

# living with energy IN IOWA

JANUARY 2021



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Chariton Valley Electric  
Cooperative assists  
Monroe County Hospital

On the road with  
co-op-served companies

Cozy up with  
soup recipes

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## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.



# living with energy IN IOWA

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Cooperatives of Iowa  
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### ON THE COVER



Congratulations to Bea McDowell, an Access Energy Cooperative member from Mt. Pleasant, for supplying the cover image for this month's issue! To have your photo considered for a future cover, email high-res images to [editor@livingwithenergyiniowa.com](mailto:editor@livingwithenergyiniowa.com). If we select your photo, you'll be awarded with \$100. 🎉



# Advocacy in the new year

BY KEVIN CONDON

For Iowa's electric co-ops, our cooperative principles guide us in good times and bad – even during derecho storms and global pandemics. Your local electric co-op strives to power your family and community no matter what may come our way.

Advocating with lawmakers and elected officials with a unified co-op voice during policy debates impacts how your co-op provides safe, affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible power.

While COVID restrictions have changed how we advocate, it has not changed *why* we advocate. We focus on advocacy because we care about our consumer-members. We know that when our communities are strong, the co-ops are strong. When the pandemic hit, Iowa's electric co-ops supported policies that helped our rural agribusiness members, including biofuels, food processing and small manufacturing. While we will continue advocating on behalf of member industries, as well as issues like renewable energy, safety, economic development and taxes, we'll likely be starting the new legislative session much like the last one ended – with limited physical access to the Statehouse.

Because the co-op mission of powering lives and empowering communities remains constant, we will always find ways to adapt to challenges. Virtual advocacy is not the same as talking face-to-face, but it is still essential. When possible and appropriate, your co-op engages with lawmakers directly. When that's not possible, we reach legislators through phone calls, emails, social media or whatever pathways materialize.

The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives manages our grassroots advocacy efforts through the Iowa Rural Power initiative.

We recently updated our advocacy website at [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org), which now includes our Voter



Activation Center and a new "Bill Tracker" feature to help electric co-op member-consumers stay informed about legislation important to rural electric cooperatives.

As Iowa's electric co-ops look back on 2020, we reflect on the August 10 storm that hit our state with little advanced warning. The devastating derecho storm that swept through Iowa with the force of a Category 4 hurricane caused thousands of power outages and left a path of destruction that required an extensive restoration effort.

While stopping the derecho was beyond our control, we can limit the damage of these powerful storms and restore power faster by keeping trees and other vegetation away from power lines. Vegetation management is an important part

of protecting the electric grid and ensuring reliable service. But in some instances, prescriptive easements prevent utilities from adequately clearing vegetation that can cause outages and create safety concerns. Iowa's electric cooperatives support plans that would allow utilities a specified vegetation management clearance to maintain reliable service and minimize outages.

A few years ago, Iowa's electric co-ops attempted to pass legislation to gain vegetation management clearances but were opposed by groups who claimed that the legislation infringed on property rights. With the memory of the derecho still fresh in our minds, we hope those groups and lawmakers will consider the rights of the member-consumers down the line who want to keep their lights on. ⚡

Kevin Condon is the director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a Fitbit Charge 4 Fitness Activity Tracker

Make keeping those New Year's exercise resolutions easier with a Fitbit Charge 4 Fitness Activity Tracker! Take your goals further with a health and fitness tracker that packs built-in GPS for pace and distance, 24/7 heart rate tracking and more into a comfortable wristband. *The winner will be able to select from four available colors.* ⚡



#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com) no later than Jan. 31, 2021. 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 Cuisinart® Extra-Large Rotisserie Fryer and Steamer from the November issue was Shirley Babcock, Butler County REC.

feeling chilled?

## HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY



Place on a flat, level surface



Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away



Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked



Plug it directly into an outlet



Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat



Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab



Do not use around small children or pets



Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

Safe Electricity.org



Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



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www.cvrec.com

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## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

# Our resolutions to our members

BY LEILANI TODD

**Reliability** is a term our industry uses to describe our commitment to provide electricity at an extraordinary level of certainty.

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative works each day to provide reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity to enhance quality of life for our members. In recent months, we have expanded that concept and demonstrated what it *really* means to be reliable.

