

## A glance back at 2020

2020 presented its share of challenges for everyone. However, there were many positives, too. Here's what happened at your cooperative:

- No lost-time accidents.
- Employee-donated funds, along with matching funds from the Butler County REC board and Corn Belt Power Cooperative, totaled over \$1,000 for our Charity of the Year. We chose to donate funds to Friends of the Family's Adopt-A-Family program. We provided gifts for six people from the four main counties that we serve: Bremer, Butler, Chickasaw, and Floyd.
- Our two solar arrays produced enough energy to power over 50 homes for the year.
- Jon Oltmann retired after 43 years and Kent Gulick after 38 years with Butler County REC. Rick Whalen retired after over 40 years serving electric cooperatives.
- \$1,023,699.36 in patronage was paid to members.
- Thirteen employees volunteered 1,385 hours to churches, fire stations, and schools among other organizations.
- Educated, engaged directors are important for our success. Two directors earned Gold recertification, one earned Gold certification, one earned Certified Cooperative Director certification, and one earned their Board Leadership Certificate.
- We successfully held our first mail-in-ballot-only voting for our board of directors. We did not hold an in-

person annual meeting for members out of concern for everyone's health and safety due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The board approved an Energy Cost Adjustment reduction and a rate adjustment for members.
- 70 members donated to RECare, our program of members helping members.
- \$993,580.67 in margins were allocated. These margins will be used to help keep your cooperative financially sound and the quality of service as high as possible.
- Service awards were earned by five employees for 35 years, 30 years, 25 years, 15 years, and 10 years.
- We loaned economic development funds to two entities.
- Our Facebook page reached over 1,060 likes.
- TrinityRail Maintenance Services at Butler Logistics Park in Shell Rock came online in August.
- We passed our Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program, confirming that safety is our priority.
- Our line crews assisted Grundy County REC, T.I.P. REC, and Alliant Energy with derecho power restoration.
- Katie LaBree joined us in October as our new business development manager.
- Shell Rock Soy Processing, LLC, broke ground at Butler Logistics Park in Shell Rock.
- Cael Ruzicka, Marble Rock, was chosen for the Youth Tour trip.

### A WORD FROM



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The trip for 2020 was postponed, however.

- 16.7 miles of line were rebuilt through the construction work plan.
- 2.32 miles of new or rebuilt overhead line were constructed through work orders.
- 2.09 miles of new underground line were built.
- Line crews completed 214 work orders.
- Our after-hours call center, SRS, answered 3,057 calls from members, while crews were dispatched for 113 of those calls.
- Cooperative employees participated in corporate culture training, an on-going initiative that began over 20 years ago.
- We updated our website, using the same platform but upgrading.
- Fourteen students applied for the Basin Scholarship. Jacob Risse, Sumner, was awarded the \$1,000 scholarship.

### Recipe published

Congratulations to Dode Westendorf, Waverly, who won a \$25 bill credit from Living with Energy in Iowa magazine when her recipe for pumpkin pecan pie was published in the November 2020 issue!



# Be prepared for winter storms

When winter temperatures drop and storms hit, it can be challenging to stay safe and warm, especially during a power outage. Your Touchstone Energy cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared:

- **Stay warm** – Plan to use a safe alternate heating source during a power outage. If you are using gasoline-, propane-, or natural gas-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors, and make sure they are properly ventilated.
- **Stay fed** – Have on hand several days' supply of food that does not need to be cooked. Five gallons of water per person should also be available.
- **Stay safe** – If you must travel during a winter storm, take a survival kit and do not travel alone. Stay away from downed lines, and report them immediately.



## When winter winds howl, power lines can gallop

Severe weather with strong winds can cause damage to trees, buildings, and electrical equipment. While power lines can sway in high winds, add freezing rain or icy conditions and the result can be galloping power lines—the bouncing or bucking movement of overhead lines.

Galloping often results from ice buildup on one side of the power line due to strong winds. This creates an airfoil, which changes the flow of air around the line.

