



## Make plans to attend your annual meeting

A WORD FROM



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Butler County REC's annual meeting is Saturday, March 17, in Allison, and we invite you to attend.

We will provide you with a free lunch of barbecued pork loin prepared by Leland Boyd, director. The country band Wichita will perform in the auditorium and the gym will hold displays to view, with employees available to answer questions. After the business meeting, there will be a drawing for cash prizes. Each voting member will receive an extension cord.

For many of our newer members, the concept of a cooperative business model is new to you. We encourage you to attend the annual meeting to get to know your cooperative. Unlike investor-owned utilities, Butler County REC exists solely to serve our member-owners, and we follow the direction of democratically elected directors, also member-owners of the cooperative.

Directors Don Feldman (36 years of service) and John Klahsen (28 years of service) are retiring from the board. Voting on successors will take place at the annual meeting. Election details will be in the official annual meeting notice in the bill you will receive in March.

We encourage all members to attend the annual meeting and become familiar with Butler County REC and the cooperative difference. We hope to see you there!

### ANNUAL MEETING: MARCH 17

10:30 a.m. – Doors open at North Butler Elementary School in Allison

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Lunch in the cafeteria and displays in the gymnasium

11:30 to 1 p.m. – Wichita country band performs in the auditorium

1 p.m. – Business meeting in the auditorium, including election of directors, reports and drawing for cash prizes

**See your annual meeting notice mailed with your March electric bill for more information.**

## Committed to their communities

Each year Butler County REC employees keep track of how many hours they volunteered. In 2017, our employees logged 1,128 volunteer hours!

Those hours included time spent in schools and churches, fighting fires, organizing town celebrations, giving blood, attending meetings and coaching children.

The top two volunteers this year were Gary Doehrmann with 349 volunteer hours and Lori Roose with 271 volunteer hours. Mandy Brouwer, Janis Cramer, John Endelman, Kyle Lorenz and Sandi Miller contributed the remainder of the volunteer hours.

Gary and Lori each chose an organization to receive \$25. Gary chose the American Cancer Society, and Lori chose the Waverly-Shell Rock United Way.

With Commitment to Community being one of our Touchstone Energy values, we are proud of our employees who live that every day by giving their time to the people and organizations in which they live.



*Lori Roose (l) and Gary Doehrmann (r)*

# The value of electricity

Even as we rely more on electricity, it remains a bargain, especially compared to other things we pay for regularly.

Since 2011, medical care, residential rental rates and education have increased at rates of 3 percent or more per year. Butter, meat and egg costs have been up by more than 1 to 2 percent annually and even bread costs have risen more than a half point on average.

Electricity costs rise about 1 percent a year, but co-ops across the country have reported a decline in average residential use per household since 2010. That means we're doing more things with less energy.

Electricity is a value, and we're always looking for ways to work with you to make it even better. That's why we urge energy efficiency, encourage you to look for ENERGY STAR® appliances and promote technology designed to give members more control over their electricity use.

That's going to become even more important as digital devices and internet-connected technologies become increasingly numerous.

The average home now has 10 Wi-Fi connected devices. That number is expected to explode to 50 by 2020. You'll depend upon your Touchstone Energy cooperative for more than the power that keeps your lights on.

That's why we're always working to provide service that's reliable, keep it affordable and make it even more valuable.



**MOVE OVER  
SLOW DOWN**

**WHAT THE SIGN REALLY SAYS IS - MOVE OVER OR SLOW DOWN.** Iowa law requires motorists to change lanes or slow down when approaching a stationary utility vehicle that has its flashing lights activated. Failure to do so can result in hefty fines or the loss of your driver's license.

**Take the Pledge.** Join your fellow Iowans who have pledged to move over or slow down for Iowa's utility workers at [moveoveriowa.com](http://moveoveriowa.com).



## ABOUT AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

The nation's member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops comprise a unique sector of the electric utility industry – and face a unique set of challenges.

Distribution cooperatives form the foundation of the rural electric network delivering electricity to 42 million co-op consumer-members. Generation & transmission cooperatives (G&Ts) provide wholesale power to distribution co-ops through their own generation or by purchasing power on behalf of the distribution members.

Whether it's a co-op serving a remote fishing village above the Arctic Circle or a co-op serving a marine research lab in the Florida Keys, electric co-ops share a single purpose: providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to their consumer-members.

## CO-OPS ARE GUIDED BY 7 PRINCIPLES

- 1 **Voluntary & Open Membership**
- 2 **Democratic Member Control**
- 3 **Members' Economic Participation**
- 4 **Autonomy & Independence**
- 5 **Education Training & Information**
- 6 **Cooperation Among Cooperatives**
- 7 **Concern for Community**

# Your 2018 farm bill update

Every five years, the U.S. Congress considers the farm bill, which sets food and agriculture policy for the entire nation, affecting everything from what crops are grown to funding for food nutrition programs. The farm bill is due to be reauthorized by the federal government this year.

