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The Taylor Villagers

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Two of the Villagers, Ralph and Hank, chat outside the refurbished service station in Taylor, Neb. See the related story on Page 6. Photograph by Tim Trudell





by Wayne Price

Being thankful for community and public power

As I prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving this month, I can't help but feel thankful for a number of things in a year that was anything but normal. I'm most thankful for my family's health during the pandemic.

I'm thankful for my friends and family and all the love, kindness and support they provide. I'm thankful that I have a home and plenty of food.

I'm thankful that I live in a rural community. I'm thankful that during difficult times the people in our state pull together to help each other. Nebraska has got to be one of the friendliest states in America. We always wave at each other on the highway, help each other when a disaster strikes, and work together to provide for our families.

It is this same Nebraska sense of being neighborly that is part of the state's public power industry. In the 1930s, rural leaders took on the enormous task of building the electric utility infrastructure in Nebraska that would provide themselves and their neighbors with reliable and affordable electricity.

Nebraskans have several reasons to be proud of our public power history. Our state is the only one in the nation that is totally served by public power. Other states have investor-owned utilities that are in the business to make money. Electric utilities in Nebraska are in business to provide low-cost, reliable electricity.

Directors and employees at Nebraska's public power districts and electric cooperatives want to see the communities they serve succeed. Why? The answer's simple: we live here, too.

Local people working for local good. First and foremost, public power strengthens our communities by doing what we do best: providing a safe and reliable supply of electricity at an affordable cost. The board of directors and staff at your local PPD or electric cooperative supports policies and projects that are good for the communities they serve because what's good for the community is good for the rural electric utility.

We have strong community roots. Public power in Nebraska has been in business for 80 years—we're not going anywhere. Our business was founded here by members just like you, and we are not going to pull up stakes to pursue greener pastures elsewhere.

We pay our employees fair wages because that in turn helps strengthen the economy when they spend that money here. And by providing good-paying jobs, we keep our towns healthy because employees and their families don't have to move away to make a decent living. The more people we retain here paying taxes and contributing to their communities, the more vibrant they will be.

Benefits Nebraska communities reap from Nebraska's public power presence aren't only financial. We open doors for our young people with scholarship programs, NREA Youth Energy Leadership Camp and the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. We teach children safety through programs in schools and online. We help members identify ways to save money by performing home and business energy audits.

We also strengthen Nebraska communities by supporting local charities. We help members and neighbors in need by sponsoring such things as blood and food drives and the Operation Round Up program.

Your PPD or electric co-op was formed locally, and it's still managed by your friends and neighbors. The employees go out of their way to serve by coaching youth sports teams, volunteering on school committees, participating in church activities, and even serving in various elected offices. Many are rural electric utility members like you, and like you they want to make their communities stronger.

When it comes to Nebraska's rural electric utilities, community comes first. That's just the way we operate.



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The Taylor Villagers

by Tim Trudell

At first glance, you may think the locals come across a bit flat, and awfully quiet. They don't acknowledge you, nor do they say much. But, The Villagers are among the most popular residents in the small town of Taylor. The figures are actually wooden art pieces designed to attract tourists to the Sandhills community.

The only incorporated community in Loup County, with a population of about 190 people – the entire county has about 600 people – The Villagers seemed the perfect fit to help build tourism and bring in extra revenue for the area, said Marah Sandoz. The self-taught artist created the wooden figures based on people who lived in Taylor from the 1890s through the 1920s.



“There was a grassroots group of local people trying to brainstorm ways to do some economic development,” Sandoz said. “The visitors information center was open, but we noticed we were not getting people to stop and use it.”

Located inside a former gas station decorated to catch passers-by attention, the group decided to create a photograph attraction to get people to stop, she said. The old Farmers Filling Station was a key business in Taylor from 1926 until 1945.

So, the artist went to work in creating her first piece of art, featuring two characters –

Ralph and Hank - chatting outside the refurbished service station. The eye-catcher is enhanced with an antique car serving as a flower bed a few feet away. Visitors can pick up a brochure featuring The Villagers at the visitors center.

The idea took off, and the owner of Marah’s Treasures - a co-op of area artists - started creating the villagers that would be located around town. The first two were designed after getting businesses to sponsor them. Besides Ralph and Hank, the initial project included a couple approaching the historic Pavillion Hotel.

Sandoz and her husband, Loren, own the hotel. They bought it with the ultimate goal of turning it into a bed and breakfast. The ongoing project is still a few years away, Sandoz said. The Pavillion



Hotel was built in 1887 when a railroad was expected to be built near the community.

The Villagers became popular after the initial project. Soon, the authentic-looking pieces started sprouting up around town. You’ll find friends hanging out near the public library, a couple standing in front of a fir tree in a yard, and even a young girl watering flowers and plants in the village park.

