

Nominating committee selects board candidates

The nominating committee of Butler County REC, duly appointed by the board of directors and consisting of Raymond Dietz, Derek Harken, and Dale Mennenga, met Jan. 7, 2021. 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 annual meeting on Saturday, March 27.

To represent the west half of Bremer County

- Duane Rieckenberg (incumbent), Ionia
- Allen Hoeper, Waverly

To represent the northeast quarter of Butler County

- Troy Feldman (incumbent), Greene

To represent the southwest quarter of Butler County

- Share Brandt (incumbent), Allison

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



The 2021 nominating committee (l to r): Dale Mennenga, Raymond Dietz, and Derek Harken

Mail-in ballots will be due at the cooperative office no later than 11:00 a.m. Friday, March 26, 2021.

Patronage of \$1,213,691.29 returned to members

The Butler County REC board of directors has authorized the distribution of \$1,213,691.29 in patronage to current and former members of the cooperative.

Members purchasing electricity in 2002 and/or a portion of 2019 are receiving patronage for those years. 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 2019. This is included in the amount to be returned to members.

Active (current) members received a credit on their power bill mailed in February 2021. 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 \$8,111,624.15 in patronage.



What happens behind the scenes during a power outage?

In the U.S., we are fortunate to have an advanced power grid in place. Power transmission and distribution is reliable in our country, and we are proud to deliver the electricity you depend on each day.

Excluding outage times attributed to major weather or other catastrophic events, electricity consumers in our country typically experience only about two hours of total

power interruptions per year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). When outages due to major events are taken into consideration, the EIA reports the total outage time at six hours a year.

What happens on our end when your power goes out? Rest assured we swing into action in a safe and efficient manner. How long restoration takes depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages, and how long it takes for our work crews to safely access the storm-damaged areas. We are careful to follow standard restoration procedures to ensure safety and to get the job done right by:

- Assessing damage to utility equipment.
- Addressing immediate safety risks, including downed power lines.
- Ensuring that essential public health and safety facilities are operational.
- Prioritizing repairs to restore power to the greatest number of people first.
- Assessing and repairing (in this order) substations, distribution lines, and service lines to properties.

Thank you for your patience during power outages. Know that in the event of an outage, we are working hard to restore it as safely and efficiently as possible.

HOW POWER IS SAFELY RESTORED

Please know that when the power goes out, we are doing all we can to safely and efficiently restore power. Here are the steps we take in the assessment and restoration process:



STEP 1: ASSESS THE DAMAGE **STEP 2: ADDRESS SAFETY RISKS** **STEP 3: RESTORE ESSENTIAL SERVICES** **STEP 4: PRIORITIZE REPAIRS**

POWER OUT?

22 WAYS TO UNPLUG



If you are trying to keep yourself (or others) entertained during a power outage, save the battery power on your phones and other electronics for emergencies or weather updates, and consider some of these “unplugged” activities instead.

FUN FOR KIDS

 Read a book	 Play board or card games	 Look at old photos	 Tell ghost stories
 Make shadow figures	 Make a fort out of boxes and blankets	 Sing your favorite songs	 Play Simon Says

GET CREATIVE

- Write a story.
- Make up jokes.
- Draw or paint a picture.
- Set up an indoor bowling alley with plastic cups as pins.
- Fix something around the house.

PRACTICE SELF CARE

- Take a nap.
- Paint your nails.
- Go for a run or hike.
- Check in on your neighbors.
- Practice a skill, such as a second language, sewing, knitting, or tying knots.

AROUND THE HOUSE

 Clean and organize your house	 Rearrange your furniture	 Fold laundry or organize your closet	 Plant seeds or tidy up your yard
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



DIYers: Call pro for electrical repairs

Working with electricity is risky business. Anyone who tinkers with wiring or circuits could suffer electrocution or shock or could start a fire. High-voltage items are especially dangerous to work on, even for professionals.

DIYers should not take any chances when it comes to electrical repairs. Licensed electricians are trained not only in the skills needed to work with electrical circuits and components, but in how to stay safe during the job, how to adhere to electrical codes, and how to prevent fires. They also know which permits are required to do the work legally.

Homeowners should also consider the following before attempting to do their own electrical repairs:

- Some homeowner's insurance policies do not cover fires that start as a result of a DIY electrical repair gone wrong.
- Electrical work requiring city or county permits can result in fines for a DIYer who does not obtain those permits.
- Selling a home whose electrical work has been done by a DIYer can be a challenge. Potential buyers usually hire home inspectors, who could flag faulty repairs and force the homeowner to pay for a professional do-over.
- Even when you hire a professional electrician, insist on a license, proper permit, and an inspection.





WE ARE
MEMBER
OWNED.



