

● DECEMBER 2025

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

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2026 rate increase**

**Your guide to  
smarter electronics**

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Kim Scharfenkamp, a Southwest Iowa REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

# LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

BY JIM MILLER



By the time you read this column, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) will have held its 2025 Annual

Meeting in West Des Moines with the theme of “Leading through Change.” And that’s the perfect phrase to describe my first year serving as IAEC board president.

## Growing connections

I’ve been reflecting on what the trade association for Iowa’s locally owned and governed electric co-ops has accomplished in 2025, and we worked hard to engage with our member co-ops on new levels. For example, Leslie Kaufman, IAEC executive vice president and general manager, made it a priority to attend Iowa electric co-op board meetings and staff safety meetings across the state during her first year on the job. During these visits, she learned about our members’ priorities and challenges as our industry experiences rapid change.

## Coordinated advocacy, united voice

I’m proud of how the statewide association engaged with our member co-ops during the 2025 Iowa Legislative Session as we advocated to safeguard electric service territory protections for the rural families, farms, businesses and communities we serve. We’re seeing more co-op board directors and co-op staff engage with their local legislators and other community leaders on this issue, and we were successful in changing the direction of proposed legislation that would have diminished Iowa’s long-standing service territory law.

When session ended in May, the statewide policy and advocacy

team rolled up their sleeves and developed a framework tool. It includes member input to analyze and define our statewide position on policy issues and aid in prioritizing resources to accomplish advocacy objectives. This tool will help our statewide staff work proactively on behalf of Iowa’s electric cooperatives as we lead through change.

We have built incredible momentum in 2025 that will propel us to the start of the 2026 Legislative Session next month. We anticipate another active session of challenges to the proven cooperative business model of self-governance and member ownership. IAEC will continue to unify and leverage the voices of board directors, employees and other member-consumers of Iowa’s electric cooperatives to advocate for safe, affordable, reliable and sustainable

power. We embrace leadership from all levels of our membership as we work with key stakeholders on local, state and federal tiers.

## A focus on co-op members

Now is the time to lead through change, and we will have ample opportunities to do so in the electric utility industry. It all points back to our electric cooperative purpose and our collective mission: to power lives and empower communities. Because electric co-ops are owned by the members we serve, our focus is always on you.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your statewide board president this year. I wish you and your family a blessed holiday season and a prosperous 2026.

*Jim Miller is the board president of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### WIN A SMART BIRD FEEDER

The 2K HD camera on this smart bird feeder captures the vibrant colors and behaviors of every bird at your feeder. Every detail is recorded with crystal-clear clarity. Receive instant notification whenever birds are detected. Note: Some advanced AI features require a subscription, and new users get a 30-day free trial.

If you don't subscribe, core functions like live viewing and sharing still work as usual. For more details, visit [www.ieclmagazine.com/editors-choice-contest](http://www.ieclmagazine.com/editors-choice-contest).

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Dec. 31. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of Lodge cast iron skillet set from the October issue was **Les Elgin**, a **Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY DEC. 31!

# FRANKLIN REC BOARD POSTPONES 2026 RATE INCREASE TO SUPPORT MEMBERS

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



At Franklin REC, our mission has always been simple: to deliver safe, reliable and affordable power to the members we serve.

In the spirit of transparency, we want to share an important update about how we're working to balance increasing wholesale costs with our commitment to keeping your bills as stable as possible.

## Understanding the Energy Cost Adjustment

Earlier this year, we shared information about changes to the Energy Cost Adjustment (ECA), a line item on your bill that reflects fluctuations in the cost of wholesale power purchased from our generation and transmission cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). These costs have increased due to factors beyond our control, including higher material and construction costs, increased system demand, and new reliability and compliance requirements across the electric grid.

Basin Electric, Franklin REC's wholesale power provider, has informed us of wholesale cost adjustments that, depending on market conditions, could result in member bill impacts ranging from 5% to 10% over the next two years. The exact percentage will depend on factors like energy commodity prices, which can fluctuate significantly.

Because the ECA directly tracks these wholesale cost changes, it ensures that the impact is shared fairly among members based on actual energy use. While this approach maintains our billing transparency and equity, it also means that recent wholesale cost increases are more noticeably reflected in our monthly statements.

