

● SEPTEMBER 2023

# iowa

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

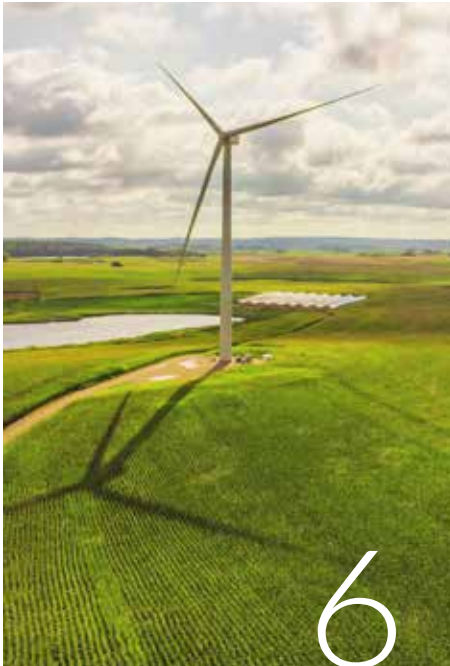
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of a co-op lineman**

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### ON THE COVER

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

# EMERGENCY PREPARATION BEGINS WITH PERSONAL PLANNING

BY SCOTT MEINEKE



There's a common saying in disaster planning, *"It's not a matter of if a disaster will take place; it's a matter of when it will happen."*

Since 2004, National Preparedness Month has been observed each September in the U.S. to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to all types of emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

This year's preparedness campaign focuses on preparing older adults for disaster. Older adults can face greater risks in extreme weather events and emergencies, especially when living alone, are low-income, have a disability or live in rural areas.

One of the most important steps in preparation is to have emergency supplies on hand. The following are tips to help you or loved ones create an emergency kit.

**Step 1: Consider how an emergency might affect your needs and plan accordingly.** It is crucial to consider what kinds of resources you use daily and what you might do if those resources are limited or unavailable.

Consider creating two kits. In one kit, put everything you need to stay where you are and make it on your own for several days. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you need to leave your home.

Basic emergency supplies include water, food, pet food, a flashlight, a radio, batteries, a first aid kit and personal sanitation items (moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties).

**Step 2: Have medications and medical supplies readily available.** If you take medicine, have what you

need to make it on your own for at least a week. You might not have access to a medical facility or drugstore during an emergency. Keep a copy of your prescriptions as well as dosage or treatment information.

If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital or if you receive regular services, such as home health care, treatment or transportation, talk to your service provider about their emergency plans.

**Step 3: Keep extra essentials in your home.** If you use eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries and oxygen, always have extras in your home. Also have copies of your medical insurance, Medicare or Medicaid cards readily available.

**Step 4: Include copies of essential documents in your emergency supply kits.** Include family records (and contact information), wills, power of attorney documents, deeds, social security numbers, credit card and

bank information, insurance cards and tax records. It is best to keep these documents in a waterproof container.

Emergencies, especially natural disasters, can often impact electricity services. Keep your local electric cooperative's phone number handy and always avoid downed power lines. If you plan to operate a generator during a lengthy power outage, take steps now to ensure you follow all necessary precautions to use it safely. Your local electric co-op is an excellent resource for safety information.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient, and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

For more information, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

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

## EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

### Win a WiFi Smart Weather Station!

Ambient Weather's personal weather station allows monitoring of your home and backyard weather conditions with the brilliant, easy-to-read LCD color display. Monitor indoor and outdoor conditions, including wind speed, wind direction, rainfall, UV, barometric pressure, indoor/outdoor temperature, indoor/outdoor humidity and more. The weather station also calculates dew point, wind chill and heat index.

#### Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting [www.ieclmagazine.com](http://www.ieclmagazine.com) no later than Sept. 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 beef bundle from the July issue was Gerald Kinney, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative.



ENTER ONLINE BY SEPT. 30

## CALL YOUR UTILITY

if you see any damaged lines or equipment. **Your safety is our top priority.**



## FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the July board meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$66,917.30
- Approved donations to the three nominees in the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives' Shine the Light contest
- Approved voting delegate and alternate for Basin Electric Power Cooperative Annual Meeting



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# WIRED FOR SUCCESS: THE LIFE OF A LINEMAN AT THE CO-OP

BY SCOTT HAGENSON



A typical day in a power lineman's life begins with reporting to the shop. The line superintendent and all crew members will "tailgate," the term used for a

lineman's meeting. This is a chance to discuss the day's agenda and receive the necessary paperwork about what jobs we will be doing, location details, truck assignments and who we will be working with. While the day-to-day tasks may vary, a lineman usually works from the same truck and with the same partner.

Once the morning tailgate adjourns, we inventory our assigned truck and load the necessary material, poles or equipment to complete the day's job. After dispatching from the shop and arriving at the job site, the lineman reports to the office staff with the location, truck number and partner using the radio system. Once we contact the office, our day begins with another tailgate session led by the first class lineman. During the meeting, we discuss who will be performing which tasks and any safety concerns that may arise during the day and go through the process one more time to ensure each person at the job site understands their role and the goal for the day.

