

NEBRASKA

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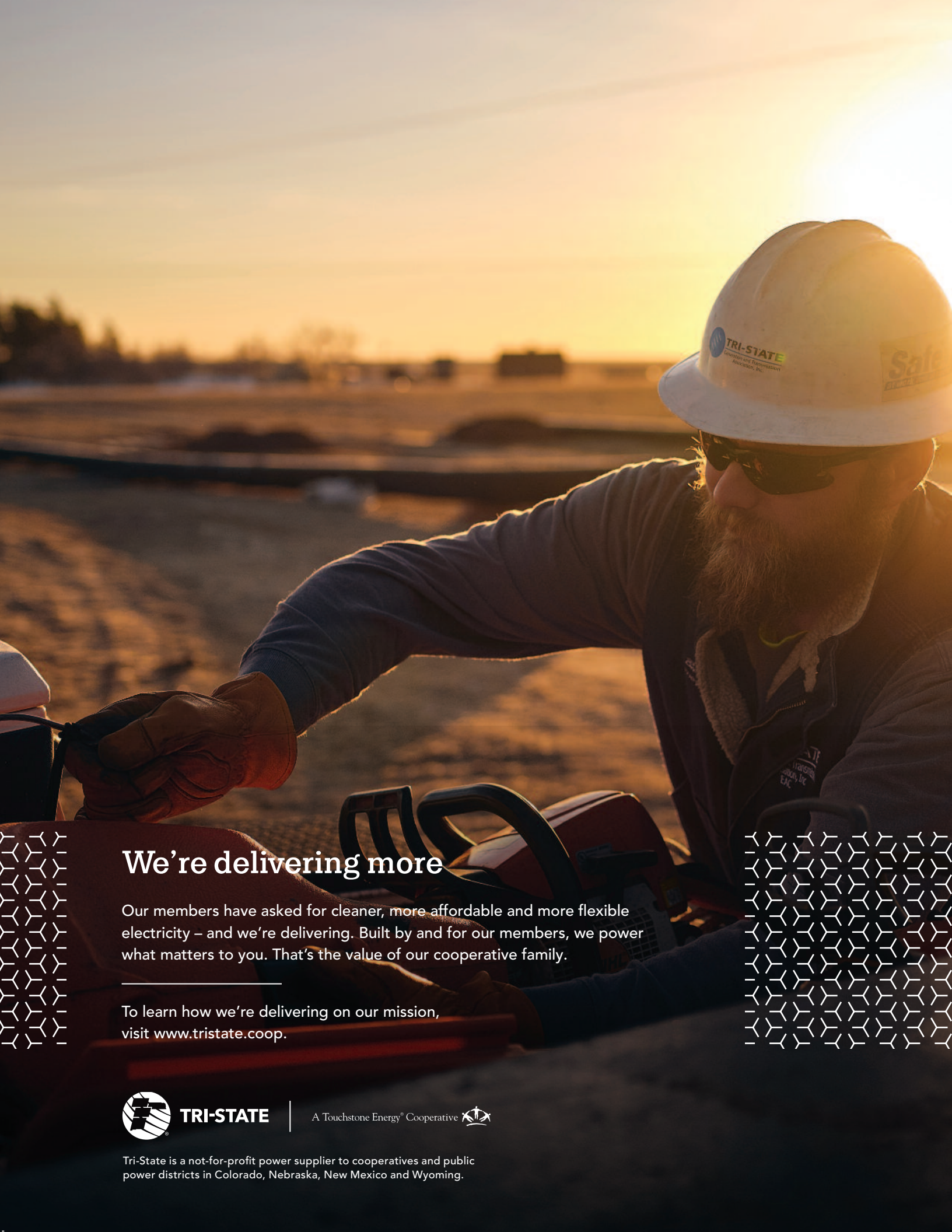
Wild About Horses

Inside:

- A Day in the Life of a Lineman
- Snowmobiling in Nebraska • Nebraska Wildlife
- Last Civil War Soldiers Recognized

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Contents



6 A Day in the Life of a Lineman

Chelsea Gengenbach, Dawson Public Power District communications specialist, spends a day with Lineman Trey Keaschall as he performs a number of tasks to keep customer's power on.



8 Wild About Horses

Each year people gather in Elm Creek, Nebraska to put a bid on a piece of the American West, a wild horse. Discover how the Elm Creek Wild Horse and Burro Corrals pairs people with horses.



12 Last Civil War Soldiers Recognized

LaRayne Topp, a freelance writer, explains how the Last Soldier Project, commemorating the final Civil War soldier to be buried in each county, is working its way across Nebraska.



20 Nebraska Wildlife

Retired biologist Mark Peyton shares his recollection of his teacher, Doris Gates, and how winter brings a variety of birds to his feeders, including the dark-eyed junco.

Departments

Editor's Page

Safety Briefs/Murphy

Energy Sense

Down Home Recipes

Marketplace



Wayne Price

Keep track of your electric bill

Everytime my phone rings from a number I don't recognize I automatically think "SCAM." The number of attempts by people to try to get me to do something foolish with my money seems to increase more and more every day. And the electric utility business is not exempt from these types of scams.

I take advantage of my public power district's mobile app to check my account each month. I am also enrolled in their budget billing program so I pay the same amount each month throughout the entire year. I enjoy the convenience of the programs they have to offer.

While the changing energy market has created more options for everyone, it has also resulted in more utility scams. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and we, as consumers, are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to the electric, heating or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. I do this by checking my account on the mobile app. I can check my billing history, my electric use and see if there are any notifications associated with my account.

Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call your local electric utility directly. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor on your side – your local electric utility. Public power districts and electric cooperatives are a community-focused organization that work to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to all Nebraskans.

Electricity theft and vandalism pose safety and financial concerns

Theft involving electricity and related materials is a problem all electric utilities face – and it’s a problem for electricity customers, too. Since the public power districts and electric cooperatives in Nebraska are member-owned, electricity theft could end up costing you money. Compensating for electricity theft drives up prices for everyone involved.

Theft of electricity also puts your personal safety at risk. Tampering with an electric meter can make it unsafe and unstable. When people steal electricity, they put themselves, their neighbors, family and pets all at risk for electric shocks, power surges, sparks and fire from exposed voltage. Stealing electrical related materials can also pose a significant risk to the culprit, resulting in injury or even death from exposure to live electricity.

Electricity theft isn’t isolated to rural areas or to big cities. It’s a problem utilities encounter from agricultural operations to housing complexes to business offices from coast to coast. Although electricity can be easily acquired through a utility, some people are still willing to risk physical damage or loss of life just for the sake of some free kilowatt hours. Others may not realize the serious legal and potential health implications. Stealing electricity is illegal under Nebraska state law and violates electrical codes.

Keeping power safe and affordable is a priority for Nebraska’s public power utilities. That is why we routinely inspect cooperative meters

and equipment, to ensure we’re doing our best to protect you from the risks of electricity theft. We take a proactive approach to this serious problem, eliminating theft and reducing related costs.

