

# THE *Southwestern*



A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2024 • VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 12

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PROGRESS**

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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 \$10.67 per year. Comments or questions regarding material in this publication may be mailed to Joe Richardson, editor of The Southwestern, c/o Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246, or e-mailed to [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com).

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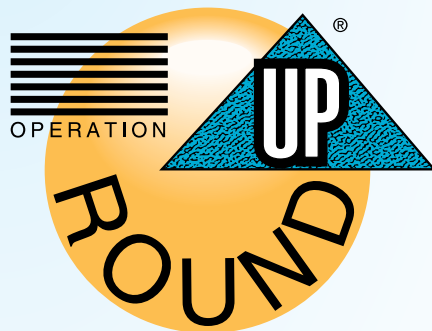
# YOUR SPARE CHANGE CAN MAKE A **BIG** **DIFFERENCE** THROUGH OPERATION ROUND UP

**Neighbors helping neighbors. That's what a co-op is about.** And that's the idea behind Operation Round Up (ORU), a charitable program governed, funded and supported by Southwestern Electric Cooperative members like you.

**Here's how it works:** After you sign up for ORU, Southwestern will round up the amount due on your monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar. Your donations are placed in the ORU account. Each quarter, an independent committee of Southwestern Electric members reviews ORU grant requests. ORU grants support various community projects across the co-op's service territory.

Since launching the program in 2005, **Southwestern Electric's Operation Round Up has assisted a wide variety of organizations**, including local food pantries, senior centers and fire departments.

**Ready to get started?** To join ORU today, just check the enrollment box on your electric bill or online, or contact Southwestern Electric Cooperative at (800) 637-8667. For more information about Operation Round Up, visit [sweci.com](http://sweci.com).



Small change.  
**Big difference.**



## ON THE COVER

Southwestern linemen Braden Clark (left) and James Rickermann execute maneuvers during the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo in Springfield, Ill. The rodeo provides lineworkers from across Illinois with an opportunity to cultivate relationships and share skills. Our story begins on page 10.

## CO-OP REMINDERS

**December 9** 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.

**December 24** Offices close at noon for Christmas holiday.

**December 25** Offices closed for Christmas holiday.

**December 31** Offices close at noon for New Year's Eve.

**January 1** Offices closed for New Year's Day.

## 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](https://facebook.com/SWECI) and [twitter.com/sweci](https://twitter.com/sweci). Search for Southwestern Electric on YouTube and Instagram. You can listen to our podcast, Wireside Chat, on Apple Music, Spotify, Audible and anywhere podcasts are found.





# Hide & Seek

## READER CONTEST

Since we haven't run the full set of rules for our contest lately (lately meaning in 2024), here's the story.

For decades, we ran a reader contest called On Account. We asked you to look for a member-account number we'd hidden in the magazine. If the account number was yours, you could contact us to win a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Account numbers were selected at random from a pool that included our entire membership. The rules were simple, but your odds were long.

We retired that contest in December 2022 and replaced it with a game of Hide & Seek. Our Hide & Seek contest isn't based on your account number and if you're a regular reader, you've a much better chance of winning a \$25 bill credit.

It works like this:

Each month — with the exception of August, when we bring you Southwestern Electric's annual report — we hide an image in the magazine.

Your job is to find it.

The image may be a photo, illustration, icon, logo — or any other graphic that catches our eye. This month's image is the snowman pictured at right:

The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see here. We may change the color. We may make the image black and white. Or robin's egg blue. It may be reversed. Or upside down. Or reversed and upside down. Who knows? We don't. We make this up as we go.

If you find the image, email us or send a postcard with your name, address, phone number, and the page number where you found the image.

For instance, if you found this month's image on page 32, you'd send an email or postcard with your name, address, phone number, and a line or two saying you found the image on page 32. That

would be an awful answer, by the way, as this issue only has 28 pages.

Please email us at [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto: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](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) inbox by the first day of the month following the month of publication. For our December contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by January 1.

Each month we choose one winner in a random drawing. Our winner receives a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. We'll publish the name of this month's contest winner in our February issue.

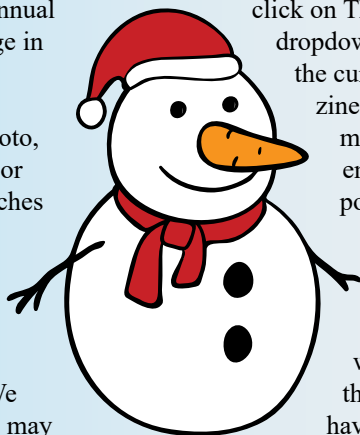
If your magazine hasn't landed in your mailbox, you want to play, and the hour grows late, you can look at our online edition. You'll find PDF files of The Southwestern at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). Go to News & Information in the main menu, then click on The Southwestern in the dropdown menu. We usually post the current issue of the magazine on the first day of the month, or when someone emails to say we haven't posted the current issue of the magazine.

That's a lot of information for a simple contest. Clearly, we didn't think this through. If we had, we may have passed on the idea.

But we've been running the contest for two years now and people seem to like it, so onward. Good luck, Godspeed, and mind the Rules To Play By in our sidebar at right.

### OCTOBER WINNER

Congratulations to Russell Metzger of Keyesport. Russell was the winner of our October Hide & Seek contest drawing. He'll receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our October contest. This month's image appears above.



### RULES TO PLAY BY

- One entry per membership per month.
- A membership can only win once per calendar year.
- No phone calls, texts, 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](mailto: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 list and not one you care to be part of.
- Again, entries must be postmarked or in our [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) inbox by the first day of the month following the month of publication. For this contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by January 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.
- Did we mention responding *only* by postcard or by sending email to [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com)? Well, we have the space, so we'll bring it up one last time — just to show we're sincere.

# Youth Tour '25

## WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

### Applications due Jan. 1, 2025

Photos courtesy Josie Gehlbach and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives

#### WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

In spring of 2025, Southwestern Electric Cooperative will take local students to Springfield, Ill., to tour the Capitol and meet with legislators during Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day. Throughout the day, students will learn about leadership from legislators, state officers and co-op employees who've dedicated their lives to public service.

At the end of the day, two students will be selected to represent Southwestern Electric during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth to Washington Tour, June 16-23, 2025.

Expenses for both trips are covered by the cooperative.

#### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Any high school student in Southwestern Electric's service area is eligible to participate in Youth Day.

#### WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF YOUTH TOUR?

In Springfield and Washington, legislators and officers discuss the rewards and responsibilities of public service, while representatives from AIEC, the statewide trade association representing Illinois electric cooperatives, explore the role of grassroots organizations in government. Careers in public service can be personally fulfilling, professionally rewarding and contribute to the common good. The spring Youth Day and summer Youth to Washington experience bring these ideas to life.

