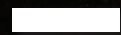


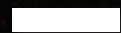
# ACEC NEWS

MAY 2025 | VOLUME 28 | ISSUE 05

WHAT MAKES  
A BOARD



SCHOLARSHIP  
WINNERS



JOIN US AT THE  
PICNIC JUNE 26





## A MESSAGE FROM *Your General Manager*

**Hollie McCormick**  
EVP/General Manager



## FROM TIGER KING TO TODAY

A lot can change in five years.

Five years ago, we were in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many people working from home and obsessing over making the perfect sourdough bread. The most popular song atop the billboard Hot 100 chart was "Blinding Lights" by The Weeknd. The nation was transfixed with streaming "Tiger King."

At Allamakee-Clayton REC, we were in the throws of chaos following COVID protocols while keeping business as usual for our electric members. But we also had another project brewing: we were beginning the process of bringing fiber internet to Allamakee County. And what a whirlwind 5 years it's been.

As a cooperative, we've been at the forefront of providing reliable internet service to our customers since 2005. We ventured into that business by offering satellite services. At its peak, we served nearly 500 customers. By 2014, we moved to the latest technology – wireless internet. At its peak, we were able to serve over 700 people who otherwise didn't have a reliable, local internet option.

Then came the latest and greatest technology – fiber-optic internet. This high-speed internet connection uses fiber-optic cables made of ultra thin strands of glass or plastic that transmits data as light signals. It allows for faster data transmission speeds and greater

bandwidth, which allows for quicker downloads, smoother streaming and more reliability. I mean, who wouldn't want that?

It all kicked off when we began looking into grants available for our rural areas. We were awarded an Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant for over \$540,000 in March 2020, just in time for the COVID lockdown to begin. Our first project was the western part of the city of Waukon, where we laid fiber to serve 226 potential customers. We hooked our first customer to service in December 2021.

We were awarded four other Empower Rural Iowa grants, for an overall total of just over \$8 million in funds, allowing us to expand our scope of service.

With the grants and our own investment, we were able to provide fiber to the city of Waukon, including the residential and business district. Now five years into providing internet, over 41% of residents have taken our service.

We also have provided service to several rural areas of Allamakee County that weren't otherwise served by fiber providers. In the rural area, we're at a 57% take rate.

We've often been asked how and why we chose where to deploy fiber. The answer is two part : 1.) Where there was grant funds available close to our existing infrastructure. 2.) Where no other providers has existing deployment plans. **#1882**

Since the first shovel hit the dirt, we've put in 460 miles of fiber, with 1,384 and counting of subscribers. That means more than 47% of potential fiber customers have switched over to our services as May 1.

With our remaining wireless and satellite customers, our AC Skyways department provides services to nearly 1,800 customers across our service territory.

With the new technology, we've also taken the jump into offering VoIP (voice over internet protocol) services. This allows our customers to use their fiber internet for their home phone service. We now have 321 VoIP lines, something we didn't foresee happening.

The service speaks for itself. We constantly hear feedback from businesses and residents that having fiber has been a huge upgrade. And that's why we do it. We're in the business of bringing a service to underserved people, whether it's electricity or fiber internet.

At the heart of our service are our local connections. Our three technicians – Matt Marting, Kelly Blockhus and Darrin Smith – are the face of the business. They're the ones you see during your install. They take time to explain things to our customers and to make sure all devices are connected before leaving. They're also the ones who are on call 24/7 to handle any outages and make sure to get problems fixed as quickly as possible. They understand how important it is for people to be connected and go above and beyond to make sure our service is reliable.

They also couldn't do what they do without our Member Services Representative Staci Malcom. She's the one you talk to when you call our office. We pride ourselves on being your local option, and these four are the glue that makes it all happen.

A lot can change in five years. But adding fiber internet services to our AC Skyways portfolio has been one of the best things to happen in this time. I'm so proud to be a part of this team and to share what all they've accomplished.

I cannot say it enough. We'd like to thank the Allamakee County community for their support and patience throughout this process. We're happy to be able to serve you. ■

### On the Cover

*Local photographer Jared Kiley captured this beautiful photo of the night sky at Yellow River State Forest.*

# Congrats to Mari & Jack!

Allamake-Clayton REC is proud to announce **Mari Delaney** and **Jack Scherf** as the recipients of Hauschild Memorial Scholarships for 2025!

