

● MAY 2025

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Ways to help protect
roadside crews**

**What to know if you're
considering solar energy**

Spring-inspired recipes

Announcing recipients of the 2025 youth opportunities ▶ See Page 13

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Honoring Iowa's
hometown heroes

EDITOR
Ann Foster Thelen

DESIGNERS
Megan Walters
Bree Glenn

**IAEC DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS**
Erin Campbell

**IAEC EXECUTIVE
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Leslie Kaufman

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Emerson Landas, a Consumers Energy member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

HELP US SHINE THE LIGHT ON LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND DESERVING CHARITIES

BY ERIN CAMPBELL



We are gearing up for year five of our statewide Shine the Light program, which celebrates our cooperative commitment to community. During the month of June, member-

consumers and employees of Iowa electric cooperatives are invited to nominate local volunteers who are making a positive difference in their Iowa communities. Three winning volunteers will each receive a \$3,000 donation to their local charity and be featured in the September issue of this magazine.

Your nomination makes a difference

Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination. Simply enter some basic contact information for you and your nominee and answer this question in 500 words or less:

How has your nominee made a difference in the community and how might their local charity/nonprofit use the \$3,000 donation?

The success of our Shine the Light program depends on co-op member-consumers who take the time to nominate a friend, neighbor or relative who deserves to be recognized. If you have nominated a volunteer in a previous year and they weren't selected as a winner, you are welcome to nominate them again.

Additionally, I will share that the judges who read through all the volunteer nominations respond positively to essays that tell a story and draw in the reader. A little creativity can help your nomination stand out in a crowded field!

A diverse impact statewide

In the first four years of the program, our 12 winners (three winners each year) represent a diverse group of charities and nonprofits. Some of the winners have included an education



Starting on June 1, go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to make a nomination.

foundation, an animal shelter, a community garden, a local food and furnishings closet, an agricultural pavilion and an air transportation service for medical treatments. You can see our past winners at www.IowaShineTheLight.com to learn more about these incredible groups. We are continuously impressed with the range of volunteer activities and local organizations that are nominated each year.

Many of these organizations are small operations that don't have the resources to seek major funding or media attention. Beyond the monetary

donation, the Shine the Light program has been helpful in spreading the word about the great work being done by some incredible volunteers.

Thank you for considering the nomination of someone in your community who should be celebrated for their volunteer efforts and for helping us shine the light on these deserving organizations. Make your nomination online from June 1 through June 30 at www.IowaShineTheLight.com.

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

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

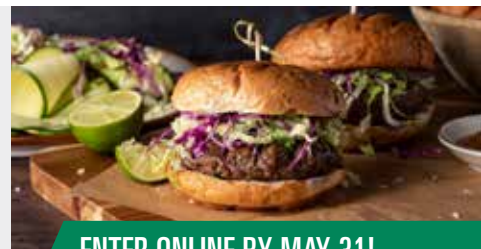
WIN \$100 IN BEEF CERTIFICATES!

May is Beef Month in Iowa! To celebrate, we're giving away \$100 in beef certificates to use at a grocery store. You can select your favorite cuts to purchase, and then make mouthwatering meals at home.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than May 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 the \$100 gift card for landscaping from the March issue was **Jeanie Hall**, a **Farmers Electric Cooperative, Inc.** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY MAY 31!

FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the March meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$10,577.28
- Appointed a Rural Electric Supply Cooperative (RESCO) director nominee
- Approved estate patronage retirements
- Approved the Reliability Plan and Report
- Approved an employee handbook change
- Approved a donation request

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Franklin REC will be closed on Monday, May 26, in observance of Memorial Day as we honor and remember those who have served our country.

Starting Tuesday, May 27, we will transition to summer hours, operating Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Office

1560 Highway 65 • P.O. Box 437
Hampton, IA 50441

Summer Office Hours

Monday-Friday 6:30 a.m.-3 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

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EXPLORING NEW QUANTUM DOT SOLAR TECHNOLOGY

BY GARRETT THOMPSON



With this month's newsletter theme centering around solar power, I thought it would be a good opportunity to share information

about new and exciting technology within that sphere. Lately, the solar panel industry has been struggling to improve upon the current variation of the solar panel that uses polycrystalline silicone. (If you would like to learn more about those panels, reference our June 2024 *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine article titled "How Solar Panels Work." You can find a copy on Franklin REC's website under "Member Perks.") However, scientists have had a breakthrough in technology that they are calling "quantum dots" (QDs).