You can also play a role in this process, by immediately notifying us if you suspect someone is gaining access to our power supply without paying their fair share of the costs or by tampering with equipment. If you have information related to electricity or materials theft, please call your local electric utility. Rest assured, we’ll keep your name anonymous. Because you share in

the ownership of your local electric utility, when people steal from the public power district or electric cooperative, they’re stealing from you, too!



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A Day in the Life of a LINEMAN

by Chelsea Gengenbach

His day starts like many who hold the same title. Up before the sun and dressed in fire resistant clothing and composite-toed boots, Trey Keaschall of Dawson Public Power District proudly holds the title of lineman.

He was inspired to choose a utility line career by his father, who also was a lineman.

Before his official scheduled hours begin, Trey has already clocked in. He and another lineman responded to an after-hours call of a broken utility pole in the wee hours of the morning. Once power was restored, Trey returned home to rest before his shift.

He meets his colleagues in the breakroom and listens as his crew foreman dishes out assignments for the day. Trey splits his time between working with the construction crew and the underground boring machine crew. Today, he will go with the construction crew to replace poles on a residential lot.

The foreman provides a list of materials needed for the job, and Trey and the crew begin to load their trucks. Fuel is added to the bucket truck and digger truck. Two poles are loaded onto the pole trailer. Transformers, meter loops and other materials are accounted for and checked off. Coolers containing drinking water are filled. Trey adds his personal belongings to the truck he

will ride in – hard hat, gloves, a coat and lunch. A circle check is conducted where crews inspect the vehicles. Finally, the crew double-checks their list and heads out.

The work site is an empty lot next to Johnson Lake's waterfront. A new cabin will be built, but the existing utility poles do not provide enough



clearance for the planned structure. The replacement poles will stand 10 feet higher than their predecessors.

A tailgate is held. This allows the foreman to discuss the job at hand and address safety concerns. Then it's time to get to work. The bucket and digger trucks are parked in place. One crew member knocks on doors to alert customers of a brief power outage. The customers received a phone call the day prior, and the additional alert was a courtesy. A college student answers the door and asks if the power will be restored in time for her online class. The lineman promises to work as quickly and safely as possible, and the crew is alerted of the time.

Trey puts on his fall protection harness and climbs into the bucket. He adds rubber sleeves and rubber gloves. A crew member hands him rubber hoses to place over the power line. Trey will be removing the equipment from the pole while the line is still "hot," or





Trey Keaschall of Dawson Public Power District proudly holds the title of lineman. Photographs by Chelsea Gengenbach



energized. He lifts himself to the top of the pole and begins to work.

Meanwhile, his crew is working below. One keeps an eye on Trey to alert him of any potential hazards. It helps to have an extra set of eyes from a different angle. Other crew members work to remove the meter and remove the pole from the ground. The foreman and another crew member attach new hardware and a grounding wire to the new pole.

Once the new pole is set, Trey reattaches the equipment. This job takes longer because communication lines are also attached to the pole. Trey carefully attaches telephone lines to the pole first. Then, he lifts his bucket to the top of the pole. A crew member controlling the digger truck lifts a transformer to Trey, who guides it into place and secures it to the pole.

Trey's crew members hand him the top of the meter

loop and Trey begins to carefully connect the wires. Below, his crew attaches the meter loop to the pole and installs the meter. They reconnect the neighbor's house, and Trey reattaches an internet cable to the pole. A crew member tests the voltage at the meter and Trey looks over the attachments one last time to ensure everything is properly connected.

Power is restored, and a crew member makes note of the time. The requested deadline was missed by a mere five minutes. Now that the first half of the job is complete and everyone is safe, the crew can relax and take a brief break. Crew members give Trey a hard time as he booms down, to which he responds by smiling and shaking his head. Some look to the sky and note the curious onlookers overhead—bald eagles. It's 40 degrees with gusty winds, but the rosy cheeks of the crew are all smiles.

The foreman declares that this break is a good stopping time for lunch, and everyone quickly clamors inside their trucks for refuge from the cold.

After lunch, the crew finishes the job. This time, Trey helps with attaching materials to the new pole while another member works in the bucket. They take turns so everyone may gain experience in all aspects of utility line construction.

At the end of the day, Trey returns to the office to unload the trucks with his crew. The drinking water cooler is emptied and washed out, ready for a refill. Trey says his goodbyes and loads his belongings into his personal vehicle. He's cold and tired, but proud of his accomplishments for the day. Finally, Trey heads home for a well-deserved rest.



You too can
adopt a
mustang

Wild about horses



Soon after Congress passed the law protecting wild horses in 1971, their numbers began to increase. Twenty-five thousand became fifty thousand, with no end in sight. Ranchers and environmentalists joined in protest, claiming the horses were destroying fragile public land. In the heat of the controversy the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) came up with a solution: 3 or 4 times a year, the BLM rounds up thousands of excess horses, brands them, and puts them up for adoption. Once charged with wiping out the mustang, the government now advertises the advantages of owning one.

There are no more wild horses roaming the plains of Nebraska. But each year hundreds are shipped here from wild ranges in the west. People gather in Elm Creek, Nebraska to put in their bid on a piece of the American West.

These mustangs are shipped here mostly from Nevada by the BLM in an effort to reduce herd populations. The goal is to limit the number of wild horses roaming the federally-managed lands of the west to fewer than 40,000 by encouraging public adoption of these wild horses.

From Nevada, the BLM trucks horses to adoption centers all over America, like the one here in Elm Creek, Nebraska. Since the program began in 1973, Americans have adopted over 100,000 wild horses.

It costs the bureau more than \$1,500 to prepare a single horse for adoption. But you can own one for just \$125.

It's a cheap gamble, and everyone at an auction is eager to play. Some of these horses will never get used to captivity, but others will adapt more easily. You never know what kind of horse you're going to get. That's why it's a gamble.



Elm Creek, Nebraska Wild Horse and Burro Corrals

The Wild Horse and Burro Corrals at Elm Creek has been in place since 1994. Elm Creek is the mid-states resting point for animals on their journey to either Off-Range Pastures in the mid-west or adoption events in the mid-west to the east coast. The facility is located on approximately 35 acres on Highway 183 north of Elm Creek, Nebraska and approximately 6 miles north of Exit 257 from Interstate 80. The facility is located on the northwest corner of the intersection between Highway 183 and 100th Road.

The Elm Creek facility can house up to 500 animals, but has an average population of 350-450 animals year-round. The animals at the facility are a mix of mares, geldings, burros and yearlings from most of the Western States that have wild horses and burros on public lands.

Elm Creek Wild Horse and Burro Corrals
P.O. Box 160
5050 100th Road
Elm Creek, NE 68836
Telephone: 308-856-4498

Snowmobiling in Nebraska

Enjoy the quiet sounds of a new fallen snow in rural Nebraska. The beauty of our state is breathtaking when covered in a blanket of white crystals. One fun way to explore this winter is to go snowmobiling on an organized trail or visit one of many state parks that offer snowmobiling venues.