As the COVID-19 crisis caused unprecedented disruption to people's lives, CVEC has been a stronghold for our members. We have proven that even in extraordinary circumstances, our communities can rely on us.

Concern for community is at the core of the cooperative advantage. But this principle means more to CVEC than just providing utility services and investments in economic development and local charities. Our employees serve on local boards, lead volunteer organizations, help celebrate milestones and offer their time and expertise for a variety of causes.

Since the pandemic hit, CVEC has taken this further. We have raised the bar for how we engage with and care for our communities. And it cements the cooperative business model as one that is built for and works for the people it serves.

Through what we do every day and

how we are responding to this crisis, we have quite simply redefined what reliability means.

**Safety** is a core value for CVEC as we develop and practice crisis and continuity plans to ensure we are ready when the call comes, when we are most needed to help our communities rebound. But it was not in any plan to be there to support those who have lost their jobs or were otherwise suffering during this public health emergency. That is just part of who we are.

Our **community focus** will be critical in the months ahead, as our communities seek to rebuild their economies, upgrade health care facilities and fulfill the many other needs that have been highlighted by this pandemic.

Thank you to our members for being leaders in your communities during this difficult time. Our service territory is better off because of you, and we at CVEC are proud and grateful to support you in your good work.

Our resolutions to you this year, and always, are reliable service, safe practices you can rely on and community focus. We are here for YOU, our members! ⚡

Leilani Todd is the general manager of Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative.



## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

**Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy.** Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.



Source: www.nrel.gov



## Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and Northeast Power join forces to assist Monroe County Hospital

Monroe County Hospital and Clinics in Albia recently underwent a massive renovation that included upgrading the existing facility and building a new addition. This project was completed in conjunction with Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. Both cooperatives provided a \$1.5 million, 0% interest loan to assist with the costs associated with the hospital's upgrade project.

The USDA awards funding quarterly for eligible projects through Rural Utilities Service borrowers, such as Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and Northeast Power. A portion of the total \$3 million was given to each cooperative as a grant from the USDA, to be repaid into their respective revolving loan funds (RLFs).

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative and Northeast Power operate their



Pictured from left to right: Doug Aeilts (Northeast Power), Tod Faris and Leilani Todd (CVEC), Veronica Fuhs and Larry Brown, (MCH), Rand Fisher (IADG) and Abe Gray (Northeast Power).

RLFs for the economic advancement and overall betterment of their service territories. These funds provide access to low interest financing for projects that the cooperatives can continually

pump into their communities as they are repaid.

For more information on REDLG or RLF loans, visit [www.cvrec.com](http://www.cvrec.com) or contact Tod Faris at 641-932-7126. ⚡

### IN THE COMMUNITY

## Giving back

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative volunteered by ringing bells for Salvation Army and the Albia Ministerial Association the third Friday in December. It was a worthwhile project, and we are happy that we were able to give back to our community. ⚡



# On the road in Iowa

Ambulances, campers, dump trucks and tankers

BY KAY SNYDER

Our family outings have turned to exploring Iowa's parks and recreation spots during these past few months. Settled in the passenger seat on our last road trip, I was poised to pass the time with my iPad and phone. Instead, I decided to put the devices down and enjoy the destination and the journey as well.

As I started paying attention to all the vehicles on and off-road, it got me thinking, and I did have to Google a couple of quick facts. Iowa has approximately 115,000 miles of roads, ranking No. 14 in the nation for Total Public Road Length. I noticed some unique vehicles in the sea of cars – including SUVs, pickup trucks and tractor trailers – and many are manufactured in Iowa. When you think of Iowa-manufactured vehicles, two companies likely come to mind – John Deere and Winnebago. However, there are many others that you can be on the lookout for as you venture out in 2021, including these featured in this article. As a bonus, the manufacturers are often served by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

## Countryside Tank Company – Osceola

Served by Clarke Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Have you ever wondered what's inside the huge tanker trucks that crisscross the country and how the contents are kept safe? Countryside Tank Company has an answer. The company has more than 40 years of experience in steel fabrication. It produces tank transport trailers that can haul up to 17,500 gallons of a wide variety of substances, safely and in full accordance with the latest specifications and requirements. In 2018, Countryside Tank leveraged its pressure vessel building experience and started manufacturing bobtail bottles, which go on truck chassis. These versatile vehicles are primarily



used in residential propane delivery where a transport trailer isn't practical. If you have a propane tank, check out your next delivery to see if it is transported in a Countryside Tank Bobtail. For more information, visit [countrysidetank.com](http://countrysidetank.com).