#### HOW DO I APPLY?

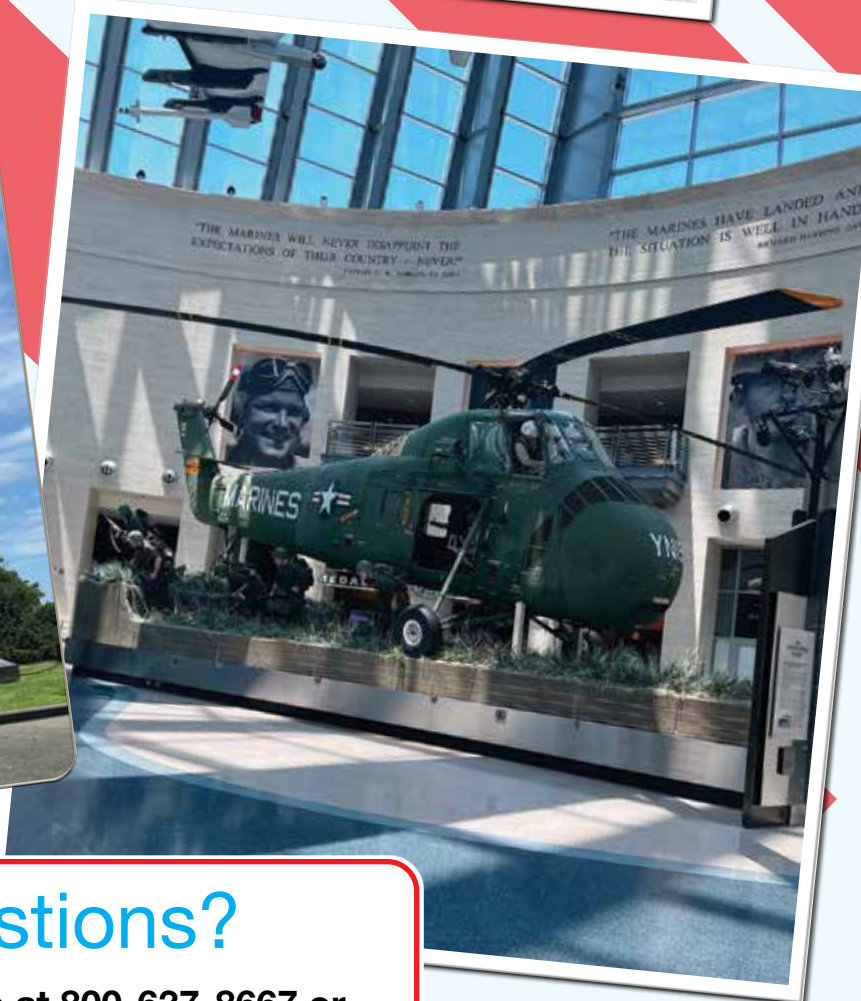
Write an essay, no more than 275 words in length, that answers the question: What do you hope to gain from participating in the Youth Tour experience?

Submit your essay to Southwestern Electric Vice President of Member Services Susan File. Your essay can either be delivered in person at our Greenville office, mailed to Susan File, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246 or emailed to [susan.file@sweci.com](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com).

Essays should be submitted no later than Jan. 1, 2025. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to [youthtour.coop](http://youthtour.coop) or [Facebook.com/ILYouthTour](https://www.facebook.com/ILYouthTour).







## Questions?

Call Susan File at 800-637-8667 or  
write to her at [susan.file@sweci.com](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com).

# SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2025

*Co-op to Award \$16,800  
in Academic Assistance*

**S**ince 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$300,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award 12 \$1,200 Southwestern Electric Scholarships, one \$1,200 Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship and one \$1,200 Richard Gusewelle Memorial Scholarship to students in 2025.

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](http://sweci.com) (the QR code at right will take you there). 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 2025 and students who graduated from high school in previous years.

The completed application and supplemental materials — including a cover letter, academic transcripts and attendance records — 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 14, 2025**.

**For more information about the Power for Progress Scholarship Program, please contact Susan File at [susan.file@sweci.com](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com) or 800-637-8667.**



## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The applicant (or the applicant's parent/legal guardian) must be an active member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Southwestern Electric 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 2025.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, March 14, 2025.



**Scan the  
QR code to  
download  
a scholarship  
application.**



# 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, 2024 to Aug. 15, 2025, 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 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.

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 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.	618-664-3309
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

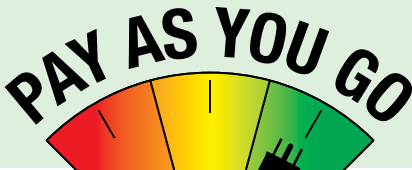
## Income Guidelines

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 at right, 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 .....	\$2,510
2 .....	\$3,407
3 .....	\$4,303
4 .....	\$5,200
5 .....	\$6,097
6 .....	\$6,993
7 .....	\$7,890
8 .....	\$8,427

- 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](http://sweci.com) or call 800-637-8667 to speak to one of our member services representatives.



# Rodeo Roundup

## Statewide event yields experience, enlightenment for Southwestern Electric lineworkers

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

As Braden Clark stared up at the cross-arm some 40 feet above him, it became clear.

This wasn't what he'd trained for.

A day earlier, Clark and fellow Southwestern Electric Cooperative journeymen linemen Dustin Kemp and James Rickermann spent the afternoon practicing the events they knew would be on the agenda for the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo, held this year on September 19 at Lincoln Land

Community College's Line School Yard in Springfield. The rodeo, put on annually by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), is a chance for lineworkers from across the state of Illinois to get together and show off their skills, with an emphasis on safety and efficiency.

Among those events practiced by the trio was the crossarm change — performed as a team, lowering one crossarm down and bringing another one up. As

Clark and others stood watching a lineman from a neighboring co-op execute the crossarm change as an individual, though — rotating the arm 90 degrees around the pole with nothing more than a drill being run up the hand line by his teammates on the ground — they knew they'd miscalculated the task ahead.

"That arm was definitely heavy," Clark recalled. "To rotate that all on your belt all by yourself, that was challenging."



Linemen from various electric cooperatives across Illinois compete in a 40-foot transition climb as part of a team event near the end of the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo on September 19 at Lincoln Land Community College's Line School Yard in Springfield.





At left, the Southwestern Electric Cooperative rodeo team of James Rickermann, Dustin Kemp and Braden Clark with CEO Bobby Williams. Below, Kemp rotates a crossarm around the pole as part of the crossarm change event.

Challenging, but not unlike the job linemen face every day. Presented with difficult restorations and inclement weather, Clark said the best way to approach line work is to “expect the unexpected.”

“They threw a surprise at us,” he said. “The job does that more often than not as well.”

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Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast.

