

InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

February 2024

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Nominating committee selects board candidates

The nominating committee of Butler County REC, duly appointed by the board of directors and consisting of Kenneth Kappmeyer, James Luebbers, and Dan Roose, met Dec. 28, 2023. They nominated the cooperative members listed below for the office of director for the ensuing term of three years each. The election will take place at the business-only annual meeting on Wednesday, March 27, at the Allison warehouse, 619 N. Railroad St., at 1:00 p.m.

To represent the west half of Bremer County

- Kenneth Kappmeyer, Waverly

To represent the northeast quarter of Butler County

- Troy Feldman (incumbent), Greene
- Clayton Kampman, Clarksville

To represent the southwest quarter of Butler County

- Share Brandt (incumbent), Allison

Candidate information and mail-in ballots will be mailed to members in March. In addition, candidate information will also be available online at butlerrec.coop.

Mail-in ballots will be due at the cooperative office no later than 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 26, 2024.



Your 2024 Nominating Committee (l to r): Kenneth Kappmeyer, Waverly; James Luebbers, Aplington; and Dan Roose, Allison

Patronage of \$1,562,165.83 returned to members

The Butler County REC board of directors has authorized the distribution of \$1,562,165.83 in patronage to current and former members of the cooperative.

The board elected to retire the remaining portion of 2005, the 2006 allocation, and a portion of 2007. The amount you receive is based on how much electricity you purchased during those years. The REC returns patronage on a 19-year cycle. However, our wholesale power supplier, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, is also retiring a portion of the patronage Butler County REC was allocated in 2022. This is included in the amount to be returned to members.

Active (current) members received a credit on their power bill mailed in February 2024. Checks have been mailed to qualifying members no longer receiving service from Butler County REC.

What is patronage?

Patronage distributions from member-owned, not-for-profit utilities like Butler County REC are somewhat similar to the dividends paid to shareholders of investor-owned utilities. The difference is that a co-op's "shareholders" are also the members that it serves and the "dividends" (patronage) are distributed to the co-op's member/owners.

Your cooperative's rates are set to bring in enough money to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve. At the end of each calendar year, we subtract operating expenses from the total amount of money collected during the year; the balance is the "margin." This margin is allocated to each member based on the amount each member paid for electricity. The Butler County REC board of directors, before distributing the patronage, must consider the financial condition of the cooperative, the need for capital funds, and the availability of loan funds.

Since 1938, your cooperative has returned a total of \$11,996,942.87 in patronage.



A WORD FROM



Craig Codner, CEO
ccodner@butlerrec.coop

Increased inflation and how it affects you and your cooperative

Rising costs and inflation are a common topic of conversation.

If it seems as if food has been especially high, you are right. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, between 2018 and 2022 the average annual percent change in food price was 5.65 percent. Between 2021 and 2022 alone, however, it was 11.42 percent. Rent and gas have also seen significant increases in the last few years. (See TABLE 1 included in this article.) As a result of inflation, our money does not go as far.

So, what has caused the recent infla-

tion? In March 2023, a director from the Roosevelt Institute stated that it was caused by shifts from services to goods (our economy was roughly 65 percent services and 35 percent goods but is now 60 percent services and 40 percent goods—a major shift for a short period), vulnerabilities in supply chains, the housing market, an increase in working from home, and Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine.

No individual or business is untouched by the inflation we are currently experiencing. At Butler County REC, we have also been affected by rising costs. Wire and pole prices have increased significantly, as have transformers—not to mention how difficult it is to obtain them. (See TABLE 2 included in this article.)

In addition, in the last few years, Butler County REC has seen increases in the cost of trucks: 49 percent for a pickup truck, 28 percent for a small basket truck, 64 percent for a large basket

truck, and 7 percent for a digger derrick.

It makes sense that these rising costs affect the REC’s bottom line, and as good stewards of your money, we want to ensure we are spending wisely.

Everyone wants to get as much as they can from their income. To do that and to counteract inflation, you can review your budget (or create one); create a meal plan and a grocery list from that meal plan; and run all your errands in one trip. These may be small changes, but they can add up.