## Life Line Emergency Vehicles – Sumner

Served by Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

Ambulances may be something you don't think about until one whizzes past you on the highway, or you or a family member are in one. A leader in manufacturing emergency vehicles is employee-owned Life Line Emergency Vehicles, located in Sumner. For over 30

years, it has been committed to making the safest, most efficient vehicle possible. Life Line offers several models to accommodate everything from hospital-to-hospital transport, compact body designs to navigate metropolitan areas, EMS and fire departments, and critical care vehicles. Life Line prides itself on innovation, offering proprietary aluminum extrusions that add strength and improve stability. It was the first to offer Labyrinth-style door construction, a double aluminum insulated floor and a two-piece aluminum crash rail. Life Line is also known for its state-of-the-art Elite electrical system. Customers say it is all the hidden details that set Life Line ambulances apart from others.





For more information, visit [www.lifelineambulance.com](http://www.lifelineambulance.com).

### Camp365 – Albia

Served by Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative

There is a newcomer on the road that will catch your eye. It is CAMP365, the world's first fold-out cabin. This new company, with its manufacturing facility in Albia, was named to the 2020 Top RV Debut of the Year by *RVBusiness* magazine. Camp365 is 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep, with more than 7 feet of headroom. It is insulated and has heating and cooling to make it usable in any weather. The camper folds down, easily fits in a standard garage and can be pulled by a Toyota Prius or any vehicle rated for towing 1,500 pounds. Setting up the camper takes less than 10 minutes, requires no tools and boasts that the “lift-assist” feature makes it very easy. Referencing that, if you can push a vacuum cleaner, you can level out your Camp365 cabin. Keep an eye out for these new and innovative campers as they continue to hit the road in 2021 and beyond. For more information, visit [Camp365.com](http://Camp365.com).

### SmithCo – Le Mars

Served by North West REC

The next time you pass a construction site, see if side dumping trailers are being used. SmithCo builds a variety of side dump trailers to haul all types of cargo. As its name indicates, side dump trailers tilt to the side, along the trailer's full length to dump the contents instead of lifting the whole trailer and dumping out the back. The benefits of a side dump trailer are superior stability, easier unloading and faster cycle times. Unloading can even take place as the vehicle is moving. Agriculture, construction, demolition, mining

and waste industries often use side dump trailers. SmithCo has been in operation for over 25 years and has stayed true to manufacturing only side dump trailers, which it custom designs and manufactures to meet state and federal laws. For more information, visit [sidedump.com](http://sidedump.com).

Advanced manufacturing is Iowa's largest industry, accounting for more than 17% of our state's total Gross Domestic Product. Nearly 6,000 manufacturers produce everything from food products and medical devices to aerospace products and construction machinery. Industry-leading companies are producing phenomenal products right here in Iowa.

To put a more personal face on these economic impact numbers, there was an average of 223,000 manufacturing employees in Iowa in 2018, many of whom live in rural communities across Iowa. Iowa's rural electric cooperatives play a vital role in supporting these employees, businesses and the communities in which they live and work.

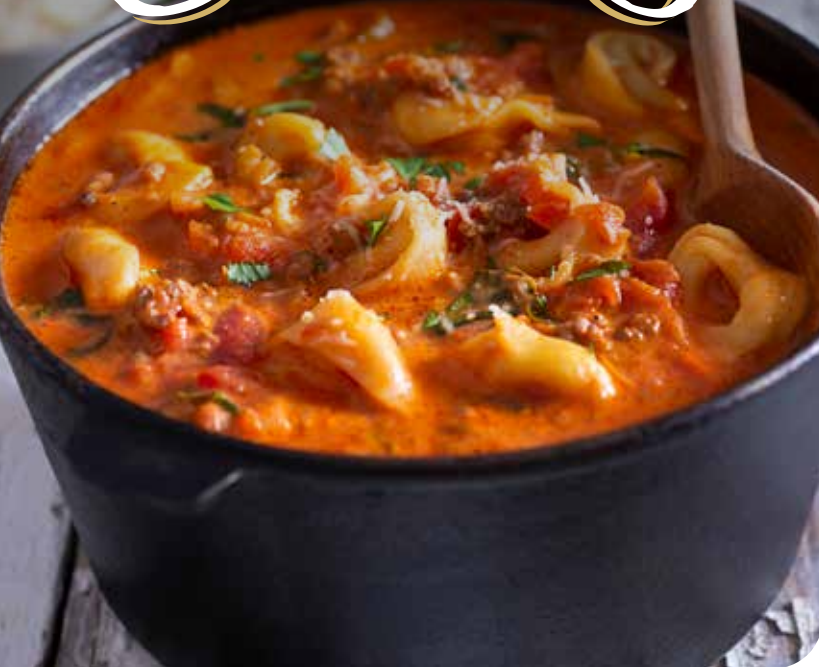
As you travel the state throughout the year, be on the lookout for these vehicles, and become curious about others you see. You never know; they just might be made in Iowa! ⚡

