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# NEBRASKA

November 2025

Magazine

**CORVAIR MUSEUM  
DRIVES NOSTALGIA  
INTO THE FUTURE**

**Don't Let a Shot  
Kill Power**

**Is a Geothermal Heat  
Pump Right For You?**

**Prepare Now For  
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Geothermal systems tap the Earth's steady underground heat to efficiently heat and cool homes. Using buried loop pipes, they move heat instead of generating it, cutting energy bills significantly. Though installation is costly, they offer long-term savings, reliability, durability, and environmental benefits.

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### ON THE COVER

*Chris Shade stands beside a classic Chevrolet Corvair at the Corvair Museum of America in Hastings, Nebraska, where he preserves and shares the history of the unique American automobile. Photograph by Wayne Price*

# Editor's Page



Wayne Price

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[nebraskamagazine.org](http://nebraskamagazine.org)



SCAN ME

## The Quirky Charm of Town Names

I grew up on a farm near the town of Rulo, Neb., which is located on the Missouri River in Richardson County. According to the Nebraska Historical Society, the land was originally granted to the wife of Charles Rouleau and the town of Rulo was named after her. Rulo was first platted in 1856 and incorporated as a village January 8, 1858. It served as a stopping point on the way west during the expansion period.

The history of the name got me thinking about other interesting and unique town names in our state. These names are part of Nebraska's charm, like hidden punchlines waiting on green highway signs.

Take Worms, for example. This small community in Merrick County, was settled in the 1870s by German immigrants. It is not known for a surplus of invertebrates, but rather was likely named after Worms, Germany. Then there is Hazard, which sounds less like a peaceful prairie town and more like a warning label. In the 1990s, the town gained some fame from the Richard Marx song "Hazard", which prompted a visit from the singer himself in 1993 as Grand Marshal of the local Fourth of July parade.

Nebraska also has a sense of borrowed grandeur. It is sprinkled with towns that carry the names of faraway places, as if the early settlers closed their eyes and stuck pins in a map. You can visit Memphis, Neb., without hearing a single Elvis tune, stroll through Nashville without spotting a cowboy hat, or glide into Venice without seeing a gondola. These places are all small, quiet and far from the crowds their namesakes attract, which might be the real appeal. The locals likely do not belt country ballads on porches or drift down canals singing opera, but they do wave when you drive by.

Some Nebraska towns have names so short you might miss them if you blink. Bee is one of those. Located in Seward County, the population was 171 at the 2020 census. Oak stands tall in name, though it is much smaller than its mighty title suggests. And then there is Eli, which sounds more like a friendly neighbor than a municipality. Eli is an unincorporated community in Cherry County, Neb.

A handful of Nebraska towns honor past presidents. Lincoln, the state capital, is the obvious one, proudly carrying the name of Honest Abe himself. There is also Madison, named for the fourth president, though most visitors are more likely to think of college towns than early statesmen. And then there is Grant, which salutes Ulysses S. Grant, the Civil War general turned president. These towns may not host parades of costumed re-enactors, but the presidential nods give them a certain stately air—if you squint.

In the end, Nebraska's funny little towns make road trips far more interesting. The city sign alone is often worth the detour.



Mark Johnson

Mark Johnson is the General Manager of Elkhorn Rural Public Power District headquartered in Battle Creek, Neb.

## Preparing the Next Generation of Utility Professionals

As we look ahead to the future of public power in Nebraska, one challenge remains the same, workforce development. For more than 85 years, public power has provided Nebraskans with safe, reliable, and cost-effective electricity. To carry that legacy forward, we must continue to invest not only in poles, wires, and substations but also in people. The next generation of lineworkers, engineers, accountants, communicators, and managers will shape how our state continues to deliver power to homes, farms, and businesses.

Across the country, utilities are facing a wave of retirements as long-serving employees finish their careers. At the same time, new technologies, increasing demand for electricity, and customer expectations are reshaping the electric utility landscape. Nebraska is no exception. Our future depends on attracting, training, and retaining talented people who are committed to the mission of public power.

One of the most visible and vital roles in our industry is that of the lineworker. These dedicated individuals work in tough conditions, often responding to storms and outages at all hours. To prepare for this career, many students enroll in one- or two-year programs offered by technical schools. Graduates then continue their training through apprenticeships at utilities across the state. This combination of classroom education and hands-on experience builds the skill, knowledge, and safety awareness needed to succeed in one of the most important jobs in public power.

