

# ACEC NEWS

APRIL 2026 | VOLUME 29 | ISSUE 04

## Out and about in our communities



YOUTH  
TOUR RESULTS

DAY  
ON THE HILL

THANK YOU  
LINEWORKERS



## A MESSAGE FROM *Your General Manager*

**Holley McCormick**  
EVP/General Manager

### STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY THANKS TO NRECA

The phrase “it takes a village” is entirely correct when it comes to operation at a rural electric cooperative. We wouldn’t be able to offer the services we do or provide support to our members without the relationships we’ve built with other cooperatives and several other organizations.

In previous monthly columns, I’ve discussed our working relationship with Dairyland Power Cooperative, the Cooperative Response Center and most recently, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of the energy sector, it is crucial to recognize these and other partnerships and alliances that empower us to serve our community effectively. This month, I’d like to share more on our relationship with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). This partnership is not just about collaboration; it is about strengthening our ability to deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy to the members we serve.

#### Understanding NRECA: A Pillar of Support for Cooperatives

NRECA is a national service organization that represents the interests of over 900 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives, public power districts, and public utility districts across the United States. These cooperatives collectively provide electricity to over 42 million people in 48 states. NRECA’s mission is to promote, support, and protect the interests of its member cooperatives and the communities they serve.

Founded in 1942, NRECA has been instrumental in advocating for rural electric

cooperatives at the national level, ensuring that our voices are heard in legislative and regulatory processes. This advocacy is crucial, as it helps secure funding, influence policy decisions, and promote initiatives that benefit rural communities.

#### What NRECA Does for Cooperatives

NRECA offers a wide range of services and programs designed to support the operational and strategic needs of electric cooperatives. These include:

- 1. Advocacy and Representation:** NRECA represents the interests of electric cooperatives in Washington, D.C., advocating for policies that support rural electrification and address the unique challenges faced by rural communities.
- 2. Education and Training:** Through workshops, conferences, and online resources, NRECA provides education and training opportunities for cooperative employees, managers, and board members. These programs help us stay informed about industry trends, regulatory changes, and best practices, as well as provide an opportunity to grow in our position.
- 3. Research and Innovation** NRECA invests in research and development to explore new technologies and innovative solutions that enhance the efficiency, reliability, and sustainability of electric service.
- 4. Insurance and Financial Services:** NRECA offers a range of insurance and financial services tailored to the needs of cooperatives, including retirement plans, health insurance, and risk management solutions.
- 5. Community Developments:** Through initiatives like the Cooperative Development Program, NRECA supports projects that promote economic development, education, and quality of life improvements in rural communities.

#### The Importance of ACEC’s Membership in NRECA

For Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, being a part of NRECA is not just an affiliation; it is a strategic partnership that enhances our ability to fulfill our mission.

Here’s why our membership is vital:

- Advocacy and Influence:** By joining forces with other cooperatives nationwide through NRECA, we are able to amplify our voice in policy discussions. This collective influence helps shape legislation and regulations that impact our operations and the communities we serve.
- Access to Resources:** NRECA provides co-ops like ACEC with access to a wealth of resources, including cutting-edge research, industry insights, and technical expertise. These resources enable us to adopt best practices and implement innovative solutions that improve service delivery. It also helps us prepare for the future and make better long-term plans.
- Professional Development:** The training and educational opportunities offered by NRECA help our team stay at the forefront of industry developments. This continuous learning ensures that our staff is equipped to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.
- Community and Economic Development:** Through NRECA’s initiatives, ACEC can participate in programs that drive community development and economic growth. These efforts align with our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for our members.
- Resilience and Sustainability:** NRECA’s focus on research and innovation supports ACEC’s efforts to build a resilient and sustainable energy future. By exploring new technologies and practices, we can reduce our environmental footprint and ensure long-term viability.