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Kay Snyder is the director of marketing and communications for the Iowa Area Development Group.



# COZY UP WITH SOUPS



## Hearty Tortellini Soup

- 1 pound Italian sausage
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup green pepper, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 30 ounces canned tomatoes, chopped
- 1 quart V-8 juice
- 1 quart beef or chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried basil, chopped
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 package frozen three-cheese tortellini, cook per instructions and drain
- Parmesan cheese, shredded or grated

In 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, cook sausage and drain. Add veggies, liquids and seasonings. Soft boil until veggies are tender, about 30 minutes. Add tortellini and stir gently. Cook an additional 5 minutes. Discard bay leaf and serve with Parmesan cheese. *Servings: 10-12*

**Belinda Fink • Cambridge • Consumers Energy**

## Buttery Onion Soup

- 2 cups onion, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups Swiss cheese
- salt and pepper, to taste
- seasoned croutons

Sauté onion in butter until tender. Blend flour into sautéed onions. Gradually add broth and milk. Cook over medium heat until bubbly. Add cheese and stir until melted. Season to taste and serve with seasoned croutons.

**Ramona Harken • Ackley  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Broccoli Cheddar Soup

- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 cups milk
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 10 ounces frozen broccoli, cooked, drained and chopped

Sauté onion in butter. Blend in flour and salt; gradually add milk and cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Add cheese and broccoli, stir until cheese is melted. *Servings: 6 (1 cup each)*

**Linda Cox • Leon  
Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Ham n' Swiss Soup

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups frozen broccoli, chopped
- 4 teaspoons onion, chopped
- 2 cups fully cooked ham, cubed
- 1 cup whipping cream
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- dash salt
- dash pepper
- 1½ cups Swiss cheese, shredded

In large saucepan, melt butter then whisk in flour until smooth. Gradually add broth and bring to a boil. Cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Add broccoli and onion then cook until crisp-tender. Add ham, cream and seasonings. Heat thoroughly. Stir in cheese until melted. *Servings: 4*

**Dorothy Carolus • Parkersburg  
Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative**

### BRIGHTEN THE BOWL

Fresh herbs, such as parsley, basil or cilantro can quickly lose their flavor if simmered in a hot soup. But when sprinkled on the top of a bowl just before serving, they will add freshness and bright flavor.



## Grandma's Chicken & Rice Soup

- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced

Mix all ingredients and simmer on low for at least 30 minutes. *Servings: 6*

**Cindy Langel • Carroll**  
**Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative**

## Taco Soup

- 1 pound hamburger, browned
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 package powdered ranch mix
- 2 quarts tomato juice
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 large can chili beans
- 1 large can black beans
- 1 quart corn
- toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, corn chips

Add taco seasoning and ranch mix to browned hamburger with a little water. Stir in remaining ingredients. Simmer, stirring often. Serve with cheddar cheese, sour cream and corn chips. *Servings: 10-12*

**Steph Messner • Rock Rapids**  
**Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Cabbage Soup

- 1 head cabbage
- 1 link kielbasa sausage, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3-4 potatoes, chopped, optional
- 3 cans cannellini beans
- 4 beef bouillon cubes
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped

Chop cabbage into eight chunks. Add other ingredients to pot. Add water to desired consistency. Bring to boil and then simmer 2-3 hours. Soup can be cooked in slow cooker on low all day, 8-10 hours. *Servings: 8*

