

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2022 • VOLUME 74 • ISSUE 1

Back To You

CO-OP RETURNS \$2.4 MILLION IN
CAPITAL CREDITS TO MEMBERS

Power for Progress

APPLY NOW FOR
A SOUTHWESTERN
SCHOLARSHIP

YOUR NEW BILL

RATE ADJUSTMENT &
FIXED CHARGES UPDATE

FROM THE CEO

WAYS TO SAVE
ENERGY IN 2022

ANNUAL EAGLE
SPOTTING GUIDE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

03 From the CEO

In a world of change, there are still some things we can count on. Bobby Williams reflects on one of them.

04 New Bill Format

Beginning this month, Southwestern Electric will provide you with a new, more informative bill. Here's what you'll see in 2022.

04 Rate Adjustment and Updated Fixed Charges

The co-op implemented a membership-wide rate adjustment and updated fixed charges on Jan 1. Here's what you need to know.

05 EV Survey

Own an EV? If you've taken our survey — thank you! And if you haven't, we'd love to hear from you.

06 Co-op Returns \$2.4 Million in Capital Credits

More than 9,000 co-op members closed out 2021 with a check or bill credit equal to the capital credits they earned in the early

1990s. In total, Southwestern returned \$2.4 million to longtime members during last year's general retirement.

07 In Celebration of Service

Southwestern Electric celebrated 17 employee service anniversaries in 2021, including two retirements and six additions to our co-op family. Please join us in congratulating our employees!

08 Power For Progress

Your co-op has provided more than \$276,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. In 2022, Southwestern will distribute \$11,000 in scholarships. Here's how to apply.

09 Libbra Scholarship Will Support Future Leaders

The family of director Alan Libbra has established the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship in his name. The inaugural scholarship of \$1,000 will be awarded this spring.

10 Members in Focus

You shared foggy morning miles, striking skies, winter's chill, a moment's reflection, and Southwestern standing tall for this edition of our member photo feature.

12 Pay As You Go

Pay for the power you need as you need it — that's the idea behind Southwestern Electric's Pay-As-You-Go program.

13 Energy Assistance

Illinois offers assistance to low income families who struggle to pay their power bills. You'll find income guidelines and application steps outlined here.

14 Energy & Efficiency

Small investments in energy efficiency can offer year-round savings. Julie Lowe, energy manager for Southwestern Electric, offers 12 ways to save on your power bill in 2022.

16 Health & Safety

Generators are a sound, short-term solution to a power outage. But they can also prove deadly. These tips will help you make it through winter safely.

18 Out & About

Pull on your winter gear, head west, and spot an American icon with a little help from our annual eagle watching guide.

20 Who-What-Where?

You identify a famous figure and we challenge you to name a place in our first puzzle of 2022.

22 Co-op Kitchen

We're serving sure-to-please noodle recipes in the Co-op Kitchen.

24 Current Events

See the holiday lights still shining in Carlyle, go for a moonlight hike in Godfrey, learn about all things ham radio in Collinsville, and spot eagles along the Riverbend.

25 End Note

We set out in search of a horse-drawn carriage and end with an ambassador owl.

27 Final Frame

Banker's hours.

On Account: We've hidden a member-account number in this issue (mailing label excluded). If it's yours, contact us within 30 days and we'll take \$25 off your electric bill. Good luck!

FROM THE CEO



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And with the turn of a page, it's 2022. New year, new challenges, new opportunities. While I can't forecast the state of COVID, the economy, or the political landscape of the year to come, I can say for certain it won't resemble the year we leave behind.

Because times change. Always.

Over the last 365 days, we've learned, adapted, grown.

We've changed. You've changed.

We're still changing today.

This time last year, I was setting milestones and framing expectations in terms of pre- and post-COVID conditions. I'd talk about the ebb and flow of projects after things settled down. After we get through this meeting, this project, this pandemic, and life settles into a regular rhythm, we'll turn our attention to this item on the long-term agenda. I'm not thinking that way today. We address the item now, in the conditions that exist, with the understanding that we can shift to meet a moving target.

Because times change. Constantly. Continually. Faster now than the day before.

We see changes in our landscape, in our communities, in the places we go to work and play and pray.

Maybe most significantly, we see changes in the people around us.

Southwestern is home to about 80 employees. We are small in number but mighty in spirit. Last year, we said goodbye to two highly valued, longtime employees who provided decades of exemplary service. We celebrated the careers of colleagues who reached service milestones. And we welcomed new colleagues to the company.

These are the people who keep your lights on. Who answer your questions and help you solve problems when you call. They care about their work, about each other, and about you. Please take a moment to review our Celebration of Service article on page 7. Among the faces you may find friends, family, neighbors. If you do, congratulate them when you see them.

In a world of change, their dedication to you is unchanging.

If you have a question or comment about Southwestern Electric, please email me at bobby.williams@sweci.com, or write to me at Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Bobby Williams, CEO

bobby.williams@sweci.com



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For the latest news and notes, follow us on facebook and twitter. You'll find us at facebook.com/SWECI and twitter.com/sweci.com. Search for Southwestern Electric on YouTube and Instagram.



ON THE COVER

The lighthouse at Carlyle West Access Marina, on Carlyle Lake, awaits nightfall. Through Jan. 9, you can view far more colorful, albeit smaller lights at the city of Carlyle's Christmas in the Park display. For details, see our Current Events on page 24.



ASK THE CEO

Have a question for the CEO? Send it to bobby.williams@sweci.com, or write to Bobby Williams at Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Periodically, we'll print some of your questions with his replies in The Southwestern. Each member who submits a question will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 bill credit. We'll draw a name each time we run an "Ask The CEO" Q&A segment in the magazine.

CO-OP REMINDERS

January 3 Offices closed for New Year's holiday.

January 10 Payment processing systems will be unavailable from midnight to 4 a.m., while we perform system maintenance. No payments will be processed during this time. We will resume processing payments at 4:01 a.m.

Better Bill For You in 2022

Until recently, many of the costs associated with moving energy from a power plant across the grid and to your home were bundled into a single line on your bill.

This month, that changed.

Southwestern Electric is providing you with a more informative bill. The new bill will break out the co-op's cost of service, line by line. At a glance, you'll see how much you pay for energy, distribution, transmission, and other expenses associated with moving electricity from the grid to your home.

In the November issue of The Southwestern, we shared an example of the new bill and defined some of the terms that may be new to you. You can view the November issue by clicking the Southwestern tab under the News

The image shows a sample bill from Southwestern Electric Cooperative. It includes a header with the company logo and contact information. The main body of the bill is divided into several sections: a table of charges (Energy, Distribution, etc.), a bar chart showing electricity usage over the last 12 months, and a table of rates (Residential, Commercial, etc.). At the bottom, there is a section for payment information, including the amount due and the due date.

& Information menu on our website at sweci.com.

If you have a question about the new bill layout, please call us at 800-637-8667. We'll be happy to help you.

Rate Adjustment and Updated Fixed Charges Effective Jan. 1

Southwestern Electric Cooperative implemented a membership-wide rate adjustment and updated fixed charges on Jan. 1, 2022. They will appear on your February 2022 bill.

Ann Schwarm, president of Southwestern Electric Cooperative, told members about the changes during the co-op's annual meeting of members in September. Schwarm said a cost-of-service study completed in 2019 examined the cooperative's rate structure and costs associated with providing energy to the homes, businesses and industries served by Southwestern. "The study made two points clear," Schwarm said. "First, our fixed charges aren't covering our investment in materials, such as poles, transformers and power lines. And second, we can fine tune our rates to more accurately reflect the costs to serve residential, commercial, and industrial members."