What are QDs?

Simply put, QDs are tiny particles that measure about 1,000 times smaller than the width of a human hair. They are created from single elements like silicon and germanium or a select few compounds. Their size can contain anywhere from 100 to 1,000 atoms and appear in different colors.

How do QDs work?

Naturally, QDs exhibit interesting electrical behaviors that make them perfect for solar technology. One neat feature is that the size of the QDs can be manipulated to have more surface mass, which allows them to capture more sunlight across a broad range of wavelengths. In turn, this will aid the solar cells in converting sunlight into electricity much more efficiently.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) performed detailed thermodynamic calculations and found that a QD solar panel

can have an efficiency rate (the rate at which sunlight is turned into electricity) of up to 66%. With Franklin REC's current solar panels, we see efficiencies from 25% to 30%, which is within the industry average. If NREL's calculations hold true, that is a significant improvement and a big win for solar energy.

What are the challenges and drawbacks of QDs?

One of the obvious challenges with any new technology is getting it off the ground and running. Mass-producing QDs at a commercial scale isn't something that happens overnight. However, it may be a major reason QDs succeed or fail within the marketplace.

One of the biggest challenges facing QDs is that they don't last as long as the current silicone-based panels. If the commercialization of these panels can't reach a production cost that is low enough to justify the shorter lifespan, then QDs may be dead on arrival. However, if that can be figured out, it could be a huge accomplishment in solar panels.

This article is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of information on QDs. The internet is filled with more information, and probably more than you will ever want to know. However, it is exciting to hear of new technologies that can have a major positive impact on our energy landscape.

What do you think of this new technology? Are there any other new technologies you want to learn more about? We'd love to hear your opinions, which may spark the next newsletter article!

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

FRANKLIN REC'S COMMUNITY SOLAR PROGRAM

Are you interested in solar energy but don't have the space or resources to install panels at your location?

Franklin REC's Community Solar Program provides an easy and cost-effective way to enjoy the benefits of solar energy without the expense and maintenance of a personal system. Instead of installing your own solar panels, you can subscribe to our community solar array with a simple, one-time payment.

New, lower subscription cost

As of May 1, the price per solar subscription has **decreased to \$476 per module** – making it even more affordable to participate.

How it works

- **Location:** The Community Solar Field is located **south of the Franklin REC office** at 1560 HWY 65, Hampton, IA 50441.
- **System details:** The array consists of 508 solar modules, each 340 watts, producing approximately 380 kilowatt-hours of electricity annually.
- **No extra costs:** After your **one-time subscription fee**, Franklin REC takes care of all **maintenance, insurance and repairs** at no additional cost to you.
- **Monthly bill credits:** You'll receive credit on your bill based on your

number of subscriptions of the solar field's monthly energy production.

- Your generation credit is calculated at **Franklin REC's kWh charge rate**, deducting your location's usage kWh.
- You can purchase up to **30 subscriptions**, depending on your **location's average energy usage over the past three years**.
- All subscriptions remain active until **April 30, 2042**.

Why join?

- In 2024, one subscription generated a total credit of \$52.06!
- No insurance increases, maintenance or repair costs – just the benefits.
- Support renewable energy and contribute to a cleaner environment.
- Receive monthly bill credits through April 2042.

Join Franklin REC's Community Solar Program today and start enjoying the savings and sustainability of solar energy without the hassle!

HONORING EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

At Franklin REC, we take pride in recognizing our employees' dedication and hard work. This month, we celebrate the work anniversaries of three team members whose commitment continues to power our cooperative's success.



Karen Ringleb
36 years

Karen has dedicated 36 years to Franklin REC, serving as an integral part of

our team. As office manager/chief financial officer, her leadership and commitment to both the cooperative and its members have been essential in ensuring our daily operations run smoothly and our long-term success.