The black-and-white figures pop against the colorful backgrounds.

“We wanted to put them in natural settings, to make it look like something was happening,” Sandoz said. “We thought about cutting out their faces, so people could pose with them, but decided otherwise.”

With the wooden sculptures located throughout town, at locations such as the public



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park, along the main square, and near churches and ball fields, visitors can park their vehicles near the park and walk around town, while checking off The Villagers from the brochure. Or, they may be more comfortable driving and enjoying the attractions.

Sandoz, who has volunteered her time in creating more than 140 pieces, started designing The Villagers in 2003. The goal was to produce at least four Villagers annually, stopping when they “doubled the population of the town,” she said.

While The Villagers’ faces look like actual people, she doesn’t use models or normally base them on actual people, Sandoz said. About 40 actual historic people have been featured. Occupations, such as a lamplighter, are also featured as part of The Villagers.

“The first historic person we used was Sheriff George Brock,” she said. “He flowed naturally into the building (along Main Street).”

The sheriff, 46, was fatally wounded in 1940, while serving a warrant on two Loup County brothers. The suspects shot him twice, before escaping. They were later captured by a posse, and, eventually, served time in prison for their actions.

The location determines the Villager that stands near it, Sandoz said.

“We would imagine what would be happening there,” she said. “Then, we would go hunting for historical pictures or magazine photos. We wanted to provide a window to the past.”

With Villagers located around town, even extending a few miles beyond the city limits, along Highway 183 – featuring two boys walking home from a day of fishing along the North Loup River – the project has proven successful.



Joining the sculptures are a series of murals featuring fellow Villagers. From a woman churning milk on the side of a shed to a family heading to town in a buggy, as well as on horseback, the murals accent the community art project, Sandoz said.

“I really like them on a colored background,” she said. “They move, and change with the seasons. During a rain storm, they look different. During the summer. During the fall. During the winter, you really get different looks. They have action in them. You want them moving. I wanted them to be alive.”

The art project annually attracts hundreds of visitors from around the country, including Iowa, Minnesota, and Kansas, Sandoz said. Canadians

have also stopped in town; though, Sandoz isn’t sure that was specifically for The Villagers. But, they did tour the art.

The project paid off for the town, which was on the verge of losing its only restaurant and bar, she said. The Corner Stop service station opened in recent years.

“It’s caused an economic updraft. There’s more tourism,” Sandoz said, noting new businesses, such as Bootleg Brewers, a craft brewery about eight miles north of town, have opened in recent years. A Villager calls the brewery home, as well as another at Calamus Outfitters.

While The Villagers have proven a boom, Sandoz said she doesn’t deserve the lone credit because the project has been a collaboration of a group of people.

“My name somehow got attached to it as the artist, but the project involved a lot of other people,” she said. “When I started this, I didn’t claim to be an artist, by occupation. I really just wanted to help the town. I grew up in a building contractor’s home, and knew how to make the wood last outside.”

Her family helped, too. Her husband and children helped paint faces. Local high school art students volunteered time, she said.

While she continues to work on creating new Villagers, people have come to her to create their own

version of The Villagers, Sandoz. "I even opened my own business," she said.

Sandoz creates personalized art pieces for people, but they can't be in black-and-white, as that's reserved for the art pieces. Customer projects are completed in color or sepia tone, she said.

Even her store is community-based. She renovated a former pharmacy, which is home to five artists.

"I opened it because there were other area entrepreneurs who needed space," she said.

The community-minded Sandoz's plans include turning the Pavillion Hotel into a bed and breakfast.

"We get asked a lot when we're going to open it as a bed and breakfast, and we'd like to say within



a few years, but, you have to see what life brings. It's still a dream, but we'll see what happens," Sandoz said. The couple bought the hotel in 1997.

Her husband, a longtime teacher at Loup County High School, is a distant relative to famed author Mari Sandoz. "It's a good name to have in Nebraska," she joked.

With a new brewery, refurbishing

a century-old hotel, and saving local businesses, an art project has proven to be a savior for a small town.

Having attended tourism and economic development conferences, she knew tourism worked.

"We needed to find a way to get the burden off the farmers and ranchers," she said. "What else can we do to bring in extra revenue.

I'd already seen gimmicks. I'd already seen the Cosmos. And Reptile Gardens. All of those things in South Dakota that work, we can't recreate here in Nebraska. We had to find something unique."

And The Villagers are definitely unique.

"They're free to see," Sandoz said. "Come see them."

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3 Efficient Appliances for Your Kitchen

With more people staying at home than ever before, many of us are spending more time in the kitchen. Whether you're roasting a chicken, blending your favorite smoothie or baking a loaf of sourdough bread, kitchen appliances are used nearly every day.