Mari is the daughter of Jesse and Heather. The Waukon High School student plans to attend Iowa State University in the fall to study civil and environmental engineering.

Jack is the son of Jason and Courtney Scherf. After graduating from Central High School, he plans to attend Northeast Iowa Community College to study in the residential and commercial electrician program.

The Hauschild Memorial Scholarship Fund was established in 1995 in memory of Robert “Bill” Hauschild by his wife and family. This scholarship is provided in recognition of Bill’s service as a board member from his election in 1988 until his death in 1993. Applications for 2026 will be available in late 2025. For more information, call ACEC at 563-864-7611. ■



*Mari Delaney*



*Jack Scherf*

## WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS!

You're invited to our 4<sup>th</sup> annual  
**MEMBER APPRECIATION  
PICNIC**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 26**  
**3:30-6:30 PM**  
Postville Big Four Fairgrounds



All members are invited to join the ACEC staff for a fun family event, featuring a complimentary meal, an opportunity to win prizes, activities for kids, and a chance to chat with fellow members, staff and our Board of Directors.



## BOARD BRIEFS

### April 28 Meeting

- Approved Jeff Bradley as nominee for Dairyland (DPC) Board of Directors and Jerry Keleher as alternate
- Approved Jeff Bradley as voting delegate for DPC’s Annual Meeting in June, with Jerry Keleher as the alternate representative
- Reviewed and approved composition of director districts
- Reviewed and revised Policy 413 “Qualifications for Eligibility to Serve on the Board of Directors”
- Tabled discussion regarding a Director Virtual Attendance Policy
- Approved Resolution regarding membership voting on two bylaw changes at upcoming Annual Meeting: Variable number of directors and electronic voting
- Fleet plans update from Jason Troendle and Ben Schulmeister
- Approved a donation request to Country on the Creek



# Look to the Night Sky This Summer

When you step outside at night, do you look to the stars? Can you find the Milky Way? Did you know that Chicago residents can only see about 12 stars on any given night?

The Friends of Yellow River State Forest are doing their part to ensure future generations of park users can see and appreciate the night sky by working to make the 8,900-acre park DarkSky compliant with the DarkSky International Association.

## What is DarkSky and light pollution?

DarkSky International is a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The organization works to protect and preserve the natural nighttime environment.

The nonprofit works to reduce the

amount of light pollution. According to the group, light pollution is a human-made alteration of outdoor light levels. When people over-light areas, do not put lights on timers or use the wrong color of light, it negatively impacts facets of life.

Kelli Boylen is the president of the Friends of the Yellow River State Forest Board. She said she heard of the DarkSky organization after seeing brochures at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve near La Farge, Wis. After learning more about it, she thought it would be the perfect project for the Friends group to pursue.

“Less than 20 percent of the world’s population can see the Milky Way,” said Boylen. “Living here it’s easy to take it for granted, but we want to do what we can to preserve the quality of the dark sky here for future generations.

Friends of Yellow River State Forest is a group of volunteers who work in conjunction with the park to protect and preserve natural resources, as well as raise funds and make improvements to the area. To date, the group has reinvested more than **\$184,000** into the forest since its inception in 2019. To learn more and become a member, email [friendsofyrsf@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofyrsf@gmail.com) or follow them on Facebook at [FriendsofYellowRiverStateForest](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofYellowRiverStateForest).

“We are discovering that many people simply have never considered the night sky or how their outdoor lighting can increase light pollution.”

## Why it matters

According to research conducted by DarkSky International, light pollution is increasing at a global rate of 10 percent per year. But, why does it matter?

Light pollution can destroy critical wildlife habitat by throwing off the Earth’s daily light and dark cycle. Research is showing that increased artificial light can have deadly effects on many species. Some of the affected animals that scientist have discovered so far are songbirds, hummingbirds, owls, bats, insects and some species of fish, toads and frogs.

It also can bring harm to humans, with studies showing it increases the risk for obesity, sleep disorders, depression, diabetes, breast cancer and more.

Excessive outdoor lighting can lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions from the wasted energy, as well as wasted money.





A focus of the Friends group, it also robs people of observing their night sky heritage. It also can cause a decrease in safety and security due to the glare from unshielded streetlights, as well as can inhibit astronomical research.

What can we do?

DarkSky has Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting that it recommends to reduce light pollution.