Schwarm pointed out that the infrastructure requirements and energy demands of residential, commercial and industrial accounts vary widely from one another. The rate adjustment and updated fixed charges will reflect those differences. She noted that the rate adjustment will be revenue neutral, meaning the cooperative is not increasing or decreasing the revenue it receives from the membership overall.

Most residential members will see a small drop in their bill after the adjustment. "Residential accounts on our standard rate using less than 887 kilowatt-hours each month will pay a little more. Residential members using more than 887 kilowatt-hours each month will pay a little less," Schwarm said. "To give that context, last year, our average residential member used 1,162 kilowatt-hours per month."

Co-op Offers New Rebates for High Efficiency Heat Pumps, Electric Water Heaters, Smart Thermostats

Our rebate program will help you save money on the replacement or new installation of air source heat pumps, geothermal systems, electric water heaters and smart thermostats.

Members are eligible for one rebate per category per year. All rebates will be applied as a bill credit upon receiving the completed rebate application and proof of purchase.

Rebate forms are available on our website at sweci.com. You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to julie.lowe@sweci.com, or mail it to: Julie Lowe, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. You're also welcome to drop off your materials at our Greenville office.



Have questions?
Call Julie Lowe at (800)
637-8667 or email her at
julie.lowe@sweci.com.

How can we improve your EV ownership experience?

Let us know by taking our EV owner survey at sweci.com/EVsurvey.

Your responses will help us build EV incentive rates and shape Southwestern's EV program. The survey takes less than 5 minutes to complete.

Questions? Call or email Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com.

**Take our EV owner survey at
sweci.com/EVsurvey.**



YOUR ACCOUNTABLE ENERGY PARTNER

Co-op Retires \$2.4 Million In Capital Credits

Southwestern Electric closed out 2021 by returning \$2.4 million in capital credits to more than 9,000 longtime cooperative members. During the November board meeting, the co-op's board of directors authorized retirement of capital credits, or patronage capital, for the years 1990-1992, and a percentage of the credits earned by members in 1993.

The capital was returned to active members as a bill credit. Inactive members — members who no longer live on co-op lines — received a check. In total, the retirement returned capital to 9,057 current and former members of Southwestern Electric.

"In the past, we've retired capital credits year by year, on a 30-year rotation," said Ann Schwarm, president of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. "We broke with tradition last year for several reasons," Schwarm said. "First and foremost, our cooperative is in sound financial condition, making it possible to return more than \$2 million in capital credits in a single year."

Schwarm said many members expressed their appreciation for the \$50 bill credit the cooperative offered for early annual meeting registration in 2020 and 2021. "A lot of members have gone out of their way to say the bill credit came at a good time," she said. "On a similar

note, we've always retired capital credits at the end of the year, when a smaller power bill or a little extra money in the budget is particularly welcome. After reviewing the cooperative's financial forecast, we saw an opportunity to help our members and bring balance to the cooperative's capital disbursements at the same time."

Schwarm said the cooperative plans to return \$2.4 million in capital credits each year for the foreseeable future.

"We calculated the co-op's overall capital credit disbursement for the next 30 years, and found the average. That has us returning \$2.4 million in capital credits each year," Schwarm said. "This approach to capital credit retirement will give our members a better idea of the savings they'll see on their final bill each year, and it will simplify budgeting and economic forecasting for the cooperative."

Capital credits are similar to shares of stock. When an individual owns stock in a for-profit company, the stock may pay dividends based on the company's performance. Southwestern Electric members accumulate capital credits based on the revenue they contribute to the co-op and the company's financial condition.

Electric cooperatives rely on member capital to finance day-to-day operations.

Member capital also offsets the need for a cooperative to raise rates or borrow money for infrastructure improvements.

"When someone signs up for service from Southwestern Electric Cooperative, they become part owner of the company," said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams. "Every time they pay their electric bill, they build equity in a company they own. If we collect more revenue than we need to cover expenses, that money is returned to them. That's one of the differences between an investor-owned utility and a cooperative," Williams said. "In a co-op, what you put in comes back to you."

In addition to general retirements, Southwestern returns capital credits to estates following the death of a member. Capital credits remain with a member's account until they're claimed by the member or the member's estate.

Credits go unclaimed when Southwestern Electric can't confirm a current address for a member who has left co-op lines, or when the co-op is unable to contact the executor of a member's estate.

Presently, about \$4.2 million in patronage capital remains unclaimed. To search for unclaimed capital credits in your name, consult the unclaimed credits list at sweci.com. For more information call us at (800) 637-8667.

Moving? Keep in touch!

Each time you relocate, update your contact information. By keeping your record current, you're making sure we can return your capital credits to you.

In Celebration of Service

Cooperation is defined as a group working together to achieve a common goal.

We'd like to begin the year by recognizing 17 Southwestern Electric employees who reached service milestones in 2021. Though their responsibilities vary, they share a single goal: providing you with the best possible service, day in and day out. You see the results of their work each time you turn on the lights, when power is restored after a storm, and when you're greeted with a kind word in our office or on the phone.

Together, the employees on this page represent more than 190 years of service to our members. Please join us in welcoming our new employees, thanking our retirees, and in celebrating the accomplishments of people committed to serving you.

NEW EMPLOYEE



Braden Clark,
*Journeyman
Lineman*



Veronica Forbis,
Manager of Billing



Marissa Horn,
*Human Resources
Administrator*



Laura Huge,
*Accounting
Manager*



Ashley Towler,
Accounting Clerk



Matt Waters,
*Journeyman
Lineman*

5 YEARS OF SERVICE



David Brandt,
*Power Plant
Technician*



Dylan Casey,
*Manager of
Engineering*



Ethan Fulk,
*Journeyman
Lineman*



Clay Snyder, *1st-
Class Mechanic*

15 YEARS OF SERVICE



Becky Spratt,
*Member Services
Representative*



Andrew Jones,
*Vice President of
Business
Development &
Marketing*



Tracy Kuttin-
Ferguson,
Purchasing Agent



Robert Nesbit,
*Maintenance
Foreman*



Neil Sperandio,
*Manager of
Operations*

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

RETIREES



Jody Baumberger-
Gehrig,
Comptroller
43 years of service



Marilyn
VanUytven,
*Payroll & Benefits
Specialist*
31 years of service



Thank you for your service and dedication to the cooperative!

SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2022



Co-op to Distribute \$11,000 in Academic Assistance

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$276,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to distribute \$11,000 in scholarship money, including the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship (see opposite page), to 11 students in spring 2022 for use in the fall 2022 semester.

Scholarship recipients can apply the funding to tuition at any accredited university, college or technical school in the U.S.

Scholarship applications may be downloaded from Southwestern Electric's website at sweci.com. You may also request an application by calling Susan File at (800) 637-8667.

Separate applications will be provided for high school seniors graduating in 2022 and students who graduated from high school in previous years.

The completed application and supplemental materials — including a cover letter, academic transcripts, attendance records and financial information — must be delivered to Southwestern Electric's headquarters (525 U.S. Route 40 in Greenville), in a single envelope, by 4:30 p.m. on **Friday, March 4, 2022**.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The applicant (or the applicant's parent/legal guardian) must be an active member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Southwestern Electric Cooperative directors, employees, and their immediate families are not eligible.
- 2) The applicant must meet all academic requirements for admission to an accredited university, college or technical school, and be admitted to that institution as a full-time student in the fall of 2022.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, March 4, 2022.