The opportunities do not stop with linework. Our utilities depend on engineers who design safe and efficient systems, IT professionals who protect our networks and ensure reliability, accountants who maintain financial strength, communicators who connect with customers, plus other key positions. Each of these roles is critical to our success and offers a rewarding career path. Generation and transmission providers also offer opportunities in power plant operations, system control, cybersecurity, renewable energy development, energy trading, environmental science, and many more. Together, these jobs form the backbone of the public power model that benefits every Nebraskan.

To meet this workforce challenge, we must continue building awareness of the career opportunities available in the electric utility industry. These jobs are not only stable and well-paying but also offer meaningful work. At the end of the day, our employees go home knowing their work has kept families warm, farms running, and businesses operating. Few industries can say their mission has such a direct and daily impact on the quality of life in their communities.

I encourage each of you to share the value of this work with the young people in your life, whether they are students, family members, or friends. By inspiring future generations to bring their skills and passion into this field, we can ensure that Nebraska's public power model remains strong, resilient, and ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

# CORVAIR MUSEUM OF AMERICA

## DRIVES NOSTALGIA INTO THE FUTURE



**O**n a visit to Hastings, Nebraska, you might hear the familiar purr of a flat-six engine long before you see it. The sound is distinctive, carrying a touch of nostalgia for an era when cars were bold, quirky, and unlike anything else on the road. That's when you know Chris Shade is nearby, probably giving a tour of his pride and joy: the Corvair Museum of America.

For Shade, this is not just a museum. It is the culmination of a lifelong love affair with one of Chevrolet's most unusual cars. He grew up in a family where the Corvair wasn't just parked in the driveway. It was woven into the fabric of daily life. "We'd load up in the Corvair to go get ice cream," he recalls.

What began as a passion for a car eventually became the story of his family, his business, and now his museum.

Shade's Classic Corvairs, his shop in Hastings, has become something of a pilgrimage site for enthusiasts from across the country. He restores, sells, and services Corvairs, and his lot is often filled with gleaming examples of Chevrolet's short-lived experiment in innovation. Over the years, visitors would walk through his shop and marvel at the rows of cars, the memorabilia on the walls, and the care put into every detail. Inevitably, someone would say, "This is a museum!" Eventually, Shade decided to make it official.

In 2022, the Corvair Museum of America was incorporated as a nonprofit. Its mission is simple but heartfelt: to preserve the Corvair's story and share it with the world through engaging, hands-on exhibits. Its vision extends beyond just history, aiming to entertain visitors of all ages while keeping alive the legacy of a car that dared to be different.



And different it was. When Chevrolet introduced the Corvair in 1960, it was a gamble. American buyers were starting to take notice of small European imports, and General Motors wanted to compete. The Corvair's design was unconventional: a rear-mounted, air-cooled engine, four-wheel independent suspension, and a lightweight uni-body frame. It looked sleek and sporty compared to the boxy sedans of the era.

The Corvair came in multiple styles—sedan, coupe, station wagon, convertible, van, even quirky pickups called the Rampside and Loadside. In 1962, the Monza Spyder hit the market with a turbocharged engine, making it one of the first American production cars to embrace turbo technology. It was an exciting time for Chevrolet, and in its early years, the Corvair was a hit.

But history wasn't always kind. By the mid-1960s, the Ford Mustang had burst onto the scene, stealing the spotlight and defining the muscle car era. At the same time, consumer advocate Ralph Nader published "Unsafe at Any Speed," which criticized the Corvair's first-generation suspension design. Sales plummeted, and Chevrolet shifted its energy to the Camaro. By 1969, the Corvair's run had come to an end.

That could have been the end of the story. Instead, the Corvair found new life as a cult classic. Collectors and enthusiasts appreciate its unique engineering, its daring spirit, and the fact that it stood apart from everything else Detroit was building at the time. In Hastings,

Nebraska, Chris Shade and the Corvair Museum of America are ensuring that appreciation continues.