Using energy efficient kitchen appliances can help you save energy over the long run and ultimately lower your monthly energy bills. For any home chef that is interested in new, electric gadgets for the kitchen (while also being energy efficient), there are several options available.

Stoves consume a great deal of energy in the kitchen. One of the most energy efficient forms of cooktop cooking is with an induction cooktop. Electromagnetic energy used in induction cooktops is directly transferred to the pan, helping to reduce cooking times, which saves energy. Gas stovetops are generally less energy efficient than induction cooktops or any other type of electric cooktop for that matter. This is because a significant amount of energy from the gas stovetop is not

transferred directly to the food, instead heating the surrounding air and warming up your kitchen. Since induction cooktops use a magnetic field to heat pans, you can touch the stove without burning yourself, which is an added safety bonus. It's important to note that induction cooktops only work with compatible cookware that is magnetic. An easy test for compatibility is to place a magnet near the cookware; if it sticks, then it will work with an induction cooktop.

A cup of morning coffee or tea is a daily ritual for many. This makes the hot water kettle an essential part of the kitchen to achieve that daily brew. Electric kettles are more energy efficient than cooktop kettles, since the heating component underneath the kettle directly heats the water. The electric kettle's automatic shutoff feature further helps to reduce energy and prevents overheating. Another benefit with electric kettles is that you can choose the exact temperature to heat the water, which allows for a finer brew that brings out the best flavor in any tea or coffee. Overall,

For any home chef that is interested in new, electric gadgets for the kitchen (while also being energy efficient), there are several options available. Photograph provided by Whirlpool

electric kettles are more convenient, efficient and portable than their cooktop counterparts.

Microwaves are typically the most efficient way to cook or heat food compared to other kitchen appliances, and state-of-the-art microwaves are becoming much smarter. Some microwaves can even scan barcodes of microwaveable meals and heat them accordingly. Others can be paired with an Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant and react to voice commands. Many of these additional features are becoming increasingly common among smart home devices to provide extra comfort and convenience.

Kitchen appliances aren't replaced very often, so do your research before you purchase any new gadgets. Different types of products provide varying benefits, and understanding your needs on the front end will help you make the right choice.

Energy conservation tips you can't afford to miss

In every home in America, money is spent on energy consumption. With the average electricity spend per year at \$1,368.36, and in some cases, about 35 percent of the electricity used is actually wasted.

Whether you use electricity, propane or natural gas as an energy source, there are ways to conserve and reduce your power bills for heating, air conditioning, lighting, and water heating. Check with your local cooperative or public power district, they may be able to help you with more direct information and rebates to install energy-efficient equipment and cut your costs.

Cooling and heating use a whopping 47 percent of energy use in your home. Installing a smart thermostat is a good way to reduce cooling and heating costs.

These costs vary from home to home. Even similar-sized homes cooling and heating costs can vary greatly so it can be tricky to “compare” your cooling and heating costs. Costs vary by; the number of people in the home, the amount and type of attic and wall insulation, the number and quality of windows, do you have (and use) a programmable thermostat and the list goes on.

Finding a comfortable temperature for everyone in your home can be challenging but can be essential to cutting your heating and cooling costs. Again, by installing a smart thermostat to help regulate the temperature automatically will help. Some smart thermostat systems also use smart features like a motion sensor to determine if you're home or away and automatically change the temperature – for both heating and cooling. According to the EPA, when used correctly, programmable thermostats are known to save homeowners 10-30 percent on their heating and cooling bills. You should also check with your electric provider to see if they offer rates for Time-of-Use. Making small changes in



The kitchen is where we gather for our favorite meals and memories. But you probably aren't thinking about saving energy as you plan that perfect dish. Photograph by Scott Van Osdol

the time you perform some of your household activities or charge your electric vehicle can also cut your utility bills. If your budget doesn't allow for installing a new thermostat, you can raise and lower your thermostat manually for nighttime and daytime temps.

Water heaters are also a major energy user in your home. Water heaters heat water for cooking, bathing/showering, and washing clothes. You can reduce water heating costs (electric or gas) by investing in low-flow showerheads, use cold water for clothes washing, turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving, take quick showers and fewer baths and lower the water heaters thermostat setting. An easy way to reduce water heating costs is

to reduce the thermostat setting. A typical water heaters thermostat is set at 145 degrees at the factory. You can reduce this to 120 degrees and; reduce the risk of burns, save money and still have water hot enough for your household needs. Your water heater runs to heat the water as well as maintain that temperature while the water is in the tank, so even when not using hot water the water heater will cycle on and off to maintain that temperature.

A washer and dryer use 13 percent of energy use in your home. At eight loads of laundry a week, the average family uses both the washing machine and the dryer six hours each on average per week. Even with some of the more energy-efficient models, the combined cost of doing laundry can add up to more than \$256 a year for the electricity alone. Use cold water for washing as often as you can and opt for EnergyStar appliances. Hang your laundry outside to dry when weather permits.

