

THE *Southwestern*

A utility worker wearing a hard hat and safety gear is positioned in a white bucket truck, working on a wooden utility pole. The worker is using a tool to adjust or secure a wire. The background shows a residential area with bare trees and a clear sky, suggesting a winter or late autumn setting. The overall scene is one of maintenance and preparation for the cold season.

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

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STORM STORY

WEATHERING THE
WINDS OF DECEMBER

POWER PLANNING

TAKE STEPS NOW
TO ENSURE COMFORT
YEAR-ROUND

FROM THE CEO
YOUR NEW BILL

HOMESERVE
ASSURANCE

SCHOLARSHIP
DEADLINE
APPROACHES

SMART SAVINGS

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

EXPLORE THE PAST
WITH LEWIS & CLARK

DIP INTO FLAVOR

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

03 From the CEO

How does a founding principal of the co-op inform today's approach to negotiating wholesale power pricing? Bobby Williams covers the topic in this month's column.

04 New Bill Format

Last month we referenced a new, more informative bill due to launch in January. Didn't happen. Here's the story.

06 Home Assurance

Southwestern has partnered with HomeServe to help you protect your finances from unexpected repairs to your home's electrical system.

07 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. This year,

Southwestern will distribute \$11,000 in scholarships. Here's how to apply.

07 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.

08 Storm Story

In December 2021, tornadoes swept across Southwestern Electric's service area. Our crews were ready to respond.

14 Energy & Efficiency

There are a number of devices designed to help you save energy — and money. Julie Lowe, energy manager, shares a few of her favorites.

15 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.

16 Health & Safety

Severe storms can cause extended outages in any season. Create a backup power plan now to ensure your family's comfort and safety year-round.

18 Out & About

Launch a voyage of discovery at the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Hartford.

20 Who-What-Where?

We challenge you to name a famous figure from Illinois' past and identify the antique featured in our December 2021 puzzle.

22 Co-op Kitchen

You've stocked up on crackers, pretzels and chips. Now all that's left is to whip up some dip. Need a recipe? We've got you covered.

24 Current Events

Spot eagles along the Mississippi, scope out the stars above Godfrey,

chill out with the Ice Jam at the Dam in East Alton, go for a polar plunge in Collinsville, Carlyle and Effingham, and catch performances at the Looking Glass Playhouse and The Hett in Lebanon.

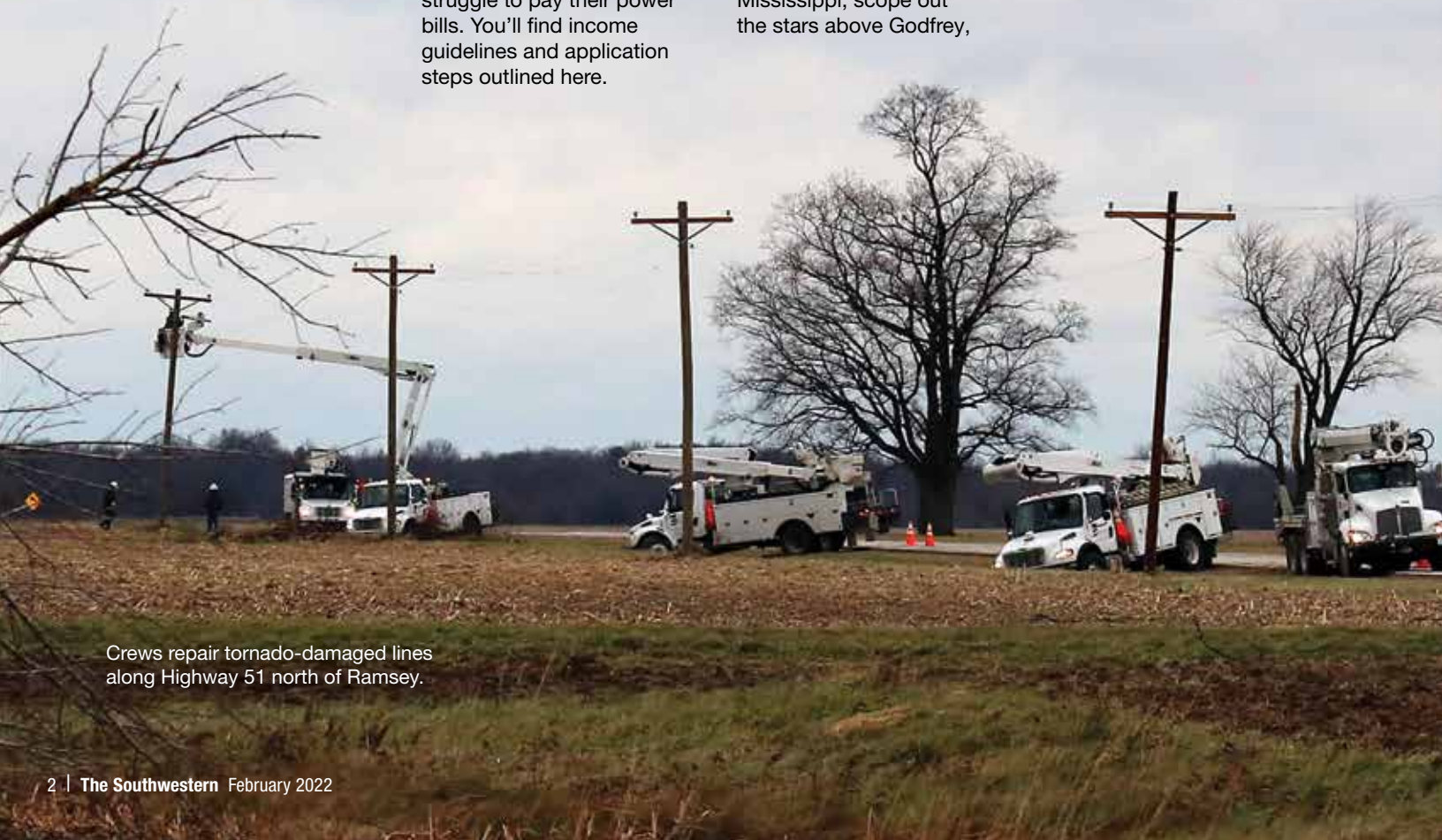
25 End Note

Mark the moments.

27 Final Frame

Ill winds.

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!



Crews repair tornado-damaged lines along Highway 51 north of Ramsey.

