

# *THE Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2024 • VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 2

## *Improving Reliability*

**POCAHONTAS SUBSTATION  
SLATED FOR \$300,000 IN  
UPGRADES**

**UNDERSTANDING  
YOUR ELECTRIC BILL**

**COOPERATIVE FAMILY**

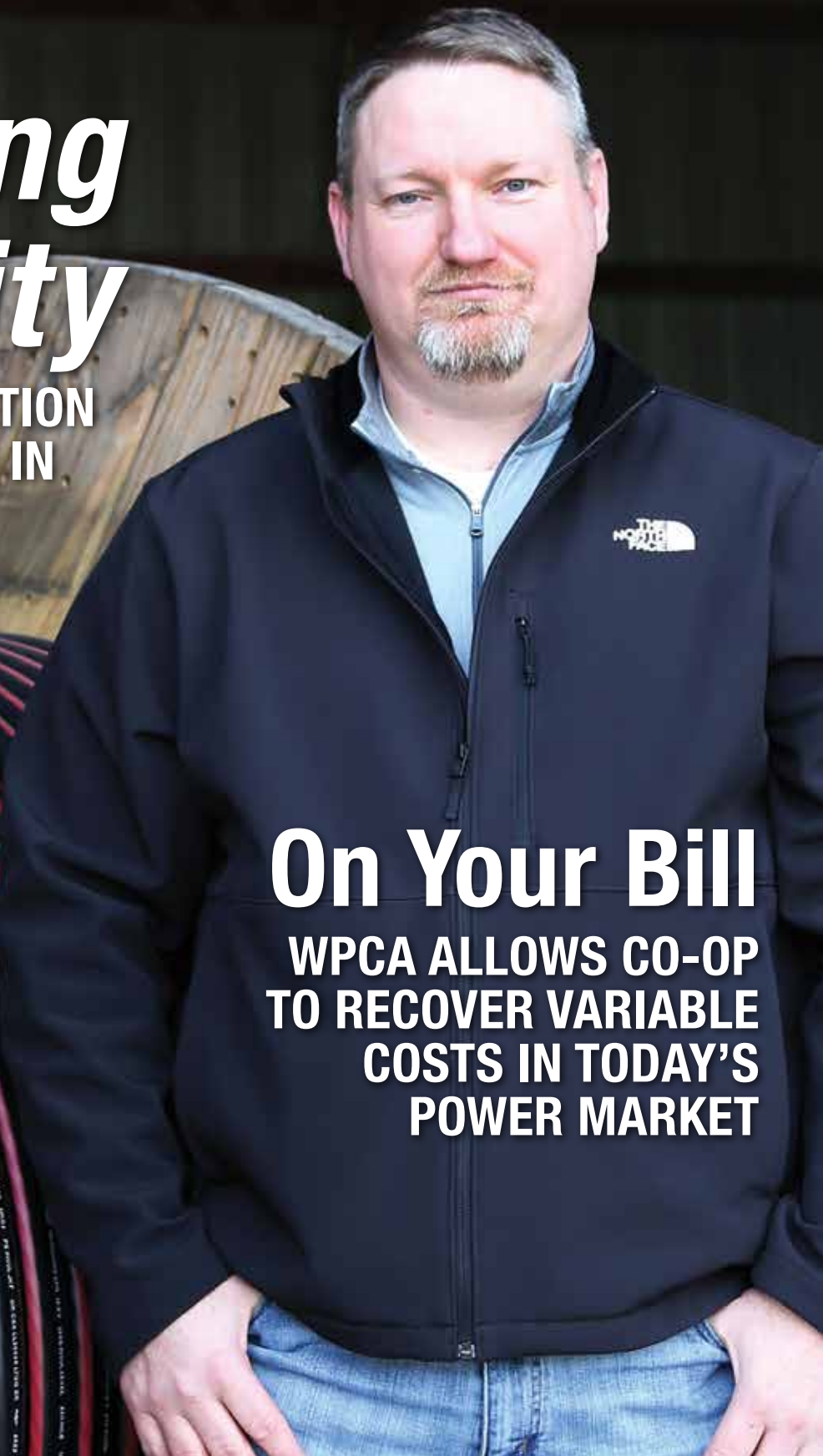
**POWER FOR  
PROGRESS**

**SNOW GOING**

**SMART SAVINGS**

## **On Your Bill**

**WPCA ALLOWS CO-OP  
TO RECOVER VARIABLE  
COSTS IN TODAY'S  
POWER MARKET**





## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### 04 News & Notes

Find the frog in our Leap Month Hide & Seek contest, then enter our \$25 bill credit drawing.