POWER FOR Progress

Southwestern
Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Libbra Scholarship Will Support Future Leaders

The family of Southwestern Electric director Alan Libbra has established the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship in his name. The inaugural scholarship of \$1,000 will be awarded in spring 2022. All Power for Progress applicants will be considered as candidates.

“Alan believed in leadership by example. He was a passionate advocate for pursuing the common good,” said Southwestern director Jared Stine, chair of the Scholarship Committee. “Students who aspire to provide community service through leadership will be particularly strong candidates for the scholarship Alan’s family established in his name.”

A lifelong member of Southwestern Electric, Alan Libbra served as president for 30 of his 36 years on the cooperative’s board of directors. He worked throughout his life to serve the interests of farmers, rural communities and Southwestern Electric Cooperative members. His family, friends and colleagues have come together to honor his memory by creating the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship fund.

All Power for Progress eligibility requirements and criteria apply to the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship. For more information, contact Susan File at 800-637-8667 or susan.file@sweci.com.

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric has provided more than \$276,000 in scholarship funding, assisting 416 students.

For more information on the Power for Progress Scholarship Program, please contact Susan File at susan.file@sweci.com or 800-637-8667.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JUDGES

- 1) Follow the instructions carefully.
This includes selecting the appropriate application for your situation, gathering and properly assembling all of the required materials, minding the word count in the personal narrative and submitting everything in advance of the deadline.
- 2) Leave nothing blank. If any piece of required material is missing, or a single section is not completed, the application will receive a score of zero points. If a particular question is not applicable to your situation, you can mark it “N/A,” but do not skip the question entirely.
- 3) Focus the personal narrative. The topic of the personal narrative is not open-ended. Keep your narrative focused on answering the question at hand: How will you use your career/education to positively impact your community?
- 4) Leverage the cover letter. Let the judges know about your achievements, aspirations and what sets you apart from other candidates. If there’s something you want to say about yourself, and it doesn’t fit in the personal narrative, include it in the cover letter.
- 5) Allow ample time. Don’t wait until the last minute to start on your application. Each applicant will be asked to obtain several supplemental documents — including academic transcripts and attendance records — which take time to collect.



MEMBERS IN FOCUS

Photos allow us to capture and recall a moment. In pictures, we relive a laugh, a smile, a winter snow or summer sun.

Members In Focus is your invitation to share those saved moments with members of Southwestern Electric.

In these pages, you can open our eyes to the people and places that mean the most to you. This is your opportunity to introduce Southwestern readers to everything that makes your corner of the world an exceptional place to live, work and play.

Send us your shots of life in Southwestern Illinois. We'll publish some of our favorite photos from time to time in our Members In Focus section. Your subject needn't be on Southwestern's lines. If you've taken a great photo, and you shot it on the Highland town square instead of the Brownstown back forty, send it. We'd love to see it.

Submission Guidelines

Please include your name, address, phone number or e-mail address, and a brief description of the photo. We'd like to know when and where it was taken, what we're seeing, and the names of any people in your shot. Digital images must be taken in high-resolution JPG or TIF format (300 DPI or greater) — and make sure the date/time stamp is turned off before you shoot.

Digital images may be sent as e-mail attachments or on a CD. Prints are also welcome. Send photos by e-mail to joe.richardson@sweci.com or by mail to The Southwestern, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

If you're sending prints, please make sure they're copies you don't mind parting with, as we won't be returning them.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative interprets all submissions as unconditional permission to use the photos provided. We also reserve the right to not use photos.

Finally, if you're submitting a shot, it needs to be *your* photo — shot by you. Questions? Contact Joe Richardson at joe.richardson@sweci.com or Mike Barns at mike.barns@sweci.com, or call 800-637-8667.



Bill Malec made this eerie morning fog photo during an early a.m. run on Witte Road in O'Fallon.



Vicki Zanetti sent this sweeping December snowscape. She shot the photo at her home in Alhambra.

Tona Walker of Troy shot this photo of a new Southwestern Electric transmission pole near Interstate 70. She aptly entitled the photo *Rural Progress*. "I absolutely love the American flags on these poles and at the new substation," Tona said.



Gary Morrison of Edwardsville made this winter weather photo of snow drifting on Holiday Lake in February of 2021.



Debbie Carter of O'Fallon shared this photo of her granddaughter, Sydney, relaxing while watching the water ripple on Rend Lake. She made the photograph in August 2021.



Ramsey resident Marilyn VanUytven shot this striking photo of a February sky on her way to work. "I thought it was interesting, the way it came out with the power lines showing up," she noted. Marilyn, who served as payroll & benefits specialist for Southwestern Electric, retired in December 2021 after 31 years of service. Congratulations, Marilyn!

Purchase Power Day By Day With **Pay-As-You-Go** Option

Pay for the power you need as you need it — that's the idea behind Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Pay-As-You-Go program. "Most members are billed for power a month at a time. The power they've used during the last month is what they pay for," explained Susan File, vice president of member services for Southwestern Electric Cooperative. "With our Pay-As-You-Go program, you only pay for the power you need at the time, and you can add more money to the account whenever you want to."

File said the Pay-As-You-Go Program is perfect for families who want to control precisely how much of their budget they put toward electricity.

"Our main goal is to help our members use less power, and forego paying a deposit and reconnection fees," she pointed out. "Studies have shown that households typically experience a 12 percent drop in energy use after switching to this type of program."

Pay-As-You-Go allows the account-holder to purchase electricity at his or her convenience. Payments appear as credits on the member's account. The balance, which reflects energy used and payments made over the past 24-hours, is updated daily. There's no penalty for allowing funds to run out, but electric service becomes subject to disconnection when the account balance reaches \$0.00.

The cooperative doesn't mail a monthly bill to Pay-As-You-Go accounts. Rather, participating members monitor their account balance via the cooperative's online billing system, SWEC IL app or in-home display. In

addition to checking their account balance and payment history, the member will have access to an assortment of tools for tracking their energy consumption, including a breakdown of their kilowatt-hour usage and money spent on power each day.

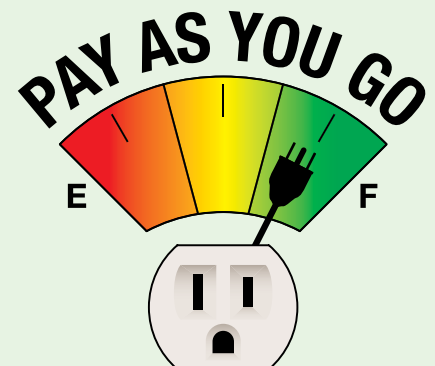
Southwestern also offers an in-home display unit (at no charge), particularly for members who don't have Internet access. The online billing system, app and in-home display allow the accountholder to view their present account balance and average daily usage.

"The member has to keep an eye on their remaining balance with this type of program, but we also have a couple of systems in place to let them know their account's status," said File. "The in-home display sounds an alarm when the account reaches a minimum dollar amount. We can also send the member a reminder message by telephone, text and e-mail if we have a valid phone number or e-mail address on file for their account."

Payments on a Pay-As-You-Go account can be made at the cooperative's Greenville office during regular business hours, at the Vandalia Farm Bureau, or deposited in the dropbox at Southwestern's St. Elmo and St. Jacob offices. Payments are also accepted 24/7 by phone, SWEC IL app and online at sweci.com. Most payments will post to the member's account within an hour. However, members should allow three day's processing time when payments are made at the St. Elmo or St. Jacob offices or Vandalia Farm Bureau.



