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January 2019

2019 NREA
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Guide

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Staff

Editor

Wayne Price

Editorial Assistant

Tina Schweitzer

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Butch Gray,

Cornhusker Public Power District

Vice President/Secretary

Bryan Monahan,

Panhandle Rural Electric

Membership Association

Treasurer

A.C. (Pat) Hecox,

Dawson Public Power District

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On the cover

The theme of the Nebraska Capitol Vestibule Dome is "Gifts of Nature to Man on the Plains". In the mosaic tile dome, surrounding the sun in a large circle are agricultural products of Nebraska, and in the corners of the dome are the four seasons of agriculture. Photograph by Wayne Price



by Wayne Price

Restoring power after a storm requires time

Most of us would have a difficult time living without electricity. It is necessary for just about everything we do these days. We depend on it to light our homes, open our garage doors, run our appliances, cook our food, and supply us with power for our computers, televisions and smartphones.

We all know how frustrating it is when the power goes off and we're left in the dark. When they happen, electric outages can be annoying and inconvenient. Providing electricity to you requires a lot of dedicated, hard-working people. It requires even more of them to restore power after an outage occurs.

We tend to count the seconds until the power is back on, but we need to remember there are certain steps that must be made to ensure electricity is restored to the greatest number of customers as quickly, and safely, as possible.

The cause of an electrical outage can range from an animal in the wrong place to a severe storm passing through. When an outage occurs employees of your rural electric utility start working to identify the problem and determine the steps to take to restore power.

Snow and ice are often the cause of downed power lines in Nebraska. Rural electric utility crews must identify how many poles and which lines are damaged in the wake of a storm. This helps determine how many customers are without power and which steps need to be taken to begin restoring power to everyone. If transmission lines are damaged and power needs to be rerouted, the electric utility will likely work with Nebraska Public Power District or Tri-State G&T during the restoration process. High voltage lines from NPPD and Tri-State G&T bring power to distribution substations all around the state, providing power to thousands of customers. Crews must also check these substations for damage following a storm.

However, if the problem can not be resolved at the distribution substation, crews must inspect the lines between the substation and the customer's meter. When these lines are repaired power is restored to the farms and homes along the line. Most of the time crews identify which lines will bring power back on

to the greatest number of customers and get to work repairing those lines first.

If your power does go out, here are a few tips to remember:

- Watch out for downed power lines. They could still be energized and potentially deadly if you come in contact with them.

- Report the outage to your electric provider as soon as possible. Don't assume your neighbor has already called the utility.

- Be sure to contact your electric provider before an outage if loss of power to your home affects life support systems or could cause any additional threat to your family's health and safety.

It's a good idea to be ready for an outage just in case. So while crews are working hard to restore power, you and your family will be able to get by until the lights come back on.

- Store a few basic items in your home. You should have at least a three-day supply of water on hand, one gallon per person per day. It's also a good idea to have a three-day supply of non-perishable, high-energy food on hand—protein bars, breakfast bars, and canned food are winners.

- Remember to store handy tools like a radio, can opener, flashlights, extra batteries, hand sanitizer, and first aid supplies. Include a seven-day supply of medications for you or other family members.

- Retain copies of important documents—birth certificates, passports, and insurance policies.

Those are the basics, but you can further customize your emergency kit. Think about including family photos, candy, nuts or other snack food, or a deck of cards to help pass the time. Rechargeable flashlights in key areas of the home provide instant light if the power goes out.

If using a portable generator, connect equipment you want to power directly into outlets on the generator with a properly rated extension cord. Never operate a generator inside your home—because of carbon monoxide poisoning—or connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use. Lineworkers' lives could be put in danger from power backfeeding onto electric lines.



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Meet Your State Senator

The first session of the 106th Nebraska Legislature will convene on Wednesday, January 9th in Lincoln. It's a 90-day session.

If you want to write your state senator during the 2019 session, please address correspondence to:

Senator (Last Name)
District # State Capitol
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Find your senator's name, hometown, legislative district and Capitol telephone number here.



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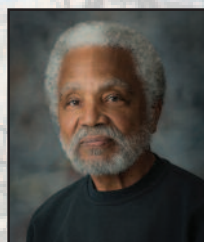
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Plan a visit with your State Senator

An effective way of conveying a message to your senator is by meeting with them or their staff. Below are a few simple steps which will help make your visit a successful experience.

Plan your visit: Know what you want to achieve and do your homework.

Make an appointment: Contact the senator's office and try to schedule a meeting. Explain why you desire a meeting and who you represent.

Be prompt and patient: It is not uncommon for state senators to show up to an appointment late or to have a meeting interrupted. Be understanding, flexible and on time. State senators do not have time to wait on you.

Be prepared: Know what you want to say and be equipped with information and materials that support your position. If a senator is not available for a meeting, talk with that member's staff.

Be pertinent: Demonstrate the connection between your issue and the interests of the member's constituency. Try to convey to the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him or her.

Emailing your State Senator

Email has become generally accepted among representatives as an acceptable form of communication. Email carries with it the benefit of having your information transmitted instantly. If you opt to use email, your correspondence should be similar in format to a traditional letter. Do not make the mistake of sending an informal letter through email correspondence.

