

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa

NOVEMBER 2026

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

Iowa linemen help bring electricity to Guatemala

Modern nuclear technologies

Twists on turkey leftovers

Win a Breville Burr smart coffee grinder ▶ See Page 3

CONTENTS


6


8


10

VOLUME 79 • ISSUE 11

3
STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE
Bringing power and hope to Guatemala

3
EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST
Win a Breville Burr smart coffee grinder

14
SAFETY MATTERS
Use caution during controlled burns

15
OUT BACK
Remembering the Vietnam era

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ON THE COVER Special thanks to Karen Kayser-Kemp, a Butler County REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive $100!

BRINGING ELECTRICITY AND HOPE TO GUATEMALA

BY SCOTT MEINECKE





"So, what was it like?"

That's the most common question I've been asked since returning home from three weeks in Guatemala. My quick answer has been, "It was extremely hot!" And it was. But that answer doesn't begin to capture what the experience was really like or what it meant to help bring electricity to families who had been living without it.

I was part of a team of 18 linemen from electric co-ops in Iowa, Oklahoma and Colorado who volunteered to build an electric distribution system and bring electricity to more than 80 homes, an elementary school and a health center in a rural Guatemalan community.

A different kind of line work

In Guatemala City, where we landed, roads were busy and modern. At our jobsites, roads were narrow, rocky switchback paths through the mountains. It rained nearly every night, creating muddy conditions and adding to the unrelenting humidity.

The line construction was very different from what we are used to in Iowa. In Guatemala, we built long spans across deep valleys. Local villagers set the poles and dug most of the anchors. We watched in amazement as they helped string wire across the valleys.

My primary focus during the project was wiring homes for electricity. Each home received an electrical panel with two breakers, two outlets, two switches and four lights. We worked with an interpreter to communicate with the homeowners and determine where everything should be located. It was humbling to think that something as simple as flipping on a light switch would become part of daily life for these families. I was continually amazed by how appreciative they were to have us there.

Connections beyond electricity

My best memories all revolve around the children. I see my own grandchildren in their faces. Team members had packed small items to give to the kids, including Hot Wheels cars, hair clips and soccer balls. The children would smile and hold out their hands as we went past, not just at the jobsite but along the roads between town and the worksite. Our daily commute soon took on a parade-like atmosphere. The kids took great joy in saying "thank you," "hello" and "goodbye" in English!

At one home we were preparing to wire, several toy cars we had given out earlier were lined up on the covered porch, just like my grandson lines up his cars back home. The girls had made small beds for the dolls they had received. Those little moments reminded me how much children are alike, no matter where they live.

The homes are very small, generally two rooms with beds in both. You could literally pack most of what many of the families own in the trunk of a car. I pray that having electricity will make daily life a little easier and open new opportunities for these families.

When people ask me what Guatemala was like, I can tell them about the heat, the mountain roads and the work. But what I'll remember most are the people, especially the children, and how grateful they were to receive something most of us rarely stop to think about: electricity.

The experience was also a powerful reminder of just how much electricity can change daily life. It was an honor to work alongside such a great team of cooperative linemen to bring power to this community. Thank you for your support and prayers for our safety while we were there.

Scott Meinecke is the director of safety and loss control for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN A BREVILLE BURR SMART COFFEE GRINDER



The perfect cup of coffee starts with a precise dose of freshly ground beans. The Breville Smart Grinder™ takes precision grinding to a new level, offering 60 grind settings from the finest espresso to the coarsest French press. Stainless steel conical burrs minimize grinding heat and protect the essential oils in the coffee beans, preserving flavor.

ENTER ONLINE BY NOV. 30!

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Nov. 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 Cosori air fryer oven from the September issue was **Tyler Metzger**, a **Lyon REC** member-consumer.



LIHEAP APPLICATION PERIOD IS OPEN

The 2026-2027 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been established to help qualifying low-income Iowa homeowners and renters pay for a portion of their primary heating costs for the winter heating season. The assistance is based on household income, household size, type of fuel and type of housing.

Besides meeting the income guidelines, you must furnish the Social Security numbers of all household members and a copy of recent heating and electric bills. You also must show proof of income for all household members age 18 and older. Additional countable income and/or income verification not listed above may be required for eligibility determination.

If you're a wage earner, you should bring copies of your check stubs for the 30-day period before the date of application or a copy of your federal income tax return. If you're self-employed or a farmer, provide a copy of your most recent federal income tax return. And if you're on a fixed income – Social Security Benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Veteran's Assistance, Unemployment Insurance and pensions – take copies of check stubs from the last 30 days.

In Iowa, applications for the program will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis from Nov. 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. The start date is Oct. 1, 2026, for elderly (60 and over) and/or disabled applicants. If you're not sure where to apply, visit **hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/liheap.** To contact your local community action agency, call 211 or write: LIHEAP, Iowa Department of Health & Human Services, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, IA 50319.