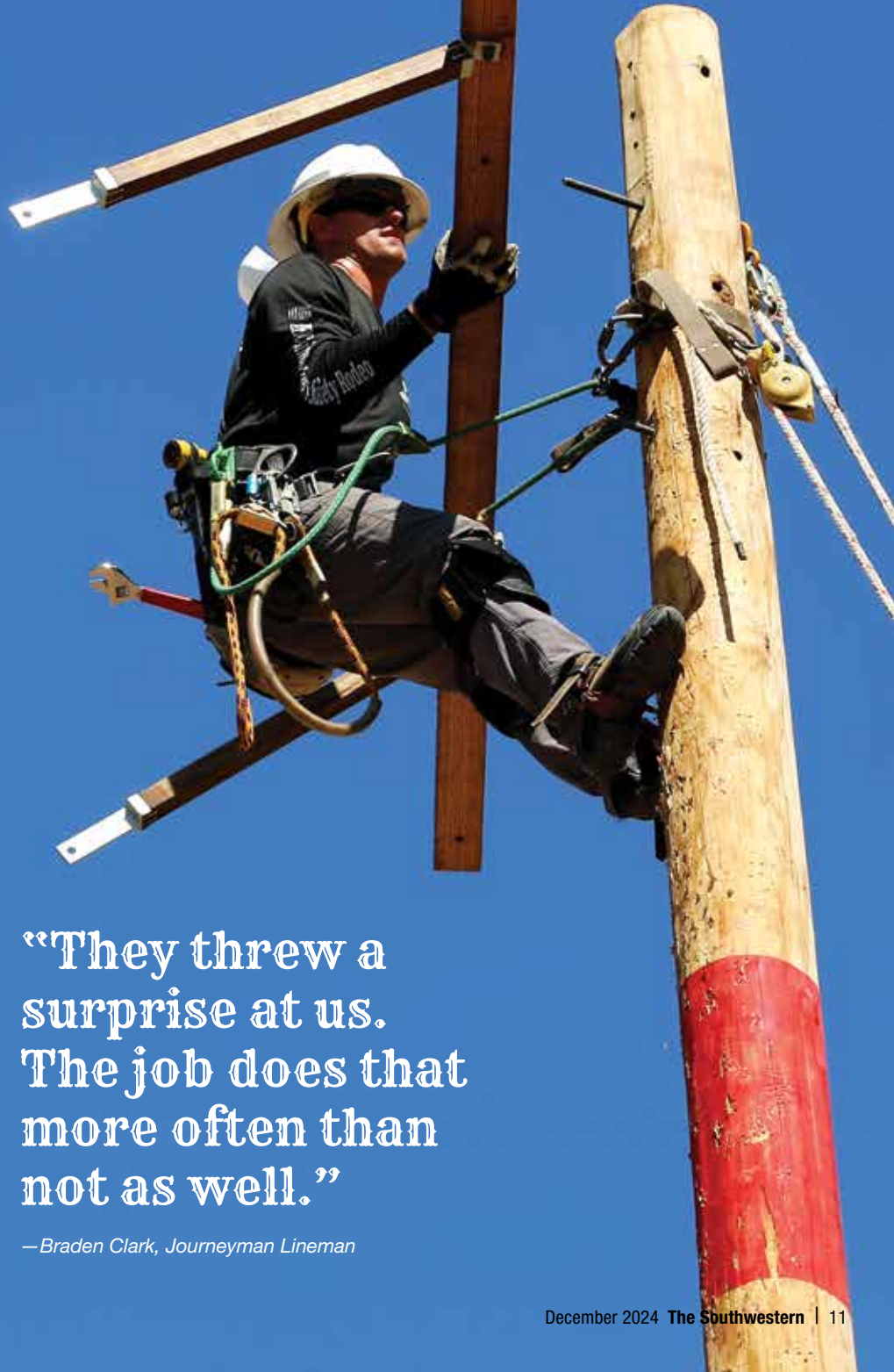
It’s a mantra that originated within the armed forces, but one that translates to line work as well. While the outward objective of the Lineworker’s Safety Rodeo is to have the fastest time in an event, AIEC Vice President of Training, Safety and Loss Control Jim Miles said doing so safely is at the forefront of the day.

“The primary focus is always going to be on safety,” Miles said. “When you add proficiency into the work we do every day, you tend to do things smoother and faster. So, for a person wanting to take shortcuts or do things that aren’t the safest, those things result in more negative outcomes than if you’re safe and proficient.”

For many Southwestern Electric representatives in attendance, the rodeo was their first. Rickermann, who joined the cooperative in early July, is a veteran of rodeos, though — the September event was his tenth. Despite that, the goal is always the same.

“The real race is to make it to retirement safely and not have any broken limbs,” Rickermann said. “This just shows you those little things you can do to do the job right and do the job smooth and fast.”

*Continued on next page ►*



**“They threw a surprise at us. The job does that more often than not as well.”**

*—Braden Clark, Journeyman Lineman*



► *Continued from page 11*

Fifteen teams from 12 electric co-ops and one municipal electric utility across the state participated in the friendly competition, along with seven others competing individually.

Line personnel competed in a series of team and individual events including the 40-foot climb, hurt man rescue and crossarm change. The cutout change was a team event, and the competition part of the day concluded with a head-to-head climbing challenge.

The culmination of the event was

an awards banquet that evening.

Southwestern Electric's team took home some hardware, placing second in the 40-foot transition climb and the cross-arm change. Rickermann also placed first in the individual portion of the 40-foot climb, and Art Director Mike Barns was recognized for his design of the team shirt.

Multiple members of the team had family at the event to support them as well, something Miles said he enjoys about the day.

"The thing I like the most is that this

is an opportunity for employees' families to come and participate, see what they do day in and day out," Miles said.

"Ultimately, it's a really good opportunity for employees who work out in the field to showcase their skills. I was very pleased to see that there were a lot more family members there, little kids running around. It was really good involvement from all different careers at the cooperative level."

Showing well at the event was

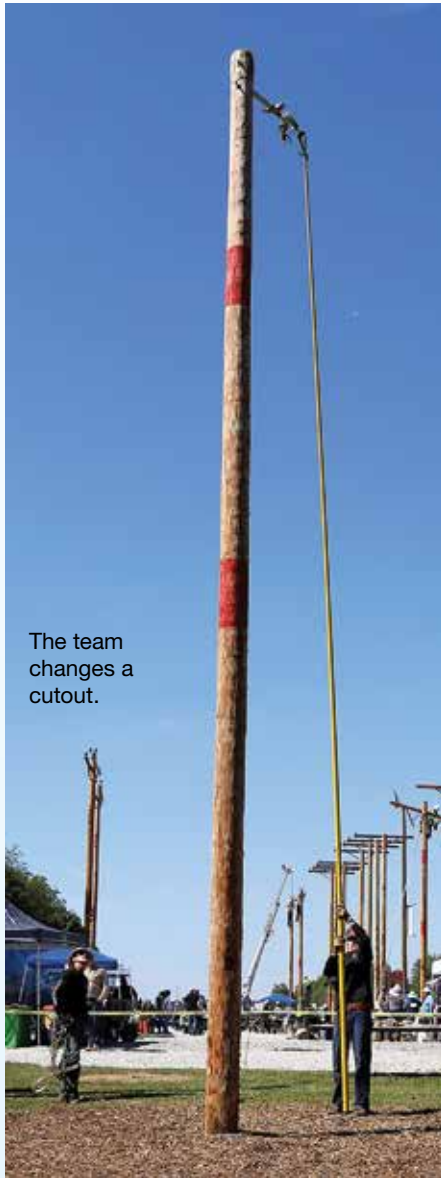
*Continued on page 25* ►



Southwestern Electric journeyman lineman Dustin Kemp rescues a "hurt man" from atop a demo pole. Right, journeyman lineman Braden Clark runs a hand line from the ground to one of his teammates above. Bottom, journeyman lineman James Rickermann (left) readies to don his climbing gear before completing his own hurt man rescue run.







The team changes a cutout.



Above left, journeyman lineman Dustin Kemp uses a drill to secure a crossarm; above right, journeyman lineman James Rickermann works the telescoping hot stick tool; left, a volunteer explains the nuances of the crossarm change to the Southwestern Electric rodeo team.



Rickermann and Kemp discuss their approach to the crossarm event.

**“Ultimately, it’s a really good opportunity for employees who work out in the field to showcase their skills.”**

— Jim Miles, AIEC Vice President of Training, Safety and Loss Control

# *It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas*

Getting in the holiday spirit doesn't have to eat into your energy budget

by Nathan Grimm

**F**or many, this time of year is synonymous with extravagance — making the season merry and bright is more work than it seems.

That indulgence can get expensive, though. String a few dozen strands of lights, light up all your vintage ceramic Christmas trees and flip on “It’s a Wonderful Life” and before you know it, your energy bill is as inflated as the Frosty the Snowman blow-up decoration in your neighbor’s front yard.

Fortunately, combating those rising energy costs doesn’t require you to become a miserly Scrooge. Here are a few simple tips and tricks to keep you — and your home — in the holiday spirit all December long.

