

heartland LINK

A publication of East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative



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We've been sharing news and tips on Facebook for nine years. Make sure to like us!

2021 pocket calendars

Members, stop by the Urbana office to pick up your free pocket calendar from ECI REC!

take the
member challenge

1. ENERGY WISE: Don't forget about ECI REC's energy-efficiency _____ when it comes to these types of home projects!
2. COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE: A _____ has a duty of due care and diligence.
3. SAFETY: Improperly operating outlets or switches may indicate an unsafe _____ condition.

Find the answers within the stories, features, and content of this newsletter and you could win a prize. Send your answers to memberchallenge@ecirec.coop. Or, print the word(s) at the top of the back page, cut it out, and send it to: ECI REC, PO Box 248, Urbana, IA 52345. You may mail your entry along with your electric bill payment, but remember there is a deadline! Entries for this issue must be received by February 1. Sixteen names will be drawn from all correct entries. Members will not be allowed to win more than once per calendar year.

last issue's
challenge winners

The following names were drawn from the Nov./Dec. 2020 *Heartland Link* entries. These members will receive a \$10 credit on their account.

Richard Zieser	Ron Thompson
Mark Mcavan	Larry Thompson
Judith Thurman	Elmer Spencer
Rebecca Shannon	Mark LaGrange
George Smith	Eli Raue
John Snyder, Jr.	Pam Greenley
Sharon Kokinos	Ron Lickiss
Brent Parks	James Van Etten

Calendar Notes

CLOSED: Friday, January 1 for New Year's Day.

Payment Options

Now taking American Express!



Contact ECI REC

EMAILS

memberservices@ecirec.coop
(rebates, product sales)

csr@ecirec.coop
(billing, new customers)

WEBSITE

www.ecirec.coop

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HOURS


Monday-Friday
Office: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

(closed Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays)

Stay connected! We post operations news and outage updates at facebook.com/eastcentraliowarec.

New 2021 Energy-Efficiency Incentives Are Available for You!

an Energy Efficiency special feature

IS IT TIME to replace your water heater, upgrade old appliances, or change out your heating or cooling system? Maybe you're planning to tackle some remodeling, or build a new home. Don't forget about ECI REC's energy-efficiency rebate programs when it comes to these types of home projects! As a cooperative member-consumer, these incentives are right at your fingertips! 

NEW EQUIPMENT/APPLIANCE INCENTIVES

Air-Source Heat Pump, Including Mini-Splits

- » Cold Climate Heat Pump: \$400/ton
- » Standard Air-Source Heat Pump: \$200/ton
- » Hybrid Air-Source Heat Pump: \$300/ton
- » ENERGY STAR® Bonus: \$250/unit (min. 1.5 ton, SEER 15.0, HSPF 8.5, EER 12.5)

Ground-Source Heat Pump

- » Closed-Loop System: \$400/ton
- » Open-Loop System: \$300/ton (no "pump & dump" systems)
- » Hybrid System with Gas Backup: Additional \$100/ton
- » Unit Replacement: \$150/ton

ENERGY STAR Central Air Conditioning

- » ENERGY STAR-Qualified: \$100/unit (min. SEER 15.0 & EER 12.5)
- » Limit two A/C rebates per account.

Indoor Air Quality

Equipment must serve the entire conditioned space of the home.

- » Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV): \$250/unit
- » Limit two HRVs per account.

Heat Pump Water Heater (HPWH)

- » ENERGY STAR Integrated Unit: \$650/unit

High-Efficiency Electric Water Heater

- » Electric Storage Unit: \$75/unit (40 gal. tank min., EF \geq 0.90)
- » With first-time Heat Plus: \$125/unit
- » Geothermal Assisted Storage Unit: \$150/unit (40 gal. tank min., EF \geq 0.90)

Beneficial Electrification (BE) Incentive

Available when a resistance or HPWH unit is replacing a natural gas or LP unit, or for new accounts.

- » Go-Electric Bonus: \$100

ENERGY STAR-Qualified Appliances

- » ENERGY STAR Clothes Washer: \$40/unit (must have electric water heater)
- » ENERGY STAR Clothes Dryer: \$20/unit

Outdoor Lighting

All LED lighting fixtures must be ENERGY STAR or DesignLight Consortium™ qualified. Outdoor lighting must be on dusk-to-dawn with no manual switches or motion sensors (no outdoor floods).