**Jenny Hall • Woodbine**  
**Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## Potato Spinach Soup

- 1 cup onion, diced
- 3 tablespoons parsley (fresh or dried)
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2-3 medium baked potatoes, diced with skin
- 1 bag fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 quart chicken broth
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup fat-free half and half
- topping: fried bacon pieces
- optional seasonings: 1 tablespoon basil (fresh or dried), pinch of nutmeg
- optional meat: small cubes of baked ham or sausage

Sauté onions and parsley in butter until tender. In saucepan, add potatoes, spinach, chicken broth and seasonings. If substituting frozen spinach, thaw and drain before adding. Simmer soup until hot and bubbly, stirring often. Add cream (for a thicker soup ½ cup dried potato flakes can be added). Top with fried bacon pieces. *Servings: 8*

**Julie Flory • Pella • Pella Cooperative Electric Association**

### PUT CHEESE RINDS TO WORK

Save your Parmesan cheese rinds; they add delicious flavor to minestrone, bean or hearty vegetable soups. Keep rinds in the freezer and toss one in when you simmer the soup. It will add some saltiness, so taste before seasoning at the end. Remove the rind before serving the soup.

SOUPER SOUP

### BROWN OR SEAR THE MEAT

If you are adding meat to a soup, sear or brown it in a sauté pan before you add it to the soup. This adds a deeper savory flavor to the entire soup.

SOUPER SOUP

### CHOP IN SPOON SIZES

When chopping vegetables, consider how big you want them to be on the spoon. Even hearty soups should have well-chopped, perfectly portioned vegetables.

SOUPER SOUP

## Wanted: Rhubarb or Asparagus Recipes! The Reward: \$25 for every one we publish!

Spring showers bring rhubarb and asparagus! These spring foods are a sure sign that warm and sunny days are on the horizon. Share your favorite recipes, and if we run yours in the magazine, we'll send a \$25 credit for your electric co-op to apply to your power bill. Recipes submitted also may be archived on our website at [www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com](http://www.livingwithenergyiniowa.com).

The deadline is Jan. 31, 2021. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. **NEW: Please also provide the number of servings per recipe.**

### EMAIL:

[recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com](mailto:recipes@livingwithenergyiniowa.com)  
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

### MAIL:

#### Recipes

*Living with Energy in Iowa*  
8525 Douglas Ave., Suite 48  
Des Moines, IA 50322-2992

# A diverse fuel mix ensures

How co-ops keep electricity reliable – the traditional way and the digital way

BY PAUL WESSLUND

“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

It’s a familiar saying, and believe it or not, that age-old piece of wisdom is used by electric utilities to make sure you receive a reliable supply of electricity.

Michael Leitman, senior analyst at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, translates that saying into utility-industry terminology this way:

“You don’t want to be too reliant on any one energy source,” says Leitman. “The goal is if one resource becomes constrained, others are there to fill the gap and keep the lights on – it’s about managing risk and priorities.”

Following that advice has been pretty straightforward for decades. A mix of four energy sources provide nearly all generated electricity: coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric power.

## Mind-boggling energy changes.

But these days, there are a lot more options – the variety of electricity generation is higher than it’s ever been and not just because of more renewable energy sources like wind and solar. While the technology still has a long way to go for large-scale deployment, batteries are getting cheaper and powerful enough to supplement wind turbines during calm weather and solar when the sun’s not shining. Energy load-control programs can shut off water heaters for short periods during times when electricity use is highest. Rapid technological advances across the power industry have also been key for unprecedented opportunities, allowing utilities to manage the electric power systems in ways that make energy resources more useful.

While a broader mix of fuels



could potentially bring even greater reliability to your electric service, coordinating all the new and old equipment of the nation’s electric grid requires new skills and careful management.

For years, the electric utility industry’s main fuel source has been coal. Coal traditionally provided about half the electricity in the country because it was reliable, plentiful and relatively inexpensive. That backbone was supplemented by nuclear power, hydroelectric power and natural gas.

## But that’s changed radically over the last 15 years.

The supply and price of natural gas fell dramatically with fracking and other drilling technologies. Natural gas plants can be built smaller, faster and cheaper than coal stations, and they can be controlled more quickly as power demand changes from day to day. Coal costs rose with environmental regulations, and renewable energy sources received more attention because of their benefits to the environment.



