

● SEPTEMBER 2026

iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Co-op member Shines the Light
on Dunlap Story Walk**

**Taco and Tech Tuesday
series highlights**

Chicken dinner recipes

Members experience the Energy Trail Tour ▶ See Page 12

CONTENTS



6



8



10

VOLUME 79 • ISSUE 9

3

STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE

Core values drive statewide leadership

3

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

Win a 13-quart air fryer oven

10

IN THE COMMUNITY

Shine the Light winners

15

OUT BACK

Never forget: 9/11 anniversary

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn
Lorelai O'Hara

IAEC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Erin Campbell

IAEC ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST
Cherie Moen

IAEC EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Leslie Kaufman

IAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Jim Miller, District 5 – President
Gordon Greimann, District 6 – Vice President
Tony Lem, District 2 – Secretary/Treasurer
Jerry Keleher, District 3 – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer
Travis Harris, District 1
Steve Inskeep, District 4
Bruce Amundson, District 7
Kevin Wheeler, Access Energy Cooperative – NRECA Representative
Terry Sullivan, Corridor Energy Cooperative – Managers' Representative

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

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

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

Website
www.ieclmagazine.com

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

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

© Copyright 2026, Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. No portion of the editorial, photographic or other content of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine or its website may be reproduced without written permission of the editor.



ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Tefna Greiner, an Access Energy Cooperative member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

CORE VALUES DRIVE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AT THE STATEWIDE LEVEL

BY JIM MILLER



Last month, I traveled across the state with the leadership team of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) for our

district meetings with member cooperatives. During our visits, we talked about our foundational values and how they impact everything we do for Iowa's electric cooperatives and the member-consumers they serve.

An organization's mission should define what it does and why it exists. IAEC's mission is to serve, support and advocate for our members by providing expertise and collaborative leadership.

Living our core values

Our core values are the fundamental beliefs and guiding principles that dictate IAEC's culture and standards for employees and board directors:

- **Integrity:** We build relationships based on trust and honesty.
- **Leadership:** We work as a unified team and lead by example.
- **Excellence:** Our work is performed with excellence and empowered through innovation.
- **Service:** We support our members with superior service in a timely manner.

When we talk about these statements and internalize them, it helps IAEC employees and board members make consistent and strategic decisions.

This column is my farewell message, as my term as a board director at Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association expires later this month. I have had the incredible privilege of serving my local cooperative as a director for 18 years, and I

often reflect on a quote that is written on the boardroom wall:

Every decision I make shall be based on what is best for the member-owners of this cooperative.

This quote is why I always prepared diligently for my local and state board meetings so I could make the most informed decisions.

A heartfelt thank you

As my term on the local co-op board comes to an end, so too does my service on the statewide board. I have truly enjoyed serving on the IAEC board for almost five years and as your statewide board president for the past two years.

I commend the outstanding staff at IAEC for their professionalism and expertise. I see IAEC's core values of integrity, leadership, excellence and service at work every time I come to the statewide office.

As I step back from electric cooperative service, I must

acknowledge my fellow statewide board directors. They greeted me with camaraderie and friendship from the very beginning, and our rapport has continued to grow. The IAEC boardroom is centered on mutual respect and trust because we focus on what unites us.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Rae. She has been so supportive of my electric cooperative service for 18 years, and I could not have accomplished this work without her.

While my leadership comes to an end, I am excited for what the future holds for electric cooperatives in Iowa. Please know that you are well represented on the IAEC board by a team of directors and employees who embody statewide core values and cooperative values every day. It has been my honor to serve my fellow co-op members in this capacity.

Jim Miller is the board president for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, whose term ends this month.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A 13-QUART AIR FRYER OVEN

Meet your ultimate cooking companion! The Cosori air fryer oven features 11 functions packed into a stainless-steel housing with a 13-quart capacity. This versatile oven is designed to make cooking a breeze with 50 chef-made recipes included to inspire your culinary creations. From baking to roasting, this is one oven to rule them all. The large capacity is perfect for cooking for a crowd or meal-prepping for the week.

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 Bose portable speaker from the July issue was **Evelyn Beavers**, a **T.I.P. REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30!

HARRISON COUNTY REC MEMBER SHINES THE LIGHT ON DUNLAP STORY WALK

Since 2021, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa and the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives have hosted the Shine the Light contest. This contest celebrates the everyday heroes in our communities. Volunteers who give their time, energy and heart to make a difference. Account number two four nine one zero zero nine one zero.

Co-op members throughout the state can nominate an individual who is making a difference in their community. If that individual is one of three selected winners, their nonprofit organization of choice receives a \$3,000 donation.

Spotlighting our member's nomination

This year, Harrison County REC was pleased that our member Jill Schaben took the time to shine a light on Jake Schaben with the Dunlap



Jake Schaben is pictured with his wife, Ashley, and their three children, Jaxon, Collins and Finley.

Betterment Group and the Dunlap Story Walk.

