



## Business-only annual meeting set for March

Butler County REC's business-only annual meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at the Allison warehouse, 619 N. Railroad St., at 1:00 p.m. Members are invited to attend; however, there will not be a meal, gifts, or entertainment.

Mail-in ballots will be sent to the membership prior to the meeting. All matters to be voted on by the membership will be on the ballot, including director elections. Due to the mailing of the ballots, no new actions will be acted upon at the meeting. However, as always, if members have issues to be addressed by the board or want member action taken on a mat-

ter, the issue should be brought to the attention of the board so that it may be considered and possibly included for action at a future meeting.

Annual meeting updates will be provided in future *InTouch* newsletters, on your bill, and on our social media platforms. Be sure to watch for your ballot to arrive in March.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2026 member appreciation events to be held this summer, where we will provide food and gifts, and you will have the opportunity to catch up with employees, directors, and your neighbors!

## Plastic bags become hope: Member crafts mats for the unhoused

Deb McWhirter, Allison (right), is turning waste into warmth. After the Butler County REC member retired from her Butler County assessor position, she learned of Midwest Missions, an organization with locations in Illinois and Iowa, from a retired assessor friend living in Algona.

One of the organization's projects is to use plastic grocery bags to make mats for the unhoused. Each mat uses 700 plastic bags. Using a loom, the bags are tied together the length of the loom, and then bags are woven through, pushed together tightly to not allow air or water between the bags. "I saw this as something I could do. It's like making a big potholder," commented Deb.

Midwest Missions has looms available for purchase, but one of Deb's friends in Allison built her loom.

The finished grocery bag product is a mat that the unhoused can sleep on so they don't have to lay on the ground. The mat is easy to transport, if needed. "Everything they have, they have to carry. It has to be something they can manage," Deb said. She has taken her mats to the Salvation Army in Waterloo, but the mats have also been sent to third-world countries.

Midwest Missions, at [midwestmission.org](http://midwestmission.org), provides disaster relief, medical supplies, education resources, and bikes and sewing machines as a means for people to make a living.



Above: Deb creating a mat for the unhoused.

Below: Deb's mat loom.



# Beginner's guide to the electric grid

A WORD FROM



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**A**s a distribution cooperative, Butler County REC receives power from our generation and transmission (G&T) co-op, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Humboldt, Iowa, who in turn receives power from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck, North Dakota.

The power is generated for and transmitted to us by our G&Ts and distributed to our members by us. To move electricity from our G&Ts' power plants to you, we need a transportation system.

High-voltage transmission lines act as the highways for electricity, transporting power over long distances. These lines are supported by massive towers and travel through vast landscapes, connecting power plants to electric substations.

Substations are like pit stops along the highway, where the voltage of electricity is adjusted. They play a crucial role in managing power flow and ensuring that electricity is safe for use in homes and businesses.

Once the electricity is reduced to the proper voltage, it travels through distribution power lines, like the ones

you typically see on the side of the road. Distribution lines carry electricity from substations to homes, schools, and businesses. Distribution transformers, which look like metal buckets on the tops of power poles or large green boxes on the ground, further reduce the voltage to levels suitable for household appliances and electronic devices.

After traveling through transformers, electricity reaches you—to power everyday life.

Electricity plays an essential role, powering our homes, offices, hospitals, and schools. We depend on it to keep us warm in the winter and cool in the summer, charge our phones, and binge our favorite TV shows.

The electric grid that delivers your electricity is often described as the most complex machine in the world.

What makes it so complex? We all use different amounts of electricity throughout the day, so the supply and demand for electricity is constantly changing. For example, we typically use more electricity in the mornings when we're starting our day, and in the evenings when we're cooking dinner and using appliances. Severe weather and other factors also impact how much electricity we need.

The challenge for electric providers is to plan for, produce, and purchase enough electricity so it's available exactly when we need it. Too much or too little electricity in one place can cause problems. So, to make sure the whole system stays balanced, the electric grid must adjust in real time to changes and unforeseen events.

At its core, the electric grid is a network of generators, power lines, transformers, substations, and other in-

frastructure that span the entire country. But it's not just a singular system. It's divided into three major interconnected grids: the Eastern Interconnection, the Western Interconnection and the Texas Interconnection. These grids operate independently but are linked to allow electricity to be transferred between regions when backup support is required.

Within the three regions, seven balancing authorities known as independent system operators (ISOs) or regional transmission organizations (RTOs) monitor the grid, signaling to power plants when more electricity is needed to maintain a balanced electrical flow. ISOs and RTOs are like traffic controllers for electricity.

Power plants can be thought of as factories that make electricity using various energy sources, such as coal, natural gas, solar, wind, and nuclear energy. Across the U.S., more than 11,000 power plants deliver electricity to the grid.

We work closely with Corn Belt Power and Basin Electric to provide electricity at the lowest possible cost. Being part of a G&T benefits members like you by placing ownership and control in the hands of your co-op, prioritizing affordability and reliability, supporting local economic development, and fostering a sense of community.

We're proud to be your local, trusted energy provider. From the time it's created to the time it's used, electricity travels great distances to be available at the flip of a switch. That's what makes the electric grid our nation's most complex machine—and one of our nation's greatest achievements.