The partnership between ACEC and NRECA is a cornerstone of our success. It empowers us to navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and deliver on our promise to provide reliable and affordable energy to our members. As we look to the future, we remain committed to leveraging this partnership to enhance our service and contribute to the well-being of the members we are proud to serve. ■



It was another successful Day on the Hill event Tuesday, March 17, as representatives from Iowa's Cooperatives filled the State Capitol. Pictured at the ACEC display are, from left – ACEC Director Jerry Keleher, ACEC's Brenda Hackman, Representative Michael Bergan, Representative Jason Gearhart, ACEC's Ryan Wagner, Representative Chad Ingels. ■



Brenda Hackman and Ryan Wagner got to meet with Senator Majority Leader Michael Klimesh of Spillville during the event. ■

## IOWA'S RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ADVOCATE DURING 2026 "REC DAY ON THE HILL"

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives gathered at the Iowa State Capitol on March 17, for their annual "REC Day on the Hill" advocacy event. Nearly 200 advocates were encouraged to wear green attire, coinciding with St. Patrick's Day and to support the event organized by the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC).

Leslie Kaufman, executive vice president and general manager of IAEC, emphasized the importance of the event as an opportunity for co-op members to engage directly with state legislators on issues affecting their communities. Representatives from Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, including Ryan Wagner, Brenda Hackman, and Jerry Keleher, participated in the advocacy efforts. Hackman expressed gratitude for the engagement from local legislators, including Senate Majority Leader Mike Klimesh, Senator Dan Zumbach, and several state representatives – Chad Ingels, Mike Bergan and Jason Gearhart.

"This is a valuable opportunity for rural electric co-ops (RECs) to talk directly with our legislators about issues that impact our members and our communities." Brenda Hackman, ACEC manager of economic development and community relations.

A key focus of the day was advocating for utility worker protections as outlined in SF 2400, which proposed stronger penalties for those who harass, threaten, or assault utility workers. Despite support in the Senate, the bill did not pass in the House Judiciary Committee, as members felt existing laws already addressed such issues. IAEC expressed disappointment but committed to pursuing the bill further.

Co-op representatives also discussed concerns regarding third-party solar provisions in HF 2672. While supportive of local solar development, co-ops raised issues about the lack of consumer protection and regulatory oversight for third-party programs. This bill also failed to advance but remains on IAEC's radar.

Throughout the event, advocates highlighted the benefits of the cooperative business model, including local ownership and member governance. Several cooperatives showcased booths with information on economic development, technology investments, and electric safety.

For more on the legislative priorities of Iowa's electric cooperatives, visit [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org). ■

### BOARD BRIEFS March 30 Meeting

- Approved audit report
- Approved three-year audit bid
- Informational Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) presentation
- Approved CFC loan repricing
- Approved retention of 2026 LACBWR proceeds
- Approved reliability/inspection plan
- Approved RLF to EWALU
- Chose candidates to serve on Nominating Committee

# ACEC BRIGHT SPOTS

Spring is a busy time at ACEC for many reasons. Our line crews are preparing for summer construction season. We're in the midst of planning our Member Appreciation Picnic and Annual Meeting. And we're out and about in the community after a long winter. Read below about some of the ways we've been involved in the community so far in 2026. ■

## Linemen bow shoot raises \$7,001

Cooperation Among Cooperatives and Concern for Community were two cooperative principles on display during the 13th Annual Linemen Bow Shoot. Held annually in February, this event brings together co-op employees from Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative and neighboring MiEnergy Cooperative to support the communities we jointly serve. This year, the group raised \$7,001.

The linemen decided to donate the proceeds to a trade program this year. After research, they chose the Waukon SkillsUSA Program at Waukon High School. SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry professionals. Every year, the program builds a house in Waukon, doing everything from design to construction to electrical work.

With the donation, the school plans to purchase a plasma cutter, a tool that can cut through electrically conductive metals, such as steel. **1068**



ACEC and MiEnergy linemen raised \$7,001 at their annual bow shoot this year. They donated the money to the Waukon SkillsUSA program.