While only three nominees out of 83 entries could be selected as winners in the contest, Harrison County REC believes that Jake's work with the local organizations deserves to be shared. To honor their efforts and the incredible work being done, Harrison County REC is making a \$100 donation to the Dunlap Betterment Group in support of the Dunlap Story Walk.

Here are details from the nomination submission:

"Jake Schaben has spent decades quietly making Dunlap, Iowa, a stronger community through selfless volunteer

service. While he has never sought recognition, his leadership and willingness to serve have left a lasting impact on local organizations, families, and future generations.

For more than a decade, Jake has served on the Dunlap Community Development Corporation and Dunlap Betterment Group Board, helping lead housing and economic development initiatives, fundraising efforts, membership drives, and community improvement projects. His steady leadership has helped strengthen the foundation for Dunlap's continued growth. Jake is also a familiar face at many of Dunlap's signature events.

He has volunteered for the Fourth of July celebration, Art at the Park, the Jason



Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative
105 Enterprise Drive - PO Box 2
Woodbine, IA 51579

Office Hours

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday through
Thursday

7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Friday

Shadon Blum, CEO
Kristi Travis, editor

Contact Us!

Phone:
712-647-2727
800-822-5591

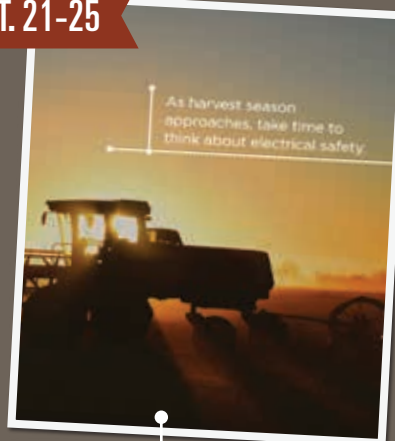
Fax:
712-647-2906
harrisoninfo@hcrec.coop
www.hcrec.coop

Directors

Tom Bothwell, *president*
Doug Pitt, *vice president*
Brenda Lundergard, *secretary*
Kent Kersten, *treasurer*
Curtis Lee, Randy Koenig, Randy Mitchell,
Bruce Pauley, Tim Faylor

FARM SAFETY WEEK

SEPT. 21-25



Hofman Memorial Tractor Pull, and the St. John Lutheran Barbecue Contest. Whether he's supervising inflatables, setting up events, fundraising, or simply filling whatever role needs to be done, Jake approaches every opportunity with humility and a servant's heart.

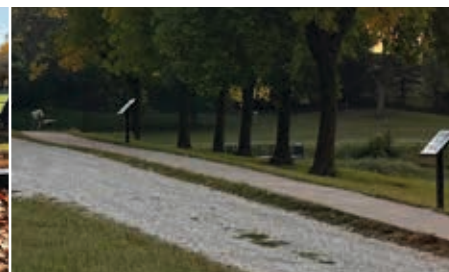
His commitment extends to his church and to the next generation. Jake has served on the St. John Lutheran Church Council, including as council president, where he has helped organize fundraisers, community dinners, auctions, and Worship in the Park. He also volunteers as a youth sports coach, helping children build confidence, teamwork, and character through athletics.

Jake has devoted countless hours to agricultural education and youth leadership as well. He serves on the Boyer Valley Ag Foundation Board, has volunteered at 4-H fundraisers, and has mentored Boyer Valley FFA students in agricultural finance competitions, sharing his professional expertise to prepare young people for future success. What



sets Jake apart is not one project or one leadership position—it's his consistency. If there is a need in Dunlap, chances are Jake is already helping. He gives his time generously, encourages others to volunteer, and leads by example without ever seeking the spotlight. His quiet leadership has inspired countless others to become involved in making our community a better place.

If selected, Jake would direct the \$3,000 donation to the Dunlap Story Walk. His family has invested significant volunteer time into this community literacy project, which encourages children and families to read together while enjoying the outdoors. The funds would help purchase