## **‘It’s a beaut, Clark, it’s a beaut!’**

Maybe you stop short of Clark Griswold’s 25,000 imported Italian twinkle lights, but even just out-lining your roof with basic white lights may take multiple strands. When each 100-count string of incandescent mini lights uses 40 watts, that can add up to a lot of energy usage.

LED lights use at least 75 percent less energy and last up to 25 times longer than their incandescent counterparts, according to the U.S. Department of Energy website. An added bonus: LED lights also stay cooler than incandescent lights, meaning less of a fire hazard, and LEDs also produce less carbon dioxide because they use less energy. And while a traditional complaint about LED lights is that they don’t give off the same warm white light of incandescent bulbs, LEDs



have advanced to the point that they can also be bought in the same soft white as traditional lights.

LED lights are slightly more expensive than their incandescent alternatives, but the upfront cost is offset by the energy savings over time. Whether on your tree, your roof or anywhere else, LED lights can help you be more efficient this winter.

## **Deck the halls with boughs of holly — lots of it**

A great way to save energy is to use none at all.

That may seem intuitive, but there are plenty of Christmas decorations that are still festive without requiring an electrical outlet. Ornate wreaths, shiny tinsel, patterned garland, spray-on window stencils and battery-operated flameless candles — or actual candles, for that matter — are all options to spruce up your holiday décor without taxing your electric bill.

## **It’s the most wonderful time(r) of the year**

Even if you do opt for traditional incandescent bulbs, that doesn’t mean they have to wait up for Santa to show.

Many modern Christmas lights now come with a timer function to allow owners to schedule their usage. Since lights aren’t visible during the day, setting your lights to come on in the evening and putting them on a timer — say, six hours, so that they shut off in the early-morning hours — saves them from being overworked and saves you from paying for inefficient energy usage. Timers with photosensors even have the ability to switch on at dusk and switch off at dawn based on ambient light conditions.

## **Let it blow, let it blow, let it blow**

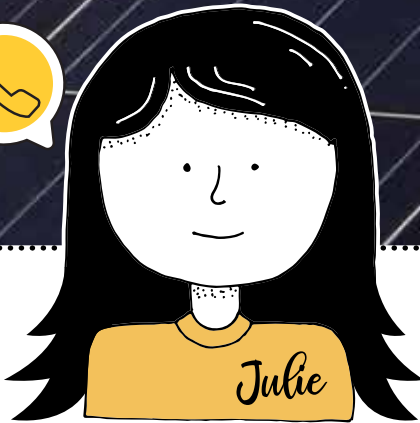
Having a blow-up tree, Grinch or other continuous-air inflatable surely isn’t cost-effective, right?

Actually, inflatables may require less energy than you’d think. A large inflatable snow globe, for example, uses roughly 150 watts per hour; contrast that with a 100-count string of incandescent bulbs that runs around 40 watts per strand, as noted earlier. Suddenly, four strands of lights use more energy than a Rudolph inflatable — red nose included.

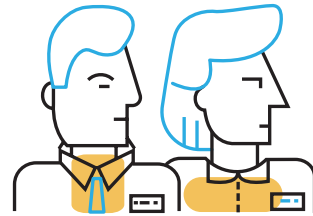
Of course, being more energy efficient isn’t the same as being energy efficient, and inflatables are both a budget choice and a style choice that may not be for everyone. Even so, if you do think you might like to go the inflatable route, don’t be deterred by the idea that it’ll blow the top off your electric bill.



# Steps to Solar Commissioning



Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com) for our information and commissioning packet.



Contact your installer and insurance agent. Ask your installer for a one-line diagram. Request a certificate of insurance from your agent. They're welcome to send those documents to Julie Lowe at Southwestern Electric. Or if you'd like to review them, they can send them to you, and you can pass them along to Julie.



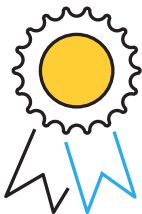
After your one-line diagram is approved by Southwestern Electric, you'll receive a \$500 invoice to cover the installation of your new dual register electric meter, a system inspection, and your array's interconnection to the grid. If your installer will be paying this invoice on your behalf, we'll send the invoice directly to them.



After installation is complete, contact us to schedule your system's on-site review and commissioning.



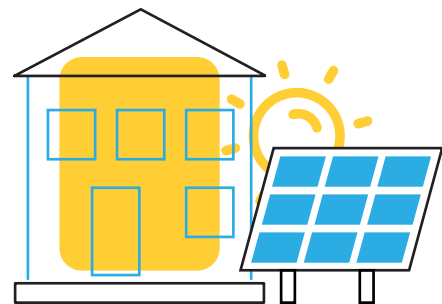
Our commissioning team will visit your site. We will inspect your system to verify it meets our safety specifications. A team member will review a memorandum of understanding with you. You'll sign this document for our files. Note: If you won't be present for commissioning, please schedule a meeting to review and sign the memorandum beforehand. After your system passes inspection, you go live! Your array is connected to Southwestern's distribution system.



We'll send you and your installer a certificate of completion. Your installer will submit this document for you, so you can receive your solar renewable energy credits (SRECs).



Each year, you'll submit documentation to confirm you've renewed your insurance. You may add us as a certificate holder on your policy so the renewal will be sent to us automatically each year.



Every three years, we'll visit your system to confirm it's connected properly, well-maintained, and that your safety signs are in place.

# HEATING HAZARDS

## Supplemental warming products require proper attention

Using electric space heaters, blankets or heating pads to fight winter's chill? While they may provide comfort, they also introduce safety hazards into your home.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters are responsible for 32 percent of home heating fires and involved in 79 percent of home heating fire deaths.

As is the case with any electric-powered appliance, keep the space heater, blanket, or heating pad away from water and never touch the item while wet.

Only purchase products approved by an independent testing facility, such as UL Solutions, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care of the product.

Prior to use, inspect cords and connections for cracks or frayed edges, and send the item off for repair if necessary. Discontinue use and unplug the unit immediately if you see or smell smoke. Here are additional safety tips to keep in mind:

### ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS

- When purchasing a new space heater, look for models with guards to protect the heating elements, and sensors that automatically shut off the unit if it tips or if an object gets too close.
- Position the space heater on hard, stable, level surfaces. Don't place it on carpets, furniture or countertops. Avoid high-traffic areas where people might knock over the heater or trip over the cord.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from combustible materials, such as bedding, curtains, clothing and rugs. Space heaters also have parts that can spark, so avoid using them in areas where you store flammable liquids like kerosene and gasoline.
- Plug your space heater directly into a wall outlet. Avoid using extension cords.
- Never operate a space heater if you suspect it may be damaged.
- Don't allow children or pets to come near the space heater when it's in use.
- Never leave a space heater unattended. Make sure to turn off and unplug the heater before you leave the room or go to sleep.

### ELECTRIC BLANKETS & HEATING PADS

- Always place the electric blanket on top of you, not below you, and keep it flat at all times: Sitting or lying on top of the blanket may damage the internal coils, exposing the heating element to combustible material.
- Avoid covering the electric blanket or heating pad with another blanket, comforter or quilt, unless the safety instructions included in the packaging specifically state that it's safe to do so.
- Discard the electric blanket or heating pad if you notice dark or charred spots on its surface. Discoloration may indicate that the unit's heating elements are burning internally.
- Turn the electric blanket or heating pad off prior to leaving the room or when not in use.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when attempting to clean the electric blanket or heating pad. Many models may only be washed by hand.



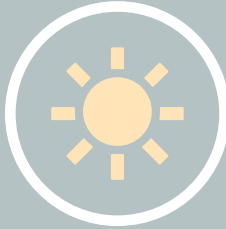
Only purchase products approved by an independent testing facility, such as UL Solutions, and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care of the product.



