

● APRIL 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Spring safety tips**

**Ways co-ops build  
effective boards**

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*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**  
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**Website**  
[www.ieclmagazine.com](http://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.

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## ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Shirley Kellenberger, a Lyon REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com). You could receive \$100!

# MY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE JOURNEY BEGAN WITH AN ACRONYM

BY JIM MILLER



Growing up on a farm in northwest Iowa near Fonda, I learned early on what “REC” stood for – rural electric cooperative. It was the power to light the farrowing house, a security light to illuminate the farm and power to keep the oven on for Mom’s pies. Back then, my acronyms were PE (physical education) – which I taught at a local school before coming home to farm – and farm terms like USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture).

## Acronyms give way to serving local members

Little did I know that when my local district director for Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association (ECA) asked me to run for our board of directors 17 years ago, I’d begin to learn a whole new set of acronyms on my journey in the electric cooperative world.

My first year as a co-op director was like learning a foreign language. PAC (Political Action Committee), IAEC (Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives) and NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) filled my conversations, and the list goes on. Our Calhoun County ECA manager at the time, Roxanne Carish, was patient with my questions, as were our seasoned board members who encouraged my education in cooperative responsibilities to serve our members. I began attending classes and learning this new language, and I am proud that I achieved the national Director Gold Credential through NRECA.

I was flattered five years ago when statewide director Steve Seidl of Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative asked if I would consider running for the state board. I am honored to represent District 5 on IAEC’s board, where I now serve as board president.

## Every decision is for co-op members

A big influence in my co-op philosophy is this quote on Calhoun County ECA’s boardroom wall: “Every decision I make shall be based on what is best for the members-owners of this cooperative.”

This quote is why I am a proponent of attending the classes and conferences offered to directors, where I continuously add industry language to my vocabulary. It is also why I prepare for my local and state board meetings. How can I make the best decisions if I am not prepared and haven’t done my due diligence?

## Advocating for co-op members

Recently, I was asked what I hope to accomplish as president of the IAEC board, and my answer came from a conversation with Darrin Lynch from CFC (National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation). He said, “Jim, in my opinion, Iowa has one of the best, if not the best, statewide organizations in the country.” My hope is that IAEC continues to set the standard for integrity and service.

And while hope is not a strategy, I know our statewide association can continue to operate at a high level because we

have incredible leadership and staff. My fellow IAEC board members are willing to put in the time and effort to serve our members successfully.

But we don’t do it alone. It’s why I appreciate fellow directors who advocate for important electric issues with their state and federal legislators. We need each of you as co-op members to be committed and engaged with your local and state boards. Let us know your questions, and share your thoughts and needs with us so we can best represent you.

After 17 years as a co-op director, the acronyms now flow freely: ROFR (Right of First Refusal), G&T (Generation and Transmission Cooperative), RTO (Regional Transmission Organization) and so many others! But sometimes, my wife Rae stops and reminds me that not everyone knows the industry lingo. It’s a good reminder to be steadfast in sharing our industry knowledge in a way others will understand as we proudly provide safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable power energy to those we serve.

*Jim Miller is the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association.*

## EDITOR’S CHOICE CONTEST

## WIN A CUISINART® ELECTRIC SKILLET!

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Enter this month’s contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than April 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 Amazon Kindle from the February issue was **Jeff Beal, a Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative member-consumer.**



**ENTER ONLINE BY APRIL 30!**

# APPRECIATION FOR OUR CO-OP EMPLOYEES

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



I don't say it enough; Franklin REC has a fantastic group of employees! I'm thankful for every one of them and I want our membership to

know how special they are, too. There is no way I could fit all the remarkable attributes of our employees into an article of this size. However, I decided to give a short and concise overview of what makes each team member special and unique. I hope you enjoy getting to know the individuals behind your power in a more personal way.

## LINE CREW/OPERATIONS



### Tom Demro

The grey beard of the linemen bunch. Tom's seen, and probably worked on, every inch of our system. He's also the one you go

to when you have a question about where something might be within our service territory. His photographic memory of every span of line is quite impressive!



### Chase Klein

The hometown kid. Chase has really grown into his own over the last several years. Taking on the additional responsibility of mapping and staking duties, all while becoming a better lineman has been fun to watch.



### Cole Marzen

Often dubbed the quarterback of the crew. Cole has a knack of seeing how a job should go in his head and then

communicating the steps involved to everyone on the job site. I've enjoyed getting to see Cole grow into the strong lineman that he is today.