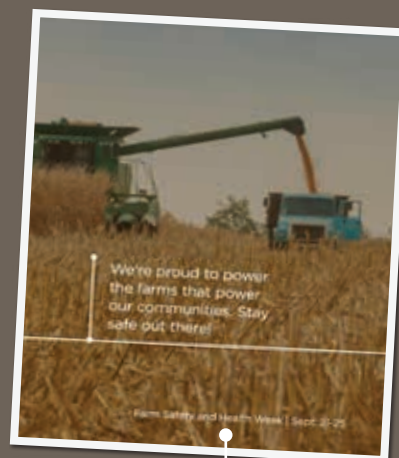


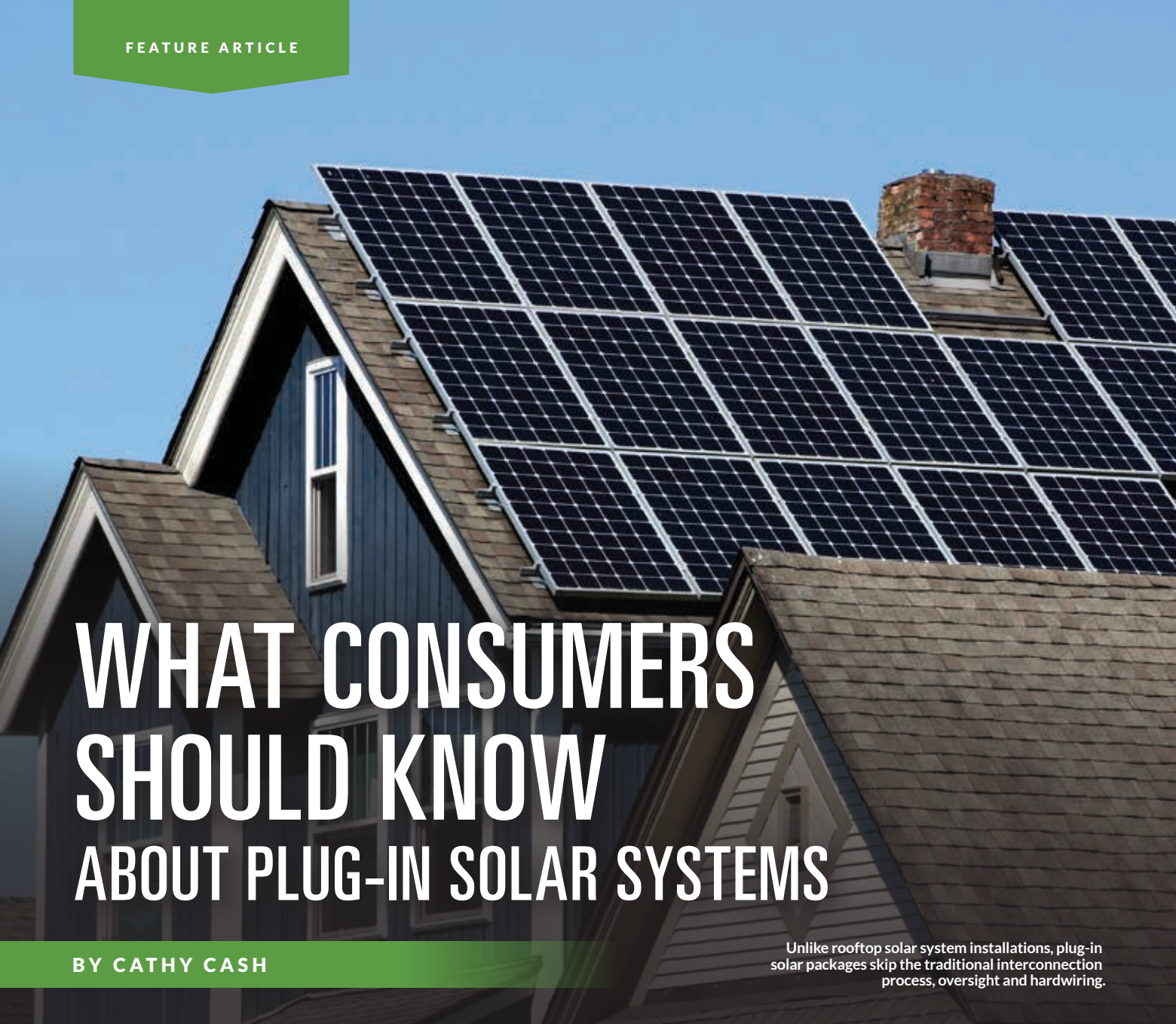
new books, replace damaged plexiglass panels, maintain the display structures, and ensure the Story Walk continues serving local families for years to come. Jake Schaben embodies the spirit of Iowa's Shine the Light program. His unwavering commitment to service, his humble leadership, and his dedication to strengthening his hometown have made a lasting difference in the lives of those around him."

The Dunlap Story Walk page on Facebook shares updates and the current books on display for participants to enjoy.



Interested in sharing your support for the Dunlap Story Walk? Financial contributions can be sent to United Bank of Iowa in Dunlap marked to the care of the Dunlap Story Walk/Ashley Schaben or you can also contribute through the Venmo (@Ashley-Schaben-2).



A large array of solar panels is installed on a residential roof. The panels are dark and rectangular, arranged in a grid pattern. The roof is made of brown shingles. A brick chimney is visible on the right side of the roof. The sky is clear and blue.

WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLUG-IN SOLAR SYSTEMS

BY CATHY CASH

Unlike rooftop solar system installations, plug-in solar packages skip the traditional interconnection process, oversight and hardwiring.

It seems easy enough. You set up a solar panel or two and its small generator-type device outside, plug the thing into a wall socket in your house, and before you know it, electricity is flowing and lowering your power bill.

These portable, DIY solar energy systems can generate several hundred watts and are marketed like appliances that only require a regular outlet. But as plug-in solar becomes more popular, consumers should be aware that these products require important safety considerations.

So, what should you know about behind-the-meter, plug-in solar kits?

Safety comes first

First, these systems have the potential to put lives and property at risk. Electric utility leaders note that almost all of these devices lack U.S. safety requirements, such as certification under UL codes or standards. UL has only recently developed a safety certification for plug-in solar systems.

