

THE *Southwestern*



A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2023 • VOLUME 75 • ISSUE 2

For the Birds

AVIAN ENCOUNTERS
ON ELLIS ISLAND

LISTEN UP

WIRESIDE CHAT
IS HERE FOR YOU

PET PROJECT

MEMBER MAIL

OPERATION ROUND UP

POWER FOR PROGRESS

SMART SAVINGS

CO-OP KITCHEN

HIDE & SEEK

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

04 News & Notes

Operation Round Up is your opportunity to make a big difference in your community with just a small amount of spare change. Learn more about the charitable program inside.

06 Member Mail

Your neighbors share their thoughts on the cooperative's Capital Credits program, electric vehicles, the Annual Meeting of Members and more.

07 'Pet' Project

The cooperative conducted its annual holiday donation drive this past December, benefiting a local animal rescue shelter. The result was, as one staff member put it, a huge success.

08 Rebate Program

If fluctuating temperatures have your home working overtime this winter, you may be considering a high efficiency or smart device. We'd like to help.

09 Power for Progress

Scholarship applications are due March 10. Learn how to apply here.

10 Listen Up

Cold showers, black coffee, taco Tuesdays — we've all got our rituals. When you're on the go, making Wireside Chat a part of your rituals is an easy way to stay connected to your electric cooperative.

11 Hide & Seek

We rolled out a new reader contest in the January issue. If you missed last month's announcement, catch up and get in on the hunt in February.

12 Pay-As-You-Go

Purchase only what you need. Sounds efficient, right? With our Pay-As-You-Go program, that's exactly what we're helping you do with your electric service.

13 Energy Assistance

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

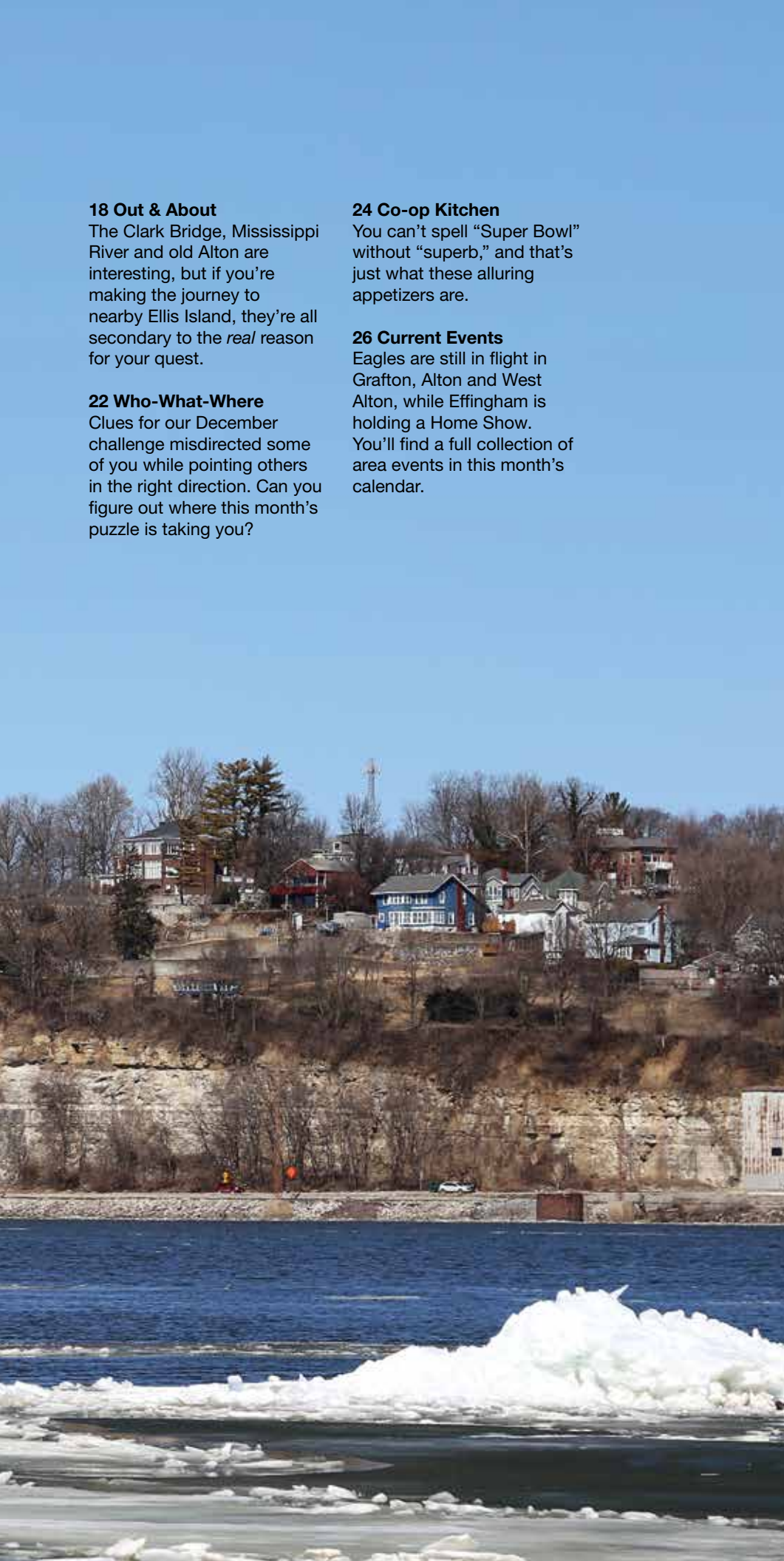
14 Energy & Efficiency

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

16 Health & Safety

Generators are great short-term solutions to unexpected power outages. They're not without their hazards, though. Read on.





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18 Out & About

The Clark Bridge, Mississippi River and old Alton are interesting, but if you're making the journey to nearby Ellis Island, they're all secondary to the *real* reason for your quest.

22 Who-What-Where

Clues for our December challenge misdirected some of you while pointing others in the right direction. Can you figure out where this month's puzzle is taking you?

24 Co-op Kitchen

You can't spell "Super Bowl" without "superb," and that's just what these alluring appetizers are.

26 Current Events

Eagles are still in flight in Grafton, Alton and West Alton, while Effingham is holding a Home Show. You'll find a full collection of area events in this month's calendar.

E-BILLING PROVIDES QUICK, EASY WAY TO AVOID FEES ASSOCIATED WITH POSTAL DELAYS

Paperless billing — or e-billing — provides a simple, reliable solution to penalties associated with postal delays and late payments. An e-bill is an electronic billing statement delivered to your email address. Our e-bill looks like our paper bill. Since it's sent to your inbox instead of your mailbox, it always arrives on time.

In addition to our e-bill, we also offer electronic notifications you can use as reminders, or to confirm your payment has been made. You can receive our reminders, alerts and notifications by text, voice mail and email.

Maybe you'd prefer not to think about your bill from month to month. With our Auto-Pay service, you won't need to. Auto-Pay automatically deducts your monthly payment from your checking account, or debit card or credit card. It's safe, convenient and reliable. Like our e-billing options, Auto-Pay is free and simple to set up.