### Austin Neff

The businessman of the bunch. Austin has a way of viewing things from the big picture and seeing how it all fits together.

Being able to see how a job or situation plays into the bigger picture is an extremely valuable trait.



### Trey Swaney

Trey was born with an innate quiet confidence. Trey is our glue guy that is down to do whatever it takes on the job. Need the

toilets scrubbed, inventory counted and a transformer exchanged all in one day? That's a normal day for Trey!



### Nick Nelson

The youngster of the group. Nick is one of the smartest people on the entire team who is eager to learn and get better. The

future is bright for him, and I'm excited to see him grow into the lineman we all know he can become.



### Jens Hovenga

Jens runs a tight ship in our warehouse! Whenever people that see other electric cooperatives across the state visit us, they

often remark that Franklin REC has the cleanest shop/warehouse in Iowa. That's all due to Jens and his ability to organize and communicate with our line crew when they prepare material for a job.

## OFFICE STAFF



### Emily Rush

Emily has "been there, done that" within every job in the office. She's worked her way up through customer service, billing, accounts

receivable and is now our accountant. She's very versatile and is willing to step up and do whatever is necessary to get the job done.



### Christy Mason

Anyone who has met Christy basically becomes her friend immediately. Her bubbly and fun personality allows her

to connect with coworkers and members in such a special way.



### Madison Alert

Madison's quick wit makes her a joy to be around! Her ability to think outside the box coupled with her artistic creativity makes

her a perfect fit as our communications specialist and key account representative.



### Tessa Haller

Tessa is the newbie of the office crew, but any outsider wouldn't be able to tell. Her ability to relate to others along with her eagerness to

learn has made her a great addition to our team.



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Monday-Friday 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

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## MANAGEMENT TEAM



### Karen Ringleb

Karen's knowledge of the history of Franklin REC, as well as her vast experience with RUS accounting

makes her an asset to our team. Over the last few years, she has also done a good job of recognizing strengths within others and allowing them to take on projects and make them their own.



### Chad Foster

Chad's the Swiss army knife of the entire crew. One day he is out in the field replacing a meter, the next

he is helping the line crew on a job site and the next will be discussing a member's options when it comes to solar. Chad will give you the shirt off his back and is willing to do whatever he can to make things easier for everyone else.



### Scott Hagenson

Scott came to Franklin REC with invaluable knowledge of the electric industry. Even though he has

only been here for two years, he's fit in so well and picked things up so fast that it feels like he's worked here for 20 years.

There you have it. I hope this has helped shed some light on the employees that are responsible for delivering your power. Next time you see them out and about, would you mind giving them a thank you? Your appreciation goes further than you will ever know!

*Garrett Thompson is the general manager/CEO for Franklin REC.*

## MATT ROELFS EARNS CREDENTIALLED COOPERATIVE DIRECTOR CERTIFICATION



Franklin REC congratulates Matt Roelfs, a co-op board member from Ackley, on recently earning

the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

In today's ever-changing business environment, electric cooperative directors face increasing demands. Staying informed about developments in the electric utility industry, strengthening governance skills and upholding cooperative principles are essential for serving member-owners effectively. Franklin REC remains committed to advancing this knowledge to benefit the cooperative and its members.

The NRECA CCD program ensures directors gain a strong foundation in cooperative governance by requiring attendance and demonstrated understanding of five core courses:

- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Operations and Process
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making

Roelfs has served on Franklin REC's board for four years, embracing the challenges and learning opportunities that come with the role. His dedication to the cooperative and its members makes him a valuable asset to the board.

## THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING



We are grateful for our members' participation in this year's Franklin REC annual meeting. Your involvement highlights one of the most important benefits of being a cooperative member: the principle of democratic control.

As a member of Franklin REC, you're not just a customer – you're an owner. This means you have a voice in how our cooperative operates. By casting your vote, you play a vital role in shaping the future of our cooperative and ensuring it reflects the values and priorities of our membership.

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all who took the time to vote and engage in this year's meeting. Your involvement is what keeps Franklin REC strong, member-focused and responsive to the communities we serve.

As always, we are committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity while upholding the cooperative values of transparency, accountability and service. Thank you for being an integral part of our cooperative. Together, we can continue to build a brighter future.

