

# ACEC NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2024 | VOLUME 27 | ISSUE 09

YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY

BEWARE OF  
SOLAR SCAMS

CO-OPS VOTE

POWERING A  
BRIGHTER  
FUTURE  
LAS PEÑAS  
GUATEMALA  
JUNE  
2024  
P. 4-5



**A MESSAGE  
FROM**  
*Your  
General  
Manager*

**Hollie McCormick**  
EVP/General Manager

**BE MINDFUL WHEN  
LOOKING AT  
SOLAR OPTIONS**

If you're a landowner in rural Iowa, and especially in Northeast Iowa, you may have received solicitations in the mail offering land lease options for proposed solar projects. Often, these letters offer attractive per-acre rental payments for various phases of a long-term proposed project, promising steady and predictable income. Often, we've heard of letters offering \$1000+ dollars per acre for large amounts of land and then more money once the project begins construction.

We received a call from one member who had a company visit him at his farm with big promises for utilization of his land. This member was fast thinking and asked, "Well, what does my electric provider think of something like this?" The salesman flat out lied and said that we were working together and very supportive. The member then asked, "Well, who is my provider?" Of course, the sales rep had no idea! The member then politely asked them to leave and was alerted to the likely scam.

With all contracts, the devil is in the details. Before signing an agreement, we encourage you to do some homework, seek legal counselor to protect your rights and give us a call to learn more about your options.

Most of these letters are coming from companies outside of Iowa, looking to lease land for future solar projects. We have noticed many of these letters refer erroneously to Iowa law, referencing legislation (Senate File 2356) that didn't pass last session. In fact, Iowa's electric cooperatives and other groups registered in opposition to the legislature due to its likely negative impact on electric co-ops and our members.

Some solicitations falsely claim local support for their solar initiative or that the



electric output would somehow benefit your neighbors or ACEC. We've also seen letters that deceptively include endorsements attributed to the Iowa Farm Bureau (IFB). IFB's legal team is working to remove these perceived endorsements.

**Our Stance**

We believe in an "all-of-the-above" energy approach. What that means is we depend on everything from natural gas, nuclear, hydro-power, coal, solar and wind to provide the electricity our members need for every day life. It takes renewable energy sources to supplement base-load generation in order to provide safe and reliable energy.

Here at ACEC, we have continued to expand our knowledge base when it comes to solar energy. When our members have questions about solar, from technical questions to rates to whether it's a good fit for them, we want to be able to answer those questions

**BOARD BRIEFS**

**July 29 Meeting**

- Jason Donnelly presented to the board regarding his recent NRECA International trip to Guatemala
- Approved revisions to Policy 7.7 Maintaining a Drug-Free Workplace and Policy 7.9 Residency Requirements for On-Call Positions
- Approved repricing a CFC Loan
- Approved a resolution to collaborate with Dairyland Power on a tentative RLF Loan
- Approved a resolution to collaborate with Dairyland Power on a tentative REDLG Loan
- Approved donations to NRECA International and The Cooperative Family Fund

**August 26 Meeting**

- Approved revisions to our existing Fiber Line Extension Policy

honestly and to the best of our ability.

These "scam" letters are nothing new. Our stance has been and continues to be that members should contact us before committing to any solar contracts so we can be sure you are being given accurate and honest information.

We also encourage you to consult your legal counsel before signing any agreements or contracts. Your legal counsel can help explain the benefits and disadvantages of these agreements, answer any questions you have, and help negotiate fair and equitable terms. These are long-term agreements that can give the solar company exclusive options and control of your land for decades. Spending some extra time up front to better understand the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement can save you significant time, money and headaches in the future.

Solar energy continues to be an important topic in the energy industry. If you want to learn more, we would love to speak with you. We are well-versed in many aspects of solar power, from installation and maintenance to industry trends and what to look for.

As with any topic in energy, we strive to continue to be a trusted expert for our members on solar, now and in the future.