Preparedness is key as a lineman because each day's agenda can swiftly change, such as transitioning from the job at hand to a nearby outage or being dispatched to an after-hours call. Since Franklin REC's service territory encompasses six counties and over 850 miles of power lines, the line crew must be prepared for anything that may arise.

At the end of the day, office phones are transferred to the 24/7 call center, where outages are reported and dispatched to the lineman on call. Franklin REC's line crew is on a six-week rotation for a lineman to be on call after business hours.

While on call, the lineman receives notification of outage calls the call center receives; the lineman then contacts another line crew member to respond to the trouble calls. When an extreme weather event occurs, it is almost a given that a Franklin REC lineman will be called out for repair purposes or restoration of power.

The job of being a co-op lineman is challenging but also highly rewarding. Putting safety first and great customer service to our membership is the ultimate goal of every lineman!

*Scott Hagenson is a line superintendent for Franklin REC.*

## FRANKLIN REC LINEMEN ASSIST IN BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

Franklin REC is proud to be an integral part of the communities we serve, and we were honored to assist the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce in the Main Street Hampton beautification project. In July, our line crew worked diligently to hang flower planters on streetlight posts throughout downtown Hampton. Through the collaborative efforts of community



members and our cooperative employees, we were able to add a touch of natural beauty and charm to the area. Being actively involved in the community we serve is a source of great pride for Franklin REC.

## LOCAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN 65 YEARS OF TRADITION

Lily Strother of Hampton and Mitch Roelfs of Ackley recently participated in the national electric cooperative Youth Tour of Washington, D. C., sponsored by Franklin REC. They spent June 18-23 in the nation's capital with 36 fellow student leaders representing Iowa's electric cooperatives.

Each year in June, this weeklong leadership development program provides high school students the opportunity to learn about government,

the electric cooperative business model and today's pressing issues in the energy industry. Students meet their elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate, tour historic sites and manage their own Snack Cooperative.

This year, Iowa Youth Tour attendees conversed with Sen. Joni Ernst, Sen. Charles Grassley and Rep. Randy Feenstra. During their time with our elected Iowa politicians, students asked questions about politics, cooperatives'

impact in Washington, D.C., and how rural Iowa influences political decisions.

Since 1958, Iowa's electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students on Youth Tour for visits to their U.S. congressional delegations, energy and grassroots government education sessions, and sightseeing adventures. Franklin REC is proud to invest in the next generation of leaders as part of our electric cooperative's mission.

### LILY STROTHER, YOUTH TOUR ATTENDEE

During the July board meeting, Youth Tour attendee Lily Strother presented her experiences from June's trip with the board of directors and co-op staff. Strother discussed the historical sites toured and learned about, speaking of the prestigious Changing of the Guard, the eeriness of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and Holocaust Memorial, and the beautiful architectural landmarks that house the history of the U.S.

This trip was the first time Strother traveled an expansive distance by herself, but she was quick to recognize that many of her fellow Iowa Youth Tour attendees were experiencing the same overwhelming feelings. She notes that immediately upon meeting fellow peers, bonds were created. All 38 Iowa

Youth Tour students created their own cooperative and worked together to create an operation to benefit all.

Reflecting on the trip, Strother was extremely grateful for the opportunity to attend such an educational experience. She expressed her love for rural Iowa living as she was taken aback by the constant honking of drivers, masses of people and the overall fast-paced lifestyle of urban living. Strother has also attended the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy Franklin REC hosts during October as part of cooperative month.



### MITCH ROELFS, YOUTH TOUR ATTENDEE

*Article submitted by Mitch Roelfs*

My trip to Washington, D.C., was an unforgettable experience, filled with unique and beautiful sights. What truly made it special was the people I had the chance to meet, like Rep. Randy Feenstra. During my time there, he had a profound impact on me as a young adult. Rep. Feenstra encouraged us to recognize the power of our voices and the importance of using them to make a difference in our communities. It was inspiring to hear that he, too, started on a similar journey.

I owe every part of this experience to my local electric cooperative, Franklin REC. They facilitated connections that opened my eyes to the potential I had to influence positive change in the world. Rep. Randy Feenstra's words, "God has given us a voice, and we should use it," have stayed with me since that moment.

As a result of this trip and the encouragement I received, I now feel compelled to pursue higher goals in life. The journey ahead seems more important, knowing that my voice matters and can play a role in shaping a better future for others.

I cannot recommend this trip enough to anyone curious about leadership and eager to work on their community involvement. Thank you, Franklin REC, for making this life-changing experience possible.



#### Learn more about Youth Tour and next year's trip

For 65 years, Iowa Youth Tour has empowered young adults with knowledge and creating advocates for Iowa, electric cooperatives, and rural communities.

For more information on who is eligible to represent Franklin REC at the 2024 Iowa Youth Tour visit [www.franklinrec.coop/youth-tour](http://www.franklinrec.coop/youth-tour). Be sure to search for "Iowa Youth Tour" on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to see more of the group's recent adventures from 2023.