## Board decision to postpone the 2026 rate adjustment

Franklin REC originally planned a 1.6% base rate adjustment effective Jan. 1, 2026, as part of our long-term financial planning strategy. However, after careful review, your board of directors voted to postpone that rate increase in light of the current ECA adjustments.

The decision reflects our cooperative values in action, prioritizing members' needs. While postponing

this rate adjustment affects our financial timeline, the board agreed that it was the right decision to provide some relief to members as wholesale costs continue to adjust.

## Committed to long-term stability

Even as we navigate these short-term challenges, Franklin REC remains focused on long-term stability and reliability. Our team continues to:

- Strengthen financial reserves to buffer against future cost increases
- Invest in system upgrades that improve efficiency and dependability
- Explore cost-saving measures to maintain service quality without unnecessary expense

These proactive steps help ensure that our cooperative remains financially sound and prepared for the future, without compromising reliability or safety.

## Transparency and trust

Every rate and policy decision at Franklin REC is made by your elected board of directors, fellow members who live and work in the same communities you do. Their decisions are guided by one goal: ensuring reliable, affordable service today and for generations to come.

As always, we will continue to keep you informed as changes occur. In the meantime, members are encouraged to explore Franklin REC's energy efficiency programs and rebates, which can help manage usage and reduce monthly costs.

If you have questions about your bill or the ECA, please get in touch with our office. We're here to help.

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

## HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Franklin REC will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 24, and Thursday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas. Additionally, the office will be closed on Thursday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day.



### Office

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Hampton, IA 50441

### Office Hours

Monday-Friday 7:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

### Telephone Number

641-456-2557  
Calls answered 24/7

### Secure Pay-by-Phone Number

1-855-940-3953

### Website

[www.franklinrec.coop](http://www.franklinrec.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND YOUTH TOUR APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

Franklin REC has revamped its scholarship program to better reflect what makes rural northern Iowa thrive – and applications for 2026 are officially open.

If you're a dependent of a Franklin REC member, now is the perfect time to check out these opportunities on our website. And for members looking to restart their education or career journey, our Reignite Your Future Scholarship is here to give you a boost. Whether you're aiming to earn a degree, gain new skills or explore a fresh path, we want to help you get started.

But that's not all. Our 2026 Youth Tour applications are also open!

This all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., gives one lucky high school sophomore or junior the chance to explore national landmarks, meet elected officials and learn about the cooperative difference alongside other Iowa students. It's truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

From scholarships to youth programs, we're proud to invest in your future – whatever stage you're at.



**Learn more and apply today at [www.franklinrec.coop](http://www.franklinrec.coop).**

## CELEBRATING FOUR YEARS WITH FRANKLIN REC



Franklin REC is proud to recognize First Class Lineman Austin Neff for celebrating four years of service

with the cooperative. Since joining the team, Austin has demonstrated a strong commitment to safety, reliability and member service. His hard work and dedication play an important role in keeping power flowing to our members each day. Congratulations, Austin, on this milestone anniversary!

# FOOD DRIVE

Full Shelves, Full Hearts

Help stock the shelves of our local food pantries. Shelves are emptying faster than ever – together, we can help fill them again.

Every donation helps support local families this holiday season.

Donation Drop-Off Locations

Center One 5 First St. SW, Hampton Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8:00AM-4:00PM
Franklin County Extension Office 6 2nd St. NW, Hampton Hours: 24/7 Drop-Off Available in Breezeway
Franklin REC 1860 HWY 05, Hampton Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:00AM-3:30PM
First Security Bank & Trust 100 1 <sup>st</sup> St. NW, Hampton Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 8:30AM-4:00PM, Fri. 8:30AM-5:00PM
First Security Bank & Trust 50 Main St. Dumont Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 8:30AM-3:00PM, Fri. 8:30AM-5:00PM
First Security Bank & Trust 319 Main St. Rockwell Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 8:30AM-3:00PM, Fri. 8:30AM-5:00PM
First Security Bank & Trust 309 Main St. Thornton Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9:00AM-12:00PM
Hampton Community Christian Daycare 104 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave. NE, Hampton Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8:00AM-6:00PM

NOV. 3 – DEC. 22

## TOUCHSTONE VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH



Congratulations to Scott Hagenon for being selected as the Touchstone Energy® Volunteer of the Month for October.