# WAYS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BUILD STRONG BOARDS

BY ANN FOSTER THELEN

Photo Source:  
Harrison County REC

The role of an electric cooperative board extends far beyond making decisions in a meeting room. It requires forward-thinking strategies, local advocacy, active engagement and a commitment to ongoing improvement. Co-op directors continuously participate in education and training opportunities, which enhance their skills and strengthen their knowledge of a complex industry.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' recent annual meeting, Richard Fagerlin of Peak Solutions and Dr. Keri Jacobs from

the University of Missouri-Columbia explored the essential qualities of high-performing cooperative boards and the steps directors take to ensure their long-term success. Hundreds of directors from Iowa's electric cooperatives attended the meeting.

## Understanding the big picture

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that effective boards do more than meet and make decisions. They ensure the sustainability of their cooperative and prepare for future challenges. A key theme of their presentation was "future-proofing" the board – ensuring

that today's decisions position the cooperative for long-term success.

To serve the needs of electric co-ops and the member-consumers they serve – today and in the future – electric cooperative boards ask:

- What does our cooperative need from its board today?
- How can we best position ourselves for future leadership?
- How do we ensure a smooth transition when current board members step down?



Photo Source: Franklin REC



Richard Fagerlin (left) of Peak Solutions and Dr. Keri Jacobs from the University of Missouri-Columbia presented information about high-performing cooperative boards at IAEC's recent annual meeting.

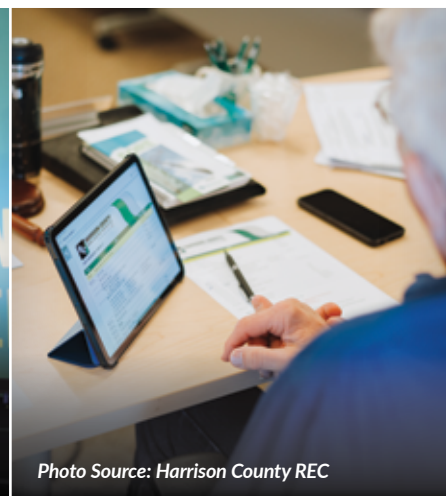


Photo Source: Harrison County REC

## Seven habits of effective board members

Fagerlin and Jacobs highlighted several common challenges boards face and seven ways board members are most effective in serving member-consumers' local needs.

- 1 Knowing their job.** Board members understand their responsibilities before, during and after meetings. This includes preparing adequately, staying engaged, and recognizing the difference between operational and strategic roles.
- 2 Finding the right balance of engagement.** Some directors may want to overreach and micromanage staff, while others leave decision-making to a few dominant voices. Striking the right balance is critical to effective leadership.
- 3 Ensuring equal participation.** Effective boards ensure that all members contribute to discussions. When one or two individuals dominate conversations, the board loses valuable perspectives and diversity of thought.
- 4 Prioritizing co-op needs.** Directors prioritize the cooperative's interests over personal motivations. An effective board remains united in its commitment to the organization's long-term success.
- 5 Passing the torch.** Board members must recognize when it's time to step aside for new leadership. Bringing in fresh perspectives while maintaining institutional knowledge is fundamental to the cooperative business model.
- 6 Maintaining confidentiality.** Board members understand what can and cannot be shared outside the boardroom. Ensuring consistent messaging strengthens trust within the cooperative and the broader membership.
- 7 Valuing diverse opinions.** Strong boards avoid the assumption that "everyone thinks like me" and foster productive discussions. The best boards value diverse opinions and encourage open dialogue.

## THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

Electric cooperative directors play a vital role in guiding the co-op's governance and strategic direction. Elected by the membership, they represent the interests of co-op member-consumers and ensure the co-op operates in alignment with its mission, values and the 7 Cooperative Principles.

Their responsibilities include setting policies, maintaining financial stability and shaping the co-op's long-term

vision. Directors stay informed on industry developments, oversee the CEO's leadership and engage with the community. They also support programs that enhance local economic development.

While directors do not manage daily operations, they provide high-level oversight to keep the co-op delivering safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable power to its members.

### Ensuring long-term success

One of the central themes of the discussion was the need to future-proof the board. This means taking proactive steps to ensure the board evolves alongside the cooperative and the industry.

Some of the key strategies electric cooperatives take to future-proof their boards include:

- **Regular board assessments.** Evaluating the board's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Director development.** Providing ongoing education and training opportunities.
- **Succession planning.** Identifying and mentoring future board members to ensure smooth transitions.
- **Engaging in strategic discussions.** Moving beyond day-to-day operations and focusing on long-term goals and sustainability.