Your Congressional Delegation

Need to contact a member of the House of Representatives or a member of the Senate? Find Nebraska's Congressional Delegation's contact information here.



Rep. Jeff Fortenberry

Washington, D.C. Office:
1514 Longworth House Office Bldg.,
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4806
Website: fortenberry.house.gov



Sen. Deb Fischer

Washington, D.C. Office:
454 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6551
Website: fischer.senate.gov



Rep. Don Bacon

Washington, D.C. Office:
1516 Longworth House Office Bldg.,
Washington, D.C. 20515
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Website: bacon.house.gov



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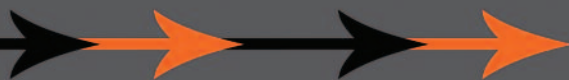
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An Outlet for Energy Savings

by Kaley Lockwood

Does the ebb and flow of your energy bill have you searching for an affordable way to reduce or better control your use? If you answered yes, then look no further because we're taking a quick dive into a practical and affordable device that allows you to better manage your home's energy use. We're talking about energy-saving outlets!

These next-generation devices afford the same surge protection as their predecessors, but also tie in the "smart" functionality of an internet-connected device.

There are several different kinds of energy-saving outlets available, but there are two factors you should consider. First is size; there are many different sizes ranging from a single external outlet to a power strip with multiple sockets. The second thing you'll want to consider is Wi-Fi connectivity; internet-connected outlets, commonly known as smart plugs, may enable you to fully realize the potential of these energy savings.

This is because you'll have greater remote control of the outlet through your smart phone, tablet or home assistant (like Google Home or Amazon's Alexa).

You'll also want to consider where you'll be using the energy-saving outlet and what you'll be using it for. Answering these questions will make it easier to choose the device that works best for you.

With smart plugs or smart power strips, a few clicks and swipes on your smart phone will enable you to fully shut down the electrical

currents to your high-powered devices to prevent them from consuming electricity even when switched off. Several devices found inside your home are commonly referred to as "parasitic loads," "phantom loads" or "energy vampires." In fact, most entertainment systems consist of several parasitic loads, such as televisions, DVD players and video gaming consoles. These outlets can potentially curb these loads, which can cost the average household an extra \$200 per year.



The Insteon On/Off Outlet is one of many options for smart, energy-saving outlets. Photograph provided by Insteon

In addition to preventing unnecessary energy consumption, these energy-saving outlets are affordable for most folks who are looking to trim their use. The average smart outlet costs around \$20 on Amazon.com and has the potential to pay for itself within two years or less depending on how often you use it.

As previously noted, convenience is also a major factor to consider when thinking about your next efficiency upgrade. Smart plugs typically come



with simple instructions to download an accompanying app on your smart phone and then connect the plug to your home's Wi-Fi. The convenience in being able to turn the device on and off using your phone cannot be understated. Advanced smart plugs and smart plug apps also have the ability to automate the use with your schedule and even your presence in the home.

You can also have large-load devices turn off at a set time each night and turn on every morning when you're ready to use them. If you want to use your television, for example, at a time that's outside of the preset hours, you can easily switch the device on through the smart phone app. Through automation, you're able to power down these energy-intensive devices and prevent unnecessary energy use.

For folks who are looking to optimize their energy use and eliminate vampire loads, smart plugs may be your best option. For others who want more of a hands-off option to save additional dollars, energy-saving outlets and power strips without the Wi-Fi connection may be a better choice.

Either way, energy-saving outlets are just one of many energy efficient options out there, and as technology continues to evolve, we'll likely see additional options emerge in the future.

Kaley Lockwood writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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Command, Control and Energy Savings

by Derrill Holly

Artificial intelligence is changing the way we live, and that has the potential to bring major changes to the way we use energy.

Smart home automation, with a utility connection, allows folks from all income levels to become more energy efficient to varying degrees. Using a platform to further tie together appliances and loads, consumers can pick and choose their preferred efficiency routes depending on their lifestyle and budgets.

Turning Words to Actions

According to the Consumer Technology Association, about 5.5 million Wi-Fi enabled devices are added to the internet each year, and by 2020, the total is expected to surpass 21 billion. That has designers and manufacturers of consumer products looking for new ways to add value to their products with Wi-Fi enabled features.

As artificial intelligence devices create opportunities for home automation, consumers will play larger roles in deciding how and when systems in their home are controlled.

Smart thermostats have been around for a while, and models that interconnect with home automation systems, like Amazon's Echo, the

Wyse Hub and Google Home, get a lot of attention. Apps developed for those products are also available for both Android and iPhone. Many public power districts and electric cooperatives are offering discounted smart thermostats to not only encourage member savings, but also help manage peak energy demand.

Changing Sources, Changing Needs

As the energy sources we use to generate power evolve, and management of the electric grid becomes more agile and sophisticated, the true potential of energy load control provides opportunities for more savings through wholesale power supply. That's challenging rural electric utilities to find additional ways to strengthen partnerships with consumers who are more interested than ever in actively managing their energy use. Two-way, real-time communications and artificial intelligence offer opportunities to learn consumer preferences and how best to reduce energy during peak demand periods.