If you are concerned about your energy bill, there are several options, including, scheduling an energy audit with Matt and Tyler from our energy-efficiency department, lowering your thermostat by a degree or two in the winter, making sure your windows are sealed, and signing up for budget billing so you know what you will be paying each month. We have more tips on our website at www.butlerrec.coop or you can contact us at 888-267-2726.

TABLE 1	2018	2022	Increase
Bacon, 1 lb.	\$5.47	\$7.31	34%
Coffee, 1 lb.	\$4.30	\$5.89	37%
Eggs, 1 doz.	\$1.74	\$2.86	64%
Milk, 1 gal.	\$2.90	\$4.09	55%
Gas, 1 gal.	\$2.71	\$4.19	55%
Rent, Iowa	\$791/mo.	\$974/mo.	23%

TABLE 2	2018	2022	Increase
Wire, per foot	\$2.79	\$5.00	79%
Pole, per pole	\$250	\$459	84%
Transformer	\$2,365.68	\$4,175.36	77%

Keep warm the natural way

Before you crank up the thermostat on an especially chilly day this winter, reach for a sweater and a pair of thick socks.

Here are four practical alternatives to sending your energy bills through the roof this winter:

1. Dress in layers. Pull a T-shirt on before layering a sweater over it. Choose fleece-lined sweatpants for lounging around the house.
2. Keep your feet warm. Did you know your feet and hands let heat leave your body? So never walk around barefoot indoors during the winter, even if you have wall-to-wall carpeting. Wear thick socks, even with slippers.
3. Put an electric blanket on your bed before you crawl into it, and the sheets and blankets will be toasty warm. Turn the electric blanket off before you fall asleep, or invest in one with an automatic “off” switch.
4. Move around. You’ll be colder if you sit still all day than if you’re active. Use chilly days to clean the house, exercise, or play with the kids. The more you move, the warmer you’ll feel.



NEW PAY-BY-PHONE NUMBER: 855-918-3803

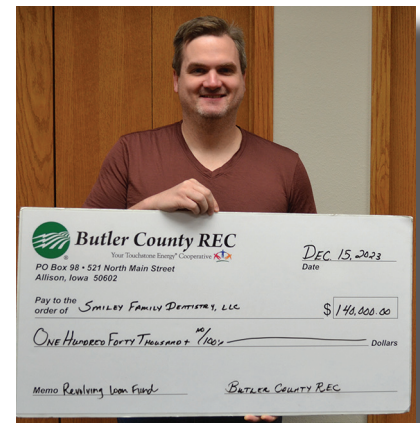
Beginning March 7, 2024, Butler County REC's Pay-by-Phone number will be changing to 855-918-3803. Members whose accounts have been set up on Pay-by-Phone will not need to re-register. If you want to set up a Pay-by-Phone account, be sure to have the Butler County REC primary phone number or account number and the Social Security number associated with the account.

12 Days of Christmas winners announced

Thank you to everyone participating in our 12 Days of Christmas giveaways! What a great way to connect with so many of you.

Congratulations to the following members who won prizes:

- Day 1: Mindy Heck, Tripoli, BCREC tumbler
- Day 2: Christi Lines, Nashua, Target gift card
- Day 3: Aimee Deuell, Greene, ornament
- Day 4: Sarah Jordan, Shell Rock, popcorn popper
- Day 5: Ann Zupke, Fredericksburg, mug warmer
- Day 6: Jacque Eberhart, Parkersburg, Real Deal's gift card
- Day 7: Carla Ostendorf, Allison, indoor s'mores kit
- Day 8: Debbie Friedman, Marble Rock, mug and cocoa
- Day 9: Tracy Weiss, Waverly, BCREC hat
- Day 10: Michelle Heath, Parkersburg, Casey's gift card
- Day 11: Allyson Mueller, Tripoli, rechargeable hand warmers
- Day 12: Brit Frerichs, Bristow, \$50 bill credit



Smiley Family Dentistry, LLC, receives loan

Smiley Family Dentistry, LLC, Waverly, is the latest loan recipient from Butler County REC's United States Department of Agriculture Revolving Loan Fund.

The dentist office, owned by Jonathan Smiley, DMD, will be relocating from their current office on the western edge of Waverly to downtown Waverly.