- » 20-34W: \$10/fixture
- » 35-49W: \$20/fixture
- » 50-74W: \$40/fixture
- » 75-124W: \$50/fixture
- » \geq 125W: \$60/fixture

Electric Vehicle Chargers

The primary charging location of the vehicle must be at the home address of the member served by ECI REC.

- » Level II Charger (240/208-volt input supply) installation: 50% up to \$500

WEATHERIZATION INCENTIVES

LIHEAP and Non-LIHEAP Requirements

- » Must have electric heat and/or central air (homes with natural gas do not qualify).
- » Home must be built prior to 2000.
- » Must be upgrade to existing home (new additions do not qualify).
- » Project cost must be \$150 or more (labor costs for self-installed projects cannot be included).

Non-LIHEAP Members

Electric Heat

With or without air conditioning.

- » Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- » Wall Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- » Foundation Insulation: 60% up to \$600
- » Infiltration Control: 60% up to \$200
- » Duct Insulation/Sealing: 60% up to \$200
- » Maximum Incentive per Account: \$2,200

Central AC Only

Non-electric heating.

- » Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 15% up to \$150
- » Wall Insulation: 15% up to \$150
- » Maximum Incentive per Account: \$300

LIHEAP-Qualified Members

Electric Heat

With or without air conditioning.

- » Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- » Wall Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- » Foundation Insulation: 80% up to \$800
- » Infiltration Control: 80% up to \$200
- » Duct Insulation/Sealing: 80% up to \$200
- » Maximum Incentive per Account: \$2,800

Central AC Only

Non-electric heating.

- » Attic/Ceiling Insulation: 20% up to \$150
- » Wall Insulation: 20% up to \$150
- » Maximum Incentive per Account: \$300

MORE REBATES & INCENTIVES

Building a Home?

Learn more about additional incentives for new home construction at www.ecirec.coop.

Installed Geothermal?

Taxpayers who have completed geothermal heat pump installations by December 31, 2021, are eligible for the Geothermal Heat Pump Tax Credit. For 2021 installations, the credit is equal to 22% of the federal residential energy-efficient property tax credit allowed for geothermal heat pumps provided in section 25D(a) (5) of the Internal Revenue Code. If you completed installation in 2020, you may qualify for a 26% federal tax credit.


Nomination Committee Meeting Is Approaching

a Cooperative Difference announcement

AT A RECENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, each Director of ECI REC selected a member-consumer from their individual district to serve on ECI REC's Nominating Committee. The committee's purpose is to nominate one to two East-Central Iowa REC members to be placed on the ballot as candidates for the Director positions up for election. The vote will take place at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Members.

There are three positions up for election. You can find more information on these individual Board Districts below.

If you are interested in being a candidate for one of the positions, would like to make a recommendation, or have a petition nominating a member, please contact the Nominating Committee member representing the District that you or the nominee could represent. Nominations may also be submitted to the Urbana office.

Nominations by petition must have 35 names. Candidates must live in the District they could potentially represent. All nominations must be registered at the Urbana Administrative Headquarters before 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 18, 2021. On that date, all candidates will be reviewed and nominations confirmed at a meeting of the Nominating Committee. 

BOARD DISTRICT #6

*Currently represented by
Don Shonka, Independence*
Serving: Homer, Sumner,
and Washington
Townships in Buchanan
County.

Nominating Contact:
Charles Mazur
2142 262nd St.
Independence, IA 50644
Phone: 319-938-2831

BOARD DISTRICT #8

*Currently represented by
Nick Donlea, La Porte City*
Serving: Barclay, Big Creek,
Fox, Lester, Poyner, and
Spring Creek Townships
in Black Hawk County;
Fairbank, Jefferson, Perry,
and Westburg Townships
in Buchanan County.

Nominating Contact:
Randy Merkel
1339 190th St.
Independence, IA 50644
Phone: 319-240-7221

BOARD DISTRICT #10

*Currently represented by Ryan
Kress, Winthrop*
Serving: Byron, Cono, Fremont,
Liberty, Middlefield, and
Newton Townships in Buchanan
County; Adams and Prairie
Townships in Delaware County;
Grant Township in Linn County.

Nominating Contact:
Carl Dodge
2418 Buchanan Delaware Ave.
Masonville, IA 50654
Email: carldodge@gmail.com
Phone: 563-920-3878
(call or text)

SAVE THE DATE!