## Powering you back on

March came in like a lion, with a week of ice, winds and snow. It started late on Thursday, March 12. Our first crews were called out about midnight to start restoring power after the strong winds picked up. By 4 a.m., ACEC's lead equipment technician Steve Gehling was called in to help with dispatching our entire fleet of linemen. Before the sun rose, all linemen were out working to restore power.

It wasn't just the downed lines the crews were dealing with. The winds brought down trees on the lines and over roads. It also took time to safely get the tree limbs off the lines and untangle the wires while battling the still blowing winds.

"It was an all-hands-on-deck effort by everyone, from the front office staff answering the phones to our line crews to our operations team managing the outage map, to make sure we got every member back on as quickly and safely as possible," said Jason Troendle, ACEC Director of Operations & Engineering. "You hope you never have a storm like that roll through, but our guys battled the elements and the damage well."



Downed tree limbs were the cause of several power outages during the storms March 12-13; At left - ACEC's Lead Equipment Technician Steve Gehling helped dispatch crews to the outages.

## ACEC at Career Fairs

Spring is also when we're out and about at various career fairs, supporting students from elementary age to those ready to graduate and entering the workforce.

Recently, we attended career fairs in Waukon and in Fayette, and we still have more planned for this spring, along with safety demonstrations throughout the summer.

"Every year we attend career fairs and safety events throughout our service territory. It's one of the things that's very important to us," said ACEC's Ryan Wagner. "We enjoy engaging with youth and teaching them how to safely interact with electricity and also hopefully inspire them to pursue a career found at a cooperative."

To learn more about how we interact with youth, visit <https://acrec.com/youth-opportunities-acec>.



ACEC's Ryan Wagner showed local eight graders some of the equipment our line crew uses to stay safe on the job.

## Gelner, Kelly to represent ACEC

ACEC is pleased to again sponsor two local students on the annual National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Youth Tour trip to Washington D.C. Congratulations are in order to **Ben Gelner** and **Bryce Kelly**, who will represent ACEC this year as a part of the Iowa delegation. Ben is a sophomore at Starmont High School and is the son of Chris and Meg Gelner. Bryce is a junior at Western Dubuque High School and is the son of Andy and Corey Kelly.

Nearly 40 representatives from Iowa cooperatives and over 1,800 students national wide will go on the annual Youth Tour, which brings youth to Washington D.C. to see the sights of the nation's capital and learn more about the government and the work cooperatives do. This year's trip runs June 14-20. During the whirlwind trip, students will run their own their own snack cooperative to learn about the co-op business model, visit the Franklin D. Roosevelt Monument and others on the National Mall and Memorial Parks, spend a day at the Capitol and more.

In order to qualify, students must be sophomores or juniors and their parents/legal guardians must be ACEC members. After filling out an application, students receive a packet of information about cooperatives and ACEC. The top five students are invited to an interview night, where they are judged on topics like cooperative knowledge and communication skills. **5701-XX**

To learn more about Youth Tour and other programs ACEC offers for youth, visit <https://acrec.com/youth-opportunities-acec> or contact Jennifer Achenbach at [jachenbach@acrec.coop](mailto:jachenbach@acrec.coop). ■



Ben Gelner



Bryce Kelly



Group photo from the 2025 Youth Tour while visiting the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.

## Growing your savings: Landscaping that cuts energy costs

When most people think about saving energy, they picture insulation upgrades, efficient windows and appliance swaps. But your yard can play a major role too. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a well-planned landscape can reduce air-conditioning costs by up to 25% and pay for itself in less than eight years.

Because landscaping results vary by region, keep in mind that the United States has four main climate zones: temperate, hot-arid, hot-humid and cool. Plant strategically for your zone.

### Choose the right trees: Deciduous or evergreen

- Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the winter) block sunlight in the summer and allow light in during the colder months, helping to regulate indoor temperatures year-round.
- Evergreen trees provide consistent shade and can serve as windbreaks, which is especially helpful in cool climates.

Tip: In hot climates, choose native or drought-tolerant species. They require less water and are typically more resilient.