# Space Heater Safety Tips

Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using a space heater doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

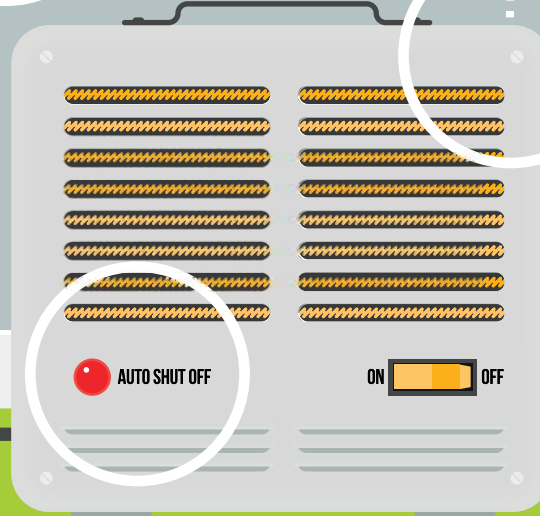
**DO:** Plug your space heater directly into the wall outlet.



**DO:** Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

**DO:** Keep your space heater at a safe distance (at least 3 feet) from kids, pets and flammable items.

**DO:** Buy a unit with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over, or you forget to shut it off.



**DO:** Always follow the directions and take a broken space heater to a qualified appliance service center.



**DON'T:** Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



**DON'T:** Use an extension cord to plug in your space heater. It can cause the heater to over-heat, and can be a tripping hazard.

**DON'T:** Place your space heater near curtains, clothing, furniture or bedding.



**DON'T:** Try to repair a broken space heater yourself.



**DON'T:** Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.



# Class is in Session

## EFFINGHAM COUNTY CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM BRINGS COUNTY'S HISTORY TO LIFE

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

“Those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it.”

Delaine Donaldson wrote that phrase across the board in his Effingham High School history classroom every year for 35 years. It's a lesson he similarly tried to impart upon his Lake Land College students, where he taught for 44 years as adjunct faculty.

Now retired, it's only fitting that Donaldson, 81, has continued his pursuit of preserving and teaching history with the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum. The president of the grassroots museum housed in the old county courthouse, Donaldson has been an integral part of the museum since its inception more than a decade ago.

“This is like a big classroom for me,” he said. “It has been a real treat.”

The building at 100 E. Jefferson Ave. in Effingham served the county well as its courthouse from 1871 until 2007, when the new Effingham County Courthouse building was constructed less than two blocks away. It sat empty until March 2009, when county administration began seriously considering demolition of the building.

That's when Donaldson and roughly 300 others turned out to a public hearing to express their hope that the historic building be spared.

“In that meeting, I led off the speakers,” he said. “There were 23 others who followed me. All of us essentially said the same thing. We were not an organized group to do that, it was



just the public feeling that was out there. This building was built in 1871, and we thought it had served the community very well as a courthouse, but it also could serve in another capacity.

“And that was as a museum.”

The very next day, Donaldson said, the county chairwoman called him with a question.

“She said, ‘OK, you want to save the building? Tell me how you’ll do it,’” he recalled.

Another public meeting was held in short order — with about 40 attendees this time, Donaldson estimated — and plans began to take shape. Lawyers volunteered to get the museum its 501(c)(3) designation as a nonprofit organization. Sherwin-Williams, which had a distribution center in Effingham, agreed to donate the whopping 30 gallons of paint it would take to bring the first floor of the old courthouse “back to life.” Everyone gave what they could, a theme for the volunteer-run museum.

That included the artifacts themselves.

Virtually everything on display in the museum was donated or loaned to them; despite the fact that more than \$500,000 has been spent on renovating the building, Donaldson estimates, very few of the pieces in the museum were bought. Like its origins, the museum survives and thrives on the generosity of the public.

“It was a really interesting process to me just to watch how people, strictly in a volunteer spirit, began to come together,” Donaldson recalled.

On November 11, 2012 — Veterans Day, fittingly, for a museum with a rich collection of memorabilia and stories from past wars — the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum opened its doors.

The memorabilia on display at the museum is as eclectic as it is incredible.

A pristinely preserved letter signed by President Harry S. Truman informing a young Effingham County woman that her husband had been killed in World War II. A handwritten correspondence from a salesman to his love interest describing the horrors he saw after the devastating St. Anthony Hospital fire of 1949. The metal cross that once sat atop the steeple at Effingham's Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Those are just a few of the countless pieces on display at the museum. Some 17,000 more pieces reside in storage on the third floor of the building, Donaldson said. The regular volunteers and curators, of which there are roughly a dozen, he estimated, do their best to tell





## GETTING THERE

Given that Effingham is in the easternmost part of our service area, most of those reading will head east on Interstate 70 until taking Exit 159 for Fayette Avenue. From there, take a right onto Fayette Avenue, a left onto South Banker Street and a right onto West Jefferson Avenue and you'll run into the museum, which is located on Effingham's town square.

Because the museum is staffed entirely by volunteers, hours are limited. March through December, the museum is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. In January and February, the museum is open by appointment only. The museum is also open November through March from 6 to 7 p.m. on the nights of their lecture series. To make an appointment, call 217-240-2471. For more information, visit the museum's website at [www.effinghamcountymuseum.org](http://www.effinghamcountymuseum.org).

a comprehensive and chronological story with what they have at their disposal.

"I thought I knew a lot of local history, and I found I knew just a tiny little amount compared to what I know now," he said.

Space, though, is not the most pressing issue facing the museum as it embarks on its second decade in existence.


"The major concern at the forefront right now is, who will move into our positions in the future?" Donaldson said. "One of the things you find throughout America today is that any heritage organization, anything that is rooted in the past, is finding it very difficult to survive. So, we're very concerned with what we do about the future."

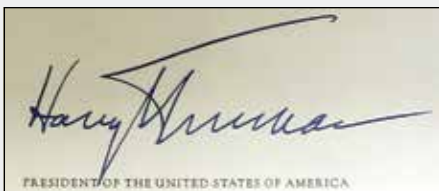
That may be turning to increasingly popular social media sites to try

to garner interest in the museum's offerings, using the power of the World Wide Web to get their message out.

"We're going to have to have something that reaches to a wider geographic region, and something that has a degree of novelty to it that will attract people," he posited.

It's a message, and a history, that needs to live on, as Donaldson knows all too well. Those who are ignorant of history, after all, are doomed to repeat it.

"If we don't know our history very well, then people will invent a history for us," he said. "We want to be able to touch the hard artifacts. We want to be able to say, 'This is the way it really was,' rather than something that people might dream up." 



Relics abound at the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum, but perhaps the most popular attraction is the built-to-scale model of many of the county's landmarks (top left).

## WHO • WHAT • WHERE

In our October issue, we challenged you to identify a mammoth machine, noting we'd left clues as to where the antique stood, if not what it was, elsewhere in the magazine. We hinted that, while the artifact wasn't originally sited in our service area, it did live its life in a county served by Southwestern Electric.

Even though the antique served as a backdrop for our October cover photo, the challenge was a tough one. Congratulations to Bill Malec of O'Fallon and Corey Rabe of Vandalia for instantly identifying the relic!

For our December challenge, we're asking you to name the historical figure on page 21. An inventor, she designed the first model of her celebrated machine in the shed behind her house, located in one of the counties served by Southwestern.

She received a patent in 1886 and showed her machine at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where her invention took first prize for "best mechanical construction, durability and adaptation to its line of work."