### 05 Cooperative Family

A suggestion from Southwestern's senior warehouseman sparked \$1,790 in employee donations to a Bond County cancer foundation.

### 06 Understanding Your Bill

In 2022, Southwestern Electric provided you with a more informative bill. Here are some of the terms that appear on your bill and what they mean.

### 08 Power Cost Adjustment

The Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment (WPCA) allows your co-op to recover variable costs of energy, capacity and transmission.

### 10 Improving Reliability

Members served by Southwestern Electric's Pocahontas Substation lost power five times in three weeks at the end of 2023. Here's what we're doing about it.

### 12 Power For Progress

Next month marks the application deadline for this year's Power For Progress Scholarship Program. Here's how to apply.

### 14 Energy & Efficiency

Whether your New Year's Resolution was to save money or get the newest in smart technology for your home's comfort, we've got good news — you can do both with these smart devices.

### 16 Health & Safety

Just because the snow starts to fall doesn't mean your world stops. If you've got to travel during inclement weather, heed these tips to ensure a safer trip.

### 18 Out & About

It's not everyday you're asked to help Cornell with research, but that's what they're asking this month. Read more to find out how you can help their study.

### 20 Who-What-Where

You were sew — er, so — onto our December puzzle item, but can you clear the bar with this month's anonymous athlete?

### 22 Co-op Kitchen

Cold winter days call for a hot bowl of soup. We've got just the recipe to hit the spot — four of them, in fact.

### 24 Current Events

Feathers (of eagles in Alton), Heathers (the Musical in Lebanon) and leathers (couches, mostly, at the Gateway Home Show in Collinsville) highlight this month's events.

### 27 Final Frame

Signs of spring.

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## NEWS & NOTES

### ON THE COVER

CEO Bobby Williams reviews underground cable slated for installation at Pocahontas Substation. The co-op is installing 9,000 feet of cable and conduit, as well as new system and substation components, to improve reliability for members served by the sub. See our story on page 10.



### CO-OP REMINDERS

**February 12** 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.



### FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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



# Reader Contest

**W**e've hidden a Leap Year frog in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see here. We may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the frog, email us or send a postcard with your name, address, phone number, and the page number where you found the image. Please email us at [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) or send your postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

Entries must be postmarked or in our [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) inbox by the first day of the month following the month of publication. For our February contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by March 1, 2024.

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.

### DECEMBER WINNER

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



### RULES TO PLAY BY

- One entry per membership per month.
- A membership can only win once per calendar year.
- No phone calls, texts, social media posts, walk-in traffic, carrier pigeons, singing telegrams or other clever means of communication that may occur to you.
- Please respond *only* by emailing us at [thesouthwestern@sweci.com](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) or by sending a postcard to The

- Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
- Entries submitted by other methods will be disqualified.
- Entries emailed to other Southwestern Electric email addresses will be disqualified, deleted, then disqualified again, just to be safe.
- Entries mailed to other departments or included with other correspondence will likely never find

- their way to the editor. If they do, they'll be disqualified. Also, he'll add you to his list of people who can't follow instructions. It's a long list and not one you care to be part of.
- February contest entries must be 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.

# Cooperative Family

Employee inspires coworkers to support local cancer foundation

Words by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

When he interviewed for a job at Southwestern Electric Cooperative in 2010, Pat Harris was told the cooperative operated like a family.

He found that out firsthand more than a decade later when in February 2022, Harris, now a senior warehouseman at Southwestern Electric, was diagnosed with esophageal cancer during a regular screening. What followed was six weeks of intensive chemotherapy and radiation before a roughly golf ball-sized tumor was removed, along with three-quarters of his esophagus and part of his stomach, on June 17, 2022.

During that time, Harris said he received no shortage of support from his cooperative colleagues.

“The whole time I was off I was getting phone calls, visits, people bringing food, lots of cards, a lot of support,” he said. “From top to bottom, pretty much everybody stepped up.”