A Brief History of the Snowmobile

The first attempts at building a “snow machine” that would move over snow on runners happened 86 years ago. Many dreamed of building a power-driven sled, especially where heavy snowfalls often meant the difference between life and death when attempting to transport an ill person to emergency care.

In 1935, a snowmobile was built with skis in front and a sprocket wheel and tracked system in back. It carried 12 people, and family doctors, veterinarians, ambulance and taxi drivers were first in line to purchase one. A modified version found a market in the logging industry.

It was the late 1950s, with the development of smaller gasoline engines, before the one- or two-passenger lightweight chassis snowmobile was marketed - and with it, a new recreational sport was born.

Ten years later, there were dozens of manufacturers producing snowmobiles that sold for a few hundred dollars each. Today, four manufacturers will produce almost 150,000 snowmobiles to be sold annually worldwide. Snowmobiling is a major winter recreational activity and a significant factor in increased winter tourism in the snowbelt of the United States and much of Canada.

Today's snowmobile bears little resemblance to earlier models. By today's standards, the machines of the 60's and 70's are considered antiques. The history of the "snow machine" is yet to be complete.

Nebraska State Snowmobile Association (NSSA) NebraskaSnowmobiler.com

The NSSA is an organized group of snowmobile and winter fun enthusiasts who organized as a nonprofit back in 1976 to unite Nebraska snowmobilers throughout the state.

- Promotes the growth of organized snowmobiling.
- Stimulates and advances the safety and welfare of snowmobilers throughout the state of Nebraska.
- The NSSA coordinates with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission to use licensee fees for trail acquisition and maintenance across the state.

Snowmobile Trails in Nebraska

Snowmobiles are permitted only at certain state recreation areas under specific conditions. Those who choose to ride snowmobiles at state recreation areas must register their snowmobiles and have a valid park entry affixed to the front of the vehicle. Information on registering a snowmobile is available on the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles website (<https://dmv.nebraska.gov/>).

ATVs and snowmobiles are allowed on frozen (8 inches thick) lake surfaces at the following areas:

- o Bluestem State Recreation Area
- o Box Butte State Recreation Area
- o Branched Oak State Recreation Area
- o Calamus State Recreation Area
- o Conestoga State Recreation Area
- o Enders State Recreation Area
- o Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area
- o Gallagher Canyon State Recreation Area
- o Johnson Lake State Recreation Area
- o Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area
- o Lake Maloney State Recreation Area
- o Lake Minatare State Recreation Area
- o Lake Ogallala State Recreation Area
- o Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area
- o Louisville State Recreation Area
- o Olive Creek State Recreation Area
- o Pawnee State Recreation Area
- o Rockford State Recreation Area
- o Sherman Reservoir State Recreation Area
- o Stagecoach State Recreation Area
- o Summit Lake State Recreation Area
- o Sutherland Reservoir State Recreation Area
- o Swanson Reservoir State Recreation Area
- o Wagon Trail State Recreation Area
- o Walgren Lake State Recreation Area
- o Willow Creek State Recreation Area

Additionally, when there is a minimum of six inches of snow on the ground, Branched Oak and Lewis and Clark state recreation areas both offer five miles of snowmobile trails.

Okay, it is time to bundle up in that snow suit, stocking cap, gloves and goggles. Get out there and hit the snow trails!



by LaRayne Topp

The Last Civil War Soldiers Recognized Across the Country

The Billy Yank raised the Henry rifle to his shoulder, the sun glinting off the brass buttons lining his dark blue coat. He aimed the weapon at a distant cloud and fired. Then he solemnly and reverently stepped back and saluted the grave before him, raising his hand to his brow, and slowly and deliberately returning it to his side.

Following the days of the Civil War, this would have been a step completed around a veteran's casket as family members and friends gathered at a farm grove or cemetery near the family home.

Today, family members and friends once again gather around the graves of Civil War soldiers who fought for the Blue in ceremonies led by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Preserving the legacy of those who fought to save the Union in the War Between the States, SUVCW members locate the long forgotten graves of Civil War veterans, as well as military records, and conduct commemorative services and educational presentations.

A current project of the national SUVCW organization—the Last Soldier Project—identifies and commemorates the final Civil War soldier to be buried in each county across the country. The National SUVCW organization is separated into 28 Departments with all of the states included; one or more states are joined in some of the departments.

Each department recognizes these last soldiers in a particular fashion. In Indiana, for example, Last Soldiers are commemorated on the state's SUVCW website. In Iowa, Last Soldier graves are decorated with a blue and silver plaque, and in Wisconsin with a bronze star.

There are also more than 200 local camps such as the five in Nebraska: Harrison Camp based out of Wisner; Shiloh Camp at Lincoln; Victor Vifquain Camp at Omaha, named after the Medal of Honor recipient; and



Welstead Camp from the Fremont area. The Thayer Camp is an at-large camp with members from the western portion of the state.

Of Nebraska's 85 SUVCW members, around 20 appear in re-enactors uniforms. Known as the Sons of Veterans Reserve, these Civil War enthusiasts call themselves the Nebraska Rangers. Oftentimes they march into Last Soldier events or headstone dedications in full dress, providing rifle squads to give an air of authenticity to the ceremonies, and chaplains to offer opening and closing prayers. Although it's obvious that none of today's SUVCW members ever served in the Civil War, many of the members are veterans of later wars. However, a quick glance at their uniforms and equipment, with such accurate attention to detail, would lead you to believe they were soldiers 150 years ago.



Nebraska Rangers lend an air of authenticity to headstone dedications and Last Soldier programs led by members of the Sons of Union Soldiers of the Civil War; however, face masks were a modern-day prevention method during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the Last Soldier project, the Sons of Union Veterans also place military headstones on those graves without. These projects have involved searching hundreds of the state's cemeteries, locating the graves of and identifying the more than 19,400 Civil War veterans buried in Nebraska, the final burial taking place in 1948.

Current day SUVCW members strictly guard the integrity of original Grand Army of the Republic veterans groups, following GAR protocol and safeguarding the memory of Civil War soldiers. Initially, the Grand Army of the Republic formed when soldiers returned home from battle and realized they needed a little help. When they were too old to care for themselves, they enlisted the help of their sons and the Sons of Union Veterans became a reality.

“There was no use for the sons to be members when the

dads were gone,” explained Norm Weber of Wisner, Commander of the SUVCW Harrison Camp, so many closed. However, some camps stayed open and assisted World War I soldiers in future years. In that way, the GAR laid the stage for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, Weber said.

To become a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, one doesn't need to have a Civil War soldier as an ancestor, but only to retain an interest in the history of the war. In addition, women are welcome to join the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

In Northeast Nebraska, Weber leads numerous special ceremonies in which Last Soldiers are memorialized, an adaptation of ceremonies first conducted by the Grand Army of the Republic in 1917.