Unlike rooftop solar and electric vehicle charger installations, these plug-and-play packages attempt to bypass existing interconnection protocols, oversight and inspections.

If a home's wiring is not up to snuff to support plug-in solar, the consumer

wouldn't know because they didn't call a licensed electrician to install the equipment or an inspector who could spot that hazard.

That can be dangerous on multiple fronts, leading to overheated wires in a residence, property damage, fire and even worse, serious or deadly electrical shock.

"Plug-in solar introduces real safety risks at the consumer-member level," said Jeffrey Groenewold, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) senior energy solutions manager. "Existing residential wiring standards were not designed for generation through standard outlets,

so plug-in solar increases the potential for fire and shock hazards.”

A charged solar system can backfeed, or send electricity back to the grid, and re-energize power lines without your electric cooperative’s knowledge. This could be fatal for lineworkers.

“The evolving plug-in solar industry must work to ensure these systems are properly managed and controlled to prevent unintended backfeed,” said Groenewold. “This is critical to protecting cooperative lineworkers and keeping them safe when they are out working to restore power.”

Unplugging the system does not eliminate its risk. Contact with the power cord energized by the solar panels can cause devastating injury.

Will Morris, a consultant to NRECA Business and Technology Strategies Group, underscored that these systems are not harmless appliances and should not be treated as such, especially around children.

“When we were growing up, our parents taught us if you would just unplug a blender or an iron or something like that, you’re putting that device in a safe state. With this, it is the complete opposite,” he said. “If somebody has this on their patio plugged into an exterior outlet and they unplug it and drop it in a puddle ... you can get 800 watts going to you. That can be a real bad day.”

Weighing the costs and benefits

Then there’s the affordability factor. Is plug-in solar really a good deal?

The equipment for this behind-the-meter energy resource can cost a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, but its output, even in areas with plenty of sunshine, will shave only an estimated 40 to 80 cents per day off your power bill, according to industry experts.

“I would be very surprised if in our markets plug-in solar makes financial sense because the average cooperative consumer rates are pretty low,” said Morris. “It would take a long time to recover that investment.”

European apartment dwellers who face very high electricity rates have been eagerly buying “balcony solar” for a while and expect to pay off their investment in a couple of years, he said.

In Germany, where rates are particularly high, the plug-and-play packages are designed within the country’s safety mandates and must be registered with the grid operator.

“So, the German utility knows when that device is being utilized and that they have potential for energy to flow back into the grid,” he said.

But in the U.S., states are at various stages of potentially regulating plug-in solar to ensure safety.

“We’re at the Wild West phase of it right now,” Morris said. “You can buy a system and plug it in. It’s like buying a hairdryer, except the hairdryer is UL certified.”

Members are encouraged to contact their electric cooperative for knowledgeable advice on plug-in solar and to inquire about requirements for installing such a device.

“The bottom line is if you’re looking to lower your electric bill with some behind-the-meter device, please let your electric cooperative know,” said Groenewold. “Co-ops have a variety of programs to partner with you to save money and to do it safely.”

Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





LEMON CREAM CHICKEN

- 2½ pounds chicken thighs, boneless and skinless
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- parsley, to taste
- paprika, to taste
- creole seasoning, to taste
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup cream
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese

Place chicken in a greased baking dish. Sprinkle liberally with seasonings. Mix butter, lemon juice, garlic and cream. Spread over chicken. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 375 degrees F for 45 minutes, or internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Serves 4

Laura DeSmet • Larchwood
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

ELEGANT CHICKEN

- 4 chicken breasts
- 8 bacon slices
- 4 ounces chipped beef
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ teaspoon paprika

Wrap chicken in bacon. Cover bottom of 8x12-inch dish with chipped beef. Place chicken on top. Mix sour cream and soup, then pour over chicken. Sprinkle on paprika. Bake at 275 degrees F for 3 hours. Serves 4

Karen Bruns • Fonda
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

YUM CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 6 chicken breasts
- 6 slices Swiss cheese
- 1 package Stove Top dressing
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½ can water
- ½ can milk

Place chicken in a 9x13-inch pan. Layer cheese on top of chicken. Mix dressing, soup, water and milk. Spread mixture over cheese. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Let sit 5 minutes before serving. Serves 6

Jane Person • Batavia
Access Energy Cooperative

CRANBERRY ORANGE CHICKEN BREAST

- 4-6 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
- 1 cup bread or cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- milk, for dipping
- oil
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- ½ cup cranberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup water

Flatten chicken breasts. Mix crumbs, cheese and garlic salt. Dip chicken in milk, then crumb mixture. Brown in oil, then place in 12x8-inch baking dish. Mix sugar, corn starch, cranberries, orange juice and water. Bring to boil, then pour over chicken. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45 minutes. Serves 4-6

Sandra Lacey • Danbury
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

STICKY CHICKEN RICE

- 2 cups uncooked rice
- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- olive oil
- ½ cup soy sauce
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- garlic, minced, to taste
- dash of sriracha
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons corn starch or arrowroot powder
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 12-ounce bag frozen green beans or broccoli
- Garnish: avocado, sesame seeds