In 2006, she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Can you name our ingenious inventor? We look forward to hearing from you. Meanwhile, here's what Bill and Corey had to say about our October antique.

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The October 2024 "What am I?" can be found at the American Farm Heritage Museum in Greenville, Illinois. On the museum grounds this recently reassembled De La Vergne steam engine is situated. The engine was relocated in pieces from the Armour Meat Packing Plant which was formerly located in East St. Louis, Illinois.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon



Pictured in the October 2024 issue of the Southwestern "What am I?" is one of the steam engines (a Frick/De La Vergne) that worked in the National City Armour meat packing plant. Since the Armour plant was built in 1907, grid power was not available. Therefore the industry had to supply their own power for lighting and refrigeration.

The refrigeration system in the Armour plant used ammonia in the cooling system to exchange heat/cooling, unlike today where we have used R12 and more recently 134A in mobile systems.

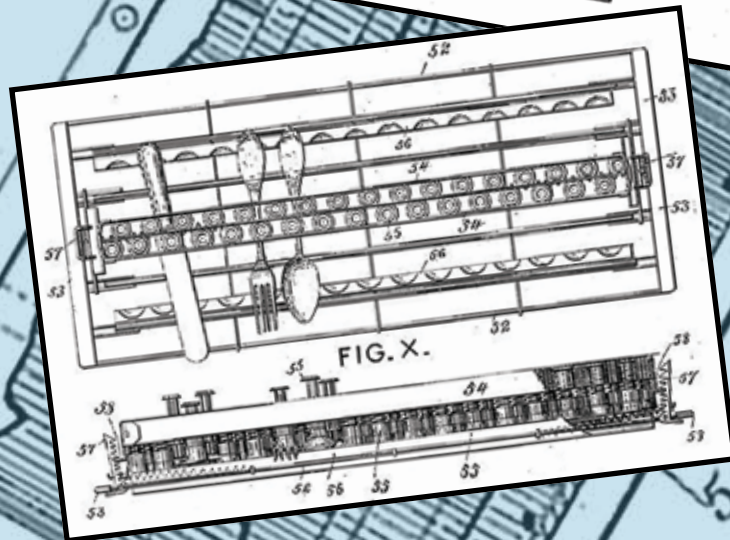
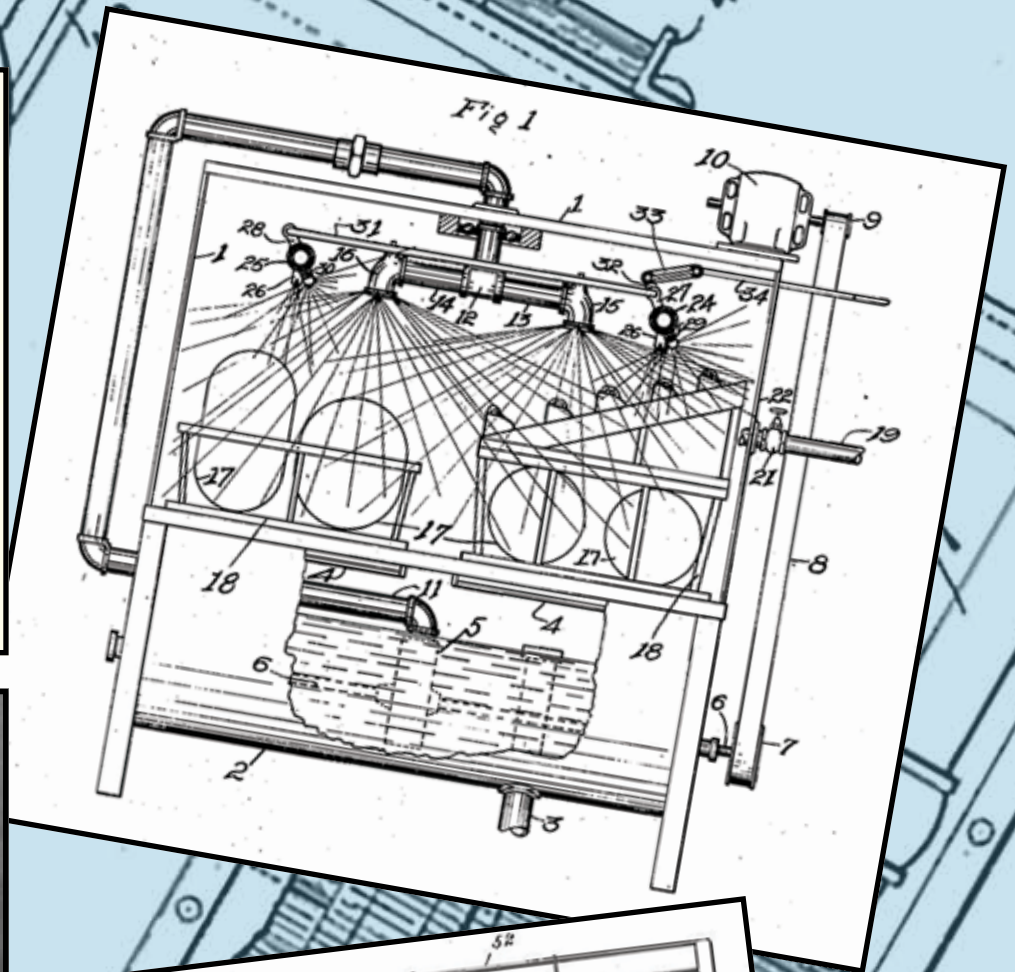
The plant was abandoned (Armour simply walked away) leaving all the machinery behind in 1959, as slaughter houses were moving closer to where the animals were raised.

The Illinois/Missouri Departments of Transportation purchased the property in 2016 for demolition. The American Farm Heritage Museum rescued this engine from the Armour plant after it was demolished in 2017. This demolition made way for the roadways to and from the new Stan Musial Memorial Bridge, going into St. Louis. The engine now resides at the northeast corner of the American Farm Heritage Museum lot along interstate 70.

—Corey Rabe, Northern Wilburton Township, Vandalia.

**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](mailto: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.





WHO  
AM I?



CO-OP KITCHEN

# SOUP SEASON



## CROCK POT BROCCOLI SOUP

### Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 4 chicken bouillon cubes
- ½ cup onions chopped
- 2 cups potatoes diced
- 1 (12 ounce) bag frozen chopped broccoli
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese cubed

### Directions

1. Mix together water, bouillon cubes, onion, potatoes and broccoli in crock pot.
2. Heat on high until broccoli is thawed.
3. Stir in cream of chicken soup and cheese.
4. Cook on low for 2 hours.

## WILD RICE SOUP

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups half and half
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cans cream of potato soup
- 1 (6 ounce) package wild rice cooked
- 1 cup white rice cooked
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese cubed
- 1 cup sour cream

### Directions

1. Saute onions in butter until tender.
2. Add broth, half and half, milk and potato soup. Cook until hot.
3. Add cheese. Cook until melted.
4. Add sour cream and rice.
5. Heat thoroughly.

Taco Soup

Prepared & photographed  
by Mike Barns

## CHEESE SOUP

### Ingredients

- 1 quart water
- 1 (14½ ounce) can chicken broth
- 4 chicken bouillon cubes
- 2½ cups potatoes diced
- 1 cup celery chopped
- ½ cup onion finely chopped
- 1 (20 ounce) package frozen California blend vegetables
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 pound of Velveeta cheese cubed
- 1 (12.5 ounce) can chicken breast
- 1 (8 ounce) can mushrooms drained

### Directions

1. Boil water, chicken broth, bouillon cubes, potatoes celery and onion for 20 minutes.
2. Add California blend vegetables and boil 10 more minutes.
3. Stir in cream of chicken soup, cheese, chicken breast and mushrooms.
4. Heat, stirring occasionally until hot and cheese is melted.

