It is the honor of IADG and our utility partners to annually recognize businesses, which in most cases, are quietly making big impacts on their communities, industries, and state of Iowa. The Iowa Venture Award has been awarded to 272 businesses during the past 32 years. In early December, these eight businesses were recognized with an Iowa Venture Award and added to the Iowa Venture Award Hall of Fame.

- AVEKA Manufacturing Inc.
- GrandStay Hotel & Suites
- Iowa Select Farms
- M & C Anderson Pullets
- Mid-Iowa Cooperative
- Peterson Transportation, Inc.
- Preferred Wholesale, Inc.
- Stensland Family Farms and Creamery

Entrepreneurial leadership, investment, and job creation are key factors considered by the nominating IADG utility partners. Every year the audience of more than 300 is captivated by the compelling stories of the companies we honor. This year Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Naig, served as the special guest to present the awards. Thank you once again to the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives for allowing IADG to hold this event in conjunction with their Annual Meeting. The full list of recipients in the Iowa Venture Award Hall of Fame is available at [www.IADG.com/HallOfFame](http://www.IADG.com/HallOfFame).

**Eight Businesses Honored with Iowa Venture Award**

IADG Builds on 35 Years of Service

When many of your utility sponsors and partners have served rural Iowa for eighty-plus years ...you don’t want to get carried away celebrating a 35th anniversary. Still, it seems that IADG, founded in 1985, should at least recognize the passing of a significant milestone.

Most certainly, we want to herald our sponsors for their collaborative and generous support of IADG’s economic development mission. To this very day, IADG remains one of our nation’s most compelling stories of rural utility partnership and accomplishments made possible by the simple acknowledgment that we are all better when we work together.

The accolades, awards, and recognition that IADG has been bestowed truly belong to the over 225 utilities that unite to sponsor and support a program of work dedicated to business and community development for rural Iowa. We will likely recognize some of the history throughout 2020, but rest assured, we’re looking forward and are focused on enhancing member engagement through sponsor determined and established economic development priorities. Working together with our sponsoring utilities, we continue to identify the challenges, opportunities, and assets to help rural Iowa communities prosper.
Iowa Governor Adopts Empower Rural Iowa Recommendations

The Governor’s Empower Rural Iowa Initiative Task Forces presented a compelling and substantive set of recommendations for the 2020 legislative session in Perry in late December. Numerous IADG partners serve on the task forces, and professional developers joined them, and service and industry leaders, along with the Iowa Rural Development Council in shaping, presenting and delivering the recommendations to Governor Reynolds and Initiative Co-Chair Lt. Governor Gregg.

“The Governor’s Empower Rural Iowa Initiative is about making sure there is opportunity and prosperity in every corner of the state. Today’s recommendations will keep us moving in the right direction,” said Lt. Governor Gregg.

In accepting the Task Forces Reports, Governor Reynolds stated, “By connecting, investing, and growing our rural communities, we can ensure Iowa’s success is every Iowans’ success. We know how to come together to think differently and build an Iowa that shatters expectations.”

The twelve-page report and recommendations of the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative are available at www.IADG.com.

“We are grateful to all the IADG partner organizations that have played a key role in the various task forces and meetings, stated Rand Fisher, IADG president. Now it is time to get behind these recommendations, support their passage, and prepare to put them to work in our rural Iowa communities!”

USDA ReConnect Program Supports Broadband Expansion in Iowa

Three areas in Iowa received first-round awards totaling nearly $35 million from the new USDA ReConnect Program. These grants and loans will support the expansion of broadband infrastructure and services in rural America.

**Grand River Mutual Telephone Corporation (GRM),** serving southern Iowa and northern Missouri matched a $20.8 million USDA award to embark on a $41.6 million project to construct eight exchanges in northern Missouri and southern Iowa, providing access to services and information for enhancements in agriculture, education, health care, and economic development. The exchanges of Blockton and Grand River in Iowa will all benefit through the installation of broadband network capabilities of symmetrical transmission rates of up to one gigabit per second.

**Premier Communications,** serving western Iowa and eastern South Dakota, received $7.2 million to deploy high-speed broadband network capabilities up to 1 gigabit to over 900 households, businesses, and farms in their service territory.

USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Bill Northey, was on hand for the announcement delivered in Hawarden in mid-November. USDA Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, and Governor Kim Reynolds announced a $6.4 million award for **Farmers Mutual Telephone Company** of Stanton. These funds will be used to connect over 500 homes, businesses, and farms in Montgomery and Page counties in Iowa.

Secretary Purdue also announced a $550 million second round of ReConnect funding will open for application on Jan. 31, 2020. The funds will be available as loans, grants, and combination awards.

FIND Announces Assistance for Iowa Dentists

The FIND (Fulfilling Iowa’s Need for Dentists) initiative can provide up to $100,000 in dental education financial assistance to new dentists dedicated to practicing in under-served areas of Iowa. Four awards are available each year. The 2020 FIND recipients are:

**Dr. Ames Cross – Stuart**

**Dr. Kristi Ouderkirk-Bock - Denison**

**Dr. Sarah Gingrich – Dysart**

**Dr. Alexander Walls - Missouri Valley**

Each year, IADG’s Bruce Hansen and Brittany Morales interact with students through their four years of dental education. They participate in Lunch-N-Learns, Practice Fairs and hold regular office hours to stay in touch with students. Each year allows for planning and a step-by-step process to understand the post-graduation opportunities that will ultimately lead to a final placement decision – hopefully, a practice in rural Iowa.