Also helping out during that time was the Lemuel Rhodes Cancer Foundation, a Bond County organization that supports cancer patients as they seek treatment. Harris said the foundation supplied gas cards that helped ease the burden of driving to O’Fallon, Illinois, five days a week for six straight weeks to receive chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

This past September, with that experience still fresh in his mind, Harris wanted to give back. He knew the local radio station WGEL held an annual pie auction to benefit the foundation and went to Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams with an idea.



The idea to participate in the pie auction came from Senior Warehouseman Pat Harris, who was familiar with the Lemuel Rhodes Cancer Foundation after they helped him following his own cancer diagnosis in February 2022.



Member Services Representative Deb Whicker with a slice of her signature “mile-high turtle pie.”

“The pies are expensive, several hundreds of dollars,” Harris said. “I knew I couldn’t buy one on my own, so I went to Bobby and said, ‘I’ll throw in the first \$100 in if anybody else wants to join.’ And it just snowballed.”

Williams brought up the idea during an employee meeting a few days before the auction commenced, and numerous Southwestern employees also pledged to donate what they could. When the dust settled, \$1,790 had been collected to buy a singular pie.

“I couldn’t believe what everybody did,” Harris said. “I was just shocked.”

It wasn’t just any pie, though. The pie purchased by the cooperative was a famous — at least in these parts — “mile-high turtle pie” baked and donated by Southwestern Electric Member Services Representative Deb Whicker.

In remission since October 2023, Harris recommended that anyone with a family history of cancer — his father had colon cancer, which prompted him to get annual check-ups — be screened regularly.

He also recommends that everyone find a work family like the one he found at Southwestern Electric.

“When I was hired, the CEO at the time said, ‘We are a family. We’re quite dysfunctional, but we are a family.’ And I agree with that,” Harris said. “When somebody is having a tough time around here, people step up. It’s one of the best things about working here.”

*Learn more about the Lemuel Rhodes Cancer Foundation at <https://www.lemuelrhodes.org>.*

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

In 2022, Southwestern Electric revised its bill to provide you with more information at a glance. Your current bill offers a line-by-line look at how much you pay for energy, distribution, transmission, and other expenses associated with moving electricity from the grid to your home.

The information can help you make informed decisions about energy-related technology, and if you're considering co-generation, assess your potential return on investment.

Until this year, the line on your bill that read WPCA, short for Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment, had no cost associated with it. In January, the cooperative assigned a charge of 0.0053400 cents per kilowatt-hour to the WPCA. You can read more about the WPCA on page 8.

Below, we've defined some of the terms that appear on your bill. If you have questions about your bill or the WPCA, please call our billing department at 800-637-8667. A member services representative will be happy to help you.

Account Number	Service Address	Telephone	Account
123456789	1234 W MAIN ST	555-555-5555	1234
Multiplier	KWH Usage	Billed Demand	Rate Description
1	1328	0.000	RATE 1-RESIDENTIAL
Bill Information			
4	Service Availability		
5	Energy	1328 @ 0.0377000	
6	Distribution	1328 @ 0.0335000	
		0 @ 0.0185000	
		0 @ 0.0000000	
7	Capacity Trans	1328 @ 0.0330000	
8	WPCA	1328 @ 0.0053400	
Subtotal Current Charges			
1-400 HPS Directional Security Light			
1-70 Watt LED Security Light			
9	State Tax		
Current Month Charges			

## TERMS TO KNOW

**1 Multiplier.** Meters for accounts meeting specific criteria are designed to record a fraction of the kilowatt hours consumed in a month. These meter readings are multiplied by a factor (the multiplier) to determine consumption. Most residential electric meters have a multiplier of 1.

**2 KWH Usage.** A kilowatt-hour (kWh) is the amount of energy required to run a 1,000-watt appliance for an hour. To calculate the kilowatt-hours you consumed in your current billing period, subtract your previous meter reading from your current reading.

**3 Billed Demand.** The highest kilowatt reading reported during your billing cycle. Your peak kilowatt reading is multiplied by a demand rate. Southwestern does not apply a demand charge to residential accounts.

**4 Service Availability.** Recurring fixed monthly charge that covers some of the cost associated with providing service to your location regardless of usage.

**5 Energy.** The Energy charge is calculated by multiplying the kilowatt-hours (kWh) you consumed during the billing period by your electric rate (most members are on Southwestern's residential rate).