For more information, we encourage landowners to reach out to Ryan Wagner, ACEC's Manager of Member Services. You can contact him directly at 563-605-6012 or at [rwagner@acrec.coop](mailto:rwagner@acrec.coop). ■

**#1585-15**

- Discussed Annual Meeting preparations and details
- Discussed and approved Dairyland Power's Load Forecast Summary for ACEC
- Approved sunseting our Environmental Controls offerings sometime in 2025
- Received a load management controls update
- Discussed Top 50 Key Accounts
- Approved 2025 Healthcare Participation Agreement
- Discussed upcoming phone system changes
- Approved an RLF Loan to White Haus Social
- Approved a Cost-Share Application to Rural Ideas Network
- Approved a donation to the Postville Area Ambulance/Fire Golf Tournament



# ATTENTION STUDENTS INTERESTED IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP



*High schoolers who attend Zoom sessions in October will have a chance to win AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship*

Guided by our cooperative commitment to the community, Allamakee-Clayton Electric has a long history of supporting students in the communities we serve through scholarships and leadership opportunities. We also celebrate this by sending deserving high school students to our nation's capital every summer since 1958 as a part of the National Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program.

Iowa's electric cooperatives are pleased to once again offer a virtual opportunity for rural students to learn more about advocacy, electric cooperative career opportunities and the cooperative business model with a three-part webinar series in October. The Iowa Youth Leadership Academy is open to any high school student in our service area. Register now at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com). #3883

"This program is perfect for rural Iowa students who have a passion for public service, leadership or government," said ACEC General Manager/EVP Hollee McCormick. "We want to raise students' awareness of how local electric co-ops power people's lives and empower communities. We also want to talk about exciting cooperative career paths that are available in smaller communities."



**WANTED:  
Rural Iowa  
high school  
students  
who have a  
passion for  
leadership**

Attend our webinar series in October for a chance to win Apple AirPods and a \$1,000 college scholarship! Learn more at [IowaYouthTour.com](http://IowaYouthTour.com)



Once students register online for the Iowa Youth Leadership Academy, they can attend the webinars from their own computer or mobile device. Each Zoom session will last about 45-60 minutes and focus on a specific topic:

- **Tuesday, Oct. 1, 7:00 p.m.** – Cooperative Business Model
- **Thursday, Oct. 17, 7:00 p.m.** – Rural Iowa Advocacy
- **Thursday, Oct. 24, 7:00 p.m.** – Leadership

At the end of each live session, one lucky attendee will be selected at random to win a pair of Apple AirPods. Students who attend all three sessions will be entered into a random drawing for a \$1,000 college scholarship. All students who register online by Sept. 25 will receive a special box of co-op goodies in the mail.

During the Zoom sessions, students will be inspired by the lineup of speakers and presenters. Participants will learn how to advocate for issues that are important to them and build leadership skills from a motivational speaker. Attendees will also hear about the Iowa Youth Tour. Students with an interest in government and public service are encouraged to apply for this weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. The 2025 Youth Tour is slated for June 15-21.

Learn more at [www.IowaYouthTour.com](http://www.IowaYouthTour.com) or at [www.acec.com](http://www.acec.com). You can also contact Jennifer Achenbach, ACEC manager of marketing and communications, at [jachenbach@acec.coop](mailto:jachenbach@acec.coop) or 563-864-7611. ■

## CYBER SECURITY Tip of the MONTH

Who doesn't love online gaming? Remember, though, you shouldn't lower your cybersecurity defenses just because you're racking up points. One security tip – credit, not debit. If a gaming system requires you to tie a specific payment method to your account, choose a credit card over a debit card. Credit cards come with more consumer protections than debit cards, and you have a better chance of getting your money back in case of fraud.

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# A TRIP OF A LIFETIME

ACEC Lineman Jason Donnelly brings light to village in Guatemala



On the final day of the project, the lineworkers and villagers held a lighting ceremony near the village.

Some people go to the beach for summer vacation. Others take their families on road trips while some spend time with family and friends.

Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative First Class Lineman Jason Donnelly spent part of his summer in a very different culture. Jason, along with 13 other lineworkers from Iowa and Minnesota electric cooperatives, traveled 2,800 miles to provide electricity to roughly 35 homes in a remote community in Guatemala. The project was part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) International Program, which has been providing volunteers to illuminate villages and homes in impoverished countries around the world since 1962.

All 14 lineworkers had to apply to be a part of the NRECA trip. In total, seven came from Iowa co-ops and seven from Minnesota.



Pictured are the 14 lineworkers from Iowa and Minnesota who traveled to Guatemala in June.