One of the highlights for visitors is The Yenko Stinger Experience, a replica of Don Yenko's famous Chevrolet dealership in Pennsylvania. Don Yenko was a pioneer in American performance cars, and his first project was built on the Corvair platform. The Yenko Stinger was

**Continued on Page 8**



“We are a living museum,” Shade said. “You can come here and test drive a Corvair, you can buy a car, you can look at a car, you can do whatever with Corvairs. We have cars that we prep and restore. They will be here a little while and they leave and then new cars will come in.”



*Above: A fully restored Yenke Stinger sits on display, surrounded by historic documents and racing artifacts. Photographs by Wayne Price*

## From Page 7

the only Yenke designed specifically for racing, and it quickly earned a reputation on the track.

Inside the museum, the Yenke Stinger Experience immerses guests in that history. A fully restored Yenke Stinger sits on display, surrounded by historic documents and racing artifacts. There's even a tribute to Donna Mae Mimms, one of the few female racers of the era, known for her skill, spirit, and pink racing helmet.

What makes the Corvair Museum of America special, though, isn't just the cars. It's the people. Over the years, Shade has met enthusiasts from around the globe. Many of them now serve on the museum's board, helping to guide its growth and future. The museum is also deeply connected to its local community, with plans to partner with charities and create volunteer opportunities as it expands.

Right now, the museum operates inside Shade's Classic Corvairs, but there are big plans in the works. A new, dedicated facility is being developed next door, one that will allow for more interactive displays, educational exhibits, and hands-on workshops. The idea is to make the Corvair story something visitors can experience, not just observe.

For Shade, this is about more than nostalgia. It's about honoring a car that represented innovation and risk-taking in an era when the auto industry often played it safe. It's about preserving a piece of history that might otherwise be forgotten. And, on a personal level, it's about celebrating the role the Corvair has played in his own life. From childhood memories to a lifelong career, the Corvair has been at the heart of it all.

The museum's story is still being written. With each visitor who marvels at the engineering, sits in a simulator, or shares their own Corvair memory, the legacy grows. It's a reminder that the car, once dismissed as a failure, has outlived its critics and earned its place in American culture.

In Hastings, Nebraska, the Corvair Museum of America stands as proof that sometimes, the most unusual ideas—the ones that take risks and break molds—are the ones worth preserving.

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*As the holiday season approaches and the days grow colder, you may be considering ways to stay cozy while also managing home energy use.*

One of the best ways to make your home more energy efficient is by choosing products with the Energy Star label. But what exactly does that label mean, and how can it benefit you?

## How Products Earn the Energy Star Label

Energy Star is a program by the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help consumers identify energy efficient products that save money and reduce environmental impact.

Products that earn the Energy Star label must meet strict guidelines for energy efficiency, performance and cost effectiveness. Here's how the process works:

1. The product must be more energy efficient than typical models. This helps you save on energy bills by using less electricity while still providing the same performance.
2. The product must be tested in EPA-recognized labs, following standardized procedures. These tests ensure the product meets all energy efficiency and performance requirements.
3. Once tested, the product's data is reviewed by a third-party certification body to verify it meets the set standards. This ensures that only the best products receive the Energy Star label.

Even after a product is certified, the EPA conducts "off-the-shelf" testing on random samples of Energy





*Left: One of the best ways to make your home more energy efficient is by choosing products with the Energy Star label. Photograph provided by Energy Star*

*Above: Many large appliances include a yellow Energy Guide label that provides estimated energy use. Comparing these labels can help you determine how much you'll save with an Energy Star model compared to a standard model.*

Star products to ensure they continue to meet the required standards. If a product fails to meet the performance requirements during verification testing, it can be disqualified from the Energy Star program. The EPA has clear procedures for handling such disqualifications to maintain the integrity of the label.

### Speaking of Labels

Whether you're upgrading your refrigerator, replacing light bulbs or purchasing new electronics, the blue Energy Star label is your assurance that the product has passed all energy efficiency tests. It's easy to spot and can be found on products ranging from small and major appliances to electronics.

Many large appliances, such as washing machines and clothes dryers, include a yellow Energy Guide label that provides estimated energy use. Comparing these labels can help you determine how much you'll save with an Energy Star model compared to a standard model.

While Energy Star products can cost a little more upfront, their energy savings over time will often cover the difference. They help reduce your household energy consumption, which could translate to lower utility bills.

### Why Should I Care?

As a member of an electric cooperative, choosing energy efficient products benefits not only you but also our entire community. When co-op members use less energy, it lowers overall electricity demand, helping to stabilize rates and reduce costs for everyone.