If you'd like to know more, please call Southwestern Electric's billing department at 800-637-8667, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Our team will be happy to help you.



ON THE COVER

Ellis Island in West Alton, Mo., offers unique views of the Mississippi River, Audubon Center at Riverlands, Alton and the Clark Bridge, as well as opportunities to see some of our country's most spectacular birds. For more on Ellis Island, read our story on page 18.



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. 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.



CO-OP REMINDERS

February 13 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.

Your Spare Change Can Make a **Big Difference** through

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.

Remember When?

Delmar Korsmeyer remembers life on family farm during early days of rural electrification

My father, Elmer Korsmeyer, got electric in 1949. We could not get a right of way to get electric until 1949. At that time, I was just 10 years old. I am now 83 years old.

We used a carbide torch and had three small lights in the kitchen, dining room and bedroom. The upstairs had no light. We used a coal oil lamp for extra lights sometimes. A lantern was carried to the barn to milk or feed cows. Usually only one light was burning.

No running water was in the house. Water was pumped by hand or carried in from the windmill to water cattle. We carried a bucket of water in the house to use.

We used a wood burning stove to get warm. In the kitchen stove, we would put wood to burn to fry food or cook potatoes.

There was no heat upstairs. My brother and I would put a hedge log in the oven, just to get it hot enough, and then wrap the log in a blanket and put it at the foot end of the bed to keep our feet warm, and sleep under a lot of covers. Some mornings we would have snow on our furniture, which blew in through a window crack.

We would milk the cows and get ready to walk to school, two miles, unless it was real bad weather. I went to Purcell School located on Niggli Road that is three-quarters of a mile west of the Leef Township Building. I went all eight years to Purcell School and had the same teacher all eight years. She was Elizabeth Bost.

We had an electric water system in our basement and used it to water cattle and finally got a used sink for water in our kitchen. We used an outhouse for our bathroom.

Our parents built a new home in 1957, where I still am at today.
—Delmar Korsmeyer, Alhambra



SOUTHWESTERN'S ONLINE PAYMENT PORTAL & MERIDIAN COOPERATIVE

If you've paid your electric bill using Southwestern Electric Cooperative's online payment portal, you've probably noticed the name Meridian Cooperative appear at the point of payment. A longtime partner of Southwestern Electric, Atlanta, Ga.-based Meridian Cooperative is a leader in the development of utility software and technology solutions. Payments directed through our online payment portal are processed by Meridian Cooperative.

"Meridian houses card data for us so we are PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliant," explained Susan File, vice president of member services. "We are committed to continually upgrading our payment portal in order to make online transactions secure and protect our members against identity theft," she said.

For more information about our online payment portal or your bill payment options, call Southwestern Electric at (800) 637-8667.



Do you remember when the lights came on? When the poles went up and the lines came through?

If you weren't there, did you hear stories from your parents or grandparents about the days before electricity lit our way? We're interested in hearing about the early days of electrification. We'd like to know how electricity changed life in your home, on your farm, or at your place of

worship, school or business, or in your community.

Please send your stories to Joe Richardson at joe.richardson@sweci.com or via USPS to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

ough Operation Round Up

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.



Small change.
Big difference.

Longtime Dorsey Member Shares Experiences, Observations & Viewpoint

Thank you for the article on capital credits. I thought since you already retired this year's last year that we wouldn't get any this year. So it appears we will still get them each year if I understand the article correctly.

I wanted to suggest at the annual meetings each year that you averaged our credits over the 30-year period so we could have a better idea each year what to expect. Some years my credits are over \$200 and other years they are \$0. I wasn't brave enough to speak out and by the end of the meetings most people were ready to go home.

That brings up the annual meetings. I'm VERY disappointed in how you did it this year! Lowering our incentive to \$30 (instead of \$50) was an unpleasant surprise. We had to drive quite a ways to vote. The old way was farther but we got breakfast, played bingo, our children and grandchildren had fun with the bounce houses, and with the drawing it was a REAL incentive to stay for the whole meeting (If this was something Alan Libbra pushed just another way us old longtime members miss him.).

Electric cars...my son spent five years working in Louisville, Ky., at the Ford truck plant in management. He is very knowledgeable about the car industry (He's now at GM in Wentzville as a union tool maker). I do not see an electric car in our future.

A lot of your members are in the country and we need better (longer) mileage. Also for long trips it's not practical. Another recent problem is the cost of electricity. My Ameren Illinois friends are LIVID at their most recent power bill. If this continues my being on Southwestern Electric is going to raise the value of my home!

I'm enjoying traveling to Florida twice a year to visit a high school friend that lives there. No electric car for that trip!

Well, I've wanted to express these thoughts to you for a long time and have just now shared them with you. I did not go to

the meeting this year and probably won't in the future if you continue it the way you did this year. It's not worth it. The old meetings were worth the trip and the time.

If you check my membership I have been with you since 1977. We (my husband and I) have been with you through good and bad (Soyland—what a mess that was!). Also, you should remind Holiday Shores residents (especially now) that aren't they glad they're not on Ameren! During the Soyland fiasco they wanted to switch.

Thanks for your time and attention. I hope to see you in Greenville in September.

—Ann L. Moore, Dorsey

Editor's Note: Ann—thank you for sharing your experiences, your observations and your viewpoint in this well-crafted letter. We'll address some of the points you touched on in future issues of the magazine. And thanks, too, for being active and engaged in the cooperative through good years and trying times alike. Members like you make Southwestern Electric a stronger cooperative. We're beholden to you.

Capital Credit Thank You Notes

Thank you for the generous check I received regarding capital credits.

—Nancy Machmer, Lincoln, Neb.

Thanks for the break this month on the electric bill.

—Donna Knight, Dorsey

We would like to thank everyone at Southwestern Electric for the capital credit refund. Have a happy, healthy, merry Christmas.

—Mr. & Mrs. Robert Dour, Maryville



‘Pet’ Project

Southwestern Electric Brings Holiday Joy to Troy Rescue Shelter

By Nathan Grimm

As part of its internal holiday donation drive, Southwestern Electric Cooperative spent the weeks leading up to Christmas collecting items to donate to cooperative member and Southwestern Illinois rescue shelter Partners for Pets. The Troy non-profit animal rescue, which has been in operation since 2003, has rescued and re-homed more than 22,000 cats and dogs in its nearly two decades of existence.

Three overflowing donation boxes — a box was placed at the co-op’s Greenville headquarters as well as the satellite offices in St. Jacob and St. Elmo — filled with paper towels, dish detergent, trash bags, cat litter and, importantly, plenty of toys and treats were delivered to the rescue by Southwestern Electric Executive Assistant Brooke Scott and Human Resources Administrator Marissa Horn in early January. Scott, who organizes

the cooperative’s annual donation drive, said this year’s effort was a huge success.

“When Marissa and I dropped off the donations, we were given a tour of the facilities, were able to meet some of the pets that are available for adoption, and were told about their future plans,” she said. “Partners for Pets was extremely thankful for the supplies and support from Southwestern Electric. I appreciate the generosity of those who donated during our collection drive and feel very fortunate to work with such a wonderful community of people.”

