

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

November 2024

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Crafting the future: How Dirt Daughters is teaching skills from the past

“We need to bring back these skills or they’ll be gone,” commented Lisa Barker (left) about the concept of Dirt Daughters, the business she and her daughter Tara Mooty (right) created. Both women love to craft and teach. They decided the best way to share their knowledge was to open Dirt Daughters in rural Allison in May of this year.

Their slogan, “Getting Back to Our Roots,” perfectly describes their mission—to teach people of all ages sewing, canning, crocheting, quilting, and those skills our grandparents and great-grandparents learned growing up, but that are unfamiliar to many of us. “We want to teach the simple stuff. Things that will benefit kids when they go out in life,” Tara said.

Lisa and Tara, emergency medical technicians and master gardeners, love to learn. Lisa is a dive master and taking a master canning class in preparation for

teaching canning and canning safety at their shop next year. She “wants to grow everything to make recipes.” Currently, she has a 40-by-100 ft. garden. She works on the class curriculum; sews; and does long-arm quilting, including custom and tee-shirt quilts.

Tara sews, crochets, and has started quilting. She sets the class schedule and answers correspondence. She is also interested in butterflies. While in 4-H, she had a butterfly garden and learned to sex, tag, and raise monarchs from egg to release. Lisa and Tara would like to add a butterfly house and teach kids to tag and release butterflies. Most of their crafts are geared toward people ages 14 and up. The butterfly program would be suitable for younger kids, as well.

“A lot of people see our crafts and say, ‘There is no way I can do that,’” Lisa said. But Dirt Daughters offers beginner-friendly classes, along with classes for those learners with more experience. The pair have done hours of research and troubleshooting. “We have tried these projects and failed. We have read blogs and looked at the Internet to see what struggles people were having with projects. We have found the materials that work. We explain it all and make it a positive experience.” In addition, the classes are affordable so that everyone has the



opportunity to learn.

Most of the classes are for five to six people. “We want to be as one-on-one as we can,” Lisa said. They provide most of the items needed for each project. For example, they taught a crochet class in which some of the students were beginners so did not have the supplies they needed. Lisa and Tara had crochet hooks available for attendees to purchase at cost. The students were then able to continue their project at home with the right tools. They even have sewing machines available for use. “Students are able to come with nothing, and leave with something,” Lisa commented.

Once a month, Dirt Daughters holds a workshop night. Students are encouraged to attend to ask questions or just to craft with others.

The business is located in a shouse (shed/house) on the Barker property. Parking is available and all classes are on one level in a large, climate-controlled area that is wheelchair accessible.

One of their dreams is to be able to have homemade items for retail—“unique, well-made items,” said Lisa. They are hoping to be able to accomplish this by early winter 2025.

Take a look at the Dirt Daughters Facebook page, which includes a monthly calendar of classes. Questions can be emailed to Lisa and Tara at dirtdaughters@gmail.com. Let’s support this local business!





Butler County REC will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday, Nov. 28, and Friday, Nov. 29.

If you have an outage or emergency, please call us at 888.267.2726.

The board and employees of Butler County REC thank you for your membership. We are grateful for the opportunity to power your lives.

We hope that your Thanksgiving table is full of your favorite food and surrounded by your favorite people.

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS: WE WANT YOU!

High school juniors whose parents are Butler County REC members or residents of Aplington, Fairbank, Fredericksburg, or Readlyn are invited to apply for the **FREE Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.**, set for June 15-21, 2025. We'll select one lucky student to participate.

Approximately 40 students in Iowa will be chosen by their local electric cooperatives to attend. Iowa participants will join students from co-ops around the country in visiting memorials and monuments, touring the U.S. capitol, and speaking with a few of Iowa's elected officials.

Are you planning to attend college? We offer **\$500 college scholarships** for the top three students applying for the Youth Tour. Watch our website, Facebook page, and future newsletters for more information on this all-expense paid trip, or contact us at 888.267.2726.



Don't forget Butler County REC's rebate for LED holiday lights! With our rebate, you can save up to \$2 per item with no limit on the number purchased.

Energy efficient: They use less electricity compared to conventional bulbs

Long lifespan: They last up to 50,000 hours or more when used outdoors and twice as long indoors

Safe: There is no chance of combustion because the bulbs are cool to the touch, regardless of how long they are left on

Visit butlerrec.coop for a rebate form to make decking your halls a little more energy efficient and a little less expensive.

Butler County REC member's photo appears on magazine cover

Congratulations to Butler County REC member Nicole Meyer of Aplington!

Nicole's photo was chosen for the September issue of *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine. She was awarded a \$100 bill credit.

Do you love to snap photos? Submit your high-resolution photos for cover-photo consideration to the magazine at editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could win \$100, too!

The magazine also accepts recipes for publication and awards an Editor's Choice prize each month. Check out your monthly magazine for more information.



