

# InTouch

WITH MEMBERS OF BUTLER COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

October 2026

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## Refresh your cybersecurity habits this month

A WORD FROM



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As the leaves change and we settle into our fall routines, it's a good time to take stock of a few things around the house—including getting ready for the colder months ahead and refreshing our cybersecurity habits.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but protecting your personal information is something that deserves attention all year long.

At Butler County REC, cybersecurity is a critical part of providing safe, reliable electric service. While much of our focus is on protecting the physical systems that operate the electric grid, we also work to protect the systems and information that help us serve you—including online accounts, payment systems, member portals, and outage communications.

Unfortunately, artificial intelligence (AI) is making it easier for cyber criminals to create convincing emails, text messages, websites, and voice messages that can look and sound legitimate. The FBI has warned that generative AI

can make fraudulent schemes more believable by eliminating many of the errors that once helped us identify a scam.

That matters when it comes to utility scams.

A scammer may impersonate Butler County REC and claim your account is past due, your service is about to be disconnected, or you need to make an immediate payment. The message might even include our logo, use professional language, or direct you to a website that appears legitimate. With AI helping scammers create more convincing communica-

tions, looking for spelling mistakes or other obvious warning signs may no longer be enough. And these scams are not a small problem.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, consumers reported losing \$3.5 billion to imposter scams in 2025, making these types of scams the most commonly reported type of fraud. Nearly



one in three fraud reports involved an imposter scam.

So, what should you do if you receive an unexpected message claiming to be from us?

If a message creates a sense of urgency or threatens immediate disconnection, take a moment to verify it. Don't click the link or call the phone number provided in the message. Instead, contact us directly. You can reach us by phone at 888.267.2726, through SmartHub and our website at butlerrec.coop, or by email at butler@butlerrec.coop.

You can also take steps to protect your online accounts before a scam occurs. Start with your password. Longer is generally better than only adding more special characters. Choose a long, unique passphrase that is difficult for others to guess, and don't reuse the same password across multiple accounts.

If the accounts you access online offer multifactor authentication (MFA), consider using it. MFA adds an extra layer of protection by requiring an additional way to verify your identity, such as a code sent to your phone or an authentication app.

Butler County REC security doesn't end with your account. There is also physical security. If you notice anyone suspicious near our substations or equipment, please give us a call—SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

Butler County REC is committed to protecting the systems that help us deliver your electricity and serve our members. You can help by protecting your own account, slowing down when something seems urgent, and contacting us directly when you're unsure.

We want to help you keep your information safe. For questions about your account or payment options, contact us at 888.267.2726.



## 2026 nominees announced

At Butler County REC, we are proud to recognize the volunteer work being done by our members. This year, three individuals and one couple were nominated for the state-wide cooperative Shine the Light contest. Those nominated were:

*Mark Bohner, Tripoli*, nominated by Nancy Kappmeyer, for his work with the Clarksville Food Pantry, Waterloo Salvation Army, Waverly Library Garden, Waverly Gardens, Bremer County Extension Board, Wapsi Sportsman's Club, and numerous additional organizations

*Dave and Judy Bucknell, Ionia*, nominated by Jennifer Waddell, for their work with the Big 4 Fair in Nashua

*Stephanie Duhrkopf, Sumner*, nominated by Nancy Meyer, for her work with the Sumner Daycare and Learning Center

*Shirley Wubbena, Bristow*, nominated by Deb McWhirter, for her work with Wilder Park in Allison and Cedar Valley Hospice

***Congratulations to the nominees, and THANK YOU for the work you are doing to better your communities!***

## Is your HVAC system ready for winter?

### Schedule a professional inspection

- Have your heating system inspected by a qualified HVAC professional each year, preferably before winter arrives.
- Ensure the inspection includes checking for proper ventilation and signs of carbon monoxide risks if your home has a gas, propane, or oil furnace.

### Change or clean air filters

- Check your air filter regularly and replace or clean it as needed — usually every one to three months. Consider filter changes more often for homes with pets, allergies, heavy system use, or significant dust.

### Check airflow throughout the home

- Ensure all registers and vents are clean and not blocked by furniture, rugs, curtains, or other items.
- Vacuum vents to remove dust and keep air moving freely.
- Keep most of your registers open. Closing vents can disrupt airflow, making your system work harder.

### Reduce heat loss

- Look for drafts around windows and doors, and seal gaps with weatherstripping or caulk.
- Check insulation in attics, basements, and crawl spaces.

### Prepare outdoor HVAC equipment

- Remove leaves, branches, grass clippings, and other debris around outdoor HVAC equipment, and trim shrubs.
- Check gutters and downspouts to ensure water drains away from HVAC equipment.
- Check that your furnace's outdoor air intake and exhaust pipes are clear to prevent carbon monoxide buildup.
- Keep outdoor heat pumps clear of snow, ice, and debris during the winter.

### Adjust your thermostat for energy savings

- Install or program a smart thermostat to match your household schedule. Lowering the temperature when you are asleep or away from home can help save energy without compromising comfort.
- Review the settings on your smart or programmable thermostat before winter begins. You could set the fan to "auto" during mild fall weather to circulate air efficiently without unnecessary energy use.

