THE Southwestern
A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER 2026 • VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 11



88th Annual

NEW ENERGY CONTRACT, VPP ON CO-OP'S RADAR

DIRECTORS ELECTED

CAPITAL CREDITS

PUBLIC CONTACTS

MANAGING DEMAND

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

04 News & Notes
Mum's the word—no, seriously, we've hidden an image of a mum flower in this month's magazine. Find it and you could win a $25 credit on an upcoming bill.

05 Capital Credits
We've changed the way we return capital credits to our members. Find out how they'll be delivered—and what capital credits even are—inside.

06 AIEC Scholarships
If you're reading this, your high school senior could be eligible for one of 20 Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarships offered through the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

08 Personalized Videos
We've talked a lot about managing demand in recent months. Now, with personalized energy report emails, we're also helping you do something about it.

09 SmartHub
Online bill pay, usage alerts and outage reporting are just a few of the reasons to sign up for SmartHub today.

10 Annual Meeting
The future was front and center at the cooperative's 88th Annual Meeting of Members this past September.

14 Space Heaters
Space heaters go a long way toward warming up those blustery winter nights. Their impact on your energy bill, though, could leave you feeling cold.

15 LIHEAP
Low-income families struggling to pay your energy bills, the state of Illinois is here to offer assistance through its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

16 Electrical Contacts
Public contacts are rare, but for those who do come into contact with a live line it's a life-changing experience. Don't become another statistic.

18 Model Trains
The Metro East Model Railroad Club has been running trains—and delighting guests and club members of all ages—for more than three decades.

20 Who-What-Where
You had no trouble locating our October service station, but do you know the name of this month's mystery martyr?

OFFICES CLOSED WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18 FOR EMPLOYEE SAFETY TRAINING

On Wednesday, Nov. 18, Southwestern Electric will provide a full day of safety training for all cooperative employees. Our offices will be closed and our personnel will be unavailable for meetings, phone calls and email.

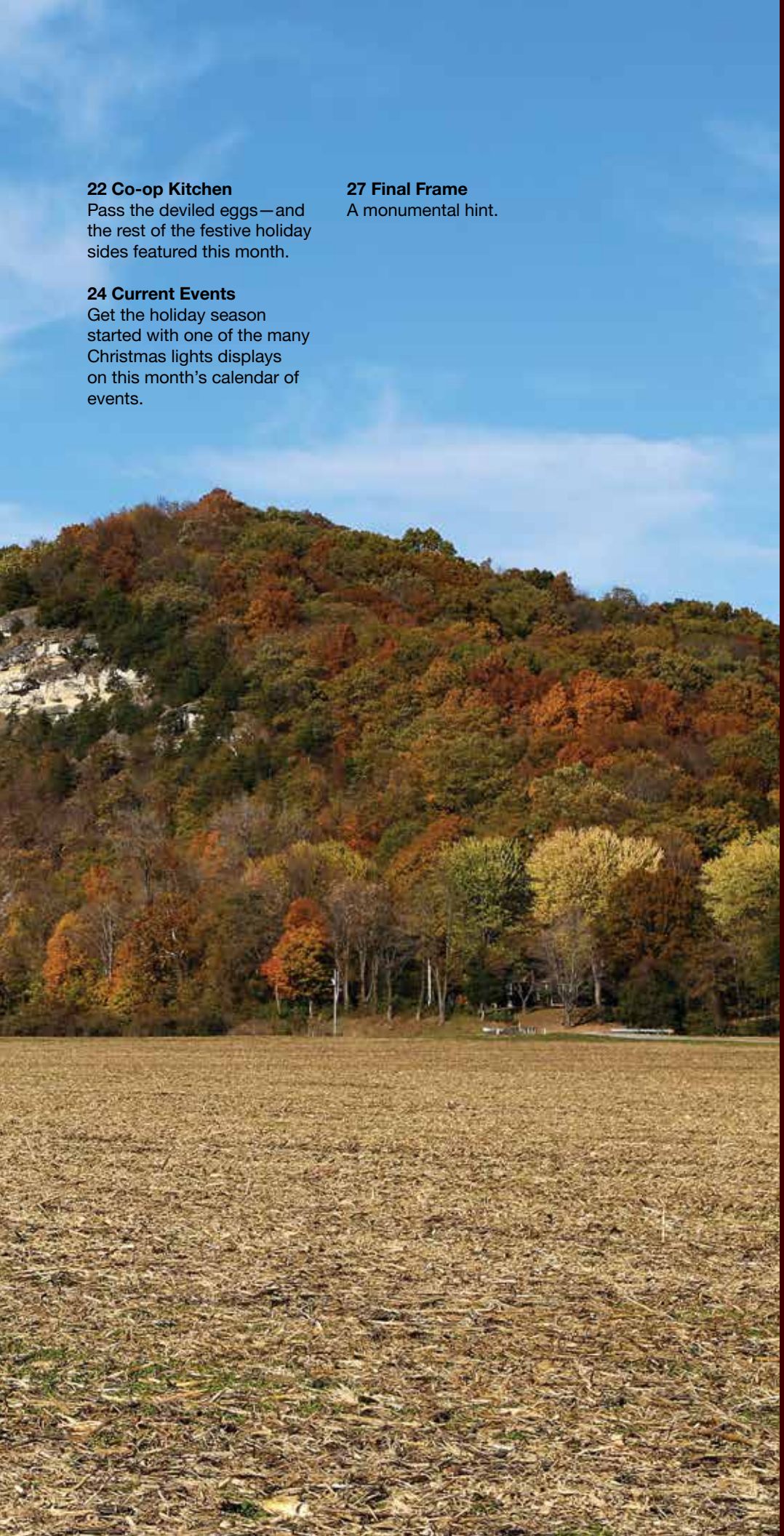
Southwestern Electric line crews will be responding to power outages and emergency calls on Nov. 18. If you lose power, please call us at 800-637-8667. Our after-hours call center will dispatch a line crew to restore your service.

The cooperative will resume regular business hours on Thursday, Nov. 19.

22 Co-op Kitchen
Pass the deviled eggs—and the rest of the festive holiday sides featured this month.

24 Current Events
Get the holiday season started with one of the many Christmas lights displays on this month's calendar of events.

27 Final Frame
A monumental hint.



Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Phone: 800-637-8667. Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Visit us on the Web at www.sweci.com.

Board of Directors

Jerry Gaffner, President ..... Greenville
Jared Stine, Vice President..... St. Elmo
Annette Hartlieb, Secretary ..... Vandalia
Sandy Grapperhaus, Treasurer ..... Collinsville
William "Bill" Jennings ..... Alhambra
Brad Lurkins ..... Greenville
Amy Marcoot ..... Greenville
Ann Schwarm ..... Loogootee
Marvin Warner ..... Pocahontas

CEO

Bobby Williams ..... Chief Executive Officer

The Southwestern

Mike Barns ..... Art Director
email: mike.barns@sweci.com
Nathan Grimm ..... Media Specialist
email: nathan.grimm@sweci.com

Distribution Centers:

St. Jacob
10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281

St. Elmo
2117 East 1850 Avenue, St. Elmo, IL 62458

Southwestern Electric Cooperative reserves the right to re-print member comments and correspondence in its cooperative educational and promotional materials.

The Southwestern (USPS 612-500) is published monthly by Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Greenville, IL. Subscriptions cost $11.53 per year. Comments or questions regarding material in this publication may be The Southwestern magazine, c/o Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246, or e-mailed to thesouthwestern@sweci.com.

Postmaster: Send address corrections to The Southwestern, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

Apple and the Apple logo are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Android, Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google Inc.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ON THE COVER



Southwestern Electric member Richard Phones of Reno and his grandson Sammy share a smile—Richard for the camera, and Sammy for his grandpa—at September's 88th Annual Meeting of Members. Our annual meeting story begins on page 10.

CO-OP REMINDERS

November 11 Offices closed in observance of Veterans Day.

November 17 Payment processing unavailable 8 - 11 p.m. while we perform maintenance.

November 18 Offices closed for employee safety training. See page 2 for details.

November 26 & 27 Offices closed for Thanksgiving.