- High school seniors: If you live in the *Butler County REC* service territory and plan to pursue a degree in a technical/trade industry and/or electric line apprenticeship program that supports the cooperative business model, apply for **one of two \$500 scholarships** from Butler County REC. Contact us at 888.267.2726 or butlerrec.coop for more information. Deadline is March 1, 2025.
- Dependents of cooperative members are eligible to apply for a **\$1,000 scholarship** from *Basin Electric Power Cooperative* for tuition at a two-year or four-year college. Contact us at 888.267.2726 or visit our website for information.
- *Corn Belt Power Cooperative* partners with *Northwest Iowa Community College* (NCC) in Sheldon, Iowa, to offer **four \$500 scholarships** to line program students who reside in a county served by a cooperative in the Corn Belt Power system. Applicants do not have to be cooperative members. Visit the college website at nwicc.edu. Deadline is March 1, 2025.
- *Corn Belt Power* also partners with *Iowa Lakes Community College* in Estherville, Iowa, to offer **one \$500 scholarship** for a student enrolled in the Wind Energy and Turbine Technology program. Applicants do not have to be cooperative members. Visit the college website at iowalakes.edu. Deadline is March 1, 2025.

A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO
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Cost-of-service study update and revisiting the new bill print

is providing one gallon of water per minute, it will take five minutes for the bucket to fill. If you turn up the faucet and it is providing five gallons of water per minute, it takes just one minute for the bucket to fill. Although the consumption is the same (five gallons), the demand on the water supply is higher when the faucet is turned up.

The same can be said for power.

When you have more lights on in your home, the demand on the system is more than if you only had one light on in your home. This requires the generation plants to produce more power in less time to meet your demand and creates additional strain on the transmission lines. Demand is the reason your electric bill fluctuates season to season and even year to year—your demand is not the same every day.

The demand charges are not new to us as we have been paying Corn Belt Power Cooperative, our power provider, for those charges. Our members have, as well, in your monthly payments, but we have never shown those values on your bill, as they are rolled into the wholesale power cost.

Peak demand is when the demand for power is the highest, resulting in higher power costs for the cooperative and therefore, our members. On the top of our website, butlerrec.coop, we have a gauge that shows if we are in normal usage, approaching peak usage, or peak alert. In other words, when demand is normal, the system is approaching peak demand, or the Corn Belt Power system is at peak demand.

This leads into the discussion of “On-Peak kW” and “Max-Peak kW” shown on your bill. On-Peak kW is

your kilowatt (kW) usage contribution to Corn Belt Power’s peak during the billing period’s 15-minute peak interval. Max-Peak kW is your household or business’s highest 15-minute interval usage during the billing period. Your highest peak may not be Corn Belt Power’s highest system peak.

Approaching peak and peak alert times are when power is more expensive. Therefore, WHEN you use electricity is just as important as HOW MUCH electricity you use.

To help with power costs, shift your electric use to lower demand hours. For example, your heating and cooling systems are on average the highest power users in your home. Gradually adjust your thermostat a degree or two so that your HVAC system doesn’t have to run as often. You can purchase a programmable thermostat so that your system isn’t running unnecessarily when you are not home. Also, run your dishwasher and clothes washer and dryer later at night.

You can track your power consumption online through SmartHub. Visit our website and create an account if you haven’t already. SmartHub offers a variety of benefits.

Be sure to read your bill each month and look at the new line items. This is one way to manage your use and mitigate the effects on your finances. We do not take rate adjustments or their effect on our members lightly. Some of our employees are members, so we know first-hand the concerns that you have. More information on the rate adjustment will be forthcoming. As always, give us a call at 888.267.2726 with any questions or concerns.

I recently discussed with you that Butler County REC is in the midst of a cost-of-service study. We are in the final stages of the study and should have answers soon. With rising costs, inflation, supply chain issues, and rising wholesale power costs, it is likely that we will have a rate adjustment for members. I tell you this in full transparency and in an effort to give you and your family a chance to prepare your budget for the coming year.

November is the fourth month of the new bill print that we introduced to members in August. Our goal was to provide an easier-to-read bill while showing transparency of your charges. In doing so, we included additional information. This month, as a refresher, I will revisit the new information included on your bill.

For this discussion, I am going to focus on “DEMAND” and/or “MAX DMD” under “Description” and “On-Peak kW” and “Max-Peak kW” both in the table on the bill.

Demand is the maximum capacity needed. Let’s use a faucet and a five-gallon bucket as an example. If you turn on the kitchen faucet and it



Your source for saving money and energy

If you have recently purchased an EnergyStar appliance; installed a heat pump, electric furnace, or central air unit; or insulated your home, don’t forget that we have rebates for those and other purchases you may have made! Contact Tyler, our energy services advisor, at 319.231.2980 to discuss our rebates and other money and energy saving options through Butler County REC.