Knowing what to do around a downed power line could save your life

Old Man Winter can create some pretty severe storms, which can interfere with power distribution or even bring down lines.

What is the most important thing to remember about a downed power line?

DO NOT GO NEAR IT. For any reason.

After a storm has caused damage in or alongside a roadway, be alert and slow down. Do not attempt to drive over downed lines or through water or over snow or debris that could be covering downed lines. Driving over a line can pull more lines or related equipment down.

If you see a downed line, pull over and report location to 9-1-1.

Here is some additional information about downed lines, which can occur after a severe storm or an accident involving a power pole.

Q: Can I tell if a downed line is energized by looking?

A: No, there is no way to tell. Always assume a downed line (or any line) is live, even if it is not buzzing or sparking.

Q: What should I do if I am in an accident involving a power line or other electrical equipment?

A: **DO NOT** get out of your car or truck. It is always safer to remain inside a vehicle, which acts as an insulator and keeps you out of the path of stray electricity. Call 9-1-1, and tell the dispatcher a downed line or other electrical equipment is involved. Power company personnel will be dispatched to the scene to de-energize the power.

Q: Is there any reason I should get out of the vehicle?

A: Yes, but only when your vehicle is on fire or if you see smoke. If that is the case, make a clean jump from the vehicle without touching it (cross your arms closely to your chest), and then hop with feet together as far as you can—preferably 50 or more feet away.

Q: What happens to the electrical current when a line is down?

A: Once a power line is in contact with a car or truck, the ground or other objects, it energizes the area. The electrical current spreads to the vehicle and ground, and it ripples out.

Each “ring” of the ripple represents a different voltage. Stepping from one voltage to the next can cause your body to become a path for electricity and electrocute you. That is why you should hop or shuffle once you make a clean jump from the vehicle. Always keep your feet together – think of hopping like a bunny or shuffling like a penguin.

Q: What else can I do?

A: Put your window down and yell to others not to approach the scene. They could be shocked or electrocuted if they walk or run over the energized area or touch anything that is energized.

Q: What if I can't tell what type of line is down?

A: It doesn't matter – still stay in your vehicle and wait for the utility personnel to arrive.

Q: Why am I safe in my vehicle?

A: Because you are not a path to ground for electricity while in a vehicle. But if you step out of the vehicle you will create a path for the electricity to get to ground.

Murphy



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A Diverse Fuel Mix Ensures Reliability

How rural electric utilities keep electricity reliable — the traditional way, and the digital way



by Paul Wesslund

“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

It’s a familiar saying, and believe it or not, that age-old piece of wisdom is used by electric utilities to make sure you receive a reliable supply of electricity.

Michael Leitman, senior analyst at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, translates that saying into utility-industry terminology this way:

“You don’t want to be too reliant on any one energy source,” says Leitman. “The goal is if one resource becomes constrained, others are there to fill the gap and keep the lights on—it’s about managing risk and priorities.”

Following that advice has been pretty straightforward for decades. A mix of four energy sources provide nearly all generated electricity: coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric power.

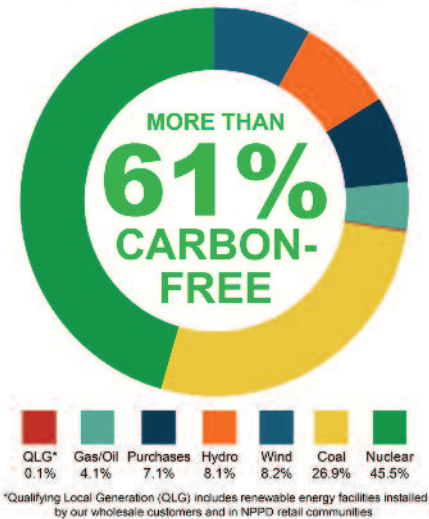
Mind-boggling energy changes

But these days, there are a lot more options—the variety of electricity generation is higher than it’s ever been, and not just because of more renewable energy sources like wind and solar. Batteries are getting cheaper and powerful enough to supplement wind turbines during calm weather, and solar when the sun’s not shining. Energy load-control programs can shut off water heaters for short periods during times when electricity use is highest. Rapid technological advances across the power industry have also been key for unprecedented opportunities, allowing utilities to manage the electric power systems in ways that make energy resources more useful.

While a broader mix of fuels could potentially bring even greater reliability to your electric service, coordinating all the new and old equipment of the nation’s electric grid

NPPD Energy Generation Resources for Nebraska Customers

2018-2019 Rolling Two-Year Average



requires new skills and careful management.

For years, the electric utility industry's main fuel source has been coal. Coal traditionally provided about half the electricity in the country because it was reliable, plentiful and relatively inexpensive. That backbone was supplemented by nuclear power, hydroelectric power and natural gas.