The bill also promotes rural economic development and allows co-ops to finance basic electrification activities. Through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), our national service organization, America's electric cooperatives are working to ensure lawmakers in Washington know what our priorities are for the 2018 farm bill.

## Economic development

The farm bill's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program is an important source of financing for economic development projects in rural communities. Over the last two decades, electric cooperatives have partnered with community stakeholders on hundreds of projects.

## Innovation

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) runs a number of programs that help fund innovative projects. Co-ops use these programs to save members money by financing investments in energy efficiency, constructing new renewable energy resources and deploying electric grid modernization technologies.

## USDA Rural Development

Rural America grows most of the food, generates much of the power and manufactures many of the goods consumed by the nation. USDA's office of Rural Development operates many programs that provide fundamental assistance to those rural communities.

We look forward to working with Congress and other stakeholders to pass a farm bill that promotes economic growth in rural America and allows co-ops to continue meeting the needs of their members.

# Keep your sump pump ready for action

As you maintain your home, it's easy to overlook the importance of the lowly sump pump. Sitting just below the surface, the sump pump helps protect against flooding and moisture in the home.

When groundwater seeps into the home, its damage can be far reaching, affecting mechanicals and structural integrity, not to mention contributing to the growth of mold and fungus. A well-maintained, properly operating sump pump help avoids those risks.

Safe Electricity offers these tips to keep your sump pump at the ready:

- Make sure to keep the pump clean and free of debris. Check it at least once a year.
- Ensure that the float is not tangled or jammed in one position. A sump pump with a jammed float will not sense when it should turn on and shut off.
- Test the pump by pouring water into the pit to make sure it activates and pumps out the water.
- When testing the pump, do not ever reach into the pit. The float can be reached and moved with a household item such as a golf club (with a rubber handle) or other non-conductive tool.
- The sump pump should have a dedicated ground fault interrupter protection, an alarm that signals water build-up and a back-up power source or battery in the event of a power outage.

If water does get into the basement due to a power outage, use caution before entering. Never enter a flooded space, as this presents a risk of electrocution. Electrical equipment can energize standing water unless all of the electricity has been disconnected.

For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



# Rockford FFA continues contribution tradition

We are so thankful to the Rockford Future Farmers of America (FFA) and their leader, Jym Hansen, for their yearly contribution to Butler County REC's RECare fund. The Rockford FFA is an organization of students at Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rock Community School District in Rockford.

For over 10 years, the FFA students have held a soup supper and bake sale at a high school game held in February. Each of those years they have chosen to donate the proceeds to our fund. This year, \$621 was contributed.

All donations given to RECare go to an emergency fund that helps families in our service area heat their homes. Funds are distributed by local community action agencies to families who apply for assistance. Contact Butler County REC or your local community action agency for more information on how to apply for RECare funds.



*Mandy Brouwer (second from right), billing clerk at Butler County REC, receives the Rockford FFA RECare donation from (l to r) Rebecca Bartling, Dawson Schriever, Abby Green, Kyrstin Burnner, Kari Jeffery and Marissa Norby.*



## Get rid of it!

Do you have an old, working freezer, refrigerator or window air conditioner eating energy at your house? Recycle those qualifying appliances, fill out a rebate form and Butler County REC will give you a bill credit for \$50.

Last year we helped members pull the plug on 50 appliances—11 freezers, 31 refrigerators and 8 window air conditioners. Not only did these members receive the rebate, they also are saving energy by unplugging their inefficient appliances.

For example, a refrigerator bought before 1993 can use more than twice the electricity that an Energy Star rated refrigerator of today uses. In addition, if that old refrigerator is in a 90-degree garage, it will use almost 50 percent more electricity than one in a 70-degree area. Cold weather may cause the thermostat to not run through its cycles correctly.

Spring clean and earn and save! Contact us for questions or visit our website at [www.butlerrec.coop](http://www.butlerrec.coop).

# Directors earn certification renewal

Engaged board directors are an important part of any cooperative. Butler County REC board members Leland Boyd, treasurer, Gerald Schmitt, assistant secretary-treasurer, and Tim Schrage, secretary, have shown their commitment and competency by earning their Director Gold Renewal Certifications from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The renewal required the directors to earn three credits of continuing education over a two-year period from a list of approved programs. The Director Gold Credential goes beyond the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificate, requiring additional time and effort by the directors and assist directors in learning to work effectively on our cooperative board.



*(Left to right) Directors Tim Schrage, Gerald Schmitt and Leland Boyd*

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