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For the latest news and notes, follow us on Facebook and x (formerly Twitter). You'll find us at facebook.com/SWECI and x.com/sweci. Search for Southwestern Electric on YouTube, Instagram & LinkedIn. You can listen to our podcast, Wireside Chat, on Apple Music, Spotify, Audible and anywhere podcasts are found.

Reader Contest

We've hidden an image of a mum flower in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see below. We may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the mum flower, email us or send a postcard with your name, address, phone number, and the page number where you found the image. Please email us at thesouthwestern@sweci.com or send your postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

Entries must be postmarked or in our thesouthwestern@sweci.com inbox by the first day of the month following the month of publication. For our November contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by December 1, 2026.

We'll choose one winner in a random drawing. Our winner will receive a $25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. We'll publish the name of this month's contest winner in the January issue of The Southwestern.

SEPTEMBER WINNER

Congratulations to Tammy Rench of Greenville. As the winner of our September Hide & Seek contest drawing, Tammy will receive a $25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our September contest. This month's image appears at left. You'll find Hide & Seek rules below.



RULES TO PLAY BY

- One entry per membership per month.
- A membership can only win once per calendar year.
- No phone calls, texts, social media posts, walk-in traffic, carrier pigeons, singing telegrams or other clever means of communication that may occur to you.
- Please respond *only* by emailing us at thesouthwestern@sweci.com or by sending a postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
- Entries submitted by other methods will be disqualified.
- Entries emailed to other Southwestern Electric email addresses will be disqualified, deleted, then disqualified again, just to be safe.
- Entries mailed to other departments or included with other correspondence will likely never find their way to the editor. If they do, they'll be disqualified. Also, he'll add you to his list of people who can't follow instructions. It's a long (and growing) list and not one you care to be part of.
- November contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by December 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

You've Got Mail

A quick guide to capital credits, why they matter, and why we're sending you a check this year

Capital credits.

If you've read the magazine, you've probably seen the term. We talk about capital credits at least once a year, usually around the time we return hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to our members.

That's all fine and well, you might be saying, but what, exactly, are capital credits?

Good question. Let's get into that and discuss how capital credits are now being returned to members in further detail.

WHAT ARE CAPITAL CREDITS?

Southwestern Electric Cooperative is owned by the people it serves — not investors. When you sign up for service with Southwestern, you become a member-owner.

If the cooperative brings in more money than it needs to cover operating costs and emergency reserves (cooperatives call that money margins), the extra funds are allocated to members in the form of capital credits. They represent your share of the co-op's margins and your ownership in the system you help to build and maintain.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS YEAR?

This year, Southwestern's board of directors approved a general retirement of capital credits. They authorized the return of credits from 1998.

In past years, current members received a bill credit during a general retirement. Recently, though, that process changed.

WHY YOU MAY RECEIVE A CHECK INSTEAD OF A BILL CREDIT

Ahead of last year's general retirement, your board of directors voted to distribute general retirement refunds by check when the amount is $20 or more. This allows members the flexibility to deposit their capital credit check in savings, use it to pay bills, or apply it to the purchase of household items.

1. If your 1998 retirement amount is $20 or more: You'll receive a check in the mail.
2. If your refund is less than $20: You'll see a bill credit on your December statement.
3. Inactive members: No changes. Inactive accounts continue to receive refunds by check, as before.

I'M WORRIED I THREW AWAY MY CHECK FROM LAST YEAR

Have no fear—if you are an active member who was set to receive a 1997 retirement but didn't cash your check, we will be reissuing that amount in addition to any 1998 credits due. Keep an eye on your mailbox to ensure you don't miss a capital credits check.

WHEN WILL YOU MAIL CAPITAL CREDIT CHECKS?

We expect to mail checks in December. They will be mailed separately from your December electric bill.

WHY CAPITAL CREDITS MATTER

Capital credits are a benefit of cooperative membership. Every time you pay your electric bill, you're investing in infrastructure that powers our communities. When the co-op's financial condition allows, we return that investment to you.

That's the Cooperative Difference. It's a system built on trust, accountability and shared ownership.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Moving? Keep in touch!

When you relocate, please update your contact information. By keeping your record current, you're making sure you receive your capital credits.

Southwestern Students:
Scholarship Opportunities Available

High school seniors who are members of the Southwestern Electric Cooperative family may be eligible for one of 20 Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarships offered through the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC).

THOMAS H. MOORE IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Nineteen $3,000 scholarships are available to high school seniors planning to continue their education. Scholarships are divided into three categories:

- 12 scholarships – For children of Illinois electric cooperative members attending a two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.
- 6 scholarships – For children of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees, or directors attending a two-year Illinois community college.
- 1 Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship – For a child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director attending a two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

Students must enroll full-time (at least 12 hours) and meet the eligibility requirements for their scholarship category. Applicants may apply through only one electric cooperative.

LAVERN AND NOLA MCENTIRE MEMORIAL LINEWORKER'S SCHOLARSHIP

One additional scholarship is available for a student pursuing a career as an electric lineworker. The LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship helps students attend the lineworker school conducted by AIEC at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

The application deadline for the Thomas H. Moore IEC Memorial Scholarships is December 31, 2026. Scholarship winners will be announced by the end of April 2027. Apply by April 30, 2027, for the lineworker scholarship.

Students should review the official eligibility requirements and application information before applying.

IEC Scholarship Application Tips

Southwestern Electric Cooperative doesn't administer, award or provide applications for the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship is coordinated by our statewide trade organization, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Springfield, Ill. Students may apply for a scholarship through the AIEC web site at https://aiec.coop.

You won't be able to stop the application process and complete it at a later date. Your application must be completed in one sitting. Plan and prepare before you sit down to fill out your application.

YOU MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED INFORMATION READY:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone Number
- Email
- Name and Contact Information of Parent or Guardian
- Electric Cooperative
- Name of High School Attended
- High School Grade Point Average – 100 point scale (e.g. if your school uses a 4 point scale, multiply your GPA by 25. If your school uses a 5 point scale, multiply your GPA by 20)
- Your parent's or guardian's legal consent to apply
- Brief Biographical Statement – Please include your educational goals, career aspirations, personal character and achievements, including an example of a time you demonstrated leadership. Also, describe a time you contributed to your community and a challenge you have overcome.
- Financial Statement – How will you finance your education? Detail your current financial situation and gaps. Explain your family's financial situation and provide context for your need for assistance.
- Two 500 Word Essays – an essay of 500 words or less in your own words – answer the following questions:
  - Cooperatives in Community Essay: Electric cooperatives care about the communities they serve. Concern for Community is one of the seven cooperative principles. Describe a time when you witnessed your cooperative or the staff making a difference. Be specific when explaining the impact.
  - Character Essay: Describe a time you made a positive difference in someone's life that's not a family member. Be specific by sharing what you did, how you motivated them, and the results of your actions.

POWERING YOUR FUTURE

20 SCHOLARSHIPS
$3,000 EACH



The electric cooperatives of Illinois are proud to offer scholarships to deserving students in our co-op family. Whether you're a high school senior planning to attend college or interested in a career as a lineworker, there's a scholarship opportunity for you.

Applications are now open for the 2027 Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarships. Apply by December 31, 2026, for most scholarships, or by April 30, 2027, for the lineworker scholarship. Scan the QR code or go to https://bit.ly/IECScholarships for more details.

OTHER INFORMATION YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE:

- Work and Volunteer Experience – List positions held, for what time period, and whether volunteer or for pay. Please do not make any reference to name, county, or home location. (Example: "Volunteer at National Honor Society Events, June 2019, Volunteer") – up to 15

- Participation in School and Community Activities – List activities (both school and non-school) in which you have participated, along with years of membership or participation and offices held. Please do not make any reference to name, county, or home location. (Example: "High School Soccer, 2019, 2020, Team Captain") – up to 15

The use of AI or any other writing tools is highly discouraged. You are encouraged to prepare your cooperative principles essays, brief character essay, and biographical/financial statement in advance, using a word processing program such as Microsoft Word, so that you may proofread your work. You may cut and paste your work into the application.

Top applicants may be asked to create/submit a video answering a few interview questions.

IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

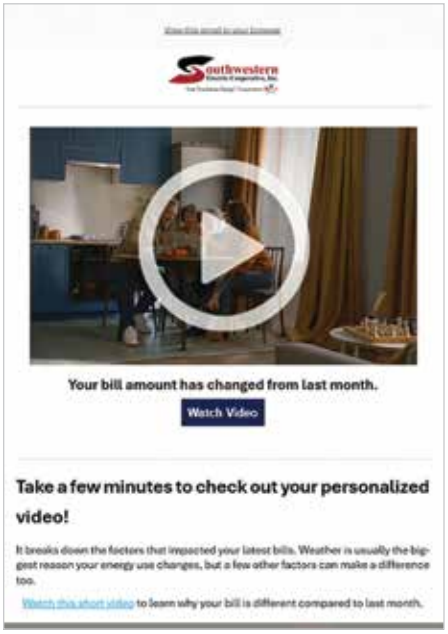
Personalized Energy Videos Are Coming Your Way

At Southwestern Electric, we want to do more than send you a bill — we want to help you understand it

by Brooke Scott, Manager of Member Services

Beginning in November, we'll start sending personalized energy reports by email when there's a significant change in your bill. These short, easy-to-understand videos will use your actual billing information to help explain what may have caused your bill to increase or decrease.

Your energy use can change for many reasons, including weather, the number of days in your billing cycle, changes in how you use electricity and your peak demand. Your personalized video will break down these factors and show you how they may have affected your bill.



And this is just the beginning. Coming soon to your inbox:

- Mid-cycle alerts to help you keep an eye on your energy use before your bill arrives
- Personalized videos explaining significant changes in your bill
- Information about programs and services available to help you save energy and money

Make sure we can reach you.

These reports will be delivered by email, so please call us at 800-637-8667 to make sure we have a current email address.

Want to learn more ways to save? Visit our website for energy-saving tips, tools and resources designed with our members in mind.

You can unsubscribe from these emails at any time by clicking the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the email.



SMARTHUB IS YOUR ONE-STOP ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT PORTAL

Haven't yet signed up for SmartHub, our online account management portal? There's no better time to make managing your account faster, easier, and more convenient.

- **Billing & Payments –** No more waiting for your bill to arrive in the mail. Access your bill anytime, anywhere. Save time with easy payment options to avoid late fees and service interruptions.
- **Alerts & Notifications –** Stay informed on important account events via email or text messages. Receive the information you need to make informed decisions about your account.
- **Paperless Billing –** Save some time and a tree when you activate SmartHub paperless billing, an eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.
- **Usage Monitoring –** Worrying about usage or surprising bill amounts can be stressful. When you know what devices are using the most energy, you can make money-saving decisions about your account.
- **Outage Reporting –** Need to report a power outage? Smarthub is the fastest and easiest way to let us know when your power goes out. When widespread storms knock out power to an entire region, phone lines can become overloaded. With Smarthub, you can avoid busy signals and report outages with a few simple taps on your mobile device.



For more information on SmartHub and how to get it, visit our website at www.sweci.com/smarthub or scan the QR code to the right.

sweci.com/smarthub

Virtual Power Plant, New Energy Contract on Cooperative's Radar Looking Forward

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

The future was front and center at Southwestern Electric Cooperative's 88th Annual Meeting of Members. Progress on the cooperative's new Greenville headquarters, the planned implementation of a Virtual Power Plant (VPP) in 2028 and a new energy contract coming in 2030 were among the big topics discussed at the meeting, held Saturday, Sept. 12, at the American Farm Heritage Museum in Greenville, Ill.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative CEO Bobby Williams struck an optimistic chord when talking about the VPP, which he said the cooperative hopes to be ready to roll out in 2028. With the VPP, the cooperative could leverage its network of decentralized, smaller-scale energy devices in members' homes – things like smart thermostats, solar battery storage and whole home generators – to act like a single, large power plant, benefiting both the cooperative and its members by lowering the demand placed on the grid by the co-op.

"It's the true cooperative model," Williams said. "It's members helping members, helping the cooperative."



Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams addresses the crowd at September's 88th Annual Meeting of Members.

Williams also provided an update on the cooperative's new Greenville headquarters, saying it's his hope to hold next year's 89th Annual Meeting in the 228,600-square-foot former Essendant building located at 2000 Wolf Business Park. The cooperative purchased the building earlier this year and recently selected Korte Construction as the contractor for the planned renovations to the building, which Williams said will likely begin in late fall of 2026.

Board President Jerry Gaffner said the nine-person board considered all possibilities for a new headquarters before concluding that the sprawling former distribution center offered unique storage and operational efficiency capabilities that made it the right fit for the cooperative moving forward.

Continued on page 12 ►











Clockwise, from top left: Cooperative members vote in the board of directors election; a young member enjoys a free orange juice; a member asks a question during the question-and-answer portion of the business meeting as Manager of Member Services Brooke Scott looks on; and Member Services Representative Lauren Schoen, right, shows a member how to view and navigate their energy usage in SmartHub.

"It's the true cooperative model. It's members helping members, helping the cooperative."

—CEO Bobby Williams





At right, Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams, left, stands with newly re-elected board members Marvin Warner, District I; Brad Lurkins, District II; and Annette Hartlieb, District III.

► *Continued from page 10*

"As your board of directors, we are not just looking at today," Gaffner said. "We are looking down the road as well."

That forward thinking also ties into the cooperative's energy contract, which ends in 2030. With an eye on that approaching date, Williams said Southwestern Electric recently entered into an agreement with NextEra Energy Marketing to help navigate the power market in the coming years. NextEra is the largest power supplier to municipal utilities and electric cooperatives in the markets it serves.

"It's been a great partnership, and it will continue to be a great partnership,"



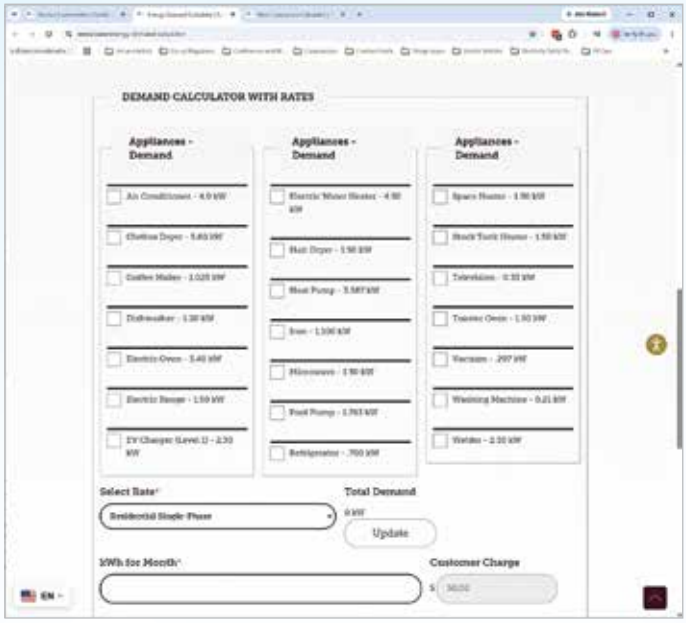


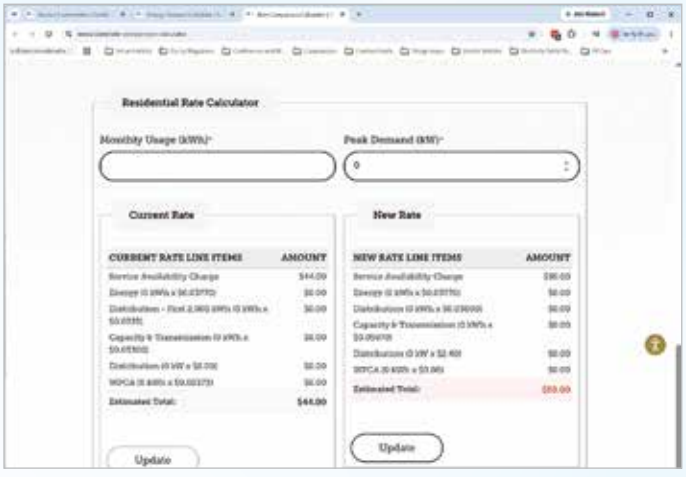


Clockwise, from above: Delighted members watch the Southwestern Electric crew present their live line demonstration; Dispatcher Shelby Nosbisch helps a member vote at a drive-through voting event; and Southwestern employees serve breakfast from Highland's Korte Meats to hungry members before the business meeting.