In recognition of his dedication and community spirit, Scott has chosen to donate \$100 to the Iowa Firefighters Memorial Wall, which honors the bravery and service of Iowa's firefighters. Thank you, Scott, for your generosity and commitment to giving back!

## LIGHT UP THE NIGHT 2025

The park was aglow, laughter filled the air and the holiday spirit was everywhere – Light Up the Night 2025 was truly a sight to behold! Franklin REC thanks everyone who joined us and helped make the evening so magical. Your energy and participation brought the lights, the joy and the celebration to life.

The display will continue shining through the new year, so take a stroll, enjoy the sights and soak in the season. We can't wait to celebrate with you again next year!



# YOUR GUIDE TO SMARTER ELECTRONICS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Wouldn't it be great to wake up on a sunny morning, say "Good morning, house!," and stand back as the right light fixtures flash on, the coffee maker starts, the outdoor security lighting switches off and the toaster oven starts preheating for your frozen toaster pastry? That may sound like something from science fiction, but today's smart home electronics make it possible.

Smart devices use digital technology and Wi-Fi to take your home to a new level of convenience and comfort. They can also help you

make better use of your electricity so you can reduce waste and lower your energy bills.

Even if you've already put the many advantages of smart electronics to work for your home and family, you might be surprised by some of the newer devices with the potential to change your daily life.

### Smart thermostats

Heating and cooling use more energy than anything else in your home. Replacing your home's standard thermostat with a smart model can lower your monthly electric

bills while keeping you even more comfortable. Smart thermostats learn your daily habits and take over for you. You won't have to lower your thermostat every evening, because it will happen automatically. Because smart thermostats know exactly when you need electricity and when you don't, they waste a lot less.

### Smart appliances

The second-biggest share of your home's electricity powers appliances, from your refrigerator to your water heater. Smart appliances use Wi-Fi and high-tech sensors to operate

more efficiently. A smart washer can sense the size of your load and adjust the water and cycle times accordingly. Smart refrigerators can warn you when the kids leave the door open. And smart water heaters don't waste energy by heating water while you're asleep.

### Smart plugs and power strips

An easy and affordable way to explore smart technology is with smart plugs, which plug into your wall outlets. You can then plug lighting, appliances and other devices directly into them. You'll be able to control all those devices through a single app, so you can tell the coffeemaker when to start brewing, turn your exterior accent lighting off at dawn or have your favorite music already streaming as you walk in the door.

Smart power strips look like their ordinary cousins but use smart plugs. They're particularly helpful at eliminating waste caused by

what's known as "phantom load" – like leaving your phone charger plugged in when it's not charging.

### Smart shades

You wish your family room didn't face south, because it's always warm during the day. Smart shades and blinds can help. You can set them to automatically open or close depending on the time of day (and year) or based on your home's indoor temperature. They can help your air conditioner keep you cooler for less.

### Smart assistants

When you combine the capabilities of individual smart home electronics with voice assistants like Amazon Alexa or whole-home smart energy management systems, they become even more powerful. You can teach voice assistants to carry out multiple tasks that make up your daily routines, like the "good morning, house" message. Energy management systems simplify control

of all aspects of your home's energy use, and some offer specific tips to help you save even more.

### Be smart with your smart devices

While all those smart devices may be able to make your home more energy efficient and your life more comfortable, they're not perfect. Most require an internet connection, so if your service is down, your smart devices won't work, either.

Smart devices typically don't receive frequent system updates like your smartphone or laptop, so be aware of potential security issues. Before you choose a smart home device, make sure it's completely secure and compatible with what you have. Then prepare to be amazed by what smart home electronics will do for you!

*Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



When you combine the capabilities of individual smart home electronics with voice assistants like Amazon Alexa or whole-home smart energy management systems, they become even more powerful.



Replacing your home's standard thermostat with a smart model can lower your monthly electric bills while keeping you even more comfortable.



