

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

May 2023

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Butler County REC annual meeting held

On Saturday, April 1, your Butler County REC board of directors met at the North Butler Elementary School to conduct the business of the annual meeting.

Prior to the meeting, election tellers, along with corporate attorney Dennis Puckett, opened and counted the almost 600 mail-in ballots to establish the results of the election. The tellers were members Erika Bauer, Tom Bjelica, Randy Heitz, Randal Johnson, Mike Merfeld, and Jason Skillen.

Results of the election were announced during the meeting. Members re-elected Gerald Schmitt, Rockford, and Tim Schrage, Allison. Grant Greenzweig, Charles City, was elected to his first three-year director term, filling the seat of Leland Boyd, Charles City, who retired from the board after 34 years.

Following the meeting, the board of directors held their organizational meeting and elected the following officers: Duane Rieckenberg, Ionia, president; Gary Poppe, Ionia, vice president; Troy Feldman, Greene, treasurer; Tim Schrage, Allison, secretary; and Share Brandt, Allison, assistant secretary-treasurer.

The annual report was included in your May bill and is also available on our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop). About Us, Board and Mission.

Thank you to our members returning their ballots, to the tellers for their assistance, and to Leland Boyd for his service to our members. We appreciate your commitment to your cooperative!

We look forward to seeing our members at the 2023 member appreciation events this summer!

### Our Touchstone Energy Values

Integrity | Accountability | Innovation |  
Commitment to Community | Teamwork



(L to R) Tom Bjelica, Dennis Puckett, Randy Heitz



(L to R) Duane Rieckenberg, board president, and Craig Codner, CEO



(L to R) Directors Tim Schrage, Gerald Schmitt, Grant Greenzweig



Butler County REC line crew members helped restore power to consumers of Eastern Iowa Light & Power Cooperative in Wilton in early April. Bryce Bruns, Clint Deutsch, Lee Frerichs, Tyler Retterath, and Chris Wehling left for the storm-damaged area on Saturday, April 1, and returned home the next afternoon. Almost 7,000 members' power was restored in less than 36 hours by our line crew along with Eastern Iowa Light and Power Cooperative and East-Central REC, Urbana, personnel.



A new sign was installed in April on the Butler County REC office building in Allison. Last summer the front of the building was updated, and this summer the windows in the lobby will be replaced. The work being done is to improve the energy efficiency and aesthetics of the building.

## Shining the Light on community volunteers in June

Guided by our cooperative commitment to community, Iowa's electric co-ops are excited to once again participate in the statewide Shine the Light contest in June to celebrate local volunteers. Sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa, the contest will accept nominations in June and select three winners who will each receive a \$2,500 donation to their local charity or nonprofit.

"We've been truly inspired by the contest entries we received in our first two years," remarked Erin Campbell, director of communications for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives. "We're increasing our three charity donations from \$2,000 to \$2,500 each this year to encourage even more participation across the state."

Member-consumers and employees of Iowa's electric cooperatives are eligible to nominate local volunteers during the month of June. If you receive electricity from Butler County REC, you're a co-op member-consumer and 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. In addition, previously nominated volunteers who did not win are eligible to be nominated again.

The three winners will be announced in September and featured in *Iowa Electric Cooperative Living* magazine.

**Go to [www.IowaShineTheLight.com](http://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  
\$2,500 for their charity!**

Contest entries accepted during June at  
[IowaShineTheLight.com](http://IowaShineTheLight.com)

## MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

Follow these tips to help you find and correct hazards that may be lurking around the home.

 **Safe  
Electricity.org®**

## Electrical safety tips for home

May is National Electrical Safety Month and a good time to visually sweep your home for electrical safety risks. Unplug and store extension cords.

1. If you have more than one power strip plugged into an outlet, chances are good that you are overloading your circuits, especially if you live in an older house.
2. Kitchen countertop appliances should be plugged into three-prong, GFCI receptacles.
3. Change the batteries in your smoke alarms twice a year and test them monthly to make sure they're operating properly.
4. Check your light bulbs and change any lightbulb whose wattage exceeds the fixture's capacity.