### Placement matters

- West and northwest sides: Plant trees to block strong mid- to late-afternoon sun.
- East and west windows: Use deciduous trees to block summer sun but still allow winter light.
- South side: Tall trees planted at a distance equal to two to five times their mature height can shade your home without blocking winter sun.
- West side: Shorter trees and shrubs help shield against intense, low-angle afternoon sun.
- Patios and driveways: Shade these areas to reduce reflected heat. **4303-XX**
- Home perimeter: Bushes can absorb sunlight and reduce heat transfer, but avoid dense plantings in humid climates, where airflow is important to prevent excess moisture.

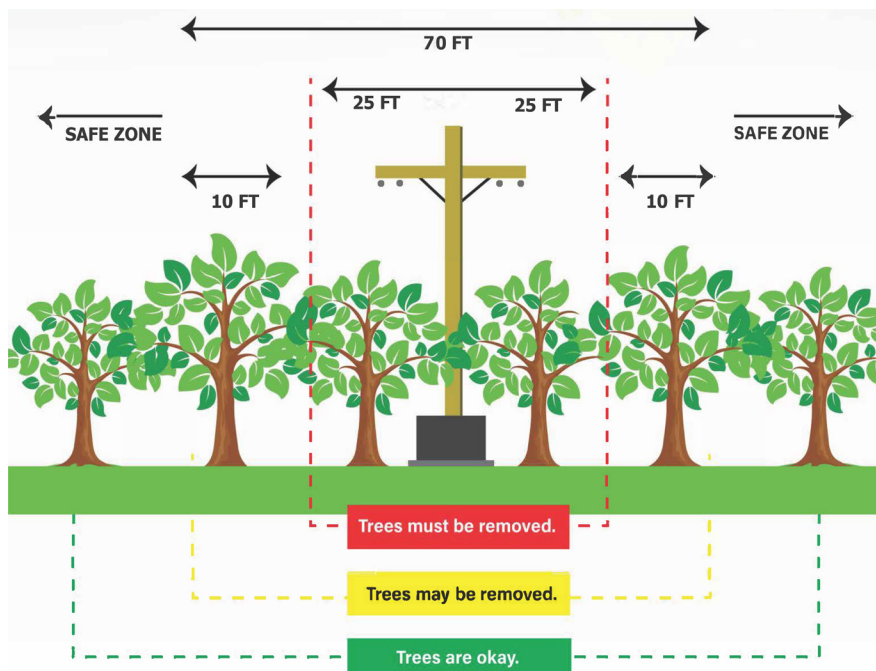
Tip: Be mindful near solar panels. Avoid planting tall trees on the south side of panels to prevent shade during peak sun hours.

### Plan for a tree's mature height

- Avoid planting trees that will grow taller than 15 feet near power lines.
- For taller species, plant at least 25 feet away — 45 feet is even better — to prevent safety hazards and avoid future pruning.

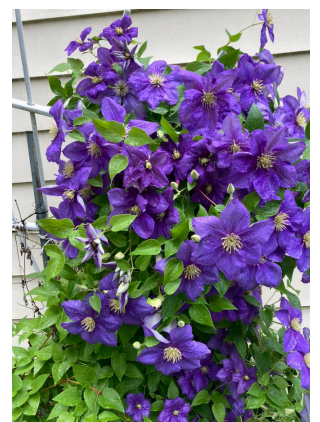
### Call before you dig!

Before you plant anything, call 811 to check for underground utilities. This free service marks public lines, like electricity, water and gas, so you avoid costly and dangerous mistakes. Call several business days before you plan to dig.



### THROUGH A MEMBER'S LENS

Spring has finally (hopefully) sprung in the Driftless Area. This month we asked for your favorite spring photos. We selected this photo taken by Kristie Welch, showing the beauty of spring flowers. Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo!