Addressing challenges to safeguard our grid

Our electric grid is amid extensive change. Changes in supply and demand and extreme weather conditions are stressing the limits of energy reliability.

Demand for electricity is outpacing supply. Energy use is expected to increase at an unprecedented pace as our nation becomes more electrified and large data centers are added.

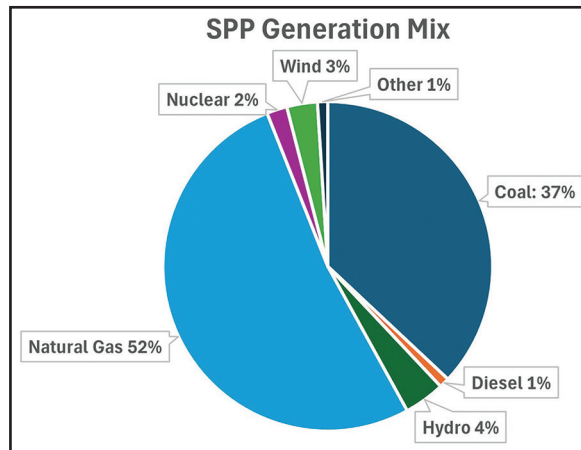
While a tremendous amount of renewable energy has been added in the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) region, which provides significant environmental benefits, renewable energy is not always available. Butler County REC works with Corn Belt Power Cooperative, our power supplier, and SPP, our regional transmission organization, to ensure your lights stay on.

However, the reality is that we need more dispatchable generation for those times when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining. Many of our current generators are aging or nearing retirement, and we also need to expand transmission to connect new generators to the grid. This expansion is crucial not only for enhancing grid security, but also for ensuring that lower-cost energy reaches consumers.

Grid alerts: Why do they happen? SPP issues grid alerts due to inadequate supply to meet demand. Grid emergencies are likely to occur more frequently, last longer, and have a more significant impact on our lives and our communities.

Our region is increasingly reliant on variable resources, generation types, often renewable energy, that vary in how much power they can provide due to reliance on as-available fuel. While these resources provide environmental and cost benefits when available, they also pose a challenge for grid operators when they are not. Solar power is dependent on time of day and year, and it is reduced by cloud cover or low sunlight. In Iowa, snow and ice cover in the winter months decrease solar generation.

Wind power depends on weather patterns, which can shift wildly, and even be at risk when wind speeds are too high to operate safely. Hydropower is reduced during times of drought or in extreme freezing conditions.



This means renewable energy output can vary widely. For instance, in just 4 hours, we have seen wind power go from providing over 16,000 megawatts (MW) of energy to less than 2,200 MW.

We experienced a period in June 2023 when only 110 MW of energy was produced by the 32,000 MW of nameplate wind capacity existing at that time in the SPP region. To put it in perspective, during that time, only 0.3% of the entire wind capacity in SPP's footprint was able to generate electricity.

While a wind farm may have a nameplate capacity of 250 MW, we can only consistently rely on about 30% of that output over time. Solar generation in our region performs similarly, typically achieving around 20% of its nameplate capacity on average. This percentage tends to be higher during the summer months, but can drop significantly during the winter.

A coal or natural gas-fired power generation unit can be relied on upwards of 90% of the time. We present these statistics not to diminish the value of wind and solar, but to provide a realistic understanding of their current capabilities.

We must have baseload generation sources in place as a backup. We need to ensure the lights, heating and cooling systems, businesses, and farms have power. Many times on the hottest and coldest days of the year, we can't rely on wind or solar.

SPP then relies most heavily on dispatchable generation, which can be turned on or off, or their power output can be increased or decreased on demand allowing them to provide more electricity when demand is high or less when demand is low.

What are we doing to mitigate risk? SPP, Corn Belt Power, and Butler County REC must plan for times of extreme power use. We do that in the form of reserve margins, resources standing by to provide additional energy when needed. Reserve margins are the amount of unused available generating capability of an electric power system (during peak demand for a utility system) as a percentage of total capability needed to meet peak demand. These margins are shrinking in SPP and across the country.

Tighter reserve margins mean there's less room for error during unexpected events or emergencies, increasing the risk of forced outages.

To maintain the reliability of your power supply, we continue to work with policymakers and regulators for a sensible, diverse, all-of-the-above generation approach that includes renewable energy and dependable resources we have come to rely on like coal, natural gas, nuclear, and hydropower.

A resilient and reliable electric grid that affordably keeps the lights on is the cornerstone of our rural economy. Electric cooperative families and businesses rightfully expect the lights to stay on at a price they can afford.

We will continue to advocate on your behalf and do everything we can to continue to live up to our mission to provide you with safe, reliable, and affordable electricity that is also environmentally responsible.

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