### The power of good governance

Governance plays a crucial role in board effectiveness. Fagerlin and Jacobs distinguished between Big G Governance (formal structures, bylaws, and processes) and Little G Governance (culture, behavior and interpersonal dynamics). While having sound policies and procedures in place is essential, the board's culture and communication style can make or break its effectiveness.

For instance, agenda setting plays a key role in board productivity. Boards strive to make agendas that allow for meaningful strategic discussions. Balancing high-level strategy with operational details prevents boards from getting stuck in the weeds.

### The board and CEO relationship

The relationship between the board and the cooperative's CEO or general manager is vital to success. The board's role is to provide advice and accountability rather than micromanage operations. Future-proofing means boards position themselves as supportive partners for leadership rather than obstacles to progress.

One emerging challenge is the governance knowledge gap – the increasing complexity of electric cooperative management versus the time board members have available to stay informed. While cooperative managers work full-time in the industry, directors often serve on a part-time basis. To bridge this gap, directors commit to continuous learning and strategic thinking.

### Leading the cooperative of the future

The success of cooperatives depends on strong, well-functioning boards that adapt to changing times. By focusing on purpose, process and performance, cooperative boards ensure they remain effective and future-proofed for the challenges ahead.

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that board leadership is a journey, not a destination. The best boards never stop learning, growing and adapting to meet the needs of their cooperative and its members. With the right mindset and commitment to excellence, today's boards lay the foundation for a thriving, sustainable future.

*Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.*



## PAD THAI WITH SHRIMP

- ½ pound rice noodles
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 egg, beaten
- ½ pound shrimp (may substitute chicken or pork)
- 4 scallions or green onions, chopped
- ½ cup peanuts, coarsely chopped
- 1 3.5-ounce box pad thai sauce
- 2 cups bean sprouts
- cilantro
- lime wedges

Soak noodles according to directions. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add egg, scramble lightly 20 seconds. Add shrimp, stir until cooked. Add 2 tablespoons oil and rice noodles. Stir fry 5-7 minutes. Add scallions, peanuts and pad thai sauce. Stir one more minute, add bean sprouts. Garnish with cilantro and lime wedges. *Serves 4*

Diana Thorn • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy

## MEDITERRANEAN LEG OF LAMB

- 4-5 pounds leg of lamb
- 3 cloves garlic
- salt
- pepper
- oregano
- 1 cup water
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce

Cut slits in lamb and insert slivers of garlic. Season with salt, pepper and oregano to taste. Roast in a shallow pan at 325 degrees F for 2½ hours. Drain excess fat from juices in pan. Combine water and tomato sauce and pour over lamb and roast 30 minutes more. Baste with sauce occasionally.

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## KOREAN BEEF

- 1 pound ground beef
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- rice, cooked

Cook meat and garlic, drain somewhat. Add the remaining ingredients, except rice. Simmer to blend flavors. Serve over rice. *Serves 4*

Grant DeSmet • Larchwood  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## ASIAN BEEF AND CABBAGE STIR FRY

- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ onion, diced
- ½ head cabbage, diced
- 1 cup carrot, shredded
- ½ red pepper, diced
- 2 teaspoons ginger
- 4 cloves garlic
- soy sauce, to taste
- Japanese barbecue sauce, to taste
- rice or ramen noodles
- green onions, optional
- sesame seeds, optional

Fry hamburger and onion, drain. Add cabbage, carrots, pepper, spices and sauces. Cook until tender. Cook noodles according to package instructions and add when finished. Cook until flavors are blended. Top with green onions and sesame seeds, if desired.

Barb Walter • Alton  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## NORWEGIAN KRINGLES

- 6 egg yolks
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4½ cups flour, divided
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients together except ½ cup flour. Chill overnight or several hours. Then, if needed, add additional ½ cup flour and roll into pencil thin figure eights. Bake on greased cookie sheets at 400 degrees F for about 7 minutes, or until slightly brown. Spread with butter to serve.

Hana Hartter • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

## EAST INDIA PARTY MIX

- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon whole mustard seed
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ cups Rice Chex
- 1½ cups Corn Chex
- 1½ cups Crispix
- 1 cup peanuts
- 1 cup cashews
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup M&M candies

Add mustard seeds to melted butter and cook until seeds pop. Remove from heat and stir in Worcestershire sauce. In large bowl, mix all cereal and nuts. Sprinkle curry and cinnamon on cereal mixture. Pour butter and sauce over top, mix well to coat. Put in shallow pan and bake at 250 degrees F for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool completely, then stir in chocolate chips and candies. Store in airtight containers. Works well with gluten-free cereals.