As you shop for appliances, electronics or other home equipment this holiday season, look for the Energy Star label. Whether it's a new washing machine or energy efficient lighting options, these products are a simple and effective way to save money and lower energy use. Check with your local electric utility to see if they offer rebates or incentives for purchasing Energy Star products.

To browse products that have earned the Energy Star label, visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

# Frying Gets Smarter



By Cory Fuehrer, NPPD Energy Efficiency Program Manager

Think quick: What is the most common side dish to serve with a cheeseburger? Naturally, you said “French fries.” In fact, the United States Department of Agriculture cited during the 2000s, U.S. per capita consumption of frozen potatoes averaged 55 pounds per year. With that kind of eating, you would think we invented deep frying!

In reality, the process of deep-frying foods started in the fifth millennium BC. Having invented deep-frying during that time, Egyptians had no idea it would change the culinary world. During the middle ages, fritters, which are dough batter filled with meats or fruits, became popular throughout Europe. Finally, in the 1830s, fried potatoes or “French Fries” became popular in France and Belgium. Today, people have become very creative and will fry just about anything.

By the late 1800s, cast iron cookware became widely available and people began preparing fried foods in their homes. In 1918, the Pitco Frialator was invented. This piece of equipment quickly became a staple in restaurant kitchens since it extended the life of cooking oil. Shortly thereafter, National Presto

Industries, one of the forerunners in the electric housewares industry, began selling some of the first electric home fryers. In 1976, they introduced “The Fry Baby,” further solidifying our love affair with fried foods.

But the 1980s brought a new focus on the connection between nutrition and health. By the end of the last millennium, studies were underway identifying the correlation between fried food intake and increased risk of heart disease, elevated blood pressure and obesity, among other problems. To date, no study has shown a positive correlation between fried food intake and good health.

Does this mean we must give up our long-lived passion for fried food? No! Introduced in 2005 for commercial kitchens, air fryers have recently gained popularity for home use as a great alternative to oil fryers. Here are some of the reasons:

**Efficiency** – Traditional fryers work by flash cooking food. After an oil-filled vat is heated to the necessary temperature, food is placed in a basket and completely submerged. Since oil fryers often produce fumes, ventilation is recommended. But air fryers can cook with just a tablespoon

of or no oil at all using a sealed cooking compartment and circulating hot air around the food. Thus, it emits no fumes and releases less heat. If someone is trying to keep the kitchen cool, this is appreciated. Though air fryer cooking times are slightly longer when compared to traditional fryers, more heat is kept in the fryer.

**Safety** – Ever notice what happens when frozen food is put into extremely hot oil? Oil splatters everywhere. In addition, potentially harmful fumes can be created during the cooking process. Air fryers dramatically reduce these risks because all the cooking occurs in a locked compartment. When finished, most models turn off, which reduces the chance of burnt food.

**Easy to Clean** – Since most of its parts are removable and dishwasher-safe, cleaning an air fryer is a breeze! Compare that to time spent draining, storing or disposing of oil, disassembling, and then scouring an oil fryer.

**Less Cost to Operate** – Quality cooking oil costs a significant amount of money. Assuming it is not scorched during use and stored properly, the oil may be usable a couple more times before it becomes too contaminated from previous use and needs to be disposed of. With an air fryer, little or no oil is needed.

**Healthier Meals** – Using little or no oil when air frying ensures excess oil is not soaked up by your food. That translates to fewer calories and less fat.

**Versatility** – Deep fryers are strictly for frying foods. With an air fryer, different accessories allow users to grill and roast foods. Air fryers can even bake desserts!

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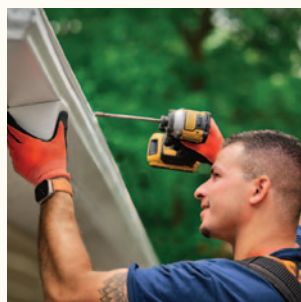
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# Is a geothermal heat pump right for you?

Geothermal systems use the steady heat stored beneath the Earth's surface to warm your home in winter and cool it in summer. Also known as ground-source or water-source heat pumps—they can even help heat your water.

Because the ground stays at a consistent temperature year-round, geothermal systems are highly energy-efficient and renewable.