- ◊ Is it useful? All light should have a clear purpose. Use lights only when and where they are needed.
- ◊ Is it targeted? Shield and aim your light so it only falls downward and where it is useful.
- ◊ Is it low-level? Lights should be no brighter than necessary to save money and reduce glare.
- ◊ Is it controlled? Lights should only be on when needed. Use timers and motion sensors.
- ◊ Is it warm-colored? Warm-colored light causes less skyglow. Use amber-toned lights whenever possible.

“It doesn’t cost any more to have DarkSky-compliant lighting. It’s really about being aware of keeping light pointing down, eliminating unnecessary lighting, using motion lights when possible, and using outdoor lighting that is warmer in color, like more orange than blue,” said Boylen.

There have been examples where making simple changes has had big results. The city of Tucson, Arizona, upgraded streetlights in 2018, saving \$2.2 million per year in energy costs and reducing light pollution by 7%. There are already more than 200 International DarkSky places that have been certified.

Camp smarter this summer

The Friends group is in the process of becoming certified as DarkSky compliant; however, the process could take up to two years to achieve.

“The Friends of YRSF Board of Directors is dedicated to the principles of the International DarkSky Association of public education and outreach and

making all lighting in YRSF DarkSky compliant.”

The group encourages people to take a close look at their lighting at their campsite this summer, as well as at their homes and workplaces. When camping at Yellow River this summer, you are asked to use minimum outdoor lighting and to extinguish lights by 10 p.m. to better see the stars.

“Many folks don't think about the impact their outdoor lights have on all of their neighbors - human, animals, birds and insects. It's really simple to decrease your outdoor lighting and allow you, your family and others, to enjoy all the night sky has to offer,” said Boylen.

Anyone interested in working with the local dark sky organization can contact Dean Peterson at (563) 535-7100. To learn more about Yellow River State Forest and the Dark Sky, visit <https://www.friendsofyellowriverstateforest.org/>. ■ #3830

Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting



DarkSky



Illuminating  
ENGINEERING SOCIETY

Responsible outdoor lighting is

1 Useful

Use light only if it is needed

All light should have a clear purpose. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.



2 Targeted

Direct light so it falls only where it is needed

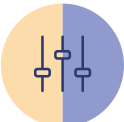
Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.



3 Low Level

Light should be no brighter than necessary

Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions, as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.



4 Controlled

Use light only when it is needed

Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.



5 Warm-colored

Use warmer color lights where possible

Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.





# Ways Electric Cooperatives Build Strong Boards

By Ann Foster Thelen

The role of an electric cooperative board extends far beyond making decisions in a meeting room. It requires forward-thinking strategies, local advocacy, active engagement and a commitment to ongoing improvement. Co-op directors continuously participate in education and training opportunities, which enhance their skills and strengthen their knowledge of a complete industry.

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives' recent annual meeting, Richard Fagerlin of Peak Solutions and Dr. Keri Jacobs from the University of Missouri-Columbia explored the essential qualities of high-performing cooperative boards and the steps directors take to ensure their long-term success. Hundreds of directors from Iowa's electric cooperatives attended the meeting.

## Understanding the big picture

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that effective boards do more than meet and make decisions. They ensure the sustainability of their cooperative and prepare for future challenges. A key theme of their presentation was “future-proofing” the board – ensuring that today's decisions position the cooperative for long-term success. #6255

To serve the needs of electric co-ops and the member-consumers they serve – today and in the future – electric cooperative boards ask:

- What does our cooperative need from its board today?
- How can we best position ourselves for future leadership?
- How do we ensure a smooth transition when current board members step down?

## Seven habits of effective board members

Fagerlin and Jacobs highlighted several common challenges boards face and seven ways board members are most effective in serving member-consumers' local needs.

1. **Knowing their job.** Board members understand their responsibilities before, during and after meetings. This includes preparing adequately, staying engaged, and recognizing the difference between operational and strategic roles.
2. **Finding the right balance of engagement.** Some directors may want to overreach and micromanage staff, while others leave decision-making to a few dominant voices. Striking the right balance is critical to effective leadership.
3. **Ensuring equal participation.** Effective boards ensure that all members contribute to discussions. When one or two individuals dominate conversations, the board loses valuable perspectives and diversity of thought.
4. **Prioritizing co-op needs.** Directors prioritize the cooperative's interests over personal motivations. An effective board remains united in its commitment to the organization's long-term success.
5. **Passing the torch.** Board members must recognize



when it's time to step aside for new leadership. Bringing in fresh perspectives while maintaining institutional knowledge is fundamental to the cooperative business model.

