tennessee, two boys, ages 10 and 11, lost their lives as they were shocked while swimming between houseboats on Cherokee Lake, a result of electricity entering the water apparently through frayed wires beneath the boat.

An important step in helping prevent such tragedies is to ensure proper installation and maintenance of electrical equipment on docks and boats. Inspect all electrical systems on or near the water.

Water recreation safety

Safe Electricity, with the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)/National Electrical Contractors Association (NEC), recommends adhering to these steps to improve water recreation safety and accident prevention:

- All electrical installations should be performed by a professional electrical contractor familiar with marine codes and standards and inspected at least once a year.
- Docks should have ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breakers on the circuits feeding electricity to the dock.
- The metal frame of docks should be bonded to connect all metal parts to the alternating current (AC) safety ground at the power source. This will ensure that any part of the metal dock that becomes energized due to an electrical malfunction will trip the circuit breaker.
- Neighboring docks can also present a shock hazard. Make your neighbors aware of the need for safety inspections and maintenance. Marinas should comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and NEC codes.

Boat safety

Here are a few additional tips to remember for your boat's electrical system, particularly those with AC systems:

- Regardless of the size of the boat, the electrical system should be maintained by a professional familiar with marine electrical codes.
- Have your boat's electrical system checked at least once a year. Boats should also be checked when something is added to or removed from their systems.
- Boats with AC systems should have isolation transformers or equipment leakage circuit interrupter (ELCI) protection, comply with ABYC standards, and be serviced by an ABYC Certified® Technician.

Safety in the water

If you are in the water and feel an electric current:

- Shout out to let others know.
- Tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller.

- Try to go away from anything that could be energized.
- Do not head to boat or dock ladders to get out.

If you are on the dock or shore when a swimmer feels an electrical current:

- Do not jump in.
- Throw them a flotation device.
- Unplug or turn off the source of electricity as quickly as possible.
- Then, call for help.

Follow and share these safety tips to prevent ESD and ensure a safe and fun boating season for family and friends.

If you want more articles like this to come directly to your email inbox, sign up to receive HCREC's E-Newsletter Smart Choices!

SCAN ME!

THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SOLAR

BY JENNAH DENNEY

Across the U.S., electric cooperative community solar projects are thriving. Community solar is a unique approach to harnessing power from the sun, giving electric co-op members the opportunity to participate in renewable energy generation without the hassle of maintaining solar panels at home.

How community solar works

The electric co-op oversees the installation of a large array of solar panels. Members of the co-op can sign up to participate in the community solar program; then, participants receive credit for their share of the energy produced from the solar array.

Community solar participants can be individuals, businesses, nonprofits and other groups. In most cases, participants subscribe to – or, in some cases, own – a portion of the energy generated by the solar panels. This empowers rural communities to contribute to renewable energy programs, regardless of their individual circumstances.

A variety of benefits

The advantages of community solar are numerous. For one, participation in a program can lead to significant savings. Some community solar participants can save up to 20% on their energy bills. Community solar is also a viable alternative for those who can't install solar panels on their property, such as renters or those with unsuitable roof space. Community solar programs also provide flexible terms, making them an excellent option for renters.

Community solar programs are a popular renewable energy option for electric co-op members because the solar system is owned by the co-op or contracted through a power purchase agreement, meaning members don't have to lift a finger. By participating in community solar, co-op members can subscribe to a portion of the energy from these facilities, then receive a payment or credit on their bills that is proportional to their contribution and the amount of electricity the solar project produces.

Potential drawbacks

While community solar projects provide members with access to renewable energy, potential participants should consider potential drawbacks, such as tax credits and limited flexibility, before enrolling in a program.

Unlike installing solar panels on your own property, community solar participants may not benefit from federal tax incentives or local rebates. These financial perks are often available to individual homeowners who invest in their own solar systems. Additionally, community solar projects are located off-site, away from your property. This means you have no influence over the solar panel placement or orientation.

Other factors to consider

If you're interested in enrolling in a community solar program, consider the savings from your co-op's standard residential rate, the clear minimum term for participation and access for low- and moderate-income households. Community solar programs typically prioritize access for these households and ensure that subscriptions include strong consumer protections.

The impact of community solar extends well beyond individual subscribers. Generating clean, renewable energy bolsters local job creation and community wealth building, enhances the resilience of the local power grid, and contributes to the overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. By producing local, renewable energy, community solar projects can decrease reliance on imported energy sources, leading to more stable energy prices and bolstering energy security for the entire community.

Community solar is more than just a way to save on energy bills. It's a way to bring communities together, empower individuals and businesses, and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient energy future. Contact your local electric co-op to learn more.

Jennah Denney writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

Community solar enhances the resilience of the local power grid and contributes to the overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by generating clean, renewable energy. ***Photo Source: NRECA***

SIGNS YOUR HVAC IS IN TROUBLE

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system is one of the most important and expensive systems in your home. Equipment functionality issues can affect electricity use, which may result in higher energy bills. Detecting issues early can help you plan for repairs or equipment replacement.

The age of your equipment can be a major factor in function. The lifespan of a heating and cooling system ranges from 15 to 20 years. If your system is approaching or past the 20-year mark, it is wise to start saving for a new system and get replacement estimates. To find the age of your system, look for the manufactured date printed on the unit's nameplate. You can also search online using the model number or call the manufacturer.

There are a few warning signs beyond equipment lifespan that may signal your HVAC system needs to be repaired or replaced.

The best solution for your home might be a different type of equipment. This high-efficiency, dual-fuel heat pump system heats and cools.

