



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# Longtime safety professional retires

After 15 years of service as Corn Belt Power's environmental and safety coordinator, Carla Hofmaster stepped into retirement May 30, but not without fond memories of her journey along the way.

Hofmaster still remembers her very first day at the power plant.

"On my first day at the power plant I was so intimidated by the elevator that I walked the three flights of stairs and was so out of breath I stood at the top step waiting to catch my breath," she said. "Then I met the guys in the break room, and they acted like they were terrified I was there."

Her path to Corn Belt Power was full of interesting stops along the way. Before joining the cooperative in February 2009, Hofmaster worked for the Promise Jobs/Job Training Partnership Act for 18 years, helping welfare recipients, underemployed workers, and dislocated workers find new opportunities.

"I taught life skills, interviewing and budgeting," she explained. "I also oversaw cases that when the recipient failed to follow through with training or seeking employment, I would remove them from the system and attend court hearings."

From there, she moved into a new role - one that would eventually expand her knowledge of jobsite safety - Human Resource



## End of a career

**Above** | Carla Hofmaster, environmental and safety coordinator retired from Corn Belt Power Cooperative May 30.

Director for Rohlin Construction, later acquired by Old Castle Materials.

"I had five separate crews in different locations with jobsites all over Iowa and into the eastern part of South Dakota," she recalled. "I oversaw over 150 employees and traveled to each worksite weekly. After a year, safety was added to my position. I had to learn OSHA and MSHA regulations and attended many training classes put on by OSHA at the time."

That experience became the foundation for her work at Corn Belt Power. For more than 15 years she became a staple at Corn Belt Power's Wisdom Station and across its service territory, helping to strengthen and uphold its safety culture. Over the course of her career, she witnessed—and adapted to—many changes in the industry.

"I believe technology has been the biggest driver in the change of safety culture," Carla said. "Tools have become more ergonomically efficient and have helped with less stress on the body. Also, students in college are having safety taught to them, so when they arrive on the job they know what hazards to avoid."

When asked about her first day of retirement, Hofmaster said she had some time to relax.

"I sat on my patio and drank coffee in the morning sun," she said. "Then I spent time with my grandkids."

Still, leaving wasn't easy.

"I will miss my co-workers and the laughs we had," she said.

To those just beginning their careers, Hofmaster offered advice drawn from her own experience.

"The cooperative will be your other family," she said. "They will be there to help you when you are down and there to celebrate your accomplishments. It is one of the few long-term employments that will grow with you. It is an ever-changing industry, so you will not be bored."

Congratulations on your retirement,

Carla. ■





# Navigating challenges, powering the future



**Wisdom Station**

**Above |** Wisdom Station, Spencer, Iowa, is a dispatchable generation source with a 118 megawatt generating capacity.

For decades, Corn Belt Power has proudly delivered safe, reliable, and sustainable wholesale power at competitive rates to nine member electric cooperatives and one municipal cooperative association across central Iowa. Our commitment to service has remained strong—even as the energy landscape undergoes profound change.

Today, we face a convergence of pressures: tightening regulations, supply chain disruptions, rising infrastructure costs, and economic uncertainty. In response, Corn Belt Power is proactively planning for the future—guided by our mission to provide stability and value to the members we serve.

## **Stability Through Planning**

The Corn Belt Power Board of Directors and staff have worked collaboratively to manage costs and minimize rate impacts through:

- Revenue deferral policies
- Operational efficiencies
- Conservative budgeting

Thanks to these measures and the strength of the cooperative model, we've maintained mostly stable rates over the last decade—demonstrating our commitment to affordability while delivering exceptional service and value.

## **Pressures on the Horizon**

Nearly 85% of Corn Belt Power's budget is dedicated to purchased power. Rising generation costs—driven by increased demand, infrastructure needs, environmental regulations, and potential tariffs—may influence rates as early as 2026.