Chad Foster
28 years

Chad has dedicated 28 years of service to Franklin REC, wearing many hats

throughout his career. As a member service representative and metering technician, his reliability and expertise play a vital role in delivering the high-quality service our members deserve, making him an invaluable asset to our cooperative.



Trey Swaney
1 year

In his first year as a Franklin REC lineman, Trey has shown tremendous

dedication and a strong work ethic, quickly becoming a valued member of our team. His contributions have already made a positive impact, and we look forward to his continued growth with the cooperative.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Karen, Chad and Trey for their hard work and dedication. Their commitment to Franklin REC and its members leaves a lasting impact.

FRANKLIN REC LENDS A HAND AFTER DEVASTATING MARCH STORM

As winter delivered one final blow in mid-March, Franklin REC crews answered the call to assist a fellow cooperative in western Iowa. Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) in Woodbine sustained significant storm damage after a powerful mix of rain, ice, snow and wind swept through the area.

Linemen Cole Marzen and Trey Swaney traveled west to aid Harrison County REC, joining local crews to restore power to thousands of people. The storm caused extensive destruction, damaging more than 90 pole structures and miles of power line damage.

The cooperative difference is built on the principle of working together. When disaster strikes, Iowa's electric cooperatives unite to restore power and light to communities, because when the lights go out, so do we.



"MOVE OVER" TO PROTECT ROADSIDE CREWS

BY SCOTT FLOOD

Iowa state law requires motorists to move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

When lineworkers are perched in a bucket truck, repairing power lines along a busy road, they have good reason to be concerned about their safety. However, most are less apprehensive about problems like working with high voltages or falling. Their biggest worry is also the most unpredictable: a distracted driver slamming into their vehicle or a nearby power pole.

The National Safety Council reported that 891 people were killed and 37,701 people were injured in work zone crashes during 2022 (the most recent statistics). Most of those crashes occur in construction sites, which are usually well-marked. Electric co-op crews are likely to face even greater danger, as they often work along remote stretches of roads, frequently in adverse weather conditions that can reduce their visibility.

Move over laws vary

The danger of work zone crashes led every state to adopt "move over" laws that require drivers to lower their speed and switch lanes when possible to protect emergency vehicles. The goal is to provide an added safety buffer and minimize the potential for accidents. Drivers caught violating the laws can face penalties such as significant fines.

Unfortunately, the Journal of Road Safety reports that just 14 states' "move over" laws protect other types of service vehicles, such as construction trucks and utility vehicles. That means drivers in those states are under no legal obligation to give lineworkers that added margin of safety.

In accordance with Iowa state law, motorists must move over or slow down when approaching ANY vehicle

stopped on the side of the road with its flashing lights activated, including passenger cars with hazard lights. Those who fail to obey the law could receive a traffic ticket or even lose their driver's license.

Distracted driving poses additional risks

Compounding this issue is the dramatic increase in distracted driving. The National Transportation Highway Safety Administration has reported that as many as 1,000 Americans are injured each day because of activities that take drivers' attention away from the road. The most common is reading and responding to text messages. If a driver traveling at 55 miles per hour glances at their phone for just five seconds, they'll have traveled the length of a football field before returning their gaze to the road.

The design of today's vehicles contributes to distraction. Many vehicles have complex controls for entertainment and climate that demand the driver take their eyes off the road to make even simple adjustments.

Geography can also be a factor. Co-ops serving rural and remote areas often have power lines along hilly roads. Locals accustomed to driving those roads at fairly high speeds may be startled and have little time to react when they encounter a work crew past a hill or around a curve.

Besides the potential for lineworker injuries, accidents can also damage or destroy expensive service vehicles, reducing a co-op's ability to respond to outages and other problems. Power poles and other infrastructure may also suffer severe damage.

Maintaining focus is essential

Additionally, many of the tasks performed by lineworkers, such as reconnecting high-voltage power lines, are inherently dangerous and require their complete focus. When their attention is distracted by speeding or noisy vehicles, they're more likely to make mistakes that can complicate the repair or cause injury.

