



# “Built on Trust, Powered for Tomorrow” Corn Belt Power hosts 77th annual meeting

Corn Belt Power Cooperative convened its 77th annual meeting, themed “Built on Trust, Powered for Tomorrow,” at Briggs Woods Conference Center in Webster City. With nearly 130 attendees present, the event served as a platform for updates on the cooperative’s progress, director elections and a keynote address from Danny Goldberg.

Attendees heard from Dave Onken, board president, that the cooperative is in a strong position, both financially and operationally.

“In 2024, we returned over \$7.3 million in patronage capital and quick roll payments to our member cooperatives,” Onken said. “These funds, reinvested in the communities we serve, strengthen rural economies and highlight the cooperative difference—proving that our utilities truly prioritize people over profit.”

He noted infrastructure investments that will serve Corn Belt Power’s member-cooperatives and their members for years to come.



**Danny Goldberg**

**Above |** Danny Goldberg, care expert and keynote speaker, invites annual meeting attendees to let go of assumptions and build depth, not breath, with employees to build and show care.



**Olberding’s first annual meeting address**

**Above |** Jacob Olberding, general manager and executive vice president, shares how providing power takes careful planning, investment and coordination between many people and organizations. Corn Belt Power hosted its annual meeting in a new location in Webster City, April 2.

“Membership in the SPP regional tariff has proven economically beneficial, resulting in the upgrade or rebuilding close to 70 miles of transmission line,” he said. “Concurrently, our electrical maintenance and meter crews have undertaken significant infrastructure improvements, replacing aging components, upgrading relays and wiring, and installing new radios and fiber connections across our system.”

Jacob Olberding, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power, gave his first report to the cooperative membership.

“Power doesn’t just happen,” he said. “It takes careful planning, investment, and coordination between a whole lot of people who really, really care about Corn Belt Power’s mission to provide safe, affordable

and reliable power to its membership.”

Olberding highlighted a few goals for the upcoming year, including working with Basin on a collaborative large load rate structure, finishing the cooperative’s SCADA upgrade, maximizing the cooperative’s relationship with the Southwest Power Pool and hiring a new manager of information technology which will make Corn Belt Power’s technology operation more efficient.

Renowned culture expert Danny Goldberg ended the day with a riveting keynote address centered around building teams, avoiding burnout and keeping employees engaged.

For more photos of this year’s annual meeting, visit Corn Belt Power’s Facebook page [www.facebook.com/cornbeltpower](https://www.facebook.com/cornbeltpower). ■



# Severe storms leave their mark

**N**orthwest Iowa wasn't spared from Iowa's April 18 storm outbreak.

High winds, heavy rain, lightning and possible tornadoes caused damage in Corn Belt Power's service territory. These areas include downed line in Buena Vista, Humboldt, Wright and Franklin counties.

Among the hardest-hit areas was the Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative territory. Upon inspection, Corn Belt Power crews discovered 34 broken poles in Buena Vista county — 22 poles four miles northeast of Storm Lake and 12 poles one and a half miles southeast of Alta — highlighting the force and scope of the storm.

"Most of this damage was caused by high straight-line winds," said Jeremy Stattelmann, line superintendent, Corn Belt Power. "Our crews responded quickly and worked tirelessly for several days to complete repairs and restore service."

Thanks to proactive system design and rapid response, Corn Belt Power was able to reroute electricity loads, minimizing the duration and extent of member outages. "We were fortunate to have the flexibility in our grid to keep prolonged outages to a



## Buena Vista county line restoration

**Above** | Travis Hefty, line foreman, and crew begin to set a new transmission pole southeast of Alta following a storm outbreak that downed 34 poles in Buena Vista county April 18.

minimum," Stattelmann added.

The event serves as a reminder of the critical importance of preparedness and resilience in utility operations during the spring storm season—especially in storm-prone areas like Northwest Iowa.

"We're always on high alert when weather systems cross the state," said Stattelmann.

"While this storm was bad, it could have been much worse."

Visit [www.facebook.com/cornbeltpower](https://www.facebook.com/cornbeltpower) to see more restoration photos. ■

## Longtime cooperative attorney passes away

**J**ohn T. Ward, 84 died on April 11, 2025 in West Des Moines, Iowa.

He was born October 19, 1940 on a farm near Knoxville, Iowa. John was

on the farm until he went to Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa where he attained his Bachelor of Arts degree and then graduated with his law degree in 1964.

While in law school he was a law clerk for the law firm of Wisdom, Sullivan & Golden, which is now known as Sullivan & Ward, P.C. John was quickly introduced to electric cooperative operations, where he became interested in the cooperative world.

Over the next 56 years he expanded on the various activities of the electric cooperatives. During his career John served as counsel to many electric generation and transmission utilities – including Corn Belt Power - and distribution cooperatives throughout the country in development of power supply and transmission agreements.

He also provided primary representation of electric utilities in development of financing agreements with RUS, CFC, Co-Bank and other lending institutions for participation in power supply and transmission facilities. He was always proud

to have assisted the electric cooperatives with mergers and consolidations that continue to benefit the member-consumers today.

Over the course of many years John served as an instructor and frequent lecturer for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and served as President of the NRECA – G&T Lawyers Association. In 2022 he was recognized for the many positive impacts he made on Iowa cooperatives, by being inducted into the Iowa Cooperative Hall of Fame. John made many lifelong friends while working with the cooperatives.