In the U.S., wind currently generates twice the amount of electricity it did five years ago and provides 10% of the nation's electricity.

# WIND ENERGY IS SOARING

BY PAUL WESSLUND

**Wind energy is big and getting bigger, in more ways than one.**

In the U.S., wind currently generates twice the amount of electricity it did five years ago and provides 10% of the nation's electricity – a share expected to grow to more than 25% by 2050.

The basics behind wind power technology is a tall pole with rotor

blades at the top. You've likely seen vast fields of those turbines, with white rotor blades spinning lazily around across the Iowa countryside. But they're not lazy at all, and that's another way wind energy is big – in physical size.

### Bigger turbines make more electricity

Wind turbine blades seem to circle slowly due to an optical illusion resulting from their size. The tips of those rotors are likely to be moving at more than 150 miles per hour.

There's a reason for that size. Wind turbines are getting bigger and taller to capture more wind high in the air. The average wind turbine height has increased from about 190 feet in 2000 to nearly 300 feet today, which is as tall as the Statue of Liberty. During that time, the size of the rotor blades doubled, making a circle more than 400 feet in diameter. That size growth has tripled the amount of electricity a wind turbine can produce, lowering the cost of wind power.

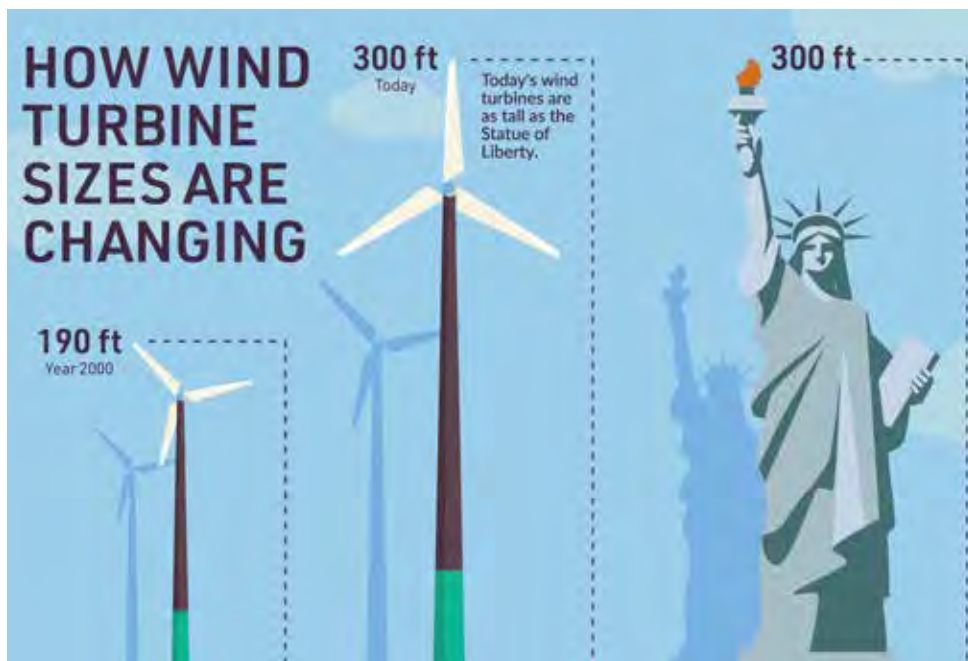
### Location of turbines is changing

One wind turbine can generate enough electricity to power about 900 homes, and they're being installed at a rate of about 3,000 a year. Today, there are more than 72,000 turbines in the U.S., primarily located in the middle of the country. But that's about to change.

Federal and state governments are encouraging developers to build wind turbines out in the ocean, where winds are more constant, and the rotors could be even larger. Sixteen projects have been proposed and one estimate shows there's enough potential for offshore wind to supply nearly all our electricity. Offshore wind turbines are generally even larger than those used on land.

### Navigating real-world challenges

Bigger sizes can cause problems, though, like transporting rotor blades that average more than 100 feet long. Delivering those monsters can



cost more than \$30,000 in finding the right truck for the oversized load, planning the route, obtaining permits, checking clearances and recruiting escort vehicles. Researchers are already working on those problems. One solution is flexible blades that could be carried on three train cars. The blades could bend to allow the train to maneuver around curves.

As the wind industry has evolved, attention has been focused on bird deaths. As many as a million birds a year fly into spinning rotors. This poses a dilemma for wildlife and nature groups, who are generally supportive of renewable energy. The National Audubon Society, for example, supports wind power as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but urges careful planning to locate wind farms in ways that minimize risk to wildlife.

### Local, distributed energy resources

Besides large onshore and offshore wind farms, wind turbines can be used as a distributed energy resource. With support from the U.S. Department of Energy, there have been significant innovations in smaller-scale wind turbines to integrate some of the improvements seen in larger models, including longer blades to capture more wind and advanced composite materials. Smaller turbines can even be used to help power homes, farms, schools and businesses.

Across the U.S., several electric cooperatives and other rural utilities, including those in Iowa, have deployed one or more large-scale wind turbines in their local service territories as a local utility-scale resource to supplement their wholesale power supply. These kinds of local resources can help boost resiliency, hedge or reduce power supply costs, and support local economic development.