WHERE IOWA CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS GROW

For many Iowa families, picking out a real Christmas tree is a favorite holiday tradition. A visit to a local tree farm offers a chance to choose the perfect tree while supporting Iowa growers.

The Iowa Christmas Tree Association helps growers across the state share knowledge and improve their craft. Growing Christmas trees takes time. While the average growing time is about seven years, it can take six to 12 years or longer for a tree to reach harvest size. During that time, growers must carefully manage soil, weather and changing customer preferences.

A group of Iowa growers formed the association in 1963. Today, it includes 190 member families and associate members, ranging from established tree farmers selling thousands of trees each year to newcomers planting their first seedlings.

Approximately 100 member farms sell trees directly to customers through "choose-and-harvest" operations, where families can walk through rows of evergreens and cut their own tree. Most farms span just 3 to 8 acres.

Iowa tree farms offer a variety of evergreens, including Scotch and white pines, Fraser, Canaan and Douglas firs, and several varieties of spruce. The selection gives families options for different sizes, shapes and styles.



Real Christmas trees are also a renewable agricultural crop. According to the Iowa Christmas Tree Association, growers plant two to three seedlings for every tree harvested, helping provide future crops.

A trip to an Iowa Christmas tree farm combines a favorite holiday tradition with an opportunity to support local agriculture. Along the way, you'll often travel through rural communities served by local electric cooperatives, which power Iowa homes, farms and businesses throughout the year.

Find an Iowa Christmas tree farm near you at www.iowachristmastrees.com.

ENTER TO WIN

WIN $100 FOR A PUBLISHED PHOTO

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 with **"Cover Submission"** in the subject line. **Please also include your address and the name of the electric cooperative that serves you.**

IOWA ELECTRIC CO-OPS ADVOCATE FOR RURAL IOWANS IN WASHINGTON

While Sen. Mitch McConnell's return to Capitol Hill dominated the headlines in mid-September, another return was also underway. Advocates representing Iowa's electric cooperatives traveled to Washington, D.C., to discuss rural Iowa priorities with our elected officials.

Organized by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, our group met with Iowa's congressional delegation and key staff to discuss federal policies affecting rural electric cooperatives and the communities we serve. Our advocates included cooperative leaders and staff from across the state with a broad range of experience and expertise:

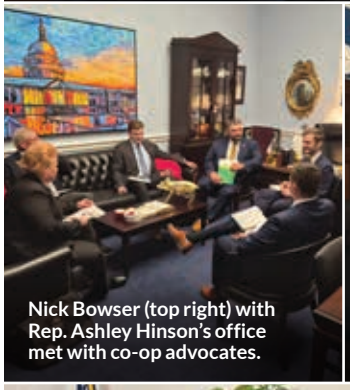
- Kevin Condon, director of public affairs at Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO)
- Brenda Hackman, manager of economic development and community relations at Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative
- Gary Kester, board director at Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative and CIPCO
- Mike Walton, vice president of engineering and system planning at MiEnergy Cooperative
- Branden Yates, government relations specialist at Dairyland Power Cooperative

Their diverse perspectives helped illustrate the real-world impacts of federal policy decisions on Iowa's rural electric cooperatives and our member-consumers.

During the September fly-in, the group met directly with Sen. Chuck Grassley, Sen. Joni Ernst and Rep. Zach Nunn, as well as staff from Iowa's three other congressional offices. Discussions focused on several key priorities for electric cooperatives, including FEMA reform to improve disaster response and recovery efforts, permitting reform to help streamline critical infrastructure projects, and increasing Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan Program funding to $12 billion in fiscal year 2027 to support continued investment in the rural electric grid.



Sen. Joni Ernst (center) met with members of the Iowa electric cooperative delegation.



Nick Bowser (top right) with Rep. Ashley Hinson's office met with co-op advocates.



Rep. Zach Nunn (third from right) is pictured with Iowa electric cooperative leaders.



Sen. Chuck Grassley (third from right) heard perspectives from electric cooperative directors and staff from across Iowa.

The co-op group also highlighted the success of the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program, sharing examples of how the program has supported economic growth, expanded opportunities and improved quality of life in rural Iowa communities.

These meetings provided an important opportunity to strengthen relationships with Iowa's federal policymakers and ensure the voice of electric cooperatives remains part of the conversation as Congress considers policies that affect rural infrastructure, economic development and the future of rural America.

Learn more about our grassroots advocacy efforts at www.IAruralpower.org and follow Iowa Rural Power on social media.



Today's nuclear facilities operate like high-tech industrial campuses that are clean, continuously monitored, extremely secure and designed with multiple, overlapping layers of safety. The Vogtle Electric Generating Plant in Georgia is the largest nuclear power station in the U.S. *Photo Source: Oglethorpe Power*

MODERN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGIES

BY ANTHONY BUCKLEY

"Nuclear energy" often conjures images from TV and movies, such as towering cooling structures, glowing green substances and busy control rooms. In reality, modern nuclear power plants are far removed from these portrayals.