In advance of the holidays, Partners for Pets Executive Director Erika Skouby-Pratte said the biggest thing the community can do to support the rescue shelter is to volunteer as a foster pet parent.

“It’s a hard thing to jump into, thinking about fostering, because everyone’s initial thought is, ‘I won’t be able to give them up,’” she said in November 2022. “But when you think about it, you’re bringing a pet into your home temporarily, we’re paying for everything, we make it as easy and seamless as possible, and we can keep saving more lives by having fosters. Fostering is a big deal. We’re always looking for more fosters.”

Marissa Horn (left), human resources administrator, and Brooke Scott, executive assistant, prepare to deliver employee donations to Partners for Pets in Troy.



For more information on rescuing, fostering or donating to the rescue shelter, call Partners for Pets at 618-540-7387 or visit www.partnersforpetsil.org.

Co-op Offers 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.



HEATING AND COOLING

High efficiency heat pumps can significantly increase the comfort of your home while lowering your energy bills. If you're thinking of upgrading to or installing a new air source or ground source heat pump, our \$300 rebate will help you offset some of the cost.

To qualify for the rebate, your heat pump must be the primary source of heat in your home. It may be installed in a newly constructed home, or replace electric resistance heat, propane or fuel oil heat. Installed backup heat must be electric, and the condenser and coil must be replaced and/or installed as a matched set.

Requirements for air source heat pumps include:

- At least 16 SEER
- 9 HSPF

Requirements for ground source (geothermal) heat pumps include:

- For closed systems— at least 17 SEER; COP 3.6
- For open systems – at least 21.1 SEER; COP 4.1

WATER HEATERS

Water heating accounts for about 18 percent of your home's energy use. Choosing an energy efficient water heater can help you reduce your monthly water heating bills.

To qualify for our \$250 water heater rebate, you can install an electric water heater as part of a newly constructed home, or replace an existing gas water heater with an electric model.

Your water heater must be at least 50 gallons and one rebate is allowed per home.

On-demand water heaters do not qualify for a rebate.

SMART THERMOSTATS

A smart thermostat learns your lifestyle and adjusts the temperature of your home automatically, helping you use less energy and save money.

With a smart thermostat, you can control your home's temperature settings, even when you're at work or on the road. Connected to your Wi-Fi, your smart thermostat allows you to monitor and change your home's temperature from your smart phone, tablet or PC.

You can install a smart thermostat as part of a newly constructed home, or replace an existing manual or programmable thermostat.

To qualify for our \$50 rebate, your smart thermostat must be:

- Energy Star certified
- Internet-enabled



POWER FOR PROGRESS SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 10



Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$287,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award \$11,000 in scholarship money to 11 students in spring 2023 for use in the fall 2023 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 2023 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 10, 2023**.

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 2023.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline,

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. 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, and giving back to the people who helped you fulfill your potential," 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.

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.

LISTEN UP

THE WIRESIDE CHAT PODCAST IS HERE WHEN YOU NEED IT — WHENEVER THAT MIGHT BE

By Nathan Grimm

Last night, I listened to music on my commute home.

There was a time when that sentence would have been so obvious that it might not even be necessary to write. After all, what else would I have been doing, singing to myself? Sitting in silence?

In 2023, though, it's a noteworthy development. That's because these days, most of my time in the car — and most of my leisure time in general — is spent listening to podcasts.

Between trying to keep two small children fed and nurtured, maintaining a decade-old marriage and being a Swiss Army knife for the cooperative, there aren't many minutes in my day that are unaccounted for. In the absence of free time during this stage of life, podcasts have become a welcome alternative. While I might not have the chance to sit down and read a couple chapters in a book or watch a half-hour of television, I can find the time to listen to a podcast in the moments that surround those seemingly endless responsibilities.

Grocery shopping? Popping on my headphones and following a well-organized grocery list is one of my favorite solo activities. Doing the dishes? I can play it on my phone. Long drive? Most vehicles these days have Bluetooth capabilities that let you play your podcast through the stereo.

What I listen to depends on the day. If I want to turn my brain off and just enjoy myself, Conan O'Brien Needs A Friend is my go-to podcast. If I'm trying to cram in some studying ahead of fantasy baseball season, there exist plenty of

options to help me sharpen my focus. News, culture, politics, sports — I've curated a list of preferred listens for every mood.

That on-the-go, all-weather usefulness is why we wanted to start the Wireside Chat podcast last year. Maybe you're like me and don't have time to regularly check the SWECI website, or even flip through The Southwestern every month. Maybe you're not like me and you simply prefer an audio medium to our other visual offerings. Maybe you just want to have something on in the background to help you sleep.

Whatever the reason, Wireside Chat exists for you. We produced nine episodes of the podcast in 2022, all nine of which I was proud to put out into the world. I had good conversations with smart guests from the cooperative that I hope served to enlighten and entertain listeners. You can find all of them for free on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and wherever else you might get your podcasts.

As we look ahead, I'm going to expand the focus of the podcast to include

the people, businesses and organizations that make up our Southwestern Electric community. When the occasion calls for it, I'll still tap my SWECI colleagues to share their insights, but I also want to talk to community leaders and CEOs and elected officials to get their perspectives on the electric cooperative industry and Southwestern Illinois in general.

If you have the time, I hope that you'll listen. Or should I say, I hope you'll listen even if — especially if — you don't have the time.



CATCHING UP

If you're new to Wireside Chat and don't know where to start, never fear — we've got you covered. Here are some of the episodes and highlights from the podcast in 2022:

“The State of Electric Vehicles”

With gas prices soaring, more consumers may begin looking to electric vehicles as an alternative. In this episode, SWECI Energy Manager Julie Lowe discusses the state of the EV market, where it's headed and the role the cooperative is playing to promote its growth in Southwestern Illinois.

“Anatomy of an Outage”

The power goes out. What now? Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams takes us behind the scenes of an outage, including the difficult decisions and challenges that come up, and how SWECI is working to continue improving outage response mechanisms moving forward.

“Here Comes the Sun”

Solar cogeneration is increasingly popular among electric cooperative members. Southwestern Electric Energy Manager Julie Lowe joined the show to discuss cogeneration, its growing popularity, what roadblocks still exist for members and where she sees cogeneration — solar and otherwise — going in the future.

“Dollars and Sense”

Lower temperatures bring higher electric bills. Ahead of the cold winter months, SWECI Billing Manager Veronica Forbis joined the podcast to talk about her department's auto-pay feature, LIHEAP assistance, personalized billing options and more.

“Communication Conversation”

The way we communicate — as a cooperative to our members, and simply as humans to each other — has perhaps never been more important. SWECI Vice President of Communications Joe Richardson joined the podcast to talk about his job, the ways he's seen it change and how he approaches communicating complex subjects to our membership, among other topics.

“Reflections and Resolutions”

December is a time to look back at the year that was, while also looking ahead to the year to come. Media Specialist Nathan Grimm did a bit of both in this year-end wrap-up episode.