*"I heard about this trip in the past and I thought it would be a really fun thing for me to be a part of,"* said Jason, who didn't know any of the other lineworkers prior to leaving. *"I like what I do. If we can do it to help other people, then that's great."*

Each lineworker departed on Thursday, June 6, flying to Guatemala City and traveling to the town of Jalapa, where they stayed in a hotel for the duration of the project.

The linemen worked in Las Peñas, a remote village of 35 scattered homes about 20 miles from Jalapa. It sits roughly 6,000 feet in elevation.

Due to the rainy season and the condition of the road to get to the village, it took the workers up to 2 hours to reach their job site. Several times they walked into the village. Jason said the crew moved most of their equipment to the bottom of the hill so even if the roads were unpassable, they would be able to get what they needed and walk to the job site.

The scope of the project included stringing roughly 3 miles of line. All the work was done by hand without bucket trucks or other large equipment typically used by lineworkers in the United States.

Due to the terrain, the work was often challenging. However, Jason said the villagers assisted, pointing out that they helped pull the wires needed for the long spans between poles.

The workers also wired the inside of the homes with two outlets, two light switches and four lights, as well as two breaker boxes.

*"They really don't have anything to plug in except for their phones at this point,"* Jason said, noting that many people used solar panels to charge their phones previously. *"We always put*



*a light in the cooking area.”*

When they weren't working, the linemen spent time exploring Jalapa and learning more about the culture. Jason said it was an eye-opening experience, both in the more crowded town of Jalapa as well as near Las Peñas. He was also exposed to a different way of living, from planting crops to the condition of the homes.

*“Getting in their homes and seeing how they lived was an eye-opening experience. It was a lot different than what we're accustomed to. They all seemed happy though,”* he said.

On the final day on the mountain, June 18, the crews met with the locals outside the village for a small ceremony and to say their goodbyes. In addition to the lineworkers and villagers, representatives from the Minnesota and Iowa statewide electric cooperative organizations were on hand to see the work and be a part of the lighting ceremony. At the ceremony, the lineworkers gave each household a five-gallon bucket with a

water filter, as well as gifts like tooth brushes, candy, hand corn grinders and more.

The leader of the village spoke on behalf of the community, expressing gratitude to the team. *“Thank you to everyone who helped,”* he said. *“You bring happiness for the hope that we can do more now with electricity.”*

Before returning home, the group traveled to Antigua for a day of rest and relaxation. They flew back on June 19.

With the project completed, the local municipality will manage the infrastructure and serve the village with electricity.

Now that he's returned to work in the U.S., Jason said he hopes the NRECA service projects continue in the future and that more lineworkers are able to experience them.

*“I'd do it again tomorrow, even knowing what I know now.”*

#5514 (PV)



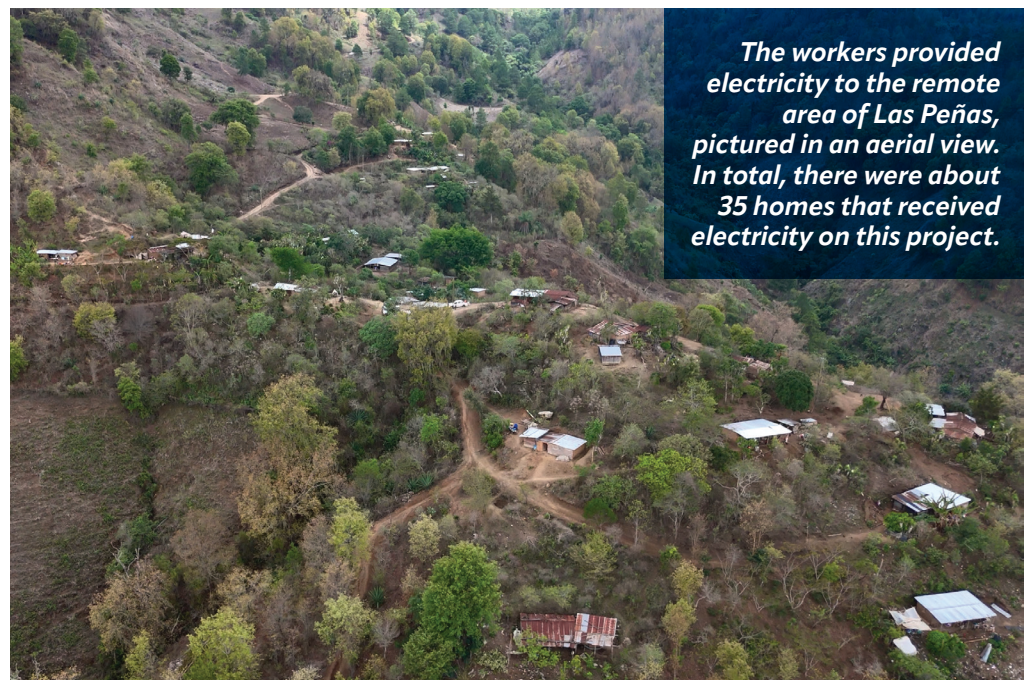
*The volunteers presented each household with a water filter, as well as several other donations on the final day of the project.*