Smart appliances use Wi-Fi and high-tech sensors to operate more efficiently. Photo Source: Samsung



# Holiday

## APPETIZERS

### CRANBERRY FETA ROLL-UPS

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dried sweetened cranberries
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup feta, crumbled (not reduced fat)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup green onion, diced
- 2 large tortillas, spinach or wheat flavor

Combine all ingredients except for tortillas. Lay tortillas out flat. Divide ingredients between the two tortillas and spread all the way to the edge. Roll tortillas up tightly, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Trim ends of roll slightly, then cut each roll into 12 slices. These can be made one day ahead of time and sliced before serving. *Yields 24 slices*

Mary Ellen Metzger • Rockwell City  
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

### MEATLOAF APPETIZERS

- 2 slices bread
- 2 pounds hamburger
- 1 pound sausage
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons onion, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk, approximately
- bacon
- barbecue sauce, optional

Break bread into small pieces. Mix bread pieces in a dish with hamburger, sausage, eggs and onion. Add milk and use fork to moisten hamburger mixture, add more milk as needed. Shape mixture into balls, wrap in bacon and seal ends of bacon with toothpicks. Bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour, then add barbecue sauce to half or all, if desired. Return to oven for 15 minutes, or until hot.

Susan Ausborn • Ventura  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

### CHICKEN NUT ROLL

- 1 12.5-ounce can chicken
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 3 tablespoons green onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon Hidden Valley Ranch dry seasoning
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup walnuts, chopped, divided
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 tablespoons pimentos, well drained, optional
- crackers

Mix all ingredients, except crackers, using half of the walnuts. Form mixture into a log, star or Christmas tree shape. Sprinkle remaining walnuts over top of mixture. Refrigerate for 4 hours, or overnight. Serve with crackers. *Serves 6-8*

Nancy Anderson • Ankeny  
Prairie Energy Cooperative

### HANKY PANKY'S

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 pound spicy pork sausage
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- 2 packages party rye bread

Brown meat and drain. Add cheese, stir until melted, then add seasonings. Spread on rye bread. Bake at 350 degrees F until brown, approximately 10-15 minutes. *Serves 10-15*

Michael Treiber • Battle Creek  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

## GINGERBREAD CHEESECAKE DIP

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- ¾ cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 2 tablespoons whole milk
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups whipped cream sprinkles, optional
- gingerbread cookies

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Add brown sugar, milk, cinnamon, vanilla, ginger, nutmeg and salt. Beat until smooth and combined. Add whipped cream and gently fold to combine. Transfer dip to a serving bowl and top with sprinkles, if desired. Serve with gingerbread cookies.

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva  
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

## HAM-WRAPPED OLIVE SHRIMP

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¾ teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 30 large raw shrimp, peeled (about 1 pound)
- 10 deli ham slices, thinly sliced
- 30 pimento-stuffed Spanish olives

In a large bowl, whisk together the first five ingredients. Add shrimp and toss to coat. Cover and chill for 30 minutes. Preheat broiler with oven rack 5½ inches from heat. Cut each ham slice into three lengthwise strips. Wrap each strip around one shrimp and one olive, secure with a wooden toothpick. Place wrapped shrimp on a large, lightly greased baking sheet. Repeat process with remaining ham, shrimp and olives. Broil 3 minutes on each side or until each shrimp turns pink. Arrange appetizers on a serving platter and serve hot. These can be made ahead and refrigerated, then broiled just before serving. *Yields 30 appetizers*

Kary Blunk • Russell  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## SAUSAGE WONTONS

- 12 wonton wrappers
- 1 pound ground sausage, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1½ cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1½ cups Monterey jack cheese, shredded
- 1 cup buttermilk ranch dressing
- ¼ cup green pepper, chopped
- ¼ cup red pepper, chopped

Lightly grease a 12-cup muffin tin. Press one wonton wrapper in each muffin cup. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5 minutes, until lightly browned. Remove and let cool on cookie sheet. In a skillet over medium heat, brown ground sausage and seasoned salt. Drain grease from sausage. In a bowl, combine sausage with cheddar cheese, Monterey jack cheese, ranch dressing and peppers. Mix with spatula until combined. Fill each cooked wonton with mixture and place in muffin pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 5-6 minutes. *Serves 12*

Julie Allison • Marshalltown  
Consumers Energy

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



## SAUSAGE CHEESE BALLS

- 2 packages Jimmy Dean Sausage, uncooked
- 1 16-ounce package shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1½ cups all-purpose baking biscuit mix
- ½ cup celery, finely chopped
- ½ cup onion, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- barbecue sauce, optional

Mix first six ingredients together and form into 1-inch balls. Bake on a cookie sheet at 375 degrees F for 15 minutes, or until golden brown. They can be served with barbecue sauce in a slow cooker on low. *Yields 6 dozen, approximately*