Mabel Fisher • Sigourney  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative

## SPINACH AND CHEESE MANICOTTI

- 1 15-ounce container ricotta
- 2 cups mozzarella, shredded, divided
- ¼ cup Romano cheese, grated
- 1 10-ounce package frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced, plus more for garnish
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- black pepper, to taste
- 14 manicotti shells
- 4 cups marinara sauce, divided

Combine ricotta, 1 cup mozzarella, Romano cheese, spinach, parsley, egg, salt and pepper. Stuff ¼ cup mixture into each shell. Spread ¾ cup marinara sauce in a 9x13-inch pan. Arrange shells on top and cover with marinara sauce to submerge all pasta. Bake covered at 350 degrees F for 1 hour. Top with remaining 1 cup mozzarella and bake uncovered for 15 minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley. Serves 7

Anna Domnick • Rock Rapids  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

Visit [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.



## CHICKEN CURRY

- ½ cup yogurt
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 whole chicken, cut up
- 5 tablespoons olive oil (or vegetable oil)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- ½ teaspoon ginger
- pinch garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 6 peppercorns
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 cup water
- 2 potatoes, cubed
- basmati rice
- frozen peas, optional

Mix yogurt and salt. Remove skin from chicken. Coat chicken pieces with yogurt mixture and set in bowl 30 minutes. Sauté chicken pieces in oil until brown. Mix onion, green pepper, ginger, garlic powder, cardamom, coriander, cumin, peppercorns, cinnamon stick, turmeric, tomato sauce and water. Place chicken in slow cooker and pour sauce mixture over chicken. Add potatoes and cook until chicken is tender and potatoes are cooked. Thawed peas can be added at the end, if desired. Serve over basmati rice. Serves 4-6

Sheila Arney • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy

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The exterior of a new modern farmhouse home features vertical siding, a front porch and natural wood columns. Steel shed roofs over the windows add contrast and interest.  
Photo Source: Hibbs Luxury Homes



# HOW THE OLD FARMHOUSE WENT MODERN

## DESIGN TRENDS FOR RURAL HOMES

BY JIM WINNERMAN

Many are familiar with interior decorating styles known as mid-century modern, contemporary or simply modern. Less familiar may be a more recent approach known as “modern farmhouse,” a trend in home decor and design evoking a feeling of warmth and comfort.

The origin of the farmhouse can be traced to Germany and Scandinavia, where they were built to house farm workers. Then, it was not a style but a necessary shelter for a way of life. Farmhouse architecture arrived in the U.S. in the 1700s. Since then, farmhouses have undergone various iterations, from being purely functional as they were in Europe

to slowly morphing into various styles of interior and exterior design adopted by everyday families.

Today’s popular modern farmhouse version grew out of the show “Fixer Upper,” hosted by Chip and Joanna Gaines from Waco, Texas. It aired for five seasons on HGTV (Home and Garden Television), a network focusing on reality programming based on home improvement and real estate.

Their show premiered with each episode featuring a home they were renovating. As their engaging personalities and decorating style aired featuring one home after another, their personal

appeal and approach to interior design gained popularity.

Prominent features included architectural elements, like the use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, and an open and airy floor plan conducive to a comfortable lifestyle. The decor was an eclectic mix of furnishings and accessories. Color choices were warm and neutral hues that did not overwhelm a room.

Because it was an approach that could be used inside a home of any architectural style, it had immediate and widespread public appeal. They ventured away from the pure countryside approach of

simplicity, function and nostalgia characteristic of earlier farmhouse decor and introduced a more relaxed way of living and entertaining. The design features smooth, clean lines and materials while retaining the rustic charm of historic farms. By 2016, the Gaines had unexpectedly created a new trend that soon had its own name – modern farmhouse.

### Designs based on personal interpretation

Modern farmhouse design can incorporate a traditional wooden kitchen table set in a large kitchen with vaulted ceilings and wooden accent beams, while the overall design is sleek, functional and bright.

Farmhouse style is a combination of the best of old and new. It remains rustic, yet it is chic, contemporary, country and modern at the same time.