New Reader Contest This Year

Hide & Seek

For decades we ran a reader contest we 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 with our December 2022 issue.

This year we're bringing you a new contest. It isn't based on your account number, and if you're a regular reader, you'll have a much better chance of winning a \$25 bill credit.

It works like this:

Each month — with the exception of August, when we break from our traditional format to bring you Southwestern's annual report — we'll 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 resembles the Lincoln likeness 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're making 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, 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 is only 28 pages.

Please email us at thesouthwestern@sweci.com or send your postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

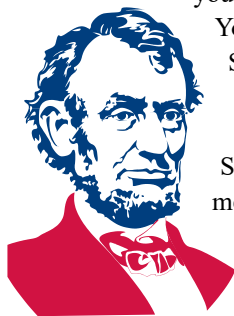
Entries must be postmarked or in our thesouthwestern@sweci.com inbox by the first day of the month following the month of publication. For our February contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by March 1.

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

If your magazine hasn't landed in your mailbox and the hour grows late, you can look at our online edition.

You'll find PDF files of The Southwestern at 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 already told friends and family about it and asked IT to set up thesouthwestern@sweci.com as an email address, so good luck, godspeed, and mind the Rules To Play By in our sidebar at right.



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 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 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 March 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? Well, we have the space, so we'll bring it up one last time — just to show we're sincere.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

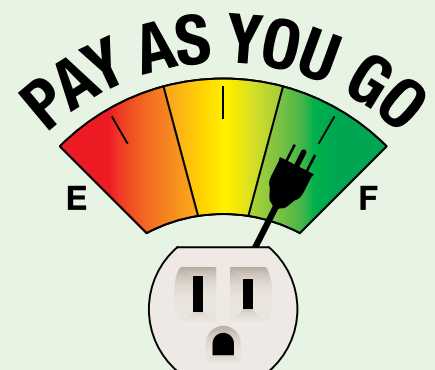
Southwestern also offers an in-home display unit (at no charge), particularly for members who don’t have Internet access. The online billing system, app and in-home display allow the account holder to view their present account balance and average daily usage.

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

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



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



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

Energy Bill Payment Assistance Available

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

County	Community Action Agency	Phone Number
Bond	BCMWS Community Services, Inc.	(618) 664-3309
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(618) 662-4024
Clinton	BCMWS 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	BCMWS 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 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.....	\$2,265
2.....	\$3,052
3.....	\$3,838
4.....	\$4,625
5.....	\$5,412
6.....	\$6,198
7.....	\$6,985
8.....	\$7,324



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 below 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.

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.

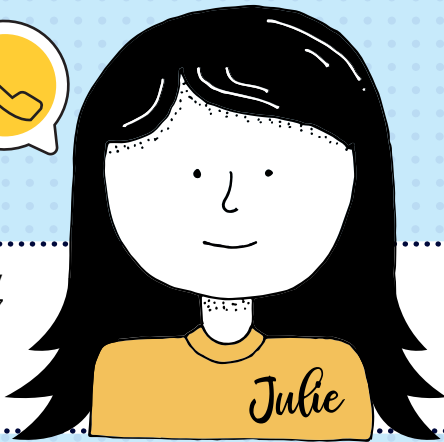


You'll need to install an app on your phone that's compatible with the smart plug of your choosing. From the app you will be able to control the power to the plug and schedule on and off times. Additionally, some apps support energy monitoring.

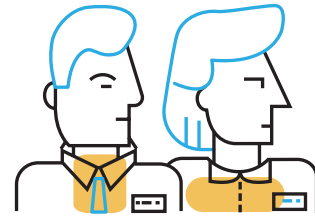
Installation is the same for all smart plugs; the variation comes with the smart phone and app you will be using. There are many models available. Compare cost and features to determine which will best fit your needs.

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

Steps to Solar Commissioning



Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or 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.



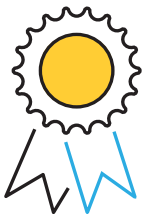
After your one-line diagram is approved by Southwestern Electric, you'll receive a \$500 invoice to cover the installation of your new dual register electric meter, a system inspection, and your array's interconnection to the grid. If your installer will be paying this invoice on your behalf, we'll send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



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



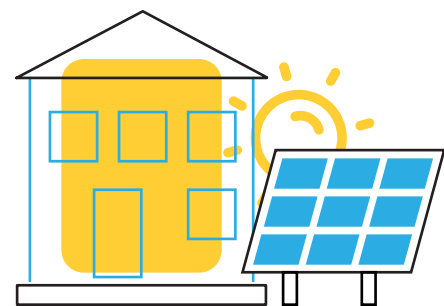
Our commissioning team will visit your site. We will inspect your system to verify it meets our safety specifications. A team member will review a memorandum of understanding with you. You'll sign this document for our files. Note: If you won't be present for commissioning, please schedule a meeting 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, or certificates (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.

Generator Safety

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

Richardson, editor of The Southwestern.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRANSFER SWITCHES