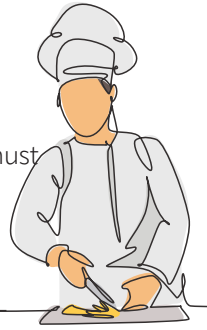


# MEMBER RECIPES

Send your favorite recipes and/or recipe topics to Jennifer Achenbach, ACEC, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162 or email [jachenbach@acrec.coop](mailto:jachenbach@acrec.coop).

You'll receive a \$5 bill credit if your recipe is printed. Please note – recipes must be received by the 25th day of the month before the intended publication.

**MAY – BEEF, JUNE – GRILLED FAVORITES,  
JULY – ICE CREAM/COLD DESSERTS**



## TATER TOT EGG CASSEROLE

- Approx. 21 oz. tater tots
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 lb. sausage, browned
- 10 eggs
- 2 c. milk
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. garlic salt
- ½ tsp. parsley flakes

### Directions

Spread tater tots evenly in greased 9x13" pan. Sprinkle with cheeses. Spread browned sausage over top. Beat eggs, milk, Worcestershire, garlic salt and parsley (may add ½ tsp. salt). Pour over top. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until eggs are set in the middle.

■ **Charlotte Waldbeser, Elgin**

## PRALINE PECAN FRENCH TOAST

- 8 eggs
- 1 ½ c. of half and half
- 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp. vanilla
- 8 slices French bread (¾")
- ½ c. butter
- ¾ c. brown sugar
- ½ c. pancake syrup
- ¾ c. pecans

### Directions:

Combine the eggs, half and half, 1 tablespoon of brown sugar and vanilla and put half of the mixture in a 9x13" pan. Add the bread, then pour the remaining egg mixture over the bread. Refrigerate overnight. In another 9x13" pan, melt the butter and add the ¾ cup brown sugar, pancake syrup and pecans. Transfer the soaked bread over the nut mixture. Bake at 350° F for 30-40 minutes until puffed and brown. A glass pan works best. Serves 6-8. Serve with warm syrup.

■ **Carol Deering, Postville**

## FLUFFY CRUSTLESS QUICHE

- ½ tsp. olive oil, avocado oil or unrefined coconut oil, to grease your dish
- 6 slices nitrate-free bacon, cooked crisp and roughly crumbled
- 10 large eggs
- ½ Tbsp. dry mustard powder
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 c. unsweetened coconut milk, almond milk, cashew milk or grass-fed cow milk
- 1 c. plain Greek yogurt, or coconut yogurt
- 2 big handfuls fresh baby spinach
- ½ c. chopped scallions/green onions
- ½ c. white cheddar, shredded

### Directions

Preheat your oven to 350°F and lightly grease a pie dish with oil and set aside. Roughly chop spinach and scallions. In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs together with mustard powder and a good pinch of sea salt and pepper, until fluffy and well combined. Gently fold in milk, yogurt, spinach and scallions. Pour your mixture into your prepared dish. Crumble bacon over top. Sprinkle with shredded cheese and bake uncovered for 30-40 minutes, just until quiche is light golden and set in the center. Serve hot or cold.

■ **Cici Mueller, Postville**

Looking for a recipe from a previous newsletter? Wanting to try something new?

Check out the recipe section on our website:  
<https://acrec.com/member-recipes>.

Every recipe submitted to the newsletter is posted on the website. Be sure to submit your recipe for publication as well – people who submit a published recipe receive a \$5 bill credit!



## CYBERSECURITY Tip of the MONTH

Sponsored by



Passwords protect every part of your online life, from email and banking to shopping, streaming and work. They are still your first line of defense against criminals so knowing how to create and manage strong passwords is one of the most important everyday cybersecurity habits. So how often should you change your passwords? If your passwords are already long, unique and random, you don't need to change them regularly. You should change yours if:

- You suspect unauthorized access
- You're notified that the account was part of a data breach

Modern guidance, including recommendations from NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology), indicates that unnecessary changes often lead to weaker habits, such as reusing old passwords or choosing simpler ones. ■

~ Courtesy of [staysafeonline.org](http://staysafeonline.org)

## FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

Congratulations to Ethan Wright, who found her service location number in a recent Newsletter. She was awarded a \$5.00 bill credit. ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – **one is worth \$17.50 one is worth \$12.50 and one is worth \$5.00.** The service location number must be yours to claim the credit, and you need to notify us when you find it.