New All-Electric Homes

Home automation controllers and smart phone apps are producing an endless string of new commands daily,

and while many may not work seamlessly, they are likely to continue to improve.

"We could soon see serial commands allowing your appliances to interact with other devices," said Keith Dennis, senior director of strategic initiatives for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), who cited household systems including heat pumps and heat pump water heaters as examples.

"Your HVAC system could learn your schedule and regulate heating and cooling for your comfort based upon when you are home," said Dennis. "Instead of maintaining a steady supply of hot water when no one is home to use it, water could be heated during periods when demand is lowest and electricity costs less, and then boosted to ideal temperatures to meet specific needs like bathing, laundry or washing dishes."

Many public power districts and electric co-ops have supported water heater load control programs for decades. Consumers are not overly concerned about when their water is heated as long as it is available on demand.

"Manufacturers and vendors are actually building shared access and control into these systems with utilities," said Dennis. "The most successful models in the end will work seamlessly with the utility to provide value to the member, and not necessarily something that is directly managed by the member."

According to Dennis, new induction stovetops, energy efficient convection ovens and some countertop appliances offer more opportunities for efficiency in the kitchen—and the common trait of these efficient products is that they are all electric. An all-electric home with energy efficient products and automation features could enhance a consumers' experience.

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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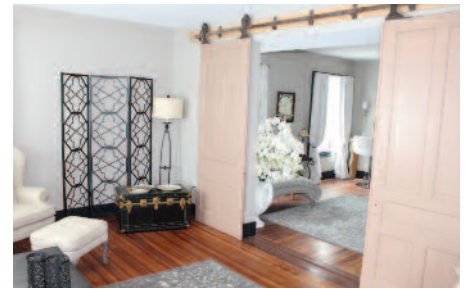
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A NEW PURPOSE FOR THE HISTORIC HOTEL HARTINGTON

by Wayne Price





Center: Ben and Erin Schroeder show off the hotel lobby.

Above: The bridal suite features beauty stations and sliding barn doors for privacy.

Opposite top: The Historic Hotel Hartington was built in 1917.

Opposite bottom: The ballroom is large enough for a variety of occasions.

Left: The hotel sign hangs over downtown Hartington.

The Historic Hotel Hartington is open for business again. It had sat abandoned since 1995 when a fire in the basement caused extensive damage.

The hotel, built in 1917, has been resurrected by Drs. Erin and Ben Schroeder and a small army of technicians and craftsmen. They created an event center in downtown Hartington, Nebraska which is a hybrid between a hotel and a vacation rental.

They purchased the building in the fall of 2017 and spent most of 2018 restoring around 26,000 square feet of space, which included all three floors and the basement. They held their first event on the last weekend of September last year, with an official opening in November during the annual Candlelight Christmas

Celebration.

“It will be an event center for family reunions, weddings and gatherings of people,” Erin said. “During the weekends we’ll rent the rooms out as suites but during the week if there are people who want to stay individually they can rent a room. But they may have to share a common bathroom.”

In total there are 17 bedrooms, nine bathrooms and four gathering areas located on the top two floors, which are divided into four wings. The second floor includes a bridal suite and the Outlaw Wing, with five bedrooms, two bathrooms and a large gathering area.

“The gathering rooms have a kitchenette,” Erin said. “It’s basically an open kitchen, living room, and dining floor plan. The rooms are

artisanal vintage. We did not want it to feel like a museum with a bunch of antiques in the rooms. We wanted the couches and beds to be something you just fall into.”

The third floor has two wings, known as Vintage Hollywood Actors and Actresses. The rooms are named after 1920-30s actors and actresses such as Greta Garbo because the Schrodgers wanted to tap into Hollywood’s Golden Age.

“When I first walked into the hotel I felt like I had walked into an abandoned set from *The Great Gatsby*,” she said. “When it opened (in 1917) there were over 1,000 people from the community who came, danced, and ate supper. They even had a jazz band from New York City.”

More on Page 16

Historic Hotel From page 15

The hotel is designed to meet all the needs of the customer, especially for brides.

“Our whole goal with events at the Hotel Hartington is that we want people, when they come through these doors, their worries are just taken care of,” Erin said. “They get scooped up to their rooms, anything that they need, we will bring it to you. It’s just a very worry free, stress free environment. Weddings especially can be pretty high stress.”

She noted that when people gather for family reunions once a year or sometimes longer, they often have to spend part of that time picking up dishes and scrubbing floors. Those aren’t the memories that she thinks people should have about getting together with family.

“We don’t want anybody’s mom, grandma, aunts making salads,” she said. “That’s all wonderful but then somebody is missing out on a portion of the day doing those kinds of tasks. This is about the experience, remembering and savoring every minute of the event you’re having. People don’t take time to make those memories as much as they used to.”

The hotel also features a gift shop, in the space that was once a cafe. In the original plans it was the hotel store.