## How does it work?

A geothermal system uses underground pipes, called loops, to move heat between your home and the ground. These loops can be installed horizontally across a large area or drilled vertically into the ground, depending on your yard size and soil type.

Most systems are closed-loop, meaning a water and antifreeze solution circulates through the pipes. In winter, the system pulls heat from the ground and sends it indoors. In summer, it does the opposite—removing heat from your home and releasing it into the ground.

Since geothermal systems move heat rather than generate it, they're far more efficient than traditional heating and cooling methods.

## Why choose geothermal?

Geothermal offers a range of long-term benefits:

- **Energy savings:** It can cut energy bills by up to 50%. Savings grow over time to offset higher upfront installation costs.
- **Reliable:** It provides heating and cooling 24/7, in any weather.
- **Long lifespan:** Indoor components last 20-25 years; underground loops can last 50 years or more.
- **Low maintenance:** Once installed, systems require minimal upkeep.

There's been a lot of buzz around going solar, but what about going geothermal?

Solar gets a lot of attention, but have you considered going geothermal? This lesser-known renewable energy source can reduce your energy bills while delivering reliable, efficient heating and cooling year-round.

- **Quiet and safe:** It uses no combustion, no outdoor units and fewer emissions make it a clean, quiet choice for your home.

## What should I consider before installation?

Geothermal heat pumps are a long-term investment, with installation ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000 depending on location, soil, system type, and home size. Check with your utility and government programs for rebates or tax credits.

Though upfront costs are high, geothermal systems are cheaper to run than traditional HVAC. Most homeowners recoup the cost in 4-15 years through energy savings, especially if staying in the home long-term. Installation is often more cost-effective when building a new home.



*A horizontal loop field can be less expensive than vertical drilling, but requires more space, as shown at this larger installation at an electric co-op. Photograph provided by Federated Rural Electric Association (MN).*

## Choosing the right system

Geothermal systems aren't one-size-fits-all. The type of system that works best for your home will depend on the climate, soil type, available land and local regulations. An experienced, certified contractor can help evaluate your property and recommend the most suitable system.

### Closed-loop systems

There are three main kinds:

- **Horizontal loops:** Pipes are buried in long, shallow trenches (6-10 feet deep). These are best for homes with plenty of yard space.
- **Vertical loops:** Pipes go straight down 200-500 feet. These are a good choice for smaller yards and cause less damage to landscaping.
- **Pond/lake loops:** If you have access to a large pond or lake, loops can be placed underwater. This option is often the cheapest but only works if site conditions are right.

### Open-loop systems

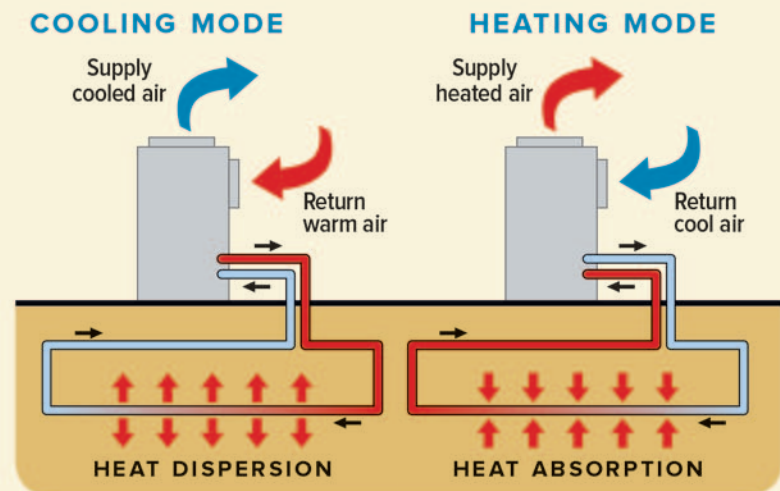
Open-loop systems use water from a well, pond, or other source for heat exchange, then return it to the ground or source, based on local codes. They're less common and depend on environmental conditions and regulations. Unlike closed-loop pond/lake systems—where water surrounds but doesn't enter the pipes—open-loop systems draw water directly into the system.

A geothermal heating and cooling system offers energy savings, reliability and environmental benefits. Carefully weigh the upfront cost against your long-term home plans to determine if it's right for you.

Contact your local electric utility for more information on geothermal systems.