In the fall of 2020, one such ceremony at the Rose Hill Cemetery in Pender honored Ashton Barton, the last soldier to be buried in Thurston County. Barton was born in Orange, Massachusetts, in February of 1847. Orphaned at the tender age of 16, he enlisting as a drummer boy in the Union Army in October of 1864, a member of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery.

Once the war was over, Barton joined the regular army at Fort Phil Kearny in Wyoming, engaging in what were known as the Indian Wars. Dying at age 90 in 1937, Barton was the last surviving participant in the 1868 Wagon Box fight, in which soldiers fought from behind a barricade of wagon boxes.

When Barton came to Omaha following his time of service, Omaha was only a hamlet. He homesteaded in South Dakota and then migrated to Thurston County, where he and his wife farmed and he was engaged as a groceryman.

During the 2020 ceremony, a medallion was placed at Barton's gravestone which through contact with a Smart phone allows access to the Nebraska SUVCW website. Nebraska's SUVCW Signal Office is compiling data on these Last Soldiers—obituaries, biographies and other information—to be posted to the website.

On hand at Barton's Last Soldier Ceremony was SUVCW Department Commander John Surman. His interest in Civil War history was piqued when he discovered his great-great-grandfather, who was captured at the Siege of Atlanta, was held prisoner at Andersonville. Also known as Camp Sumter and the Andersonville

Continued on Page 15

In Search of a Business Model: Can a Business Case be Found For Rural Broadband?

The mission of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) is to support our members by providing essential services which can be performed more effectively and economically at a statewide level. Beyond the issues surrounding your electric rates, the NREA also has a responsibility to pursue the betterment of the lives of rural Nebraskans. Not many recent issues can impact as many lives as the development of broadband across rural Nebraska. Broadband is a healthcare issue, it is an education issue, it is an agricultural issue, and it is an economic development issue. As important as connectivity is, rural Nebraska clearly does not enjoy parity with our urban counterparts when it comes to broadband connectivity. Rural Nebraskans pay more to receive slower internet--if they can get connected at all. In fact, the USDA recently reported that only 20 percent of rural farms in Nebraska have access to a fiber connection. Sixteen percent of Nebraska farms do not have access to the internet at all. The current pandemic has further stressed the importance of solving this issue for all Americans.

For the past three years the NREA has been stepping outside our electric issues comfort zone and asking, is there something public power can do to help facilitate broadband development? As we have met with internet and telecommunication providers, it has become clear that many of these companies believe a business case cannot be made for delivering internet fiber to a rural home. As much as 70 percent of the cost of delivering broadband to a home is the cost of burying fiber. Building the infrastructure to provide reliable internet service is expensive and without enough consumers to purchase the end product, a business case cannot be made. After all, these companies cannot exist without making a profit, and we should not expect that they would lose money in order to bring service to rural areas.

So, is there an answer to this conundrum? In the 1930's when private companies said that a business case

could not be made for delivering electricity to the farm, rural Americans came together, formed not-for-profit electric cooperatives, and brought electric service to the farm. Similarly, does an innovative business model exist for the establishment of rural broadband? Hundreds of rural electric cooperatives across America are currently bringing broadband to rural homes. These companies have access to low interest capital, they have expertise in building and maintain infrastructure, and they are not looking for a return on their investment in three to five years. They can depreciate their investments out over twenty or thirty years. As a result, many electric cooperatives are successfully delivering broadband internet to their most rural customers.

Nebraska's legislative statutes do not allow public power to get into the business of retail internet delivery, nor are we asking for such authority. We do believe, however, that rural electric power districts may play an important role in broadband delivery. We believe that electric utilities, fiber internet companies, wireless internet providers, as well as other interested parties can come together in a partnership model. Companies that have historically competed with one another can share risk and expertise entering into an agreement that allows every party to profit. Allowing, for example, a rural power districts to develop and maintain the infrastructure, a fiber internet company to provide the internet service and utilize their IT expertise, and allowing a wireless internet provider to access the fiber they need to reach the most rural customers could collectively provide an avenue where rural broadband development becomes possible.

NREA does believe that an innovative business model for broadband exists. Perhaps, no single model will work for every corner of the state, but bringing interested parties together, reducing profit expectations, eliminating red tape, and sharing risk might ultimately be the recipe for providing connectivity to every Nebraskan.

Last Soldier Project - From Page 13

Prison, this Georgia Confederate prisoner of war camp held 45,000 Union prisoners. Almost 13,000 never made it out.

Knowing that, Surman began an active pursuit for further information. This led to his involvement in the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and eventual appointment as SUVCW Commander of Thayer Camp, and up through the ranks as Nebraska's Junior and Senior Commander. In June of 2020, Surman was named the Department Commander for Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, involved with the plans to honor the Last Soldiers as instructed by the National SUVCW organization.

Last Soldier events began taking place in Nebraska in 2019. With 92 Last Soldiers commemorations across the state, Surman said, it may take a while to complete them all.

"If we're lucky, we will have 15 to 18 completed in the first year," Surman said.

Once the Last Soldier project is finished nationwide, Surman would like to see the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War associations honor World War I veterans in a similar fashion.

"I don't want this to end with the Civil War," Surman said. "Our vets are being taken for granted. They shed precious blood to guarantee our rights and our liberties."



Rick Marx of Pilger fires a Henry rifle used by only a few units of Union troops.

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A Conversation with Governor Pete Ricketts

The Nebraska Rural Electric Association had the privilege of sitting down with Nebraska's Governor Pete Ricketts to discuss the economic development, rural broadband and the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are excerpts from our discussion:

Economic development in rural Nebraska is a big issue. Speak to some of our states success and where we are headed in the future.

Economic development requires a partnership to bring companies into our state. We have found that having a welcome community is vital. At the end of the day no company invests in a place called Nebraska, they invest in specific communities. Public power's low utility rates and flexibility to meet new companies' needs is key to attracting them to Nebraska.

There has been some success with broadband development in rural Nebraska but we have a way to go before we catch up with our urban neighbors. What can be done to equalize broadband across urban and rural Nebraska both from an economic and career standpoint?

My office continues to focus on rural broadband because the ability to use precision agriculture and big data helps producers to become more efficient. As the world gets bigger and bigger, we have to remain competitive with other nations. We have to be able to leverage technology to remain competitive. Since the pandemic started, we have dedicated almost \$30 million to reach rural homes and businesses so they can manage work from home, telehealth, and school for our young people learning remotely. We certainly have good service in our schools, but we need to get to that last mile of service. That is really the biggest challenge



ahead. We have more work to do so stay tuned.

As we look at some of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, from your seat, how has this made Nebraska stronger? Are there opportunities that have come to light as a result of COVID-19?