Unfortunately there isn't much utility workers can do until the wind subsides. Many power lines have objects, like twisted wire or round or angular pieces of metal attached to the line to help reduce galloping and prevent potential danger.

### If you see galloping power lines:

- Stay away - ice can break off or power lines can break loose.
- Contact your utility as soon as possible to make them aware of the potential damage.

### If you see a downed line:

- Stay far away and warn others to stay away, too. A downed line can remain energized even if it is not sparking or arcing.
- Always report the location of a downed power line and damaged electrical equipment.

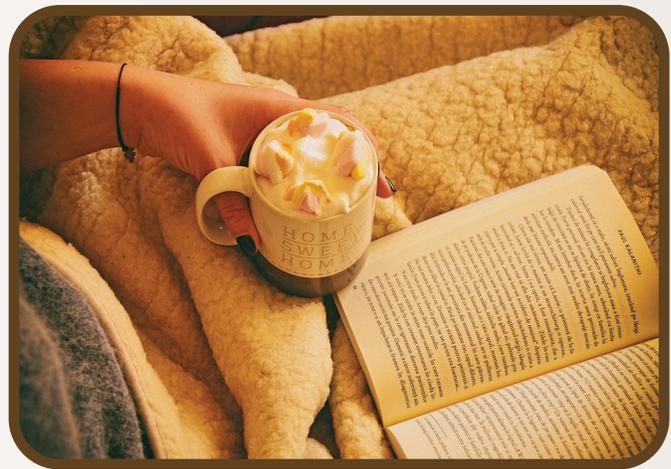


## Five ways to stay cozy this winter

By Abby Berry, NRECA

Baby, it's cold outside! When you're feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can keep comfortable without turning up the thermostat. Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter:

1. Whether you're experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply "run cold," **an electric blanket or throw** can deliver quick warmth that a regular blanket or throw cannot.
2. One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to **keep your feet warm**. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
3. On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. **Open all curtains, drapes, and blinds** to let in the sunshine.
4. Another way to make your home cozier is to **use a humidifier**. Cold air doesn't hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer.
5. Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, **area rugs** can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time.



*Don't forget the hot chocolate to help keep you cozy!*

# Invest in home gym equipment

If you don't feel comfortable fulfilling your New Year's resolutions at a gym during the pandemic, consider adding a few pieces of exercise equipment to your home.

It may sound expensive, but if a treadmill, stepper, or rower are out of your price range, consider some low-tech workout aids. Start with a weight bench, and buy just the basics: dumbbells or hand weights in just a few different sizes; resistance bands, a mat, and a big exercise ball. You could also purchase a manual stationary bike.

If your budget permits and your electrical system can tolerate it, add one electrically powered piece of equipment, such as a treadmill. Some stationary bikes are electric, as well. But make that investment only if you're sure you'll use the equipment once your New Year's resolve wears off.

Add a mirror, some music, and a TV to keep you company during your workout, and you'll have everything you need to keep in shape while staying safely at home.



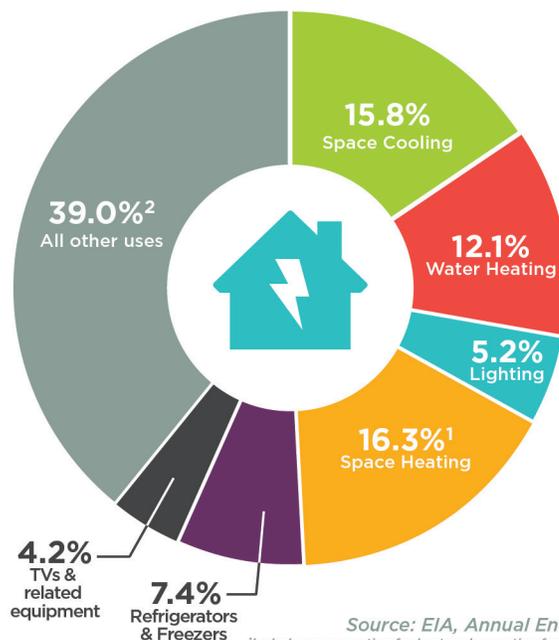
## Scholarships available

- Dependents of cooperative members are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 **Basin Electric Power Cooperative** scholarship for tuition at a two-year or four-year college.
- Corn Belt Power Cooperative partners with **Northwest Iowa Community College** (NCC) in Sheldon, Iowa, to offer four \$500 scholarships.
- Corn Belt Power also partners with **Iowa Lakes Community College** to offer one \$500 scholarship for students enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program.

