

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

May 2021

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Butler County REC annual meeting held

Due to concerns of COVID-19, your Butler County REC board of directors made the decision to conduct the 2021 annual meeting of members by mail-in ballot only.

The morning of the annual meeting on Saturday, March 27, election tellers, along with corporate attorney Dennis Puckett, opened and counted over 530 mail-in ballots to establish the results of the election.

Members of Butler County REC re-elected three incumbent directors: Duane Rieckenberg, Ionia; Troy Feldman, Greene; and Share Brandt, Allison.

Following the ballot count, the board of directors held an organizational meeting and elected the following officers: Duane Rieckenberg, Ionia, president; Gary Poppe, Ionia, vice president; Leland Boyd, Charles City, treasurer; Tim Schrage, Allison, secretary; and Share Brandt, Allison, assistant secretary-treasurer.

The annual report was included in your April bill and is also available on our website at butlerrec.coop, About Us, Board and Mission.

We appreciate our members demonstrating the cooperative principle of Democratic Member Control and returning the mail-in ballot. Thank you for participating in the cooperative difference!



Your re-elected incumbent directors (l to r): Share Brandt, Duane Rieckenberg, and Troy Feldman.



Election tellers (l to r): REC corporate attorney Dennis Puckett; REC employees Anne Sesker, Gary Doehrmann, Mandy Brouwer, John Groen, Jane Bradley, Sandi Miller.



Take a permanent vacation from mailing your REC bills

This promotion runs through August 31, 2021, with bill credits appearing on the first billing following notification of your authorization.

Automatic bill payment is offered at no charge for members. Payments are deducted from your bank account or applied to your credit card on the 28th of each month or the next banking day if the 28th is a bank holiday or weekend.

Leave everything behind, including remembering to pay your Butler County REC bill, when you get away this summer!

If you're planning to hit the road this summer for a much-deserved getaway, Butler County REC offers you one less thing to think about—your power bill payment.

From June through August, if you sign up for automatic bill pay with Butler County REC, your name will be entered into a drawing for a **\$100 bill credit** for the month in which you enroll.

As a new sign-up, if you mail in a form (for checking or savings), you will receive a one-time **\$5 bill credit**. Forms can be found on our website at butlerrec.coop, or call the office and we will send you the form. Sign up through SmartHub on our website (for checking, savings, or credit card), and you will receive a one-time **\$10 bill credit**.

Improving your yard? Know what's above and below

When the temperature warms to signal the arrival of spring, many of us begin planning improvements to our outdoor spaces. This could include building a deck, adding a patio, or assembling play equipment. Remember to plan for safety prior to adding an outdoor structure or improving your yard.

Being aware of power line locations near your home is important for you and your family's safety. Always look up and around for power lines, recognizing too that electricity can jump or transfer even without direct contact. Also know what's below before starting any digging job.

Your Touchstone Energy cooperative and Safe Electricity offer these tips to keep in mind while working in your yard:

- Assume that all power lines are always energized and keep at least 10 feet between a power line and you or any item you are holding.
- Perform a hazard assessment of the work area, noting all power line locations.
- Call 8-1-1 to mark underground utilities before digging. The service is free.
- Utility locators do not mark private lines, however. Private lines need to be marked by an independent locating service.
- Once underground utilities are marked, the 8-1-1 "Call Before You Dig" service recommends that the area within 18 to 24 inches of either side of the marked lines be dug by hand with a fiberglass-handled shovel, not by machine.
- Do not install structures within 25 feet of a power line. Consider the height and reach of all structures in relation to the lines.
- Educate your children about power line safety and how electricity can jump. Teach them to never touch a power line or get too close to one — either directly or with a toy or object.
- Use extreme caution when moving ladders and operating long-handled tools, such as pool skimmers, around trees and power lines.
- Also use extreme caution and look up and around for power lines when you are elevated, whether it be on a ladder, a boom lift, scaffolding, or your roof.
- Keep in mind that specialized tree trimming experts certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in utility clearance are the only persons legally allowed to trim within 10 feet of power lines.

Please contact us with questions about specific power line clearance recommendations concerning decks, pools and play structures in your yard. For more information about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Memorial Day Monday, May 31

**Our offices are closed
on Monday, May 31, in
observance of Memorial Day.**

**As always, our phones are
answered 24/7 for outages
and emergencies.**

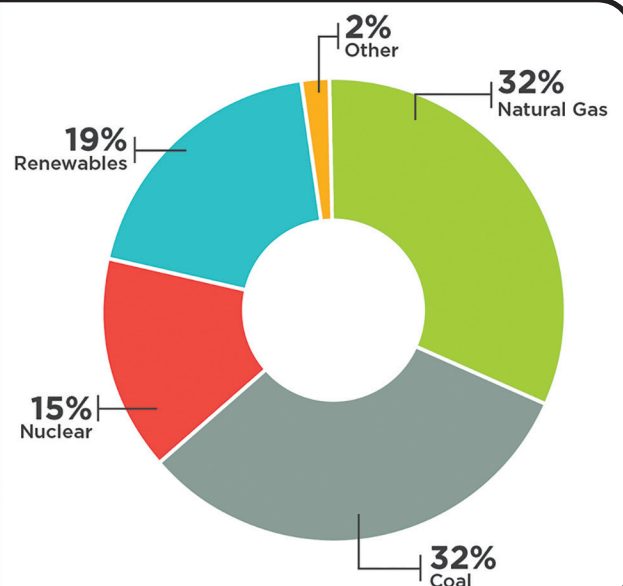


Co-op Energy Sources

Nationally, electric cooperatives use a variety of fuels to power consumer-members' homes and businesses.