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

TRANSFER SWITCH AND GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

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

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

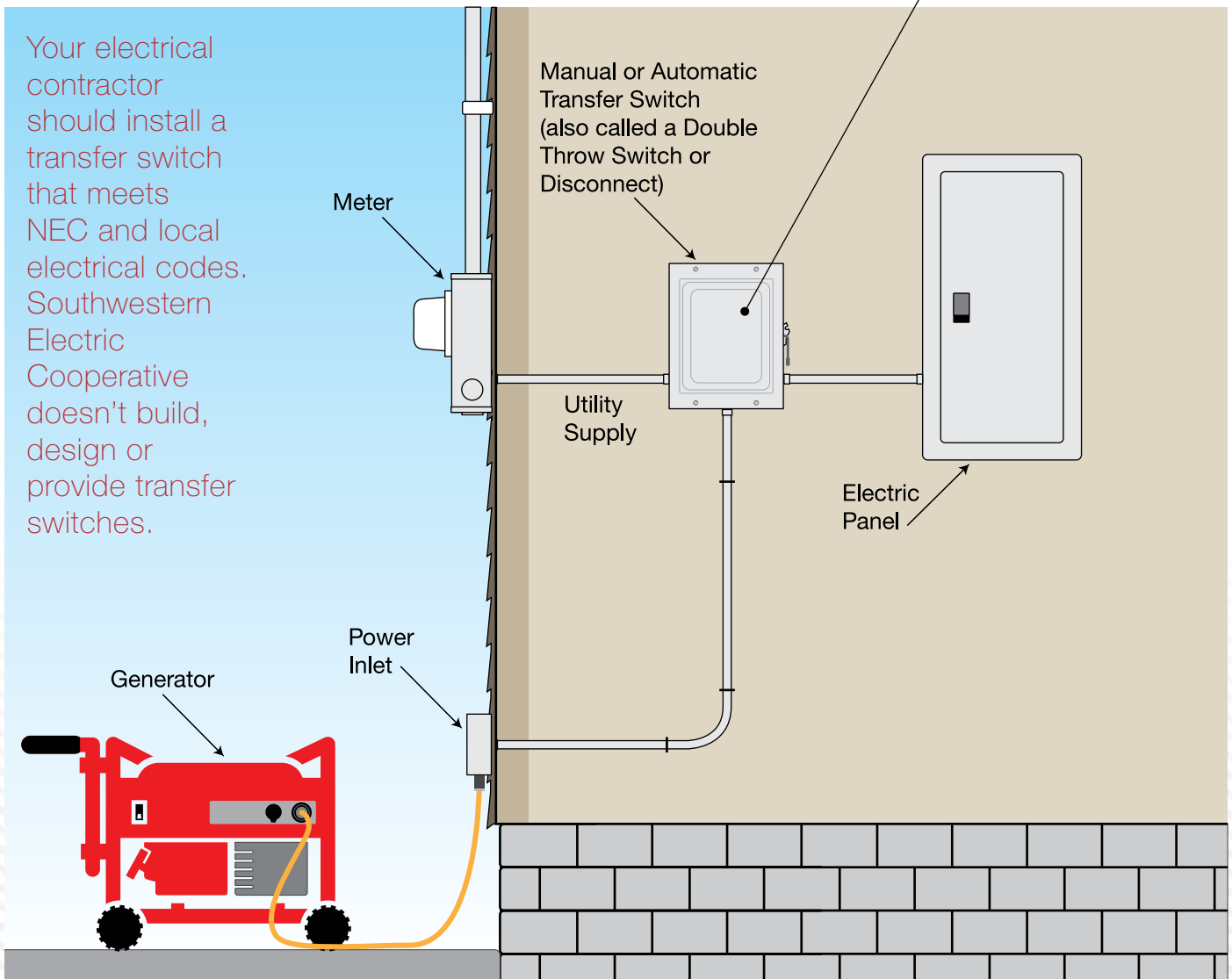
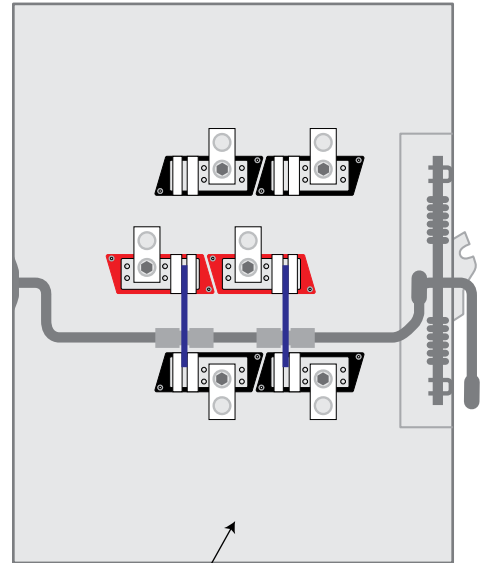
"Transfer switches make life easier during a power outage while keeping our linemen safe as they restore service," said Dylan Casey, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's manager of engineering. "Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute line workers."

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

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

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

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



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

FOR THE BIRDS

IS ELLIS ISLAND'S UP-CLOSE VIEW OF THE MISSISSIPPI WORTH THE GAS TO GET THERE? MAYBE. BUT THAT ISN'T WHY YOU MAKE THE TRIP.

Words by Joe Richardson | Photos by Mike Barns & Joe Richardson

On most days, absent the concrete pylons and canary-yellow cable-stays of the Clark Bridge looming in the background, Ellis Island would look like any other oasis of sand prairie peppered with vernal ponds and ringed by Midwest hardwoods. But a week of warm air and light wind have pulled water from the Mississippi River into the atmosphere, enshrouding the island in fog. Overnight, temperatures dropped into the twenties. Shortly after sunup, the land appears enchanted, trees coated in crystalline fur and grasses rimed in hoarfrost.

The spell won't last.

By midmorning, sunlight and mild weather have burned away the frost and fog and coaxed visitors from Illinois and

Missouri out of their homes, into their cars and onto the island.

The day's tourists come in two categories: trail walkers with well-mannered, well-harnessed dogs, and photographers with high-end cameras attached to arm-length lenses. Both missed the island's transformation from frozen forest to wooded river spit, and thus, the ethereal moments of the morning. But they didn't come for the frost and fog or trails and trees or colorful grasses that cover the island. And likely, neither should you.

THE ISLE THAT ISN'T

It's easy to overlook. Heavy on grasses and light on elevation, Ellis Island is a mile-long finger of flat land pointing from the Clark Bridge to Melvin Price Locks and Dam.

Of the many things Ellis Island is—wildlife refuge, conservation success story, recreational area—there's one thing it clearly isn't: an actual island. Southwest of old Alton and opposite the Illinois state line, Ellis is a peninsula separated but not severed from Missouri by Alton Slough.

A broad, gravel biking trail traverses the length of the peninsula. It could easily accommodate a pair of cyclists riding side by side.

Packed-earth nature trails spin out and away from the bike path to the edges of Ellis Island. Along the northeast shore, one path opens to views of the Clark Bridge and old Alton before looping past a bird blind overlooking a marsh, then reconnecting with the bike trail.

A short out-and-back path leads to a



blind at the peninsula's fingertip, this one a hide from birds favoring the water between Ellis and Melvin Price Locks and Dam.

Another path leads to a blind facing southwest, looking out on Ellis Bay.

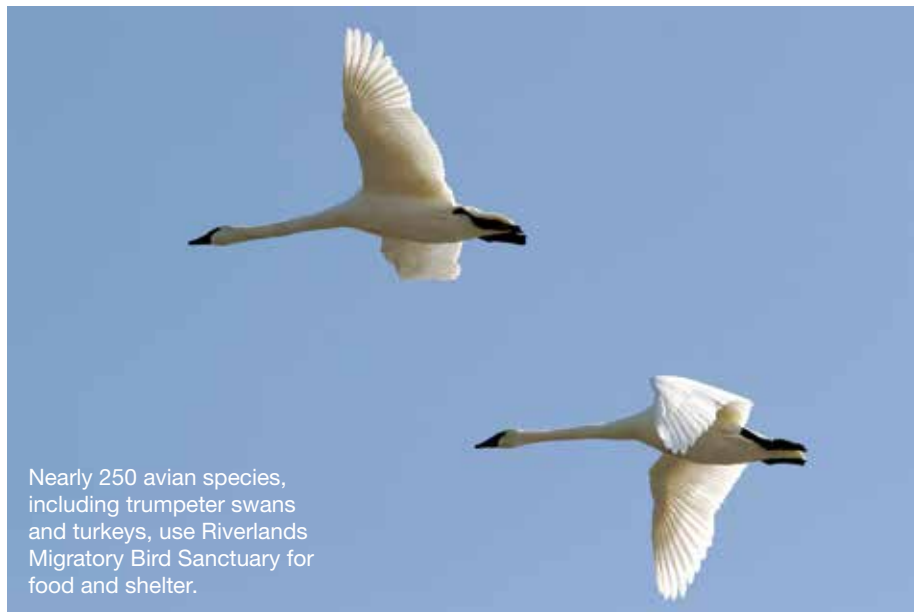
Don't expect towering trees or rolling hills on your hike. Look for new and low growth hardwoods, grasses, shrubs, small trees, beached snags, sandy earth and fallen timber.