- 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.

Energy Bill Payment Assistance Available

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) 664-3309
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(618) 662-4024
Clinton	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	(618) 526-7123
Effingham	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 347-7514
Fayette	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(618) 283-2631
Macoupin	Illinois Valley Economic Development Corp.	(217) 839-4431
Madison	Madison County Community Development	(618) 296-6485
Marion	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	(618) 532-7388
Montgomery	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 532-5971
Shelby	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 774-4541
St. Clair	St. Clair Community Action Agency	(618) 277-6790

Income Guidelines

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income for all household members, before taxes are deducted) is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level as shown in the chart below, you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat and/or electric is included in the rent, your rent must be greater than 30% of your income in order to be eligible to receive assistance.

Family Size	30-Day Income
1.....	\$2,147
2.....	\$2,903
3.....	\$3,660
4.....	\$4,417
5.....	\$5,173
6.....	\$5,930

*For households larger than 6 members, please contact your county agency.



For more information on this program, visit IllinoisLIHEAP.com or call the toll-free hotline, (877) 411-WARM.

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.

Please review the income guidelines listed at left to see if you qualify. The amount of the payment is determined by income, household size, fuel type, geographic location, and the amount of funding available.

Use the listing at left 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 gross income from all household members for the 30-day period prior to application date.
- A copy of your heating and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy paid for directly).
- A copy of your rental agreement (if your heating costs are included in the rent) showing the monthly rental amount, landlord's contact information, and proof that utilities are included in the rent.
- Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.
- Proof that the household receives TANF or other benefits—such as Medical Eligibility or SNAP—if you are receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

The agency will determine your eligibility based on information you provide and will notify you within 30 days of receiving a completed application.

If your application is accepted, the local agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf, or in some cases, directly to you. All client and vendor payments will be made by the local agency within 15 days of the application's approval. Electric cooperative members, if approved, will receive assistance in the form of a one-time payment.

Members using Pay-As-You-Go may also qualify for LIHEAP funds. Contact your local community action agency to find out if you qualify for energy assistance.

Energy Saving Resolutions

Small Investments Add Up To Year-Round Savings

by Energy Manager Julie Lowe

When you're pressed for time and living on a tight budget, making home improvements may not seem worth the effort. But small investments made with energy efficiency in mind can keep cash in your pocket year-round. And you don't have to spend the time or money all at once. Commit to making a single energy-efficiency investment each month, and watch your savings grow. Here are 12 projects to take you through the year.

JANUARY

Lowering your thermostat just a few degrees during winter can save as much as \$85 per year on your energy bill. Programmable and smart thermostats make it easy to save by offering pre-programmed settings to regulate your home's temperature throughout the year, or allowing you to control settings remotely. Southwestern Electric is now offering a \$50 rebate on the purchase of a smart thermostat. See www.sweci.com for details!



FEBRUARY

Sunlight can help your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system do its work in winter. During cold months, open your curtains and blinds during the day to harness the sun, so it can help you heat your home. (In summer, use light-colored window treatments to shut out the sun, keeping your home cooler.)



MARCH

Make sure your refrigerator is on your spring cleaning to-do list. Throw out expired items, clean the refrigerator inside and out and check the temperature gauge. For maximum operating efficiency, your refrigerator's temperature should be set between 37 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



APRIL

A little caulk goes a long way toward energy savings. Caulking cracks and openings to the outside can save you more than \$200 a year.



MAY

If you're buying a dehumidifier to keep your home comfortable, look for the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR certified dehumidifiers have more efficient refrigeration coils, compressors, and fans than conventional models, which means they remove the same amount of moisture, but use nearly 30 percent less energy. Look for a model that has the feature to shut off when the environment reaches the chosen humidity level, or has a timer you can set to control how frequently the unit runs. The annual energy saved by an ENERGY STAR certified dehumidifier could run your ENERGY STAR certified refrigerator for four months.



JUNE

Hire a contractor to check your heating and cooling system.

Commit to an annual HVAC system check-up from a qualified technician. A good contractor will make sure your home's heating and cooling system is operating safely and efficiently. The up-front expense can save you money over time, and it's an investment in the health of your home and family.

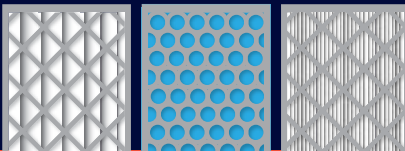
JULY

Leaving home for summer vacation? Unplug electronic devices like computers (including peripheral devices like the monitor and printer), TV and cable boxes, game consoles and microwave ovens. Electronics with digital displays and standby power features consume energy even when they're not in the "on" mode.



AUGUST

Change your home's air filters regularly—at least every three months. Dirty filters restrict air flow and reduce the efficiency of your heating and cooling system, forcing it to work harder year-round. This wastes energy and can reduce the life of expensive HVAC equipment.



SEPTEMBER

Seal leaking ducts in your basement. You'll help your HVAC system direct conditioned air where you need it, and keep more of your money where you want it—in your wallet.



OCTOBER

Get ready for winter by insulating your attic. Adding nine or more inches of insulation could save you more than \$150 a year.



NOVEMBER

While you're decorating for the holidays, swap out your home's traditional light bulbs for energy-efficient LEDs.



DECEMBER

Put a new ENERGY STAR appliance at the top of your Christmas wish list. Upgrading appliances like washing machines to ENERGY STAR-rated models can save up to \$140 per year.



For more energy efficiency tips, call Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667.

Generator Safety

Southwestern Electric Cooperative is urging members who use generators to exercise caution. “When used correctly, generators are a sound, short-term solution to a power outage. But if the proper precautions aren’t taken, generators can be deadly to the people using them and to linemen working to restore power,” said Joe Richardson, editor of The Southwestern.

“Read your owner’s manual and follow the manufacturer’s instructions,” Richardson said. “It should cover general safety guidelines as well as procedures that apply specifically to your model.”

Richardson cautioned members against connecting a generator directly to their home’s wiring. “That can backfeed power into our distribution lines. Our transformers will step-up that energy, increasing it by thousands of volts. And that’s more than enough to injure or kill a lineman who’s working on that



system, even if he’s a long way from your home.”

Never plug a generator into a household outlet, said Richardson. “That can also backfeed power into the distribution system, energize power lines and injure family members, neighbors or linemen.”

Generators also produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and deadly gas. Never use your generator indoors or in an attached garage, Richardson said. “Run it outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area, far away from air intakes to your home.”

Homeowners should plug individual appliances into portable generators using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords with a wire gauge suitable for the appliance load.

“All the standard cord precautions apply. Don’t use extension cords with exposed wires or worn insulation. Make sure the cords don’t present a tripping hazard, and don’t run them under

rugs where heat could build up and start a fire. Be selective with what you plug into your generator,” said Richardson. Overloaded cords can cause fires and damage appliances.

“You also need to make sure your generator is properly grounded,” he said. “Generators get very hot while they’re running. They can deliver a nasty burn. Remind kids to stay clear of them.”

TRANSFER SWITCHES

The only safe way to connect a generator to your home’s existing wiring is to hire a licensed electrical contractor to install

TRANSFER SWITCH AND GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

- Transfer switches make life easier during a power outage while keeping linemen safe as they restore power. Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute linemen.
- Your transfer switch should be wired to meet standards outlined in the National Electric Code (NEC) and all local codes.
- Talk to your electrician to make sure you have the proper sized wire to accommodate your generator and the needs of your home.
- Never use a generator indoors.
- Inspect wire from your generator to the power inlet for tears in the insulation.
- Make sure the voltage your generator produces won’t damage your electronics.
- Never plug a portable generator into an outlet in your home. It can backfeed energy into power lines and compromise the safety of your family, neighbors, and service crews.

a double-throw transfer switch. The switch isolates your household, forming a break between the power coming from your generator and Southwestern's distribution system.