## Dusty indoor air?

If the air inside your house is dusty, your air conditioning ducts may be leaking.

If you are changing your air conditioner filter regularly, it will trap dust and pollutants that get into the indoor air.

But if the ducts have tiny holes or cracks or are not well-sealed, dust can sneak into the ducts, blowing the dust all over the house.

It's well worth it to have the ducts of your air conditioning system sealed at the joints.

Not only will it prevent dust from flying around your house, it could reduce your air conditioning bills this summer. The average house loses about 20 percent of its conditioned air through ducts that are improperly installed or are leaking at the joints.

A house with "clean" air also is less likely to trigger dust and pollen allergies to family members while they are indoors.

## 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](http://www.butlerrec.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](mailto:customer@iub.iowa.gov).



Don't let a controlled burn reach a power pole.

The pole could slowly burn from the inside out.

Learn more at: [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

## Prevent grass and brush fires

Grass and brush are excellent fuels for fire, making fires involving ground cover and foliage extremely dangerous and destructive.

Grass and brush fires can travel up to 15.5 miles per hour and can spread to tens of thousands of acres within a few hours of ignition. They can occur naturally when lightning strikes the ground or when high winds bring down power lines, both of which can cause a spark and ignite a fire. However, 85 percent of wildfires are caused by humans. The more common causes include burning debris, using hot equipment on grass, improperly discarding cigarettes, leaving campfires unattended, and intentionally setting a fire.

To keep your family safe from grass and brush fires, follow these safety tips:

- Be aware of any Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches.
- Never build a campfire, shoot fireworks, burn debris, use a barbecue pit, or initiate a controlled burn when warnings are in effect.
- Never leave the area unattended and keep a shovel, bucket of water, fire extinguisher, or other fire suppression tools on hand.
- If you see a downed power line or other damaged electrical equipment, notify Butler County REC immediately. Never approach a downed power line or try to move one; stay at least 50 feet away from the area.
- Do not park cars, trucks, boats, or recreational vehicles on dry grass or shrubs.
- Use an approved spark arrester on all internal combustion engine-powered equipment used on your property, such as lawnmowers, chainsaws, tractors, and trimmers.

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



In Loving Memory



Mike Hall  
1981-2023

## Remembering Mike Hall

On Saturday, March 11, we lost our friend and co-worker Mike Hall, coordinating crew chief.

Mike began serving our Butler County REC members as a lineman on May 19, 2003, and was then promoted to coordinating crew chief.

“I worked with Mike for almost 20 years. He was hard-working and reliable. He always came to work early—ready to work and work safely. We could count on him. He took his work seriously, but he also knew how to have fun. We will miss him,” said John Endelman, operations manager.

Mike is survived by Molly, his wife, and their four daughters, Kaidance, Mya, Madasyn, and Jordyn.



Thank you to our over 70 members contributing to RECare, our program of members helping members. We appreciate you!

Funds through RECare are distributed by local community action agencies to help pay heating bills and to assist in the weatherization of homes of low-income consumers.

If you would like to contribute, please call us at 888-267-2726 or visit our website at [butlerrec.coop](http://butlerrec.coop).

## Zupke to attend Youth Tour

Butler County REC is proud to announce that Colton Zupke (*right*), a junior from Sumner-Fredericksburg High School, will be representing the cooperative at the 2023 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 17-23.

Zupke is the son of members Ryan and Ann Zupke, Fredericksburg. Active in football, basketball, and track, he is also a member of the National Honor Society and FFA, where he is a committee chairperson and involved in public speaking competitions.

While on the Youth Tour, Colton will join students from more than 40 additional electric cooperatives in Iowa and over 1,800 students from across America to explore our nation's capital. The fast-paced informative week gives the students a better understanding of the role electric cooperatives play in our country.



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