Above, Accounting Clerk Ashley Towler collects a member's vote at an early voting event at our St. Jacob warehouse.





A demand calculator to help members estimate their peak demand and a residential rate calculator to show members what their bill might look like under the new rate structure are two additions to the cooperative's website mentioned by CEO Bobby Williams during his address.

Williams said. "They have a lot of great resources and a lot of great experience to bring to the table."

Following the addresses from Williams and Gaffner, the results of this year's election were revealed. Southwestern Electric members elected one member from each of the co-op's three voting districts to serve on the board of directors.

From District I, incumbent Marvin Warner of Pocahontas ran unopposed. From District II, incumbent Brad Lurkins of Greenville defeated Clayton "Snipe" Hilderbrand of Sorento, receiving 1,221 votes to Hilderbrand's 612.

Continued on page 26 ►



"As your board of directors, we are not just looking at today. We are looking down the road as well."

—Board President Jerry Gaffner

At right, a graphic showing some of the big issues on the cooperative's radar—including the possibility of large loads coming onto our lines, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) that manages our power grid, and legislation that impacts generation, among others—was displayed during CEO Bobby Williams' speech.





Above, Maintenance Foreman Kyle Hails shows the crowd a photo of a live line incident while talking about electrical safety. At left, Baylee Flowers, the legal and government relations coordinator for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield, Ill., talks with a member about the Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) grassroots initiative.



Early voters line up outside our St. Jacob warehouse to participate in democratic member control of their cooperative.



A Little Extra Warmth

HOW SPACE HEATERS CAN AFFECT YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

by Brooke Scott, Manager of Member Services

When temperatures drop, a portable electric space heater can be a convenient way to warm up a chilly room. But depending on when you use it, that extra warmth may also affect your electric bill.

At Southwestern Electric, we want to help our members understand how everyday energy use affects their bills, especially as residential demand charges become part of the picture.

WHAT DOES A SPACE HEATER HAVE TO DO WITH DEMAND?

A typical 1,500-watt space heater uses 1.5 kilowatts (kW) of electricity while running. Depending on what else is using electricity in your home, a space heater can contribute to a higher peak demand.

Your peak demand is the highest amount of electricity your home uses during a single hour of the billing period. With demand billing, your peak demand is an important part of your electric bill, meaning both how much electricity you use and when you use it can make a difference.

For example, using a space heater while cooking dinner and drying a load of laundry could contribute to a higher peak demand. Even if you only use a space heater occasionally, it can affect your bill if it contributes to your home's highest-demand hour of the month.

SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

You don't have to give up your space heater to be mindful of your energy use. When practical, try to avoid running several large electric appliances at the same time. Being aware of what is running in your home can help you better understand and manage your peak demand.

CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR HOME'S ENERGY USE?

Southwestern Electric offers online resources to help you understand how everyday appliances affect your home's demand. Visit our website, www.sweci.com, to explore demand management tips and try our appliance calculator to see how different appliances can contribute to your peak demand.

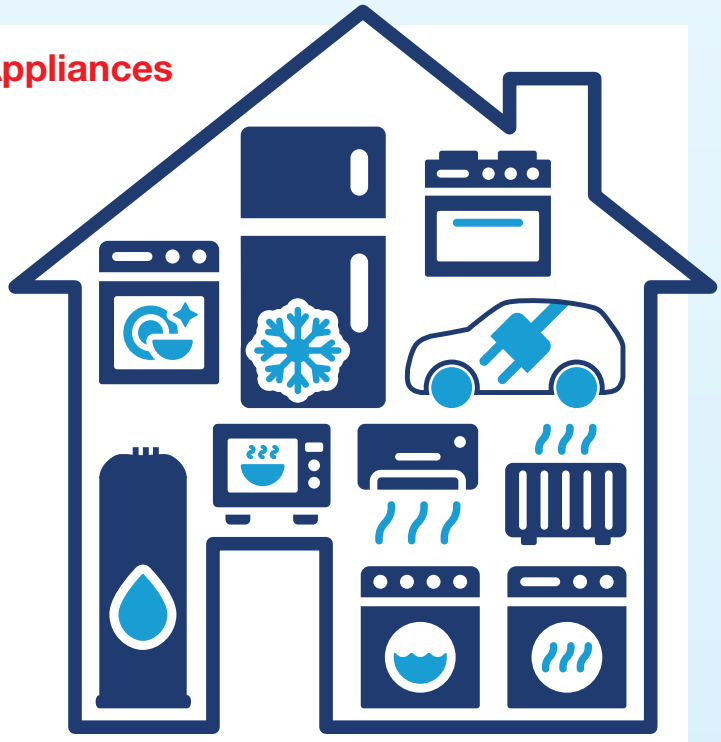
sweci.com/understanding-demand-billing

The Average Demand for Household Appliances

Understanding how much power your appliances use can help you plan, budget and make smarter energy choices.

Common Appliances	Average Demand (kW)
Electric furnace	10 kW
Heat pump	3-6 kW
Central A/C	3-4 kW
Water heater (electric)	4-5 kW
Electric oven	3-4 kW
Electric clothes dryer	2-4 kW
Washer	1 kW
Microwave	1 kW
Refrigerator	0.5-1 kW

Other Appliances	Average Demand (kW)
EV charger	10 kW
Hot tub	4-5 kW
Window A/C unit	1-2 kW
Space heater	1-2 kW
Dehumidifier	1 kW
Pool pump	1-2 kW



LIHEAP Energy Assistance

The State of Illinois offers assistance to low-income families who struggle to pay their energy bills. Applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. The current LIHEAP application period is Oct. 1, 2026 to Aug. 13, 2027, or until funding is exhausted.

The listings below will help you determine if you're eligible for assistance. Payment amounts are determined by income, household size, fuel type, geographic location and available funding.

Use the listing to find the agency that serves the county you live in, then contact the agency and tell them you'd like to apply for assistance through LIHEAP. The customer service representative who takes your application will explain the requirements, the type of assistance available, and your rights under the program. When you apply for assistance, please bring the following items:

- Proof of past 30-day income through paystub, check or copy of check showing fixed income amount (e.g. SSA, VA, DHS benefits), or other proof of documentation for any income source,
- Copy of most recent bill for heating (usually gas, propane or electric) and/or electric bill issued within the last 30 days (if energy directly paid for).
- Social security card or ITIN for residents who have them. Residents without ITIN or SSN can still apply and your Local Administering Agency will advise accordingly.
- A copy of rental agreement (if renting) showing that heating utility(ies) is/are included, the monthly rental amount, and landlord contact information.
- Proof the household received TANF or other benefits, such as Medical Eligibility or SNAP, if receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

If your application is accepted, the agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf, or in some cases, directly to you. Payments will be made by the local agency within 15 days of the application's approval.

Electric co-op members, if approved, will receive assistance in the form of a one-time payment. Members using Pay-As-You-Go (see below) may qualify for LIHEAP funds. Contact your community action agency to find out if you qualify for energy assistance. For more information visit https://dceo.illinois.gov/communityservices/utilitybillassistance.html or call 877-411-WARM.

To apply for assistance through LIHEAP, please contact the community action agency serving your county.

County	Community Action Agency	Phone Number
Bond	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Clinton	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Effingham	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Fayette	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Macoupin	Illinois Valley Economic Development Corp.	217-839-4431
Madison	Madison County Community Development	618-692-8940
Marion	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Montgomery	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Shelby	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
St. Clair	St. Clair Community Action Agency	618-277-6790

Income Eligibility

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income, before taxes are deducted) is at or below the 300% Federal Poverty Guidelines* as shown in the chart below, you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat is included in the rent, you may be eligible for a LIHEAP benefit.