Co-op employees are not only at risk only when their vehicles are parked and repairs are underway. Lineworkers frequently have to drive slowly along the shoulder of roads to pinpoint broken power lines or failed transformers, especially in darkness or conditions that interfere with visibility.



Many state transportation agencies, including Iowa, have work zone awareness programs. Amplifying those efforts by devoting part of a co-op's advertising, publicity and social media reminds co-op members and other drivers of the importance of giving lineworkers a wide berth.

Co-ops are considering ways they can modify bucket trucks and other service vehicles to make them even more visible. Bright colors and additional lighting, such as flashing strobe lights and lighted detour

arrows, can attract attention from a distance. Reflective "work zone ahead" signs can also alert drivers to be ready for an unusual situation.

Remember, if you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing lights activated, you are required by law to move over or slow down, preferably both. Please give our employees room on the road; their families thank you!

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





SPRING-INSPIRED RECIPES



ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 cups asparagus, cut into 1 to 1½-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger root, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- toasted sesame seeds, optional

Stir broth, cornstarch and soy sauce in a small bowl until the mixture is smooth. Heat oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus, ginger root and garlic and stir-fry until crisp-tender. You can substitute ginger root with ⅓ teaspoon ground ginger. Add broth mixture to the skillet. Cook and stir until the mixture boils and thickens. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if desired. Asparagus can be substituted with broccoli, cauliflower or baby carrots. Serves 4

Tammy Neubauer • Ida Grove
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

FRESH CILANTRO DIP

- ½ bunch cilantro
- 1 can black beans, drained
- 1 can black olives, minced or chopped
- 1 small jar pimentos
- 5 banana peppers, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- nacho chips

Mix all ingredients together and serve with nacho chips.
Serves 12

Jenny Hall • Woodbine
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative

HAM MACARONI SALAD

- 3 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 1 cup cooked ham, chopped
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 tomato, seeded and diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 1¼ cups mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Prepare macaroni according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cold water until cool. Combine remaining ingredients, then add macaroni. Mix until blended. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours. Serves 8-10

Bryce and Kelly Godbersen • Odebolt
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

RHUBARB CUSTARD PIE

- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon butter, divided
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups rhubarb, diced
- 1 unbaked pie shell
- ½ cup flour
- ⅓ cup oatmeal
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- cinnamon

Cream together 1 tablespoon butter, sugar and nutmeg, then mix in eggs. Fill unbaked pie shell with diced rhubarb, then add custard mixture. Bake at 450 degrees F for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, mix ½ cup butter, flour, oatmeal and brown sugar into a crunch topping. Break topping into chunks over top of pie. Bake pie at 350 degrees F for 30 more minutes then sprinkle with cinnamon. Serves 8

Raymond Robbins • Fort Madison
Access Energy Cooperative

KALE SALAD

- 8 ounces kale, finely cut
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 medium apple, chopped
- ½ cup pecan halves
- ½ cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup bacon, crumbled
- poppy seed dressing, optional
- Mandarin oranges, optional

Mix all ingredients and top with poppy seed dressing, if desired. Cranberries can be substituted with Mandarin oranges. *Serves 4*

Audrey Kreykes • Rock Valley
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

ASPARAGUS AND SPRING PEA SOUP

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 stalks celery
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 5 cups water or broth
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and sliced
- 2 cups green peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped, optional

In a large saucepan, add butter, onion, celery and garlic. Cook over medium heat until veggies soften, stirring frequently. Stir in choice of liquid (water, vegetable broth or chicken broth). Add asparagus and peas. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer 15 minutes, until asparagus is tender. Puree using blender or an immersion blender. Strain through a sieve if needed. Add salt and lemon juice to warm soup. Ladle into soup bowl and pour a drizzle of canned coconut milk into bowl. Top with fresh dill, if desired. *Serves 6*

Anita Doughty • Ankeny
Consumers Energy

TERRI'S PASTA SALAD

- 5 ounces dried rotini noodles
- 3 cups broccoli florets, chopped
- 3 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In a large pot, cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Add broccoli and cook for 3 more minutes or until pasta is done. Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, oil, honey and garlic. Add pasta mixture, pepper, onion, almonds and basil. Toss to combine. Gently stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. You can substitute goat cheese with feta, fresh Parmesan or pearled mozzarella. *Serves 4-6*