6. **Maintaining confidentiality.** Board members understand what can and cannot be shared outside the boardroom. Ensuring consistent messaging strengthens trust within the cooperative and the boarder membership.
7. **Valuing diverse opinions.** Strong boards avoid the assumption that “everyone thinks like me” and foster productive discussions. The best boards value diverse opinions and encourage open dialogue.

## Ensuring long-term success

One of the central themes of the discussion was the need to future-proof the board. This means taking proactive steps to ensure the board evolves alongside the cooperative and the industry.

Some of the key strategies electric cooperatives take to future-proof their boards include:

- Regular board assessments. Evaluating the board's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Director development. Providing ongoing education and training opportunities.
- Succession planning. Identifying and mentoring future board members to ensure smooth transitions.
- Engaging in strategic discussions. Moving beyond day-to-day operations and focusing on long-term goals and sustainability.

## The power of good governance

Governance plays a crucial role in board effectiveness. Fagerlin and Jacobs distinguished between Big G Governance (formal structures, bylaws, and processes) and Little G Governance (culture, behavior and interpersonal dynamics). While having sound policies and procedures in place is essential, the board's



culture and communication style can make or break its effectiveness.

For instance, agenda setting plays a key role in board productivity. Boards strive to make agendas that allow for meaningful strategic discussions. Balancing high-level strategy with operational details prevents boards from getting stuck in the weeds.

### The board and CEO relationship

The relationship between the board and the cooperative's CEO or general manager is vital to success. The board's role is to provide advice and accountability rather than micromanage operations. Future-proofing means boards position themselves as supportive partners for leadership rather than obstacles to progress.

One emerging challenge is the governance knowledge gap – the increasing complexity of electric cooperative management versus the time board members have available to stay informed. While cooperative managers work full-time in the industry, directors often serve on a part-time basis. To bridge this gap, directors commit to continuous learning and strategic thinking.

### Leading the cooperative of the future

The success of cooperatives depends on strong, well-functioning boards that adapt to changing times. By focusing on purpose, process and performance, cooperative boards ensure they remain effective and future-proofed for the challenges ahead.

Fagerlin and Jacobs emphasized that board leadership is a journey, not a destination. The best boards never stop learning, growing and adapting to meet the needs to their cooperative and its members. With the right mindset and commitment to excellence, today's boards lay the foundation for a thriving, sustainable future. ■

*Ann Foster Thelen is the editor of Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine.*

# MEMBER RECIPES

Send your favorite recipes and/or recipe topics to Jennifer Achenbach, ACEC, PO Box 715, Postville, IA 52162 or email [jachenbach@acrec.coop](mailto:jachenbach@acrec.coop).

You'll receive a \$5 bill credit if your recipe is printed. Please note – recipes must be received by the 25th day of the month before the intended publication.

**June – SEAFOOD; July – BEVERAGES**

## SPICE CRUSTED STEAKS W/CHERRY SAUCE

- ½ c. dried cherries
- ¼ c. port wine, warmed (or use Marsala cooking wine)
- 3 ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. brown sugar
- ¾ tsp. garlic powder
- ¾ tsp. ground coffee
- ¾ tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. ground mustard
- 4 steaks (about 6 oz. each, can be tenderloin, ribeye, sirloin)
- 1 Tbsp. oil (canola, vegetable or olive will work)
- 1 large shallot or 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 c. beef broth
- 1 tsp. minced fresh thyme or ½ tsp. dried thyme
- ½ c. heavy cream

### Directions

Preheat oven to 350°. In a small bowl, combine cherries and wine. Set aside. In a shallow dish, combine pepper, brown sugar, garlic powder, paprika, coffee grounds, salt, cinnamon, cumin and mustard. Add steaks to dish and turn to coat. Cover for 30 minutes. Place oil in a 10-inch cast iron skillet or other ovenproof skillet. Be sure oil has coated the entire bottom of the pan. Heat oil over medium high heat. Add the steaks to get a nice sear (about 2 minutes per side). Bake, uncovered, until meat reaches desired doneness (about 15 minutes for medium/medium well). Remove steaks from pan and keep warm. For the sauce, wipe skillet clean, saute the shallot or onion in butter until crisp-tender. Add broth and thyme. Bring to a boil; cook until liquid is reduced by half, about 8 minutes. Stir in cream; bring to a boil. Cook until thickened, stirring occasionally, about 8 minutes. Stir in the reserved cherry mixture. Serve sauce with steaks.