At the same time, we face increasing costs for critical infrastructure, including poles, wires, transformers, and cybersecurity. Investments in new transmission lines support growing demand from data centers, industrial growth, and emerging loads across the Corn Belt Power and Basin Electric service areas.

## **A Proven Value**

Even with necessary rate adjustments, electricity remains one of the most stable and affordable essentials in the economy today. While prices for fuel, housing, and food fluctuate dramatically, cooperative electricity continues to deliver dependable service at predictable costs—helping families and businesses plan with confidence.

## **The Power of the Cooperative Model**

As a member-owned cooperative, Corn Belt Power operates not for profit, but for people. This model allows us to spread risk over time, invest strategically, and make decisions that benefit our members—not shareholders. That's a key reason why our system has delivered reliable power for more than 75 years—and why it's uniquely positioned to meet future challenges.

## **Looking Ahead**

Any rate adjustments made by Corn Belt Power are carefully considered by our Board of Directors—leaders elected by our members. These decisions are made with full transparency and with one goal in mind: sustaining the reliable, secure, and cost-effective power that our communities rely on.

We remain committed to open communication, operational excellence, and long-term planning. Because in North Central Iowa, electricity isn't just about keeping the lights on—it's about powering growth, opportunity, and quality of life for generations to come. ■



**Control center**

**Above |** Corn Belt Power employees operate power flow in the control center.

# The Skin Bar receives RLF

Corn Belt Power closed on a loan for \$250,000 to The Skin Bar at The Mansion in Algona July 1.

Debra Menke, licensed esthetician and spa executive with over 25 years of industry leadership founded The Skin Bar at The Mansion in 2024. Menke's goal is to bring a new era of self-care and luxury to the heart of Iowa. She's spent decades traveling the globe visiting, training and learning from the world's top med spas and luxury resorts.

Menke purchased a historic property in Algona known as "The Mansion," where she will bring the best elements of international wellness innovation and pair it with the embrace of small-town Iowa hospitality in Algona.

The Mansion is the culmination of a decade long dream that she has shared with her daughter, Cori Olson, who is also a licensed esthetician. Along with Farmers State Bank, Algona Municipal Utilities and Corn Belt Power partnered with their Revolving Loan Funds to assist in financing the project.

**Right |** At The Skin Bar at The Mansion loan closing July 1 are from left, John Bilsten, Algona Municipal Utilities; Stacy Cirks, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Deb Menke and Cori Olson, The Skin Bar; and Brian Kollasch, Farmers State Bank.



# McKnight's vision to rebuild Belmond's pool

Every small town has its unsung heroes, but in Belmond, one woman is proving that determination, vision, and a heart for her community can turn the impossible into reality. Aimee Goeman McKnight is one of those unsung heroes.

Aimee returned to her hometown of Belmond in 2020 after living away since graduating high school in 1995. In 2023, when the city pool faced a crisis, Aimee stepped into her true role – community

champion. After a summer marked by repeated breakdowns, the Belmond City Council voted not to reopen the pool in 2024, citing the nearly \$1 million in needed repairs.

Instead of accepting defeat, Aimee gathered a group of dedicated community members to form the Luick Memorial Swimming Pool Committee under the Build a Better Belmond organization. They began meeting with city

officials, engineers, financial experts, pool design firms, and residents. What they discovered was that repairing the pool wasn't the answer—rebuilding it from the ground up was.

The challenge? A staggering \$5.7 million price tag.