**6 Distribution.** A charge based on kilowatt-hours consumed during the billing period. This charge helps the co-op recover costs related to right-of-way clearance, line maintenance, and equipment that serves your account.

**7 Capacity-Trans (Capacity & Transmission).** Fees Southwestern Electric pays to move electricity across long distances at high voltages.

**8 WPCA (Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment).** The WPCA reflects increases and decreases in the cost of capacity, transmission, and wholesale energy purchased by Southwestern.

**9 State Tax.** Taxes are applied as required.





# Recovering Expenses *Without Raising Rates*

## CO-OP ADDS WHOLESALE POWER COST ADJUSTMENT TO BILL

**T**wo years ago, Southwestern Electric revised its bill. The new format provided you with a line level breakout of various charges involved in delivering electricity from our wholesale power provider to your home or business. A line for the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment (WPCA) was included on your bill with no costs associated with it. In January of this year, Southwestern assigned a charge of 0.00534 cents per kilowatt-hour to the WPCA line. That translates to \$5.34 per 1,000 kilowatt-hours, which means an increase of about \$6 per month for most members.

What is the WPCA and why did Southwestern add the adjustment?

The Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment allows Southwestern Electric to recover expenses associated with changes in the price of wholesale power. Those costs include energy, capacity, and transmission fees. While some of these expenses are addressed in our wholesale power contracts, others aren't.

### WHOLESALE ENERGY, CAPACITY COSTS & TRANSMISSION FEES ARE INCREASING

Southwestern's contract with its power provider (BP) is favorable and shelters members from dramatic price increases in an unpredictable power market. That said, the co-op is paying more for wholesale power than it was in 2020.

In past articles, we've discussed the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). MISO manages power supply and demand across the grid in our region of the Midwest. Southwestern Electric develops energy forecasts using historical data and growth projections, which we submit to MISO. MISO uses the forecasts to calculate our capacity requirement, or the potential demands our membership may place on the grid.

The greater demand we could potentially place on the grid, the greater our demand or capacity requirement from MISO.

Your co-op is required to buy enough capacity to meet MISO's requirements. Last year, MISO began evaluating potential demand, or capacity, by season, rather than annually. Since your cooperative's demands on the grid vary widely by season, we saw defined peaks and valleys in our capacity requirements from MISO (Unlike your cooperative, MISO doesn't offer levelized billing.).

In summer 2023, Southwestern bought capacity above and beyond what was included in our wholesale power contract.

Due to the changing power production landscape in our region, MISO's 2022 Planning Resource Auction closed at exponentially higher rates than previous years. The auction drove up power costs in our region. The WPCA allows Southwestern to recover that added expense without raising rates.

Southwestern is also paying significantly more in transmission fees — expenses incurred in moving energy from power plants across the grid and onto the co-op's distribution system — than it was a few years ago.

These fluctuating energy, capacity and transmission expenses are addressed by the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment. The WPCA allows Southwestern to recover expenses incurred in a rapidly changing power market, without continually restructuring electric rates.

The WPCA is a pass-through cost. Southwestern only collects what's necessary to recover variable costs associated with providing wholesale power.

Energy, capacity and transmission costs rise and fall. Likewise, the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment will rise and fall to meet those fluctuating expenses. Southwestern's board of directors will review the WPCA every six months to ensure it reflects the true cost of providing wholesale power to the membership. If energy, capacity or transmission costs drop substantially, the WPCA will appear as a credit on your bill.

While language and presentation vary by utility, all energy suppliers include a charge to recapture variable costs related to power production. If you receive bills from other utilities, they may refer to their WPCA as a Wholesale Power Adjustment, Fuel Cost Adjustment, Power Cost Adjustment Factor or Power Charge Indifference Adjustment.

### PAYING YOUR BILL: PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

We understand that small expenses add up. Southwestern Electric offers levelized billing to help you avoid substantial changes in the amount of your electric bill from one month to the next. Levelized billing flattens the peaks and valleys that come with seasonal changes in your electric usage, making it easier for you to plan your budget. Levelized bills are calculated on a rolling 12-month average. When you sign up for levelized billing, your payment will probably vary by a few dollars from month to month.