Wind energy and the technologies that power it will continue to evolve. For wind power, there will be opportunities for growth at both smaller and larger scales, as well as on land and offshore.

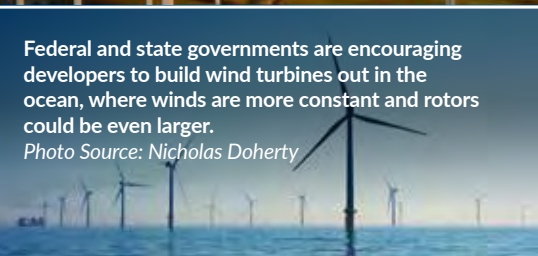
*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development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



There are currently more than 72,000 wind turbines in the U.S., primarily located in the central part of the country.  
Photo Source: American Public Power Association



One challenge for wind is transporting rotor blades, which can average more than 100 feet long.  
Photo Source: Artur Zudin



Federal and state governments are encouraging developers to build wind turbines out in the ocean, where winds are more constant and rotors could be even larger.  
Photo Source: Nicholas Doherty

# SCHOOL NIGHT

## RECIPES



### SIMPLE CHICKEN OR SHRIMP ALFREDO

- 8 ounces cream cheese**
- ½ cup butter**
- 1 cup milk**
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese**
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt**
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- ½ pound shrimp, detailed and cooked (or 2 chicken breasts, cooked and diced)**
- noodles, cooked**

Mix all ingredients, except meat, in a saucepan over medium heat until cooked through. Add meat and serve over noodles. Serves 2-4

**Marcy Gherian • Alvord**  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### BAKED TUNA SANDWICHES

- 3 eggs, hard-boiled and diced**
- 7 ounces canned tuna, drained**
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickles, diced**
- 1 tablespoon onion, diced**
- ½ cup mayonnaise**
- 1 cup cheese, cubed to taste**
- buns**

Mix ingredients, put on buns and wrap in aluminum foil. Bake at 225 degrees F for 25 minutes.

**Denise Anderson • Ocheyedan**  
Osceola Electric Cooperative, Inc.

### CHICKEN STIR-FRY

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast**
- ¾ cup mayonnaise**
- 16 ounces frozen stir-fry vegetables**
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- rice**

Dice chicken, then cook in mayonnaise in a large skillet over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and continue cooking until chicken is done and veggies are tender. Serve over rice. Serves 6

**Laura DeSmet • Larchwood**  
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

### BURGER BOWL

- 1 pound ground beef**
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt**
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 head lettuce, chopped**
- 1 cup cheese, shredded**
- 2 dill pickles, sliced**
- ¼ cup onion, chopped**
- salad dressing**

Brown ground beef and crumble until cooked. Add seasoned salt and pepper. Meanwhile, divide lettuce into four serving bowls. Top lettuce with ground beef, cheese, pickles and onion. Top with ranch, Thousand Island or your favorite dressing.

**Mary Gropper • Chelsea**  
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative



## COMPANY GRAVY

- 2 pounds lean stew beef
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of onion soup
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- ½ cup water
- optional: rice, mashed potatoes or noodles

Place all ingredients in a slow cooker on low for 5-6 hours. Can also be baked covered in oven at 275 degrees F for 3½-4 hours. Stir before serving. Best served over rice, mashed potatoes or noodles. *Serves 8*

**Susie Jacobs • Allison  
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative**

## BISCUIT CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 roll refrigerator biscuits
- 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- ½ cup brown sugar
- mozzarella cheese

Brown ground beef and onion. Cut each biscuit into four pieces and layer on bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Mix spaghetti sauce and brown sugar with meat mixture. Pour over biscuits and bake at 400 degrees F for 20 minutes. Add mozzarella cheese and bake another 5-10 minutes. Gluten free option: Use one recipe box or homemade gluten free biscuits in place of refrigerator biscuits. *Serves 8*

**Deanna Foreman • Rock Valley  
North West Rural Electric Cooperative**

## SWEET & SPICY CHICKEN WRAPS

- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups coleslaw mix
- 1 small scallion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha sauce
- 4 frozen breaded chicken tenders
- 4 8-inch flour tortillas

Combine sour cream, 1 tablespoon mayonnaise, sugar, seasoned salt and pepper. Stir in coleslaw mix and scallion (can substitute shredded cabbage and carrots for pre-made coleslaw mix). Create a sauce by combining ¼ cup mayonnaise and Sriracha sauce. Prepare chicken tenders according to package directions. Divide sauce and coleslaw mixture among tortillas and top with chicken tenders. Roll tortilla into a wrap. *Serves 4*

**Chris Daniels • Casey  
Guthrie County Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

## TACO CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 package taco seasoning (4 tablespoons)
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 roll refrigerator pizza crust
- 4 ounces corn chips, crushed
- 1½ cups Mexican cheese, shredded
- optional toppings: salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper, diced tomato

Brown pork, chop into small pieces as it cooks and then drain. Stir in taco seasoning and sour cream until well blended. Spray 9x13-inch cake pan with cooking spray. Press pizza crust into pan and slightly up sides. Bake crust at 400 degrees F for 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle crust with half the crushed corn chips.