*ACEC's Jason Donnelly spends time with one of the village children.*



*Pictured is one of the homes where the lineworkers provided power.*



*The workers provided electricity to the remote area of Las Peñas, pictured in an aerial view. In total, there were about 35 homes that received electricity on this project.*



# IT'S ELECTION SEASON



In an effort to help our communities, ACEC is encouraging all member-consumers to register to vote and to vote with co-op issues in mind.

With the goal of boosting voter turnout, ACEC is participating in a national, non-partisan program called "Co-ops Vote." This campaign also serves to inform both our consumer-members and the candidates about issues important to America's electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. It is important for the cooperative community's voice to be heard on all our issues, especially for safe, affordable, and reliable electricity.

"As an organization with very deep roots here, we want to be sure that our voice is heard on Election Day," said General Manager/EVP Hollee McCormick. "Participating in Co-ops Vote will send the message to those seeking office that the issues facing our community, and all of rural America, cannot be ignored."

The Co-ops Vote website, Vote.coop, provides a wealth of voter resources, including five simple steps to becoming a Co-op Voter: ensure your voter registration is current; learn your state's voter details; understand key electricity issues; know the candidates' energy policies; and share your story to encourage others to vote. Co-op Voters have the power to educate lawmakers, build awareness about our issues and concerns, and support legislative issues that are important to our communities.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know fall is the perfect time to schedule a tune-up for your heating system? Home heating accounts for a large portion of winter energy bills, and no matter what kind of system you have, you can save energy and money by regularly maintaining your equipment.

Combining proper equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings can save about 30% on your energy bills.

Source: Dept. of Energy



## CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

No child should have to start the academic year without the supplies needed. That's why staff at ACEC held a school supply drive this year to support the children of Cora B. Darling Elementary School in Postville. We wish all students in all our school districts the best year this year!



*Pictured are, from left, front row – Tomi Tash, fifth grade; Jina Wood, elementary ELL; Lisa Acevedo, first grade; Karen Miller, fourth-sixth grade special education; Jennifer Schutte, PK-6th Principal; Brenda Hackman, ACEC manager of economic development and community relations; Back row – Heather Staley, K-6 positive behavior support teacher; LaRae Schutte, Title 1 reading and math teacher; Ryan Jaster, ACEC apprentice lineworker; Josh Abbott, ACEC lead lineman*



ACEC expresses its sympathy to the family and friends of **Duane Strong**. Duane was a member of the ACEC Board of Directors for 14 years. He passed away August 22.

A lifelong resident of Elgin, Duane and his wife Sara worked on the Strong family farm, raising hogs, beef cattle and crops until he retired in 2002. He also was an integral part of the Elgin community and was a member of various civic organizations.





# 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.

October – **PIES**; November – **GLUTEN FREE**;

December – **POT LUCK IDEAS**



## BLACK BEAN TACOS

- 2 tsp. olive oil
- ½ onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ½ c. frozen corn
- 15 oz. black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 ½ tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. cumin
- ½ c. salsa
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 8 corn or flour tortillas, 6-inch
- Toppings, as desired

### Directions

Cook onion and garlic in olive oil over medium heat until tender, about 4 minutes. Add corn, black beans, seasonings and salsa. Simmer 5-6 minutes or until liquid has evaporated. Slightly mash some of the beans, if desired. Taste and season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon into tortillas and top as desired.