**Program Year 2027 Income Guidelines are based on Federal Poverty Guidelines. Households that are customers of federal funded utilities/energy vendors must be at or below 60% of the State Median Income to receive a LIHEAP benefit. The state reserves the right to adjust these levels based on the availability of federal appropriations.*

Family Size	30-Day Income
1	$3,990
2	$5,410
3	$6,830
4	$8,250
5	$9,670
6	$11,090
7	$12,510
8	$13,930

Pay-As-You-Go

- Take control of your energy usage.
- No credit checks or security deposits.
- No fees for late payment or reconnection of service.
- Say goodbye to paper bills.

For more information on our Pay-As-You-Go program, visit sweci.com or call 800-637-8667 to speak to one of our member services representatives.

CONTACT INFO

Electrical Contacts Are More Than Just 'Numbers in a Spreadsheet'

FEDERATED RURAL ELECTRIC INSURANCE EXCHANGE
2025 PUBLIC CONTACT INFORMATION

Public Contact Causes	Number of Claims	Number of Fatalities
Other	43	7
Independent Contractor Telecummunications	12	1
Truck, Boom, Bed, Crane or Lift	20	6
Property Owner Tree Incident	6	2
Independent Contractor - Line Work	15	1
Roofing, Guttering and Siding	9	2
UG Dig-in	13	0
Vehicle Accident (electrical contact as result of vehicle accident)	5	1
Antenna, Ladder, Pole	9	2
Farm / Irrigation Equipment	12	2
Independent Contractor - Other	5	1
Copper Theft / Vandalism	2	1
Aircraft Wire Strike	3	1
Member Reconnect after Disconnect	1	0
Independent Right of Way Contractor	1	0

FEDERATED RURAL ELECTRIC INSURANCE EXCHANGE

In a given year, there are around 70 to 100 human-shark interactions and approximately 60 to 75 unprovoked shark bites.

In that same span, roughly 270 to 400 people in the United States are struck by lightning.

Of all global baseball players, only about 0.0012% to 0.0018% ever make it to Major League Baseball.

In a world full of statistics, it can be easy to forget the human element. Sure, only a few dozen people have run-ins with sharks, but for those few dozen people the experience was anything but a line item.

The same is true for electrical contacts. Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, the largest insurance carrier for electric cooperatives in the country, tracks public contacts, the contacts that happen outside of occupational incidents for those who work in the industry. In 2025, Federated counted at least 156 public contacts, 27 of those resulting in death.

The contacts came in various ways. A dozen came from farm or irrigation equipment. Another 20 came by way of a truck, boom, bed, crane or lift. Six incidents involved property owners and trees on their property. The list goes on.

And though they could easily be

written off as things that happened to nameless, faceless people in parts unknown, those individuals were family, friends, neighbors—and in some cases, rural electric cooperative members—just like you.

"It's easy to think of line contacts as just numbers in a spreadsheet, but they are very real, dangerous accidents which impact not just your cooperative, but your families, loved ones and the surrounding communities," Southwestern Electric Vice President of Engineering Travis Jones said.

Within the past few months, Jones said, Southwestern Electric itself has seen multiple instances of farm equipment snagging overhead lines and cracking utility poles, cutting power to neighbors and putting operators in serious danger.

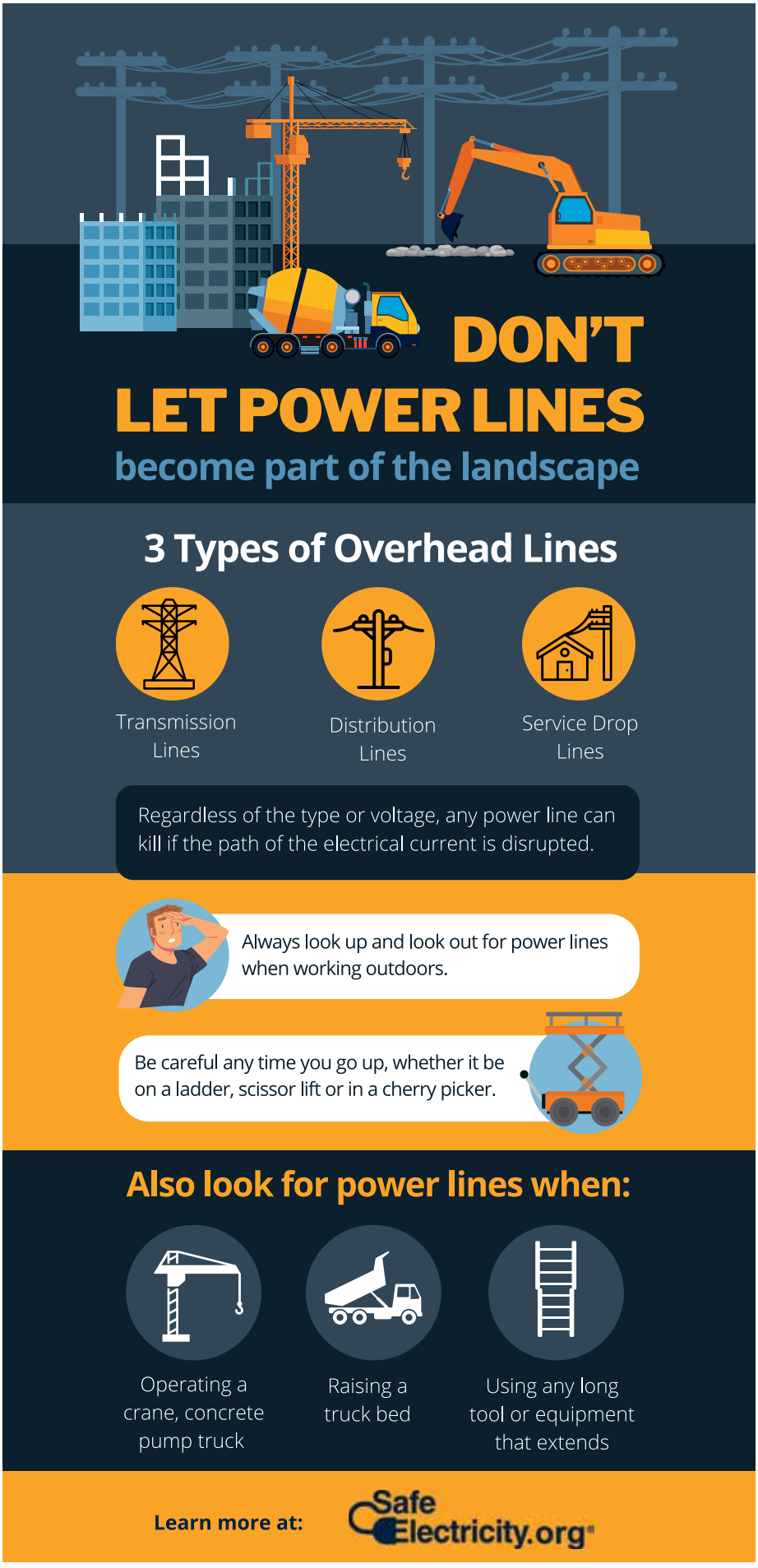
"Your safety matters more than any harvest, so please remember to keep all cultivating and planting implements, combines, grain augers, and extensions at least 10 feet away from power lines," Jones said. "Take a second to map your route, lower tall equipment completely before moving, and always use a spotter when space gets tight."

If your vehicle or machinery does make contact with a line, stay inside the cab and immediately call 911. Stepping out onto the ground can complete an electrical circuit, so please stay put unless a fire forces you to jump clear.

Like lightning strikes and shark attacks, contacts are rare. Just as you wouldn't go for a swim in the ocean with a red meat swimsuit or walk in an open field with a metal rod during a lightning storm, though, practicing safety around electrical lines can help ensure the statistics stay just that—statistics.

"Let's look out for one another," Jones said, "and make sure everyone gets home safely at the end of the day."

Southwestern Electric puts on a free live line demonstration that educates the community on electrical safety. If you are interested in scheduling a live line demonstration for your school, organization or group, please reach out to community@sweci.com for more information.



model citizens

Metro East Model Railroad Club Keeps the Hobby on the Tracks in Glen Carbon

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

Ozone.

I never knew it had a name.

All I knew was that it was one of those distinct smells, the kind of smell that you associate with a very specific place in time. For me, the enduring memory of the model trains running around my family's Christmas tree every December was the smell.