This diverse fuel mix supplies co-op members with the safe, reliable and affordable power they depend on.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (2019 data)



Shining the Light on community volunteers in June

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Iowa's electric co-ops are launching a new contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. The Shine the Light contest, sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, will accept nominations and select three winners who will each receive a \$1,500 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

Member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers during the month of June. We encourage you to nominate someone who is making a positive impact in the community. The volunteer being nominated does not need to be a co-op member-consumer. Minors may be nominated with consent from their parents or legal guardians.

The three winners will be announced during the Iowa State Fair in August. In addition to the \$1,500 donation, each winner will be featured in the September issue of Living with Energy in Iowa magazine.

Go to www.IowaShineTheLight.com to review the contest rules. Contest entries will be accepted at this website starting on June 1. Help us shine the light on community volunteers this summer and consider making a nomination.



Nominate a local volunteer and they could win \$1,500 for their charity!

Contest entries accepted during June at IowaShineTheLight.com



Too much screen time? Try blue-light glasses

If you're spending too much time watching TV, scrolling through social media posts, or playing video games, your eyes may be paying the price.

Computer, TV, and phone screens emit blue light, part of the visible light spectrum with the shortest wavelengths and the highest energy. We sit so close to our screens, that blue light can penetrate our eyes.

Too much exposure to blue light can increase the risk of macular degeneration, an eye disease that can lead to permanent vision loss. The more screen time you log, the greater your risk.

One remedy: blue-light canceling glasses. The lenses filter out blue light.

Computer glasses, on the other hand, reduce eye strain while using digital devices.

Both models are sold with prescription or non-prescription lenses.

Your Touchstone Energy cooperative encourages you to MOVE OVER AND SLOW DOWN when you approach a vehicle with flashers on.

Let's make sure everyone arrives safely!



**MOVE OVER
SLOW DOWN**

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Effective May 22, 1991, the Iowa Utilities Board passed a ruling requiring all non-rate regulated utilities to post the following notice to its memberships: If a member-consumer has a question or concern regarding his/her electric service, please write or call your local electric cooperative at the following address or phone number:

Butler County REC

521 N. Main Street, PO Box 98
Allison, IA 50602-0098
(319) 267-2726
www.butlerrec.coop

Franklin REC

1560 Highway 65, PO Box 437
Hampton, IA 50441-0437
(641) 456-2557
www.franklinrec.coop

Prairie Energy Cooperative

2099 Highway 3 West, PO Box 353
Clarion, IA 50525-0353
(515) 532-2805
www.prairieenergy.coop

If your complaint is related to your cooperative's service rather than its rates, and your cooperative does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling 515-725-7321 or toll-free 1-877-565-4450; by writing to 1375 E. Court Avenue, Room 69, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069; or by email to customer@iub.iowa.gov.

A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO
ccodner@butlerrec.coop

How your electricity usage is measured

With my March column I began a series of discussions about how usage, meters, rates, and billing are related to each other, specifically discussing energy usage and demand.

Butler County REC is a distribution cooperative—distributing energy to our members from our generation and transmission (G & T) cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative in Humboldt. In addition, I discussed that your energy usage matters because it's not just about how much is being consumed, but also how much is being used at one time because a peak can be created, incurring additional cost to the system and ultimately our members.

This month, I want to talk about your meter. Each month when you receive your Butler County REC bill, your “NEW READING” and “PRIOR READING” appear under your current charges. These numbers represent your meter readings and how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) you used during the previous month. Your kWh reading is your energy consumption—how much electricity you used during that billing cycle.

Each kWh is the basic measure of electric energy use. It equals the amount of energy you would use by keeping a 1,000-watt appliance running for one hour. For example, a 100-watt lightbulb burning for 10 hours uses 1 kWh.

Our current Cannon Technologies metering system has allowed us to provide our members with more precise meter readings, improved billing accuracy, faster outage response times, as well as a load management program.



We are in the process of researching an upgrade from our current power-line carrier (PLC) meters to radio frequency (RF) meters. The RF benefits to our members include the opportunity for more detailed information leading to even faster outage response and power restoration; more efficient power distribution helping Butler County REC keep your costs down; more information about how you use electricity to help diagnose problems leading to high bills; and more protection against cyber threats.

An RF system would also allow us to look at different rate designs that are more beneficial to our members and to the REC—rates that may make more sense for how YOU use electricity.

Watch for future newsletter columns in which I continue to explain demand and consumption and how they relate to usage, meters, and rates.



Schellhorn awarded Basin scholarship

Ethan Schellhorn, a senior at Tripoli High School, was chosen as Butler County REC's \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship recipient. Schellhorn is planning to attend Wartburg College, Waverly, and major in exercise science, with the goal of becoming a physical therapist.

Commenting on the scholarship award, Ethan said, “I want to thank you so much for awarding me with the Butler County REC \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative college scholarship. This will go a long way toward helping me finance my first year of college at Wartburg. I am grateful for your generosity and kindness. . . . I deeply appreciate it.”

Ethan has been very active in sports, community work, church activities, tutoring, and other activities throughout his high school career. He is the son of Scott and Beth Schellhorn, Sumner.

Congratulations, Ethan, and best of luck!

INtouch is published monthly for members of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative
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