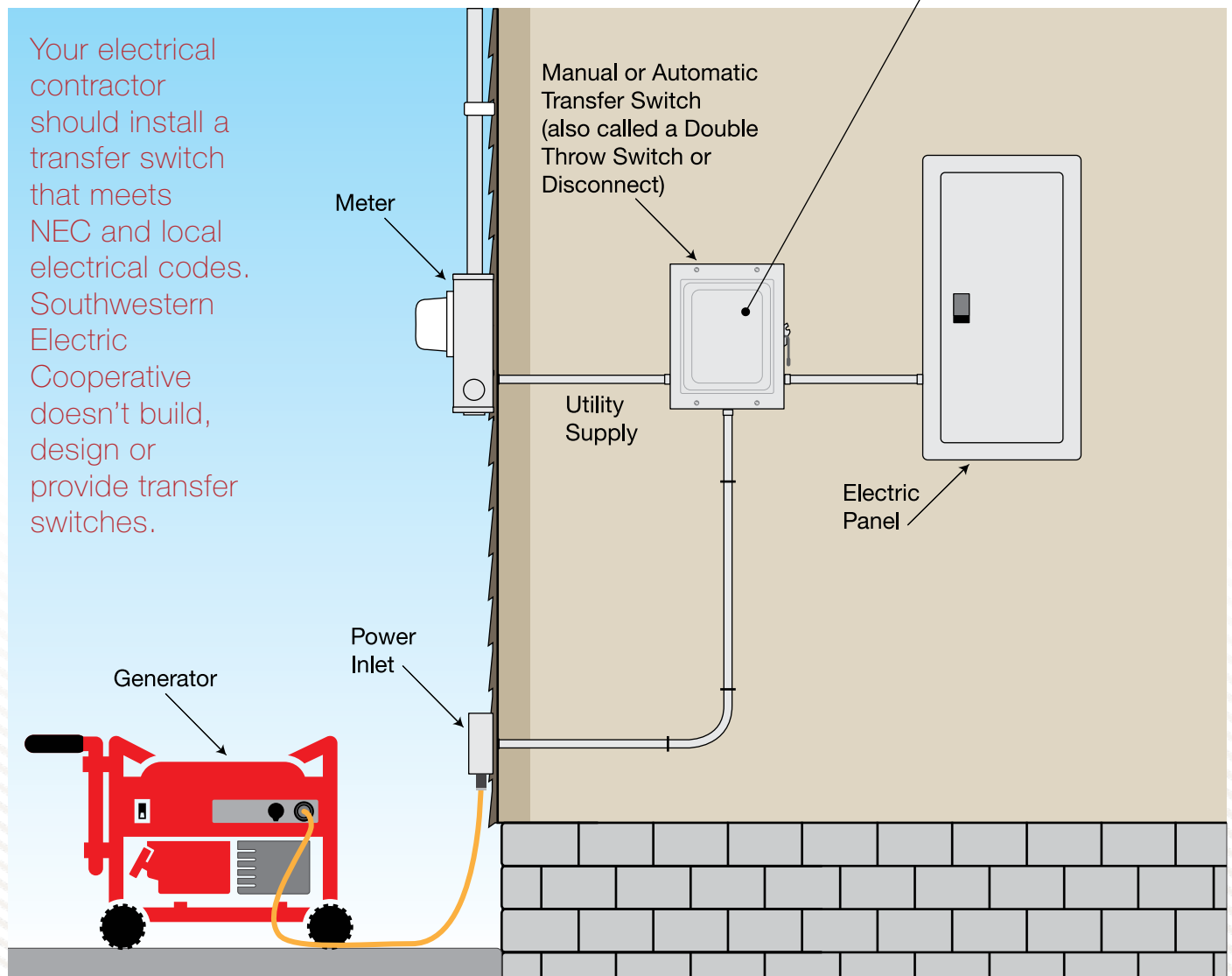
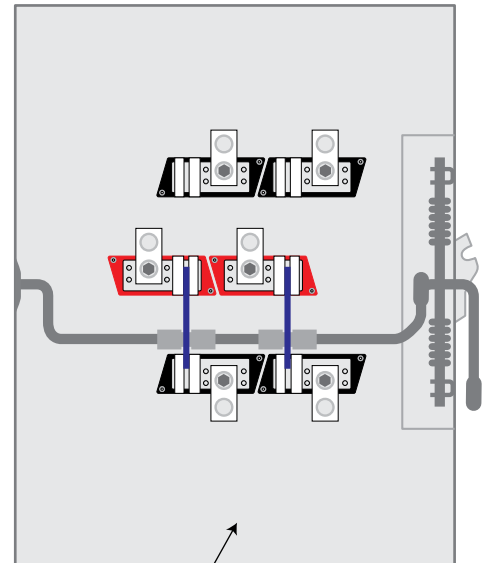
"Transfer switches make life easier during a power outage while keeping our linemen safe as they restore service," said Dylan Casey, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's manager of engineering. "Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute line workers."

Casey said transfer switches may be manual or automatic. "With a manual transfer switch, during a power outage, you have to manually switch power from the utility to your backup source." By contrast, automatic transfer switches detect an outage and activate without assistance from the homeowner.

"Inspect the wire going from the generator to the power inlet box for tears in the insulation," Casey said. "And be aware of the voltage you're generating to ensure you don't damage your electronics."

Your transfer switch should be wired to meet standards outlined in the National Electric Code (NEC) and all local codes, Casey added. "Talk to your electrician to make sure you have the proper sized wire to accommodate your generator and the needs of your home."

These guidelines are in place to protect the safety of our linemen and our members, said Casey. "We rely on our members' participation to help us take care of everyone involved."



Your electrical contractor should install a transfer switch that meets NEC and local electrical codes. Southwestern Electric Cooperative doesn't build, design or provide transfer switches.

A GUIDE TO BALD EAGLE WATCHING IN SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS

As with the UNESCO World Heritage Site in our backyard, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, or the world-class Saint Louis Zoo just across the Mississippi River, some things we tend to take for granted.

One of those is the influx of eagles to our region every winter. Beginning in early January, one is hard-pressed to drive the stretch of the Great River Road between Alton and Grafton and somehow not see a bald eagle perched on a barren tree branch along the bluffs. So prevalent are they that it's hard to remember that less than two decades ago they were on the federal government's list of endangered species.

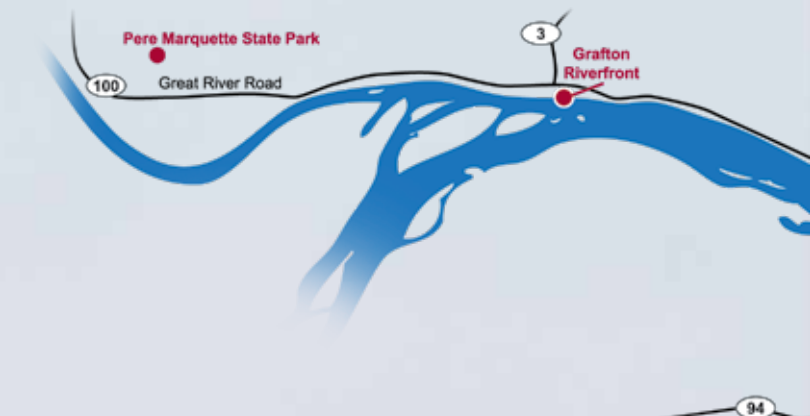
Despite no longer being considered endangered, the majestic birds should still be appreciated for the few weeks they stay over before moving along on their journey. From festivals to tours to bridge lookouts, if you're in the mood for some eagle entertainment this month, we've got you covered.