Spread meat mixture over corn chips. Sprinkle with cheese and top with remaining corn chips. Bake an additional 18-22 minutes or until cheese starts to brown and crust is baked.

Cut into squares and add salsa, torn lettuce, diced green pepper and diced tomatoes as desired. Can substitute 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese and ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese for Mexican cheese. *Serves 8*

**Barb Sexton • Rockwell City  
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association**

**WANTED:**

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION RECIPES

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

**Deadline is Sept. 30**

Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name and the recipe category on all submissions. Also provide the number of servings per recipe.



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

**MAIL: Recipes**  
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# ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



Driven by their commitment to community, the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives of Iowa held their third-annual Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Employees and member-consumers of Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives were invited to nominate someone who makes a positive difference in their community.

The judging committee reviewed essays from 126 outstanding nominations and selected three winners.

Congratulations to Erica Lindaman, who is recognized for her generous efforts through Gift of Giving; Betty Thronson, who is recognized for restoring hope for families through Project Flo; and Heather Weers, who is recognized for her compassion for children through Sleep in Heavenly Peace. These three winners have been awarded a \$2,500 donation to their charity.

The following pages showcase and honor each of the Shine the Light contest winners' commitment to humbly serving their communities. Learn more at [www.iowaShineTheLight.com](http://www.iowaShineTheLight.com).

## GIFT OF GIVING

**ERICA LINDAMAN'S PASSION FOR GIVING DOESN'T GO UNNOTICED**

**BY RYAN CORNELIUS**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Erica Lindaman saw a need and acted. The Clarion teacher started Gift of Giving 501c3 nonprofit organization to help collect Christmas gifts for children.

"We saw a need based on people not working as much," Lindaman explains. "Hours were cut because people had to stay home."

### A mission grows

Gift of Giving could have stayed with just meeting Christmastime needs, but that wasn't in Lindaman's plans.

Since that first Christmas, the program has grown exponentially. The organization now assists with everything from food insecurity to bedding and furniture.

"It has grown into this massive entity," she says. "We are trying to get people in Wright County to keep their clothing and pieces here rather than take them to a different county to donate."

Emily Bernhardt, one of Lindaman's many nominators, has known her for 13 years. "I think Erica has seen a



Erica Lindaman is presented with a check for her Gift of Giving charity.

*Gift of Giving continued:*

need in the community through her background being a teacher and working with students on a daily basis,” Bernhardt says. “She just stepped in to fulfill that need. I know she spends a lot of her personal time and effort working with Gift of Giving. Her whole family has become involved and quite dedicated.”

For Lindaman, it has almost become a full-time job – and one that she loves.

“I literally get between 20 and 30 texts, emails and Facebook messages saying, ‘I need this,’ or ‘How can you help me with this,’” she says. “We have extended where we are helping to pay for electric bills and water bills. We have provided gas cards for people who are having health problems. We are just here to give.”

### **A heart for giving**

That tenacity shines through for all to see, even when she may not want the credit.

“Erica has a huge heart,” Bernhardt says. “She may be quiet sometimes and likes to be in the background. But she has a huge heart and huge passion for the youth and families in the community.”

Today, Lindaman and Gift of Giving accept any items in Wright County. Those are stored in a temporary warehouse, where you can meet with Lindaman by appointment or visit one of the organization’s “pop-up” events.

“If you have a need, and you come to me, or you come to my mother or my father, or anyone who is involved in the organization, we’re going to find you a resource or the right person to help you,” she says.

Learn more about Gift of Giving at [www.facebook.com/groups/134251198297192](https://www.facebook.com/groups/134251198297192).

*Article contributed by Ryan Cornelius, vice president of corporate relations, Corn Belt Power Cooperative.*



## **PROJECT FLO** **BETTY THRONSDON CONTINUES HER** **MOTHER'S LEGACY OF STEWARDSHIP**

**BY ERIN CAMPBELL**

Betty Thronson is pictured in the front row, far right, along with her parents (mom Flo) and siblings.

The Project Flo Association works to build hope in the Chickasaw County area by restoring homes. And it all started with a mother’s love for her community.

Betty Thronson of New Hampton was nominated for Shine the Light by her sister, Shirley Hoffman, a member-consumer of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative in Ionia. In her essay, Hoffman shared that she and Thronson come from a family of 15 children, and they established Project Flo in 2011 after the passing of their mother, Florence “Flo” Thronson. Their mother was known in the New Hampton area for her positive spirit of volunteerism and her children have made it their mission to keep her spirit alive through community service.

Thronson has served as president of Project Flo for more than 11 years and is responsible for gathering family, friends and neighbors once a year in June to offer needed home repairs in the Chickasaw County region. These essential repairs help local families take control of their homes and help restore their faith in humanity. Often, the homes would be deemed unsafe and homeowners’ insurance could be jeopardized if the repairs weren’t made. Hoffman says, “The impact Betty has made on the residents, neighborhoods and businesses in Chickasaw County is immeasurable. Her dedication and leadership have significantly improved the lives of many individuals in need.”