Today's nuclear facilities operate more like high-tech industrial campuses that are clean, continuously monitored, extremely secure and designed with multiple, overlapping layers of safety.

In the U.S., nuclear plants are among the most heavily regulated facilities of any kind, with an extensive framework of state and federal oversight governing reactor licensing, fuel handling, plant maintenance, material disposal and emergency preparedness to ensure nuclear plants operate safely and responsibly.

Layers of safety

Safe operation begins in the control room. Plant operators must pass demanding written and operational examinations administered by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission before they are licensed to operate a reactor, and training doesn't stop once operators are licensed.

Personnel are regularly tested on routine plant operations and rare but high-consequence emergency scenarios. As nuclear facilities modernize, operators are also trained using advanced digital systems that are replacing older analog equipment. These upgrades improve automation, diagnostics and situational awareness.

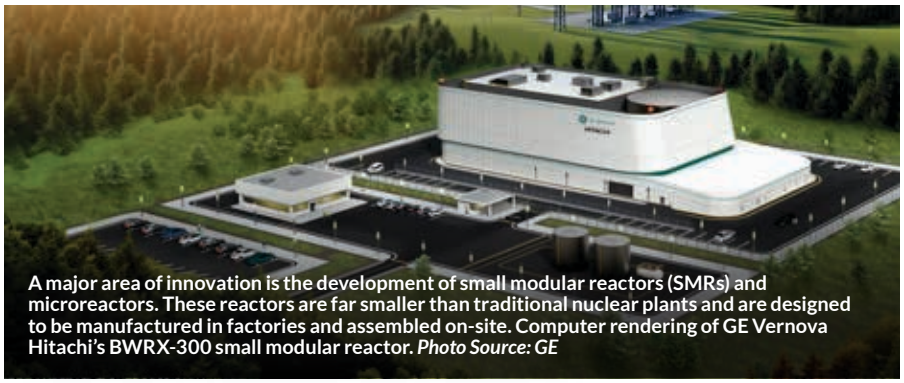
Safety extends far beyond the control room. Organization and discipline define how nuclear plants are designed and run. Facilities have clearly established security perimeters, controlled access points and rigorous maintenance programs to ensure reliability while protecting workers and surrounding communities. Critical components are housed in reinforced concrete and steel structures and are accessible only to essential personnel.

Decades of operating experience have also led to advances in reactor safety. One of the most significant is the increased use of "passive safety" systems, built-in safety features that work automatically. Earlier reactors relied heavily on pumps, motors and operator intervention to perform critical functions such as circulating cooling water. While modern designs still include active systems, they also integrate passive features that do not require external power or immediate human action.

Instead, natural forces such as gravity, pressure and convection keep the reactor stable and cooled during an emergency or loss of power. Passive safety increases resilience during grid outages and extreme weather events.

Another major area of innovation is the development of small modular reactors (SMRs) and microreactors. These reactors are far smaller than traditional nuclear plants and are designed to be manufactured in factories and assembled on-site. Existing U.S. nuclear plants typically produce between 600 and 1,500 megawatts (MW). By comparison, SMRs are expected to generate about 70-350 MW, while microreactors would produce just 1-20 MW. Their smaller size and standardized designs could shorten construction timelines and allow capacity to be added incrementally as energy demand grows.

SMRs and microreactors remain emerging technologies in the U.S. Widespread adoption is unlikely before the end of the decade, but interest remains strong. The U.S. Department of Energy and numerous private investors, including large technology companies, are committing significant funding to accelerate research, licensing and deployment.



A major area of innovation is the development of small modular reactors (SMRs) and microreactors. These reactors are far smaller than traditional nuclear plants and are designed to be manufactured in factories and assembled on-site. Computer rendering of GE Vernova Hitachi's BWRX-300 small modular reactor. ***Photo Source: GE***

A role in an evolving energy mix

At a time of rapid growth in electric demand, nuclear power offers carbon-free, around-the-clock generation. That could make it an increasingly valuable resource as fossil fuel plants retire, renewable generation expands and utilities work to maintain a reliable supply of electricity.

Electric cooperatives are tracking nuclear developments as part of their long-term planning. For co-ops and their member-consumers, nuclear energy can provide reliable, cost-effective, carbon-free electricity.

Cooperative involvement in nuclear energy is not new. Nationwide, generation and transmission cooperatives, which provide wholesale power to local electric cooperatives, partially own or contract for power from 16 operating nuclear reactors. Those include the nation's two newest reactors at Plant Vogtle in Georgia.

IOWA'S ONLY NUCLEAR PLANT PREPARES FOR RESTART

After more than five years offline, Iowa's only nuclear power plant could once again generate electricity. The Duane Arnold Energy Center (Duane Arnold), located near Palo in Linn County, about 8 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids, began commercial operation in 1975 and shut down in August 2020.