Tax credits available

Tax credits are available on several energy-efficient home improvements, due to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. According to the Act, these credits are available through 2032.

The following are some of the available tax credits. Butler County REC also has rebates for several of the items:

- Air Source Heat Pumps: 30% of project cost, \$2,000 maximum amount credited; BCREC rebate offered
- Central Air Conditioners: 30% of project cost, \$600 maximum amount credited; BCREC rebate offered
- Electric Panel Upgrade: 30% of project cost, \$600 maximum amount credited
- Exterior Doors: 30% of product cost, \$500 (\$250 per door) maximum amount credited
- Geothermal Heat Pumps: 22 to 30% depending on when property was placed in service; BCREC rebate offered
- Heat Pump Water Heaters: 30% of project cost, \$2,000 maximum amount credited; BCREC rebate offered
- Insulation: 30% of product cost, \$1,200 maximum amount credited; BCREC rebate offered
- Windows & Skylights: 30% of product cost, \$600 maximum amount credited

NOTE: Be sure to consult with your tax advisor regarding these credits. The overall total limit for an efficiency tax credit in one year is \$3,200. Visit <https://bit.ly/41rc0ix> for additional Energy Star tax credit information.

Contact Matt or Tyler in our Energy Efficiency Department for more information on electric heat and our numerous rebates.



STUDENTS: Deadlines approaching

- Technical/Trade Industry Scholarship: March 1, 2024
- Youth Tour: March 1, 2024
- Iowa Lakes Community College Scholarship: March 1, 2024
- Northwest Iowa Community College Scholarship: March 1, 2024

Be sure to check our website at www.butlerrec.coop for information and applications.

How Extreme Winter Weather Impacts Reliability

By Maura Giles, NRECA

When outdoor temperatures drop, our electricity use increases. In addition, we all tend to use electricity at the same times—in the morning and early evenings—and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

At Butler County REC, we work closely with our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch, but the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and G&T.

In winter months, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if an unexpected event like a sudden snow or ice storm or equipment malfunction occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call for rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid, and Butler County REC will inform you about the situation as soon as we are notified.

We take proactive steps to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts, and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.


To help keep the heat on for you and your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid (and save a little money along the way):

- Select the lowest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it down several degrees whenever possible.
- Stagger your use of major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens, and dryers.
- Ensure that your heating system is optimized for efficiency with regular maintenance and proper insulation.
- When possible, use cold water to reduce water heating costs.
- Unplug devices when not in use to eliminate unnecessary energy use. Even when turned off, electronics in standby mode consume energy.

BEST BETS FOR Winter Savings

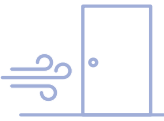
Energy consumption spikes during winter months as we spend more time indoors and heating systems work overtime. You can help reduce demand and strain on the electric grid by conserving during peak energy times. Reducing energy use will also help lower your energy bills.

UNPLUG WHEN POSSIBLE




Turn off unnecessary lights and electronics when you aren't using them.

ELIMINATE DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS




Seal air leaks and drafts around windows and exterior doors.

USE APPLIANCES WHEN ENERGY DEMAND IS LOWER




Run large appliances like clothes washers, dryers and dishwashers early in the morning or before you go to bed.

MAINTAIN HEATING EQUIPMENT



Maintain your heating system by replacing dirty, clogged filters and scheduling an annual inspection for necessary maintenance.

LOWER THE THERMOSTAT



Home heating accounts for a large portion of energy consumption. Adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting (68 degrees or lower).

Understanding the impact winter weather has on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme cold, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the power grid, keeping our local communities warm and connected.

Congratulations!

Diane White, Waverly, is the latest winner of a \$25 bill credit from Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine. Diane's recipe for Cheesy Potatoes was published in the December 2023 issue of the magazine.

Page 9 of each issue of the magazine details how to submit your recipe—either by email or by mail to the magazine's headquarters. If your recipe is chosen, you will win a \$25 bill credit, as well!

The magazine's website has several recipes if you are looking for something new to try. Just go to the website at www.ieclmagazine.com, click on Recipes, and then Recipe Archive.



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