IN THE SHADOW OF ST. LOUIS

During the hours after sunup, with no one else on the trails, the island offered solitude, but never silence. Traffic on the Clark Bridge was ever-present. The up and down throttle of diesel engines kept me company on the trails, and overhead I saw the scrawl of jets and heard the roar of commercial airliners climbing from Lambert International Airport, punctuated now and then by a helicopter or small plane. The morning air carried an industrial odor, possibly from a refinery, that dissipated with the fog.

While the peninsula offers panoramas of the Clark Bridge, Audubon Center and old Alton—including unobstructed views of Monument Avenue and the Lovejoy memorial—many nature lovers may feel Ellis Island alone isn't worth a trip across the river.

To them I offer this: Ellis Island is never alone.



Nearly 250 avian species, including trumpeter swans and turkeys, use Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary for food and shelter.

SAFE LANDINGS

The peninsula and waters around it—Ellis Bay, Teal Pond, Heron Pond and the Mississippi River—sit within Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary—a 3,700-acre haven for birds common and rare in the Mississippi Flyway, a significant North American migration route. Close to 250 species of birds have been spotted in the sanctuary. Some call it home. Others, like the American bald eagle and trumpeter swan, are temporary residents, using Riverlands to feed and shelter during travel layovers.

On this January morning, a dozen eagles perched in a pair of trees in Ellis

Bay. Others hunkered in the peninsula's treetops and watched the water. More stood on snags in the river.

In the space of an hour, I startled a pair of great blue herons that were shore stalking, saw a six-pack of trumpeter swans settle in the bay, photographed a patrol of white pelicans wheeling over the water, heard the near-endless chatter of Canada geese, and watched wood ducks rise from a slough and dart low across the woodland before rising over the trees, bound for open water.

A passing photographer told of a large owl near the southern bird blind. I missed it. *Continued on next page* ▶





► *Continued from page 19*

But I didn't miss the flock of turkeys, seven-strong, that broke cover to cross my path and put distance between themselves and a resident coyote, who cried and cried and cried, scolding me at length, I suppose, for coming between him and his breakfast.

Finches, thrushes and wrens flit through upper branches and underbrush. Their nests, camouflaged in most seasons, were evident in winter, dark nodes woven into low forks of bare trees.



PLANTS & ANIMALS

If plants are your area of interest, you need to see Ellis Island. Other than frost flowers, winter isn't a season for blossoms, but the grasses were in bloom, ranging in color from cornsilk to dandelion to green apple and cranberry, adding islands of summer pigment to the otherwise unbroken sea of brown our prairie and woodlands become in winter.

If you go to Ellis Island, you'd do well to visit the Audubon Center at Riverlands, just across the bay. Equal parts natural history interpretive center and climate-controlled bird blind, the building is a beautiful blend of art, architecture and science.

Is Ellis Island worth the gas to get there? With frost and fowl and eagles

overhead, encounters with turkeys on the run and a recalcitrant coyote, and passing conversations with people clearly humbled to be among birds threatened with extinction two or so generations ago, it was for me.

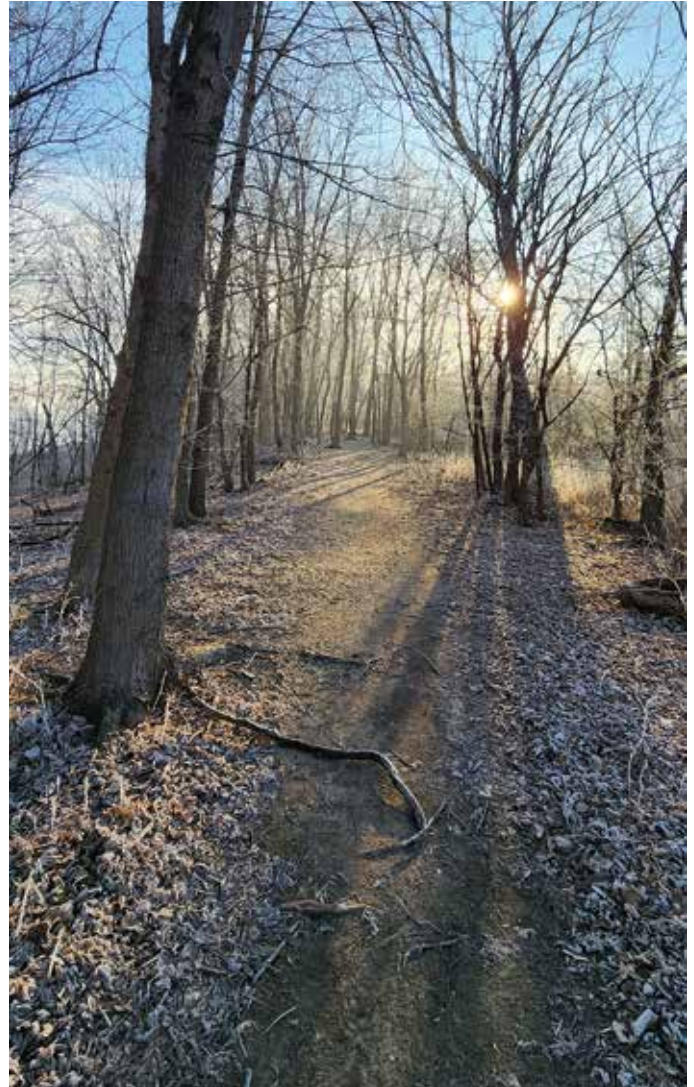
If you go, don't make the drive for panoramic views of Alton or the river. Don't make it to marvel at the elegant engineering, twin spires and cable stays of the Clark Bridge. And though it's worth your while, don't make the trip solely to see the Audubon Center at Riverlands, or on the off chance you'll walk into an atmospheric phenomenon of frost and fog, or to hike trails on an island that isn't.

Make the journey to see American bald eagles and trumpeter swans, finches and thrushes, ducks and geese, wrens and herons, and any number of avians that call Riverlands home, for a lifetime or a season. While you're there, remember how fragile and resilient these animals are. Then pack up that thought—pack up all your thoughts—and just be present. Wonder at the raptors and waterfowl and seed-eaters and waders. Watch them hunt and rest and swim and play. Let these animals that fly, carry you away.

You don't come to Ellis for the island. This trip is for the birds. **S**



Located in West Alton, Mo., Ellis Island offers views of sand prairie, the Mississippi River, Clark Bridge, old Alton, The Lovejoy Monument, Audubon Center at Riverlands, Melvin Price Locks and Dam, and birds in the water and on the wing.



GETTING THERE

To reach Ellis Island, drive to Alton, then make your way onto Highway 67. Cross the Clark Bridge and immediately begin looking for exit signs. In January, construction made it a challenge to enter and exit Highway 67 in Missouri. There was an abrupt exit immediately after the bridge, not well marked, and I missed it. I had to make a U-turn about a mile down the road. Leaving Ellis Island, I found arrows spray-painted onto concrete dividers that separated motorists leaving Ellis Island from oncoming traffic. Navigation wasn't intuitive. If you want to see eagles or trumpeter swans, you need to go soon. If that isn't a priority, you might want to wait until road crews have finished work on the highway.