FROM THE CEO



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I'll open this month by thanking new Southwestern Electric member Cheryl Maguire of Maryville for the email that inspired this column. Cheryl, who recently lived on Ameren lines, asked about aggregate electrical pricing. "Area cities pool together and contract for a competitive aggregate residential electric rate, through an outside supplier," she wrote, aptly describing the approach to competitive pricing. "Has Southwestern Electric ever considered taking this same approach for rates?"

Great question, Cheryl. As a cooperative, aggregate bargaining is the approach we've taken to securing economical rates for 83 years.

In the 1930s, investor-owned utilities weren't interested in serving rural America. There weren't enough consumers per mile of line to offer a sound return on their investment. So rural residents — many of them farmers — banded together, and with help from the Rural Electrification Act, formed not-for-profit electric cooperatives. Some co-ops pooled their resources to build power plants. Others, like Southwestern, signed contracts with power suppliers, which offered flexibility in wholesale pricing and bargaining power as our membership grew.

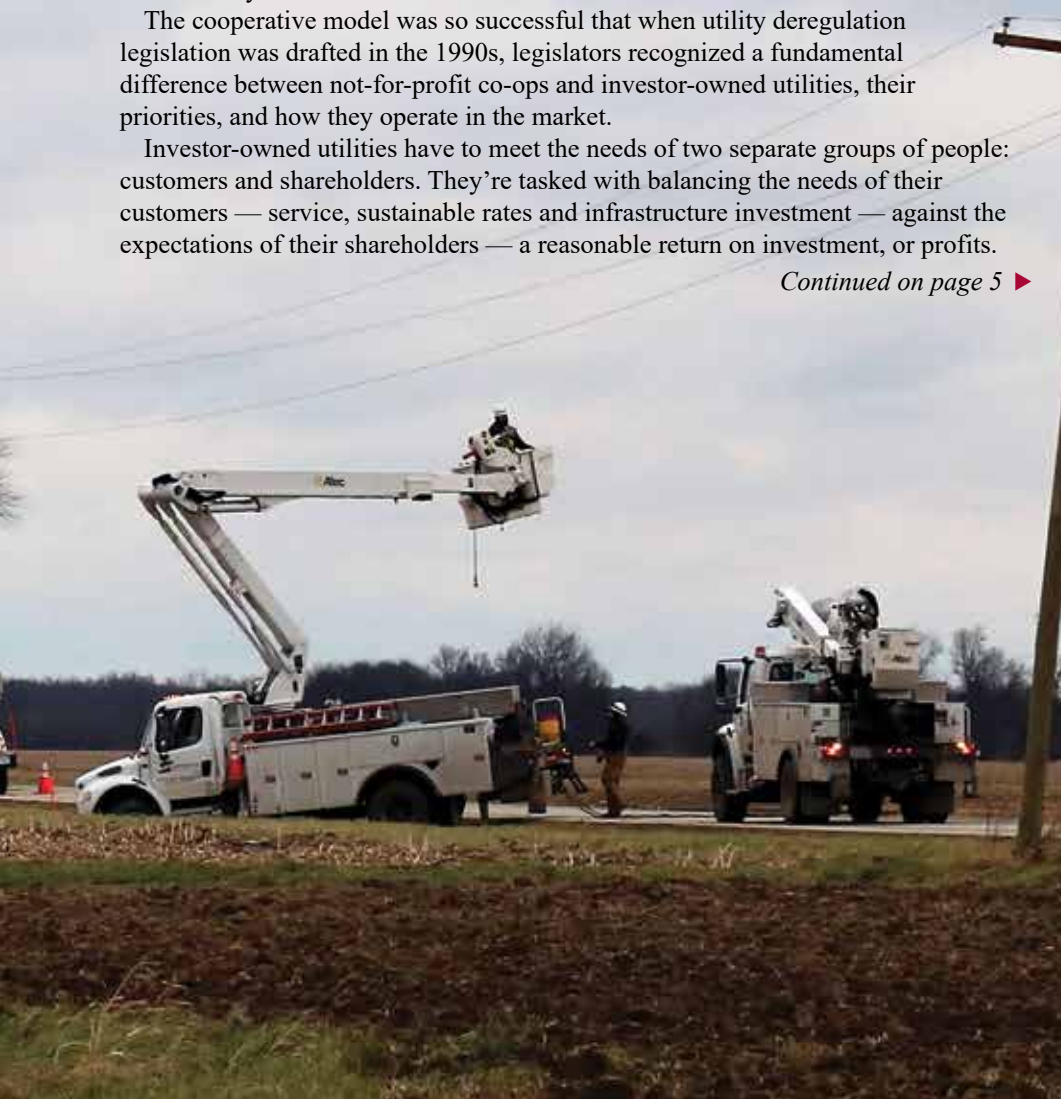
In essence, we brought individual rural consumers together to secure electric service and more competitive pricing than they could achieve individually.

Our founding principles — open and voluntary membership, democratic member control, members' economic participation, autonomy and independence, education and communication, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community—live on today.

The cooperative model was so successful that when utility deregulation legislation was drafted in the 1990s, legislators recognized a fundamental difference between not-for-profit co-ops and investor-owned utilities, their priorities, and how they operate in the market.

Investor-owned utilities have to meet the needs of two separate groups of people: customers and shareholders. They're tasked with balancing the needs of their customers — service, sustainable rates and infrastructure investment — against the expectations of their shareholders — a reasonable return on investment, or profits.

Continued on page 5 ►



New Bill Format Expected In February

The new bill format we said you'd see in January? Obviously it was delayed. The day after our January issue went to press (in December), we learned the new bill was behind schedule. When your January magazine arrived, you found an article addressing the new bill as if it was in your hands. That would be why. We've addressed the breakdown in communication and will strive to do better in the future.

Editor's Note:

I'm told the new bill format will appear in February. As I understand it, there are still coding issues to resolve, so, time will tell.

While I have you here, I'd like to thank you for reading the magazine, for your letters, your emails, for your contributions to our Members in Focus segment, and for participating in our puzzle pages. You are, without doubt, the best part of our publication. We're grateful.

Hope you had a Merry Christmas and your new year is off to a great start. Wishing you all the best in 2022.



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.



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.

ON THE COVER

Lineman Tyler Kunz works in frigid wind to secure new lines to a freshly set pole near Ramsey, during the December 2021 tornado repair effort. See the story on page 8.



CO-OP REMINDERS

February 14 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.

March 4 Southwestern scholarship application deadline.

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.

► Continued from page 3

In a cooperative, there are no competing interests. Our customers *are* our shareholders. You, Cheryl, are part-owner of Southwestern Electric. Revenue we make that exceeds what we need to purchase energy, build and maintain our substations, poles and power lines, and operate the business, is returned to you. We call your equity in the cooperative *capital credit*. You can think of it as a rebate equal to the margins we make. Last year, Southwestern Electric returned \$2.4 million in capital credits to longtime members. We included an article about our approach to returning capital credits in the January issue of our magazine. You can find the issue online at sweci.com.