Ozone, according to the internet, is the sharp, clean, sometimes metallic smell created when tiny electrical sparks jump between the motor's carbon brushes and the rotating commutator. It's a fairly common smell for older model trains, making my experience one that's surely shared with many others throughout time.

Shared experience is in many ways at the heart of clubs like the Metro East Model Railroad Club. The club has roughly a dozen members—although they'd be happy to welcome more and have the room to accommodate—who enjoy getting together a few times a month to run trains inside the historic former town hall and firehouse in Glen Carbon.

Shared experience is also, in some ways, foreign to the club and its members. Yes, they all meet regularly for the purpose of running trains, but each person's interest in the hobby varies slightly based on their own unique experience. Some want to watch them run. Others enjoy fixing them. Still others simply get a thrill talking to guests who stop in at an open house or play session, savoring the chance to introduce someone new to the world of model trains.

Metro East Model Railroad Club member Bob Gibson was into model railroading as far back as the 1960s but was pulled away from the hobby by active duty in the military. Later in life, he found the club and reignited that old flame.

For club treasurer Tom Johnson, meanwhile, a childhood interest in real trains sparked his passion for the hobby in middle age. Amid a move from Springfield to the Metro East, a friend suggested they take up an interest that could keep them connected despite the distance. Having grown up in the Quad Cities near the Rock Island Line, model railroading was an obvious choice.

"I've enjoyed watching real trains my whole life," Johnson said. "Models are just a nice add-on to that."

The club, located at 180 Summit Ave. in Glen Carbon, has been in existence



Metro East Model Railroad Club members, from left, Tom Johnson, Ross Abbott, Bob Gibson and Bill Davis stand behind one section of the roughly 1,000-foot track that's built into the club's Glen Carbon home.





The HO, or “Half-O,” scale layout is 18 feet, 6 inches wide by 27 feet, 6 inches long and includes several different levels. A depiction of the Glen Carbon area in the 1940s, a fictitious “Glen Carbon Central Railroad” yard and a steel mill that's a nod to nearby Granite City Steel are just a few of the features of the layout.

since 1994. The HO, or “Half-O,” scale layout is built into the current building, measuring 18 feet and 6 inches wide by 27 feet and 6 inches long. The roughly 1,000 feet of track spans several levels and includes a freight yard, passenger yard, staging yard, a depiction of Glen Carbon in the 1940s, a section dedicated to Granite City Steel and a coal mine, among other features.

The Christmas season is a busy one for the club. On top of its regular meetings and open sessions, the club will host free open houses on four separate upcoming Saturdays: Nov. 21, Dec. 5, Dec. 19 and Jan. 2, 2027. All open houses will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. They also have open houses at other points throughout the year, usually in March, June and September.

This holiday season, get out and discover the excitement of model railroading. See the intricate designs and meticulously crafted miniature houses and buildings. Hear the trains whizzing around the tracks. Perhaps that ozone smell belongs to a bygone era, but that only means you’ve got the chance to develop your own sensory recall—and your own fond memories of the first time you experienced model trains for yourself.

GETTING THERE

Most of our readership will be coming from the east, which means a trip west on Interstate 70 will be the fastest route. Stay on I-70 as it turns into I-270 West. From there, take Exit 12 toward Collinsville. Turn left onto Illinois Route 159, right onto Glen Crossing Road, left onto South Main Street, left onto School Street and right onto Summit Avenue, where the former village hall will be on your right.

For those interested, the club holds regular business meetings in the Glen Carbon Library on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. In addition, work/play sessions are held every non-first Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to stop by at any of these times.

For more information on the Metro East Model Railroad Club, visit their website at http://trainweb.org/memrc/.





WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Judging by the number of responses we got to our October location, plenty of you have been getting your kicks on Route 66.

The answer to the question of "Where are we?" was, as many of you correctly noted, the Soulsby Service Station in Mt. Olive. Located at 701 W. 1st St., the service station was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 for its historical significance as a stop along the famed Mother Road.

For our November mystery man, we thought we might offer some help. If he were here today, he might say:

"November is a significant month in the story of my life, as it is both the month in which I was born and the month in which I was murdered. That's right, murdered—at just 34 years old, an angry mob attacked me for my abolitionist beliefs.

"Sixty years later, in 1897, a monument was erected in my name in the town that I called home. That monument still stands today.

"During my life, I was a Presbyterian minister, journalist and newspaper editor. Famously, I wasn't the only one attacked by pro-slavery zealots—my printing press was also destroyed and thrown in the nearby Mississippi River.

"Can you name me?"

As you collect your thoughts, here are your responses to our October location in question:

This one is in my backyard, Soulsby's gas station. It is located in Mt. Olive, Illinois.

Henry and his son Russell built this in 1926 on two lots located on 1st Street. Henry invested most of his life's savings believing that the new U.S. Highway Route 66 would pass through Mt. Olive. Henry was right.

Henry and his son Russell built the Shell-branded "house and canopy" style station. It was in operation until 1991, and by 1993 Russell closed the station.

In 1997, Mike Dragovich bought Soulsby's gas station, and in 2003 Mike began a full restoration to bring it back to the original appearance.

In 2004, Soulsby's was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, many people stop by to take pictures since it's on Old 66.

—Scott Fischer, Staunton



The station is in Mt. Olive. Soulsby's Station is on Route 66.

My husband and I completed Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, California this year. It's the 100th anniversary of the Mother Road.

We had a wonderful time just going back in time for a little while. We met so many great people and saw some beautiful and unusual sights along the way.

—Bill and Tammy Rench, Greenville

The October 2026 "Where are we?" puzzler can be found in Mount Olive, Illinois. There, in 1926, Henry Soulsby designed and built a gas station on two lots at the corner of First Street, now called Old Route 66.

Soulsby was initially a miner like his Irish immigrant father, until an injury forced him to pursue other endeavors. He became aware that a national highway would soon pass through his town, so he put his life's savings into building his business.

Soulsby Station was operated by Henry until he retired, at which time he handed it down to his children, Russell and Ola. They closed the doors of the station in 1993. In 1996, they sold the station to their neighbor, Mike Dragovich.

Mr. Dragovich and the Soulsby Preservation Society began preservation efforts in 2003. In 2004, the National Park Service provided a grant to help with the restoral. Today, the station looks essentially the same as it did during its post-World War II heyday.

The Soulsby Service Station now operates as a visitor center and museum. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2004.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon

The picture is in Mt. Olive, Soulsby Station. Great place to take pictures, especially with old cars.

—Mike and Cyndy Peters, Staunton

The Who-What-Where picture in the October magazine is the Soulsby Service Station located along historic Route 66 in Mt Olive, Illinois. Like Route 66, the station is also 100 years old.

—Ann Schmidt, Worden

I know this place well because my wife makes me go weekly to the bakery in Mt. Olive and we drive past it.

The location is Soulsby's Shell Service Station, 102 South Route 66, Mt. Olive, Illinois. Opened July 1926 by Henry Soulsby, therefore the station just celebrated its 100-year anniversary.

The site is the oldest, most original station along Route 66 in Illinois that has not been completely rebuilt.

It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

—John Gorenz, Alhambra

Mt. Olive, Illinois on Old Route 66. We just drove by there yesterday on our way home from Litchfield, doing some country sightseeing.

—Carrie Rodgers, Greenville

Who-What-Where is a contest that challenges your knowledge of people, places and objects in and around Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service area. Here's how it works: Each month, we run a photo. Your job is to tell us who's pictured, what we've photographed, or where we shot the photo. You can email your response to thesouthwestern@sweci.com or send it by mail to The Southwestern magazine, c/o Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include your name, mailing address, and hometown. If you have a story about our photo topic, include that as well—we love these! The puzzle solution—possibly accompanied by a few words from you—will appear in a future issue of The Southwestern.


Who
am I?
HENRY M. CARR
1845 – 1884
MARY K. CARR
1864 – 1923
LEWIS M. CARR
1876 – 1956
GRACE W. CARR
1881 – 1957

Festive Holiday Sides



DEVILED EGGS

Ingredients

- 12 eggs hard cooked
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2½ tablespoons vinegar
- paprika

Directions

1. Peel eggs and cut in half lengthwise (save yokes).
2. In blender, place yokes, mustard, mayonnaise, sugar, and vinegar and blend together.
3. Spoon yoke mixture into egg halves, sprinkle lightly with paprika, and chill until served.