One thing we have seen is great cooperation in our society, our hospitals in particular. For example, the state has worked with the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) which has worked with our long-term care facilities for years to teach them how to do infection control. Since the pandemic began UNMC has been doing webinars, on-site visits, training how to properly use personal protective equipment, and how to create quarantine zones within their facilities.



looking at moving to a place like New York or Chicago are finding that the quality of life they find in cities is not so good compared to back home. I do think businesses are going to look around and say that Nebraska stayed open through the pandemic and as they look to expand, they will be looking to expand in Nebraska. As we are able to expand broadband and people are able to work from home, I think people are going to make that choice to say I can live in a setting where I can have more land, I can have more house, better schools, a better quality of life and not have to put up with the traffic or crime that we see in the cities on the coasts.

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This has really helped us keep down the fatalities in our long-term care facilities. We have never experienced anything like this in the last 100 years and we need to be prepared to respond in the future should this happen again.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic we are seeing that many people in urban centers around the nation are exiting cities looking for a simpler life, a safer life. Do you see any opportunities for rural Nebraska as we see people looking to relocate to rural areas?

I think what you are going to see is that people are going to recognize the value of the quality of life that we have here in Nebraska. Our young people that were

4 Ways to ensure medication safety during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staying healthy is top of mind. For individuals at risk for or diagnosed with COVID-19, the addition of new treatments may pose another medical danger: adverse drug events (ADEs). ADEs cause an estimated 150,000 deaths per year in the United States and 1.3 million emergency room visits, resulting in nearly 350,000 people hospitalized for further treatment.

The experts at Tabula Rasa HealthCare, a team of clinical pharmacists building solutions for personalized medication safety, recommend several actions to improve medication safety and prevent ADEs:

1 Keep an updated list of all your medications.

Ask your doctor(s) for a list of all your medications and update it with over-the-counter medications to ensure you both have a complete profile. Document why you take each medicine, the dose, frequency and time of day. Always have access to it by, for example, creating a secure note in your phone for safekeeping. Also, share a copy with a loved one in case of an emergency.

2 Ask your pharmacist to review your medication regimen.

Make an appointment with your pharmacist to review your medications, including prescription, non-prescription, supplements, herbals and recreational drugs. While you may see multiple health care providers, your pharmacist can provide a holistic review of your regimen. Ask questions and try to understand the purpose of each medication. Your pharmacist likely has access to technological tools that identify risk for preventable ADEs. For example, Tabula Rasa HealthCare's MedWise is a one-of-a-kind technology solution that compares how medications interact together. Using this unique solution, pharmacists may assist you with managing your medications safer and smarter. If you are not aware if your health plan covers pharmacist visits, consider selecting a plan that does.

3 Ask your pharmacist about risks with every new medication.

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, talk to your pharmacist before taking any new medications to determine if they may increase your risk for ADEs. When adding or removing medications to or



Photograph courtesy of Getty Images

from your regimen, it is important to understand how these changes impact your risk for an ADE. Another tool your pharmacist may use is the MedWise Risk Score to help you better understand and measure medication risk with changes. Your pharmacist may adjust how you take your medications or recommend an alternative that is safer for you.

4 Develop a routine for taking your medications and stick with it.

Be consistent when you take your medications to avoid ADEs. Your pharmacist can provide you with a unique medication profile that outlines the time to take each of your medications for safety. Setting reminders such as an alert on your cell phone or sticky notes can help remind you to take your medication on time.

Pharmacists are medication safety “quarterbacks,” helping optimize your medication regimen, avoid ADEs and assure you and your loved ones stay healthy and safe, during and after COVID-19. To learn more, visit trhc.com/nextfrontier.

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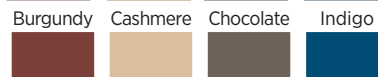
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by Mark Peyton

Outside our formal living room windows I have two birdfeeders. One is attached to the side of the house just below the window and the other is a platform feeder on the stump of an old ash tree.

I get Eurasian collared doves, blue jays, cardinals, starlings and house sparrows all year long. In the spring I get house finches, gold finches, various kinds of sparrows and pine siskin's, but during January and February the most common bird out the window are dark-eyed juncos, the "snowbirds".

One of my fondest memories of college life is the wintery Saturday mornings at Miss Gates' house south of Chadron. She would invite her students out for coffee and a snack and we would sit there from sunup to about 10:30 A.M. and watch the hundreds of birds that came to the feeder just outside a large window.

Doris B. Gates was the ultimate bird watcher. She had a convertible and would put five students in the car, top down, middle of winter, and drive the back roads between Chadron and Crawford pointing out this bird and that one. At the time I thought I would probably die in the back of that car because she spent all the time looking for birds and not watching the road!

Instead of binoculars she used a monocular, but I think she could identify almost any and all birds simply by their actions and behavior. I was nine years old when I first met Miss Gates and she let me tag along on a college field trip to the Valentine National Refuge. Later, as a college student, I worked as her lab assistant for two years. Without doubt she is the major reason I

ultimately became a naturalist.

The most common birds at her feeder were evening grosbeaks and dark-eyed juncos. These two bird species have distinctly different stories!

At the time, Western Nebraska was the only area of the state where a few grosbeaks could be found all year long, but they would show up by the hundreds during the winter. Now, they can't be found at all! The population of evening grosbeaks sharply declined twenty years ago. Various explanations as to why have been given: West Nile virus, house finch eye disease, logging, and spraying with insecticides to reduce forest

insects that damage trees. Whichever, the population dropped from about 125 million birds in the 1970's when we were watching them at Miss Gates' house, to just over four million today.

The evening grosbeak gave me a great bird watching experience when I attended my first Nebraska Ornithologists' Union spring meeting. We met at Halsey National Forest. Being from Chadron and familiar with all the western birds Miss Gates suggested I go birding with people from Lincoln. The leader of the field trip was the

president of the organization and he was an excellent "birder." The first bird we saw got everyone excited. Not understanding the excitement, I looked up and absently, almost to myself, I said, "I think that's an evening grosbeak."

The field trip leader looked at me and said, "That boy knows his birds!" They didn't have evening grosbeaks in the Lincoln area and I had been watching hundreds of them every Saturday morning all winter long. Yeah, I knew grosbeaks. Not wanting to ruin the impression I made with that identification, I didn't say anything else the rest of the day!



A dark-eyed junco perches on a branch. Photograph by Mark Peyton

The dark-eyed junco hasn't suffered the same fate as evening grosbeaks and they are still one of the most common birds that I see at my winter feeder. They are the true "snowbirds." They breed north of us in Canada and west of us in the Rockies showing up throughout the rest of the United States once winter arrives. While they will feed on my platform feeder they do seem to prefer foraging on the ground around the feeder eating the millet seeds that the other birds kick off the platform.

Juncos are small sparrow-sized birds that come in a wonderful variety of colors from gray to black and brown. The head is almost always darker, the beak is slightly pink and the outside feathers of the tail are bright white. Two varieties are common in western and central Nebraska, the slate-colored junco and the Oregon junco.

At my feeder here in south-central Nebraska I see mostly the slate-colored birds with black heads. The Oregon Juncos with their buffy brown sides also show up. In eastern Nebraska, however, it is almost always the slate-colored variety that you see.