ECI REC's Annual Meeting of the Members

Thursday, June 17, 2021

- Registration begins at 10:30 a.m.
- Business meeting begins at 11:00 a.m.
- Location/meeting platform to be determined

POWERING POSSIBILITIES

Lester (43) Black Hawk County		Fairbank (44) Buchanan County				
Barclay (53) Black Hawk County		Perry (54) Buchanan County		Washington (55) Buchanan County	Byron (56) Buchanan County	Fremont (57) Buchanan County
					Coffins Grove (58) Delaware County	
Poyner (62) Black Hawk County	Fox (63) Black Hawk County	Westburg (64) Buchanan County	Sumner (65) Buchanan County	Liberty (66) Buchanan County	Middlefield (67) Buchanan County	Prairie (68) Delaware County
Big Creek (72) Black Hawk County		Spring Creek (73) Black Hawk County	Jefferson (74) Buchanan County	Homer (75) Buchanan County	Cono (76) Buchanan County	Newton (77) Buchanan County
					Adams (78) Delaware County	
					Grant (138) Linn County	



Make a Difference in ECI REC: Consider Running for the Board of Directors

a Cooperative Difference message from Board President Steve Rau

ARE YOU INTERESTED in serving on the ECI REC Board of Directors? Our Directors have the ability and knowledge to set policies and approve programs that form the basis for operating your Cooperative.

What are the responsibilities of a Director?

Directors are expected to perform three basic duties on behalf of their organization and its owners: care, loyalty, and obedience.

In the broadest terms, it is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to decide how to protect and use the resources of the Cooperative to provide the most benefits for the members. Through the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation, the membership has delegated certain authority to the Board. The Board uses this authority to accomplish certain basic jobs. For example, it communicates with the membership to determine what members most want and need from ECI REC. The Board then uses this information to establish a direction for ECI REC that will result in specific outcomes. Then the Board reports back to the membership on how well these outcomes are being achieved. Finally, the Board governs the Cooperative through a series of written policies that guide the activities of the Board and the CEO.

Per the NRECA, a Director must have time to attend monthly Board meetings, other special meetings, and educational seminars. These sessions are necessary to keep Directors informed of the business of the Cooperative and the electric utility industry. New Directors are strongly encouraged to obtain their Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate within their first term of service. At ECI REC, regular Board meeting are held on the last Wednesday of the month. Meetings normally begin at 8:00 a.m. and adjourn by noon. However, Directors should be prepared to meet into the afternoon.

ECI REC Directors are expected to attend the Annual Meeting of the Members, which is held on the third Thursday of June. They are also expected to attend the reorganizational meeting held directly after the Annual Meeting. At this meeting, the Directors elect officers and designate voting delegates and alternates to affiliated organizations.

ECI REC Directors are also encouraged to attend meetings of affiliated organizations on a state, national, and regional level. The statewide organization sponsors a grassroots advocacy program, and Directors are encouraged to participate in these related events.

Finally, ECI REC Directors are encouraged to seek training so they can fulfill their responsibilities to the membership to the best of their ability. The national organization sponsors training courses that equip Directors so they can carry out their responsibilities and obtain credentials and leadership certificates.

What are the duties of a Director?

- » A Director has the duty of being loyal to the Cooperative.
- » A Director must always avoid any conflicts of interest.
- » A Director must treat confidential information accordingly.
- » A Director must not do anything that harms the Cooperative, including publicly criticizing the actions of the Board.
- » A Director has the duty of obedience, meaning he or she needs to be aware of and obey the obligations and requirements in the law that govern the activities of the Cooperative.
- » A Director has a duty of due care and diligence.
- » According to the Model Business Corporation Act, a Director shall perform his or her duties as a Director, including his or her duties as a member of any committee of the Board upon which he or she may serve, in good faith, in a manner he or she reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the corporation, and with such care as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.

Who is eligible to be a Director?

Article VII, Section 3 of the Articles of Incorporation of the Cooperative list the below eligibility requirements for an individual to be nominated, elected, or appointed to the ECI REC Board of Directors. These same requirements must be met to remain a Director.

- » To be a member of the Cooperative.
- » To have one's primary residence in the sub-district he or she is to represent.
- » To receive electric service from the Cooperative at that primary residence.