The practical part of modern farmhouse design is frequently expressed through open shelves in living spaces. In family rooms, shelves contain family heirlooms and collectibles. In the kitchen, clear glass cabinet doors display everyday functional utensils, like dishes, textiles and other practical objects, as well as rustic cooking decor.

Early farmhouses did not have walls made from drywall like those found in most new and existing homes. Walls were shiplap, beadboard or tongue-and-groove boards, and using the same material today is an important part of modern farmhouse decor. Painted in shades of white and installed vertically or horizontally, either approach delivers the coziness found in the charm of historic farms.

### The most important room in the house

Although stainless-steel kitchen appliances would not seem to fit the modern farmhouse approach to decor, they are easily incorporated into a kitchen that features the clean, straight lines of Shaker cabinets, shiplap walls and other natural elements like soapstone sinks.

Similarly, modern farmhouse design does not usually incorporate busy, repetitive patterns on furniture,



This kitchen features a center island with vintage style turned foot legs and a built-in low cabinet to display large pieces of cookware. Natural elements include a wood plank floor and stone surrounding the alcove. Photo Source: Jim Winnerman

walls or draperies; however, kitchens can again be an exception. It is not unusual for a subtly patterned tile backsplash to be used above the oven, where a geometric design works well and does not compete with white subway tile installed nearby.

A kitchen island styled as a table with rustic turned legs beneath its countertop, copper drawer knobs and pulls, and a butcher block surface all work anywhere in a modern farmhouse kitchen.

When looking for basic design materials, look for historical pieces or items that could be found in nature. Examples include wood, slate, marble, soapstone, brick, aged brass, cast iron and tin. Most importantly, both comfort and function are goals in modern farmhouse decor, versus aesthetics, trends or a consistent sense of design.

### Modern farmhouse exterior

While interior decor for a modern farmhouse design is popular when existing homes are remodeled, builders, architects and contractors of new homes have been quick to add a modern farmhouse exterior aesthetic to their portfolios.

Considerations for an exterior design include the siding and color, roof, lighting and the entrance that greets guests from the curb to the front door.

As for color, the same approach applies outside as it does inside. Neutral hues, such as whites, creams and beiges, are commonly used



A coastal farmhouse living room on Cape Cod features sea blue accents, a sliding barn door into the utility room, a light gray wood plank floor, sea foam green chairs and a contemporary painting of a beach scene. Photo Source: Jim Winnerman

for a clean and fresh exterior. That palette provides a background that easily incorporates elements such as natural stone on a portion of the facade, wooden shutters and wooden porch railings and posts that evoke a rustic, familiar feel.

A combination of vertical or horizontal siding is often blended with cedar shingles under the roof peaks to add interest and texture. Vintage barn-style lantern light fixtures or industrial lighting are popular near the front door. Nothing exudes a modern farmhouse exterior like a welcoming, comfortable front porch.

A front door can be contrary to an overall paint scheme. Pale colors work, but almost any color can add texture and interest to the entrance. Having a door in a pleasant shade of red, yellow or blue is more welcoming, which conveys a happy vibe to arriving guests.

Finally, incorporating the true meaning of modern farmhouse design into the exterior means using metal barn-style roofing to create additional color and texture contrast. However, traditional shingles can also be used with metal shed roof accents above window overhangs or for just the porch roof.

Top it all with a wooden sliding barn door replacing a traditional front door, add a picket fence in the front yard, and turn that house into a modern farmhouse home.

*Jim Winnerman is a guest contributor for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

## FRANKLIN REC ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUND

Franklin REC's voluntary Alternative Energy Program allows members to support the development of renewable energy projects with contributions to the fund. The funding for the program, provided by our members, supports the development of alternative energy production facilities in Iowa. These contributions not only provide the opportunity for alternative energy to be purchased but also assist in the development of nontraditional energy generation in Iowa.

Members can make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge that is automatically added to monthly bills in \$1 increments. To enroll in the Alternative Energy Program, complete the form below.

## CREATE EVENT FUN WITH FRANKLIN REC'S GRAVITY BASKETBALL WAGON

Planning a town festival, school fundraiser or community event? Franklin REC is thrilled to offer our Gravity Basketball Wagon – a fun and interactive activity – for you to use at no cost!

Perfect for all ages, the Gravity Basketball Wagon brings energy and excitement to any gathering. Whether it is kids trying their first shots or adults enjoying a friendly challenge, it's sure to be a crowd favorite.

### What's included?

Franklin REC will handle all the logistics, delivering the wagon directly to your event within our service territory and picking it up afterward – all for free!