Karen Caldwell • Albia  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

## SIMPLE BACON CHEESE BALL

- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- pepper, to taste
- bacon bits

Mix all ingredients, except bacon bits, together until smooth. Shape into a ball and chill for 1 hour, then roll in bacon bits. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill until ready to serve. *Serves 15-20*

Rebecca Hancox • Plano  
Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

WANTED:

## BREAKFAST & BRUNCH RECIPES

THE REWARD:

\$25 FOR EVERY  
ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Dec. 31

From egg bakes and casseroles to cinnamon rolls and power bowls – we want your best **breakfast and brunch recipes!**

Recipes will appear in our April issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: [recipes@ieclmagazine.com](mailto:recipes@ieclmagazine.com)

MAIL: Recipes

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



# HOLIDAY LIGHTS: CANDLELIGHT TO CO-OP POWER

How Christmas lights and rural electrification brought warmth, color and connection to Iowa homes

BY SAFE ELECTRICITY AND ANN FOSTER THELEN

Long before electricity, people brightened the dark winter months with firelight, from the burning of the Yule log to candles placed around the home. The first recorded candlelit Christmas trees appeared in Germany in 1660 and eventually spread across Europe, reaching the U.S. later in the century.

While the glow of the candles was festive, it also posed a serious fire hazard, so the light could only be enjoyed for a short time.

## A revolutionary spark

While Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb in 1879, it was his colleague Edward H. Johnson who created the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1882. He hand-wired 80 colored bulbs around a revolving tree in his parlor, all powered by a generator.

Johnson's lights were ahead of their time, as electricity was not yet routinely available and electric lights were considered expensive. President Grover Cleveland and his wife First Lady Frances Cleveland helped boost acceptance in the 1890s when the White House Christmas tree was illuminated with colored bulbs to delight their young daughters.

The tradition of outdoor light displays, now associated with driving around to view beautifully lit homes and elaborate light shows, began in North America. This expansion was made possible by the development of safe outdoor Christmas light bulbs and light strings in the 1920s.

## Lighting up Iowa's countryside

In Iowa, rural homes didn't see the glow of electric Christmas lights until the 1930s and 1940s, when

rural electric cooperatives began bringing power to farms and small towns. Before then, kerosene lamps and candles offered only a modest holiday shimmer. When electricity finally reached the countryside, families could string colorful bulbs for the first time, a symbol not just of celebration but of progress.



The arrival of electric lights brought a new kind of warmth to rural winters, brightening long nights and connecting communities across the state.

### LEDs, smart displays and sustainability

Every holiday season, millions of light sets brighten homes across the country. From twinkling displays set to music to TV favorites like ABC's "The Great Christmas Light Fight," modern holiday lighting turns neighborhoods into dazzling shows filled with festive moments when we flip the switch and watch them glow.

Christmas lights have come a long way. Today's LED lights shine brighter than ever, creating beautiful displays while using less energy and lasting longer. LED light strings use about 80-90% less electricity than traditional incandescent bulbs and can last up to 25 times longer. They also stay cooler to the touch, reducing fire risks, and their shatter-resistant lenses make them safer and easier to handle.

Many communities now offer recycling programs for old light strings, and energy-efficient options make it easy to decorate responsibly. For electric cooperatives, encouraging LED lighting is part of an ongoing effort to help members save energy and money while keeping the season bright.



### Behind the bulbs: The technology of light

From the first incandescent filaments to today's smart LEDs controlled by phone apps, holiday lighting has mirrored the evolution of electric power itself. The same current that once revolutionized rural life now drives innovation in energy efficiency and smart home technology.

Many electric cooperatives are helping members explore these new frontiers, from real-time usage tools and rebates for efficient lighting to systems that make homes brighter and more connected. Each advance continues the story of illumination that began more than a century

ago, when light first connected homes to the wider world.

### A brighter tomorrow

As we look to the future, Christmas lights remain a shining reminder of how far we've come, from candlelight to clean, efficient energy. Each twinkle tells a story of innovation, cooperation and community spirit. Across Iowa and beyond, those bright strands remind us that even in the darkest winter nights, we have the power to bring warmth and wonder to the world around us.

*Article by Safe Electricity with supplemental content provided by Ann Foster Thelen, editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living.*



## FRANKLIN REC RECOGNIZES LOCAL POWER PLAYERS

Franklin REC is proud to celebrate local high school football linemen who went above and beyond this season. Through the Power Player of the Week program, student-athletes were recognized for their leadership, perseverance and impact on their team.