ECI REC: Committed to Energy Efficiency

an Energy Wise feature

TO KEEP YOUR COSTS DOWN, we have several programs to help you use electricity more efficiently. In fact, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives has recognized us for our excellence in offering and promoting energy-saving ideas and products to our member-consumers. We'll do everything we can to help you find ways to decrease your electric bill by becoming more energy savvy!

- » We offer incentives for residential, agricultural, and commercial members through our energy-efficiency programs.
- » We offer energy audits.
- » A full line of literature provides more detail about how to save energy.
- » Use our website as a resource for energy tips and resources.
- » Locate links to current federal income tax credits for residential energy efficiency via energystar.gov.

ECI REC SUPPORTS ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Iowa's locally owned electric cooperatives have a long history of supporting energy efficiency; in fact, we've been offering cost-effective energy-efficiency programs since the late 1980s. These programs include rebates and incentives


for various energy-efficient products, such as ENERGY STAR® appliances, water heaters, LED lighting, and heating and cooling systems. ECI REC also offers programs designed to reduce electric demand, such as our residential, agricultural, and commercial rebates and incentives. Additionally, your electric cooperative continues to upgrade facilities to maximize efficiency, including more efficient transformers and upgrades to substations. Generating, transmitting, and distributing electricity more efficiently helps ECI REC manage costs more effectively, ultimately resulting in lower utility bills for our members.

Iowa's electric cooperatives work in cooperation with other cooperatives to more effectively deliver energy-efficiency programs to members. By partnering with other cooperatives, energy-efficiency programs can be developed and delivered more effectively and at a lower cost than ECI REC could do alone.

Working together with other community-focused cooperatives, ECI REC assesses the costs and benefits of each program to determine what to offer our members. Standardly, we perform

four benefit-cost tests to determine the cost-effectiveness of the program. First, the participant cost test determines whether the program is cost-effective from the perspective of the participant in the program. Second, the utility cost test determines whether the program is cost-effective from the perspective of ECI REC. Third, the ratepayer impact cost test, also referred to as the RIM test, determines whether the program is cost-effective from the perspective of Cooperative members who do not participate in the program. Finally, the societal test determines whether the program is cost-effective from the perspective of society in general.

Ultimately, ECI REC invests in energy-efficiency programs to benefit the communities we serve. In 2019, your electric cooperative invested \$0.0010 per kWh, or 1.06% of its total revenue, in energy-efficiency programs.

If you have questions or concerns or would like to learn more about energy efficiency, please contact us at 877-850-4343 and ask to speak with a member service representative. 

Is Your Account Phone Number(s) Current?

Did you know our consumer software links your account information with your primary and secondary phone numbers? If you call to report an outage or a concern, our personnel can help you more quickly if your number(s) in these two fields are current. In today's mobile world, you may want to consider updating your primary and secondary phone numbers, especially if you have:

- ✓ Disconnected your landline, or you do not use it as a primary point of contact
- ✓ Changed your cell phone number or provider



To access the form online, scan the code or choose Member Information Update Request from the Account Services menu at ecirec.coop.

You're Not Alone in the Dark

When a power outage happens, ECI REC springs into action. Here's the process we follow to ensure power is restored quickly and safely. It all starts with identifying what distribution equipment in what location has been damaged or is experiencing an interruption.



Scan to watch a video from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association explaining the steps co-ops go through to restore power.



Occasionally during a major storm, transmission towers are damaged. Repairing these is the responsibility of our power supplier and is top priority.



High-voltage transmission stations power ECI REC's 25 distribution substations. If the issue is isolated and can be resolved here, thousands of members get their power restored at once.



Next, crews inspect distribution lines between substations and the meters they serve. If the distribution lines can be repaired, power can be restored to the meters on those lines.



If your lights are out but your neighbors' are blazing, call ECI REC at 877-850-4343 right away so we can send a line crew to your home.



Even in Winter, the Sun Still Shines on Solar

an Energy Wise feature

Photo credit: CTPCO

When reflective Iowa snow collects under the bifacial panels at Wapello Solar (above), the transparent glass on the back will generate energy.

THINKING ABOUT SOLAR ENERGY likely brings to mind pictures of long, warm summer days when the sun is hot. But solar energy generates in the colder months, too. For example, at Wapello Solar in southeastern Iowa, the colder temperatures are actually good for solar generation.