The FIND program has successfully placed 52 dentists in underserved communities of rural Iowa. Partners in FIND include Delta Dental, Iowa Department of Public Health, The University of Iowa College of Dentistry, Ripple Effect, and IADG. For more information, visit www.IowaFINDProject.com.
Iowa Select Farms
“Outstanding Business of the Year” – Nominated by Midland Power Cooperative
Iowa Select Farms is the fourth-largest pork producer in the world, and the largest family-owned production company in the U.S. Iowa Select Farms has over 800 farms in 52 Iowa counties. Owners Deb & Jeff Hansen also formed a Foundation that provides major funding to combat food insecurity, support for veterans, and assist cancer patients and their families.

AVEKA Manufacturing – Nominated by Butler County REC
AVEKA, celebrating its 25th Anniversary, recently became an employee-owned company. AVEKA operates Iowa facilities in Fredericksburg, Cresco, and Waukon and recently completed a 50,000 sq. ft. expansion, equipment upgrade, and facility remodeling in Fredericksburg.

GrandStay Hotel & Suites – Nominated by North West REC
The GrandStay Hotel & Suites in Rock Valley fulfills a community need for lodging and gathering space. This 46-room $5.5 million hotel also showcases the artwork and memorabilia from the surrounding area. North West REC installed an electric charging station to serve guests with electric cars.

M & C Anderson Pullets – Nominated by Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative
M & C Anderson Pullets of Sioux Rapids is acclaimed for their conservation-based farming practices. This 1,753-acre farm is home to ten specialized bio-security facilities that produce nearly 5 million pullets annually. Owner Colleen “Coke” Anderson is a nationally recognized leader in the poultry industry.

Mid-Iowa Cooperative – Nominated by Grundy County REC
Mid-Iowa Cooperative, headquartered in Conrad, Iowa, is over 75 years old. A 2019 merger with East Central Iowa Cooperative grew membership to over 1,300 members in ten counties. In 2019 Mid-Iowa invested over $18 million, acquired 40 acres in Grundy County to house a new 5-million bushel grain delivery and storage facility.

Peterson Transportation Inc. – Nominated by Calhoun County REC
Peterson Transportation, Inc. of rural Manson is a long-distance hauler of steel and wood. They recently invested over $3.5 million expand its headquarters to accommodate a fleet of 45 semi-trucks and 125 trailers. Peterson Transportation employs over 70 people.

Preferred Wholesale, Inc. – Nominated by Chariton Valley Electric Cooperative
Preferred Wholesale, Inc. (PWI) completed a 10,000 sq. ft. expansion to their facilities in Albia in 2018. PWI delivers food products to nearly every state. PWI developed its own brands and is the exclusive supplier of IOWA SMOKEHOUSE jerky and meat snacks and Laura Beth’s line of jams, salsas, dressings, and pickled goods.

Stensland Family Farms – Nominated by Lyon County REC
Stensland Family Farms, established in 1915, is located just outside of Larchwood, Iowa. In addition to farming 1,500 acres of organic cropland and operating a 200-cow dairy, they recently expanded the operation to include Stensland Creamery. The milk produced on their dairy is used for freshly bottled milk, ice cream, aged cheese, and cheese curds.
818 Forward with Faith Opens in Pella

818 Forward with Faith cut the ribbon on a new residential home for adults with disabilities in Pella. Specialized care providers manage the home and deliver around the clock care to the residents.

818 Forward with Faith is a non-profit organization created by Jerry and Judy Fynaardt after their son, who has cerebral palsy, was injured in a 2016 accident on 8-18. Their son required greater assistance than they could provide at home, and the solution they created is 818 Forward with Faith. The Fynaardt’s hope to build additional homes in the future.

Pella Cooperative Electric Association and Southwest Iowa REC provided funding from their Revolving Loan Funds to support this project.

FABTECH in Chicago


Cherokee Regional Medical Center Assisted by C-M-L

C-M-L Telephone Cooperative Association (CML Telephone) secured a $300,000 grant from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program, $30,000 from the Ripple Effect Program, and provided $30,000 in matching funds to assist the Cherokee Regional Medical Center (CRMC) with facility upgrades. The project included the purchase of new diagnostic equipment, including Digital Radiography x-ray equipment, as well as new equipment and furnishings to expand the services offered by the clinic. The USDA grant also allowed CML Telephone to create a Revolving Loan Fund to support the CRMC project and many more in the future.

ReNue Rx Opens Pharmacy in Bancroft

Many rural pharmacies in Iowa have closed over the years. Rural communities without pharmacies face challenges of access to medicine and distance to the nearest pharmacy. However, with recent changes to Iowa legislation that allows remote pharmacies to operate “on-line” (or telemedicine) with a licensed pharmacist, rural towns can now encourage a much needed local service once again. Bancroft stayed the course and stuck with the mission of a telemedicine model and successfully located ReNue Rx on Main Street offering pharmacy services and connections with a licensed pharmacist on-line. Congratulations, Bancroft!