### How to reserve

Reserving is easy! Just visit our website and fill out the form.

At Franklin REC, we're proud to support our communities. Let us help make your event unforgettable with the Gravity Basketball Wagon!

## FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

### During the January meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$135,267.58
- Approved an adjustment to the Revolving Loan Fund interest rate and administrative rate
- Accepted the nominating committee reports

### During the February meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$142,134.00
- Accepted a RECare program update
- Approved Idle Service Tariff language change

## ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FUND AUTHORIZATION FORM

One-time Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Payments made payable to Franklin REC.*

Monthly Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*This amount will be automatically applied to your monthly electric bill. You may opt-in or opt-out of the program at any time.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Clip this portion of the magazine and return to Franklin REC, PO Box 437, Hampton, IA 50441 or email franklin@franklinrec.coop.

## PLANNING A SPRING PROJECT? CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG

Before starting any project that involves digging, be sure to contact 811! This free service helps locate underground public utilities, ensuring your safety and preventing damage. Whether you're planting trees, installing a fence or tackling a landscaping project, calling 811 before you dig is required by Iowa law. Safe digging starts with a simple call!



# U.S. FARMERS FEED THE WORLD; LET'S REMEMBER ELECTRICAL SAFETY THIS PLANTING SEASON

As planting season nears, here are some agriculture-related facts from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF):

- Each year, one U.S. farm feeds 166 people domestically and abroad. The global population is expected to increase by 2.2 billion by 2050. This means that the world's farmers will have to grow approximately 70% more food than what they produce today.
- 2 million farms dot America's rural landscape, according to the AFBF, and 98% are operated by individuals, families and family-run partnerships or corporations.
- 86% of U.S. agricultural products are produced on family farms or ranches.
- Americans throw away approximately 25% of the food they buy to eat at home.
- Women make up 36% of the total number of farm operators in the U.S.; 56% of all farms have at least one female decision-maker.

As farmers return to fields this spring, Safe Electricity and Franklin REC urge all workers to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines.

## Follow these safety tips:

- ① Determine power line locations before going out into the fields and designate preplanned routes that avoid hazardous areas.
- ② Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting



tractors on trailer beds. Be cognizant of tall antennas.

- ③ Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators or raising truck beds near power lines.
- ④ Do not attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- ⑤ Coming too close to a power line while working can be just as dangerous as contacting one since electricity can arc or "jump" to conducting material or objects.
- ⑥ Non-metallic materials, such as lumber, tree limbs, tires, ropes and hay, will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.
- ⑦ When grounded wires that stabilize poles, known as guy wires, are broken, they become hazardous. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Do not do it yourself.
- ⑧ When it comes to dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.

- ⑨ If your equipment contacts a power line, stay in the cab and call 911 or Franklin REC for help. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until the electric utility arrives.

- ⑩ If leaving the cab is necessary, as in the case of fire, the proper action is to jump – not step – with both feet hitting the ground at the same time. Hop away from the area as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop. If you are unable to hop, then shuffle with the insides of your feet touching. Do not return to the equipment until the power has been deenergized.

Managers and owners should make sure family members and staff, including seasonal workers, are educated on these safety precautions. Dangerous areas need to be thoroughly identified and labeled.

Start each day with a safety meeting to alert everyone to potential hazards and how to avoid them.

For more electrical safety information, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

## JOIN THE ENERGY TRAIL TOUR

Enter for a chance to join fellow cooperative enthusiasts on a trip through the North Dakota Energy Loop this summer! Register for the Energy Trail Tour by scanning the QR code with your smart device or visiting [www.franklinrec.coop/energy-trail-tour](http://www.franklinrec.coop/energy-trail-tour).



# READERSHIP SURVEY: WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Each month, *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine reaches 55,000 households, and we're proud to bring informative content to you each month. Beginning in mid-April, we'll be conducting a scientific survey to learn more about our readers' preferences and demographics.

We'll be randomly selecting readers to participate in the online survey, and if you are selected, we hope you'll take a few minutes to anonymously provide your feedback.

If you receive an invitation to participate, the email will look similar to the graphic at the right and the content below. In addition, you can look for these details to know that the email is legitimate.

**Subject:** *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine  
**Preheader:** We invite you to complete our survey!  
**Sender:** Iowa Electric Cooperative Living /  
 invitation@online2.snapsurveys.com

Thank you in advance for your valuable input! If you have any questions, please contact [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com).