Since you've recently relocated from Ameren's service area, you've noticed there's a difference in our rates. What may not be as apparent is the difference in our numbers — our members per mile of line.

On average, Southwestern Electric serves about seven homes per mile of line. Investor-owned utilities average 34 households per mile of line. Municipal utilities? They average 48 homes per mile. In terms of elbow room, we're hard to beat. In terms of households per mile of line, we're at an economic disadvantage. Here's what I mean:

The cost for a utility to build a mile of line is relatively consistent. Southwestern Electric's cost, a municipal utility's cost, and an investor-owned utility's cost to build a mile of line are all about the same. That's also true of maintenance — the cost of keeping a mile of line clear of trees is relatively consistent, whether you're a co-op, municipal or investor-owned utility.

Let's revisit the numbers I shared a moment ago. Municipal utilities are recouping their cost to build and maintain a mile of line from revenue generated by 48 households. Investor-owned utilities are recouping their investment through revenue collected from 34 households. Our number is seven; we're building and maintaining that mile of power line with revenue generated by about seven households. So municipalities

are dividing their cost of service per mile of line among 48 customers. Investor-owned utilities are dividing their cost per mile of line among 34 consumers. We're dividing our cost among seven of you.

Looking at the numbers, you would expect our rates to be about five times higher than the neighboring investor-owned utility. That isn't the case. So how do we provide affordable, reliable, quality service, when — compared to investor-owned and municipal utilities — we recoup operating costs from so few households per mile of line?

It goes back to the difference between not-for-profit cooperatives and investor-owned utilities. Investor-owned utilities are expected to make a profit. We aren't. Any revenue we make that exceeds what we need to provide safe, reliable power, we return to you. We will always work to serve you to the best of our ability, be it in person, by email, on the phone, or when we're leveraging the negotiating power of a membership 24,000-strong to offer you economical electric rates.

Thank you for making time to write, Cheryl. Since your question provided the foundation for this month's column, we're applying a \$25 credit to your electric bill. Welcome to Southwestern Electric Cooperative. We're happy to have you as a member.

Whether you're new to Southwestern or a lifelong member, I encourage you to reach out to me at bobby.williams@sweci.com with your questions. I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, stay healthy and stay safe.

Bobby Williams, CEO



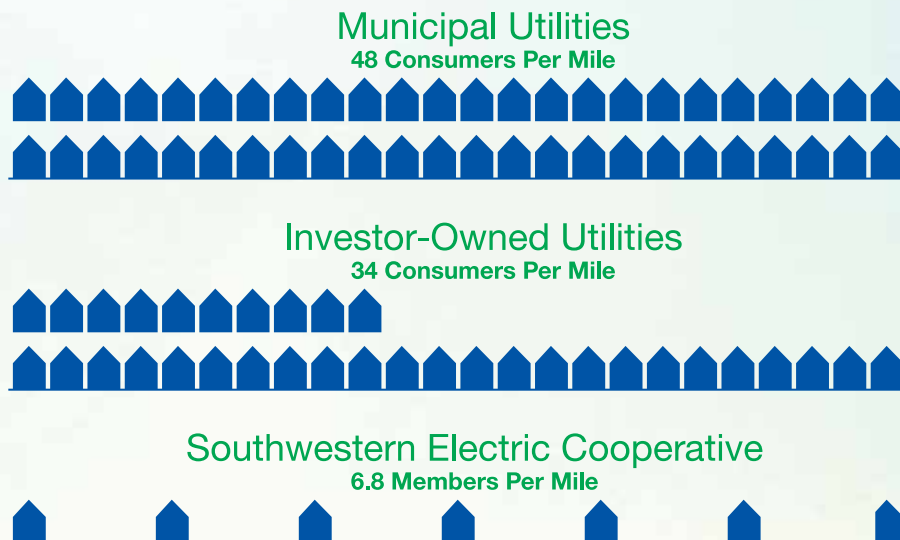
bobby.williams@sweci.com

MEMBERS ACROSS THE MILES

Across America, electric cooperatives maintain more miles of power line per consumer than other electric utilities. That means we collect less revenue per mile of line than municipal and investor-owned utilities.

As a not-for-profit utility, we go the extra mile to make the most of your investment — delivering safe, reliable, affordable energy to you, your friends and neighbors, and your communities.

Statistics provided by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Administration based on 2017 data.





Home Service Repair Plans Offer Assurance, Quality and Convenience

We've all experienced home mechanical and system failures. When breakdowns involve exterior home electrical lines, members sometimes call Southwestern to request repairs. Many members understandably assume all electrical lines outside their home are owned by the cooperative. But components that connect a member's home to the cooperative's distribution system — elements like the weather head, insulator, riser, meter base or loop, and service entrance conductor — are owned by the member.

When those elements fail, you find yourself facing bills you hadn't budgeted for. If the issue is related to aging parts and normal wear and tear on the system, your homeowners insurance may not cover the cost of repairs. That's why Southwestern partnered with HomeServe USA, an independent provider of home repair service solutions. HomeServe offers home service repair plans that protect a homeowner's budget from sudden, often significant expenses that come with water, sewer, electrical and heating and cooling home emergencies. Their external electrical line plan will pay for repair or replacement of items that your homeowners insurance may not cover when the components fail due to normal wear and tear.

If something goes wrong with a system or appliance covered by a HomeServe repair plan, the member can call HomeServe anytime, 24/7, at 833-334-1874. The company will dispatch

a pre-screened, local repair technician to the member's home to diagnose the problem. The technician will fix the issue or replace the covered item as detailed in the home repair plan.

HOW HOMESERVE HELPS

HomeServe is available to take emergency repair calls around the clock.



Photos courtesy Modern Photographic by Dave Noonan

Technicians dispatched through HomeServe are local, licensed and insured. Their work is covered by a one-year HomeServe guarantee.

HomeServe lessens the financial burden of unexpected breakdowns by paying the bill on covered repairs up to the benefit amount, and eases the stress and inconvenience that comes with the event. You don't have to research repair bids or vet and hire a technician.

And if the work doesn't measure up to your expectations? HomeServe will work to address the issue as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

HELPING US HELP YOU

Southwestern has partnered with HomeServe to offer home service repair plans as an optional member service. No one is obligated to buy a plan. Southwestern recommends that members interested in a plan speak with their insurance agent before buying, to make sure the terms and conditions listed in the plan aren't already addressed by your homeowners policy.