How? Because roughly one-third of the year is spent with limited daylight hours, like winter, the solar panels at Wapello Solar are bifacial. They have a back layer of transparent glass to give them the ability to utilize the sunlight reflected onto the rear side of the panel, as well as the traditional front panels. Bifacial panels result in roughly 7% additional annual energy generation, and they make the panels sturdier.

East-Central Iowa REC's power supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative, will purchase 100% of the power from Wapello Solar, currently the largest solar project in Iowa.

Anticipated to begin generating low-cost energy during the early, coldest months of 2021, Wapello Solar will actually use frigid temps and gathering snow to its advantage. Solar panels are more efficient at converting sunlight into electricity when they can remain cool. These panels are designed to operate in temperatures as low as -40° Fahrenheit and withstand wind speeds up to 105 miles per hour, according to Clēnera, the company developing Wapello Solar.

While the front face of the panels will get warm enough to melt away most of the snow or ice, the snow that collects on the ground can also contribute to the energy generation output at Wapello Solar. Snow substantially increases the ground reflectivity, meaning an even higher percentage of sunlight will be reflected onto the backside of the solar panels. In this way, the bifacial panel allows for some electricity generation from the solar array, even when the panels may be completely covered in snow.

As for maintenance throughout the winter, crews will monitor snow accumulation around the panels to make sure they aren't being impacted and clear any excess snow. ☁

2021-2025 Work Plan Finalized

At October's Board meeting, the 2021-2025 Work Plan was presented and approved by the Board of Directors. Your Cooperative's Operations team worked with its contracted engineering firm to finalize it; the estimated cost of the Work Plan is \$22,459,437. Our investment will be divided approximately equally—nearly \$4.5 million per year—over each year of the Work Plan.

The Work Plan focuses on system improvements over a five-year period. What are we tackling? Here's a few highlights:

- » 180 overhead and underground replacement projects totaling 290 miles; estimated to cost \$14 million
- » Approximately \$2.5 million in miscellaneous pole and conductor replacements
- » \$150,000 in security light installations and replacements

Wrapping Up the 2017-2020 Work Plan Projects

- » By the time this newsletter is released, Highline Construction will have finished replacing 29.4 miles of overhead distribution line, as scheduled in the Work Plan.
- » CRC Trenching has already completed the underground portion of the Work Plan.

Other 2020 Maintenance Projects

- » Osmose Utility Services, Inc., completed 2020 pole inspections of over 3,500 poles near the Van Horne and Spring Creek substations. ECI REC crews will work on replacing 81 rejected poles this winter.
- » Maurer Tree Service has completed tree trimming on the Lindahl and the Quasqueton substations for 2020. Midwest Spray has completed vegetation control for the Karr and Fairbank substations.

Ongoing Repairs and Upgrades

- » ECI REC's crews continue to rebuild services since the August derecho.
- » New underground service was installed for a new residential and commercial subdivision in Urbana.
- » New cutovers were made following completion of Work Plan projects.
- » Old copper lines were rebuilt with new poles and aluminum-conductor steel-reinforced (ACSR) wire.
- » A new SCADA control switch was installed at the Maryville substation, which will allow us to get members powered up more quickly after an outage.

Van Horne Substation

- » MJ Electric finished construction of the new Van Horne substation the first week of December. This substation is located along the Highway 30 four-lane project. ☁

2021 Energy-Efficiency Calendar

There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your energy bills—and it helps the environment. Change your energy habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar on you refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient!

JANUARY

Turn off ceiling fans when you leave the room.



FEBRUARY

Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.

MARCH

Turn off lights when you leave a room.



APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

MAY

Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.

JUNE

Take short showers instead of baths.



JULY

Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

AUGUST

Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the A/C filter every 60-90 days.

SEPTEMBER

Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.



OCTOBER

Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.

NOVEMBER

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.



DECEMBER

Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.

YOU CAN PAY
ONLINE
OR BY
PHONE



Welcome to East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative's online account portal.

Welcome to Pay Now!

Welcome to the Pay Now Site

Account Number

Last Name Or Business Name

Submit

Reset

* Easy Bill Pay with no registration required!

* Use your account number and last name/business name to access your account for payment.

Version: 11/17/17



888.223.2048

Get Smart ... at Home!