Wash and drain rice, cook according to package instructions. Meanwhile, cut chicken into strips or chunks. Season with paprika, chili powder, onion powder, garlic powder, oregano, salt and pepper. Cook chicken and seasonings in olive oil. Once chicken is cooked, add soy sauce, honey, rice vinegar, sesame oil, minced garlic, sriracha and ginger. Coat the chicken with sauce mixture. In a small bowl, stir together corn starch or arrowroot powder and water. Stir until the sauce thickens slightly, then add to pan. Add frozen green beans or preferred vegetables. Cover and continue cooking until vegetables are done. Plate the sticky chicken over cooked rice and garnish with avocados and sesame seeds. Serves 4-6

MacKenzi Harger • Nevada
Consumers Energy

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU SOUP

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 small head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups chicken, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 cup ham, finely cubed
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups Swiss cheese, shredded

Heat butter and oil in pan. Add cauliflower and cook 8-10 minutes, until crisp tender. Add garlic and onion, cook for 1 minute. Stir in flour, then whisk in broth. Bring to a boil and cook until cauliflower, onions and garlic are tender. Cool and then puree in blender. Return to pan and stir in chicken, half and half, ham, mustard, salt and pepper. Heat through. Add cheese and stir until melted. Serves 6-8

Joyce James • Prescott
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

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



SPICY CHICKEN TAGINE

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pat butter
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1½-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 red chilies, seeded and chopped
- 3 fresh rosemary sprigs
- 1-2 cinnamon sticks
- 8 chicken thighs
- 6 ounces dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons clear honey
- 1 14-ounce can plum tomatoes, with juice
- water, as needed
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- rice or couscous, optional

Heat oil and butter in medium-hot cast iron skillet or iron pot. Add onion, ginger and chilies until soft. Add rosemary sprigs and cinnamon sticks. Add chicken and brown on both sides. Add apricots and honey, then stir in tomatoes with juice. Add water, if needed to cover skillet bottom and apricots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer gently for 35-40 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and basil, stir. Serve over cooked rice or couscous. Serves 4

George M. Clifford • Farmington
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

MEATLESS MEALS

THE REWARD:

\$25 BILL CREDIT FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Sept. 30

To ring in the new year, we want to share your favorite wintertime **meatless meals!** From sheet pans and casseroles to soups and savory salads, send us your favorite vegetarian meals for a chance to be featured in our January issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48
Des Moines, IA 50322



MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS



Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their sixth-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 83 outstanding nominations, which were published in the August issue of this magazine, and selected three winners.

Congratulations to **Ellen Campbell**, who is recognized for bringing comfort and connection to others through **Stitch & Chatter**; **Bill and Megan Gleeson**, who are recognized for supporting families facing pediatric cancer through the **Rally For Reid Foundation**; and **Belinda Seay**, who is recognized for her compassion and dedication to serving others through **Monroe County Helping Hands**.

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.



Stitch & Chatter receives a Shine the Light contest donation for Ellen Campbell's (right) volunteer efforts.

STITCHING TOGETHER A STRONGER COMMUNITY

ELLEN CAMPBELL'S VOLUNTEER SPIRIT BRINGS COMFORT AND CONNECTION TO OTHERS

BY SARAH OLTROGGE

For Ellen Campbell of Panora, volunteering has always been about bringing people together to help others. Now, her dedication has earned statewide recognition.

Ellen joined Stitch & Chatter after retiring from Panorama Schools in 2015, seeing it as a way to keep busy and be productive at the same time. What began with borrowed sewing machines has grown into a thriving volunteer group with members from towns as far away as Jefferson that create quilts, pillowcases, doll clothes and other handmade gifts for people throughout the community.

Handmade with care

"Each and every member is a delight to be around," Ellen said. "Without them, none of this could happen. We talk about who should be given a quilt, then invite the community to view them and see who will receive them. Probably the most rewarding part is the delivery of the quilts to so many people."



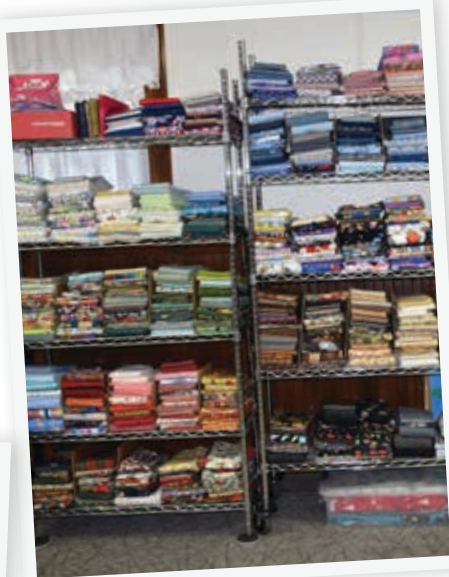
Ellen Campbell (left) shares information with a fellow volunteer.