Throughout the season, Franklin REC highlighted outstanding local football players. Each week, a standout lineman was recognized for making game-changing plays and showcasing remarkable strength, skill and teamwork on the field.

Often the unsung hero of the game, these athletes serve as the backbone for their team – displaying the same power, determination and commitment that Franklin REC's own linemen bring to their work every day. Congratulations to these players for their outstanding strength, determination and teamwork both on and off the field!



### AGWSR

**Blake Willems**  
Offensive and  
Defensive Lineman  
Senior



### AGWSR

**Gage Van Loh**  
Strong Tackle and  
Defensive Lineman  
Junior



### H-D CAL

**Briggs Gruelke**  
Defensive Lineman  
Junior



### Iowa Falls-Alden

**Brooks Hickman**  
Offensive and  
Defensive Tackle  
Junior



### Iowa Falls-Alden

**Reece Rankin**  
Offensive and  
Defensive Lineman  
Junior



### West Fork

**Owen Schmidt**  
Defensive End  
Senior



### West Fork

**Wyatt Bonnema**  
Offensive and  
Defensive Lineman  
Senior



### West Fork

**Parker Sheriff**  
Offensive and  
Defensive Lineman  
Senior

## STRENGTHENING OUR SYSTEM: 2025 COMING TO A CLOSE

Cooler weather signals the end of another busy building season for Franklin REC. With the help of contracted crews, Franklin REC has rebuilt over 30 miles of power lines to increase your service reliability and strengthen the power we provide to you.

Contracted crews completed 22 miles of multi-phase lines across varied sections of our territory. Their work directly supports our members by improving reliability and preparing our system for future growth. Projects included installing a new air switch between the Hampton and Geneva substations, upgrading single-phase lines to multi-phase, and taking on a challenging two-mile hilly stretch with seven strands of power lines.

Our Franklin REC crew also made important contributions. While fall weather was favorable, spring brought storms, fallen trees and high winds that damaged lines and snapped poles. Thanks to their hard work, our crew rebuilt 10 miles of single-phase lines, installed new underground services for members and retired aging overhead lines to keep your power system strong and dependable.

These upgrades aren't just about replacing old equipment – they're about providing peace of mind for our members. By evaluating the age of equipment, addressing areas of system wear and planning for growing energy needs, Franklin REC is preparing today so that you continue to receive the safe, reliable service you depend on tomorrow.

## FROM YOUR BOARDROOM

During the October meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved construction and special equipment work orders of \$1,018,737.94
- Approved 2026 Franklin REC board meeting dates
- Approved Franklin REC annual meeting date
- Accepted submission of Tax Forms 990, 990T and IA 1120
- Accepted Encompass IA 1120 tax form
- Approved patronage discount percentage
- Approved renewal of Franklin County Development Association partnership

# SERVE YOUR CO-OP: JOIN FRANKLIN REC'S NOMINATING COMMITTEE

At Franklin REC, our members are more than just consumers of electricity – you are the owners of your cooperative. One of the most meaningful ways you can shape Franklin REC's future is by serving on the nominating committee.

This committee plays a vital role in keeping our cooperative strong and member-focused. By helping identify candidates for the board of directors, you are directly shaping the leadership that represents all Franklin REC members.

## What is the nominating committee?

The nominating committee consists of a minimum of three electric cooperative member-owners, each representing one of Franklin REC's districts. The primary responsibility is to ensure members have a strong, capable leadership by identifying and recommending qualified candidates for Franklin REC's board of directors.

## Responsibilities include:

- Seeking qualified candidates
- Reviewing director qualifications for potential candidates
- Submitting a slate of nominees for Franklin REC's board of directors election
- Counting the ballots at Franklin REC annual meeting

## Why serve?

Serving on the nominating committee is about more than attending a few meetings – it's about giving back to your community and helping guide the future of your cooperative. By participating, you can:

- Ensure fair and democratic director elections
- Connect with fellow members and expand your network
- Gain a deeper understanding of how your cooperative operates
- Receive a per diem rate and mileage reimbursement for your time

## What's the commitment?

Serving on the nominating committee is a meaningful way to get involved without taking up too much of your time. Here's how it works if you choose to be on the committee:

- **December:** The board of directors appoints committee members from each district.
- **Early January:** Committee members begin reaching out to fellow members to identify potential candidates for the board. Franklin REC provides all the contact information you need.
- **Mid-January:** The committee gathers at Franklin REC to present nominations, which will appear on the annual meeting ballot.
- **April:** The committee assists at the annual meeting with ballot counting and revealing election results.