VEGETABLE CASSEROLE

Ingredients

- 1 package California blend vegetables
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can fried onions
- 1 cup cheddar cheese shredded
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Directions

1. Mix all ingredients together (save small amount of fried onions and cheese to sprinkle on top at the end of baking).
2. Put mixture in greased baking dish and bake at 350° for 30 minutes.
3. Sprinkle with fried onions and cheese and bake until cheese is melted.

CRANBERRY JELLO SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) can crushed pineapple
- 1 package raspberry Jello
- 1 (16 ounce) can whole cranberry sauce
- 1 teaspoon orange peel grated
- 1 (11 ounce) can mandarin oranges
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream

Directions

1. Drain pineapple but reserve the syrup.
2. Add enough boiling water to syrup to make a cup of liquid.
3. Dissolve Jello in hot liquid.
4. Stir in cranberry sauce and orange peel.
5. Chill until partially set.
6. Fold in mandarin oranges and crushed pineapple.
7. Whip the cream and fold into fruit mixture.
8. Pour into bowl or Jello mold and chill until set.

Deviled Eggs prepared & photographed by Mike Barns, mike.barns@sweci.com

PUMPKIN CRUMBCAKE

Bread Base Ingredients

- 1 package yellow cake mix (save 1 cup of mix for topping)
- 1 egg
- ½ cup melted butter

Directions

1. Blend together and pat into greased 9 x 13 inch baking dish.

Filling Ingredients

- 1 can pumpkin pie filling
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar

Directions

1. Beat ingredients together and pour over bread base.

Topping Ingredients

- 1 cup of the yellow cake mix
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- 3 tablespoons butter

Directions

1. Combine and crumble over filling.
2. Bake at 350° for 50-55 minutes.

SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

Potato Mix Ingredients

- 4 cups cooked and mashed sweet potatoes
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 egg
- 1 cup milk

Directions

1. Mix together and put in greased casserole dish.
2. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes.

Topping Ingredients

- ¾ cup corn flakes crushed
- ½ cup walnuts
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 6 tablespoons butter

Directions

1. Mix together topping ingredients, spread over potato mix, and bake at 400° for 10 minutes.

CURRENT EVENTS

November 2-30 SILAS COGGESHALL ART EXHIBIT, Highland. Come view the painted landscapes artwork of Silas Coggeshall. This small people friendly gallery features an original artist every two months. Work is not only on display, but is also for sale. Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Latzer Memorial Public Library, 1001 9th Street. Email burnskathy11@gmail.com or visit highlandillibrary.org.

November 4, 11, 18 ADULT CLAY HANDBUILDING CLASS, Highland. Join seasoned art teacher, Courtney Sellers, as she leads you through the process of hand building clay using slab construction. You will make 2 - 3 projects that will be fired upon completion of class. For 14 years of age and older. All materials, tools and supplies will be provided. 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Class fee is $95. Class size is limited. Highland Middle School, 2813 IL-160. Email burnskathy11@gmail.com for questions or visit highlandartscouncil.org for easy sign-up.

Call to Confirm
Listings are provided by event organizers or taken from community websites. We recommend calling to confirm dates, times and details before you make plans. All are subject to change.

Submissions
To submit an event for consideration in our calendar, email your event information to mike.barns@sweci.com. Please use our Current Events format (as seen on these pages) to write your submission. Include a contact number or email and submit your listing at least two months prior to your event.

November 8 CITY OF THE SUN 5K TRAIL RUN, Collinsville. Race begins at 9 a.m. Entry fee is $35. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. For details, call (618) 344-7316 or visit cahokiamounds.org.

November 14 5K/1M TURKEY TROT, Maryville. 5K race and 1 mile accuracy walk/race to benefit local CC teams. 8 - 11 a.m. Drost Park, East Division Street. Visit maryville.il.us/98/parks-recreation, email parksandrec@maryville-il.us or message us (618) 223-8965.

November 14 SAUSAGE SUPPER, Grantfork. Dinners include fresh homemade pork sausage, mashed potatoes and milk gravy, sauerkraut, green beans, applesauce, and a piece of pie. Serving from 2 - 7 p.m. Drive thru only. All meals are $15. Packaged fried sausage available for sale. Grantfork United Church of Christ, 206 South Locust Street. Call 618-978-5541.

November 19 A CHRISTMAS MEMORY, Edwardsville. The centerpiece of the evening will be a performance of "A Christmas Memory," a short story by Truman Capote, staged by members of Alumni Players. The program will also include holiday caroling, vintage Christmas stories from the pages of the Edwardsville Intelligencer, a Christmas quilt raffle, fruit cake and more. First Christian Church, 310 South Main Street. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; performance at 7 p.m. members $50; non-members $60. This event is a fund-raiser for Madison County Historial Society. For advance tickets, visit madcohistory.org.

November 20 COMMUNITY TREE LIGHTING, Alton. The evening begins at 6 p.m. with the arrival of Santa Claus, bringing holiday cheer to the square. Enjoy festive caroling, cookies, and hot cocoa as the celebration continues until 6:45 p.m., when Mayor David Goins lights the community tree for all to enjoy. 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Lincoln-Douglas Square, 100 Market Street. Visit downtownalton.com/events/alton-community-tree-lighting/.

November 20 & 21 VICTORIAN HOLIDAY, Lebanon. Kick off the holiday season with shopping, live performances, carolling, photos with Santa, free children's activities, live reindeer, and carriage rides. Friday 4 - 8 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. 221 West St. Louis Street. Visit lebanonvictorianholiday.com.

November 20 - December 31 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, Shelbyville. Take the last entryway into the park to start your journey through the lights. Donations are accepted at the end of the tour. Sunday - Thursday 5 - 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 5 - 10 p.m. Forest Park, 324 East North 9th Street. Visit lakeshelbyville.com.

November 20 - December 31 WINTER WONDERLAND OF LIGHTS, Lebanon. Drive through holiday light display, donations welcome and appreciated at the gate. 5 - 9 p.m. Horner Park, 11113 Widicus Road. Visit lebanonswinterwonderland.org.

November 21, December 5, 19; January 2 TRAIN SHOW, Glen Carbon. The Metro East Model Railroad Club will host 3 Holiday Open Houses at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. each day. Visitors are welcome to view trains running on the Club's 18 x 27 foot HO scale model railroad. Snacks available. Admission is free. Old Village Hall and Firehouse, 180 Summit Street. For more information, please call Bob at 618-476-9228, or Bill at 618-531-1589 or visit www.trainweb.org/memrc/.

November 22 ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW, Effingham. More than 80 crafters and vendors. Gift card giveaways. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 North Keller Drive. Email Brandi at baentertainment21@gmail.com or call 618-322-4774.

November 26 TURKEY TROT AND TURKEY CHASE, Belleville. Annual Thanksgiving 5K run and kids turkey chase. All proceeds go to support Belleville High School Hockey Club. 7 - 10 a.m. Downtown public square at the intersection of Main and Illinois Streets. For more information or to register, visit belleville-thanksgiving5krunturkeychase.itsyourrace.com/.

November 27 LIGHTING OF THE FOUNTAIN, Belleville. Enjoy the lighting of the Veterans Memorial Fountain on the Northeast Quadrant of Belleville's Honorary Veterans Memorial Square. 6 p.m. Visit belleville.net/586/Holiday-Events.

November 27 WINTERFEST Maryville. Warmup by the firepits and enjoy s'mores, music, crafts, games, pictures with Santa, see a live reindeer and special lighting of giant Christmas tree. Food trucks and drinks available. 5 - 9 p.m. Firemen's Park, 300 North Donk Avenue. Visit maryville.il.us/98/parks-recreation or call (618) 223-8965.

November 27-29 HOLIDAY INDIAN MARKET, Collinsville. Over 30 tribal affiliated artists from around the country selling indigenous fine arts and crafts. One of a kind, hand-crafted items, jewelry, mixed media, ceramics, paintings, beadwork and more. Friday noon – 5 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Cahokia

Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. Call (618) 344-9221, email giftshop@cahokiamounds.org or visit cahokiamounds.org.