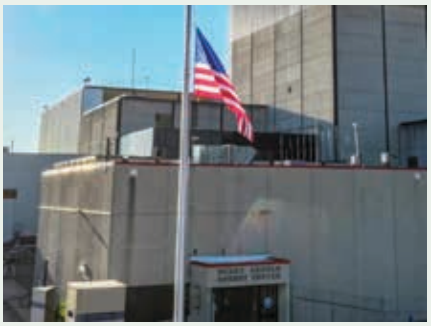
NextEra Energy is working to restart the 615-MW facility. If approved, Duane Arnold would return around-the-clock electricity generation to the regional grid at a time when electricity demand is growing.

A long-standing co-op connection

Iowa's electric cooperatives have a long history with Duane Arnold. Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO) previously held a 20% ownership interest in the plant, while Corn Belt Power Cooperative held 10%. NextEra Energy has since acquired the cooperatives' ownership interests, giving the company full ownership of the facility.

The cooperative connection will continue. CIPCO has agreed to purchase 50 MW of Duane Arnold's output when it restarts. CIPCO says the purchase will add baseload generation to its diversified energy portfolio and support safe, reliable and cost-effective service to its member cooperatives. CIPCO is owned by 13 member cooperatives and associations that together serve more than 300,000 Iowans in 58 counties.

The project could also provide economic benefits for the region and state. An economic impact study estimates Duane Arnold would generate more than $9 billion in economic benefits for Linn County and Iowa over 25 years of operation and support approximately 400 long-term jobs. The study also estimates the facility would generate about $346 million in economic activity statewide each year.



Safety at the center of the restart

Restarting a nuclear facility after it was out of service for several years is an extensive process. Equipment and systems must be restored, tested and inspected before the plant can begin generating electricity again. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission will review the plant and conduct inspections to ensure it meets rigorous safety, security and environmental requirements. NextEra Energy expects Duane Arnold to return to service no later than the first quarter of 2029, pending regulatory approvals.

Anthony Buckley is an energy research analyst for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



TWISTS ON TURKEY LEFTOVERS

TURKEY CARNITAS

- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar, divided
- 2 cups leftover Thanksgiving turkey
- ½ cup orange juice
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced into slivers
- 6 small flour tortillas
- shredded cheese
- sour cream

In a bowl, combine garlic powder and 1 teaspoon brown sugar. Slice or shred the turkey, add to the bowl, then add orange juice. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Mix until combined. In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the turkey and slivered onion. Cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Lift the lid, stir and sprinkle remaining brown sugar on top. Cook for another 5 minutes, until browned and crispy to your liking. Remove from stove and divide into the tortillas. Serve with shredded cheese and sour cream. *Serves 6*

Crystal Hammes • Libertyville
Access Energy Cooperative

CRAN-ORANGE TURKEY

- 1 14-ounce can cranberry sauce, jellied or whole berry
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 packet onion soup mix
- 1 3-4 pound turkey breast

Mix cranberry sauce, orange juice and onion soup mix. Pour half of mixture into a slow cooker. Add turkey, then pour the remaining cranberry mixture over top. Cook on low for 4-6 hours, until turkey is at least 165 degrees F on a digital thermometer. Remove turkey to platter and slice. *Serves 4-6*

Barb Sowers • Fredericksburg
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

SLOPPY TURKEY SANDWICHES

- 1 turkey breast, roasted
- 2 cups Velveeta cheese, cubed
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 stalks celery, diced

Shred turkey and combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. *Serves 10-12*

Pat Lynch • New Hampton
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

SECOND TIME TURKEY

- 1 cup elbow macaroni
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup onion, diced
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- dash thyme
- 2 cups milk
- 1½ cups turkey, chopped
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- parsley, to taste

Cook and drain macaroni. Melt butter, add onion and cook over low heat for 3-5 minutes. Stir in flour, salt, pepper and thyme. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly until thick. Arrange half of the macaroni in the bottom of a lightly greased 2-quart casserole dish. Place half of the turkey over the macaroni. Sprinkle cheese on top of turkey. Repeat layering once. Pour onion mixture over cheese. Mix breadcrumbs, butter and parsley. Sprinkle over top and bake at 350 degrees F for 35 minutes. *Serves 4*

Brenda Newell • Sully
Pella Cooperative Electric Association

LEFTOVER TURKEY ROLLUPS

- **1 container refrigerator pizza dough**
- **¼ cup cranberry sauce**
- **1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded**
- **1 cup leftover turkey breast pieces**
- **1 teaspoon seasoning**
- **2 tablespoons butter, melted**

Spread pizza dough into a large rectangle, about 9x12-inch size. Spread cranberry sauce over the dough. Sprinkle shredded mozzarella cheese over cranberry sauce. Layer with turkey breast and top with seasoning. Roll dough into a log, starting at the 12-inch side. Stretch the final edge over the top of the roll and pinch dough together. Using a serrated knife, slice the roll into 1-inch segments. Place slices on a greased cookie sheet and brush with melted butter. Bake at 350 degrees F for 25-30 minutes. *Yields 12 rollups*