But that's changed radically over the last 15 years.

The supply and price of natural gas fell dramatically with fracking and other drilling technologies. Natural gas plants offer other advantages—they can be built smaller, faster and cheaper than coal stations, and they can be controlled more quickly as power demand changes from day to day. Coal costs rose with environmental regulations, and renewable energy sources received more attention because of their benefits to the environment.

In 2019, natural gas made up 38% of the national electric utility fuel mix; coal, 23%; nuclear, 20%; and hydroelectric power, 7%. However, in Nebraska natural gas accounts for a small percentage of generation. The non-hydro renewable energy share of electricity production has risen from almost nothing 10 years ago, to 7% for wind and 2% for solar—and both

continue to increase rapidly.

Those statistical trends hide two revolutionary changes.

One is that renewable energy doesn't act like the more traditional power plants. A coal plant can run all the time, while wind and solar shut on and off as Mother Nature makes changes every hour—meaning the wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine. But with the second revolutionary change—the smart grid—the use of these complex renewable energy sources can be managed better.

The smart grid arrives

The digital transformation began more than two decades ago, and disruptive forces have had an impact on the power sector ever since. Electric utility dreamers foresaw a shift from an analog network of levers and switches to a digital system that includes automated

power management and new ways to manage the flow of electricity.

That smart grid has arrived. Power outages can be detected more quickly, and you can even track the repair process on your smartphone. Digital software can more effectively manage the output of rooftop solar panels, sending electricity back to the utility when the homeowner isn't using all the electricity they produce.

Managing the smart grid brings improvements, as well as requirements for new ways of doing business.

“The smart grid brings new opportunities to increase reliability and resiliency, but it has to be more actively managed,” says Leitman. “You've still got to have folks that know how to climb utility poles, and now we need those who also understand programming and working with computers and control systems.”

Tri-State is leading a clean energy transition

Together with its electric cooperatives and public power district members, Tri-State G&T is expanding renewable energy generation and reducing emissions while ensuring reliable, affordable and responsible electricity for the communities it powers.

In January 2020, Tri-State announced its Responsible Energy Plan. The plan includes several major components, including:

- 50% of all the electricity its members consumer will be renewable by 2024;
- Eliminate all emissions from its coal plants in Colorado and New Mexico by 2030;
- More local renewables for members through contract flexibility;
- Capturing the benefits of regional markets by participating in a regional transmission organization;
- Expanding electric vehicle infrastructure and beneficial electrification; and
- Community and employee

transition support.

Tri-State retired its Nucla Station coal-fired power plant in western Colorado in 2019. Last month, its only remaining coal-fired plant in New Mexico went offline for the last time and Tri-State had previously retired its share of another coal-fired plant in New Mexico.

By 2030, when Tri-State retires the last of three generation units at Craig Station, it will no longer produce electricity from coal in Colorado.

Tri-State will add an additional 1,000 megawatts of solar and wind power by 2024, when 50% of the energy its member distribution utilities use will come from emissions-free electricity.

Tri-State will then continue to add renewables to help meet its members' energy needs. Construction is proceeding in Colorado on the first eight new planned renewable energy projects to serve its members.

Breathe easy about your home's air quality

by Pat Keegan

Q : I read your column a few months ago on sealing air leaks, but I've heard a home that's sealed too tight can lead to air quality issues. How can I be sure I have healthy air as I seal air leaks in my home?

A : Sealing air leaks is one of the best ways to make your home more energy efficient, and there are steps you can take to ensure your home has an adequate amount of healthy, fresh air.

The average home loses about half its air volume every hour, so it can be sealed considerably (often at a low cost) and still have more than enough healthy air.

Pollutants are the main cause of poor indoor air quality, and the most dangerous pollutant is carbon monoxide (CO). It can come from furnaces, water heaters or stoves that burn natural gas, propane or wood. The problem usually occurs in devices that are old, in need of repair or installed or operated in a manner that prevents clear, unobstructed supply and exhaust of combustion air.

Excessive moisture in the air can also be considered an indoor pollutant because mold and dust mites thrive when relative humidity is above 60%. One sign your home is sealed too tight is window condensation, which can happen if moist air doesn't exit the home at an adequate rate.

Pollutants can cause physical reactions such as coughing or sneezing, but carbon monoxide causes more severe reactions, such

as headaches, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, confusion, blurred vision or loss of consciousness.

So, what can you do to ensure healthy indoor air as you increase your home's energy efficiency? The first strategy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is to eliminate or reduce the source of pollution. And the first



An HVAC professional can inspect and test a furnace to make sure it is operating safely and efficiently. Photograph provided by NAVFAC Hawaii HVAC Specialists

pollutant to eliminate is carbon monoxide. If you have a combustion furnace, it should be inspected and serviced regularly by a professional. If you have any combustion appliances, it is critical that CO detectors are installed and replaced every five to seven years.