Alton Visitors Center: Eagle meet-and-greet sessions and guided eagle-watching tours are just some of the eagle-centric events happening at the Alton Visitors Center this month. The biggest is Eagle Fest on Jan. 8, which features professional ice carvers, axe throwing, a live eagle, food and drinks. The Alton Visitors Center is located at 200 Piasa St. in downtown Alton, Ill. For more information, call (800) 258-6645 or go to visitalton.com.

Grafton Riverfront: Like Alton, guided eagle tours and meet-and-greet events are scheduled to take place in the river town northwest of Alton. Its situation along the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers makes it perfect for eagle spotting along the riverfront. Visit enjoygraffton.com or call (800) 258-6645 for more information.

Melvin Price Locks & Dam: One of the key spots along the Alton area eagle-watching tour is the Melvin Price Locks & Dam. The locks and dam provide the dual service of making safe travel possible for commercial river traffic while also serving as a popular spot to view bald eagles south of Alton's Clark Bridge. For information regarding hours of operation and tours of the locks and dam, call the National Great Rivers Museum at (618) 462-6979.

Old Chain of Rocks Bridge: What's better than viewing eagles' nests from the riverfront? Viewing eagles' nests from the river! The Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, the eastern end of which is on Chouteau Island near Granite City, was once a motor route connecting Madison County with St. Louis but now serves as



a pedestrian bridge. In the winter, it also provides a direct view to the riverbanks where eagles like to nest. Bring your binoculars or telescopes for up-close looks at the distinguished birds.

Pere Marquette State Park: The largest state park in Illinois, Pere Marquette has eagle-watching tour dates throughout the months of January and February for visitors to enjoy. A site interpreter presents informative programs about bald eagles, followed by a short video presentation and an observational drive to view the wintering birds. Interested guests are encouraged to dress warmly, have a full tank of gas, bring binoculars, wear waterproof boots and bring snacks and drinks. For more information or to make a reservation, call (618) 786-3323 ext. 1.

Pere Marquette Lodge: On the grounds of the state park, Pere Marquette Lodge plays host to the annual Bald Eagle Festival every January. This year's event is on Jan. 30 and includes unique vendor booths, live music and entertainment by the World Bird Sanctuary with their Masters of the Sky shows. Festival entry is free; however, tickets to the Masters of the Sky show are \$10 per person. For more information, call (618) 786-2331.

Audubon Center at Riverlands: The Audubon Center at Riverlands is located in the 3,700-acre Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary on the banks of the Mississippi River. Bald eagles can be seen feeding and perching in the trees throughout the sanctuary. An observation deck and several long-range binoculars can be found near the visitors' center. The Audubon Center at Riverlands is at 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, Mo. Visit riverlands.audubon.org or call (636) 899-0090.



On Account: If your account number is 67835001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.



See our Current Events on pages 24 and 26 for area eagle happenings.



WHO • WHAT • WHERE

You are *here* — at the cusp of 2022, that is. A year in which we'll present you with perplexing places, challenge you to identify famous faces, and...some catchy, rhymy, turn of phrase that means we'll share pictures of unusual items that are difficult to classify. You'll have to use your imagination, here. We're scant weeks from Christmas, it's late of an evening, deep in the week, and I used all my good material editing the End Note (see page 25).

But before I sign off for a cup of hot tea and a cold moonlight run, I will say we're starting the year off right.

In November, we shared a photo of a historical figure (see below) and this clue: Sculpted by Gutzon Borglum, this statue stood in Washington, D.C., before finding a new home in one of the counties Southwestern serves. If Borglum's name sounds familiar, you may have noted it while you were admiring another sculpture he designed: Mt. Rushmore.



You took that clue and ran with it! Now let's see if you can be as industrious in sussing out the solution to this month's challenge. Take a good look at our photo. Know where we are? Have any stories related to the history of this place? We look forward to hearing from you! Meanwhile, here's what you had to say about our November puzzle.

I received the November issue of the magazine today and recognized William Jennings Bryan, three-time Democratic nominee for President of the United States as this month's quiz.

Aside from being nominated for president, he's also known for his famous "Cross of Gold Speech" at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago (where he secured his first presidential nomination) and as the lead prosecutor in the 1925 "Scopes Monkey Trial" in Dayton, Tennessee.

He was also US Secretary of State under Wilson, but resigned in 1915 over a disagreement with how Wilson handled the sinking of the Lusitania.

Born in Salem (Marion County), that's where the statue is, in Bryan Memorial Park in that city.

You may be aware of the history of the statue, but I think the story of how it came to be in Salem is an unusual one. In 1961, the statue was in the way of some road construction in D.C., so it was moved to a vacant lot. Apparently, learning it had been essentially cast aside, several people from Salem went out, loaded it up, and brought it back.

Here's the full story on the City of Salem's website: <https://www.salemil.us/history-salem/pages/william-jennings-bryan>.

[salemil.us/history-salem/pages/william-jennings-bryan](https://www.salemil.us/history-salem/pages/william-jennings-bryan).

I always look forward to the magazine. And I rarely get the Who/What/Where correct. In fact, I think the last time I did get it correct....it was also the Wm. Jennings Bryan statue and had to be at least 15-20 years ago.

—*Scott Beal, Mason*

The sculpture is of William Jennings Bryan and is located in Salem, Bryan's hometown, in the Bryan Memorial Park triangle. Bryan unsuccessfully ran for president three times. He was also famous for being the prosecutor in the Scopes Monkey Trial, which tried a young teacher for teaching evolution. The statue, originally placed in Washington, D.C., was torn down to make way for a bridge. After being abandoned for several years, Salem was able to secure the sculpture and eventually gain full title to it. Salem is fortunate to have a sculpture by such a renowned artist.

Thanks for running these puzzles. My favorite feature of SWEC's magazine.

—*Jane Dapkus, Pocahontas*

In regards to the question, "Who am I," posed on page 21 of the November issue of The Southwestern, I submit "William Jennings Bryan, former United States Secretary of State.

Since 1961, the new home for the statue has been Salem, Illinois, Bryan's birthplace. It was moved to its present location across from the Bryan Memorial Park on North Broadway.

Thanks for another enjoyable challenge.

—*Tim Bennett, Holiday Shores*

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 joe.richardson@sweci.com or send it by mail to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. 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.

WHERE ARE WE?



You can find the answer to the November 2021 “Who, What, Where” in Salem, Illinois. The 8-foot-tall statue of William Jennings Bryan is located across from Bryan Memorial Park on North Broadway in the Bryan Memorial Park triangle at Boone Street. Another historic site, Bryan’s birthplace and boyhood home, is located close by at 408 S. Broadway.

The well-traveled statue was created by Gutzon Borglum, famed sculptor of Mt. Rushmore, dedicated in 1934 and given to the U.S. Congress. Originally installed in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., the statue was later

removed for highway construction and put in storage. In 1960, the statue was given to Salem and installed at its present location in 1961.