Lori Kautzky • Perry
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative

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



STRAWBERRY RHUBARB UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1 cup rhubarb, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 cup strawberries, hulled and halved
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

Combine rhubarb, strawberries and melted butter. Spread evenly across the bottom of a 9-inch round cake pan that has been greased and lined with parchment paper on the bottom. Set aside while making cake mixture. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Cream room temperature butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add eggs, vanilla and milk and beat. Mix with dry ingredients then pour over the strawberry and rhubarb topping. Bake at 350 degrees F for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen cake. Place serving plate over pan and invert cake onto the plate. Remove the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Serve warm or at room temperature with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream. *Serves 12*

Kristin Goddard • Charles City
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

FALL APPLE RECIPES

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY
ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is May 31

Submit your favorite fall apple recipes. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com

MAIL: Recipes

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



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE CONSIDERING SOLAR

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE



Often, homeowners conflate installing solar at home with energy efficiency. But what most people don't realize is solar is not energy efficiency. Solar is generating energy. Energy efficiency is finding ways to use less energy. While these are not one in the same, both are thought of as beneficial to the environment and a way to save money.

If you are interested in installing solar, it is important to understand your motivations. It may be saving money, concern for the environment or both. Focusing first on energy efficiency can address both motivations.

Here are the five key energy efficiency considerations to evaluate when adding solar to your home.

① Energy consumption Solar systems are sized based on a home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. That means it will use less energy and allow you to install a smaller solar system – which will save money and reduce your home's environmental impact.

Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation. A fully insulated and air-sealed home uses less energy, and those insulation measures are less expensive than solar panels. Finish these energy efficiency projects before installing solar.

② Affordability Consider your overall out-of-pocket expenses. The expected lifespan of a heating and cooling system is 15 to 25 years. Check the age and condition of your HVAC equipment and consider the expenses of replacement.

③ Roofing Consider the age, orientation and shade of your roof. It is more difficult and expensive to reroof a home with solar panels. Evaluate if the roof will need to be replaced before the solar panels need to be replaced.

The best orientation for solar panels is south facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof helps keep your home cool in the summertime but reduces solar energy production.

④ Maintenance A solar system doesn't last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy. Maintenance and repairs may be needed.

⑤ Electric bills and storage Solar is not "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill.

Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining. If you want power to your home at other times, like after dark, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in battery storage system, which comes at an additional cost.

During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnection to the grid requires panels to shut down during a power outage. This protects lineworkers from injury while making repairs.

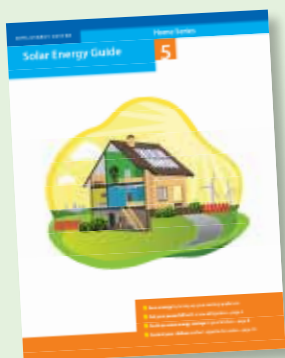
BEWARE OF SOLAR SCAMS

Before working with any vendor, Iowa's electric cooperatives encourage you to do your homework to ensure you choose a reputable provider.



If you have a complaint regarding solar installation or financing, you can complete and submit an electronic complaint at bit.ly/3usfVj7.

Consumers can also call the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 515-281-5926 or 888-777-4590 or email consumer@ag.iowa.gov.



SOLAR ENERGY GUIDE

Iowa's electric cooperatives are committed to helping member-consumers make educated energy decisions that make sense for their home or business. Before moving ahead with a solar project, contact your local co-op first and also review the Solar Energy Guide for tips and to learn interconnection requirements.

www.iowarec.org/publications/solar-resources

Contact your electric co-op

Solar contractors often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with your co-op's offerings, rate structures and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, check with your electric co-op for local information rather than relying on what the contractor says.

As with any other system for your home, get bids from three contractors to compare equipment and pricing. Another option may be community-owned solar. Many electric co-ops offer community solar programs. You may have an option to enjoy the benefits of solar without the responsibilities of ownership and maintenance.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals.

Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



TOP 10 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE INSTALLING SOLAR

- 1 Address energy efficiency.** Implementing energy efficiency measures in advance can help reduce your overall energy or water consumption, and subsequently, the size of your solar system.
- 2 Do your homework before writing a check.** Talk to your electric co-op at the outset of the process. Then speak with credible, reputable sources who are skilled professionals that will help guide you through the process.
- 3 Know your co-op's rate structure and policies.** Your co-op will help you understand the rate structure and what type of charges are likely to be incurred. They will also let you know how you will be compensated for the excess, unused energy that is generated by your solar system.
- 4 Analyze your electric load.** Understanding your electricity use and overall energy needs will help determine if solar is a good investment for you.
- 5 Determine costs upfront.** You will likely be responsible for initial upfront costs to install the system, as well as maintenance and repair costs. Doing your homework upfront will help determine if it is economical for your energy needs.
- 6 Research incentives and tax credits.** Visit with your co-op to see if there are financial incentives to offset your investment costs. These are often driven by laws and policies and can vary on the type and size of system.
- 7 Understand responsibilities.** A variety of parties are involved in making a solar project a reality, so it's important to know exactly what tasks and costs you're responsible for.
- 8 Know safety requirements.** Solar is connected to the grid, so it's important that you work with your co-op to ensure you're meeting their requirements to keep the grid reliable and safe.
- 9 Choose a reputable vendor.** It is important to find a reputable installer who will give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check reviews and ask for third-party input.
- 10 Keep thorough records.** Establish a thorough record-keeping process to retain all data and research you gather.

CELEBRATING MILESTONE YEARS OF SERVICE: HONORING FOUR FRANKLIN REC BOARD MEMBERS

Franklin REC is proud to recognize four of our dedicated board members for their outstanding commitment to the cooperative and the industry. Together, they have accumulated an impressive 90 years of combined experience. Their decades of service have contributed to the cooperative's growth and strengthened our commitment to our members.

Congratulations to Directors Dale Schaefer (40 years), Gordon Greimann (30 years), Dave Keninger (15 years) and Darwin Van Horn (5 years).

These individuals have consistently demonstrated leadership and dedication, many of them representing Franklin REC and our members on external boards and committees. Their knowledge and expertise have helped guide the cooperative through changes in the industry, ensuring we remain focused on providing exceptional service and value to our members.

Their ongoing commitment to education and leadership continues to inspire those around them. We are grateful for their years of service and look forward to many more as they continue to serve Franklin REC with passion and pride.

Please join us in celebrating their milestone years and thanking them for their invaluable contributions to the cooperative.



Pictured from left: Dale Schaefer (40 years), Gordon Greimann (30 years), Dave Keninger (15 years) and Darwin Van Horn (5 years).

GET TO KNOW YOUR CO-OP

At Franklin REC, we're more than just a cooperative – we're a team dedicated to serving our members and community. In our "Get to Know Us" series, we're excited to introduce the employees and board members who make it all happen.

Through a series of questions, we'll share what our team loves about working at Franklin REC, how they see our impact on the community and the projects they're most proud of. We'll also dive into how the cooperative has evolved and get advice for those just starting their careers.

Stay tuned to learn more about the people who help keep Franklin REC running smoothly and making a difference!

GARRETT THOMPSON
CEO/General Manager



Q: What is your favorite part of working at Franklin REC?

I enjoy working with all the employees and helping the

membership. Electricity is an essential need daily, so it feels good to provide a service to people and businesses that appreciate what we do, how we do it and why we do it.

Q: If you had to sum up Franklin REC in three words, what would they be?

Collaborative, strong and conscientious.

Q: What is one piece of advice you would give to someone just starting their career?

Now more than ever, a college degree is not the end all, be all. There are fantastic careers that require little to no post-secondary education, thus allowing you a start on life with substantially less debt (or hopefully no debt). The faster you get out of debt, the quicker you can begin building wealth and being outrageously generous. There is nothing more fun in this world than being able

to help others who truly need it and deserve it.

JOHN SNYDER
Board Director



Q: What is your favorite part of being involved with Franklin REC?

How and why we as a board make decisions that affect the future of the REC.

Q: How has Franklin REC changed since you started?