# reliability



As a result, by 2016, natural gas replaced coal as the largest source of electricity. In 2019, natural gas made up 38% of the electric utility fuel mix; coal, 23%; nuclear, 20%; and hydroelectric power, 7%. The non-hydro renewable energy share of electricity production has risen from almost nothing 10 years ago, to 7% for wind and 2% for solar – and both continue to increase rapidly.

## Those statistical trends hide two revolutionary changes.

One is that renewable energy doesn't act like the more traditional power plants. A coal plant can run all the time, while wind and solar shut on and off as Mother Nature makes changes every hour – meaning the wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine. But with the second revolutionary change – the smart grid – the use of these complex renewable energy sources can be managed better.

## The smart grid arrives.

The digital transformation began more than two decades ago, and disruptive forces have had an impact on the power sector ever since. Electric utility dreamers foresaw a shift from an analog network of levers and switches to a digital system that includes automated power management and new ways to manage the flow of electricity.

That smart grid has arrived. Power outages can be detected more quickly, and you can even track the repair process on your smartphone. Digital software can more effectively manage the output of rooftop solar panels, sending electricity back to the utility when the homeowner isn't using all the electricity they produce. The smart grid can also make solar and wind energy more useful through the use of batteries. It's a lot

of technology that helps factor into the quality of electric service.

## Managing the smart grid brings improvements, as well as requirements for new ways of doing business.

“The smart grid brings new opportunities to enhance quality of service, reliability and resiliency, but it has to be more actively managed,” says Leitman. “You’ve still got to have folks who know how to climb utility poles, and now we need those who also understand programming and how to work with computers and control systems.”

The need for that new expertise will benefit electric cooperatives and their consumer-members. New skill sets will be needed, and that will create additional job opportunities in the local communities served by electric co-ops. ⚡

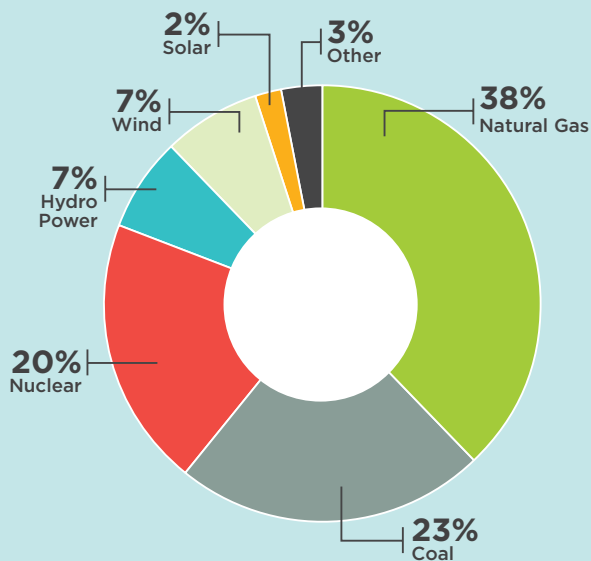
Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



## Powerful Energy Sources

Nationally, electric cooperatives and other utilities use a variety of fuels to power American homes and businesses. This diverse fuel mix supplies co-op members with the safe, reliable and affordable power they depend on.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (2019 data)



# New website launched

Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative is pleased to announce the debut of our brand-new website! After months of hard work and dedication, we are delighted to officially announce the launch. The new site is available now, with the same URL, [www.cvrec.com](http://www.cvrec.com), as the previous website.

Our goal with the new website is to provide our members with an easier way to learn about CVEC and our services while providing quick solutions to any questions and/or needs our members have. The new website is interactive and easy to navigate with even more information in our six main tabs: Your Cooperative, Your Membership, Safety, Renewables, Careers and Operation Round Up. Our current and prospective members will find useful information and frequently used buttons on the homepage of our



website.

Among the new features, the site contains an integrated social media button for Facebook to foster improved communication with our members. You will find easy online bill payment options and interactive rebate forms. We will be constantly

updating our content with helpful information, articles, newsletters, company announcements and more in the News section.

We hope you enjoy the fresh new look, easy-to-access information and consider our site a source of valuable information! ⚡

## ELECTRICITY 101



## Do you know your electrical equipment?

A transformer is a piece of equipment that is most commonly used to decrease ('step down') voltage levels going into homes and businesses.