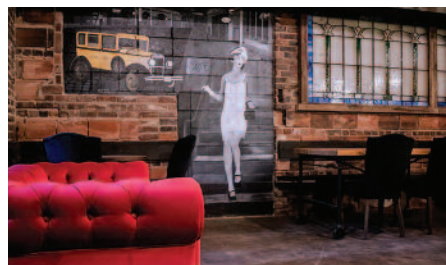
“At some point it morphed into a cafe but we have turned it back into a store with gifts and home decor items,” she said.

There is also a coffee shop in the lobby and an event bar in the basement. Erin said they expect to employ three full time workers, with Jessica Rohan as the chef and manager, and a host of part-time staff, event staff, bartenders, housekeeping, wait staff. She would like to create a pool of 25-plus employees, with a wide diversity of team members including high school students and second job adults.

Cedar-Knox Public Power District,



Above: The bridal suite receives natural lighting from all new windows on the second floor of the hotel.



Left: The Taproom is an event bar in the basement of the hotel. It features a mural and comfortable seating.

headquartered in Hartington, is a huge supporter of economic development in Nebraska. In partnership with Northeast Nebraska Economic Development organization, together they have helped businesses through the Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant program obtain loans to help them establish and grow. For the past 10 years Cedar-Knox PPD has approved low interest loans to businesses that have promoted economic development and jobs. Recently, the Cedar-Knox PPD Board approved a supplemental loan to Erin and Ben Schroeder in their restoration of the Historic Hotel Hartington.

“When we first started the project we thought we could just do the first floor,” said Erin. “Very quickly we realized you still have to run all the plumbing and electrical before you put finishes on, and we had to completely bring the building up to fire code.”

That included installing a full sprinkler and alarm system. The stairways are essentially fire corridors, which is why the floors are divided into wings. Because the hotel has been on the national register since 2003, they were allowed to keep a lot of the historic features but not to the point where it would be unsafe.

Ben, a native of Coleridge, Neb. met Erin at Kansas State University, where they both studied to become veterinarians. Erin grew up in Westport, New York. Ben’s father, John, is also a vet and following graduation they moved back to Nebraska to work with John. They bought the business, Cedar County Veterinary Services, from John in 2007. They have two sons, Charlie and Chase.

Erin said she hopes that having another business in the downtown area will allow Hartington to develop as a destination place for people to come to visit.

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- 2 Any time you leave a room, remember to turn off the _____. Ask your parents if they use LED lights, which save the most energy!
- 3 With the help of your parents, _____ glass, plastic, paper and aluminum items.
- 4 When the heat or air conditioning is running, always keep _____ to the outside closed.
- 5 Take short _____ instead of baths to conserve water use.

Word Bank

Showers
Doors
Water
Recycle
Lights





Left: Attendees took advantage of several networking opportunities at the conference last year. Top right: The 2019 MarkeTech Conference will feature Facebook ad strategist Amanda Bond. Bottom right: Janell Anderson Ehrke, CEO of GROW Nebraska, is interviewed about how technology and marketing help businesses of all sizes.

MarkeTech keynote speaker to share Facebook ad secrets

Facebook ad strategist Amanda Bond will share her secrets for converting Facebook fans into customers at the 2019 MarketTech conference in Kearney.

Amanda, who lives in Canada, is owner of The Ad Strategist and the creator of The StrADedy System. Entrepreneur Magazine calls her a “Facebook advertising genius” due to her unique mix of creativity and her vast analytical experience—from analyzing hundreds of millions of client ad impressions.

She mixes her dynamic and energetic personality with education and entertainment in a straight shooting way to show people the right way to create Facebook advertising. She’s the official Facebook advertising news correspondent for Social Media Examiner and a HubSpot Academy instructor.

Amanda describes herself as a lifelong entrepreneur, selling lemonade and bracelets in her youth. She always loved math and pursued a career as a social media manager and worked in the corporate world for several years, including a stint at

Pepsi Co., before launching her own business, the Ad Strategist, three years ago.

She has helped clients successfully create multi-million dollar product launches using Facebook ads. At MarkeTech, she will explain how to create revenue using both organic (non-paid) and paid methods.

“I’m going to teach people to stop guessing and start getting results with their social media and Facebook ads,” she said.

GROW Nebraska CEO Janell Anderson Ehrke said she heard Amanda speak at the Social Media Examiner conference in California and wanted to bring her expertise to Nebraska business owners.

“For the majority of our businesses, Facebook is the primary social media platform they are using,” Janell said. “I’m real excited about Amanda because that’s her expertise.”

Amanda will demonstrate the power of Facebook advertising by promoting MarkeTech with \$400 in Facebook ads. Results of that campaign will be available to those who attend MarkeTech.

In addition to Amanda Bond, the 2019 MarkeTech Conference will also feature educational sessions on LinkedIn and how to use that platform to gain customers or recruit employees, what small business owners need to know about voice-activated internet searches (like Alexa) and tips from a Google trainer (back by popular demand from the 2018 conference).

The 2019 MarkeTech Conference will be Wednesday, April 3, at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. Registration for the conference will open by January 1.

Janell said MarkeTech has become a premier Midwest marketing gathering, and is a primary benefit of being a member of GROW Nebraska. For members, the cost is only \$49 to attend this conference.