The outside feathers on the tail of the junco are white. These feathers are called "flash feathers." Biologists believe the function of these bright white feathers on either side of the tail may be to startle, confuse, or surprise a predator. It may also function as a way for males to attract females, though the females have the flash feathers as well. The tail makes it very easy to identify juncos from a distance. When the junco flushes, the tail spreads and there is the bright flash of white on each side.

Dark-eyed juncos nest on the ground in forested areas. They will lay up to six eggs and they will produce two or three clutches each year. They incubate the eggs for two weeks. After hatching they care for the rapidly growing young for another two weeks before the fledglings are ready to leave the nest.

Contrary to the grosbeaks, the dark-eyed junco is one of the most numerous birds in North America with estimates of almost 700 million birds. During the winter they are the most common "backyard bird" seen in Nebraska.

Remembering Doris Gates

Watching the juncos at my feeder I fondly think back to Miss Gates and the years I spent studying with her. She spent 12 years teaching at North Platte High School before leaving to teach at Chadron State College in 1955. She taught until 1974, the same year I graduated. She quit teaching at age 59 to fulfill her lifelong dream of being a rural mail carrier. Her license plate said "Mail Ma'am."



Doris B. Gates

In 1958 she built a one-room cinder block house at the foot of "Rush No More Butte" seven miles south of Chadron where she lived until she died. By the time I was watching birds at the window the house had grown to five rooms and an attached garage. Doris B. Gates was born April 12, 1915 in Lincoln and died on October 4, 1983. She served as President of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union and for years was the editor of the Nebraska Bird Review, the journal published by the Union.

Miss Gates never married or had any children, except the hundreds and hundreds of students in which she instilled a love for birds, plants, insects, and basically all of nature.

We hate it when the power goes out just as much as you do. When there is an outage, we work hard to resume service as quickly and safely as possible.

Many times, the reasons for outages are beyond our control. Here are the main reasons the power goes out:

STORMS — Conditions brought on by storms such as high winds, ice and lightning can interrupt service.

Lightning itself does not impact outages as much as people think, but it can strike trees and cause branches or even whole trees to fall on distribution lines. Lightning can cause a problem, however, if it strikes substation equipment, such as a large transformer. Strong high winds and ice that accumulates on lines can also impact distribution.

TREES AND VEGETATION – Branches, limbs or trunks can fall on lines and vegetation (such as vines) can grow around poles, lines or other equipment. Ice and wind can make matters worse. This is why we work so hard to keep power lines and equipment clear.



ANIMALS — It is estimated that 11 percent of all outages are caused by our furry friend the squirrel. They love to chew on the weatherproof coating around lines. Other critters like turkeys, snakes and seagulls can interfere with service too.

A bird on a wire is harmless and safe for the bird as long as it touches nothing but the line.

ACCIDENTS — Cars, trucks, and farm equipment that have a run-in with a utility pole can cause an outage.

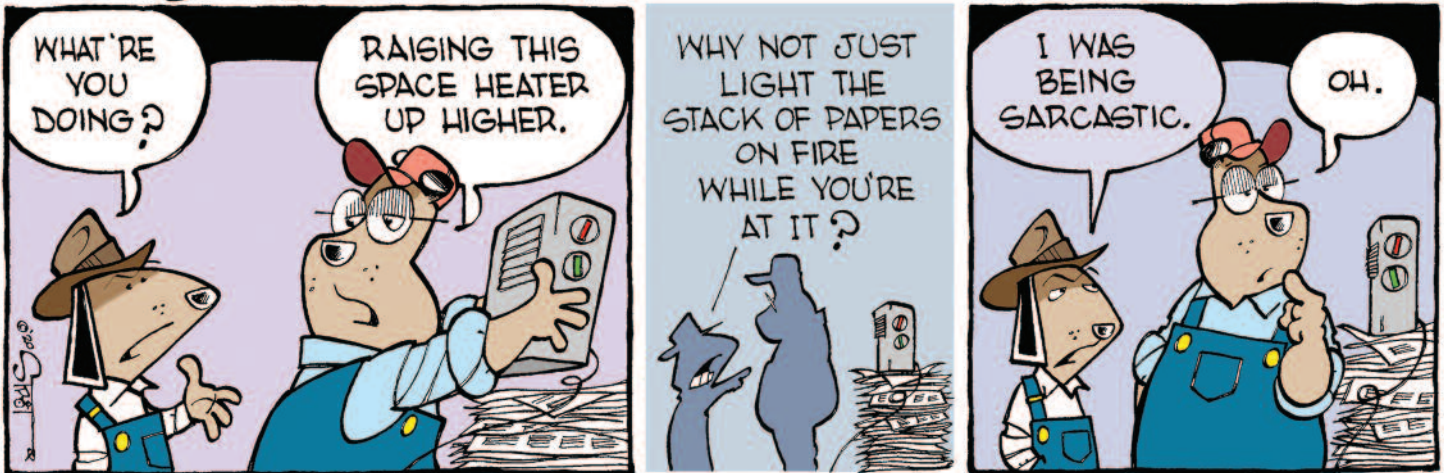
PUBLIC DAMAGE — Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, vandalism or theft can all cause interruptions in the energy chain.

EQUIPMENT issues — We maintain and inspect all of our lines and equipment regularly; however, sometimes equipment malfunctions. We strive to address any problem as soon as it happens.

Please contact your local electric utility with questions about outages or to learn more about the steps we take to provide reliable service.

Photograph by Karen Schlautman

Murphy



Finally... a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

The **Zoomer's** versatile design and 1-touch joystick operation brings mobility and independence to those who need it most.

If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you've experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Once simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there's a better alternative... the Zoomer.

My Zoomer is a delight to ride! It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the-out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.

Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you'll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It's not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll right up to a table or desk- there's no need to transfer to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight

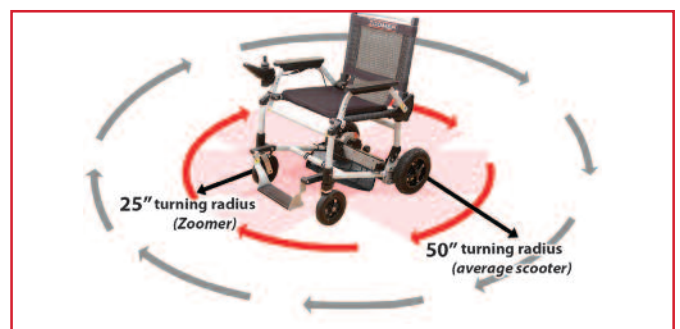
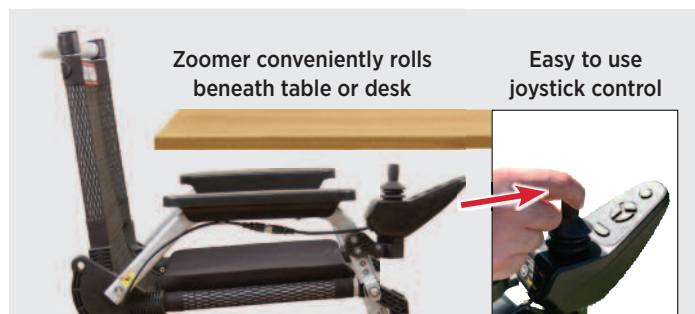


aluminum frame makes it durable and comfortable. It's dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per



hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a dime. The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles on a single charge. Plus, it's exclusive foldable design enables you to transport it easily and even store it in a closet or under a bed when it's not in use.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your lifestyle? Call now and find out how you can have your very own Zoomer.