## How ground-source heat pumps work

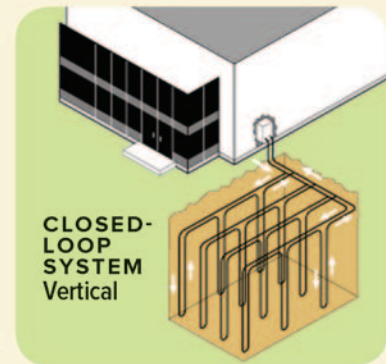
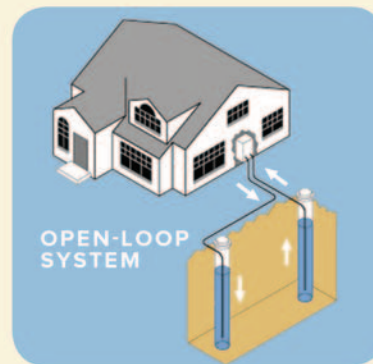
Geothermal heat pumps operate on the same heat-transfer principles seen in air-source heat pumps, but they use 25 to 50 percent less electricity than conventional HVAC systems.



SOURCE: WATERFURNACE

### TYPES OF GEOTHERMAL HEAT PUMP SYSTEMS

There are four basic configurations for geothermal heat pump ground loops. One is an "open-loop system," where ground water or well water is used. Three others are "closed-loop systems," where a water and antifreeze solution is continually moved through pipes.



SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, OFFICE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Wearing a bright orange vest, keeping your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot, and only pointing at your target. These are some of the safety measures associated with hunting, and electrical safety should be added to the list.

Never shoot near or toward power lines, power poles, transformers or substations. A stray bullet could not only damage equipment, potentially interrupting electric service, but could be deadly to the shooter. Damage to the conductor could drop the line to the ground, causing a possibility of electrocution to those nearby.

Hunters are urged to follow these safety tips while out hunting:

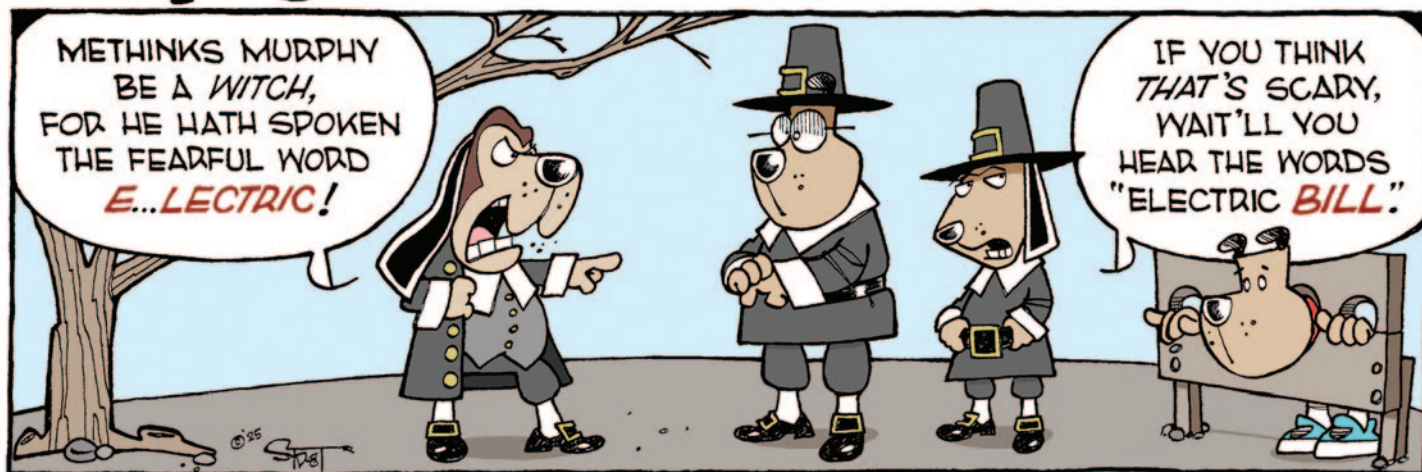
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole, except for utility equipment is an obstruction and poses a serious hazard to utility workers.

Don't make lineman hunt for problems caused in a hunting area. Sometimes damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months, or unless an outage occurs.

Keep yourself and your utility safe this hunting season.