To get a sneak peek at some of Amanda’s tips, visit her blog at www.theadstrategist.com to read her articles such as “Want Better Facebook Ad Results? Success Starts Before You Hit Publish” and “Here’s Why Your Facebook Ads Aren’t Working.”

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Marvin Schultis, NE - “My calf catcher works great! I would not be without it! Thanks for the great workmanship.”

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DEALER INQUIRY INVITED

Dean Gipfert receives NREA Good Neighbor Award

The 2018 Good Neighbor award was presented to Dean Gipfert, with Wheat Belt Public Power District, at the Nebraska Rural Electric Association's annual meeting on Nov. 29 in Kearney, Neb.

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association's Good Neighbor Award program is designed to recognize individuals for outstanding contributions to their electric system, community, or state. Many individuals often go out of their way to do a good deed for someone in their community or provide some exceptional service to the members of his or her community. The Good Neighbor Award program recognizes these people who strive to make a contribution to their community and help others.

This award is presented annually by the association to an individual for the recognition of acts of community



NREA Board President Butch Gray, left, and NREA General Manager Kim Christiansen present Dean Gipfert with the 2018 NREA Good Neighbor Award.

service, the saving of a life, disaster relief, or other appropriate acts of service or humanitarianism.

Gipfert has been with Wheat Belt PPD for 43 years, joining the company as the Warehouse Assistant in 1975.

He was promoted to Maintenance Equipment Operator in 1979 and accepted the position of Sidney Maintenance Lineman in 1995. He took the position of Sidney Area Maintenance Foreman in 2018.

As the Maintenance Lineman, he has very strong ties with the community he serves. He has been the type of employee that was, and is, always willing to jump in and help with Annual Meetings, Customer Appreciation Days, Open House celebrations, parade preparation and especially the safety related events such as Safety Day demonstrations, Fair Safety demonstrations, the Annual Second Grade Safety Day, and promoting the industry with Career Day visits.

He and his wife, Nancy, enjoy following their grandchildren's activities and traveling to Mexico.

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Tech Trend to Watch:

BLOCKCHAIN

by Kaley Lockwood

We are living in the age where the pace of innovation and disruption is getting faster and faster. As a result, keeping up with the latest-and-greatest technologies is becoming increasingly difficult, not to mention expensive. It seems that as soon as we upgrade our smartphone, a new model with a bigger screen and cooler features is released.

One word that comes with a lot of hype and confusion is “Blockchain.” Because this technology is completely digital, thereby intangible, it’s tough to truly grasp exactly what it is.

Public power districts and electric cooperatives know that with any new technology, we have to view it from every angle and consider how it will ultimately improve our services. With Blockchain, that means recognizing its potential and limitations, both for Nebraska’s public power districts and electric co-ops and the energy industry as a whole. It also means asking whether Blockchain truly benefits our consumers.

Let’s take a look at how Blockchain works.

What is Blockchain, exactly?

In simplest terms, Blockchain is a digital, shared ledger that records transactions between buyers and

sellers. The transaction records, or blocks, are linked together in a time series, or chain. When a new transaction is completed, a new block is added to the chain.

Rural electric utilities make numerous transactions, such as billing, contracting with vendors and

the interference being detected.

Another important characteristic of Blockchain is that it’s decentralized. As noted before, a blockchain is distributed across the systems of all participating parties, rather than residing within a single institution, like a bank. This particular feature is why some consider the technology disruptive. Someone in Arkansas can send money to someone in Japan directly, without needing to go through a third party. This feature makes it transparent and eliminates the need for the trusted third party.

What are some real-life examples and applications of blockchain technology?

Currently, Blockchain works best when the product being bought or sold is virtual rather than physical.

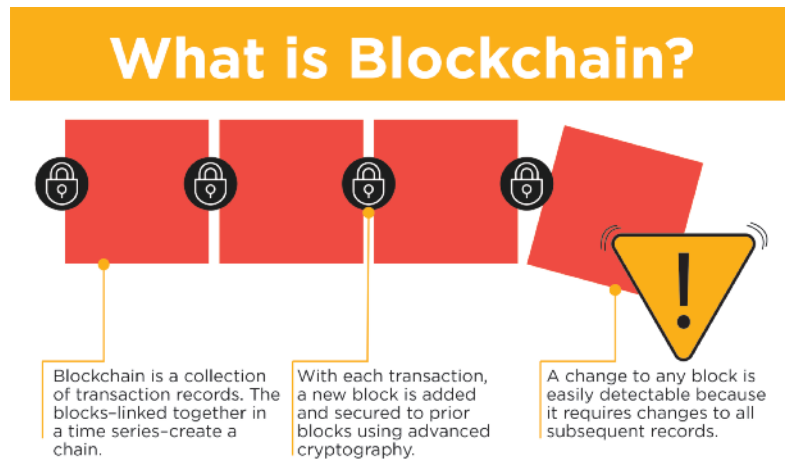
If the transaction involves a material product, whether it be a new home thermostat or a jumbo jet, some trust agent is usually required to certify that the physical transfer actually takes place.