The group relies on donated fabric and grant funding to support its work, providing handmade items to organizations, including Children's Clothes Closet (Three C's), medical facilities and others in need. She also helps organize donations, write grants and coordinate the group's annual quilt showcase, where community members can see the finished projects before they are distributed.

In her nomination letter, Guthrie County REC member Luann Waldo said Ellen's leadership and commitment made her an easy choice for the nomination.

"Ellen likes to keep busy. She is very good at organizing whatever task is put before her," Luann shared of her longtime friend. "She has a talent of recruiting people to help her, but she never asks anyone to do anything that she won't do herself."

Luann added that the quilts are "made with love for fellow



citizens. It's a gift that shows the recipient someone cares about and for them."

Inspiring others to serve

Ellen hopes the recognition inspires others to get involved in their own communities.

"I would encourage others to find a group in their community they could join and discuss how they could help someone," she said. "Maybe random acts of kindness to a neighbor, business or even family member to bring a smile to their face."

To learn about Stitch & Chatter, visit www.panorafcc.org/stitch-and-chatter.

Sarah Oltrogge is the communications content supervisor for Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

A HEART FOR HELPING OTHERS

BELINDA SEAY'S COMPASSION AND DEDICATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MONROE COUNTY FAMILIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Selfless. Irreplaceable. Angel walking among us.

These are the words nominators used to describe Belinda Seay of Moravia and her volunteer work at Monroe County Helping Hands, located in Albia. Belinda was nominated by three members of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative who work with her at Helping Hands.

Sharon Cunningham, site director of the thrift store and local food pantry, shared, "Belinda has been a wonderful volunteer for us for the last 10 years. She is the clothing supervisor and supervises many other volunteers. She works tirelessly to make sure the clothing donations we receive are sorted and hung for distribution to our shoppers, which are at least 600 every month."

Fellow volunteer Marnie Starr said, "I am not surprised by her 10 years of service as she has also been a nurse for 30 years and a Christian all her life. Compassion is one of the best volunteer traits to find in a person, so this is her wheelhouse. I have personally witnessed unselfish acts of concern from Belinda for the welfare of others. She has a true altruistic spirit."

"Belinda, during these 10 years, volunteers four days a week. She also stops at a store on her way to Albia from Iconium to bring in donated dairy to the food bank. She is dedicated, selfless and goes above and beyond to help others. Her sense of humor and patience help purchasers and the rest of the volunteers to be their best," remarked nominator Pat Merrick.

Helping Hands at work

Monroe County Helping Hands was established in 1985 and currently



Belinda Seay (second from the left) accepts a Shine the Light contest donation for Monroe County Helping Hands. She is pictured with her nominators.

operates out of an older building in Albia that was previously a laundry facility. There is a constant need for maintenance, and the \$3,000 Shine the Light donation will help to keep the facility in good working condition while also stocking the shelves of the food pantry section.

The thrift store is open to the public and operates on donated clothing and household goods from the community. The proceeds from thrift store sales benefit the food pantry, allowing Monroe County Helping Hands to purchase food monthly from the Food Bank of Iowa. The food pantry serves more than 200 people in need each month, and no one who asks for assistance is turned away.

A spirit of service

And what makes Monroe County Helping Hands such a longstanding blessing in the community are volunteers like Belinda. Marnie shared, "Belinda has a genuine concern for people. All people. She is invaluable and her dedication is priceless and irreplaceable."

Belinda has endured some difficult challenges recently, and her faith sustains her. She shared, "My biggest faith is in God. Without his grace and his mercy, I would not be the person I am today."

To learn more, find Monroe County Helping Hands, Inc. on Facebook.

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



Belinda Seay.

See Page 14 for the article on Bill and Megan Gleeson's Rally For Reid Foundation.

CO-OP MEMBERS EXPERIENCE THE ENERGY TRAIL TOUR

More than 120 electric cooperative member-owners from western and north central Iowa participated in this year's Energy Trail Tour, a three-day educational experience exploring how electricity is generated and delivered. Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) was pleased to send 12 members to enjoy this experience.

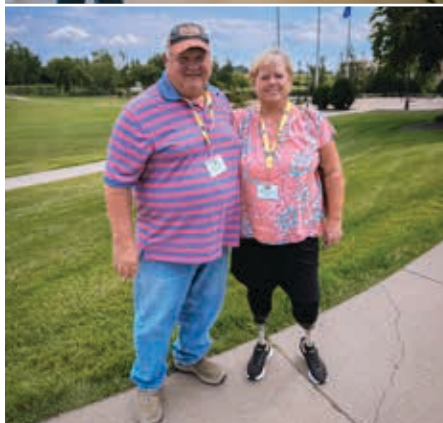
The tours in late June and July departed from Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative's (NIPCO) headquarters in Le Mars. Participants traveled through the Dakotas to visit key facilities operated by Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA). This summer marked the 37th anniversary of the Energy Trail Tour as a three-day experience offered to members of the NIPCO and Corn Belt Power Cooperative systems.