## Murphy



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You will be thankful you prepared in the fall for colder weather when you receive your first winter bill. Just as you pull out your winter gear before you need it, prepping your home for the coming season is a great idea.

The following steps can be taken now to use less energy at home before the winter chill sets in. They also help lower strain on the electric grid during extreme winter weather when energy use is at its peak in your community.

First, let's consider your home's layers. Just like layering up those winter flannels, fleeces and down jackets with waterproof, wind-stopping shells, gloves and hats, your home needs layers, too. Air sealing and insulation protect your home from the elements while locking in the warm air to keep you cozy. The same applies to hot weather, making air sealing and insulation a year-round efficiency upgrade.

To offset the costs, federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades are available through Dec. 31, 2025. Homeowners can claim a total of 30% of the cost of installation, up to \$3,200. Tax credits are available for insulation, heat pumps, air conditioning systems and more. There is even a tax credit for electrical panel upgrades, which might be needed to accommodate new energy efficient equipment.

There is also a \$150 tax credit for an energy audit, which allows a pro to help determine what your home needs and how to prioritize potential projects. Visit [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov) for more information.

When it comes to do-it-yourself projects, there are a few upgrades you can take care of yourself. Lock in savings with window cleaning and maintenance. Make sure sash locks and window cranks are in good working order and

cleaned of any dirt and leaves. Debris can keep them from closing snugly. I find the crevice tool attachment on my vacuum cleaner, combined with a small, dry scrub brush or an old toothbrush, works great. The locks should pull the top and bottom window sashes together tightly. For casement windows, the locks should pull the window tightly to the frame.

Although it might not seem like a significant difference, reducing airflow through and around windows can make your home more comfortable in the winter. Replacing broken or nonfunctional sash locks can be a reasonable DIY project, but it's best to avoid doing it when the winter winds are blowing. Also, use caulk to seal all gaps around the window trim. If you have operable storm windows, make sure they close.

If you have a forced-air heating or air conditioning system, replace the filter. First, turn the system off to check it. If your filter is dirty, leave it in place until you have a replacement. Running your system without a filter can send any dust or dirt in the ductwork directly into the components and damage your equipment. Make a note of the filter's size on your shopping list or

take a picture of the filter with your phone so you can reference it when running errands.

Also, stocking up on filters can save you money. I bought a 12-pack of filters for \$72—\$6 each. A similar filter sold separately was \$10. Don't see a bulk pack at your local hardware store? Ask at the customer service desk. They may be able to order them for you.

This fall, look for opportunities to protect your home from the elements and maintain your equipment *before* the cold of winter.



*Filters should be checked every three months and replaced if needed. Photograph by Miranda Boutelle, Efficiency Services Group*



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Tucked along a quiet stretch of road that was once a bustling railroad line, The Speakeasy stands as one of the last reminders of what was once the Village of Sacramento, Nebraska. The brick structure went up in the 1890s, originally housing a general store on one side and a grain company on the other. The grain was ground in the basement and carried up by a small dumbwaiter elevator, a relic that still hints at the building's hardworking past.

Back then, Sacramento was the place to be in Phelps County. In the late 1880s, it even rivaled its nearby neighbor, Holdrege. But in 1883, the Burlington Railroad decided to route its tracks through Holdrege instead. One by one, businesses packed up and moved as Sacramento slowly faded from the map. Today it is an unincorporated town, remembered by only a few weathered buildings and a historical marker.

According to the Phelps County Historical Society, Sacramento once boasted about 200 residents. It even made national news when a local resident, Albert Person, used a gasoline engine and a 110-volt generator to power his home, business, and a single streetlight. His creation gave Sacramento the rare distinction of being the smallest town in the country to have its own electric light plant.

The building that houses The Speakeasy survived all that change. Over the years it served many different purposes, but in the 1970s it found new life as a restaurant. In 1980, Terry Puls purchased it, and it has been in the Puls family ever since. His son, Ryan, grew up working there and officially took over in 2013. Ryan's wife, Julie, handles the books and steps in to help when needed. Ryan calls himself a self-taught chef, having learned through trial and error during years in the kitchen.