ISLAND GUIDE

The Army Corps of Engineers published an excellent map of Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, which includes Ellis Island and the surrounding area. You can find it by googling Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary. For hours and information about Audubon Center at Riverlands and the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, visit <https://riverlands.audubon.org>, write to Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, MO 63386, or call (636) 899-0090.

WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Our December clues proved to be a doubled-edged sword. While they led several of you straight to the solution, others they led astray.

We closed 2022 with a Who~What~Where puzzle that challenged you to look outside the proverbial box that makes up Southwestern's service area.

Mike Barns, art director for Southwestern Electric, traveled to Greene County to photograph the statue that honors an Illinois governor, a former Edwardsville resident with a namesake city.

As Southwestern member Steve Merriman of Vandalia noted, the statue stands in Carrollton. "I drove through this quaint village daily on my delivery route," he recalled. "Spectacular courthouse in the middle of a lovely town square."

Several readers identified the figure as Ninian Edwards — *another* governor of Illinois who resided in Edwardsville, and with a city who bears his name. But the Greene County clues in our December

puzzle took Edwards out of the running.

Who was our mystery figure? A handful of you knew. We've printed your solutions here.

Speaking of statues, we hope you'll give this month's puzzle a go.

You probably recognize the figure at right. He lived in Springfield, walked the halls of the Capitol in Vandalia, and went on to become our nation's 16th president. Statues of Abraham Lincoln are plentiful in Southwestern Illinois. This month's challenge: Tell us where we found this one.

We'll share some of your solutions in our April issue. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy the responses to our December puzzle. Thanks to everyone who submitted a solution — and thank you for reading *The Southwestern*.

.....
You threw me for a loop...I thought it was our fourth governor, John Reynolds, since he served during the Black Hawk War and held numerous positions in state government. Your tip that helped

me figure out that it was Thomas Carlin, our seventh governor, in the picture, was that he "served as governor and in both houses." Thankfully I investigated a little further and didn't have an "Oops!"
—*Nick Dochwat, Troy*

I believe if memory serves me correctly, the statue is of Thomas Carlin, of whom the City of Carlinville is named after.

I am a history buff as well an antique collector. Thanks for the opportunity to exercise my memory!
—*Don Albrecht, Staunton*

The December 2022 "Who am I?" challenge is Illinois' seventh governor, Thomas Carlin. Carlin was a self-taught farmer, soldier and politician who had a life-long passion for reading and learning. The pictured statue of him can be found not in Carlinville (est. 1865), which bears his name, but in Carrollton, the county seat of Greene County, where he lived. The statue is prominent in the Carrollton Courthouse Square Historic District there.

Carlin died at his home on Valentine's Day in 1852. Seven of his 13 children survived him. He is buried at the family graveyard in Greene County, Illinois.
—*Bill Malec, O'Fallon*

That would be the statue of Gov. Carlin. In his formative years, he was illiterate. Whether he ever learned to read and write I do not know. It would have been difficult for him to govern this state if he hadn't become literate later in life. He led a wonderful life and is remembered by the town of Carlinville that is named for him.
—*Harry Volberg, Pocahontas*



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

WHERE ARE WE?



LINCOLN
1809-1865

With her towards mon...



A close-up, vertical view of the laces on a brown leather football. The laces are made of a light-colored, textured material and are stitched through the leather. The leather shows signs of wear and texture. The background is a blurred, warm-toned surface.

CO-OP KITCHEN

SUPER BOWLS

GAME DAY
DISHES

MINI CHOCOLATE CHIP CHEESECAKE BALL

Ingredients

- 8 ounces cream cheese softened
- ½ cup butter softened
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ¾ cup pecans finely chopped

Directions

1. In a medium bowl beat together cream cheese and butter until smooth.
2. Mix in powdered sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla. Then stir in chocolate chips.
3. Cover and chill for 2 hours.
4. Shape chilled cream cheese mixture into a ball, wrap with plastic wrap, and chill overnight.
5. Before serving roll in finely chopped pecans. Serve with graham crackers.

BACON & CHEESE SPREAD

Ingredients

- 1 pound bacon cooked crisp and crumbled
- 16 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 12 green onions chopped
- 2 cups Miracle Whip

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients and mix thoroughly.
2. Chill for at least one hour.
3. Serve with crackers of choice.

This month's recipes are courtesy of Bond County Habitat for Humanity Cookbook (bacon & cheese dip and mini chocolate chip cheesecake ball) and Fayette County Museum 35th Anniversary Cookbook (artichoke heart hot dip, bean dip, and Vidalia onion dip).

ARTICHOKE HEART HOT DIP

Ingredients

- 1 (14 ounce) can artichoke hearts drained
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 clove garlic minced or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tomato chopped (optional)
- 1 scallion chopped (optional)

Directions

1. Mix together artichoke hearts, mayonnaise, garlic, and cheese.
2. Pour into 9 inch pie pan and bake at 350° for 20 minutes until lightly browned.
3. Garnish with tomatoes and scallions (optional) and serve with Ritz crackers.

BEAN DIP

Ingredients

- 1 (15 ounce) can each of black-eyed peas, pinto beans, black beans, red beans, and shoe peg white corn all drained
- 1 small jar pimentos drained
- 1 medium onion diced
- 1 cup celery chopped
- 1 cup green pepper chopped
- 2 jalapenos finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon water
- ¾ cup apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar

Directions

1. Mix together all the vegetables in a large bowl.
2. In a saucepan combine salt, pepper, water, vinegar, oil, and sugar and heat to a boil. Heat until the sugar is dissolved.
3. Pour liquid mixture over the vegetables and stir gently to combine.
4. Refrigerate overnight. Pour off marinade and serve with Fritos.

VIDALIA ONION DIP

Ingredients

- 2 cups Vidalia onions chopped
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 2 cups grated Swiss cheese

Directions

1. Mix ingredients together and put into greased 1½ quart baking dish.
2. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes until bubbly and brown on top.
3. Serve with sliced, toasted baguette or crackers of choice.

CURRENT EVENTS

February 1, 3, 6 & 7, 14, 16, 21-24; March 2, 9 BALD EAGLE DAYS AT PERE MARQUETTE STATE PARK, Grafton. A site interpreter at Pere Marquette will be present programs about bald eagles. There will be a short video presentation followed by a drive to view wintering eagles. Dress warmly, have a full tank of gas, bring binoculars, wear waterproof boots and bring snacks/coffee. Programs begin at the park's visitor center at 8:30 a.m. Reservations are required. Pere Marquette State Park 13112 Visitor Center Lane. For more information or reservations, call (618) 786-3323 or visit pmlodge.net.

February 2-5, 9-12 THE PRODUCERS, 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 lookingglass-playhouse.com.