## CONTACT ACEC

### HEADQUARTERS

229 Highway 51 • PO Box 715  
Postville, IA 52162

### PHONE NUMBERS

**LOCAL** 563-864-7611

**TOLL-FREE** 888-788-1551

**PAYMENT LINE 24/7** 833-284-5051

**UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING**  
811

**SKYWAYS INTERNET SOLUTIONS**

800-864-1611

### WEBSITE

acrec.com

### OFFICE HOURS

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

### OUTAGES

888-788-1551 or 563-864-7611

### IOWA STATE ONE CALL

811

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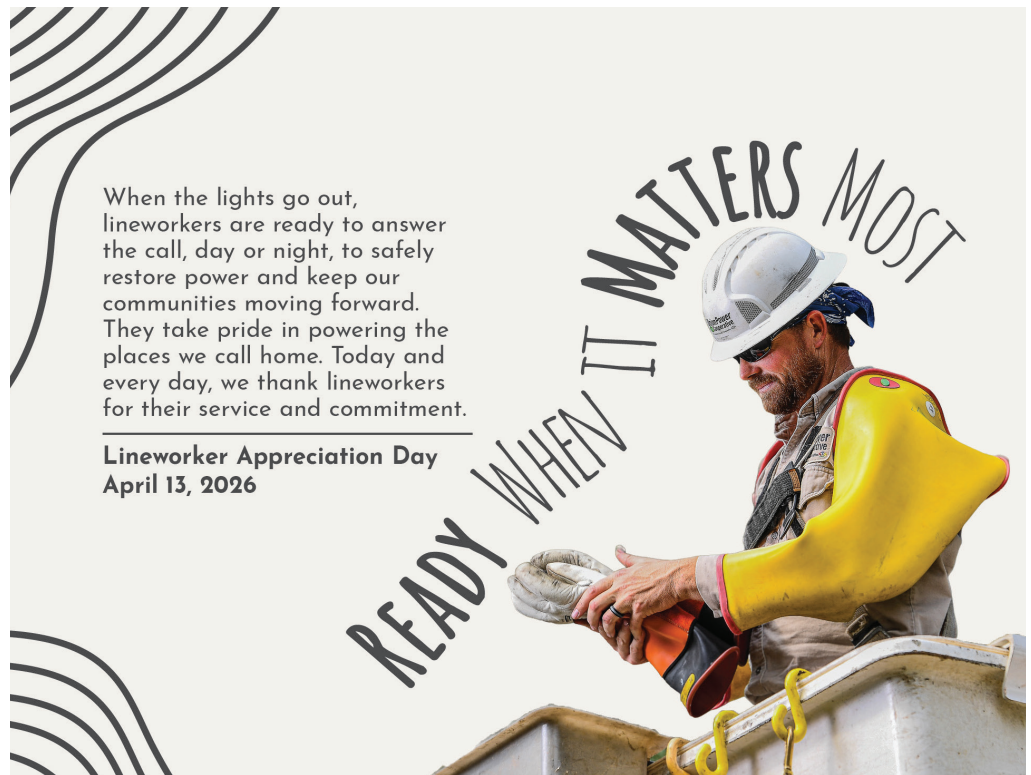
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## LINEWORKER APPRECIATION

Today and every day, we thank you line crew for all they do to keep the power on: **Josh Abbott, Sam Ash, Jeff Cox, Jason Donnelly, Travis Erickson, Blair Everman, Sam Freitag, Steve Gehling, Ben Grangaard, Andrew Henderson, Jason Leonhart, Jason Nefzger, Jack Regan and Brent Schutte** – You are superheroes. ■