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The Zoomer Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair. Zoomer is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2021 firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond, Inc.

Will your January electric bill have a holiday surprise?

Ever rediscover one of those Christmas gifts you intended to give during the holidays but forgot where you hid it until the following February? It can be a pleasant surprise if you can still gift it in the future, return it for a refund or use it yourself. Unfortunately, your January or February electric bill may reflect similar holiday surprises. I'm referring to those things you did or items you used during the festivities that may have negatively impacted your electrical bill. Unfortunately, you can't undo or "re-gift" these holiday surprises, and you will have to pay for the energy they waste regardless of whether they added to your seasonal cheer.

Space heaters

Nobody wants to be cold for Christmas! To chase away the chill, you may find it convenient to plug in a portable space heater in a spare bedroom or other seldomly-used area to accommodate guests. But do you shut off the heater after they leave?

When investigating wintertime "high bill" inquiries, the most common responses residential energy consultants hear about space heaters is, "Oh, that little heater couldn't have added that much to my bill!" Nearly all space heaters have more than one temperature setting. Of those, the highest setting usually operates around 1,500 watts or 1.5 kilowatts (kW). If the heater operates continuously at that level for an entire month (30 days or 720 hours), it will add 1,080 kilowatt-hours (kWh) to your electric bill. At Nebraska's 2020 average residential price of electricity (11.94¢/kWh), that little heater magically adds \$129! Don't open yourself up to this kind of surprise. To ensure the heater does not operate when unneeded, simply unplug it.

Exhaust fans

Whether it's grandma trying to clear the kitchen of smoke from burning bacon or Uncle Eddie clearing the bathroom from whatever was burning him, somebody's going to turn on an exhaust fan. Chances are, that fan will continue to run long after pollutants are gone. Kitchen exhaust hoods can often draw 250 to 500 cubic feet of air per minute (cfm). Bathroom exhaust fans remove 50 to 150 cfm. When they are ducted to the

outdoors, conditioned air pulled out of the house is replaced by cold outdoor air that is sucked in through gaps or tiny cracks around windows, doors, foundations, rooflines or other wall penetrations. All this "new" air must be heated to maintain indoor comfort. To minimize the amount of additional heating required, turn kitchen exhaust hoods off as soon as airborne food contaminants are removed, and install a timer switch on bathroom fans to minimize over-exhausting.

Gaming systems

Inevitably, Santa will bring some lucky child one of the newest gaming systems, like the PlayStation 5, or even worse, a dedicated Gaming PC drawing 750 continuous watts. Then, with delight in their heart, that child will skip gleefully to the room with your entertainment center and connect their new gaming system to your 85-inch big screen television that draws 175 watts, as well as the surround sound system that pulls another 150 watts. For the rest of the holiday vacation, they become affixed to **YOUR** couch challenging siblings, aunts, uncles, and even the mailman to a video game showdown while your electric meter is spinning. Now ask yourself this – "What is the likelihood of them turning off everything when they finally put down their controller?" Go and check to avoid this surprise. Better yet, if electronics won't be used in the next few hours, unplug them, as most electronics still draw a small amount of power when they are turned "off."

Lights

By now, you know LED Christmas lights can use up to 99% less energy per bulb than conventional incandescent lights. But if your home is filled with family and especially young kids this season, anticipate every light you own will be turned on at some time. According to a survey conducted by Lutron Electronics, 90% of Americans say someone in their household forgets to turn the lights off when they leave a room. Surprised? Don't be. After your last guest leaves, take a thorough tour of your home and outside buildings. You'll likely be glad you did.



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HETEROSIS...DON'T BE IN BUSINESS WITHOUT IT!

Q : Last year brought financial hardships, and with a new year ahead, I'm looking for new ways to save money. I know there are things I can do to save energy at home and lower my monthly bills. Can you share a few ideas on how to start the year off right by saving energy?

A : Here are a few simple tips to help you get organized and start an achievable path to saving energy. First, we'll take a look at three important steps when considering energy efficiency projects: information gathering, planning and taking action.

Start by gathering information.

Begin by reviewing your 2020 energy bills. Knowing how and when you use energy can help you decide how ambitious your plan should be. If you have questions about your past bills or energy use, give your electric utility a call—they can help you understand your energy bills. Your utility may also offer a free app that can show you exact data about your home energy use.

Next, visit your electric utility's website to see if they offer additional assistance, like energy improvement rebates, free energy audits or other special rates and programs.

Finally, the most important step is to schedule an energy audit, or conduct an online energy audit. (Your electric utility may offer free audits.) If you plan to live in your home for many years to come, hiring an energy auditor may be the best investment you can make. An energy auditor can tell you which energy efficiency actions will save you the most money or provide the biggest improvement in comfort. If you're looking for a faster, DIY (socially distanced) method, try an online energy audit like energystar.gov's Home Energy Yardstick.



A programmable thermostat can help you reduce energy use when you don't need to be heating or cooling your home. Photograph by Consumers Energy

Develop a plan.

Now that you've gathered the information you need, you can develop a plan. It can be simple or more comprehensive. If your priority is cutting energy costs, you can select the measure that will deliver the most savings. Maybe you're already planning to do work on your home, such as roofing or renovating, and you can incorporate energy efficiency strategies into that project. To complete your plan, you'll likely need to check with local contractors or suppliers about costs.

Take action.

Now that your planning is done, it's time to take action. If you're tackling any major energy efficiency projects that require a contractor, remember to do your research and hire a licensed, reputable professional.

In addition to energy efficiency projects and upgrades, there are other ways you can get organized to save energy:

- **Replace filters regularly.** A clean filter can improve the performance of your heating and cooling system, and reduce the electricity needed to pump air through your ductwork.

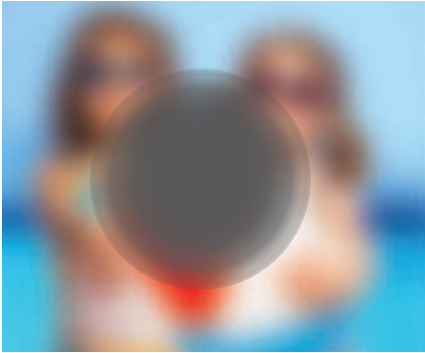
Replace the filter now if it's been a while, then set a reminder on your phone, online calendar or paper calendar for the next replacement. Filters should be replaced every month if you're using an inexpensive filter, or every three months if you're using a higher-quality filter. A better filter will do a better job and last longer.