Eventually this technology may even start to intersect with areas of your life when recordkeeping and processing requires security, efficiency and connectivity. In the coming

years, experts see potential for blockchain technology in the fields of healthcare, supply-chain management, finance and lending, and more.

Blockchain, like all software, is a means to an end that will provide different solutions to different needs, and determining its impact starts with understanding what the technology is and how it works.

Time will tell if Blockchain proves useful for electric utilities in the future, but for now, we’re viewing this as a technology trend to watch. Our top priority will always be to provide our consumer-members with the safe, reliable and affordable energy they depend on.



purchasing power on a daily basis, and even though we have secure, well-functioning systems already in place to handle these types of transactions, some see this as a potential application for Blockchain and electric utilities.

What makes Blockchain unique?

What makes blockchain technology so unique is that when a transaction takes place, it’s recorded on a network of computers, also known as nodes. The chain is shared and synchronized among all participating nodes in the Blockchain network, making it very difficult to alter the chain without

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Take winter heating safety steps and install smoke alarms

Nearly half of American families use alternative heating sources such as space heaters, fireplaces, or wood/coal stoves to stay warm this time of year. Fixed and portable space heaters, including wood stoves are a leading cause of home fires, and are involved in 74-percent of fire related deaths. Carbon monoxide is also a killer, and each year over 200 people die from carbon monoxide produced by fuel burning appliances in the home including furnaces, ranges, water heaters, and room heaters.

“Eighty percent of Americans don’t realize that home fires are the single most common disaster across the nation,” said Steph Novacek, Executive Director for the Capital and Eastern Nebraska Area Chapter of the American Red Cross. “People can reduce their family’s risk of being harmed in a home fire by using alternative heating sources safely, and by installing smoke alarms on every level of their home,”

Seven times a day someone in the U.S. dies in a fire. Red Cross volunteers have responded to over 58

home fires just this past year in the Capital and Eastern Nebraska Chapter area. The Red Cross is working to reduce the number of fires by calling attention to winter heating safety, as well as proper installation and testing of smoke alarms. In addition, families and individuals are also encouraged to develop and practice a home fire escape plan.

Simple Steps to Save Lives

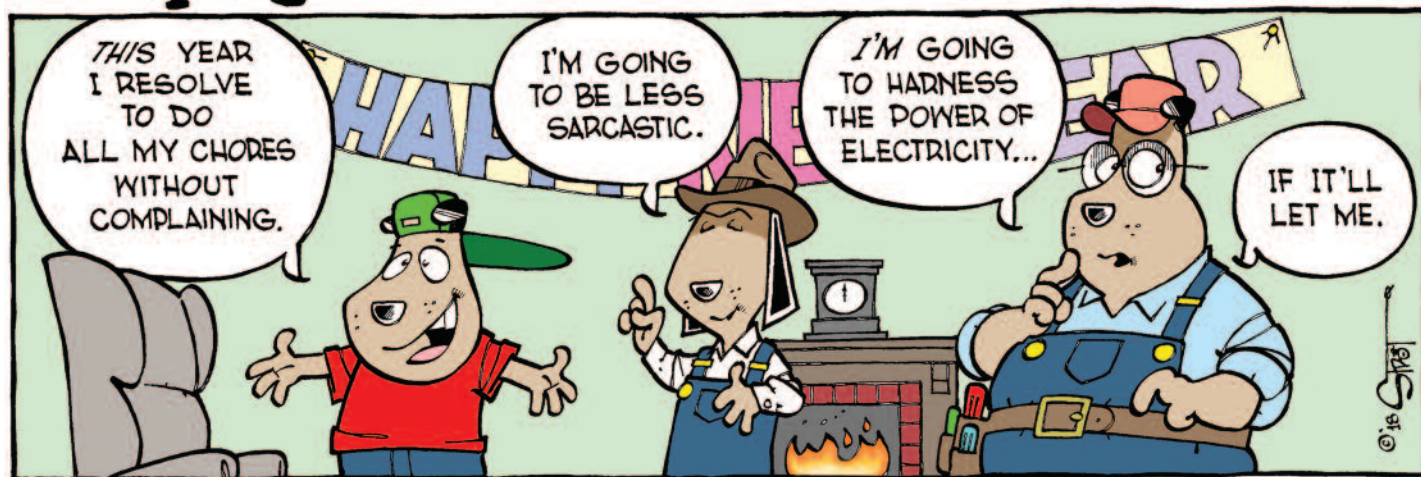
The Red Cross is calling on everyone to take steps that can save lives, especially during the winter months when home fires are more common:

- Keep all potential sources of fuel like paper, clothing, bedding or rugs at least three feet away from space heaters, stoves, or fireplaces.
- Portable heaters and fireplaces should never be left unattended. Turn off space heaters and make sure any embers in the fireplace are extinguished before going to bed or leaving home.
- If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or

carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.