### Know when it may be time for a replacement

- Watch for signs such as increasing energy bills, uneven heating, frequent repairs, unusual noises, or a system that takes too long to heat your home.
- When it is time to replace your system, consider ENERGY STAR-labeled equipment for long-term energy savings and efficiency.
- Contact us for a discussion on your HVAC options and rebate information: 888.267.2726.

# Backer returns from Youth Tour adventure

Kennedy Backer (*pictured right*), a senior at Waverly-Shell Rock High School, wasn't ready to come home. "I would definitely recommend it," she said of her Washington, D.C. Youth Tour experience. "The week went fast."

Kennedy was chosen as Butler County REC's representative for the June 2026 week-long trip. The adventure included the Capitol, monuments, museums, meetings with interns for Senators Charles Grassley and Joanie Ernst and Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks, and a Potomac River dinner cruise.

She was chosen as one of four students for the honor of laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. "That was my favorite part," she said. Before the ceremony, the group toured the cemetery.

There are traditions that can be counted on during the Youth Tour, which include eating spots; trading state pins; and the snack co-op used to teach the students the cooperative business model. Kennedy collected over 30 pins (Iowa also trades a corn necklace). She said the snack co-op "helped her understand how co-ops work."

After being told to expect to walk 6-10 miles per day on the tour, Kennedy prepared by walking 8 miles per day, stating that her feet never hurt while on the trip.

Next up for Kennedy after graduation from high school is college. She is considering Iowa State, Ames, to pursue a degree in wildlife and fisheries conservation and ecology.



## Your source for saving money and energy

If you have recently purchased an EnergyStar appliance, installed a heat pump or electric furnace, or insulated your home, don't forget that we have rebates for those and other purchases you may have made!

We also offer NO-COST audits to assess your home's energy efficiency and usage. You'll learn where your home may be leaking energy and best practices to save money and energy.

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.

## RECare: Members helping members

Butler County REC continues to extend a helping hand to members in need. In response to actions by the Iowa General Assembly, your REC has established RECare, a program of members helping members.

RECare will provide funds to be distributed by local community action agencies to help pay winter heating bills and to assist in weatherization of homes of low-income consumers.

You may make a one-time contribution or a monthly pledge that will be automatically added onto your monthly electric bill. Even a dollar a month pledge will help others. *You have the power to make a difference.*

### RECare Consumer Authorization Form

- I will contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month. I understand this amount will be automatically added to my monthly electric bill.
- I will make a one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to RECare. My check is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_



Return to Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative



# Local voices shape local solutions

October is National Co-op Month *By Abby Berry, NRECA*

When you hear the word cooperative, what comes to mind? As your local electric co-op, we hope you think of Butler County REC.

Regardless of the services offered, all cooperatives have one thing in common: they're led by the people they serve—and that simple idea makes a meaningful difference.

Cooperatives come in all shapes and sizes, each created to meet a specific need. Credit unions help members save and borrow money. Producer cooperatives, like Ocean Spray and Land O'Lakes, help farmers bring their products to market. Retail cooperatives, like REI and ACE Hardware, are owned by their shoppers or a membership of store owners, while housing cooperatives give residents a voice in managing their communities. And utility cooperatives—like Butler County REC—provide reliable electricity to the communities they serve.

Unlike many businesses that answer to outside investors or shareholders, cooperatives are built for our members. Our goal isn't simply to earn a profit—it's to provide value, meet unique local needs, and strengthen the communities we call home.

That's exactly what makes us different.

Our story began in 1936 when neighbors came together to bring electricity to an area when other utilities wouldn't. While a lot has changed since then, our purpose has remained steady. We're still here to provide power and make decisions with our community's best interests in mind.

Being locally owned means we have the flexibility to focus on what matters most to the communities we serve. That's why no two electric cooperatives are exactly alike. Every community has different needs, and every cooperative reflects those priorities.

For some co-ops, that means expanding programs that help members save energy and money. Others may focus on supporting economic development, investing in new technology, or creating new opportunities for local students.

You'll also find the co-op difference in the little things. It's the lineworkers restoring power after a storm. The employees answering your questions when you call. The team members volunteering at community events. The board members—your neighbors—who help guide decisions for the future.

We're your neighbor and local energy partner, and we're committed to serving this community for generations to come.

This National Co-op Month, we invite you to join us in celebrating the cooperative difference, because this co-op belongs to you.

Whether it's Butler County REC, your local credit union, or ACE Hardware, cooperatives prove that when people work together, everyone benefits.

Your membership is what makes our mission possible—and it's what keeps us focused on serving the people and communities that matter most.

## TYPES OF CO-OPS

Cooperatives come in many forms—from electric utilities and credit unions to farm supply stores and housing co-ops—but all cooperatives are built with a common purpose: to meet the needs of the members they serve.

Co-ops strengthen local communities, keep decisions close to home and invest in long-term success.

**October is National Co-op Month.**



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