## TORTELLINI SOUP

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 clove garlic minced
- 1 carrot shredded
- 1 onion chopped
- 1 stalk celery chopped
- 1 can red kidney beans drained
- 1 (32 ounce) carton vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 (12 ounce) package cheese tortellini frozen or dried
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon parsley

### Directions

1. Saute butter, garlic, carrot, onion and celery until tender.
2. Pour broth and kidney beans into large pot and stir in sauted mixture.
3. If using dried tortellini add 2 cups of water. If using frozen tortellini add 1 cup of water.
4. Bring to a boil. Add tortellini, season to taste, reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes or until tortellini is tender. When serving garnish with parsley.

## TACO SOUP

### Ingredients

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 onion chopped
- 2 (15 ounce) cans whole kernel corn undrained
- 1 (14½ ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 2 (15 ounce) cans kidney beans drained
- 2 cans tomato soup
- 1 (2¼ ounce) can sliced black olives drained
- 1 (16 ounce) jar salsa
- 1½ cups water
- 1 envelope taco seasoning

### Directions

1. Brown beef with onion and drain.
2. In large pot combine beef with remaining ingredients and heat well.
3. Serve with Fritos and any of your favorite taco toppings.

*This recipe will feed a large family but is easily halved for smaller families.*

## CURRENT EVENTS

**December 1-27 CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND**, Alton. Drive through to view more than 4 million lights decorating the park. Take your own free photos with Santa. Monday - Friday 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday 5 - 9 p.m. The 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.

**December 1-29 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS**, Shelbyville. Take the last entryway into the park to start your journey through the lights. The center of the park is lit up with the Chautauqua being a giant carousel. Stop by the Chautauqua building on Friday or Saturday from 5 - 9 p.m. and enjoy 30 plus trees decorated by various businesses and organizations. Donations are accepted at the end of the tour. 5 - 10 p.m. Forest Park, 324 East North 9th Street. Visit [lakeshelbyville.com](http://lakeshelbyville.com).

**December 1-31 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WONDERLAND**, Greenville. See our unique and extensive collection of light boxes, displays and lights, and holiday scenes. 5 - 9 p.m. Free-will donation. American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue. Visit [americanfarmheritagemuseum.org](http://americanfarmheritagemuseum.org).

**December 1-31 FANTASY OF LIGHTS**, Centralia. The lights will shine daily from dusk - 11 p.m. Foundation Park, 600 Pleasant Avenue. Visit [seecentralia.com](http://seecentralia.com).

**December 1-31 WINTER WONDERLAND OF LIGHTS**, Lebanon. Drive through holiday

light display, donations welcome and appreciated at the gate. 5 - 10 p.m. Horner Park, 11113 Widicus Road. Visit [lebanonswinterwonderland.org](http://lebanonswinterwonderland.org).

**December 1 - January 2 WONDERLAND IN LIGHTS**, Effingham. A drive through holiday light display at Community Park, East Temple Avenue. Sunday - Thursday 5-9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 5-10 p.m. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. To extend your festivities, visit the old courthouse at 100 East Jefferson Avenue to view larger-than-life, 3-D holiday light displays. Go to [visiteffinghamil.com](http://visiteffinghamil.com).

**December 1 - January 7 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. 1096 Lake Road. Visit [carlylelake.com](http://carlylelake.com).

**December 5-8, 12-15, 19-23 CHRISTKINDLMARKT**, Belleville. An open-air German Christmas market featuring unique vendors, food, and beverages, along with live entertainment and special attractions on specific dates. 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Sundays 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission is free. Downtown public square at Illinois Route 159 and Main Street. For details, visit [bellevillechristkindlmarkt.com](http://bellevillechristkindlmarkt.com).

**December 6-8 CHRISTMAS IN CARLINVILLE**, Carlinville. Enjoy the festivities and shopping at numerous locations throughout the community. Shops and restaurants will have specials

and tours will be taking place showing off Carlinville's beautiful courthouse decorated for the holidays. Trolleys and buses will be available to transport visitors to each holiday location. For details, visit [christmasincarlinville.com](http://christmasincarlinville.com).

**December 6-8 HOLIDAYS IN STAUNTON**, Staunton. Join us 4 - 8 p.m. on Friday at the Holiday Walk featuring local businesses, vendors, food trucks, lighting of Duda Park, live nativity and many other events. Saturday take part in the Holiday Hustle 5K at 9 a.m., followed by snacks with Santa 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The library will host story time once an hour on the hour. Sunday will feature the Community Christmas Concert at 3 p.m. and the Staunton High School Christmas Concert at 7 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call Dave at (618) 781-1745 or Carrie at (618) 635-3050.

**December 6-28 TINSEL & TAILS**, Effingham. This new holiday event will take patrons on a short golf cart ride to enjoy festive light exhibits, sip on hot chocolate, roast s'mores and get in plenty of snuggles by the fire pit. Every Friday and Saturday from 5 - 9 p.m. Last golf carts to go through at 8:45 p.m. Proceeds benefit EARS (Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary). Cardinal Golf Course, 15737 North Beach Road. Visit [effinghamanimalrescue.com](http://effinghamanimalrescue.com).

**December 7 GINGERBREAD 5K RUN/WALK**, Belleville. Kids dash starts at 8 a.m.; 5K run/walk 8:30 a.m. Online registration until December 6 is \$30; race day registration is \$35;

kids dash (ages 5 & younger) is \$15. Packet pick-up December 4-5 and race day starting at 7 a.m. Start and finish at Belleville Parks & Recreation Department, 510 West Main Street. Visit [gingerbreadrun.com](http://gingerbreadrun.com).

**December 7 HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS TOUR**, Elsah. Enjoy a walk through the historic Village of Elsah while touring selected homes decorated for the holidays. Tour also includes Farley Music Hall, Elsah Museum, the historic two-room school house, bed and breakfast inns, churches, and the village shops. 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. For tickets, visit [historicehsah.org](http://historicehsah.org) or call (314) 308-0931.

**December 7 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS**, Effingham. Enjoy the traditions of Christmas with horse drawn carriage rides, tractor train rides, live reindeer, entertainment, hot drinks, kettle corn and fun in Santa's workshop. 3 - 6 p.m. Downton on Jefferson Avenue. Visit [effinghamcountychamber.com](http://effinghamcountychamber.com).

**December 7 NUTCRACKER! SUGAR, ICE, AND EVERYTHING NICE**, Godfrey. Alton Symphony Orchestra performance featuring Tchaikovsky's beloved "Nutcracker" alongside festive sing-a-longs to lift your spirits through the power

*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](mailto:joe.richardson@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.





From top, Southwestern Electric rodeo team members, employees and their families pose for a photo; Lineworker's Safety Rodeo volunteer and Southwestern Electric Manager of Operations Neil Sperandio, center, explains the rules to competitors; Southwestern team members Braden Clark, Dustin Kemp and James Rickermann show off their hardware.



► *Continued from page 12*


important, Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams said, but just as important is what the linemen got out of the experience.

"Aside from the competition itself, it's just a great opportunity to network with people from the other co-ops," Williams said. "It gives crews an opportunity to see their colleagues from other cooperatives and see how they do things, learn some tricks and ways of doing things differently than they do on a day-to-day basis. I think it was a great experience.