HomeServe will return a portion of the proceeds from plan sales to Southwestern Electric. The funds will be dedicated to support efforts like Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program.

You can read more about HomeServe at www.HomeServe.com and view nearly 100 informational videos on HomeServe's YouTube channel.

FINAL REMINDER: **SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS** **DUE MARCH 4**



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, 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**.

**Applications may be downloaded from
Southwestern's website at www.sweci.com
or picked up from the co-op's office at 525 US
Route 40 in Greenville.**

**For more information on the Power for Progress
Scholarship Program, please contact Susan File
at 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 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.

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.

STORM STORY

A photograph of a utility truck with a crane arm, carrying large logs on a trailer, with two workers in the background. The truck is white with a crane arm that has the 'Atec' logo. The logs are large and have metal chocks on the ends. Two workers in orange safety gear and hard hats are standing near the logs. The background shows a wooded area with bare trees and a cloudy sky.

*Weathering the
Winds of December*

Southwestern linemen set a pole north of Ramsey, where a tornado damaged homes, tore apart outbuildings, and destroyed trees and parts of the co-op's distribution system.



I can still smell the timber. A month after the Dec. 10 tornado outbreak, I'm sifting through images from Fayette County. Specifically, I'm looking at shots of Highway 51 and a pair of county roads north of Ramsey taken the morning after the storm.

By the time I arrived, our forestry crews were finished. They'd worked through the night, cutting and clearing countless trees and branches from miles of blacktop. Bucket trucks traveled roads that, hours earlier, had been impassable.

Continued on next page ►



► *Continued from page 9*

Our line crews had worked overnight as well. Trucks with booms, buckets and linemen aloft were scattered along the shoulder of Highway 51. By daylight our linemen had finished the heavy lifting along the highway. Broken poles and downed wire were gone. New poles were standing in their place. By midmorning, crews were bolting crossarms to poles and preparing to replace wire.

There's extensive damage northeast of the highway site. I follow directions delivered by our eastern district maintenance foreman, and drive up on spans of downed wire, missing poles, and a line of trucks.

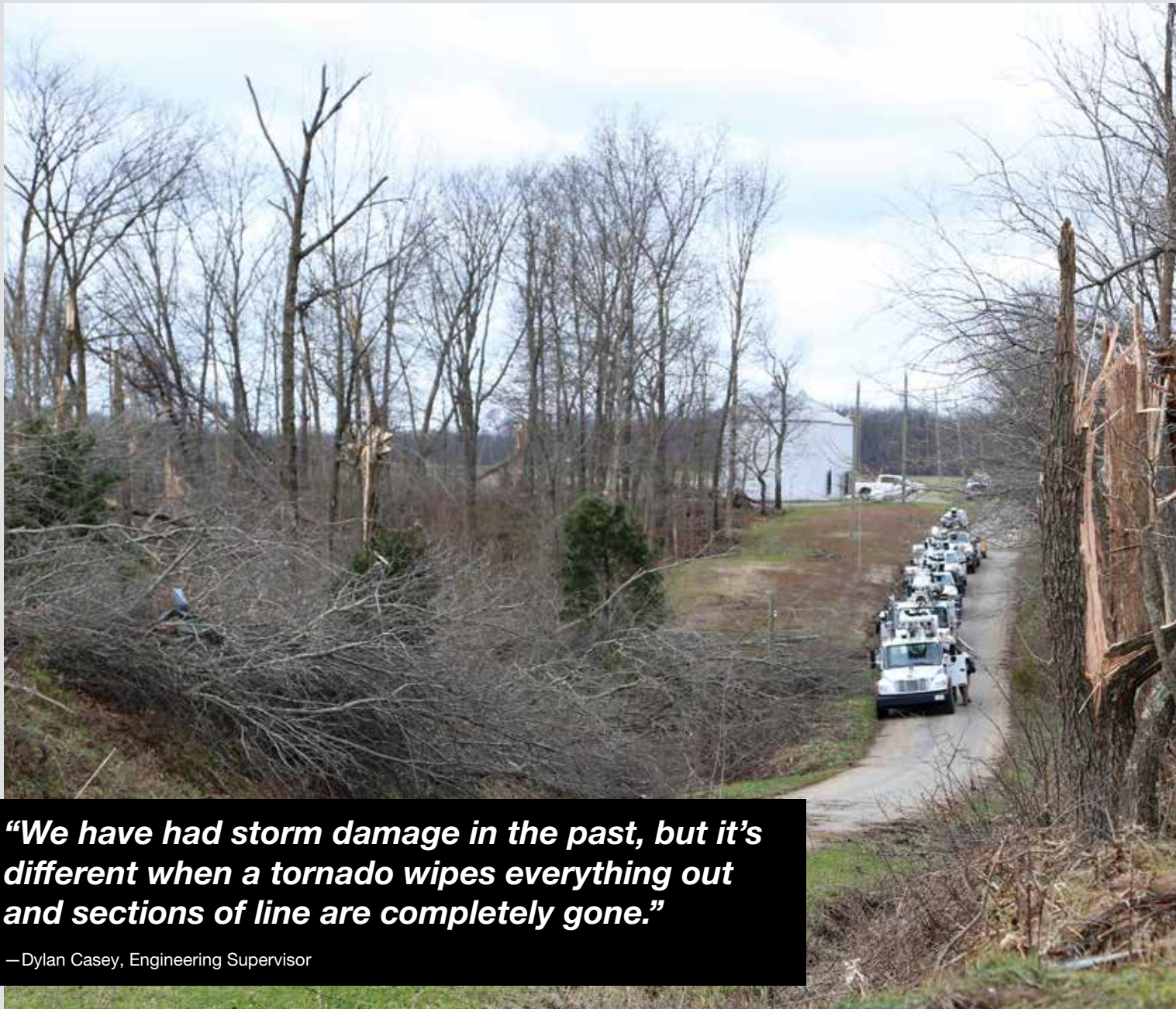
Here, the tornado has pushed poles askew, snapped others in two, and carried some away. It's also ripped up about a mile of line. The trucks are parked near a debris field that, a day prior, had been an outbuilding. Nearby, the tornado topped off

a little grove of hardwoods and split their trunks to the ground. It smells like a sawmill, like fresh planed timber. I walk what's left of the stand. I don't find the treetops.

Nearer the road, crews dressed in winter gear are using booms and hand tools to tear pole stubs from damp earth. Minutes later they're planting new poles in place of the old. The work is muddy, meticulous, precise and demanding. The wind and cold aren't making it easier.