Marilyn O'Brien • Geneva
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

FRUITED TURKEY SALAD

- **1 orange, or 1 can mandarin oranges**
- **1 cup grapes, halved**
- **½ cup almonds, slivered or sliced**
- **1 apple, diced**
- **1 banana, sliced**
- **3 cups white turkey meat, diced**
- **1 cup mayonnaise**

Peel and cut orange into bite-size pieces. If using mandarin oranges, drain the can. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Chill and serve. *Serves 4-6*

Kate Hindin • Hampton
Franklin Rural Electric Cooperative

LEFTOVER TURKEY AND DRESSING CASSEROLE

- **2-3 cups turkey, cut up**
- **1 tablespoon cornstarch**
- **1 can cream of chicken soup**
- **½ soup can milk**
- **1 chicken bouillon cube**
- **leftover dressing**

Place turkey in the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch pan and sprinkle with cornstarch. Mix soup, milk and bouillon. Heat mixture, then spread over turkey. Top with dressing. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-60 minutes, or until thoroughly warmed.

Lauren Zollinger • Rock Rapids
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

TURKEY BOATS

- **1 turkey breast, white meat**
- **salt, to taste**
- **1 can cream of celery soup**
- **1 can cream of chicken soup**

Cut turkey breast into 2x4-inch pieces, 1-inch thick. Cover the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch pan with the turkey, then salt. Mix soups thoroughly and pour over turkey boats. Bake 1 hour at 350 degrees F. *Serves 4-6*

Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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

TURKEY SUPREME

- **1 10.5-ounce can cream of chicken soup**
- **2 cups water**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**
- **dash pepper**
- **1⅓ cups Minute Rice**
- **1½ cups turkey, cooked and diced**
- **1½ cups green beans or peas, cooked**
- **3 tablespoons diced pimento, optional**
- **2 tablespoons parsley, chopped, optional**

Combine soup, water, salt, Worcestershire sauce and pepper in a saucepan. Cream of mushroom soup could be used in place of cream of chicken soup. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients. Pour into a greased 2-quart casserole dish. Bake at 450 degrees F for 15 minutes. *Serves 6*

Bonnie Miller • Eldon
Access Energy Cooperative

WANTED:

ONE-POT WONDERS

$25 BILL CREDIT REWARD FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!



Deadline is Nov. 30
Sometimes less is more! Send us your favorite **one-pot recipes** – think skillet dinners, Dutch oven dishes or other meals that keep cooking (and cleanup!) simple. Selected recipes will appear in our March issue. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.

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(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

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FEATURE ARTICLE

IOWA CO-OP LINEMEN HELP POWER LIVES IN GUATEMALA

BY ERIN CAMPBELL

Electricity is an essential element of our modern lives. We depend on it for just about everything, including lighting, cooling and heating, water heating, cooking, refrigeration, washing and drying clothes, and powering our devices. It's hard to imagine getting through the day without power, but that's a harsh reality for parts of the world that still don't have access to safe, reliable or affordable electricity.

Electric cooperatives across America are working to change that, one rural community at a time. Through NRECA International, the nonprofit international electrification affiliate of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), electric co-ops have helped bring electricity to more than 220 million people worldwide since 1962.

Iowa electric cooperatives have assisted with three NRECA International electrification buildouts in rural Guatemala. Most recently, seven Iowa electric co-op linemen teamed up with linemen from Oklahoma and Colorado to power the rural Guatemalan villages of El Estucal and Montenegro in September.

Preparing for the work ahead

Long before the linemen boarded the plane to Central America, NRECA International staff were hard at work with statewide electric cooperative associations to manage project funding, logistics, scheduling and staffing. For this latest project, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) worked with the Oklahoma Association of Electric Cooperatives and the Colorado Rural Electric Association to form the 18-member team needed to tackle the project.

"Participating in these international projects gives us an opportunity to work across state lines with other cooperatives, which is an incredible example of how we live out the co-op principle of cooperation among co-ops," said IAEC Executive Vice President Leslie Kaufman.

With funding ready and the project schedule finalized, team members were selected from electric cooperatives within the three participating states.

"The linemen met each other during an orientation session before the project, and the underlying message we shared was to stay flexible and adapt to your circumstances," said IAEC Director of Safety Scott Meinecke.

The team logged 12 workdays filled with manual labor tasks like digging pole holes by hand, busting anchors in rock by hand, climbing poles, framing poles, wiring conductor over long spans, hanging transformers, often by hand, and wiring homes in extremely hot and humid conditions. The local villagers assisted with digging pole holes, trimming trees and pulling hundreds of feet of conductor through mountainous terrain.

Overcoming challenges in the field

This 2026 project was the second international electrification project for Meinecke, who journeyed to Guatemala in 2024 to assist with a



project that included linemen from Iowa and Minnesota co-ops.