Under his care, The Speakeasy has earned a



reputation for serving some of the best steaks around. The menu offers sirloin, filet mignon, ribeye and New York strip, with prime rib available on Fridays and Saturdays. A house favorite is the Sacramento Strip, a 14-ounce New York strip topped with Danish bleu cheese and a brandy-mustard mushroom sauce. Eight different house made steak sauces are available, including a rich red wine and mushroom demi-glace.

The restaurant is also famous for its buttermilk battered onion rings, which have been on the menu for 45 years. One of its more indulgent starters is cured and smoked pork belly served with pickled onions and Dijon mustard. Even the hamburgers stand out, ground fresh in-house from the steak trimmings.

The Speakeasy runs with a crew of ten, many of whom have been there for years. "We are a pretty close group," Ryan said. They open Tuesday through Saturday at 5 p.m., serving their meals under the glow of electricity provided by Southern Public Power, just as Sacramento's early pioneers once dreamed.



## Loaded Philly Cheesesteak Baked Potato

- 4 large russet potatoes, washed
- 1 cup Real California sour cream
- 1-2 tablespoons Real California whole milk
- 1/4 cup Real California unsalted butter, divided
- 1 small green bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 small yellow onion, thinly sliced
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 pound fresh shaved sirloin steak
- 2 cups shredded Real California provolone cheese

Preheat oven to 425 F and line baking sheet with aluminum foil.

Prick potatoes all over with fork. Bake until potatoes are tender and fork inserted easily comes out, 45 minutes-1 hour. Split tops of potatoes open with knife and fluff potato flesh with fork. Set aside.

In small bowl, combine sour cream and milk, adding more milk as needed, until sour cream is pourable. Set aside.

In large skillet or on griddle over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon butter. Add peppers and onions; cook until tender, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to plate and set aside.

Clean skillet then melt remaining butter. Add steak and cook until fully cooked and lightly browned, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Return vegetables to skillet and toss to combine.

Evenly top each potato with 1 tablespoon butter, steak mixture and cheese. Transfer to oven and bake until cheese is melted, 2-3 minutes. Drizzle with sour cream and serve.

## Reader Submitted Recipes

### Impossible Easy Pumpkin Pecan Pie

- |                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 cup canned pumpkin          | 1 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice |
| 1 cup evaporated milk         |                                  |
| 1/3 cup Bisquick              | 1 teaspoon vanilla               |
| 1/2 cup sugar                 | 2 eggs                           |
| 1 tablespoon butter, softened | 1/2 cup chopped pecans           |

Grease or use Pam spray on a pie plate. Combine and mix all ingredients, except the pecans. When thoroughly mixed, stir in pecans until blended together. Pour into pie plate. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool – then serve with whipped cream topping. This is a great pie – the ingredients form a crust and is very tasty.

**Diane Epley, North Platte, Nebraska**

### Mom's Sweet Potato Balls

- Sweet Potatoes
- Large Marshmallows
- Salt and pepper
- Corn flakes, crushed

Boil sweet potatoes until soft. Cool and then peel skin off. Mash like regular potatoes, add salt and pepper to taste. Use 1 large marshmallow for each ball. Place some mashed sweet potato in your hand and put marshmallow in the center. Add enough potato to cover the marshmallow and make a ball. Roll each ball in crushed corn flakes and sugar. Fry in 1/2 butter or margarine and 1/2 cooking oil, cook until golden brown. Serve warm.

**Bonnie Vering, Howells, Nebraska**

### A Different Cranberry Salad

- |                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 1/2 cups cranberry apple juice  | 1/2 cup chopped pecans    |
| 6 oz lemon or orange Jello        | 1 1/2 cups cottage cheese |
| 1 1/4 cup frozen cranberry relish | 1/4 cup mayonnaise        |
| 1/2 cup finely chopped celery     |                           |

Bring juice to boiling and add Jello. Stir in the cranberry relish and then chill until it is almost set. Add celery and pecans. Pour half of mixture into 8" X 8" dish and chill until firm. Combine cottage cheese and mayonnaise and spread on firm layer. Top with remaining cranberry mixture and chill until firm.

**Audrey Sayers, Clarkson, Nebraska**

### Simple Cream Cheese Corn

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 16 oz frozen corn | 4 tablespoons butter |
| 4 oz cream cheese | Sea salt to taste    |

Place in saucepan and warm to serve. For larger gatherings this can be doubled and placed in crockpot to cook and keep warm.

**Connie Schulz, Norfolk, Nebraska**

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