A Keeping the Lights On spotlight

ACROSS THE COUNTRY—and around the world—people are doing their part to flatten the COVID-19 curve by doing more from home. From work to school, we're all learning to adapt and use technology to get through our day-to-day.

SmartHub is one online tool ECI REC members can use to stay on top of their account. After registering, you can log in online or download the SmartHub app on your smartphone.

When you're registered with SmartHub, you can:


- » Pay bills online for free.
- » Inquire about budget billing.
- » Access bill inserts.
- » Check the ECI REC Outage Map for updates during an outage.
- » Find tools to analyze past and current energy usage.
- » Set markers to monitor changes in your usage.
- » Get energy-saving tips.
- » Perform a free self-energy audit in the EnergyResourceCenter.

New Member Service Representative Joins ECI REC Team

a Keeping the Lights On announcement

WE'RE EXCITED TO WELCOME a new member service representative to ECI REC! Tanya Ellis has been a member of the Cooperative for over a decade. In her new role, she will assist members with payments, resolve billing questions, and address usage concerns.

Tanya grew up in Urbana and currently lives there with her husband, Zach, and their two children, Levi and Kylie. She enjoys being outdoors with her family, boating on the river, having bonfires, and playing with their Labrador Retrievers.

"ECI REC is focused on the community and gives back. That shows the quality of an organization," said Tanya. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve the community I grew up in!" 



Home Electrical Safety Checklist, Part 1

Protect your family from fire and other electrical hazards by using this short checklist. These simple and easy steps will help you identify and correct electrical dangers commonly found in the home. Watch for Part 2 of this checklist, coming soon! Checklist courtesy of the Electrical Safety Foundation (ESFI), www.esfi.org.

THE BASICS

Check the wattage of all bulbs in your lights.

- ☐ Are the bulbs the appropriate wattage for the size of the fixtures? A bulb with too-high wattage may lead to overheating and fire.

Check all lamp cords and extension cords.

- ☐ Are cords placed out of walking areas and free of the furniture resting on them? Cords can become tripping hazards. Stepping on cords or placing furniture on them can cause damage and create a fire hazard.
- ☐ Are cords in good condition (not damaged or cracked)? Shock or fire hazards can result from damaged cords. Do not attempt to repair cords yourself. Take any item with a damaged power cord to an authorized repair center, or safely dispose of the item and purchase a new one.
- ☐ Are cords unwrapped? Tightly wrapped cords can lead to overheating.
- ☐ Are all extension cords being used only on a temporary basis? Extension cords are not as safe as permanent house wiring. Have receptacles installed where they are needed.

Check all wall outlets and switches.

- ☐ Are all outlets and switches working properly? Improperly operating outlets or switches may indicate an unsafe wiring condition.
- ☐ Are all outlets and switches cool to the touch? Unusually warm outlets or switches may indicate an unsafe wiring condition.
- ☐ Do you hear crackling, sizzling, or buzzing from your outlets? Call a licensed electrician to identify the cause.
- ☐ Are all outlet and switch cover plates in good condition? Replace any missing, cracked, or broken cover plates.

THE BEDROOM

- ☐ **Check for tamper-resistant outlets.**

Check portable heaters.

- ☐ Is the heater placed away from things that can catch fire, such as drapes and newspapers? Relocate heaters away from passageways and keep all flammable materials (such as curtains, rugs, furniture, or newspaper) at least three feet away.
- ☐ Is the equipment stable and placed where it will not be tipped over? Fire hazards can result if a heater is tipped over. Animals and even blowing drapes can be factors.

Check for the presence and proper placement of smoke alarms.

- ☐ Test each alarm.
- ☐ Smoke alarms should be located on every level of the home, inside each bedroom, and outside each sleeping area.

PILLOW TALK SAFETY

Taking your cell phone to bed with you can do a lot more harm than interfere with your sleep.