### **A widespread impact**

Project Flo coordinated 80 volunteers working on six projects in 2023,

including home repairs for a disabled veteran, a young family of five, a single mother of three, a low-income couple with a disability, and a retired man who is disabled. The volunteer group of carpenters, plumbers, electricians and masonry professionals use their vast skills to repair steps and sidewalks, install flooring, paint, perform landscaping, remove debris, repair bathrooms, and replace doors and windows.

Since Project Flo began, Thronson’s organization has assisted more than 30 homes in addition to helping with repairs at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and St. Joseph Community School in New Hampton. Thronson takes charge of coordinating the grant and fundraising endeavors for Project Flo. She then conducts a thorough assessment of the tasks needed for each project and prioritizes them. During June each year, Thronson shifts into project mode and reaches out to local businesses to coordinate supplies and services.

Thronson also coordinates volunteer assistance to ensure each home project has the right crew ready to work. Hoffman says, “When Betty visits a work site, her infectious energy fills the air with jubilation, laughter and camaraderie. Volunteers of all ages are thrilled to see Betty, recognizing her as the glue that holds the family and project together.”

The \$2,500 Shine the Light donation will be invested to purchase much-needed renovation equipment and supplies for Project Flo.

Learn more about Project Flo at [www.thronson.com](http://www.thronson.com).

*Article submitted by Erin Campbell, director of communications for Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.*



**Continued on Page 14**

# SHINING THE LIGHT ON OUR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS



## LANA SCHAEFER

As a life-long avid reader, Lana Schaefer always wanted others to share in her love for knowledge. She believes knowledge has the power to enrich their lives or to learn something new to better their lives, but above all to inspire themselves. Schaefer is the epitome of an all-around volunteer locally and regionally.

After retiring from teaching, she chose to continue her advocacy for children through Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), working directly with children and as a supervisor. She has given

her time and attention over the past eight years, ensuring every child has the best circumstances to thrive now and in the future. In 2023, Schaefer was recognized by Gov. Reynolds with a State Volunteer Award.

### A variety of important impacts

Along with CASA, she continues to serve within the education system through the RSVP Pen Pal Project. She corresponds with children to help them learn how to write in complete sentences, answer questions and write in letter form. Also, Schaefer serves in the Reading Buddies program through the school system, where she interacts with second- or third-grade children. It's important work, as many conversations are about more than the book. It is an ear for a child to know someone will listen without judgment.

She strives daily to improve her community through many acts of kindness, including her countless hours as the church organist and pianist. She has donated her time for more than 50 years to weekly church services, special services (e.g., Lenten services, Bible school, etc.), more than 335 weddings and funerals, choirs and Sunday school. Her talent has brought joy to

many. Finally, in her efforts to help those in different circumstances, she has sewn quilt tops for Lutheran World Relief.

### Vision for the award

If selected for the 2023 Shine the Light contest, Schaefer would choose to donate to her favorite cause, The Rockwell Library. This donation would mean the world to her because it could inspire more children and adults to gain a hobby to share with others or to improve themselves for the greater community. She has lived as a role model for so many by demonstrating that by learning, you are giving back to your community, which brings more hope, joy and love than one could anticipate.

This article is a testimony to all the wonderful things she has done for so many. It is her legacy of giving and expecting nothing in return.

*Schaefer was nominated on behalf of Franklin REC member Bev Peters.*

*Franklin REC made a donation on behalf of the volunteer to their elected nonprofit organization.*



## DIANE WILLS

Diane Wills and her husband Rev. G. Kim Wills came to Zion St. John Lutheran Church in Sheffield in April 2009. She is a strong supporter of the music program within the church. She directs the bell choir, participates in the church choir, directs the children's choir, and participates and accompanies the Praise Team during church services. She also uses her musical abilities to adapt music and provide accompaniment during other services.

Wills is an officer for the church's women's organization and has held an office for many consecutive years. She also volunteers for the northeastern Iowa women's synodical group. Her involvement includes being the publisher of the

women's newsletter and being the contact for the Facebook page for the organization.

Wills has a passion for fostering and training puppies for Leader Dogs for the Blind. She and her husband are currently caring for puppy number 11. She and the puppies have been companions in church and community activities, training both the dogs as well as the community members to know how to treat a "working dog" appropriately. One of their previous puppies is grown and may become a therapy dog. Wills has been working with this dog in the hopes of bringing children comfort through contact with this attentive and calming dog.

### Addressing local food insecurity

In 2016, Wills heard an announcement on the local radio station addressing food insecurity of families and individuals in the area who needed healthy food options but were financially deprived. The Food Bank of Iowa suggested utilizing a mobile food pantry to address this issue.