Photo Source: Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

The lifespan of a heating and cooling system ranges from 15 to 20 years. Proper maintenance and lower use can increase the life of the equipment.

Photo Source: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

1 **Air conditioning is not as cool as usual.** If the air from your air conditioner is warm or not as cool as it usually feels, the equipment has an issue. It could be a problem with the compressor or a refrigerant leak. Many refrigerants, especially the ones used in older systems, are harmful to the environment. Fix leaks before adding more refrigerant. Special certifications are required for handling refrigerants, so hire a professional to ensure the work is done properly.

2 **Low airflow.** If you aren't getting good airflow, it could be an easy fix, such as filter replacement or opening closed dampers. If you've made these fixes and the airflow is not at normal levels, contact a professional. There could be a bigger problem with a motor or fan.

3 **Bad odors.** Heating and cooling systems sometimes smell when first turned on for the season. Those smells should be minor and dissipate quickly. Any serious smells – such as burning metal, melting plastic or noxious odors – are a sign the system is in trouble. If you smell those odors, turn the system off immediately and contact a professional.

4 **Strange noises.** There is typically noise associated with the fans and motors in HVAC systems. Take note of any excessive or new noises. If your system is making any clunking, clanging or whistling noises, turn it off and check the filter. If that doesn't solve the problem, reach out to a professional.

5 **Running frequently.** Your system needs to run more often to keep up on extreme weather days, but there might be an issue if it runs too often outside of these special circumstances. Short cycling is when a system cycles on and off before completing the heating or cooling process. Contact a professional to diagnose this issue.

Decision-making factors to consider

Several factors come into play when deciding to fix or invest in new equipment. Consider the severity of the issue, repair costs, the likelihood of additional repairs, equipment lifespan and your budget.

The efficiency of your existing system is also a consideration. Heating and cooling technology improvements have come a long way in the last 20 years. Lower operation costs can offset the cost of a new system over time.

Be proactive and evaluate your options before you are in desperate need. And if you are ready to make a change, always get estimates from at least three contractors before making a choice.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

REMEMBERING THE BATTLE CRY OF FREEDOM

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When I was putting flowers on the graves of our family members on Memorial Day, I visited the grave of my great-great-grandfather Henry C. Nicholson at the Lake City Cemetery. Ever since I was a kid, I've seen his white marble gravestone with the words "Henry C. Nicholson, Co. B, 106 Ill. Inf."

I never knew much about Henry, other than the fact that he was my great-grandmother Myrtle Dougherty's father. I also knew he died in the master bedroom upstairs in my family's farmhouse in 1925.

I became more interested in Henry's story after interviewing some members of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and attending one of their meetings this spring in Atlantic, Iowa. These men, who come from Denison, Lenox, Griswold and beyond, are members of the Colonel William H. Kinsman Camp #23.

It was amazing how much each member knew about his ancestor's Civil War service. I shouldn't have been surprised, since the group's mission is to "preserve the history and legacy of the heroes who fought to save the Union during the Civil War." This takes many forms, from educating local school children to locating the final resting place of Union Civil War veterans and providing gravestones.

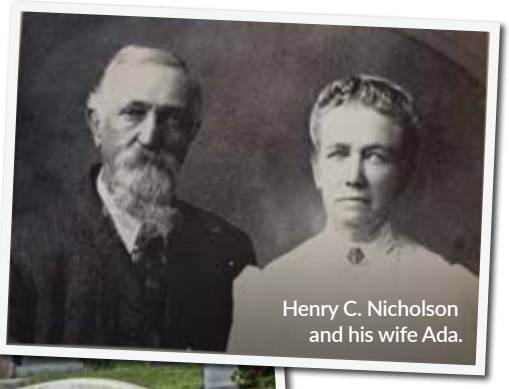
A personal account of the Civil War

These guys inspired me to see what I could find out about Henry Nicholson's life. I was thrilled to find the "Life's History of Henry C. Nicholson Written by Himself," which appeared in the Nov. 26, 1925, edition of the *Lake City Graphic*, following Henry's death.

Born in Cass County, Michigan, in 1844, Henry grew up working on farms in Michigan and Illinois. Henry was living in Logan County, Illinois, northeast of Springfield, when "President Lincoln called for 600,000 more soldiers," he noted.

"On Aug. 9, 1862, I went with the Army as a volunteer in Company B, 106th Illinois Volunteers," he wrote. "We camped at Lincoln, Illinois, on the fairgrounds. We drilled hard for two weeks and were then sent south. We went by railroad to Alton, Illinois, and then by boat to Columbus, Kentucky, and then to Jackson, Tennessee. We were soon put on detached service to keep the rebels from burning bridges and tearing up railroads. This brought us in touch with the rebels several times. We had to forage some of the time, as the government was unable to send us food."

Henry noted that, "Four of the boys in my company were captured, and three ran away. I was exposed to all kinds of weather, sleeping in wet clothes, etc. I took very ill with pneumonia and was sent to the regimental hospital and from there to General hospital at Jackson, Tennessee, where I was discharged as an honorable soldier by the medical board, saying I would not be able to stand the service any longer. I was not able to work much for over a year."



Henry C. Nicholson and his wife Ada.

Henry C. Nicholson's gravesite at the Lake City Cemetery.

Members of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War at a recent meeting in Atlantic.

Preservation, education and patriotism

Henry eventually recovered, married my great-great-grandmother, Ada (Adams) Nicholson in Illinois, and moved to Calhoun County, Iowa, in 1881. He bought farmland near Yetter, which my family still farms.

The more I've learned about Henry's history, the more I appreciate the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, who promote historic preservation, education and patriotism in their communities. That's worth honoring as we celebrate our nation's independence in July.

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

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