Visit our website for more information on scholarship opportunities.

## How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: EIA, Annual Energy Outlook 2020

<sup>1</sup>Includes consumption for heat and operating furnace fans and boiler pumps.  
<sup>2</sup>Includes miscellaneous appliances, clothes washers and dryers, computers and related equipment, stoves, dishwashers, heating elements, and motors.

\$2 per strand LED holiday lighting rebate

See our website for a rebate form.

# Your 2021 Butler County REC annual meeting

With health and safety in mind due to COVID-19, your board of directors has decided to forego the 2021 in-person annual meeting of members for Butler County REC.

Instead, voting and the meeting will be conducted as they were in 2020. We will only accept mail-in ballots for the director election, and on Saturday, March 27, 2021, the board will hold their business meeting without members in attendance. Please read upcoming newsletters and check for updates on our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop) and our Facebook page at [facebook.com/bcrec](https://facebook.com/bcrec).

We are hopeful the meeting in 2022 will be held in-person and we will once again be able to see and talk to you face-to-face. We look forward to that day.



## Butler County REC presented with Impact Award By Kay Snyder, IADG

Iowa's rural electric cooperatives commitment goes far beyond ensuring safe, reliable, and environmentally responsible energy. We actively create strategic partnerships and provide technical and financial assistance to support business growth and community vitality.

Annually, the Iowa Area Development Group (IADG) presents Impact Awards to utility partners who have been involved in significant economic development initiatives. During the recent board meeting, Butler County REC was recognized for its economic development accomplishments and commitment to the communities it serves.

Awarded with an IADG Impact Award for project and community development, recent projects that demonstrate our commitment to economic development support include the location of TrinityRail Maintenance Services in the Butler Logistics Park and the continuation of a dental practice in Charles City.

Butler County REC was part of an active team that worked to bring the \$60 million TrinityRail project to Butler County. We secured a \$2 million loan through the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDL&G) program to install 8,000 feet of additional rail track and



*One of four main buildings encompassing TrinityRail Maintenance Services at the Butler Logistics Park, Shell Rock.*

make other improvements to the park to accommodate the needs of TrinityRail. This project brings approximately 250 new employment opportunities to the area.

We also supported Hometown Dental, Inc. in purchasing an existing dental practice in Charles City. After purchasing the practice from a retiring dentist, Dr. Reed Faldet expanded the facility and updated the equipment to expand the services and accommodate an estimated 480 additional patient visits per year. Butler County REC secured funds through the USDA REDL&G program to support this project, as well. Hometown Dental will repay their loan into the Butler County REC Revolving Loan Fund, which will continue to fund projects like this for years to come.

"We commend Butler County REC for being an active supporter of business and community development in the territory they serve," said

IADG President Rand Fisher. "They provide essential financial and technical assistance that are often critical components in successfully securing projects that create jobs and support community vitality."

### About IADG

The Iowa Area Development Group is the marketing and business development office for Iowa's member-owned rural electric cooperatives, select municipal electric utilities, and independent telecommunication companies. IADG has assisted with over 2,100 successful business expansions and start-up projects. This growth represents a capital investment of more than \$12 billion and 53,000 jobs for Iowa. The Iowa Area Development Group was established in 1985 to promote and strengthen rural Iowa development opportunities. Stay connected with IADG news at [www.facebook.com/IADG.IA](http://www.facebook.com/IADG.IA) and [www.twitter.com/IADGIOWA](http://www.twitter.com/IADGIOWA).

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