The linemen are quiet. Focused. Tired, certainly. They've heard about the deaths in Edwardsville and lives lost in Kentucky. They repair what they can, as safely and effectively as they can, restoring heat and light to members who aren't home. They're out clearing their land, or in trucks and cars and four-wheelers, surveying the generations-old trees and buildings they've lost, and counting themselves lucky.

Continued on page 12 ►



“We have had storm damage in the past, but it’s different when a tornado wipes everything out and sections of line are completely gone.”

—Dylan Casey, Engineering Supervisor



Leo Dublo (above), maintenance foreman, surveys several spans of new line. CEO Bobby Williams (right) directs traffic around downed lines. Crews from Madison, Bond and Fayette counties (below) converge north of Ramsey to repair poles destroyed by the storm.



RAPID RESPONSE

When storms swept across Southwestern Electric's service area the evening of Friday, Dec. 10, the cooperative's engineering and operations teams were ready to respond. Minutes after tornadoes touched down in Madison County, the co-op deployed crews to assess the damage and begin repairs.

As the storms tracked east, Dylan Casey, engineering supervisor for Southwestern Electric, monitored reports and developed a response plan to address outages caused by isolated, significant structure damage from tornadoes and high winds.

Casey brought in the cooperative's Dispatch Department, and together the team assessed the ever-growing number of damage reports. They also coordinated the movement of crews performing on-site assessments and repairs. "We have had storm damage in the past, but it's different when a tornado wipes everything out and sections of line are completely gone," Casey said.

"We saw damage in all three districts of our service area, but by far the worst was in Fayette County," he noted. One of the tornadoes that swept across Southwestern's service area destroyed about 20 poles along roads north of Ramsey. Many were in heavily wooded areas. Debris-blocked roads posed a significant challenge to St. Elmo linemen performing on-site damage assessments during the initial response phase. Southwestern's forestry crews played a vital role in clearing the way.

Multiple crews worked within a few miles of each other during the Ramsey restoration effort, Casey said. "We had a lot of trucks and about 20 guys working on a section of line. Our team worked well together."

By the evening of Dec. 11, crews had completed repairs and restored power. "It takes good communication and teamwork to get a section of line repaired that fast," he noted.

In total, more than 300 members lost power during the storm, which downed more than a mile of line.


► *Continued from page 10*

Early in the day the skies are dark, mirroring the mood of anyone who's watched the news. The wind is cold, relentless. Strong enough to tumble debris across a field south of the work site. In the right of way at the edge of the field, 30 feet up, where the temperature is colder and the wind is stronger still, linemen in buckets are attaching wire to pole tops.

By midday the wind has cracked the clouds. By early afternoon it's swept them from the sky, leaving it brilliant blue. The temperature continues to drop. The crews continue to work, repairing spans at a time. They've set about 16 poles along the county roads where the tornado came to ground. Once again, they're unspooling new wire to replace damaged line. Within an hour they've attached it to the poles they set.

By evening they've restored power to every home in the area save one, which is tucked in the timber at the top of a hill, well off the road. Here, the repairs will require more attention, and a little more time.

Tornadoes and high winds have destroyed poles and downed lines in other parts of the co-op's service area as well. In Madison, Bond, Fayette and Effingham counties, crews followed in the wake of the storm, clearing trees, replacing poles, repairing lines.

Less than 24 hours after the storm struck, co-op crews have restored heat and light to more than 300 members across 80 miles of Southwestern's system. It's a remarkable achievement, and one they can be proud of as they head home to a hot meal, and some well-earned rest. 



Crews work in frigid winds to repair tornado-damaged lines along a Fayette County road (above) and Highway 51 (below). Rick Mersinger (upper right), maintenance foreman, guides a new pole into position using a remote.





Rob Nesbit (left), maintenance foreman, prepares to attach new steel-reinforced aluminum conductor to a pole. Above: Storm debris lodges in a fallen tree. Below (l-r): Brian Bast, Rick Mersinger and Braden Clark (also in the inset) deploy new conductor east of Highway 51. Bast and Clark are journeymen linemen and Mersinger is a Southwestern Electric maintenance foreman.



Smart Savings

by Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

SMART DEVICES CAN IMPROVE COMFORT WHILE LOWERING YOUR ENERGY BILL

There are many appliances and devices on the market today designed to help you save energy — and saving energy means saving money. Here are a few of our favorites.

SMART THERMOSTAT

Smart thermostats perform many of the same functions as regular programmable thermostats, as they allow you to control the temperature in your home throughout the day using a schedule. But they also offer additional features, such as sensors and Wi-Fi connectivity, that allow you to adjust your home's environment remotely using your mobile or internet-connected device. This capability makes operation more convenient, offering more control of heating and cooling, and therefore more control of energy savings.

Some smart thermostats, such as the Nest Thermostat, can “learn” when the house is likely to be occupied and when it is likely to be empty, by using the location services on your mobile phone. This allows automatic pre-heating or pre-cooling, so the temperature is comfortable when you arrive. If your schedule or lifestyle change, the smart thermostat will gradually adjust to accommodate your new routine, maintaining energy savings and comfort.



Most of these smart thermostats also come with energy reports. The reports are free and easy to read, and depending on the model, can include an hour-by-hour breakdown of your home's thermostat data, inside temperature versus outside temperature by readings, humidity levels, etc.

While smart thermostats may be a wise investment for some homes, they won't work with all HVAC systems. For most smart thermostats to work, a strong Wi-Fi signal is necessary.

SMART POWER STRIP

Traditional power strips are an affordable way to expand the number of electrical outlets in your home. The downside is that the convenience of the strip can encourage you to leave electronics plugged in all the time — and many devices continue to draw energy even when you aren't using them! DVD players, computers and TVs are all examples of products that may use significant energy in standby mode. This “phantom power” drain costs money and wastes energy.

Smart power strips work to reduce your energy usage by shutting down power to products that go into standby mode. For example, when a TV plugged into a basic smart power strip goes into standby mode, its power consumption drops. The circuitry within the strip detects the change and cuts the power to that outlet while maintaining power to other outlets on the strip.

Some smart power strips let you group items together, turning all of them on or off at the same time. Such a strip would be useful for devices that you can only use when the TV is on, like a DVD player or a gaming system.

Smart power strips come with a range of options, from basic to more high-tech

— including surge protection and motion detection.

SMART PLUG

Smart plugs are an easy and affordable way to turn ordinary appliances, lighting and other electronics into devices you can control from your smart phone.

Installation is simple. You plug the smart plug into a wall outlet or power strip. Then you plug the device of your choice into the smart plug. It's that easy. You won't gain or lose an outlet—you're making an existing outlet smart by connecting it to your home Wi-Fi network.