Our Pay-As-You-Go program equips you to closely monitor your daily usage and customize your payment schedule. You

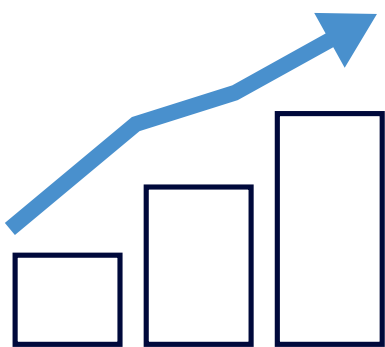
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# The Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment Explained

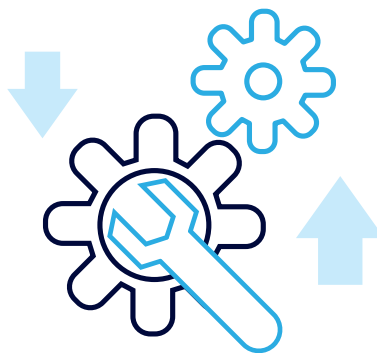
## The WPCA Provides Flexibility

The Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment (WPCA) allows Southwestern Electric to recover expenses associated with changes in the price of wholesale power. Those costs include energy, capacity and transmission fees.



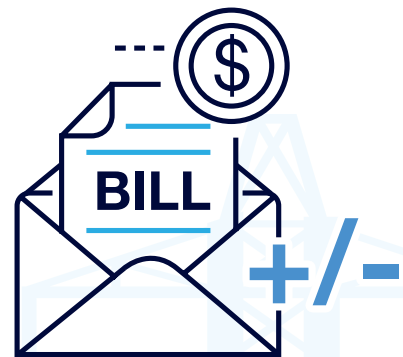
### Energy, Capacity & Transmission Costs Are Increasing

The co-op is paying more for wholesale power than it was in 2020. Capacity costs are much higher than they once were. Transmission fees — expenses incurred in moving energy from power plants across the grid and onto the co-op's distribution system — have also increased significantly. These expenses are addressed by the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment.



### The WPCA Helps Southwestern Avoid Rate Increases

The WPCA allows Southwestern to recover expenses incurred in a rapidly changing power market, without continually changing or restructuring electric rates. The WPCA will rise and fall to meet fluctuating market prices.



### The WPCA Is A Pass-Through Cost

Southwestern only collects what's necessary to recover variable costs associated with providing wholesale power. If energy, capacity or transmission costs drop substantially, the Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment will appear as a credit on your bill.



***YOUR ACCOUNTABLE ENERGY PARTNER***

# Improving Reliability

Members served by Southwestern Electric's Pocahontas Substation lost power five times in three weeks at the end of 2023. None of the outages were storm-related. Here's what we're doing about it.

Words by Joe Richardson | Photos by Mike Barns

On the afternoon of Nov. 28, an Ameren maintenance project shut down Southwestern Electric's substations near Reno and Pocahontas, leaving 1,800 co-op members in the dark. The project took both substations offline again that evening. "They were doing some work on the transmission side, trying to install a mobile substation and ran into issues," said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams. The work tripped breakers on an Ameren transmission line that energizes both substations.

Less than two weeks later, on Dec. 8, Ameren de-energized the same line to complete their project, creating a third outage for Southwestern members.

On Dec. 11, members served by Pocahontas Substation experienced a fourth outage. "Essentially, we had a failure on two phases of an underground cable at Pocahontas Sub," Williams explained. "Our crews were able to isolate that pretty quickly."

Based on initial field assessments, Southwestern's communications team posted messages preparing members for a 15-minute outage. Their messages missed the mark by more than an hour. Pocahontas Substation was out of service for close to 90 minutes, with one circuit affected for two hours.

While making repairs, crews were tasked with rebuilding several substation fuses. The process required equipment that isn't standard issue or commonly carried on trucks. Linemen relied on experience, ingenuity and on-site gear to safely rebuild the fuses and complete the project. The repairs were successful — but they took time. "That's why our estimated time of restoration turned out

to be inaccurate," Williams said. "We didn't update our communications to reflect changing conditions in the field. We learned from that. Moving forward, we'll do a better job of keeping everyone informed."