"The international work is different from the outage restoration mutual aid work we typically coordinate among electric cooperatives," Meinecke said. "We don't have modern equipment or bucket trucks in Guatemala, which can make safety much more of a challenge. We also must adjust to a climate and culture that is new to us."

Adam Hawkins, a lineman from T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative, said, "By far, the biggest challenge on this project was the terrain. On the first day, the anchors were not set, so we had to dig all the holes and bust all the anchors by hand; it was raining, and the terrain was muddy, so that was challenging."

Team member Jeremy Jochims, a foreman at Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative, agreed. "It was a constant battle with the terrain and the environment," he said. "Dragging wire through the jungle and using more manual tools and methods made it seem like we weren't going to be able to finish. Everything was fighting us, but we all worked together, and we pulled it off."

The linemen were struck by how happy the local people were, even though they don't have very much compared to American standards. The people and the way they live made a lasting impression.

Prairie Energy Cooperative lineman Wes Held shared this update while in Guatemala: "The best part for me each day is when we head up the mountain and come back down. Driving by the villagers, they're so friendly and welcoming. Everyone waves, whistles and hollers at us as we go by. A special thing they do here as you pass each other on the roads is a short double honk, like their way of saying hello, or a special whistle that they do; it makes us laugh."

Cody Stackhouse of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative said what impacted him most was the people. He said they were incredibly welcoming and grateful, even though many have so little.



"It makes me happy to know that I can change their life for the better," said Heartland Power Cooperative lineman **Jackson Rice** during the project. **"Seeing the lights come on with the kids will be something very special, I think. It's going to change their lives in a positive way."**

"A local man named Rudy helped the linemen carry equipment, shared fresh papaya from his garden, and even played soccer with the team and local kids," he shared. "The community welcomed us with open arms, and they cooked amazing meals for our team!"

Electricity brings new possibilities

The team wired each home for four lights, two outlets and two light switches. It may not seem like much to us, but electricity will bring transformation and opportunity to these forgotten communities. The linemen saw a 5-year-old girl washing clothes by hand and women cooking over open flames in their homes. Electricity will undoubtedly make these tasks much safer and easier, just as it did for rural Iowans 90 years ago when electric co-ops were formed.

"I met a guy who is in his 80s, and it'll be the first time he's ever had electricity. It's just eye-opening to think about how dramatic the impact will be and how much their lives will change," said Jeremiah Ruby of Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.

During the lighting ceremony on Sept. 30, each home received an electric burner unit for safer cooking.

The team was also able to complete a community service project, updating the elementary school kitchen with a refrigerator, cooktop, supplies and shelving. They also stocked a newly built health center with supplies.

Now that the electric infrastructure is in place, the villages will be served by the local municipal electric utility.

The linemen also talked about how the team formed a brotherhood almost instantly. Held said, "Our team of guys came from multiple states and by day seven it felt like we have known each other forever. We have a great group, a lot of really good linemen down here."

We know that bringing electricity to these remote areas will improve quality of life for generations to come, including better health, educational outcomes and economic opportunities.

Electric cooperatives were proud to be a part of this transformation in rural America in the 1930s, and we're proud to maintain our legacy by participating in these international electrification projects today.

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

Editor's note: We'll share more of this incredible story in our December issue, along with a link to a video of the project.

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES HARD AT WORK IN GUATEMALA



















1 Electric cooperative linemen traveled rugged mountain roads to bring electricity to two remote villages in Guatemala.

2 Local residents helped crews navigate steep, muddy terrain during the electrification project.

3 Linemen prepared materials using manual tools and equipment to build electric infrastructure in rural Guatemala.

4 Linemen climbed poles and installed electric lines across the mountainous landscape without the use of bucket trucks.

5 Children in the villages of El Estucal and Montenegro now have access to electricity in their homes for the first time.

6 Local schoolchildren benefit from an upgraded kitchen equipped with a refrigerator, cooktop and new supplies.

7 Linemen and local residents worked together to pull electric wire through the rugged terrain.

8 Students and community members celebrated a project that brought electricity and new educational opportunities to rural Guatemala.

9 Beyond building electric lines, the project created meaningful connections between linemen and local residents.

ENERGY TRAILS IN GUATEMALA
COLORADO | IOWA | OKLAHOMA

ENERGY-SAVING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RENTERS

BY MIRANDA BOUTELLE

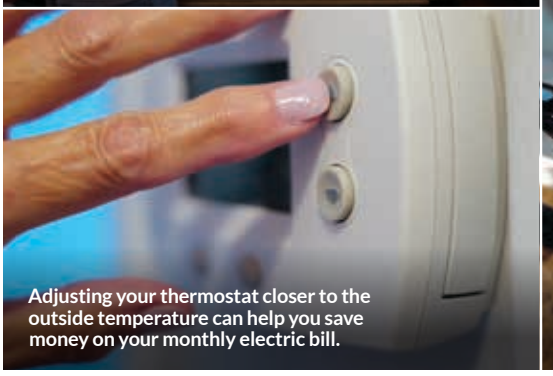
Renting a house or apartment can put you in a challenging spot when it comes to energy efficiency. As a renter, you can't make all the decisions about energy-efficient upgrades in your home. At the same time, renters are usually responsible for paying the electric bill. That means if the home has inefficient equipment, you're going to use and pay for more energy.