You'll need to install an app on your phone that's compatible with the smart plug of your choosing. From the app you will be able to control the power to the plug and schedule on and off times. Additionally, some apps support energy monitoring.

Installation is the same for all smart plugs; the variation comes with the smart phone and app you will be using. There are many models available. Compare cost and features to determine which will best fit your needs.

For more energy-saving tips, contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at 800-637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com.

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.

POWER PLANNING



BEWARE OF DOWNED LINES

After a storm, be alert for downed power lines. Treat all downed or hanging power lines as if they're energized. Warn others to stay away and report the location to Southwestern Electric immediately.

REACHING OUT

The ability to communicate during an outage is vital. A traditional corded phone will usually operate during an outage. A cordless phone with a base which relies on power usually won't. Keep your cellular phone fully charged and handy when forecasts suggest a storm is likely. If you don't own a mobile phone, consider buying one with an economy plan to use in emergencies.

Severe storms can cause extended outages in any season. Create a backup power plan now to ensure your family's comfort and safety year-round.

Power interruptions are usually measured in minutes or hours. But when a storm damages infrastructure system-wide, an outage can last for days. No one can predict when the next powerful storm will strike. Forming a backup power plan today will help you weather an extended outage safely.

Your plan can be as simple as making arrangements to stay with a friend or family member (who lives on a different circuit) during an outage.

If friends and family aren't nearby, look into purchasing a standby generator. Investing in a standby generator is the most reliable way to ensure you always have electricity. In this month's Health & Safety section, we've offered several items you'll want to consider as you develop your backup power plan.

On Account: If your account number is 83822001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.

Check in with neighbors to see if you're the only home without service. If you are, check your electrical box for tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses.

If you can't source your outage to your electrical box or your neighbors are also without power, report your outage using the SWEC IL app, or call us at 800-637-8667. The line is staffed 24 hours per day. Your call will be answered by a Southwestern Electric employee or a representative of the co-op's emergency response service. Be prepared to give the operator your name, address, telephone number and account number.

Don't rely on e-mail or social media to contact the cooperative during an outage or other emergency. While our phones are constantly monitored, our e-mail and social media channels aren't.

During an outage, it's a good idea to unplug or switch off lights and electric appliances, leaving on a light or two so you'll know when power is restored. Doing so will help you avoid overloading a circuit when the electricity comes back on. After your power is restored, turn on appliances and electrical devices one at a time.

Members who depend on electricity for medical reasons should develop a backup power plan now.



Electric pumps mounted to wells won't function without electricity. If you depend on a well for water, store plenty of extra water in case of a power outage. Water is a key ingredient of your emergency supply kit.

If you already have an emergency supply kit, take a few minutes now to make sure it's stocked and your supplies are fresh. If you don't have a kit, spend some time assembling one this week. Your kit should include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- High-calorie, non-perishable food like dried fruit or energy bars.
- A blanket or sleeping bag.
- A change of clothing and footwear per family member.
- A first aid kit, including prescription medicines.
- Emergency tools, including a battery-powered National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio and portable radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- An extra car key and a credit card or cash.
- Any special items needed by an infant, elderly, or disabled family member.
- Telephone numbers for medical emergencies, law enforcement, family members, and friends who may be able to offer assistance.
- Your Southwestern Electric account number and the co-op's phone number: 800-637-8667.



(800) 637-8667

GETAWAY TO THE WEST



Lewis & Clark State Historic Site in Hartford Brings Westward Expedition to Life

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

For some on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River, crossing the bridge to get to the big-city attractions on the other side is an odyssey in and of itself.

For Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, crossing the river was the least of their worries. The famous duo's early-1800s journey west to explore the newly acquired territory following the Louisiana Purchase began right in our backyard, and their entire journey is chronicled in great detail at the Lewis & Clark State Historic Site in Hartford. The historic site, opened in 2002 and owned and operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, features myriad artifacts, life-sized replicas and no shortage of information about the westward expedition.

Visitors can read not only about the trip itself, but also about the world as it was in 1803, from the complications Lewis and Clark faced in preparing for the trip to the dangers they might have

encountered along the way, and everything in between. A short video detailing the trek is shown at intervals throughout the day, and a 55-foot keelboat — cut in half to give guests a look inside — are just a few of the things to see and do inside the interpretive center.

Outside, a stone's throw from the building, a recreation of Camp Dubois was constructed, and nearby a settler's cabin offers a chance to physically step into the past. The cabin is currently undergoing some repair work and won't be open until later in spring, according to Site Superintendent Brad Winn, and the Camp Dubois structure is only for viewing from afar, but the point remains — the intrigue and authenticity of the site extend beyond the interpretive center's four walls.

And, perhaps best of all, for the travel-averse: Hartford is on the Illinois side of the river, so visitors can leave the voyaging to the experts.

GETTING THERE

Take Illinois Route 70 west, continuing onto Illinois Route 270 west. From there, take Exit 3 onto Illinois Route 3 north for roughly three miles. The Lewis & Clark State Historic Site is on the left, tucked back behind some railroad tracks and a canopy of trees.