For more information, visit:



Don't Forget to Set Up Your Online Co-Op Connections® Account!

a Community Connected reminder

THE CO-OP CONNECTIONS

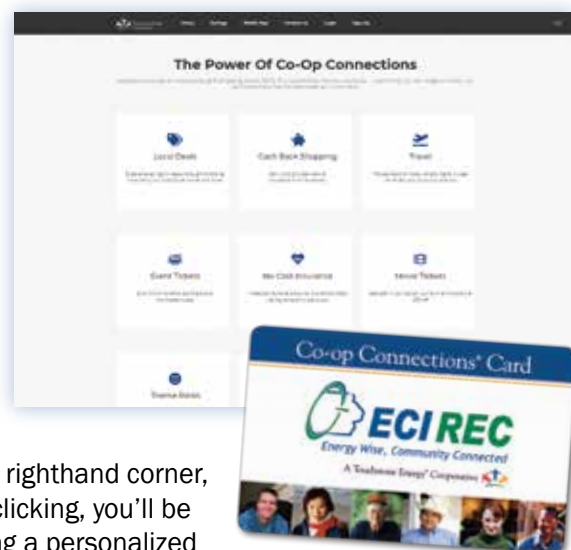
WEBSITE is robust, easy-to-use, and member-focused. When you set up an online account, you have easy access to:

- » Healthy savings, co-op deals, and national discounts
- » Online shopping platforms with cash back
- » Resources for booking hotels, concerts, and sporting events

To register, visit

www.connections.coop. In the top righthand corner, you'll find a sign-up button. After clicking, you'll be taken through the steps of creating a personalized dashboard featuring your profile information, your history of savings and cash back, and your saved offers.

If you have questions about setting up your Co-Op Connections account, please call 877-850-4343 or email ecirec@ecirec.coop.



Bank Bucks for College! Apply for an ECI REC Scholarship TODAY

ECI REC offers \$1,000 scholarships to 10 students each year to continue their education in any field. If you're interested in a career as a lineworker, the Cooperative offers two additional \$1,000 scholarships to those who are accepted to the Powerline Technology Program at Northwest Iowa Community College. **APPLY BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3.**

Update: 2021 Youth Tour

Due to the ongoing uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Iowa's electric cooperatives have made the decision to not participate in the 2021 Youth Tour. The current plan is to return to offering the trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2022.

Thank You!

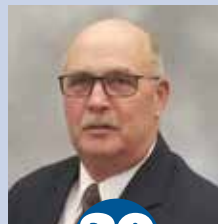
ECI REC's Years of Service Honorees

Allen Albers
Director,
35 years



35

Jeff Elliott
Board Vice President,
30 years



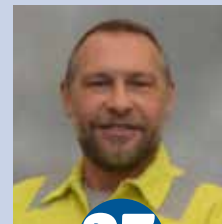
30

Pat Hyland
Engineering Design
Technician, 30 years



30

Dave Henkes
Engineering Design
Technician, 25 years



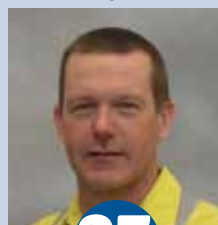
25

Jennifer Schmitz
Manager of Finance,
25 years



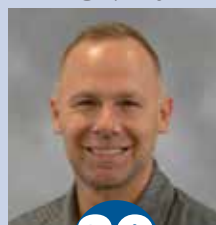
25

Kevin Walton
Line Foreman,
25 years



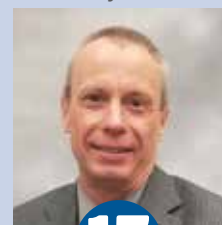
25

Adam Albertsen
Member Service
Manager, 20 years



20

Steve Rau
Board President,
15 years



15

Message From the CEO continued from page 12

details and criteria of these programs are based on guidance and feedback from our members. Here are a few examples:

- » We participate in the annual Youth Tour, sponsoring two local high school juniors to travel to the nation's capital, meet with lawmakers, and learn firsthand how our democracy works.
- » We have a scholarship program, offering twelve \$1,000 scholarships.
- » Our RECare program distributes funds via community action agencies to low-income energy consumers in Benton and Buchanan Counties.
- » We work closely with our local schools to provide safety demonstrations and participate in career fairs.
- » We support local businesses. Many participate in the Co-op Connections® program. Qualifying businesses who are expanding or upgrading equipment may also apply for a loan through our Revolving Loan Fund.

More information about these programs is located at ecirec.coop, under Account Services and Community & News.

We recognize the vital role ECI REC plays in energizing our local economy. But to innovate and more effectively serve our communities, we rely on you—our members—to provide guidance. Without your perspective, we cannot operate successfully and help our community thrive. This is why we value your participation in our Annual Meeting, held every June, and other ECI REC events. (The next Annual Meeting will take place June 17, 2021.) I hope you will attend and consider running for the Board of Directors. If you are interested in learning more about the duties of a Director, visit ecirec.coop, go to the menu titled The Cooperative, and look at the links under Cooperative Difference.