February 4 RAPTOR SATURDAYS, West Alton. Meet live raptors presented by Treehouse Wildlife Center and learn all about these amazing birds. Raptors, or birds of prey, are special birds that hunt and

eat live prey. Raptors include hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls. After your raptor meet and greet, take time to roast mallows and enjoy a fireside s'more. Sessions start at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. Registration is required. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Visit riverlands.audubon.org.

February 4 & 5 HOME SHOW, Effingham. Show features over 70 exhibitors. Come and check out the latest products in the home building and remodeling industry and receive top notch advice from the professionals. Explore current trends in home building and construction and meet face to face with builders, contractors and other professionals who are ready to help you remodel or build your dream home today. Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 North Keller Drive. Visit effinghamba.com

February 4, 11, 18, 25 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 to see nesting eagles. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather. Shuttles are limited to 20 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 more information or tickets, visit riversandroutess.com.

February 4, 11, 18, 25 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS, Grafton. Enjoy a two and a half-hour guided tour of some of the best American bald eagle watching spots around the Grafton region. Sites may include the Brussels Ferry, Calhoun Point, and Pere Marquette State Park. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather. Shuttles are limited to 20 passengers and are not ADA accessible. Tickets must be purchased in advance. 9 a.m. Admission is \$30. Grafton Skytour parking lot, 3 West Clinton. For more information or tickets, visit riversandroutess.com.

February 5, 12 EAGLE SUNDAYS, West Alton. Meet Liberty, the live 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. After your eagle meet and greet, take time to roast mallows and enjoy a fireside s'more. Sessions start at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. Registration is required. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Visit riverlands.audubon.org.

February 5; March 7 MOONLIGHT HIKE, Godfrey. Join us on a night hike 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 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.; March hike 8 - 9:15 p.m. Meet at the Talahi Lodge. The hike leaves promptly at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free for members; non-members \$5. Registration is required. The

Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

February 10-12 SINATRA: LAST CALL, Alton. Concert starring Kevin Frakes & Company showcasing the life, legacy, and talents of Frank Sinatra's six-decade career. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Admission is \$25. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

February 10-12, 17-19 THE BANNER, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the last Sunday showing, which is at 2 p.m. \$12 for adults; \$10 for students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification). Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For tickets, call (618) 526-2866 or visit clintoncountyshowcase.com.

February 18 ICE JAM AT THE DAM, West Alton. The winter-themed festival promotes outdoor recreation and celebrates all things icy along the river with live music, open dam tours, live animal programs, warm food and beverage vendors, park ranger campfire programs, educational booths, and more! Watch for American bald eagles hunting on the river, and see how barges and boats use the locks system. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. Call (618) 462-6979 or visit mtrf.org.

February 18 & 19 AMERICAN INDIAN & ETHNOGRAPHIC SHOW, Collinsville. Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewaycenter.com.

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.

February 18 FAMILY FRIENDLY OWL PROWL, Godfrey. Head to TNI after dark to discover whoooo lives in the woods. Meet Treehouse Wildlife Center's ambassador owls, dissect owl pellets, and then take a night hike to search for owls. Ages 6 and up recommended due to time sitting for animal presentation. Most of the program takes place indoors. 6 - 8 p.m. Admission is \$10 for members; non-members \$15. Registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.



February 18 - April 15 GOSHEN WINTER MARKET, Edwardsville. The market will be held on the third Saturday of the month and ends in April. Find seasonal produce, eggs, meats, baked goods, arts and crafts from local growers and artists. 8 a.m. - noon. In the basement of the Newsong Fellowship building, 201 St. Louis Street. Visit goshenmarket.org.

February 19 ALTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT, Godfrey. An Afternoon of Spanish Dance, Delight, and Desperation. 3 p.m. Adult \$10; under 18 years of age \$5. Lewis & Clark Community College, Ann Whitney Olin Theatre, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For tickets, visit altonsymphonyorchestra.org.

February 20; March 21 TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Want to look at the universe through a telescope, but don't

own one? Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have some set up. Bring your own telescope and we can help you use it. We will talk about how telescopes work and look at the moon and other night sky objects. February event 6 - 8 p.m.; March event 8:30 - 10:30 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.

March 3 & 4, 8-11 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: VIOLET SHARP, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$20; children under 18 years of age \$15. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

March 4 WOODLAND WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION WITH TREES FOREVER, Alton. Looking forward to Spring and all the new, blooming flora that comes with it? Mark your calendars for a woodland wildflower identification class with Emily Ehley of Trees Forever. Whether you're a seasoned outdoor enthusiast or just starting to explore an interest in nature, this is a great opportunity to get the know the wildflowers of our area and how to recognize them. No registration is required. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Admission is free. Hayner Library at Alton Square Mall, 123 Alton Square Drive. Call (618) 792-8567.

March 4 ANITA JACKSON CONCERT, Lebanon. One of St. Louis' premier ladies of song, gospel vocalist Anita Jackson makes her debut on the Hett stage. Jackson has appeared as a background vocalist with Bette Midler, Patti Austin and Mariah Carey. She has been featured with several jazz, R&B, blues and gospel groups around St. Louis. 7 p.m. The Hett Center for the Arts,

400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com for ticket information.

March 10 TUBA SKINNY CONCERT, Lebanon. Right off the streets of New Orleans, Tuba Skinny is dedicated to bringing the best in traditional early jazz swing to audiences around the world for over a decade. 7:30 p.m. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com for ticket information.

March 10-12 & 17-19 JIMMY BUFFETT'S ESCAPE TO MARGARITAVILLE, Highland. A Hard Road Theatre Productions musical comedy featuring the most-loved Jimmy Buffett classics. Weinheimer Community Center, 1100 Main Street. For more information, visit hardroad.org.

March 16-19, 23-26 LOOKING GLASS PLAYHOUSE: EMMA, 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 18 FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY: RIGHT ON TARGET, Godfrey. Learn to shoot an arrow on our archery range. Beginners are welcome. Must be 8 years of age or older. All supplies and instruction provided by TNI. Parents/guardians are required to attend with children. 10 a.m. - noon. \$5 members; \$7 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

March 18 FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY: SOMETHING'S FISHY, Godfrey. Head to Cypress Pond to try your hand at fishing. Poles and bait are provided by TNI. All fishing is catch and release. After, complete a fish craft back at the Lodge. Parents/guardians are required to attend with children. 10 a.m. - noon. \$5 members; \$7 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

March 23 NEIL BERG'S 50 YEARS OF ROCK AND ROLL, PART 2, Lebanon. From the progenitors of rock 'n' roll in the 1940s through the glory years of the '50s, '60s, and '70s up until MTV in the early '80s, With a cast consisting of stars from Broadway's greatest rock musicals and incredible rock singers, Neil shares the often-unknown stories from the 50-year history of the music that changed the world forever. 7:30 p.m. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com for ticket information.



March 21, 28 WILDFLOWER HIKE, Godfrey. Many of the flowers you'll see in the spring are known as ephemerals due to their short-lived nature. Join one of our naturalists to identify some of these plants before they're gone. 9 - 10 a.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.