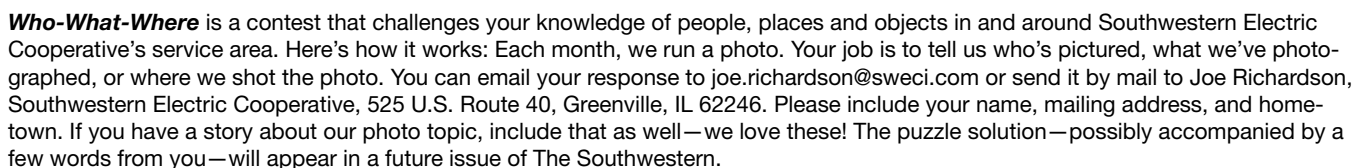
WHO • WHAT • WHERE

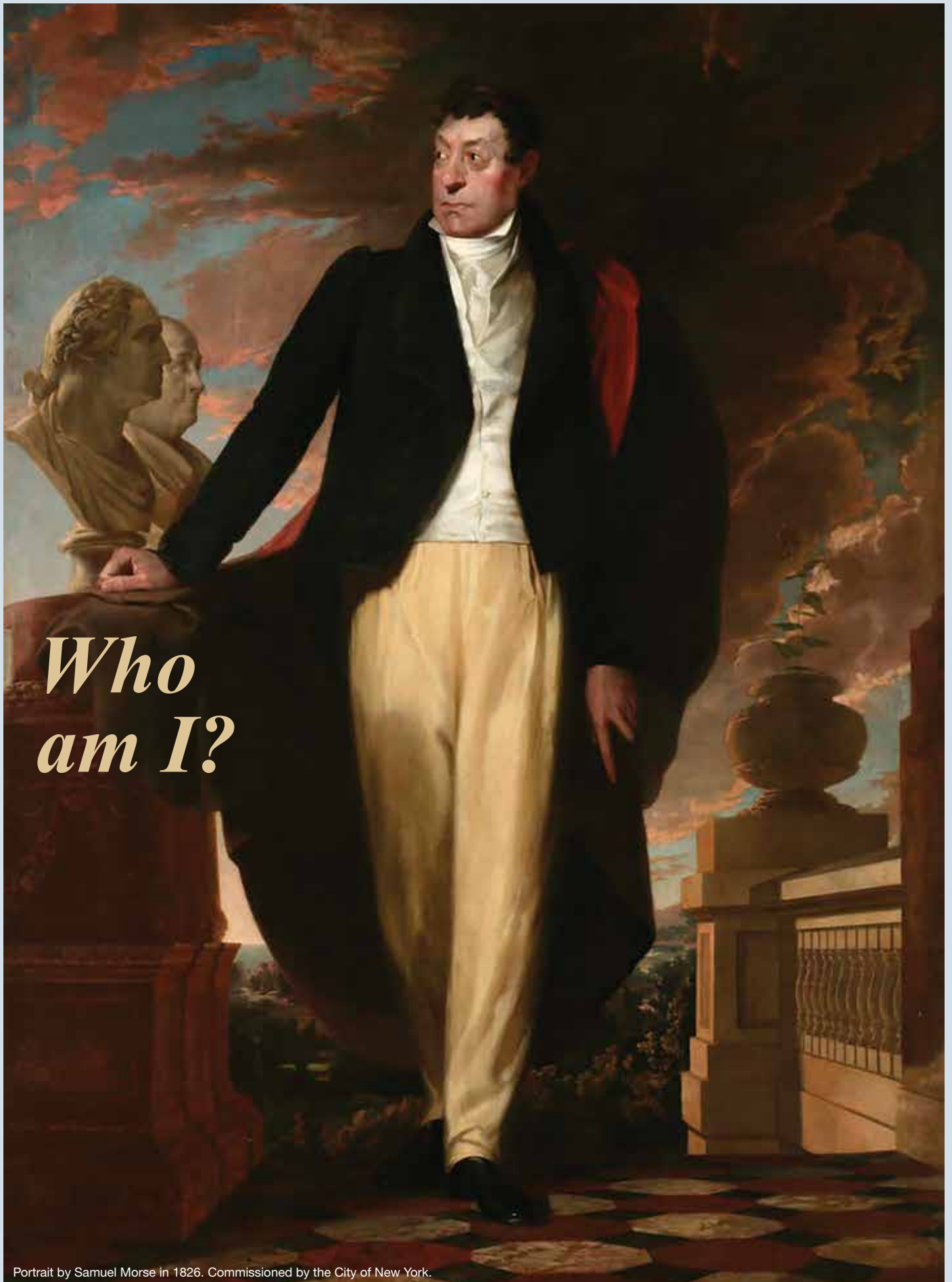
While in France, he helped to write the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a document inspired by

In his biography, “My Own Time,” published in 1855, Illinois Supreme Court Justice John Reynolds recalls meeting this historical figure in St. Louis, as he embarked on a tour of

Can you name the figure in the portrait? We look forward to your responses!

—*Bill Malec, O'Fallon*





*Who
am I?*

Portrait by Samuel Morse in 1826. Commissioned by the City of New York.

COVERING ‹ the › SPREAD

4 EASY GAME DAY PARTY PLEASERS

This month's recipes are courtesy of Bond County *Habitat for Humanity Cookbook* (hot crab dip, Mexican corn dip, and no bake spicy pretzels) and Fayette County Museum *35th Anniversary Cookbook* (buffalo chicken dip).

Hot Crab Dip



NO BAKE SPICY PRETZELS

Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) bag small pretzels
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon lemon pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 package ranch seasoning mix
- 1½ teaspoons cayenne pepper

Directions

1. Mix all ingredients in resealable bag, turning often to coat pretzels well.

HOT CRAB DIP

Ingredients

- ½ cup milk
- ⅓ cup salsa
- 3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese cubed
- 3 (8 ounce) packages imitation crab meat flaked and chopped
- 1 cup green onions thinly sliced
- 1 (4 ounce) can green chilies

Directions

1. Combine milk and salsa and transfer to greased slow cooker or crock pot.
2. Stir in cream cheese, crab, onions, and green chilies.
3. Heat on low for three hours, stirring often.
4. Serve with crackers.

The Southwestern Test Kitchen added 1½ teaspoons of Cajun seasoning for a little kick and served with bagel crisps for dipping.

BUFFALO CHICKEN DIP

Ingredients

- 16 ounces cream cheese
- 2 (12.5 ounce) cans shredded chicken
- ½ cup Frank's Red Hot sauce
- 1 cup Ranch dressing
- 2 cups cheddar cheese shredded

Directions

1. Place all ingredients in crock pot and heat until hot and cheese is melted stirring to combine.
2. Serve with crackers, tortilla chips, or celery.

MEXICAN CORN DIP

Ingredients

- 8 ounces sour cream
- 8 ounces Hellman's Real Mayonnaise
- 2 cans Mexican corn drained
- 1 small can green chilies
- 16 ounces cheddar cheese shredded
- garlic powder to taste

Directions

1. Mix together all ingredients except garlic powder.
2. Next add garlic powder to taste.
3. Refrigerate overnight if possible.
4. Serve with tortilla chips.

CURRENT EVENTS

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

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 lookingglassplayhouse.com.

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 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 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.

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.

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.

February 11-13, 16-20 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: WITH THIS RING, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For

tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

February 12 LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY, Springfield. Enjoy free admission to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in celebration of Lincoln's Birthday. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. 212 North 6th Street. Call (217) 558-8844 or visit presidentlincoln.illinois.gov.

February 16; March 18 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. February hike is 7:30 - 8:45 p.m. March hike is 8 - 9:15 p.m. Meet at the Talahi Lodge and be on time, as the hike leaves promptly at start time. 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.