"In an outage situation, when you're trying to get the power back on, it's hard to think outside of the box. You're used to doing what you normally do," Williams said. "Having an environment where you're having a fun day showing your skills, you're able to sit back and take in some other ways of doing things. Talking to the guys, they picked up a couple of things. It was a great way to learn to adapt and overcome and learn how to move on the fly and find the safe, appropriate way to get something done."

And while this year was the first in more than two decades that Southwestern Electric entered a team into the rodeo, it won't be the last. Clark said he and his teammates are "definitely going to try to recruit more guys" to join them in Springfield next year, and Rickermann suggested they "might have to have our own little tryouts" to determine who gets to represent the cooperative.

Williams liked that idea, saying the co-op might even have its own "quasi-rodeo" at its annual Safety Day event, possibly pitting the linemen representing the cooperative's three districts against each other in a friendly competition.

"I'm curious," Williams said, "to see where this takes us." 

► *Continued from page 24*  
of song. Also performing will be our Deborah Fox Guild award winner. 7 p.m. Adult \$10; child \$5. Lewis & Clark Community College, Ann Whitney Olin Theatre, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Visit [alton-symphonyorchestra.org](http://alton-symphonyorchestra.org).

**December 7** PINK ELEPHANT ANTIQUE MALL OPEN HOUSE, Livingston. Come celebrate the holiday season with us. Light refreshments and snacks will be served all day. 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. Visit [pinkelphantantiquemall.com](http://pinkelphantantiquemall.com).

**December 7 & 8** ABOB OLDE ALTON ARTS & CRAFT FAIR, Alton. Over 200 crafters selling their best wares. Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. and \$3 admission; Sunday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. and \$2 admission; children 12 years of age and younger are free. No strollers please. All proceeds support our students in the band and orchestra programs. Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Road. Visit [abob.net/craft-fair](http://abob.net/craft-fair).

**December 7 - January 1** FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, Vandalia. Enjoy a stroll through Christmas lights at Rogier Park, Filmore Street. 5 - 9 p.m. Visit [facebook.com/OTCFestivalofLights](http://facebook.com/OTCFestivalofLights).

**December 13 & 14** AREA 66 HAUNTED SCHOOL HOLIDAY EDITION, Livingston. 7 - 11 p.m. Admission is \$19.99. The Pink Elephant Antique Mall, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For tickets, visit [area66hauntedschool.fearticket.com](http://area66hauntedschool.fearticket.com).

**December 13-15, 19-22** ALTON LITTLE THEATER: A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$22; children 17 years of age and younger \$18. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**December 14** HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS, O'Fallon. Event features indoor/outdoor winter market, outdoor live music, holiday lights, a visit from Santa, story time at the caboose and more. 4 - 8 p.m. Downtown District, 212 East 1st Street. Visit [ofallonparksandrec.com](http://ofallonparksandrec.com).

**December 14** OLD BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL LUMINARY WALK, Belleville. Stroll luminary-lined Abend and Garfield Streets while touring historic homes. Carolers, food truck pod, and Christmas photo opportunities are available. Koerner House, Garfield Saloon and Emma Kunz House will be open to the public. Noon - 9 p.m. Admission is free. Old Belleville Historic District, 200 Abend Street. Call (618) 799-1088.

**December 14** STATEHOUSE CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE, Vandalia. The oldest surviving capitol building in Illinois is opening its doors to the public for candlelight tours. The building will be illuminated by more than 150 candles and trimmed with holiday decorations. The site also will be collecting non-perishable or canned food items that will be donated to the local food pantry. The first 100 families to visit will receive a free Christmas ornament. Free refreshments will be available. 5 - 7 p.m. Vandalia Statehouse State Historic Site, 315 West Gallatin. Visit [facebook.com/VandaliaStatehouseStateHistoricSite](http://facebook.com/VandaliaStatehouseStateHistoricSite).

**December 14 & 15** ARRIVAL WEEKEND, Hartford. On December 12, 1803, the Lewis & Clark Expedition arrived at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and fixed on a place to build Camp River Dubois. Arrival Weekend features exhibitors of vintage tools, firearms, rocks and minerals, 18th Century medicine, military re-enactors and artillery. See how the Corps of Discovery lived during their winter encampment. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, One Lewis & Clark

Trail. Call (618) 251-5811 or visit [campdubois.com](http://campdubois.com).

**December 14 & 15** CHRISTMAS CONCERT: JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM, Highland. Celebrate Christmas with the Heartland Community Chorus. The highlight of this program will be Vivaldi's "Gloria", performed with a chamber orchestra and soloists Christine Guthrie and Keith Wehmeier. Saturday at 7 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. St. Paul Catholic Church, 1412 Main Street. For ticket information, visit [heartlandcommunitychorus.org](http://heartlandcommunitychorus.org).

**December 14 & 28** MODEL TRAIN SHOW OPEN HOUSE, Glen Carbon. Visitors are welcome to view trains running on the Club's 18 x 27-foot HO Scale model railroad. Snacks provided. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. Metro East Model Railroad Club, 180 Summit Street. For more information, call Bob at (618) 476-9228, or Bill at (618) 531-1589, or visit [trainweb.org/memrc](http://trainweb.org/memrc).

**December 19** MAIN STREET MINGLE: HOLIDAY EDITION, Belleville. Enjoy an evening of shopping, happy hour specials, live music, visit the Christkindlmarkt, Santa's house and free horse-drawn trolley rides. 4 - 8 p.m. Downtown at 216 East A Street. Visit [bellevillemainstreet.net](http://bellevillemainstreet.net).

**January 3-5** LET'S GO FISHING SHOW, Collinsville. There will be a wide variety of fishing gear, live demonstrations, kids activities, 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. Visit [gatewaycenter.com](http://gatewaycenter.com).

**January 4** EAGLE ICE FESTIVAL, Alton. Get a bite to eat, see a live eagle from the World Bird Sanctuary, take an eagle-watching tour, and enjoy fun winter activities for all ages. The celebration will take place


at FLOCK Food Truck Park, 210 Ridge Street, National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way and the Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, MO. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Event is free. Visit [riversandrout.es.com](http://riversandrout.es.com).

**January 4, 11, 18, 25; February 1, 8, 15, 22** EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS, Alton. Enjoy a 45-minute guided tour of some of the best American bald eagle watching spots around the Alton area. Sites may include Clifton Terrace, Audubon Center, Maple Island and National Great Rivers Museum. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather. Shuttles are limited to 15 passengers and are not ADA accessible. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Tours at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Admission is \$15. Alton Visitor's Center, 200 Piasa Street. For tickets, visit [riversandrout.es.com](http://riversandrout.es.com).

**January 11, 25** EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Grafton. The World Bird Sanctuary will bring a bald eagle for up-close viewing. Take a photo with one of the handsome birds and learn interesting facts about eagles and their conservation. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Grafton Visitor Center, 950 East Main Street. Visit [riversandrout.es.com](http://riversandrout.es.com).

**January 12** BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL AND LIVE BIRD SHOW, Grafton. Meet our nation's majestic symbol up close. Festival will have numerous unique vendors, restaurant favorites, drink specials, free face painting, live bird shows, and more. Our Master's of the Sky Bird Show, presented by The World Bird Sanctuary, will introduce and educate guests about magnificent winged creatures such as owls, falcons and eagles. Show times will be at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Admission fees apply. 11 - 3 p.m. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Call (618) 786-2331, ext. 338 or visit [pmlodge.net](http://pmlodge.net).





A moment of  
silent reflection  
at Watershed  
Nature Center in  
Edwardsville.

## THE FINAL FRAME