## ENTER TO WIN

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### SEND US YOUR RURAL IOWA PHOTOS

We're always looking for stunning images for the cover of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. If we select your photo for a cover, we'll award you \$100. The photos must be clear, of an Iowa place served by an electric cooperative and in high resolution.

To be considered, email photos to [editor@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:editor@ieclmagazine.com) with "Cover Submission" in the subject line. Please also include the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.



# CELEBRATING A SEASON OF NEW LIFE AND HOPE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Think back to when you were in high school. If you're like me, you rarely considered your teachers had a life outside of the classroom.

As an adult, however, you see these influential people in a new light. I was thinking about this when I watched a social media video about "Why I'm an Organ Donor" from Stewart Memorial Community Hospital (SMCH) in my hometown of Lake City.

## A life-changing diagnosis

As someone who checked "yes" to being an organ donor when I renewed my driver's license, the video made me think of Scott Nesbitt (Nez), my high school speech teacher. I knew he'd received a liver transplant, and I was grateful he was willing to share his incredible story.

It started on May 12, 2009, when Nez was 47. The Pocahontas native (who was in great health) had been teaching high school English and speech classes for 25 years, mainly in Lake City. He and his wife Janelle were raising their three school-aged children: MaeLaan, Brock and Jaden.

The Saturday before Mother's Day, Nez suddenly felt nauseous. When a high fever kicked in, he and his family chalked it up to influenza, which was going around the local school. Nez took acetaminophen, but nothing helped. Within a few days, he made an appointment at SMCH to see his family doctor, who suspected Nez had contracted a virus.

Things only got worse. Nez was admitted to the hospital on day four after his symptoms appeared. Tests revealed alarming liver counts, which measure the proteins, enzymes and other substances that indicate how well the liver is functioning.

"While counts of 0 to 40 are normal, mine were 8,000 to 10,000," Nez explains.



Scott Nesbitt (center, holding granddaughter) with his family.

"My first question was, 'Am I dying?'"

Nez's doctor immediately consulted with an organ transplant team at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in Omaha, where Nez was transported by ambulance.

"Had my doctor waited 12 more hours to make this decision, I would have died," says Nez, who was immediately put on the national donor network system in search of a liver.

Nez had contracted hepatitis A, which inflames the liver and is transmitted when a person ingests contaminated food or water. He had also taken too much acetaminophen, which stressed his infected liver. "I was poisoning myself and didn't realize it," he says.

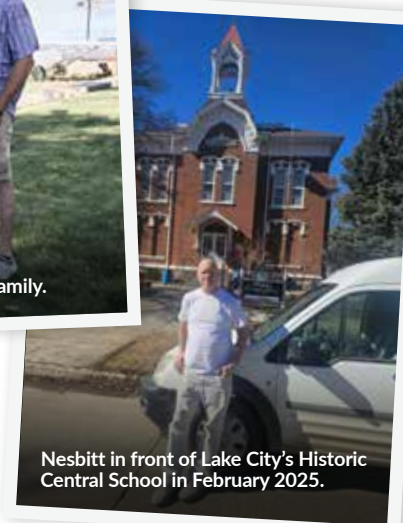
## A transplant saves a life

While UNMC's skilled doctors perform about 350 liver transplants a year, Nez had nearly everything working against him. His body was shutting down, plus he had a rare blood type requiring an exact match. As the hours passed, things looked hopeless.

Then, a miracle happened for Nez. He received a liver from a 33-year-old named Brian Gorman. The liver was flown from Cheyenne, Wyoming,



Nesbitt in his hospital bed in 2009.



Nesbitt in front of Lake City's Historic Central School in February 2025.

to Omaha. While Gorman had died by suicide, this tragedy offered new life for Nez, who had been perfectly healthy a mere eight days earlier.

The transplant wasn't without its complications, but it was successful. Nez was reunited with his family, which now includes nine grandchildren. He returned to teaching in the fall of 2009. While Nez retired in 2022, he continues to work about 30 hours a week with his painting business.

"I appreciate everything so much, including things I used to take for granted," says Nez, 63, who serves with his church's youth group and chairs the SMCH board of directors.

Nez's story is timely since April is National Donate Life Month. It also reflects the timeless message of Easter, a cherished time of renewal, new life and faith, where the season's greatest gift is hope.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at [www.darcymaulsby.com](http://www.darcymaulsby.com).



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
cooperatives

April 2025

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