### Notes

*To use canned beans, rinse thoroughly in a colander. To use dried beans, soak dried black beans in cold water overnight. Drain and rinse. Place in a pot and bring to a simmer; cook 60-90 minutes or until tender. Any kind of canned or dried beans can be used for tacos. Pinto beans, great northern beans, even lentils can be used, be sure to follow the same procedure for rinsing and cooking above. In keeping with the meatless theme of this recipe, swap in any vegetables you'd like – diced zucchini, sauteed mushrooms, diced potatoes, sweet potatoes or even cauliflower rice.*

■ Landon Edminster, Postville

## VEGETARIAN CHILI

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cumin

- 2 bay leaves
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 green bell peppers, chopped
- 2 jalapeño peppers, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 (4 oz.) cans chopped green chile peppers, drained
- 2 (12 oz.) packages vegetarian burger crumbles
- 3 (28 oz.) cans whole peeled tomatoes, crushed
- ¼ c. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. ground black pepper
- 1 (15 oz.) can kidney beans, drained
- 1 (15 oz.) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 (15 oz.) can black beans
- 1 (15 oz.) can whole kernel corn

### Directions

Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in onion and season with oregano, salt, cumin and bay leaves. Cook and stir until onion is tender; stir in celery, green bell peppers, jalapeños, and garlic. Add green chile peppers and cook until heated through. Stir in vegetarian burger crumbles; reduce heat to low, cover pot, and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in tomatoes; season with chili powder and black pepper. Stir in kidney beans, garbanzo beans, and black beans. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in the corn, and continue cooking for 5 minutes before serving.

■ [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

## VEGETARIAN MEXICAN INSPIRED STUFFED PEPPERS

- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 4 large green bell peppers – tops, seeds, and membranes removed
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ c. chopped onion
- 2 c. cooked rice
- 1 (15 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed

- 1 (14.5 oz.) can chili-style diced tomatoes
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 (8 oz.) package shredded Mexican cheese blend

### Directions

Preheat oven to 350°. Bring a large pot of water and 1 Tbsp. salt to a boil. Add green bell peppers and cook until slightly softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain bell peppers and arrange cut-side up in a 9x9-inch baking dish. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir until softened, 5 to 10 minutes. Transfer cooked onion into a large bowl; add rice, black beans, and tomatoes. Stir in chili powder, garlic salt, cumin, and ½ tsp. salt until well combined. Fold in 1 ½ c. Mexican cheese blend. Spoon rice mixture evenly into bell peppers; sprinkle with remaining Mexican cheese blend. Bake in the preheated oven until cheese is melted and bubbling, about 30 minutes.

■ [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

## VEGETARIAN TORTILLA SOUP

- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 (1 lb.) package frozen pepper and onion stir fry mix
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
- 3 (4 oz.) cans chopped green chile peppers, drained
- 4 (14 oz.) cans vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 (11 oz.) can whole kernel corn
- 12 oz. tortilla chips
- 1 c. shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 avocado – peeled, pitted and diced

### Directions

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in the pepper and onion stir fry mix, garlic, and cumin, and cook 5 minutes, until vegetables are tender. Mix in the tomatoes and chile peppers. Pour in the broth, and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer 30 minutes. Mix corn into the soup, and continue cooking 5 minutes. Serve in bowls over equal amounts of tortilla chips. Top with cheese and avocado.

■ [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)



## FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – **all three are 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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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## PLUGGED IN: Electric Vehicle Update



### JULY

Number of miles driven:

**70 miles**

kWh's charged: **25 kWh**

Total cost to charge:

.13 x 25 kWh = **\$3.25**

### AUGUST

Number of miles driven:

**313 miles**

kWh's charged: **82 kWh**

Total cost to charge:

.13 x 82 kWh = **\$10.66**



## ACEC's Heffern Achieves Credential in Today's Electric Utility Competencies

ACEC Director  
Cindy Heffern  
recently received  
the Credentialed  
Cooperative  
Director (CCD)  
certificate from  
the National Rural  
Electric Cooperative  
Association  
(NRECA).



An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model.

The NRECA CCD program requires attendance and demonstrated understanding of the basic competencies contained in five core courses:

- Director duties and liabilities
- Understanding the electric business
- Board operations and process
- Strategic planning
- Financial decision making

Heffern has been a member of the ACEC Board of Directors since 2017.

NRECA represents the nation's almost 900 private, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide electric service to more than 42 million people in 48 states.