Typically, it is the owner's responsibility to make energy-efficiency upgrades, such as adding insulation or new heating and cooling equipment. Don't assume they won't make upgrades. If the home needs upgrades, just ask. I've had landlords let me pay for an upgrade and then they provided a credit on my rent to offset the cost.

In a situation where you don't have control over all the decisions, focus on what you can control.



Thick curtains can help keep heat out in the summer and make the room feel warmer in the winter.



Adjusting your thermostat closer to the outside temperature can help you save money on your monthly electric bill.



Use a kitchen thermometer to test the water heater temperature. If it is over 120 degrees F, lower the heat setting.

Everyday ways to save energy

The thermostat is a great place to save energy. Adjusting the thermostat a few degrees closer to the outdoor temperature can help you save money. Adjust the settings when you aren't home or at night when you're sleeping. Adding thick curtains can help keep heat out in the summer and make the room feel warmer in the winter. A rug can make a cold floor feel warmer in the winter.

These additions can make changing the thermostat a few degrees more comfortable.

Make sure your property owner follows through with annual maintenance and HVAC filter changes. Ignoring these can lead to unnecessary energy waste.

Lighting is another element you can typically control. If your home has incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, switch to efficient LEDs. If you can't change the lighting installed in your home, consider using plug-in LED lighting or lamps instead.

Check whether your water heater is wasting energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting it to 120 degrees F. This can help reduce energy use while also lowering the risk of scalding. I recommend calling the owner or property management company to request an adjustment.

One benefit of renting is that you aren't on the hook when equipment breaks down. If the water heater is older than 10 years or is showing signs of possible failure, such as leaking, unusual noises or discolored water, let the owner know. Upgrading to a heat pump water heater could be a great fit for your home, saving energy and preventing possible damage caused by a failed water heater.

Explore rebates and upgrades

Another way to save is by finding available rebates and incentives for your home. Because renters typically pay the electric bill, a landlord doesn't see the financial benefit of monthly energy savings. You can make it easier for them by finding opportunities for energy-efficient upgrades in your home. Your rental might be eligible for insulation, water heater or HVAC upgrades. You might also be eligible for discounts on products you can buy yourself, such as air purifiers, dehumidifiers or other small home appliances.

If your home has electric heat, adding either a ducted or ductless heat pump, also called a mini-split, provides more efficient heating as well as air conditioning.

Energy-efficient upgrades could benefit the homeowner by increasing the property's value or keeping a good renter from looking for another place to live. It doesn't hurt to ask for upgraded equipment and provide information on eligible rebates or incentives. Partnering with your landlord on projects is a great opportunity to benefit both of you.

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

IOWA'S ELECTRIC CO-OPS URGE CAUTION DURING CONTROLLED BURNS

BY ABBY BERRY

Iowa farmers play an essential role in keeping communities across our state thriving, and we appreciate their hard work and dedication year-round. As the harvest season comes to a close and fields are prepared for the year ahead, we remind farmers to exercise safety when conducting controlled burns near utility poles and other electrical equipment.

Over the next few months, many farmers will conduct controlled burns to clear crop stubble and weeds and prepare fields for spring planting. While controlled burns are an effective way to manage agricultural land, they can also pose serious risks to nearby utility poles, power lines and other electrical equipment. Iowa's electric cooperatives urge farmworkers to use extreme caution when planning and conducting burns near electrical infrastructure.



Controlled burns are an important part of managing farmland, but they should be conducted safely.



As harvest ends and many farmers prepare their fields for the next season, remember to exercise caution when conducting controlled burns near utility poles.

Hidden damage can create serious risks

Every year, utility poles are damaged during controlled burns in fields, along roadsides and in ditches. The danger is compounded by the delayed visibility of pole damage after the fire has passed. Most wooden utility poles are treated with chemical preservatives, including creosote, to protect them from decay. When exposed to fire, the pole can sustain hidden damage. Embers can become lodged in cracks or other openings and continue burning inside the wood long after the flames have disappeared. In some cases, a utility pole can burn from the inside out and collapse hours or even days after a controlled burn has ended.

A damaged utility pole can create a dangerous situation for farmworkers, co-op crews and the public. Repairing or replacing a utility pole can be expensive and time-consuming. More importantly, a weakened pole can fall unexpectedly, potentially bringing power lines down with it. Depending on the location and extent of the damage, a single compromised pole can result in power outages affecting homes, farms and entire communities.