East-Central Iowa REC was established to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. We are a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. Together, let's continue making our corner of the world a better place. 🌱

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Voluntary and Open Membership
Democratic Member Control
Members' Economic Participation
Autonomy and Independence
Education, Training, and Information
Cooperation Among Cooperatives
Concern for Community

Consider Running for the Board of Directors

continued from page 5

- » Must not be in any way employed by or have extensive financial interests in a competing enterprise, be employed by or have extensive financial interests in a business selling electric energy or electrical supplies to the Cooperative, or be employed by or have extensive financial interests in a business engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures, or supplies to members of the Cooperative.
- » Must not be a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, corresponding in-law or "step" relation, cohabitant, or any other family member who resides within the household of an employee of the Cooperative. 🌱



YOUR BOARD

Board District 1 - Jeff Elliott
(2020/2021 Vice President)
Board District 2 - Julie Kester
Board District 3 - Allen Albers
Board District 4 - Gary McKenna
(2020/2021 Asst. Secretary/Treasurer)
Board District 6 - Don Shonka
Board District 8 - Nick Donlea
Board District 9 - Steve Rau
(2020/2021 President)
Board District 10 - Ryan Kress
(2020/2021 Secretary/Treasurer)

CLASSIFIEDS: Free to members only

FOR SALE: Men's 8½ EE black Nocona Western dress boot, bought for a wedding, worn very little, new \$350, asking \$175, Urbana. Ph: 319-540-6832

FOR SALE: 100 small bales (approx. 50 lbs.) of grass hay, \$5 per bale, Independence. Call/text 319-404-3976.

FOR SALE: Black nylon Western flex-tree saddle, \$30, Independence. Call/text 319-404-3976.

Please email your ad to classifieds@ecirec.coop. Ads for the March/April 2021 Heartland Link must be received by Feb. 1, 2021.

East-Central Iowa REC will publish non-commercial advertisements as a service to our members. All ads are free. They may be submitted by any member or employee of East-Central Iowa REC. Ads should contain a phone number, name (if desired), a brief description of items with price if applicable. Each ad is limited to maximum of 50 words; please type or print clearly. Editor reserves the right to edit or reject any ad. No ads will be taken over the telephone—please email, mail, or bring your ad to the office.

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Editor: Lisa Franck

East-Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

CLIP AND MAIL

See page 2 for the Member Challenge questions.

Answers: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Please note: NO ANSWERS will be taken over the phone.

Find tools for members at www.ecirec.coop



24-Hour Bill Pay With Smarthub
See account information at ecirec.smarthub.coop or download the app.



Outage Center & Map
View current outages via Smarthub or at outages.ecirec.coop:81.



Online Forms
Access rebate, service request, and program sign-up forms.



Call Before You Dig
Notify utilities before you dig at www.iowaonecall.com or call 811.



Co-op Connections®
Get discounts on everyday expenses. Visit www.connections.coop or download the mobile app.



Heartland Link E-Newsletter
Email ecirec@ecirec.coop and ask to receive our newsletter via email.



FREE Monthly Energy Tips
Sign up at www.myenergytips.com to get the Watts \$mart e-newsletter.



Iowa Rural Power
Join grassroots advocates for Iowa's electric cooperatives. Visit www.iaruralpower.org.



Message From the CEO: The Value of Member Engagement

MOST CONSUMERS wouldn't equate helping their community with active involvement with their electric company. But ECI REC is not an ordinary utility company. We are a cooperative, and part of our business model is concern for the community. We are motivated by service to people, rather than profits for investors five states away. And ECI REC's customers are more than consumers—they are members of the Cooperative. Therein lies the difference.

Our core mission is providing our members with safe, reliable, and affordable power in an environmentally responsible manner. After meeting our annual expenses, we invest the extra money back into ECI REC, and when possible into the wider community. We depend on the guidance and perspective of our members and Board of Directors to set priorities for ECI REC and guide our governance decisions. At our Annual Meeting, we raise issues for voting by the general membership. Our Board of Directors is comprised of members who live and work in our service area, because they are in a position to know where community investments are most needed.

We view ECI REC's role in the community as a catalyst for good. We have numerous ongoing programs that impact the 11 counties we serve. The

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