Bryan was born in Salem in 1860 and later served as the 41st U.S. Secretary of State in President Woodrow Wilson’s administration. He died in 1925 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His epitaph reads, “Statesman, yet Friend to Truth! Of Soul Sincere, in Action Faithful, and in Honor Clear,” and on the other side, “He Kept the Faith.”

—Bill Malec, *O’Fallon*

The statue depicted in the November 2021 issue of *The Southwestern* is William Jennings Bryan. It was displayed in Washington, D.C., from 1934 through 1960 and was then moved to Salem, Illinois, corner of North Broadway and Boone Street in 1961. The inscription on the base reads: WILLIAM JENNINGS/BRYAN/1860 - 1925/ YOU SHALL NOT PRESS/DOWN UPON THE BROW/OF LABOR THIS CROWN/OF THORNS. YOU SHALL/ NOT CRUCIFY MANKIND/UPON A CROSS OF GOLD.

—Darwin Evelsizer, *Maryville*

CO-OP KITCHEN

New Year Noodles



CHICKEN TETRAZZINI

Ingredients

- ½ pound spaghetti
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup green pepper chopped
- 1¼ cups onion chopped
- 3½ cups chicken cooked & diced
- 4 cups Monterey Jack cheese shredded
- 2 cans cream of mushroom soup (one can may be cream of chicken or celery for variety)
- 1 soup can of milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅓ teaspoon pepper
- 1 small can mushrooms (optional)

Directions

1. Prepare spaghetti according to package directions.
2. Sauté onion and green pepper in butter.
3. Thoroughly mix together all ingredients in large bowl.
4. Place mixture in 9 x 13 inch baking dish and bake at 350° for 30-40 minutes.

May divide mixture into two 8 x 8 inch baking dishes and freeze one for later.

ROQUEFORT NOODLES

Ingredients

- 1 (12 ounce) package egg noodles or fettuccine
- 1 tablespoon poultry seasoning
- ½ teaspoon olive oil
- ½ cup butter
- 10 green onions chopped
- 1 cup Roquefort or crumbled blue cheese
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 cup broken walnut pieces

Directions

1. Prepare noodles according to package directions adding poultry seasoning and oil to the water.
2. Meanwhile, melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat.
3. Add onions and sauté 5-7 minutes or until tender.
4. Reduce heat to medium low and stir in Roquefort cheese, stirring constantly until cheese is melted.
5. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream and noodles.
6. Add walnut pieces and season with salt and pepper.

This month's recipes are courtesy of Fayette County Museum *35th Anniversary Cookbook* (never fail noodles) and Greenville Regional Hospital Auxiliary's *Home Town Favorites* cookbook (chicken Tetrazzini, Mediterranean style angel hair pasta and Roquefort noodles).

MEDITERRANEAN STYLE ANGEL HAIR PASTA

Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) package angel hair pasta
- 2 cups chicken cooked and chopped into bite sized pieces
- 1 cup grape tomatoes halved
- ½ cup green or black olives halved
- ½ cup red onion thinly sliced (optional)
- ½ cup Feta cheese
- ¾ cup bottled Italian dressing
- 2 tablespoons parsley chopped

Directions

1. Prepare pasta according to package directions.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, toss together and serve.

NEVER FAIL NOODLES

Ingredients

- 1 egg beaten
- 2 tablespoons milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup flour

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients, mix, and beat well.
2. Roll out on a floured board and let rest 30 minutes.
3. Flour top of noodles, flip over, and flour the other side.
4. Roll out again to very thin and let rest another 30 minutes.
5. Fold or roll and cut in strips.

Noodles can be dried until ready to use. Double the recipe for larger servings.

Never Fail Noodles

CURRENT EVENTS

January 1-9 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN THE PARK, Carlyle. Take a drive through the park to view the lights and tune your radio to 90.1 FM to hear the dancing trees music. 5 - 11 p.m. Admission is free. Carlyle City Park, 1090 Lake Road. Visit carlylelake.com.

January 7, 14, 21, 25, 27-29; February 2-4, 25 & 26; March 3 PERE MARQUETTE STATE PARK EAGLE WATCHING TOURS, Grafton. A site interpreter at Pere Marquette State Park will be presenting informative programs about bald eagles this winter. All programs will begin at the park's visitor center at 8:30 a.m. There will be a short video presentation followed by an observational drive to view the wintering bald eagles. Please dress warmly and have a full tank of gas. Bring binoculars, wear water proof boots, and



January 7-9 LET'S GO FISHING SHOW, Collinsville. There will be a wide variety of fishing gear, boats, exhibits and seminars. Friday noon - 8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Adults \$7; children 6-15 years of age \$3.50; children 5 years of age and younger are free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Call (800) 289-2388 or visit gatewaycenter.com.

bring snacks/coffee. Pere Marquette State Park 13112 Visitor Center Lane. For more information or reservations, call (618) 786-3323 ext. 1.

January 8 ALTON EAGLE FEST, Alton. Enjoy a variety of activities. Watch as professional ice carvers work their magic and create beautiful ice sculptures throughout the day. Stay warm by the fire as you make a s'more or enjoy Old Bakery Beer Company's new winter beer. Try your hand at axe throwing brought to you by Riverbend Axe Throwing. Inside the visitor center meet live eagles and get your picture taken. 2 - 6 p.m. Alton Visitor Center 200 Piasa Street. Call (618) 465-6676.

January 8, 15, 22 & 29 EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Alton and Grafton (sites alternate by weekend). The World Bird Sanctuary will be bringing a live bald eagle for the public to view up close. Be sure to bring your camera. After this personal encounter you can pick up an official All Around Alton Eagle Watcher's Guide and set off along the Great River Road to see eagles in their natural habitat. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Alton Visitor Center (Jan. 8 and 22), 200 Piasa Street. Call (800) 258-6645. Grafton Visitor Center (Jan. 15 and 29), 950 East Main Street. Call (618) 786-7000.

January 8, 15, 22, 29 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS, Grafton. Enjoy a guided tour of some of the best eagle watching hot

spots in and around the Grafton region. This two-hour tour will highlight sites where wintering American bald eagles are typically seen. Sites will include the Brussels Ferry, Calhoun Point, and Pere Marquette State Park. Masks are mandatory on all shuttle tours. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather or COVID related issues. Shuttle is not ADA accessible. 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$23. Grafton Visitor Center, 950 East Main Street. For more information or tickets, visit riversandroutesc.com.

January 9, 16, 23, 30; February 6 & 13 EAGLE SUNDAY, West Alton, MO. Meet Liberty, the American bald eagle, up close and presented by World Bird Sanctuary. Visitors will learn all about amazing eagle adaptations, their conservation history, and fun facts. Question and answer opportunities will follow. Sessions at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. Join us for guided eagle and swan walks. Visitors will meet at the Audubon Center at Riverlands for a leisurely hike on paved trails to view our overwintering birds. Bring binoculars and wear comfortable clothing and footwear for the outdoors. These guided hikes are a great way to view and learn more about our winter visitors, bald eagles and trumpeter swans, improve your bird ID skills, and immerse in nature. Walks begin at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. After your eagle meet and greet or walk, take time to roast some mallows and enjoy a fireside

s'more. Our trails will also feature self-guided learning stations, a trail-side storybook walk, and more. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. To pre-order tickets, call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 15; February 19; March 19; April 18 GOSHEN WINTER MARKET, Edwardsville. Visit the expansion parking lot downtown and shop your favorite vendors, the third Saturday of each month through April. 10 a.m. - noon. The Land of Goshen Community Market, 100 St. Louis Street. Visit goshenmarket.org.