- When buying a space heater, look for models that shut off automatically if the heater falls over as another safety measure.
- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Keep fire in your fireplace by using a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, and furnaces professionally inspected and cleaned once a year.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector on each level of your home.
- Install smoke alarms. At a minimum, put one on every level of the home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas.
- Make sure that everyone in the family knows how to get out of every room and how to get out of the home in less than two minutes.
- Practice the fire escape plan, and keep track of the time it takes. It should be not more than two minutes!

Murphy



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– Janet F.

Have you ever said to yourself "I'd love to get a computer, if only I could figure out how to use it." Well, you're not alone. Computers were supposed to make our lives simpler, but they've gotten so complicated that they are not worth the trouble. With all of the "pointing and clicking" and "dragging and dropping" you're lucky if you can figure out where you are. Plus, you are constantly worrying about viruses and freeze-ups. If this sounds familiar, we have great news for you. There is finally a computer that's designed for simplicity and ease of use. It's the WOW Computer, and it was designed with you in mind. This computer is easy-to-use, worry-free and literally puts the world at your fingertips.

From the moment you open the box, you'll realize how different the WOW Computer is. The components are all connected; all you do is plug it into an outlet and your high-speed Internet connection. Then you'll see the screen – it's now 22 inches. This is a completely new touch screen system, without the cluttered look of the normal computer screen. The "buttons" on the screen are easy to see and easy to understand. All you do is touch one of them, from the Web, Email, Calendar to Games– you name it... and a new screen opens up. It's so easy to use you won't have to ask your children or grandchildren for help. Until now, the very people who could benefit most from E-mail and the Internet are the ones that have had the hardest time accessing it. Now, thanks to the WOW Computer, countless older Americans are discovering the wonderful world of the Internet every day. Isn't it time you took part? Call now, and you'll

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Keeping the Home Fires Affordable

by Pat Keegan

Q : I have high energy bills, especially during the winter. My home is heated with a 20-year-old propane furnace. To make matters worse, I've also been paying the expenses on my mother's home, which is heated with electric baseboards and wall heaters. Should I upgrade to a different kind of system?

A : You're really getting the double whammy, especially if you live in a cold climate. Fortunately, you have a few potential solutions.

A good first step, before making major changes to the heating system, is to look at the area you are heating. The amount of heated space and the efficiency of that space determine how large of a heating system you'll need. Air leaks and inadequate insulation might be a major cause of higher bills, and correcting these problems might enable you to install a smaller heating system. An energy audit will provide the answers you need and give you an idea of how much you can save from weatherization measures and a more efficient heating system. Contact your public power district or electric cooperative first to see if they offer energy audits or if they can recommend an auditor.

Let's talk about heating systems. Propane furnaces are expected to last 15 to 25 years, but if yours has been well-maintained, you may get more mileage out of it. Even if your furnace is still running well and has some life left in it, it may not be efficient. Propane, gas and oil furnace efficiency is measured by the Average Fuel Utilization Efficiency, or AFUE. This is indicated on a label which may still be attached to the furnace. Your 20-year-old unit might have an AFUE

in the 70 to 80 percent range. A new high-efficiency furnace can have an AFUE rating of over 95 percent, which can reduce the portion of your propane bill that goes toward heating by 15 to 20 percent. The AFUE doesn't account for any heat escaping through poorly-insulated or improperly-sealed pipes or furnace ducts, so you definitely want those issues taken care of first.

Instead of replacing your old propane furnace with a new one, you have two additional options. You could install an air source heat pump, which would use your existing duct



Mini-split heat pumps are efficient options for heating and cooling. They are typically installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home. Photograph provided by Bonneville Power Administration



An energy auditor can help you weigh your options before making major energy efficiency investments.

work, or a mini-split heat pump, which can heat up to four rooms. In the past decade, the efficiency of heat pumps has greatly improved, even to the point where they are solid options even in colder climates.

It's not surprising that your mother's electric bill is high. This is common for inefficient homes that rely on resistance heat using wall heaters, portable heaters or baseboard heaters.

Your mother's home probably doesn't have ductwork, which makes the installation of a central heat pump very expensive. Instead, I suggest getting a quote on a ductless mini-split heat pump. They are efficient for heating and cooling, so if your mother uses a window A/C unit (or two), she can save even more money. Mini-splits are usually installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home. Your mother can continue to use baseboard heaters in the rooms she doesn't use as often. As efficient as the mini-splits are, they might not provide enough heat in a prolonged, extreme cold snap, so leaving a few baseboard heaters connected is a good idea.

Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and the pocketbook for many years. Scheduling an energy audit and considering all your options gives you the best chance at making the right decisions.

Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health



by **David Waxman**
Seattle Washington:

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, AloeCure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in AloeCure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharmaceutical therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"I was always in 'indigestion hell.' Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try AloeCure. And something remarkable happened... Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone - completely gone - but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from of 100% organic Aloe Vera, AloeCure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her colleagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion... soothe aching joints... reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails ... manage cholesterol and oxidative stress... and improve sleep and brain function... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One AloeCure Capsule Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
- Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
- Supports Healthy Immune System
- Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

This is the official nationwide release of the new AloeCure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is available for the next 48-hours only. All you have to do is call **TOLL-FREE 1-800-330-0061** and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: AC100. The company will do the rest.