If you live in an area with radon, which you can determine by checking out EPA's radon map, keep it out of your home because it is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

Radon tests are not expensive, and your local health authorities can provide more information. If radon levels are too high, you'll need to hire a professional to install a system that will divert radon gas to the outside of your home.

Here are a few additional pollutant reduction measures to consider:

- Never smoke tobacco inside.
- Run the exhaust fans in bathrooms and your kitchen after use.
- Store toxic cleaning and painting products outside.
- Never idle a vehicle, even for a minute, in an attached garage.

The second strategy is ventilation.

Your home probably has more than enough natural ventilation from outside air leaking into the home. If you suspect this isn't adequate, the best way to know for sure is to hire an energy auditor to do a blower door test.

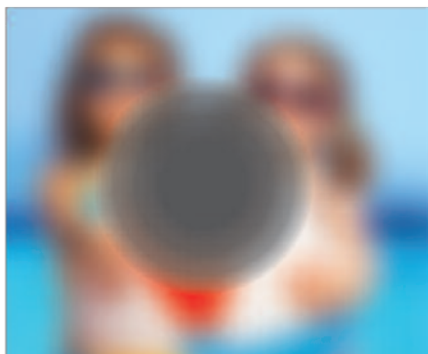
Many experts recommend sealing the home as tight as possible and using mechanical ventilation to ensure a consistent and adequate supply of outside air. The most energy efficient ventilation system is a heat recovery ventilator (HRV), which pulls in fresh air from outside and captures the heat from indoor air before it is exhausted to the outside.

The third and final strategy is to clean the air. The easiest step is to simply change your furnace filter at least once every three months and keep your furnace supply and return air registers free of obstructions. If any rooms do not have an air return, keep the doors open. There are several home air cleaning systems available—some are effective, and some are not.

We hope these suggestions will be helpful as you seal air leaks in your home and enjoy fresh, healthy indoor air.

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





There are things you can do now to help ensure you are managing your energy use and spending less. These simple steps can help you manage your use:

- Wrap exposed pipes and water heaters that are in unconditioned spaces.
- Make sure to change your air filter once a month.
- Keep drapes closed at night and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too.
- Keep the fireplace damper closed when it is not in use. Keeping it open can bring cold air into the room.
- Caulk around the fireplace hearth, and caulk or weather strip around doors and windows.
- Dress for the weather, even if you are inside. Wearing proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation of bumping up the thermostat.

So, when temperatures fall this winter and you hear your weatherman talking about bringing in pets and plants, take the steps above to help manage your use.

Using the tips above can certainly help you manage your energy use, but your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why?

- The weather makes a big impact on electric bills, accounting for nearly half of your bill.
- Even those with the most efficient HVAC systems will see more use in extreme weather.
- When extreme cold temperatures hit, our heaters work overtime.

Prepare now for

Winter's Chills & Bills

Frigid temperatures can cause heating systems to work over time, and since heating and cooling can make up nearly half of your electric bill, you may experience sticker shock when you open that bill. Instead of waiting until after a potentially high bill is in your mailbox, be proactive.

- For example, even if you set your thermostat to our recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference.

- Your heater works harder and cycles on and off more often, making your use much higher. That means your bill will be much higher.

- Remember, there is value in comfort. For us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters are going to work harder, but it may be worth the additional cost to you.

Source: SafeElectricity.com

NREA presents Custer Public Power District's Jerry Spanel with the Jack McEnerney safety award

Custer Public Power District employee Jerry Spanel has been selected as the 2020 recipient of the Jack McEnerney Award for his role in promoting safety. The award is presented by the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) Job Training and Safety Committee to a person who goes above and beyond in the areas of safety, public service, and leadership.

Larry Oetken, NREA Job Training & Safety Coordinator, presented the award to Spanel at the Custer PPD offices in Broken Bow on Tuesday, September 15. Spanel's family, NREA General Manager Dennis Houston and Job Training and Safety Instructor Kory Hildebrand also attended the ceremony.

The Jack McEnerney Award is one of the highest honors a Nebraska lineman can receive and is normally presented during the annual Job Training and Safety conference but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was canceled this year.

Employees of the NREA's 34 rural electric member systems are eligible for the Jack McEnerney Award and traveling plaque, which has been awarded since 1983 in honor of Jack McEnerney who worked as a manager for Cornhusker Public Power District and was an avid proponent of employee safety.

Spanel began his career with Custer PPD in March of 1975 and has worked as a lineman on the construction crew, a substation tech, a foreman technician, and as operations manager since 2019. Custer PPD General Manager Rick Nelson nominated Spanel for his efforts in promoting safety among employees through the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) control system, high voltage demonstrations, the Commitment to Zero Contacts Campaign, and many other safety and continuing education programs.