Prevent frozen pipes by keeping your house warm

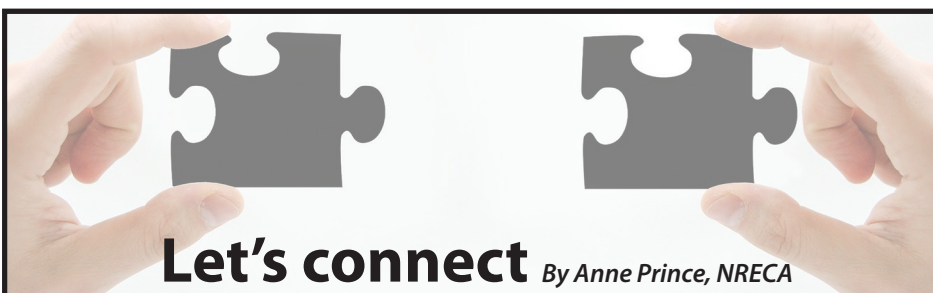
A mid-winter getaway seems like a dream during a pandemic, but if your family has found a safe destination and is heading out of town for a couple of weeks, leave the heat on at home.

It might seem like a waste of energy and money to heat an empty home, but the cost of cleaning up after a water pipe that has frozen and burst will be far more costly than leaving the thermostat set high enough to prevent the problem.

When the water inside of a pipe freezes, it expands and puts pressure on the pipe. That pressure can cause the pipe to crack or break, and water can gush out, leading to a non-stop flood of water and massive damage to your property.

Here are some precautions to take before you leave:

- **Shut off the water** at the cut-off valve.
- **Remove garden hoses** from outdoor faucets. Then, drain those faucets and leave them in the “on” position.
- **Leave the heat set** at around 50 degrees.
- **Open cabinet doors under sinks** so the heat can circulate around the water pipes.
- **Shut off the water** to your washing machine if it is in an unheated garage.
- **Insulate pipes** in the attic and in crawl spaces using a product designed specifically for pipes.
- **Give your house key** to a trusted neighbor who can check for frozen pipes while you’re away.



Let's connect *By Anne Prince, NRECA*

When we say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology—our smart phones and other devices and gadgets. But as a member of an electric co-op, there’s so much more to being part of our connected co-op community.

We depend on you because you power our success, and when your cooperative does well, the community thrives because we’re all connected.

We greatly value our connection to you. And we’d like to help you maximize the value you can get from us through a variety of programs, products, and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill by asking you questions about how you use energy, and we also offer a number of rebates. In addition, when you download our SmartHub app, you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online, and access a menu of additional options for potential savings and more.

Follow us on social media to stay up-to-date on power restoration efforts, tree trimming planning, co-op director elections, and more. You’ll also see photos of our line crews in action and our employees helping with community service projects.

Your electric cooperative relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, and up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure that we can provide the highest level of service that you expect and deserve.

Updated contact information can even speed up power restoration during an outage. That’s because when you call to report an outage, accurate information helps our outage-management system predict the location and the possible cause of an outage, making it easier for our crews to correct the problem.

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can. Your cooperative exists to serve members, and when we’re better connected to you and our local community, we’re better prepared to answer the call.

We look forward to connecting with you!

Boomgarden retires

Mike Boomgarden turned a Butler County REC high-school summer position into an over 31-year career.

Mike, a native of Allison and an Allison-Bristow High School graduate, returned to Allison after three years in the Navy. He thought he would look for a job for six months and return to the service if he didn't find anything. And then Carl Heyenga, former REC operations manager, called Mike, offering him an apprentice lineman position. Mike accepted and spent over 24 years as part of the line crew.

In 2013, Mike accepted the position of energy advisor when Larry Schultz retired. Mike said, "I've learned a lot since I've been in the office. I've enjoyed working with our members, and I thank them—that's who we work for."

Mike and his wife, Sherri, will be spending their winters in Florida "going to the swimming pool" and will then spend summers in Minnesota fishing. He commented, "I'll miss the people at the REC. There's a lot of good people here."

Mike, we wish you a long, happy retirement!



Congratulations!



Survey drawing winner announced

Congratulations to Wayne Lantow, Nashua, winner of a \$200 energy bill credit. Wayne's name was drawn after he completed our database survey, administered by Inside Information, Smithville, Missouri.

The survey was conducted to help us improve our services and member communications and also to assist us and our power supplier with long-range electrical system planning. Thank you to those members who participated!



LWE winner announced

Shirley Babcock, New Hampton, was the November *Living with Energy in Iowa* Editor's Choice Contest winner. Shirley's name was randomly drawn as the winner of a Cuisinart extra-large rotisserie fryer and steamer. Congratulations!

You can enter the *Living in Energy with Iowa* magazine contest each month by visiting living-withenergyiniowa.com. Entrant information is not shared and only one entry per account is allowed.



Photo Credit: Consumers Energy

Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.

INtouch is published monthly for members of Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative
521 North Main • PO Box 98 • Allison, IA 50602
PHONES: 319.267.2726 or 888.267.2726 • FAX: 319.267.2566
OFFICE HOURS: Mon. - Fri., 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
WEBSITE: www.butlerrec.coop • E-MAIL: butler@butlerrec.coop
Craig Codner, CEO • EDITOR: Anne Sesker, CCC

 Follow us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/bcrec

smart choices 

Sign up for our e-newsletter at www.butlerrec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.