We've addressed how to be prepared for many potential issues that are not friendly to Franklin REC.

Q: What's one thing you wish more members knew about Franklin REC?

The business side of the general operation of the cooperative.

AUSTIN NEFF
Lineman



Q: What is your favorite part of working at Franklin REC?

My favorite part of working at the REC is working

alongside a great crew while being outside daily.

Q: How would you describe Franklin REC's impact on the community?

I believe the REC continues to provide positive impacts to the community, not only during our work hours, but also to help shine the light during the holidays!

Q: What is one piece of advice you would give to someone just starting their career?

To really consider becoming a lineman. Being a part of the electric industry provides an abundance of opportunities to meet like-minded people and can build a beautiful life for your family.

ANNOUNCING THE RECIPIENTS OF OUR 2025 YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Franklin REC is thrilled to honor our scholarship winners and our Iowa Youth Tour winner, who embody the cooperative spirit and dedication to learning. These exceptional students are not only excelling academically but also contributing to the betterment of their communities, aligning with our core cooperative principles. We congratulate them on their achievements and look forward to the bright futures they will continue to build.

Franklin REC's Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarships

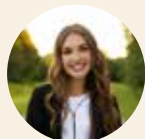
Franklin REC partners with our power provider, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and offers two scholarships to students who exemplify extraordinary educational leadership goals. The 2025 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship winners are Iowa State University student Kierra Dodd and West Fork High School student Katelyn Witte.

Kierra Dodd

School: Iowa State University (sophomore in fall 2025)

Major: Agricultural Business and Accounting

Parents: Shayna and Aaron Dodd of Ackley



Katelyn Witte

School: Iowa State University (freshman in fall 2025)

Major: Agricultural Studies

Parents: Brandie and Roger Witte of Rockwell



Scholarships awarded for commitment to community

Franklin REC offers three scholarships to high school seniors who show commitment to their community by volunteering in organizations or for community events and projects. This year's winners include Jana Harms of Sheffield, daughter of members Jeremy and Sara Harms; Ellie Lauffer of Sheffield, daughter of members Brandon and Toni Lauffer; and Katelyn Witte of Rockwell, daughter of members Roger and Brandie Witte. Each winner receives a \$500 scholarship in recognition of their commitment to their communities, volunteer efforts and active local involvement.

Jana Harms

Community involvement: West Fork FFA, West Fork sports, 4-H, Youth Club, Lutheran Youth Organization, community cleanup days and visit nursing homes.



School: Ellsworth Community College

Major: Pre-Veterinary

Ellie Lauffer

Community involvement: West Fork Dance Team, assisted with dance clinics, helped with an initiative to provide students with snacks to be taken home, volleyball, Girl Scout Troop member, and currently working on a project that donates books and blankets to local hospitals' emergency rooms.

School: North Iowa Area Community College

Major: Health Science



Katelyn Witte

Community involvement: West Fork FFA, helps plan kid's ag day, community cleanup days, Franklin County Fair volunteer and 4-H.

School: Iowa State University

Major: Agricultural Studies



YOUTH TOUR REPRESENTATIVE



Nicholas Quasdorf (left) is pictured with Jennifer Burnham, from the *Hampton Chronicle*, who served as one of this year's judges.

Franklin REC is proud to announce Nicholas Quasdorf, a junior from Hampton-Dumont CAL, as its 2025 Youth Tour representative. This summer, Nicholas will join nearly 40 other Iowa high school students for a weeklong journey to Washington, D.C. During this enriching experience, he will explore cooperative principles, advocate for rural communities, visit historic landmarks and engage with elected officials.

Nicholas stood out for his exceptional leadership qualities, impressing the judges with his dedication and passion during the exam and

interview process. We look forward to hearing about his impactful experience in D.C. and how he will continue to embody the cooperative spirit of Franklin REC.

VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE WINNER



Congratulations to Madison Alert, Franklin REC's communication/key accounts representative, for being selected as

the Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge Winner for March! Madison has chosen Friends of Beeds Lake to receive her community donation. The group is currently raising funds for a new playground set at the lake.