- **Program your thermostat.** Heating and cooling your home account for the most energy use, so setting your thermostat to match your lifestyle can make a major difference. If you don't have a programmable or smart thermostat, get in the habit of manually adjusting your thermostat throughout the day or setting it to the most energy efficient setting when you're away.

We hope by taking a little time to complete these steps, you'll be on your way to a more energy efficient 2021!

Advanced Technology Allows Macular Degeneration Patients To See Again

And Allows Many Low Vision Patients To Drive Again



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration



Same scene of Grandchildren as viewed through telescope glasses.

For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence - driving. Nebraska optometrist, Dr. Robert Stamm is using miniaturized telescopes which are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

“Some of my patients consider me their last chance or people who have vision loss” said Dr. Stamm, one of only a few doctors in the world who specializes in fitting bioptic

telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. Bioptic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical technology that will give you back your independence. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50.

Bioptic telescopes treat both dry and wet forms of macular degeneration as well as other vision limiting conditions.

While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. “My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning” says Dr. Stamm “Even if it’s driving”.

“The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you’re looking at,” said Dr. Stamm. “It’s like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise.”

For more information and to schedule an appointment today, call:

Robert Stamm, O.D.
Low Vision Optometrist
Member IALVS

Toll Free:
(877) 393-0025



Cut down on time spent in the kitchen

While getting nutritious, delicious and affordable meals on the table to help fuel those busy days is crucial, there are ways to cut down the amount of time spent in the kitchen each day. Setting aside a couple hours each week to meal prep can make it easier to serve lunch and dinner on a tight schedule and budget. For example, this California-Style Cheesy Enchilada Casserole can be made in batches ahead of time then frozen as individual portions and reheated when hunger strikes while working or learning from home.

Using prepared enchilada sauce, roasted chicken and a Hispanic-style cheese blend made with 100% Real California Milk, plus a traditional blend of vegetables and spices, you can feel good about serving your family members a flavorful, nutritional and budget-friendly meal each time they reach for another helping.

Find additional busy season recipe inspiration, nutritional information and more at RealCaliforniaMilk.com.



California-Style Cheesy Enchilada Casserole

Cooking Sauce:

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup Real California half-and-half, milk or evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup Real California sour cream
- vegetable oil

Casserole:

- 1 1/2 cups prepared enchilada sauce, divided
- 12 corn tortillas, divided
- 1 cup roasted skinless chicken, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 teaspoons enchilada seasoning
- 4 cups shredded Real California Mexican cheese blend, divided, or 1 cup each shredded Real California Oaxaca, Cheddar, Jalapeño Jack and crumbled Cotija cheeses
- 1 cup canned pinto beans, drained well
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/3 cup canned kernel corn, well drained
- 1/3 cup sliced black olives, well drained
- 1/3 cup mild green chiles, well drained
- 2 tablespoons of cilantro, minced
- 2 green onions, sliced

lime wedges, for serving

Real California sour cream, for serving

Preheat oven to 350 F.

To make cooking sauce: In bowl, whisk eggs, salt, half-and-half and sour cream; set aside.

Spray casserole dish with vegetable oil.

To make casserole: Assemble first layer by spreading 6 tablespoons enchilada sauce on bottom of casserole dish. Top with four tortillas, overlapping them. Cover tortillas with 6 tablespoons enchilada sauce.

Assemble second layer by tossing chicken with enchilada seasoning. Mix with 3 cups shredded cheese. Layer half chicken-cheese mixture over tortillas.

Assemble third layer by seasoning pinto beans with cumin and garlic powder. Spread beans over cheese-chicken layer.

Assemble fourth layer by overlapping four tortillas then cover with 6-8 tablespoons enchilada sauce. Cover with corn, olives and chiles. Top with remaining cheese-chicken mixture.

Assemble final layer by covering filling with remaining tortillas, overlapped, then spread remaining enchilada sauce over them. Pour cooking sauce over casserole. Top with remaining shredded cheese. Let rest at least 30 minutes.

Bake 50-60 minutes, or until bubbling. Remove and rest 10 minutes before cutting.

Sprinkle with cilantro and green onions. Serve with lime wedges and sour cream.



Churros

- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons C&H Golden Brown Sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 cups canola oil, for frying
- 1 cup C&H Granulated Sugar
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon

In medium saucepan over high heat, combine water, butter, sugar and salt; bring to boil.

Reduce heat and add flour. Using wooden spoon, mix vigorously until mixture forms into dough. Remove from heat.

While stirring, gradually add eggs into dough. Mix well. Place dough in pastry bag fitted with large star tip.

In heavy pot over medium-high heat, heat oil until it reaches 365 F.

On plate, mix granulated sugar and cinnamon; set aside.

Squeeze churro dough in 4-inch strips into hot oil. Fry 5-6 churros in batches until golden brown, about 2 minutes per side. When ready, transfer to plate lined with paper towels.

Roll churros in sugar-cinnamon mix. Makes approx. 45 churros.

French Toast Ham “N” Cheese Sandwiches

- 4 slices cooked ham
- 4 slices swiss cheese
- 8 slices of bread

Place a slice of ham and cheese between two slices of bread.

Dip Mixture:

- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons milk
- Dash of salt

Beat together mixture ingredients. Dip sandwiches into the mixture. Sauté in shortening, turning to brown on both sides. Takes about 15 minutes. Serve hot. Makes 4 sandwiches.

Delores Hansen, Stanton, Nebraska

Potato Chowder

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 8 cups diced potatoes | 1/4 teaspoon pepper |
| 3 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) chicken broth | 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese, cubed |
| 1 can (10 3/4 oz.) cream of chicken soup – undiluted | 1/2 lb. bacon, cooked and crumbled |
| 1/3 cup chopped onion | Minced Chives (optional) |

In a 5-quart slow cooker, combine the first 5 ingredients. Cover and cook on low for 8 to 10 hours or until potatoes are tender. Then add cream cheese, stir until blended. Garnish with bacon and chives.

Jill Switzer, Ewing, Nebraska

Texas Tumbleweeds

- 1 cup butterscotch chips
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 can (9 oz.) potato sticks, approx. 6 cups

Melt butterscotch chips and peanut butter in microwave, stir until smooth. Combine with potato sticks. Drop teaspoons full onto waxed paper. Refrigerate 10 – 15 minutes until set.

Beverly Wright, Oakdale, Nebraska

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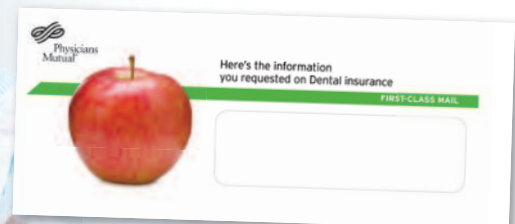
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