Important: Due to AloeCure's recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 48-hour deadline may lose out on this free bottle offer.

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Host a festive feast for a hungry crowd

Hosting holiday dinners can be stressful, even for the most seasoned home cooks. Between gift giving, cookie baking, home decorating and more, there's often little time left to think through a festive feast for a hungry crowd of family and friends.

While the main entree and dessert are usually the first courses to be accounted for when planning, seasonal appetizers and sides can set your spread apart. Perfect for intimate gatherings or larger parties, a simple app like Cranberry Walnut and Brie Bites, filled with ingredients like Willow Tree Classic Chicken Salad and creamy Brie cheese, can leave guests anxiously awaiting the rest of the meal.

Round out your menu with must-have sides like potatoes. For example, a traditional French dish like Dauphinoise Potatoes are easy to make and feature a homemade butter and garlic sauce, thinly sliced potatoes and rich Gruyere cheese.

For more easy hosting ideas and recipes, visit willowtreefarm.com.



Cranberry Walnut & Brie Bites

- 2 packages (17 ounces each) puff pastry**
- 1 bag (12 ounces) fresh or frozen cranberries**
- 1 cup sugar, plus additional, to taste**
- 1 orange or lemon, zest only, cut into strips**
- 2 tablespoons water**
- salt, to taste**
- pepper, to taste**
- 1 container (7 1/2 ounces) Willow Tree Classic Chicken Salad**
- 4 ounces Brie cheese, cut into 48 pieces**
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh sage**

Heat oven to 375 F.

Thaw puff pastry sheets according to package instructions. Once thawed, unfold into thirds.

Cut each third into 12 equal squares to make 48 squares.

Grease two mini muffin tins; press each puff pastry square into muffin cup.

Bake 8-10 minutes; remove from oven and press center of each cup in with end of wooden spoon.

While puff pastry is baking, prepare cranberry sauce. Add bag of cranberries into saucepan. In pan over low heat, combine sugar, one strip orange or lemon zest and water; cook, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves and cranberries are soft, about 10 minutes. Increase heat to medium and cook until cranberries burst, about 12 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Add sugar, salt and pepper, to taste; let cool slightly and reserve.

Fill center of each puff pastry cup with chicken salad, 1/2 teaspoon cranberry sauce and one piece Brie cheese.

Bake 5-7 minutes, until Brie is melted.

Top with chopped walnuts and minced sage. Serve warm.



Dauphinoise Potatoes

- 8 ounces potatoes**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 1 large clove garlic**
- 1/2 cup heavy cream**
- 1 ounce Gruyere cheese, for garnish**
- salt**
- pepper**

Heat oven to 350 F.

Peel and finely slice potatoes.

Add butter to saucepan and melt. Finely mince garlic and add to saucepan; saute gently until garlic is pale golden color.

Add cream to saucepan and bring to rapid simmer but do not boil.

In oven-safe dish, arrange slices of potato in even layers.

Pour warm cream over potatoes slowly, allowing to seep between layers without overflowing dish.

Top generously with sliced Gruyere cheese and place in oven, 30-45 minutes per portion. When done, potatoes should be golden-brown on top, bubbling at edges and a knife should slide easily into center.

Note: Recipe can be multiplied for additional servings.

GOOMBAHS

- 14 oz. caramels**
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk (divided)**
- 1/2 tsp. burnt sugar flavoring**
- 1 regular size package of German Chocolate Cake mix**
- 2 cups chocolate chips**
- 3/4 cup melted butter**
- 1/4 tsp. butter flavoring**
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 cup chopped nuts**

Place caramels in a double boiler with 1/3 cup evaporated milk and burnt sugar flavoring. Stir over low heat until melted. In a large bowl, mix the melted butter, cake mix, 1/3 cup evaporated milk, butter flavoring, vanilla and nuts until it holds together. Put half of this dough into a greased and floured 9X13 inch pan. Bake 350° for 12 minutes. Sprinkle chocolate chips over crust while hot. Pour caramel mixture over chocolate chips. Lastly sprinkle other half of dough over top. Bake 15-18 minutes at 350°. Cut into 36 squares.

Barbara Buller, Atkinson, Nebraska

Vegetable Beef Soup

- 1 lbs. ground beef**
- 1 onion, diced**
- 6 red potatoes, finely diced**
- 3 stalks chopped celery**
- 5 carrots, thinly sliced**
- 1/2 cup water**
- 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained**
- 2 cups frozen green beans**
- 1/3 cup barley**
- 1 (46 fluid ounce) bottle tomato-vegetable juice cocktail (I used V-8 original)**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 tablespoon beef bouillon**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**

In a large pot over medium heat, cook beef, onion, celery and potatoes, covered, until beef is no longer pink and potatoes are tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Meanwhile, place carrots and 1/2 cup water in a microwave safe bowl and microwave on high 5 minutes, until tender. Drain beef mixture and return to pot with carrots, corn, green beans, barley, tomato vegetable juice cocktail, water, bouillon and pepper. Simmer over low heat 30 minutes, until flavors are well blended and soup is hot.

Sandy Spence, Norfolk, Nebraska

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