5 ESSENTIAL ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

BY ABBY BERRY

Every May, National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your local electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May but also year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1 Be vigilant. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2 Use surge protectors. Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness



National Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home.



Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity.

over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3 Practice safe power strip use. Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4 Avoid contact with water. It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)



The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying.

should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.

5 Educate family members. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

HONORING IOWA'S HOMETOWN HEROES

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

Faces capture attention. That's something I learned early in my journalism career when I was trained to take pictures of the people I featured.

I think about this each time I drive through Auburn. As I roll along Highway 71 through the heart of this Sac County town, I see patriotic banners featuring pictures of local men and women who served in the U.S. military. The black-and-white images – some with smiling faces, some with sober expressions – grace the streetlight poles.

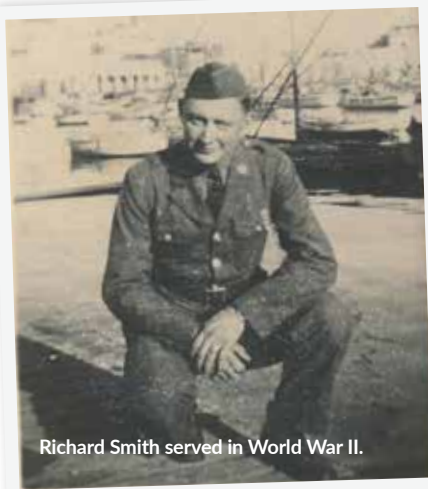
I've always wondered about the stories behind these captivating banners, so I contacted my friend Donetta (Smith) Stewart. For the past 17 years, she has been the librarian at the Auburn Public Library. She's also one of the keepers of knowledge in this small town of roughly 300 residents.

Donetta's uncle, Richard Smith, is featured on a banner southeast of the library. "Dad didn't talk much about Richard when I was growing up," says Donetta, referring to Don Smith, Richard's younger brother. "It was only later in life when I started asking more questions that he started telling me more."

Remembering a life cut short

Richard was born to Frank and Janet Smith on Dec. 23, 1919. He attended country school and graduated from Auburn High School in 1936. The likeable, easygoing young man was farming with his father when the U.S. entered World War II.

As his buddies began enlisting, Richard wanted to join the service, too. When Janet pleaded with him to stay home, he honored his mother's wishes. Uncle Sam came calling, however, in 1941. Richard was drafted into the U.S. Army and completed basic training at Camp Claiborne in Louisiana.



While his Auburn buddies served stateside, training other soldiers, Richard was sent to England and then Africa, along with the Red Bull Infantry Division. Richard was on the front lines when Erwin Rommel (a German field marshal known as the "Desert Fox") launched the Battle of Kasserine Pass on Feb. 14, 1943.

The next day, Feb. 15, Richard was killed in action. He was just 24 years old. "Dad always said that after Richard died, the laughter went out of the house," Donetta says.

After the war, one of Richard's commanding officers traveled to the Smith farm to pay his respects and fill in some gaps. "He told Frank that one minute Richard was there, and the next minute he was gone," Donetta explains.

Honorable legacies live on

Richard was buried near Carthage, Tunisia, in the North Africa American Cemetery, which contains the remains of more than 2,800 war dead. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, including Jane Barto, coordinator for the Auburn Historical Society (AHS), he now has a banner along Pine Street in his hometown.



It's one of 23 banners that the AHS and the City of Auburn installed in November 2024, in time for Veterans Day. "It's important to honor this heritage," says Jane, who was inspired by similar banners she'd seen in Arlington, Nebraska. "There's something very personal about putting faces with the names."

The Auburn banners feature local men and women who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm. They include Jane's father, Floyd Barto, an Army veteran, and her uncle, Frank Lee, who helped the Allied forces liberate the Auschwitz concentration camp in early 1945. "My uncle said the human suffering was beyond description and wouldn't talk about his war experiences," Jane says.

That's why the banners are so important, she adds. They draw people in and start the conversation about these veterans' stories.

"We get so many positive comments," Donetta says. "Richard and the other local heroes are not forgotten."

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



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING


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for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

May 2025

Visit our website at www.franklinrec.coop

SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY



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