## Students: Deadlines approaching

- Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship: Feb. 1, 2026
- Butler County REC Technical/Trade Industry Scholarship: March 1, 2026
- Powerline, Powerline Technology, Wiring Scholarship: March 1, 2026
- Wind Energy and Turbine Scholarship: March 1, 2026
- Youth Tour Trip to Washington, D.C.: March 1, 2026

Visit [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop) – Member Perks – Students for information and applications!

## Rowell retires

Matt Rowell, Horton crew chief, retired on Dec. 1, 2025, after serving our members for 27 years.

Before becoming a Butler County REC employee, Matt traveled while working construction. Wanting a job with more security and steady hours, income, and benefits and a good place to raise his daughters, Matt applied for and received a first-class line crew position.

Throughout his time at BCREC, Matt has seen several changes, including technology, digital mapping, AMI meters, and real-time communications, all systems that help our line crew more quickly find members' power issues. One of Matt's favorite memories during his career has been "seeing people's faces light up when the power comes back on."

Matt has also enjoyed "showing younger guys the ropes and watching them advance. I will miss the people I worked with and the brotherhood of the crews."

During retirement, Matt plans to enjoy his family and friends, travel, discover new hobbies, volunteer, and relax. "I look forward to enjoying life at a slower pace," he said.

"I do want members to know they are in good hands. There's an awesome group of people running the operation at Butler County REC. I am grateful for the years I have spent here. I'll miss seeing the lights come back on, knowing we made a difference."

Matt, we will miss you, too. Thank you for the difference you have made in our members' and our lives.

*Enjoy your retirement, Matt!*



## Need assistance with your winter power bills?

Butler County REC's members-helping-members program, RECare, was established for our members needing assistance with their power bills during the winter months.

Effective Oct. 1, 2025, the following enhancements were made to our RECare program:

- RECare applicants may receive up to \$350 for electric usage and up to \$550 if using electricity as their primary heating source.
- At the conclusion of the moratorium, April 1, Butler County REC may disburse funds up to \$75 to RECare applicants who made full payments throughout the winter. This will show on bills in either April or May.

Members are required to apply for energy assistance through their county community action agency to receive RECare funds.

Contact us at 888.267.2726 if you have questions.

## Stars are born in 2026 Touchstone Energy ad

You may be seeing some familiar faces in print ads and on television in 2026.

Butler County REC was chosen as the host cooperative for the lone Touchstone Energy Cooperative's ad shoot for 2026, which took place in June. Harvest Creative Services, Lansing, Michigan, was the production company.

Several Butler County REC employees, retirees, and directors, along with a few family members, appear in the ad campaign. The ad was also a nod to cooperation among cooperatives, one of our seven cooperative principles. The first scene was shot at Grundy County REC, Grundy Center, with co-op employees in the ad. Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Estherville, sent three volunteers who appeared in various scenes, as well.

The ad, released during the Touchstone Energy annual meeting in November, is Touchstone's 2026 national campaign, The Cooperative Advantage. With over 100 co-op members, employees, and actors, this was Touchstone's largest production to date. It also has the distinction of being the only ad in eight years with Harvest that scene shooting days had to change to accommodate weather.

"Touchstone Energy and Harvest Creative Services were great to work with. Butler County REC was proud to be the host for the 2026 ad campaign. It was an amazing opportunity that we are so grateful to have been a part of." commented Anne Gardiner, Butler County REC public relations specialist.



## Interested in our rebates?



SCAN ME

# Butler County REC's 2025 in focus

## Members

- \$1,366,689.91 paid in patronage
- \$2,090,323.86 in margins allocated by board
- 89th annual meeting held
- Almost 70 members contributed to RECare
- RECare contribution amounts from Butler County increased for members needing support
- Approximately 1,600 meals served at member appreciation events
- Rebate amount adjustments made to better serve membership
- Five nominees for Shine the Light: Al Buseman, Dumont; Stephanie Duhrkopf, Sumner; Patty Hummel, Allison; Deb McWhirter, Allison; Debra White, Clarksville
- Facebook followers: 2,209
- Instagram followers: 142
- Basin scholarship and Youth Tour attendee scholarship winner: Caleb Sinnwell, Nashua
- Technical/Trade scholarship winners: Easton Richards, Ionia, and Caleb Sinnwell, Nashua
- Youth Tour attendee: Amelia Thompson, Greene
- Newsletter column series on how wholesale power affects the cooperative and our membership
- New Marathon water heater pricing

## Operations

- No lost-time accidents
- 20.23 miles of line rebuilt through the construction work plan
- 3.75 miles of new or rebuilt overhead line constructed through work orders
- 1.58 miles of new underground line built
- 249 work orders completed by crews
- Security and Response Services took 1,786 calls from members resulting in crews being dispatched for 129 of those calls
- 678 poles set
- Our two solar arrays produced enough energy to power over 40 homes

## Employees/Directors

- Honored for years of service: Jane Bradley, 40; Lori Beach, 30; Ben Bowman, 20; Gary Doehrmann, 15; Zach White, Joel Noelting, Tyler Retterath, 5
- Steve Boevers retired after 12 years on the board
- Tom Risse elected to the board
- Jane Bradley, 40 years; Lori Beach, 31 years; and Matt Rowell, 27 years, retired
- Tyler Retterath and Bryce Bruns earned journeymen linemen status
- Bethany Carlson, Gabbi Guerrero, and Luke Leichtman began their Butler County REC careers
- 10 employees volunteered over 750 hours
- Donated to Head Start organizations in our four counties through employee fundraiser
- Participated in the only 2025 ad shoot for Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

*We look forward to serving you in 2026!*

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