With just a small amount of time, your involvement makes a lasting impact on your cooperative and community.

## No experience needed

You don't need any special skills to serve – just a willingness to participate and help guide your cooperative. Franklin REC's CEO/General Manager Garrett Thompson will meet with the committee to provide information and support along the way.

## Ready to make a difference?

If you have ever wanted to play an active role in your cooperative, now is the time. Join the nominating committee and help shape the future of Franklin REC while serving your fellow members.

To learn more or volunteer, contact a current director or reach out to Franklin REC at franklinrec@franklinrec.coop or 641-456-2557.



## SHOW YOU CARE WITH RECare

As an electric cooperative, Franklin REC is invested in helping our communities thrive, and that means supporting our low-income member-owners, too. RECare is a nationwide program exclusive to rural electric cooperatives encouraging fellow members to make a one-time or monthly donation to potentially help alleviate the stress for other members straining to pay their electric bills.

Funds may also be used to weatherize the recipient's home to make electricity use more efficient. And don't worry; your donation is directed to a local community action agency for distribution to low-income families on Franklin REC lines. You can feel good that the dollars you donate are helping your friends and neighbors.



**YES**

**I want to help my neighbors by contributing to RECare.**

- I will make a one-time contribution to Franklin REC's RECare program. My check is enclosed.
- I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to Franklin REC's RECare program. I understand this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2026 MOMENTUM IS BUILDING CONFERENCE DETAILS

Iowa builders and contractors are invited to discover the latest advancements in energy efficiency technologies at the **2026 Momentum is Building Conference**, set for Feb. 19-20 at the Sheraton in West Des Moines.

The annual conference offers opportunities for contractors to earn continuing education units (CEUs) in Iowa's plumbing/mechanical, HVAC and electrical codes. Attendees will also have the chance to network with industry peers, learn from leading experts in energy efficiency and the building trades, and gain insights into current energy efficiency regulations and incentives.

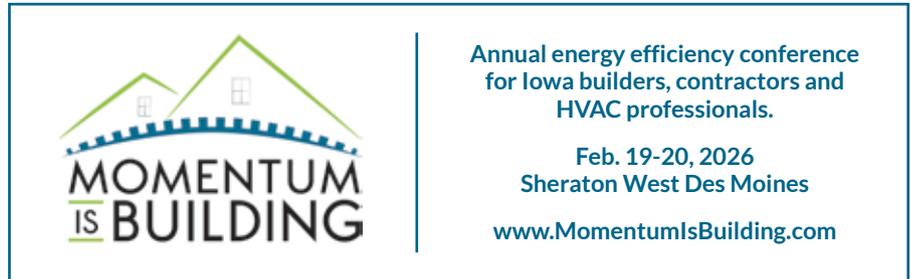
Sponsored by the Iowa Cooperatives for Energy Efficiency, the annual Momentum is Building Conference connects Iowa's construction industry with the services and resources provided by local electric cooperatives, which serve nearly 650,000 Iowans across all 99 counties.

"Electric cooperatives have long supported energy efficiency, and one of our key goals is to help member-consumers use energy wisely," said Angela Catton, vice president of communications and development at Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative. "We invest in this conference to build relationships between cooperatives and the contractors who serve our members."

## Lineup of speakers, educators

The conference kicks off with Justin Wilson from Construction Instruction as the keynote.

"Wilson, who spoke in 2013, will discuss current policies, technologies, and consumer trends affecting home building and remodeling," shared Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations at Corn Belt Power Cooperative.



The conference also welcomes back Bill McAnnally, who can be heard monthly on Iowa Public Radio's "Talk of Iowa - Home Improvement Day." CEU providers, Dave Sullivan (electrical), Terry Moorman and Jeff Reichart (PMSB), who have been long-time partners and presenters at the conference, will return to offer their specialized training to attendees.