January 15, 22, 29; February 5 & 12 RAPTOR SATURDAY, West Alton, MO. Meet live raptors presented by TreeHouse Wildlife Center and learn all about these amazing birds of prey. Learn about the raptors on-site, their adaptations, life cycle, and other natural history. Sessions begin at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. Join us for guided eagle and swan walks. Visitors will meet at the Audubon Center at Riverlands for a leisurely hike on paved trails to view our overwintering birds. Bring binoculars and wear comfortable clothing and footwear for the outdoors. These guided hikes are a great way to view and learn more about our winter visitors, bald eagles and trumpeter swans, improve your bird ID skills, and immerse in nature. Walks begin at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. After

Continued on page 26 ►

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 joe.richardson@sweci.com, or mail your info to The Southwestern, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. 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.

END NOTE



by Joe Richardson

I came for the horse and carriage. I stayed for the one-eyed owl.

Great horned owls are imposing. Saw-whet and screech-owls warble, whinny and scream. Barn owls are hauntingly beautiful, with their valentine faces, ghostly-white. But barred owls will always be my favorite. They moved through the woods behind my boyhood home and called from the summer dusk. *Who cooks for you — who cooks for you aaaaawwwlllll?* From time to time I'd mimic the call. The owls would call back. All well and good when you're at the edge of your lawn, but when you're two and a quarter miles in back of beyond, light failing, night rising from the gullies and tangling in the trees, and you send up a call on a whim, only to start a competition among three or four birds watching from the high branches of the cottonwoods, you feel it. Feel the wild otherness of things that live out their days by night. Feel a strange vulnerability, knowing there are things in the woods that you can't see, that see you.

I'd forgotten that feeling.

Tucked it away with autumn walkabouts through moldering leaves, creek pool dives in shady spots on summer days, winter sledding between the trees until I couldn't feel my face, and a Daisy rifle oiled and primed for tin can target practice

on spring afternoons when I should have been inside doing homework.

The bird on the perch in the civic center green brought it back to me. He was a juvenile. Lost an eye to an accident, and in the same stroke, his life among the shadows in the cottonwoods and the oaks. By the time he made it to TreeHouse Wildlife Center in Dow, he'd imprinted on people. He thinks he's one of us. The Center shifted its intentions from rehab and release to making the animal an ambassador.

He will teach.

He was teaching when I found him on a Saturday afternoon in December, in the midst of Elsie's holiday walk. While carolers sang and a horse-drawn carriage took turns through the village, the owl was taking in the mild weather, the sunshine, the cool breeze, indifferent to the crowds that gathered 'round him. They were, after all, his people. Or so he thought.

There was a moment of melancholy as I realized I'd spent more time talking to his kind than he would, offset, somewhat, by the understanding he will say more about owls to my kind, than I ever could.

Here's to your future, young one. Teach us well.

Thanks for the memories.

And thank you for the chat.

► *Continued from page 24*
your raptor meet and greet session or walk, take time to roast some mallows and enjoy a fireside s'more. Our trails will also feature self-guided learning stations, a trail-side storybook walk, and more. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. To pre-order tickets, call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 17; February 16
MOONLIGHT HIKE, Godfrey. Join us on a night hike through the woods on the trails of the Mississippi Sanctuary and Olin Nature Preserve. The terrain is light to moderate and is appropriate for families. The hike will be about 2 miles with stops along the way. 7:30 -

January 18; February 17
TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Want to look at the universe through a telescope, but don't own one? Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have some set up. Bring your own telescope and we can help you use it. We will talk about how telescopes work and look at the moon and other night sky objects. 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.



8:45 p.m. Meet at the Talahi Lodge and be on time, as the hike leaves promptly at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free for members; non-members \$5. Registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

January 20 **GATEWAY WEDDING SHOW**, Collinsville. Meet vendors who can personalize and plan every aspect of a wedding. 5 - 9 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. To pre-register, visit gatewaycenter.com.

January 21-23 & 26-30
ALTON LITTLE THEATER: THE COVER OF LIFE, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Wednesday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday shows at 2 p.m. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

January 22 **ALL ABOUT EAGLES**, Godfrey. Learn about our feathered friends and meet some of World Bird Sanctuary's ambassador eagles in person. After the presentation, hit the trails with TNI's education staff to try to spot an eagle in the wild. 11 a.m. - noon. After warming up with a cup of hot chocolate, families can choose to head over to the main office to search for eagles soaring over the Mississippi River noon - 12:30 p.m. Things to Note: What makes this event extra special? Our trails are closed to the public in the winter. Get an exclusive look at TNI in the wintertime. While this event is family-friendly, the first half of the program is sitting. Ages 6 and up are recommended. Due to the live animals in this program, attendees must remain seated to avoid startling the eagles. The program will begin promptly at 11 a.m. so be sure to arrive a little bit early to get seated. The entire program will take place outdoors, so dress for the elements. Blankets and extra layers are encouraged.

The presentation will take place in our amphitheater. This area is a short walk from the parking lot. Limited number of binoculars will be available to borrow for wild eagle viewing. Admission is \$12 for members; \$15 non-members. Registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. For more information or to register, visit thenatureinstitute.org.

January 22 **HAM RADIO WINTERFEST**, Collinsville. Winterfest is the largest hamfest in the Midwest exceeding over 30,000 square feet of convention space with over 180 vendors. 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information or tickets, visit winterfest.slsr.org.

January 27 **BRIAN WOODS CONCERT**, Lebanon. Performance by classical pianist Brian Woods. 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$10. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

January 27-30; February 3-6 **DISASTER!**, Lebanon. A theatrical performance by the Looking Glass Playhouse. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m., except for Sunday shows, which begin at 2 p.m. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. For more information or tickets, call (618) 537-4962 or visit lookingglass-playhouse.com.

January 29 & 30 **GATEWAY SPRING HOME SHOW**, Collinsville. The goal of the Home Show is to inspire, motivate and excite you for your upcoming home improvement — whether it's a minor renovation or a major remodel. Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission is free with online registration. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewaycenter.com.

January 30 **EAGLE FESTIVAL**, Grafton. Guests can shop at our vendors booths, grab a bite to eat in our restaurant, taste

locally made wines, experience our historic Lodge, and meet some feathered friends. The main event, our Master's of the Sky Show presented by The World Bird Sanctuary, will personally introduce guests to magnificent winged creatures like owls, falcons, eagles, and more. Show times will be at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. Tickets for the shows can be purchased at our front desk starting at 10 a.m. the morning of the festival. Masters of the Sky show admission for children age 3 and older is \$10; children age 2 and younger are free, but must sit on the lap of a parent or guardian. Tickets cannot be used at a different show time than they were purchased for. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Entry into the festival is free. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Call (618) 786-2331 or visit pmlodge.net.

February 4-6 **WOODWORKING SHOW**, Collinsville. Show will feature woodworking presentations and tool vendors. Friday noon - 6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is \$12 online; \$14 at the door; children under 15 years old are free with a paid adult. Active duty military, fire, and police with valid ID are free. Ticket good for all three days of the show. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information, visit thewoodworkingshows.com.

February 11 **ETHEL + ROBERT MIRABAL: THE RIVER**, Lebanon. World music, storytelling, adventurous New York-string quartet ETHEL and special guest artist Robert Mirabal continue their deeply successful cross-cultural collaboration, inspired by water as the embodiment of spirit, and its essential role in life on earth. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$25, senior \$23, student or child \$10, McKendree University students are free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.



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