■ Barb Kaiser, Lansing

## THAI MEATBALLS

- 1 lb. ground beef
  - 1 large carrot, peeled and shredded
  - 1 Tbsp. chili paste
  - 2 Tbsp. ginger
  - 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
  - 1 egg
- Sauce**
- ¼ c. soy sauce
  - ¼ c. chicken stock or water
  - 2 Tbsp. sesame oil
  - 2 tsp. ginger
  - 1 tsp. chili paste
  - 1 garlic clove, minced

### Directions

Add meatball ingredients together. Form into 1/2 inch round balls. Bake at 375° for 20-25 minutes or until cooked through. Meanwhile, heat sauce ingredients in a medium pot over low heat. Stir periodically. When meatballs are cooked through, remove from oven. Turn off sauce. Add meatballs to sauce and coat. Serve over rice.

■ Kiley Roth, Postville

## TACO NOODLE DINNER

- 1 lb. ground beef
- ¼ c. chopped onion
- ¾ c. water
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 4 oz. can mushroom stems & pieces (opt.)
- 3 c. egg noodles, uncooked
- 2 ½-3 c. tomato juice
- 1 c. sour cream
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

### Directions

Brown ground beef and onion in a microwave dish, covered 6-8 minutes, stirring halfway through. Drain. Stir in water and taco seasoning and microwave another 3 minutes, uncovered. Add mushroom and noodles. Pour tomato juice over it all and stir gently. Cover and microwave for 20 minutes, stirring after 10 minutes. Top with sour cream and cheese. Cover and let stand 5 minutes before serving.

■ Becky Engelhardt, Postville



## FIND YOUR SERVICE NUMBER

**Congratulations to Walter and Beverly Clauson**, who found their service number in a recent newsletter. They were awarded a \$17.50 bill credit. ACEC has hidden three Service Location numbers within this newsletter. The numbers are from different regions of our service area – **two are worth \$10.00 and one is worth \$5.00.**

The service location number must be yours to claim the credit, and you need to notify us when you find it.



## CONTACT ACEC

### HEADQUARTERS

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Postville, IA 52162

### PHONE NUMBERS

**LOCAL** 563-864-7611

**TOLL-FREE** 888-788-1551

**PAYMENT LINE 24/7** 833-284-5051

**UNDERGROUND CABLE LOCATING**  
811

**SKYWAYS INTERNET SOLUTIONS**

800-864-1611

### WEBSITE

acrec.com

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

### OUTAGES

888-788-1551 or 563-864-7611

### IOWA STATE ONE CALL

811

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**MICHAEL D. GIBBS**, Vice President, Waterville

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**ROGER ARTHUR**, Sumner

**JEFF BRADLEY**, Wadena

**NELSON CONVERSE**, Postville

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**JERRY KELEHER**, Elkader

**BRICE WOOD**, Lansing

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**JENNIFER ACHENBACH**, Manager,  
Marketing & Communications

**DAVID DECKER**, Director,  
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**BRENDA HACKMAN**, Manager, Economic  
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**JENI KOLSRUD**, Manager, Information  
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**JASON TROENDLE**, Director,  
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DPC

# CYBER SECURITY

## Tip of the MONTH

### Cyberbullying in the Workplace

Cyberbullying is often associated with teenagers and social media, but some bullies grow up...and enter the workforce. The rise of instant messaging, social media, and workplace collaboration tools has created new avenues for bullying behavior in professional settings. In a 2024 Oh Behave survey, found that 18% of the 6,000 adults surveyed reported being victims of cyberbullying. Tactics can range from sabotaging reputations to issuing threats and engaging in intimidation. Some common workplace cyberbullying tactics include impersonation (posing as someone else via email or messaging), outing (sharing personal or work-related secrets to humiliate a coworker) or trolling (posting inflammatory comments on workplace forums or social media). If you or someone you work with is cyberbullied at work, report it to HR immediately. ■

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BY: ALLAMAKEE • CLAYTON  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

~ Courtesy of  
[staysafeonline.org](https://staysafeonline.org)

**Our office will be closed on  
Monday, May 26, in honor of**

# MEMORIAL DAY

**REMEMBER & HONOR**

*Honoring the brave heroes who made  
the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.*