Diving into energy production, co-op values

Along the route, members explored a diverse energy mix, from hydroelectric generation at Big Bend Dam in Fort Thompson, South Dakota, to coal-based generation at Antelope Valley Station and lignite coal production at the Freedom Mine near Beulah, North Dakota. They also learned about wind energy and the production of synthetic natural gas and valuable byproducts at the Great Plains Synfuels Plant in Beulah, North Dakota.

Beyond the technical learning, the tour reinforced the cooperative difference – highlighting the history, principles and community focus that set electric cooperatives apart from other utilities.

Participants also enjoyed educational and entertaining stops that showcased non-energy points of interest throughout the Dakotas. Account number six zero eight four zero zero nine one two.



Interested in participating next year? Contact our office at 712-647-2727 or visit our website at www.hcrec.coop/energytrailtour to learn more about the 2027 Energy Trail Tour.



Sponsored by Iowa generation and transmission power cooperatives NIPCO and Corn Belt Power, the Energy Trail Tour connects members with the people, resources and

partnerships that power their homes, farms, businesses and communities, offering a firsthand look at what it takes to keep the lights on.

SUCCESSFUL TACO AND TECH TUESDAY SESSIONS

Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) was pleased to host another round of Taco and Tech Tuesday presentations this summer, bringing members together for an opportunity to enjoy lunch while learning about topics that impact their homes, finances and daily lives.

This year's sessions shared practical information designed to help members make informed decisions. Topics included home energy efficiency, smart home technology and how to protect yourself from today's increasingly sophisticated scams. Attendees asked thoughtful questions, shared personal experiences and engaged in meaningful discussions that made each session both educational and interactive.

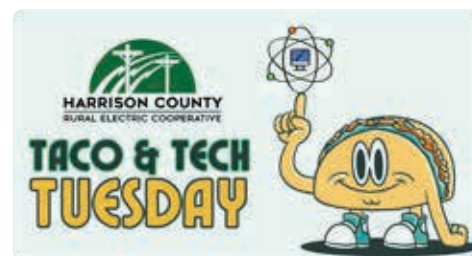
The positive response from members reinforced the cooperative principles of "Education, Training, and Information" as well as "Concern

for Community." Whether we're helping members understand ways to save energy, navigate new technologies or recognize potential scams, our goal is to be a trusted resource to help our communities stay informed and empowered.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Farmers Trust & Savings Bank for partnering with us for this year's scam awareness presentation. Their expertise and commitment to protecting local consumers added tremendous value to the discussion and helped provide attendees with practical tips and real-world examples of fraud prevention. Strong community partnerships like this help us better serve the people who count on us every day.

Feedback for future sessions

Because of the enthusiasm and participation we saw this year, we're excited to continue offering



Taco and Tech Tuesday events in the future. As we begin planning upcoming sessions, we would love to hear from our members.

If there's a topic you're interested in seeing at a future Taco and Tech Tuesday, please contact the cooperative and let us know your ideas. Your feedback will help us develop programs that are relevant, useful and valuable to our membership.

Thank you to everyone who attended, participated in discussions and helped make this year's Taco and Tech Tuesday series a success.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Each September, National Preparedness Month encourages and reminds Americans to be prepared for disasters or emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities. Follow these reminders to prepare for the unexpected.



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 Sept. 30 to be eligible to claim this credit.



Questions? Contact our office by calling 712-647-2727.

MEET THE 2026 SHINE THE LIGHT WINNERS

RALLY FOR REID FOUNDATION

**BILL AND MEGAN GLEESON
HONOR THEIR SON'S LEGACY
BY HELPING FAMILIES FACING
PEDIATRIC CANCER.**

BY JIM WILLIAMS

Feature continued from Page 11

Bill and Megan Gleeson faced every parent's nightmare when they were told their 2-year-old son had cancer. Their son, Reid, died in 2020 when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer. Megan was nominated for Shine the Light by Kathy Wunderlich, who is a member of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.

Reid was an active and fun-loving boy who had a special love for garbage trucks. He would spend time on the 12th floor of the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital overlooking Kinnick Stadium and would watch Hawkeye football games and participate in the iconic Wave tradition. Reid would also point out all the green and yellow garbage cans around the stadium. He would watch for garbage trucks and identify which companies they belonged to during family car trips.

During a stay at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for treatment, Reid toured two garbage and recycling centers, as well as the McNeilus Companies facility where garbage trucks are made. During his fifth birthday party, the city of Davenport organized a garbage truck parade past his house in his honor.

Turning loss into a legacy

As a legacy to their son, the Gleesons founded the Rally For Reid Foundation

to support other families facing this devastating diagnosis. The Foundation helps provide support for the entire family, allowing families to stay together during the difficult times they are facing.

"We felt a great loss and emptiness after we lost Reid," Megan said. "After we started the Foundation and started to receive messages from the families it benefitted, it helped fill that void and gave us a sense of purpose."

The Foundation supports the Stead Family Children's Hospital and a variety of research efforts dealing with pediatric brain tumors. Its mission is to provide support for families and children affected by pediatric cancer and to raise funds for vital research.