With the assistance of volunteers in the community from Zion St. John Lutheran Church and four other churches, the mobile food pantry was organized and operated from the church facility, distributing food to those in need twice

a month. Wills was integral in keeping the inventory, ordering the food from the food bank, and keeping track of where the food was stored in various locations in the church. After 18 months, the Food Bank of Iowa suggested the food pantry become a permanent site. This led to the establishment of the West Fork Food Pantry and board. Wills became the site coordinator, ordered food, took notes at board meetings, contacted volunteers to help distribute food items, and helped write grants to assist with funding the food pantry and its needs.

In March 2020, everything changed with the COVID-19 pandemic. The food pantry never closed. It continued as a drive-through option for most of the year. In spring 2021, a building was purchased by the West Fork Food Pantry. Wills and her husband headed the capital campaign to raise the funds for this purchase. Through her diligent and compassionate endeavors many families have received infinite benefits.

*Wills was nominated on behalf of Franklin REC member Alice Greimann.*

*Franklin REC made a donation on behalf of the volunteer to their elected nonprofit organization.*

# SHINING THE LIGHT (CONT.)



## JEFF & TRACY SPEAR

Jeff and Tracy Spear are renowned for their pioneering effort behind the annual Hampton Car Show, drawing thousands of people to rural Franklin County for an enchanting day brimming with cars and entertainment.

Jeff's passion for vintage cars ignited during his early years, as he formed a profound connection with automobiles and the art of restoration. Over the past three decades, Jeff has been sharing his fervor for hot rods through active volunteerism at the annual Hampton Car Show. Recently, he received the honor of chairperson, solidifying his commitment and leadership to the event. Alongside Jeff, Tracy plays a vital role in enhancing the excitement of the car

show by assuming the responsibility of organizing and promoting. Her efforts ensure a seamless, well-advocated event that adds to the overall success.

Through their dedication, Jeff and Tracy have transformed the annual Hampton Car Show into hours of joy for car owners and attendees. Commencing on Friday night at the roar of the Spear's notorious 1957 Chevrolet Gasser engine, known as the 'Cherry Bomb,' they lead fellow car fanatics on a cruise through Franklin County, capturing a timeless rural Iowa sunset. At the break of dawn on Saturday, the streets of Hampton come alive with a remarkable showcase of hundreds of cars and their proud owners. By high noon, the streets are flooded with people admiring the exquisite vintage vehicles gracing the roadway.

As the weekend concludes, Jeff and Tracy's diligent preparation for the event is richly rewarded as they present winners with their distinctive car show trophies. These one-of-a-kind awards are specially crafted by Jeff's skilled crew at J-T Machine & Tool. Their personal touch and craftsmanship add an extra level of significance and pride to the awards, making them cherished mementos for recipients.

### Local quality of life

Thanks to countless hours of hard work, the car show has blossomed into a magnificent spectacle that captivates both

visitors and participants. The dedication and efforts by Jeff, Tracy and fellow volunteers have undoubtedly elevated the event, creating an unforgettable experience for all. Their unwavering passion for restoring vintage hot rods leaves a lasting impression on our community, inspiring generations to appreciate and embrace the world of classic automobiles.

As pillars of our community, the Spears play a crucial role by consistently dedicating their time and support to the rural area they call home. With their unwavering spirit of volunteerism, Jeff and Tracy's contributions to our community significantly improve local quality of life.

Jeff and Tracy pledge to donate funds to Bridge of Hope North Central Iowa. This organization specializes in training and empowering local Christian faith communities to address the issue of homelessness, particularly single mothers and their children, through practical and compassionate means. The donation received would create meaningful opportunities and bring hope to families experiencing homelessness, making a positive impact in their lives.

*Jeff and Tracy Spear were nominated on behalf of the employees at Franklin REC.*

*Franklin REC made a donation on behalf of the volunteer to their elected nonprofit organization.*

# CELEBRATING CO-OP WORKIVERSARIES

Congratulations to the following Franklin REC employees for reaching service anniversaries at the cooperative!



Accountant **Emily Rush** celebrates an impressive 12 years of dedicated service.



Warehouseman **Jens Hovenga** marks nine years of exceptional contributions.



Administrative Assistant **Christy Mason** celebrates seven years of valuable support.



Apprentice Lineman **Hunter Sutter** is recognized for three years of dedication and growth.

We applaud our employees' commitment and appreciate their continued contributions to the success of Franklin REC.

# ANNOUNCING THE 2023 SHINE THE LIGHT AWARD WINNERS



## SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE HEATHER WEERS WORKS TO PROVIDE BEDS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

BY CHRISTIE REMLEY

Heather Weers (right) is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. She is pictured with MVEC employee and member Megan Ruley, who nominated Weers for the honor.

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Heather Weers of Center Junction has dedicated her professional and personal life to improving the lives of Jones County children and residents alike.

By day, she works for the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children, which aims to improve the child welfare process. And on her own time, she is the president of the Jones County Chapter for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a non-profit dedicated to providing beds for children who would otherwise not have them. While the national organization's mission is "No Kid Sleeps on the Floor in Our Town®," Weers likes to say, "No kid sleeps on the floor in Jones County."

### Addressing a community need

When the Jones County Community Partnership for Protecting Children received a \$1,600 grant to buy beds for children, Weers was shocked to learn how great the need was in her community. While researching ways to help, Weers discovered the national organization Sleep in Heavenly Peace and pursued starting a local chapter. She established the Jones County

chapter in 2019 and has delivered more than 320 beds to local children since then.