Take precautions before you burn

Farmers planning controlled burns should keep the following safety measures in mind:

- **Maintain a safe distance from utility equipment.** Avoid burning directly beneath or near utility poles, guy wires, transformers and other electrical equipment.
- **Monitor the weather.** Avoid burning during dry, windy conditions when flames and embers can spread quickly.
- **Create firebreaks.** Clear vegetation and other combustible materials around the area to keep the fire contained.
- **Have water and firefighting equipment nearby.** Be prepared to respond if the fire moves beyond the intended burn area.
- **Monitor the fire until it is completely extinguished.** Never assume a fire is out simply because flames are no longer visible.
- **Inspect nearby utility poles after the burn.** If a pole is actively burning, call the fire department. If a pole appears scorched, damaged or otherwise compromised, contact your electric cooperative. Never attempt to repair electrical equipment yourself.

Controlled burns are an important part of managing farmland, but they should be conducted safely. If you have questions about how a planned burn could affect nearby electrical equipment, contact your electric co-op before you begin.

Iowa's electric cooperatives appreciate everyone doing their part to protect themselves, their neighbors and the electrical infrastructure that helps power our communities every day.

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

FROM IOWA AND BACK: REMEMBERING THE VIETNAM ERA

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY



The Wall That Heals traveling exhibit features a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The replica is 375 feet in length and stands 7.5 feet high at its tallest point.

The passage of time is a strange thing, isn't it?

This was on my mind when I heard a podcast guest say the time is coming soon when a '69 Chevy will no longer be a cool classic. To some younger people, it's just an old car, as boring as a Model T. Ouch.

A similar realization hit me on Sept. 12, when I helped bring Jeremy Glazier's documentary film "From Iowa & Back: The Vietnam Era" to the Capri Theatre in Lake City. As I reviewed photographs I took at the event, one thing struck me. The 63 people in the audience were not young.

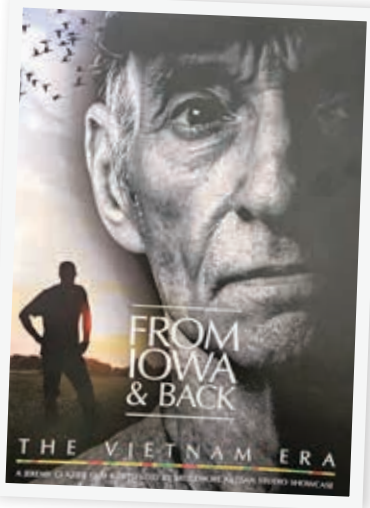
This "revelation" might sound silly. After all, the Vietnam War officially ended more than 50 years ago. The generations who lived through that era are now in their 70s, 80s and 90s.

It's one more reminder of how fast life's daily moments fade into memories. Those evaporate, too, if we don't preserve the stories.

The stories of Vietnam used to permeate American culture. When Gen Xers like Jeremy and I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, Vietnam themes inspired TV shows like "The A Team" and blockbuster films like "Rambo," "Good Morning, Vietnam" and "Forrest Gump."

But that was decades ago. Today, a third of Americans are too young to have any personal memories of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, much less memories of the Vietnam era.

That's why "From Iowa & Back" is so important. This award-winning film tells some of the stories of the 115,000 Iowans who served during the Vietnam War (1964-1975). Many of the Iowa veterans in the film were 19 or 20 years old when they entered the military.



A publicity poster for the documentary "From Iowa & Back." This award-winning film tells some of the stories of the 115,000 Iowans who served during the Vietnam War.



Steve Streeter (right) from Lanesboro and a fellow Vietnam veteran from Iowa who traveled to Manning on July 26 to visit The Wall That Heals.

"We were just kids, doing what we were told to do," said Steve Streeter, a 1963 Lake City High School graduate. This Lanesboro-area farmer was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1965.

While Steve isn't featured in the documentary, he and his wife watched it in Lake City. "It was quite a film," he said when I asked for his assessment. "Everything was pretty accurate."

A difficult homecoming

Like many veterans, Steve didn't talk much about Vietnam for decades. Few people asked, either.

"I worked for years to block it all out of my memory," noted one veteran in the film. Another put it this way: "We came back changed. You looked at the world differently."

For some, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., still raises troubling questions with no answers. "My name wasn't on The Wall. Why was I one of the lucky ones?"

"There are a lot of triggers for me, like the derecho," added another veteran in the film, who commented about the massive destruction from the 2020 storm. "The war never really ends for us."

Honoring those who served

Many Vietnam vets rarely spoke about their military service until the last decade. "I never wore my Vietnam veteran hat until about 10 years ago," Steve noted.

A lot of the credit for these changes goes to the Honor Flights, which started in 2005. These all-expenses-paid trips allow U.S. military veterans to visit the war memorials in Washington, D.C. Steve joined an Honor Flight out of Fort Dodge about 10 years ago.

"That day was one of the best days of my life. We felt like dignitaries. We never had that kind of welcome when we came home from Vietnam," he shared.

I'm grateful the Honor Flights and the film "From Iowa & Back" are providing some much-needed healing for Vietnam vets. It matters, Steve said. "We shouldn't forget what these people went through for freedom."

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

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