Supporting families when they need it most

The Foundation has funded several programs to assist with travel expenses and ensure families have access to meals at the hospital so they can stay with their child without having to leave or skip meals. It also provides Family Care packages with essential items and comforting treats to help keep family spirits up during treatment at the hospital.

Brady Gleeson (Reid's brother) participates in the Rally For Reid Golf Event in early August.



Reid Gleeson died when he was 5 years old after a courageous battle with brain cancer.

To date, the Foundation has helped more than 300 families, raised nearly \$250,000 and provided care packages to nearly 200 families of children battling cancer.

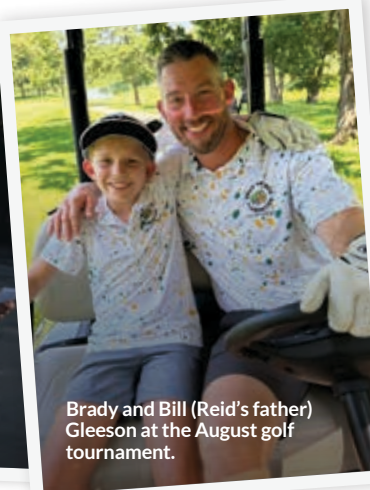
At the hospital, Reid's Story Corner is located in the Janice and Bruce Ellig Children's Library, where Reid loved to spend time reading books and doing puzzles. The activities were a welcome distraction for Reid during his four-to-five-hour chemo treatments.

To learn about the Rally For Reid Foundation, visit www.rallyforreid.org.

Jim Williams is the communications director for Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative.



Megan Gleeson, Reid's mother, addresses the golfers at the start of the Rally for Reid Golf Event.



Brady and Bill (Reid's father) Gleeson at the August golf tournament.

NEVER FORGET

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Would you believe about one-third of Americans are too young to have any personal memories of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks? It's also hard to fathom that 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of that horrendous day.

In 2001, I was working from my home near Grimes that Tuesday morning, writing articles for AgWeb.com. My landline phone rang shortly before 9 a.m. My colleague demanded that I turn on the TV.

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I went to the living room and grabbed the remote control. Like millions of other Americans, I watched in disbelief as a second airplane hit the World Trade Center. I couldn't turn away as more updates came in. Something hit the Pentagon! A plane crashed in Pennsylvania! What next? Would one hit Chicago? Omaha?

In the days ahead, we learned that terrorist attacks had left nearly 3,000 people dead in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

A day no one will ever forget

I recently asked my friends and acquaintances about their memories of 9/11.

"I was working in the Sac County courthouse," said JoAnn Ellerbrock of Lytton. "I heard the breaking news on the radio when the first plane hit. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Our son was in college. I remember calling to check on him. It was kind of like when I was in grade school, and our superintendent told us President Kennedy had been shot."

Jon Hollatz, a Garner-area farmer, was hauling old-crop corn to town. "The news came across the radio tuned to KWMT 540 AM in the '69 Ford straight truck. My grandpa and I turned on the TV during the lunch hour. That day reminded him of Pearl Harbor in 1941."

Katie Daniel, whose family farms in Carroll County, was eating breakfast when the morning news was interrupted. "It sounded like an accident involving one of the World Trade Center towers. Within minutes, the second plane came, and terrorism was mentioned. I was in disbelief the rest of the day and was praying through it all."

Sac City-area farmer Gary Langbein was headed to the Clay County Fair when he heard the news on the radio. "We found out it was not an accident. A lot of people at the fair were watching all the TVs for sale at the vendors' booths. I remember some people were worried that the fair might get hit."

For Lake City-area farmer Barb Richardson and her husband, Eric, Sept. 11 started as an ideal day to chop corn silage. "The weather was so perfect. Not too hot, and the sky was a bright blue with the prettiest puffy clouds. When the first plane hit, I heard the news over KWMT.



We only had AM radios in those straight trucks. It sounded like a tragic accident. And then the next plane hit the towers, and the third into the Pentagon. My mother-in-law videotaped the news broadcasts, so we could watch them later."

Melanie (Hjelm) Bloom, the ag teacher and FFA advisor at Sioux Rapids High School, was a senior at Iowa State University. "Some friends met me after class and filled me in. I remember how quiet the campus was, maybe an hour after the attacks happened. The phone lines were so busy it was hard to get a call home."

Remembering why it still matters

What a different world that was.

Today, a quarter century later, we must never forget the tragic day that changed America. We must continue to share our memories so those born after 9/11 learn its significance and enduring legacy.

What are your memories of 9/11? Email me at yettergirl@yahoo.com.

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



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

September 2026

Visit our website at www.hcrec.coop

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY

A large white utility bucket truck is parked on a dirt road. Two workers in yellow safety gear and hard hats are in the bucket. The truck has "Touchstone Energy Cooperatives" written on its side. In the background, there are orange traffic cones and a green field under a clear sky.

Safety is **#1** at your **Touchstone Energy® cooperative.** This commitment to provide electrical safety has always been our priority so we can deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®