For most towns of 2,300 people, that number might have been the end of the

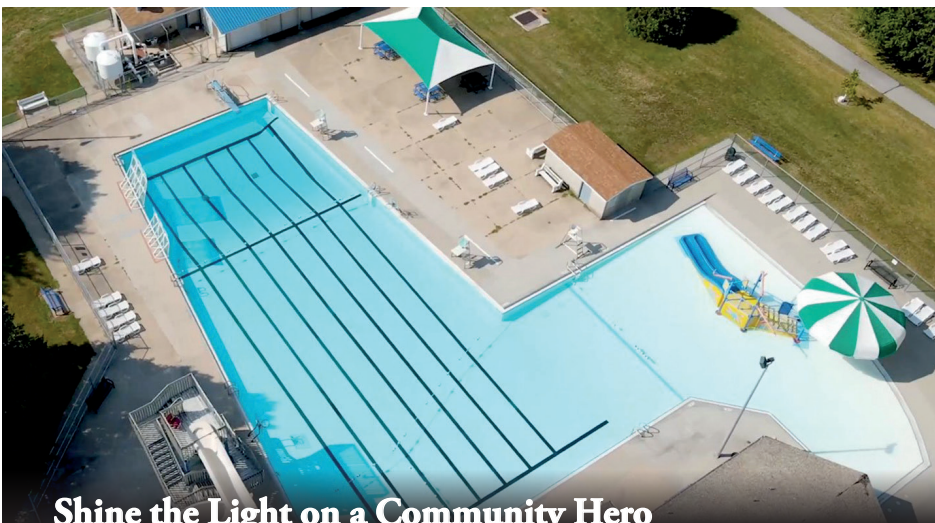
story. But for Aimee, it was just the beginning.

In just 12 months, she and her committee raised an incredible \$2.1 million

through donations and a steady stream of community-driven fundraisers. Next up: a critical vote in November 2025 on a \$3 million city bond that would push the project across the finish line.

Her motivation is simple: a love for her community and its future. Friends and neighbors often marvel at how she balances her demanding job, her business, and countless hours of volunteer work—often pouring more time into the pool project than anything else.

In a world that could use more unsung heroes, Belmond already has one. Her name is Aimee McKnight—and she's proving that with passion and persistence, even the biggest dreams can make a splash. ■



## Shine the Light on a Community Hero

**Above |** Aimee Goeman McKnight won one of three \$3,000 awards in this year's Shine the Light contest. McKnight and the Build a Better Belmond organization have volunteered countless hours in hopes to save Belmond's Luick Memorial Swimming Pool.





**August Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Sarah Kollasch**, customer care and billing, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, donated her \$100 prize to the Estherville Fire Department.

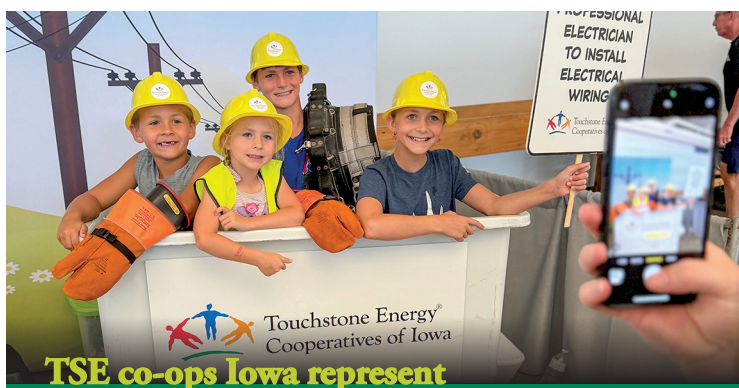
## TSE Cooperatives of Iowa share safety messages at State Fair

The Touchstone Energy Co-ops of Iowa led by Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, Central Iowa Power Cooperative and the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives sponsored the Rastettler 4-H Exhibits Building at the 2025 Iowa State Fair.

Electric co-op staff from across the state handed out plastic hard hats with Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa stickers on them and suckers to kids. Kids could also try on select line worker safety gear and take fun photos in our co-op safety selfie station.

According to fair officials, 1,160,121 people visited the fair in 2025, just off the attendance record set in 2024. A big thanks to all the distribution cooperatives that allowed staff to fill a time slot at the booth.

Co-op employees and directors handed out more than 4,000 hard hats and met with countless cooperative members from across Iowa and the midwest. ■



**TSE co-ops Iowa represent**

**Above |** 2025 fairgoers pose for a safety selfie at the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of Iowa booth August 12.

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

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