The conference will close with Kenyon Murray on Friday, Feb. 20. Kenyon is the CEO of Murray Legacy Management and the business manager to his sons, Kris and Keegan, who play in the NBA. He is a host of "The Leave Your Legacy Show" and became a Certified Professional Life Coach. In his session, attendees will be introduced to a simple and digestible way to embrace personal growth. The goal is to share tools for creating a

systematic personal routine that can impact their lives at multiple levels.

## A long-standing resource

For almost 35 years, the Momentum is Building Conference has provided a platform for electric cooperatives and contractors to collaborate in delivering safe, efficient and cost-effective home comfort solutions to Iowans.

Don't miss this chance to stay ahead of the curve in energy efficiency and enhance your professional skills. For more information or to register for the 2026 Momentum is Building Conference, visit [www.MomentumIsBuilding.com](http://www.MomentumIsBuilding.com).

Discounted Early Bird registration runs until Monday, Jan. 19.

# GIVING GIFTS FROM THE HEART

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

When you were a kid, what was your favorite toy for Christmas? Farm toys top the list for Nolan Toomsen.

While Nolan lives on a farm near Geneva in Franklin County, his mom, Erin (Frank) Toomsen, is from Lake City, my hometown. When I visited with Nolan this fall during his Grandma Rita's birthday party, I asked if he wants to be a farmer when he grows up. "I'm a farmer right now," stated Nolan, who celebrated his 5th birthday in early January 2025 with a Pioneer Seed-themed party.

Then I asked Erin about Nolan's accident on Jan. 28, 2025. Erin was at work (she's a kindergarten prep teacher in Hampton), and the Toomsen's older kids were at school. Just a typical Tuesday.

Nolan wasn't feeling well that morning, however, and needed to go home. His dad Tyler took Nolan and his little brother Brody, 2 (who was also home, since daycare wasn't open), along to do farm chores. Around this time, a fluke accident left Nolan unresponsive. He was rushed by ambulance to Franklin General Hospital in Hampton. Then Life Flight whisked him to the University of Iowa Health Care Stead Family Children's Hospital in Iowa City. The medical team ran a CT scan and an MRI on Nolan, who suffered strained neck muscles.

## Turning compassion into action

After a short stay, Nolan returned home wearing a cervical collar. "I really liked it when I finally got to take it off," Nolan told me. "I burned it."

Despite his quick recovery, Nolan couldn't quit thinking about something that troubled him about the Children's Hospital. They only had two toy tractors, several wagons and an odd assortment of farm animals, including a dolphin. (Don't get Nolan started about how silly this is.)

"Nolan told me he wanted to donate some of his farm toys to the Children's



Nolan Toomsen, who is 5 years old, suffered an accident early this year. His hospital stay led him to coordinate a farm toy drive for University of Iowa Health Care Stead Family Children's Hospital.

Hospital for other kids who have to go there," Erin said. He also wanted her to write a letter for him, which she posted on her Facebook page in mid-May.

The letter read: "Do you want to give me some money to buy more tractors for the Iowa City Hospital because the ones they had weren't very good. From Nolan."

Checks and electronic money transfers via Venmo started pouring in from friends, family and strangers. Nolan received more than \$3,000 from more than 200 different donors. Combined with significant discounts from the businesses he purchased from, Nolan was able to donate about \$5,000 worth of farm toys.

## The joy of giving

On delivery day (Aug. 15), the Toomsen family filled the back of their Ford Expedition with toys from John Deere, Case IH, Little Buster Toys and Big Country Toys. When I asked Nolan if it was hard for him to part with any of them, he admitted he really liked a CASE IH harvest equipment set. "But I'd paint it green if it were mine," he emphasized.



Nolan is pictured with some of the farm toys he donated to the hospital.

"We know that these carefully selected toys will help brighten the day of many farm-loving kids who are facing battles in the hospital," said Erin, who added Nolan has always had a kind heart. "We can't thank everyone enough for helping Nolan give back."

The toys have been well received by pediatric patients of all ages, reports Sheri Austin, supervisor, concierge services & Rossi Lodging Program, for University of Iowa Health Care.

"Thank you, Nolan, and your family and community, for generously donating high-quality farm toys to the Stead Family Children's Hospital. Your thoughtful gift has brought joy to children from across Iowa," she said

As we celebrate the priceless gift of a child during this Christmas season, never forget that the greatest gifts are never wrapped in paper, but in love.

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



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine  
for members of  
Iowa's electric  
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