These transformers are made up of several parts, mineral oil and coils that step the voltage down to the proper voltage for the use. In most residential homes, the voltage used and/or required is 120/240 volts.

The most typical type of transformer is a polemount and the most common size is a 10 KVA (kilovolt-ampere). This kind of transformer is installed near the top of the pole, with a wire that runs from the primary line (commonly 7,200 volts) and connects to the top of the transformer.

The transformer also has bushings on the front where three separate wires (one neutral and two 120-volt) connect and allow for the electricity to flow from the transformer to the top side of the meter, which powers your home or business.

This essential piece of equipment has a fairly long life span, averaging 25 to 30 years. However, when installing a new service or replacing one due to damage, these transformers cost CVEC approximately \$900 each. ⚡



# M&W Welding is growing strong

For more than 40 years, Moravia-based M&W Welding has been a thriving business fulfilling an agricultural niche with its custom-made livestock and hay trailers. Established in 1979, the company's founder Mervin McDanel and new owner – Mervin's grandson Colton Beals – have never deviated from the core passion of building a quality product to fit customers' needs and ensuring high-caliber customer service.

"I bought the company in 2019 from grandpa, and he built a great company with a solid foundation and was very well-known in this area," Beals explains. "When he decided to retire nearly two years ago, we were building and selling an average of 30 trailers a year. In 2020, we sold and built 150 trailers."

With an aggressive outreach strategy to market the company's products through online resources, the company now has 14 dealers from Montana to North Carolina and the states in between. In addition, the company is focused on its flagship trailers – Cattlemen Hay Trailers. The company also builds attachments for the Sinclair Tractors dealership and has a shop where full-time employees offer full-service repairs.

A key component to the company's rapid growth came through the building of additions onto the main shop. Before 2019, the company only built trailers during the warm-weather months because the 53-foot-long trailers would stick outside the shop. Now, M&W Welding builds trailers year-round, thanks to a 60-by-64-foot addition.

"Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative has been a saving grace for our expansion projects," Beals says. "Tod Faris with the co-op heard that we wanted to expand and grow, and he helped me secure a loan for equipment purchases, including a CNC plasma table. The new equipment will allow us to cut out parts for the trailers rather than outsourcing those services. It's going



to take our business to the next level with production and staying up with the competition."

First Iowa State Bank in Albia assisted Beals with the construction loan and CVEC helped M&W secure loans from the co-op's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and Northeast Missouri Electric Power Cooperative's RLF. In addition, Faris (CVEC's member services & economic development manager) introduced Beals to Bryan Ziegler, director of the Small Business Development Center, who helped create financial projections and other business growth documentation required for the loan applications.

"When working with co-op-served businesses, my focus is listening to the entrepreneur to find opportunities to introduce them to other experts who may be able to assist with their growth. This could be potential business contacts, technical assistance, lenders or property owners," Faris explains. "It

is very gratifying to assist businesses in accomplishing their goals.

Projects like M&W Welding are the culmination of many resources all coming together for the good of the small business owner. However, it's always the vision and persistence of the small business owners, like Colton, that make the business successful."

"My grandpa was born in the same house that I live in now. Our shop is also located here," Colton says. "I'm proud to be the next generation to run this business. If it weren't for Tod and the electric co-op, a lot of these loans wouldn't be possible."

He adds, "Not only did Chariton Valley open the doors for me to grow and to be able to have the money to do what I needed to do here, but it also has opened up a lot of other doors that I didn't imagine were possible."

*CVEC is proud to support the businesses throughout our service territory.* ⚡

# This year, organize your energy

BY PAT KEEGAN AND BRAD THIESSEN

With a new year, it's a perfect time to begin new projects and set goals for the months ahead.

If you're looking for ways to save energy at home and lower your monthly bills, these simple steps can help you get organized and start an achievable path to saving energy.

## Step 1: Gather information

Begin by reviewing your 2020 energy bills. Knowing *how* and *when* you use energy can help you decide how ambitious your plan should be. If you have questions about your past bills or energy use, give your electric co-op a call – they're available to help you understand your energy bills. Your co-op may also offer a free app that can show you exact data about your home energy use.

Next, visit your electric co-op's website to see if it offers additional assistance, like energy improvement rebates, free energy audits or other special rates and programs. Because of COVID-19, some restrictions may apply to in-home visits, so you can also try an online energy audit like energystar.gov's Home Energy Yardstick.