February 17 MAD RIVER THEATER WORKS: FREEDOM RIDERS, Lebanon. Freedom Riders is the latest edition to the canon of American History plays by Mad River Theater Works. This new play, with original songs and music, explores the valiant and courageous personalities behind one of the most critical chapters in the history of the Civil Rights movement. Shows at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Adult \$25, senior \$23, student or child \$10, McKendree University students are free. The Hett Center

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. 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've seen the tree in every season, every weather, every light. It isn't pretty. It lacks the clean lines of a pine and the strong symmetry of an oak. In the fog it looks like a fugitive from a fairy tale — something that lumbered from the forest onto the prairie, and for want of a better place to be, put down roots. It isn't tall or broad or commanding. Doesn't call to mind any of the superlatives you think of when you think of a superlative tree.

But in a sea of grass, it stands out, because it stands alone.

~

Ten years ago I took a walk in the woods. Circled an inlet and wandered into tall grass. The tree stood like a specter against a sunset sky, akimbo and unexpected, like the monuments in the graveyard just outside its shadow. That's what the pilgrimage to the tree has become. A place to reflect and remember, grieve and give thanks, look back as I find my way forward.

A marker in a sea of days.

~

I didn't care to come today. The world is dark and drab and dishwater gray. But it's New Year's Eve and I hate to break tradition. Nor do I take my slog through the wet and fog for granted. Not so long ago I wasn't certain I'd live to see another year. That fear, the isolation, uncertainty, are with me now. I

knew they would be. I brought them. But they're like the gray of the day. Everywhere and nowhere. An echo rather than an expectation. In part that's why I came. To listen for the echo. I won't leave until I hear it.

Hear and remember.

~

The fog is lifting. I can see the stones in the cemetery, and the sea of grass, tens of thousands of stalks, slender, tawny and tall. I waded through them on my way here. But I can't speak to the character of any one plant. The prairie is long and bright and beautiful, and a single stem, easy not to see. Days can be like that, if you let them.

Don't let them.

Plant a marker in the grass. Take notes. Record your intentions, your interests, your fears. Ask questions. Are you making time for things that matter? Are you present with the people you love? Did you take time to see the sky, the stars, the light, yourself? Can you recall the color in a stalk of grass?

Every now and then, find a park or trail or quiet room, a kitchen counter or barnyard, or some bare earth beside a spindly tree — some place that stands out — and stand alone. Recount your year. Recall the hours. Hold them close.

Don't lose your moments in a sea of days.

► *Continued from page 24*
for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

February 17; March 2 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'll take a 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.

February 18 POLAR PLUNGE, Collinsville. Take the Plunge to support Special Olympics Illinois. Registration 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.; plunge at 6 p.m. All funds raised go to provide programming and events for more than 23,100 traditional athletes and

13,000 young athletes participating in Illinois. Collinsville VFW, 1234 Vandalia Street. For more information or to register, visit polarplunge.soill.org.

February 19 ICE JAM AT THE DAM, East Alton. A new, winter event set along the Mississippi River. Enjoy a variety of winter-themed activities – from wildlife presentations to live music and open tours of Melvin Price Locks and Dam. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. Visit mtrf.org.

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.

February 20 "AMERICANA – THE SHAPING OF OUR NATION" CONCERT, Godfrey. Performance by the Alton Symphony Orchestra. 4 p.m. Adults \$10; 18 years of age and younger \$5. Because ASO performs on the Lewis & Clark Community College Campus we are adhering to their masking guidelines. Currently all visitors must wear a mask regardless of vaccination status. Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For more information or tickets, visit altonsymphonyorchestra.org.

February 26 POLAR PLUNGE & 5K DONUT DASH, Carlyle. Take the Plunge or Dash for Donuts. Support Special Olympics athletes by taking a flying leap... into the frigid waters of Carlyle Lake. Registration 10 - 11:30 a.m.; plunge at noon. All funds raised go to provide programming and events for more than 23,100 traditional athletes and 13,000 young athletes participating in Illinois. 801 Lake Road. For more information or to register, visit polarplunge.soill.org.

February 26 POLAR PLUNGE, Effingham. Take the Plunge to support Special Olympics Illinois. Pre-registration February 25 from 5 - 7 p.m.; same day registration 10 - 11:45 a.m.; plunge at noon. All funds raised go to provide programming and events for more than 23,100 traditional athletes and 13,000 young athletes participating in Illinois. Lake Sara, 15250 North Beach Road. For more information or to register, visit polarplunge.soill.org.

February 28 BESSIE, BILLIE & NINA – CELEBRATING WOMEN IN JAZZ, Lebanon. Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Nina Simone were among the most influential and popular singers of their times, wielding their exceptional talents to combat racial prejudice, sexism, and poverty. All three defied social norms to embrace self-empowerment through their art. Backed by an all-female band featuring Charenée Wade, Vanisha Gould and Tahira Clayton, each star will celebrate the enduring legacies of these iconic women and artists with performances of their classic songs. 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.

March 10 GOITSE, Lebanon. Goitse (pronounced "go-witcha") is an informal Gaelic Irish greeting meaning "come here." The multi-award-winning quintet was forged at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. Its distinctive sound intersperses original compositions with traditional tunes from the Irish countryside and abroad. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$30, senior \$28, 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.

March 10-22 THE AUDIENCE, 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. \$10 on Thursday and \$12 Friday - Sunday for adults; \$9 on Thursday and \$11 Friday - Sunday for students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification). Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. Call (618) 537-4962 or visit lookingglassplayhouse.com.


March 19 PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY OF BELLEVILLE: KEYBOARD FIREWORKS, Belleville. Maestro's birthday celebration including Mozart Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488, with Brain Woods, and Saint-Saens Organ Symphony in honor of Gail Long. 7:30 p.m. Union United Methodist Church, 721 East Main Street. For more information or tickets, visit bellevillephilharmonic.org.

March 19 THE WEE HEAVIES, Lebanon. The Wee Heavies have won a following with its eclectic mix of Scottish, Irish, and American folk music. Dedicated to music from and influenced by the Celtic tradition, tenors Aaron Schiltz and Peter Merideth, baritone Jay Harkey, and bass Steve Neale began singing together in St. Louis' Shaw neighborhood in 2013 after they observed a distinct lack of a cappella Celtic music at charitable events. 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.

March 26 OLDE ALTON VENDOR & CRAFTS FAIR, Alton. There will be many booths of crafters selling their best wares. Proceeds benefit the Alton Band & Orchestra. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Road. For more information, call (618) 474-6996 or visit abob.net.



February 18-21 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT. Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days we invite people to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them to us. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations. Whether you count one bird or hundreds, participating is easy and fun for all ages. For more information, visit birdcount.org.



Shattered by a
tornado north of
Ramsey, a tree
bears witness
to the ferocity
of December's
storm.

THE FINAL FRAME