Spanel has been active in the Broken Bow community supporting area youth by serving as a 4-H volunteer, t-ball coach, sponsor on numerous youth trips with St. Joseph Catholic Church, and holding leadership roles with the Elks Lodge, Knights of Columbus, and the Columbian Squires.

Photographs by Tarin Burrows



Enjoy tailgate-worthy grub at home

Creating a mouthwatering game day spread is all about teamwork, and it's hard to find a better set of teammates than crispy bacon and potatoes.

Take one to the house with these Pigskin Potatoes that cut down on prep time and cleanup as an easy-to-eat finger food that can be made in advance. Just prep the potatoes and wrap with bacon a day or two ahead of time then throw in the oven an hour or so before kickoff.

Your base ingredient in these tasty, touchdown-worthy snacks, potatoes, are low in calories, high in fiber and a source of vitamin B6, potassium, vitamin C and antioxidants.

Find more game day inspiration at eatwisconsinpotatoes.com.

A menu full of flavorful favorites takes the experience to another level, and tackling your spread by starting with a tasty dip is a sure way to fire up the crowd.

No tailgate or home-gate is complete without fresh guacamole made with the Avocados From Mexico brand. Because they're always in season, you can enjoy guac during your favorite sporting events and beyond.

Take it to the house with a twist on a game day classic by testing out this Bacon Chipotle Guacamole, a tailgate-worthy snack loaded with crowd-pleasing flavor. Because it's such a fan-favorite, you might find yourself making another round at halftime.

To find this recipe and more ways to take your tailgate to new heights, including more than 200 guacamole recipes to choose from, visit avocadosfrommexico.com.



Pigskin Potatoes

- 1 1/2 pounds Boomer Gold Little Potatoes**
- 6 ounces plain cream cheese, at room temperature**
- 1/3 cup orange cheddar cheese, finely shredded**
- 3 tablespoons fresh chives, finely chopped**
- 1/8 teaspoon salt**
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 jalapenos, to taste (optional)**
- 1 pound bacon, thinly sliced, rashers cut in half**

Preheat oven to 400 F.

Boil potatoes until fork tender, approximately 15-20 minutes. Cut in half and allow to cool.

In bowl, use spatula to combine cream cheese, cheddar, chives, salt, pepper and jalapenos, if desired.

Once potatoes cool, spread cream cheese on one half of each cut potato and sandwich using other half. Wrap each potato using half rasher of bacon around cut middle to secure cheese filling.

Bake on middle rack 10 minutes to allow bacon to set. Flip and bake 10 minutes.

Turn oven to broil. Broil 2 minutes, turn and broil 2 minutes until bacon reaches desired crispiness.

Tip: Bacon-wrapped potatoes can be made ahead of time and kept in refrigerator until ready to bake.



Bacon Chipotle Guacamole

- 3 Avocados From Mexico, halved, pitted and peeled
- 3 tablespoons shallot, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 lime, juice only
- 8 ounces applewood smoked bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1/2 cup tomatoes, small diced
- 2 canned chipotle chiles, finely chopped
- ground cumin, to taste
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

In large bowl, mash avocados with shallots, garlic, cilantro and lime juice to desired consistency. Fold in bacon, tomatoes and chipotle chiles until well combined. Season with cumin, salt and pepper, to taste.

Beef Brisket

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 large beef brisket, untrimmed (7-10 lbs.) 1/2 (5 oz.) bottle Worcestershire Sauce 1/2 bottle Liquid Smoke 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt 1/2 teaspoon celery salt 1/2 teaspoon onion salt 1/2 teaspoon pepper | <h4>Barbecue Sauce</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 tablespoons brown sugar 4 tablespoons vinegar 4 cups ketchup 4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce 4 teaspoons dry mustard |
|---|---|

Mix Worcestershire sauce and liquid smoke, garlic salt, celery salt, onion salt, and pepper. Pour over brisket and marinate overnight. Roast in sealed pan for 5 hours at 275 degrees. Remove meat and cool in refrigerator. Slice very thin and put in foil and cover with sauce. Close foil tight to form nice packages. These may be heated and served or frozen to be used at a later time. Bake in foil for 1 hour at 250 degrees.

Marilyn Meier, Pierce, Nebraska

Original Potato Casserole

- 10 cups Mr. Dell's hash browns or make your own fresh
- 1/4 cup + 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup crushed corn flakes
- 12 oz. sour cream
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 cups ham (optional)

Preheat oven to 340 degrees. Pour 1/4 cup melted butter or margarine into 9" X 13" baking dish. Add 5 cups hash browns. Mix soup, sour cream, milk, and onion in separate bowl. Pour half of the mixture over hash browns. Sprinkle 1 cup grated cheese on top. Add remaining hash browns and mixture on top. Sprinkle remaining cheese, then cover with crushed corn flakes. Drizzle 2 tablespoons melted butter on top. Bake for 60 minutes. Delicious, family picnics love this casserole.