## Step 2: Develop a plan

With the information gathered, it's important to develop a plan. If your priority is cutting energy costs, you can select the measure that will



A programmable thermostat can help you reduce energy use when you don't need to be heating or cooling your home.

Photo Credit: Consumers Energy

deliver the most savings. Maybe you're already planning to do work on your home, such as roofing or renovating, and you can incorporate energy efficiency strategies into that project. To complete your plan, you'll likely need to check with local contractors or suppliers about costs.

## Step 3: Take action

Now that your planning is done, it's time to take action. If you're tackling any major energy efficiency projects that require a contractor, remember to do your research and hire a licensed, reputable professional.

In addition to energy efficiency projects and upgrades, there are other ways you can get organized to save energy:

- **Replace filters regularly.** A clean filter can improve the performance of your heating and cooling system, and reduce the electricity needed to pump air through your ductwork. Filters should be replaced every month if you're using an inexpensive filter, or every three months if you're

using a higher-quality filter. A better filter will do a better job and last longer.

- **Program your thermostat.** Heating and cooling your home account for the most energy use, so setting your thermostat to match your lifestyle can make a major difference. If you don't have a programmable or smart thermostat, get in the habit of manually adjusting your thermostat throughout the day or setting it to the most energy efficient setting when you're away.
- **Label the circuits in your breaker box.** It may not reduce your energy use, but it's an easy way to get organized and will save a lot of headaches down the line!

We hope by taking a little time to complete these steps, you'll be well on your way to a more energy efficient 2021! ⚡

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write about energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Photo Credit: Marcela Gara, Resource Media



# The lure of the sale barn

BY VALERIE VAN KOOTEN

Kent and I drove past a former sale barn in eastern Iowa the other day. The building was dilapidated and deprived of paint with its grayish, weathered exterior bravely standing against the Iowa elements. You'll find them in all parts of the state – some still open, but many of them closed as livestock farming has moved from a single farmer taking 20 hogs to market to thousands of hogs going to much larger facilities.

Pella had a sale barn on the north end of town. It's long gone now, but Thursday nights were a highlight of the week for my sister and me as we tagged along with our dad to the sale. I don't really remember whether it was hogs or cattle that were being sold, but that wasn't the important part to us anyway. With strict instructions to stay out of the sorting and penned areas in the back where animals were "staged" for the sale, we were free to explore all the other nooks and crannies of the old barn.

We took full advantage of that. The barn was ringed, as most sales barns are, with tiered seating on three sides and the auctioneer on the fourth, with the sawdust-covered ring in front of him. At the very top of the seats were ancient and none-too-clean couches that were beyond usable, but we'd plunk ourselves on them, sometimes with other kids who had come to the sale.

My memory is that there was always, always, a box of kittens up there with a harried mother cat who really didn't appreciate everyone picking up her offspring. They weren't for giving away as much as to keep around the barn to quell the mouse population.

We soon tired of the sale barn itself and headed for the adjoining restaurant. Everyone knows that sale barn restaurants have the best food anywhere. My dad would let us put



anything we wanted on the tab and stop in at the end of the night to pay off our tally of pop, candy, chips and the occasional greasy cheeseburger. Those who came to eat dinner could have home-cooked Iowa specialties like hot beef sandwiches with real potatoes and gravy or pork chops with all the sides.

I'm sure we were more than a pest. The restaurant had a bathroom off one side, and I distinctly remember my sister Amber stepping on the exposed water pipes that ran parallel to the floor, about a foot up. As the bossy older sister, I told her to stop doing that, but in true kid fashion, she had to jiggle up and down on it once more. The pipe broke, water bursting everywhere. And also true to kids' natures everywhere, we took

off, not telling anyone.

Kent and I were in Ireland several years ago and stopped at a sale barn that had sheep selling that day. We commented that other than the farmers' caps, which were flat "newsboy" type hats, this scene could have taken place in Iowa. It seems a sale barn is a sale barn, no matter where you are in the world.

If you get the chance, stop by a sale barn on an open day and take a look. Look up the kittens. Have a piece of homemade pie. Stay off the water pipes in the bathroom. ⚡

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Valerie Van Kooten is a writer from Pella who loves living in the country and telling its stories. She and her husband Kent have three married sons and two incredibly adorable grandsons.



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