November 27-29; December 4-6, 11-13, 17-20 FREE HORSE-DRAWN TROLLEY RIDES, Belleville. Hop aboard a horse-drawn trolley that takes you through Belleville's historic and beautifully decorated public square, unique downtown shopping and dining district. Fridays 5 - 8 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays noon - 6 p.m. December 17th 5 - 8 p.m. The trolley starts and stops at the 1st block of East Main Street. Visit belleville.net/586/holiday-events.

November 27 - December 27 CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND, Alton. Drive through to view more than 4 million lights decorating the park. Monday - Friday 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday 5 - 9 p.m. Suggested donation is $10 for cars and small vans or $1 per person for vehicles holding more than 10 people. Rock Spring Park, 2100 College Avenue. Call (800) 258-6645.

November 27 - December 31 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WONDERLAND, Greenville. See our extensive collection of light boxes, Christmas displays and holiday scenes. Hill's Fort 1800s Christmas open Fridays and Saturdays. North Pole Express train rides Friday - Sunday. Cookies and hot chocolate will be served in the Lil Red Barn every night. 5 - 9 p.m. Admission to display is free-will donation. Train rides $5. American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue. Visit americanfarmheritagemuseum.org.

November 27 - January 6 CHRISTMAS IN CARLYLE LIGHTS, Carlyle. Take a drive through City Park to view the lights, animated features, and dancing trees. Tune your radio to 90.1 FM for dancing trees music. 5 - 11 p.m. 1090 Lake Road. Visit carlylelake.com.

November 28 CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT TOURS, Edwardsville. The historic home will be aglow in candlelight and bedecked in early 19th century decorations. The first tour starts at 4 p.m. with the last tour at 7 p.m. Tickets must be purchased online in advance for a specific time. Admission is $15. Check in at the gift shop 10 minutes before your time slot. Tours begin promptly in the courtyard every 20 minutes. Colonel Benjamin Stephenson House, 409 South Buchanan Street. For tickets, visit stephensonhouse.org.

November 28 HERITAGE WINTER MARKET, Glen Carbon. Tour the museum, admire the beautifully decorated Christmas trees and wreaths created by local businesses and organizations, and cast your vote for your favorite. Get up close with live reindeer, watch our tree lighting ceremony at 6 p.m., shop local vendors and support small businesses. 5 - 8 p.m. Glen Carbon Heritage Museum, 124 School Street. Visit glencarbonil.gov.

November 28 & 29 THE GREAT TRAIN SHOW, Collinsville. Explore more than 200 tables of model trains, browse national exhibitors, watch huge operating layouts, and enjoy free workshops and kids' activities—including a riding train. Discounted tickets online; children 11 years of age and younger are free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For tickets or more information, visit trainshow.com.

December 5 GINGERBREAD RUN, Belleville. Join us for the Gingerbread 5k run/walk and the Kids Ginger Loop 1-mile fun run through the festive streets of downtown. The fun run is for kids 3 - 12 years of age. 5k starts at 8:30 a.m.; fun run at 8 a.m. Registration fees vary. Day of race registration opens at 7 a.m. Start and finish at Belleville Parks & Recreation, 510 West Main Street. To register, visit gingerbreadrun.com.

December 5 HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS TOUR, Elsah. Enjoy a walk through the historic Village of Elsah while touring selected homes decorated for the holidays. 1 - 5 p.m. Admission is $20 in advance; $25 day of event (cash only). Tickets will be available at Farley Music Hall starting at 12:30 p.m. Admission is free for children 12 years of age and younger. Ticket includes a self-guided tour and music at the two Elsah churches. Tour starts at Farley Music Hall, 37 Mill Street. Visit historicelsah.org/tour/ or email historicelsah@gmail.com.

December 5 WINTER MARKET FESTIVAL, Edwardsville. Find fun, one-of-a-kind gift items, enjoy festive entertainment, visit with Santa, grab something to eat and drink and stick around for our annual tree lighting ceremony. The market will showcase area artisans, baked goods, crafts, locally grown items, boutique gifts and unique products. Noon - 5:30 p.m. Tree Lighting at 5:30 p.m. City Park, 101 S. Buchanan Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com.

December 6 ALTAMONT GARDEN CLUB CHRISTMAS WALK, Altamont. Tour 5 beautifully decorated local homes. The homes of Ryan and Katy Huntley, Terry and Erica Magelitz, Randy and Rosa Milleville, Charles Siebert and Lisa Miller and Faye Winter will be featured on the tour. Grand finale mini-concert at the Altamont First United Methodist Church starts promptly at 5 p.m. (church doors open at 3 p.m. for restroom access). 12:30 - 5 p.m. Adults $20; age 18 and younger $10. Advance tickets may be purchased from any Garden Club member or at People's State Bank in Altamont. Day-of tickets available for purchase at any home on the tour. No smoking, drinking, photos or eating inside the homes. Proceeds go toward the beautification of Altamont. For more information, call Nita Miller at 618-322-6043.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

The Southwestern (publication #612-500) is published 12 times per year by Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc (SWECI). Publisher & owner: SWECI. General business offices of the owner/publisher are located at 525 US Route 40; Greenville, IL 62246-3358. Editor: Mike Barns. Annual subscription rate: $9.08 (included in Southwestern Electric's service availability cost). Contact person: Mike Barns, (800) 637-8667. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: CoBank; 5500 S. Quebec St.; Greenwood Village, CO 80111.

The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization, and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes, have not changed during the preceding twelve months. Extent and nature of circulation: the 25,000 members of SWECI. Issue date for circulation data below: September 2026.

For paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail), the following information pertains to the single issue published nearest to the filing date. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions on PS Form 3541: 17,839. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,798. Paid distribution outside the mails, including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS: 0 copies. Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 0. Total paid distribution of this kind: 19,637 copies.

For paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail), the following information reflects the average of the issues published during the preceding twelve months. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions on PS Form 3541: 17,959. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,830. Paid distribution outside the mails, including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS: 0 copies. Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 0 copies. Total paid distribution of this kind: 19,789 copies.

For free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside mail), the following information pertains to the single issue published nearest to the filing date. Free or nominal rate outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0. Free or nominal rate in-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0. Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 0. Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail: 0 copies. Total free or nominal rate distribution of this kind: 0 copies.

For free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside mail), the following information reflects the average of the issues published during the preceding twelve months. Free or nominal rate outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0. Free or nominal rate in-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0. Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 0. Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail: 0 copies. Total free or nominal rate distribution of this kind: 0 copies.

The following information pertains to the issue published nearest to the filing date. Total distribution: 19,637 copies. Copies not distributed: 75 Total: 19,712 copies. Percent paid: 100.

The following information reflects the average of the issues published during the preceding twelve months. Total distribution: 19,789 copies. Copies not distributed: 78. Total: 19,867 copies. Percent paid: 100.

The information contained within the Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation will be printed in the Nov. 2026 issue of The Southwestern. This information was certified by the editor, Mike Barns, and filed with the Greenville (IL) Post Office on Oct. 5, 2026.

▶ *Continued from page 13*

From District III, incumbent Annette Hartlieb of Vandalia won re-election over challengers Vance Moore of Brownstown and Cassie Abendroth of Beecher City. Hartlieb received 1,015 votes, Moore received 451 and Abendroth received 339. Each director will serve a three-year term on the board.

Also on this year's ballot was the topic of proposed updates to the cooperative's bylaws. Among the proposed changes were expanding the voting methods for member matters, adding flexibility for meeting formats moving forward and the establishment of a three-year waiting period for former employees of the cooperative before running for a board seat. The changes to the bylaws passed, receiving 1,351 votes in favor as compared to 316 against.



It was all smiles—save for Vice President of Engineering Travis Jones' quizzical glance—as our Southwestern Electric team got to interact with members.







At left and below, the train at the American Farm Heritage Museum provided entertainment for all ages. At right, Energy Manager Julie Lowe, left, talks with a member about the various programs that the cooperative offers.







Hint, hint.

THE FINAL FRAME