John is survived by his wife Dana, his children Tom Ward and Wendy Ward, as well as step-children Chelsea Reynolds, Ethan Reynolds and Melissa Werner (Luke) and their children Addison and Jackson.

The entire Corn Belt Power Family mourns in the loss of Ward and thank him and his family for his decades of service to Iowa's electric cooperatives. ■



**John Ward**

**Above** | Longtime rural electric cooperative attorney, John Ward, passed away April 11. Ward was a staple in the Corn Belt Power boardroom for years.

# Distribution cooperatives hold annual meetings

## Butler County REC

Annual meeting season is here, and the democratic process is taking place all across the Corn Belt Power service territory.

On Wednesday, March 26, Butler County REC held its business-only annual meeting. Nearly 500 mail-in ballots were collected for the election of directors. At the meeting, it was announced that members reelected Gary Poppe and Allyn Harms to three-year terms. Tom Risse, Sumner, was elected to serve his first three-year term.

Following the meeting, the board reorganized, reelecting its four officers. They are as follows:

Gary Poppe, President  
Share Brandt, Vice President  
Tim Schrage, Secretary  
Troy Feldman, Treasurer

## Franklin REC

Franklin REC held its business-only annual meeting Tuesday, April 1.

In addition the board, two members were present. More than 240 ballots were cast in the election of directors. Those who returned a ballot were entered into a drawing for five \$100 gift cards. Each member who returned a ballot received a \$10 electric bill credit.

John Snyder, David Keninger and Gordon Greimann will serve new three-year terms.

Officers remain the same and they are as follows:

Gordon Greimann, President  
John Snyder, Vice President  
Darwin Van Horn, Secretary/Treasurer

## Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative

Iowa Lakes Electric drew 265 members to its annual meeting on Saturday, April 12 inside the Clay County Regional Events Center in Spencer.

Attendees heard from Dan Winterhof, board president, Crystal Pluth, board treasurer, Ryan Craig, President/CEO, Jarrett Smith, Operation Round Up, Danielle Mielke, 2024 Youth Tour Representative and a keynote address from linemen and statewide officials who took part in the Guatemala Project.

Iowa Lakes handed out 51 individual scholarships totaling \$44,250 during the annual meeting.

Extension cords were given to all member-owners in attendance. Door prize drawings were held for cash to be applied to the member-owners' electric bill and pre-paid gift cards.

Members reelected Jerry Beck, Bruce Amundson, Gary Rouse and Alan Madden to three-year terms. Following the meeting the board reorganized as follows:

Dan Winterhof, Chair  
Chad Boysen, Vice Chair  
Trent Will, Secretary  
Crystal Pluth, Treasurer ■



**Jena Blackett**

## Blackett promoted to Safety and Environmental Coordinator

Corn Belt Power is pleased to announce that Jena Blackett has accepted the position of Safety and Environmental Coordinator at Corn Belt Power Cooperative. In her new role, Blackett will report directly to Jennifer Arndorfer, Human Resources Specialist, beginning May 1.

Blackett has been part of the Corn Belt Power team for the past four years, serving as the building custodian. During that time, she has demonstrated a strong work ethic, dedication to safety, and a commitment to continuous learning.

In May, Jena will achieve a major academic milestone, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Occupational Safety and Health from Waldorf University. Her education, paired with her on-the-ground experience, positions her well to take on the responsibilities of this critical role.

"Over the coming weeks, Jena will work closely with Carla Hofmaster leading up to her retirement, to ensure a smooth and thorough transition at the end of May," said Jacob Olberding, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power. "We are excited to see where Jena can take Corn Belt Power's safety culture and program in the future."

Please join us in congratulating Jena on her well-earned promotion and in supporting her as she steps into this new chapter of her career. ■



Kari Rubel, accountant III, approaches the camera with a trash grabber during Corn Belt Power's Three Rivers Trail clean up day in Humboldt April 17. Employees volunteered to clean up sections of trail between Humboldt and Dakota City in two shifts throughout the day.



**April Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Scott Hagenson**, line superintendent, Franklin REC, donated his \$100 prize to the Fireman's Memorial Wall Expansion in Traer.

## Corn Belt Power employees volunteer for Three Rivers Trail clean up

Corn Belt Power Cooperative's employee engagement committee organized a trail clean up on the Three Rivers Trail Thursday, April 17.

Volunteers focused their efforts on the stretch of trail between

Humboldt and Dakota City, removing debris and trash. The cleanup event underscores the cooperative's dedication to community involvement and living the cooperative principle of commitment to community.

The mission of the Employee Engagement Committee, is to focus on employee engagement of Corn Belt Power. Further, it is their duty to enhance the Corn Belt Power core values, improve communication and safety inside the organization. ■



### Three Rivers Trail clean up

Above | Corn Belt Power employees from left, Mike Thatcher, Brittany Dickey and Eric Hankey, clear trash and debris from the Three Rivers Trail April 17.

## Corn Belt Power Cooperative **Watts Watt**

Watts Watt is published monthly for employees and associates of Corn Belt Power Cooperative, 1300 13th St. North, Humboldt, Iowa 50548-0508. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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