Weers is humble and attributes the impact of Sleep in Heavenly Peace Jones County to the local volunteers who help build the beds and donate materials.

"It's not about me; it's about what the community comes together to do to give children a comfortable place to sleep," she says. Weers hopes to inspire others to make their own impact. "I want others to know that you can help people with the simplest gestures – sometimes it's just a thank you note or a letter that can profoundly impact another person's life," says Weers.

### Dedication to community shines

Weers was nominated for Shine the Light by Megan Ruley, a member and employee at Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC).

"When I learned about the Shine the Light contest, the first person who came to mind was Heather," Ruley says. "Her work with Sleep in Heavenly

Peace is heartwarming, and I admire her dedication to improving the lives of our Jones County residents. The work outlined here doesn't even begin to encompass all of Heather's impact in our community as she seems to be behind many initiatives to make Jones County a better place now and into the future."

"Maquoketa Valley is thrilled to recognize Heather's dedication to making Jones County a better place. Heather embodies the co-op principle, 'Concern for Community' by recognizing unmet needs and then rolling up her sleeves to meet those needs," says Jeremy Richert, MVEC CEO.

The \$2,500 award will help the Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapter purchase materials, tools, bedding and mattresses. With the vision of no Jones County child sleeping on the floor, Weers is seeing to that goal one bed at a time. For more information, visit [shpbeds.org/chapter/ia-jones-co](http://shpbeds.org/chapter/ia-jones-co).

*Article contributed by Christie Remley, manager of communications and public relations for Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative.*

# IT'S ALL GOOD ON RIVER TIME

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

I kept thinking to myself, “How far back in here do I have to drive?”

In July, I was invited to share my “Adventures Along the Lincoln Highway” history program with the volunteers of Iowa Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition) – the state’s largest river cleanup event.

Fortunately, I found my contact easily once I reached the campground. “No worries,” my hosts said. “We’re on river time.”

## Decades of cleanup work

It turns out this was the 20th Annual Iowa Project AWARE event, and an impressive 315 volunteers gathered for the big cleanup. They paddled canoes down 58 miles of the Iowa River from July 9-14, removing all kinds of junk along the way. We’re talking serious trash here, including tires, mannequin heads, appliances and farm equipment (some of it 100 years old). The crew hauled 21,360 pounds (10.7 tons) of junk from the Iowa River. An amazing 96% of this (20,520 pounds, including 161 tires) can be recycled.



The origins of Iowa Project AWARE were inspired by Chad Pregracke, “The River Rescuer,” who started a movement to help clean up the Mississippi River. Inspired by his work, three dozen volunteers spent a week during the summer of 2003 camping, canoeing and picking up trash from the Maquoketa River. That first-of-its-kind event became known as Iowa Project AWARE. It quickly became the state’s largest volunteer river cleanup.



Photo Credit: Project AWARE 2023

While it started as an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) event, Iowa Project AWARE now operates through a nonprofit organization known as N-Compass, Inc. Major partners include the Iowa DNR and the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa. Hundreds of participants return each year for this unique event, including multigenerational family groups, youth groups, church groups and scouting groups.

One gentleman I met said his kids grew up participating in Iowa Project AWARE. Now they plan their vacations around this annual, can’t-miss event.

## Diligent volunteers make a difference

Even though they’re on “river time,” these volunteers work hard. They’ve cleaned the Boone River, Maquoketa River, Cedar River, Lower Des Moines River, Wapsipinicon River, Big Sioux River, Iowa River, Little Turkey, Turkey and Volga Rivers, West and East Nishnabotna Rivers, Cedar River, Winnebago River, Shell Rock River, Middle and North Raccoon River, English River and Little Sioux River.

The Iowa Project AWARE team is just as diligent about tracking results as cleaning up Iowa’s rivers. In the past 20 years, 6,223 volunteers from across the country have been part of this effort. They’ve cleaned 1,429 river miles of nearly 1 million pounds (979,480 pounds, to be exact) of trash. A majority (81%) of this trash has been recycled. Wow!

I checked in with my friend Jodi Henke from Norwalk and her daughter Michaela, who started volunteering with Project AWARE in 2021 and helped clean up the Iowa River this summer.

“Hearing a loud ‘whoop!’ from around the river bend means someone found something cool – probably their first tire,” Jodi shares. “Also, some of the nicest people you’ll ever meet are wet, filthy dirty, stinky and so proud of the trash they collect. We totally believe in what we’re doing. Every piece of trash we pull out of the river is one less thing to potentially harm the environment.”

For someone like me who cares about Iowa’s water quality, that’s great news. It also speaks to the goodness of Iowans. There’s nothing quite like Iowa Project AWARE in any other state. These volunteers know it’s all good when you’re on river time.

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





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for members of  
Iowa's electric  
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A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a blue denim shirt, with his right hand raised in a meeting. In the background, another person is visible, also with their hand raised. The setting appears to be a workshop or a community meeting.

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