Sandra Psota, North Loup, Nebraska

Pumpkin Dump Cake

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 29 oz pure pumpkin 1 12 oz evaporated milk 3 eggs 1 cup sugar 1 tsp salt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 tsp cinnamon 1 box yellow cake mix 1 cup chopped pecans 3/4 cup melted butter |
|--|--|

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix first 6 ingredients until well blended. Pour batter into a 9" X 13" greased pan. Sprinkle dry cake mix on top, cover with pecans. Pour melted butter over the top. Bake 50-55 min. Top with cool whip.

Kelli Fischer, Humphrey, Nebraska

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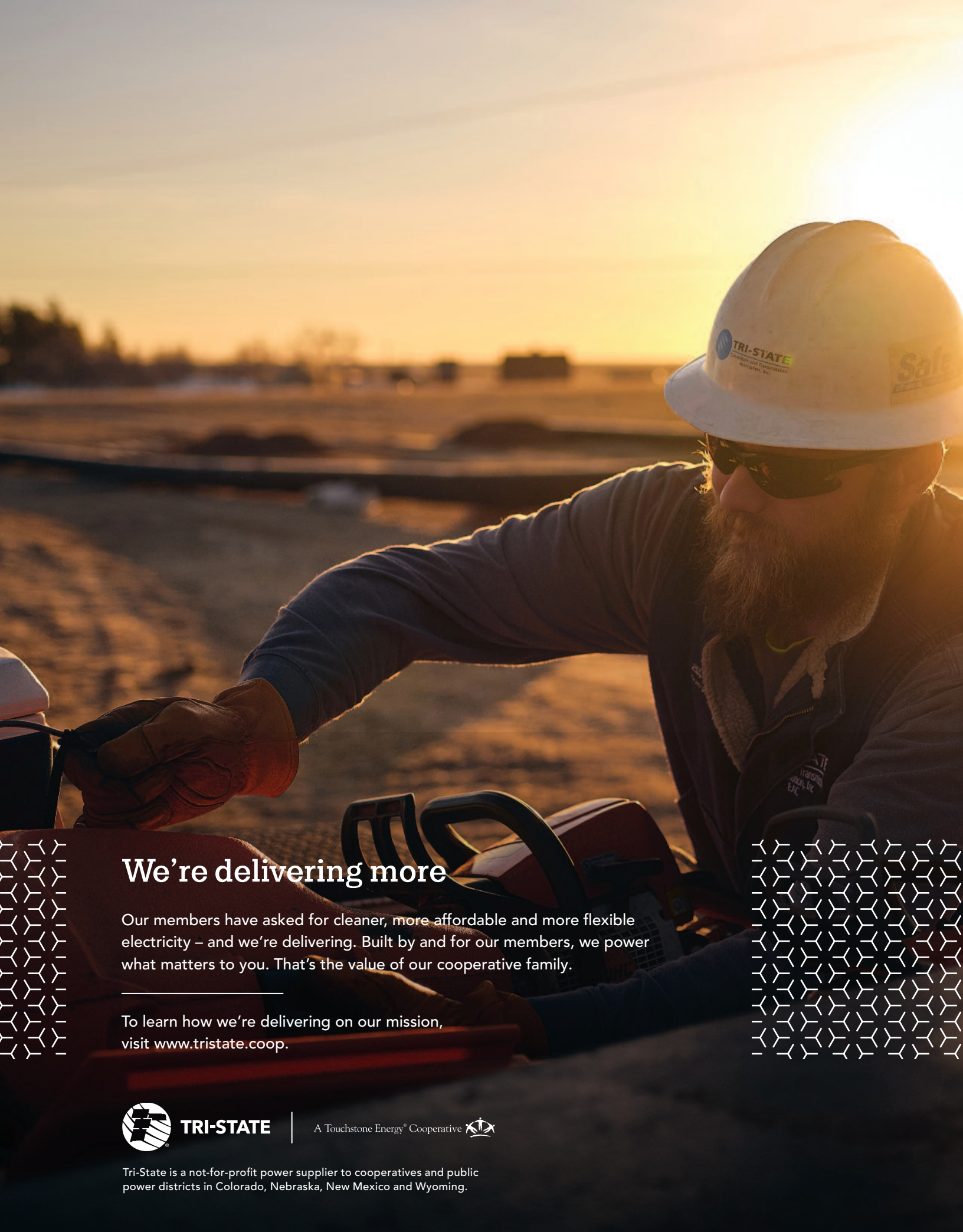
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