On Dec. 15, members served by Pocahontas Sub experienced their fifth outage inside three weeks. "We had repaired two of the three phases coming out of Pocahontas Substation," Williams said. Crews energized a circuit to confirm the integrity of repairs they'd made earlier in the week. "Their work was solid," Williams said. "The third phase failed. We had repaired two of the three phases at Pocahontas Substation — and the third phase faulted." The fault damaged substation fuses, leaving 1,100 members without electricity. Crews quickly rerouted power to restore service and repaired the fuses. The outage lasted about 25 minutes.



Bobby Williams shows new underground cable for Pocahontas Substation and the conduit (opposite page) that will protect it. The co-op is installing 9,000 feet of cable and conduit, and new system and substation components to improve reliability for members served by the sub.

## CAUSE AND EFFECT

Did Ameren transmission line outages in November precipitate the mid-December faults? It's impossible to say. Williams compared the events to a lightning strike. "When you de-energize and re-energize, the inrush current is higher than normal load current. That's an impact. Transient energy from lightning can damage cable as well. It's rated to take pulses," he said, "but if you have too many, the cable breaks down."

In the weeks following the outages, Williams and Southwestern's engineering and operations personnel developed immediate and long-term plans to upgrade Pocahontas Substation and improve reliability for the members it serves.

"In terms of the coming weeks, we've developed switching scenarios to balance load," he said. "If a winter storm rolls in this month and we lose a line that serves a lot of members on Pocahontas Sub, we can quickly tie different circuits together and reroute power. That's going to reduce the duration of outages. In terms of improving reliability, we've slated substation improvements for this month. We've ordered materials and we have them in stock," Williams said.

"We're replacing a lot of the sub's existing components with new materials. We ordered 9,000 feet of conduit and cable," he said. "We're replacing all three phases of underground cable that faulted last year." Each cable will be protected by conduit.

"We're also adding new junction cabinets and replacing components in an existing cabinet, so we can isolate outages more easily to make repairs," he said. "If there's a fault in a circuit, we





can quickly switch people to an alternate feeder. That allows us to expedite repairs and reduce the duration of outages.”

The co-op also plans to upgrade internal components of Pocahontas Substation, as well as overhead circuits that move energy from the sub onto Southwestern’s distribution lines.

To date, the cable, conduit and junction boxes cost about \$140,000. Williams said with labor, he expects substation improvements to total at least \$300,000. “It’s important work — priority work,” he said. “We’re using quality

materials. And we want to get it done as soon as possible. The members on our Pocahontas Substation have been patient. We want to do all we can to improve their reliability.”

### **QUALITY CREWS, EXCELLENT PARTNERS**

Williams commended operations and engineering teams for their work on Pocahontas Sub. “Working with energized lines is difficult, dangerous work. Our crews are experienced and they’re agile. The Pocahontas outages in

December weren’t textbook situations. Our operations and engineering personnel addressed them safely and skillfully. They devised solutions to uncommon problems quickly, applying field tactics and a thorough understanding of our distribution system’s components,” he said. “I’m grateful we have teams with the skills and experience to develop solutions in the field.”

While technology is tremendously useful, it informs experience and intuition. It doesn’t replace it. “Our cooperative is 85 years old,” Williams noted. “We’ve been diligent with our maintenance and upgrades, but our system is aging. We have more than two dozen substations and 3,500 miles of power line in our distribution system. About 770 miles of that line is underground. Technology can relay information and paint a picture of what’s happening in our distribution system, but there’s no substitute for the experience and insight of our people. Many of the challenges we’ve faced in recent years — storm

*Continued on page 26 ►*

***“We expect to invest at least \$300,000 in improvements at Pocahontas Substation. It’s important work — priority work. I appreciate our members’ patience as we take measures to improve their reliability.”*** —CEO Bobby Williams

# ***SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2024***

***Twelve  
\$1,200  
Southwestern  
Electric Scholarships  
and one \$1,200 Alan  
G. Libbra Memorial  
Scholarship will  
be awarded  
in 2024***



## **Co-op to Award \$14,400 in Academic Assistance**



**S**ince 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided close to \$300,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award \$14,400 in scholarship money to 12 students in spring 2024 for use in the fall 2024 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](http://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 2024 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 **Monday, March 11, 2024**.





## 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 2024.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, March 11, 2024.

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric has provided close to \$300,000 in scholarship funding, assisting 439 students.

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

# Libbra Scholarship Will Support Future Leaders

**T**he 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](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JUDGES

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

# 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.

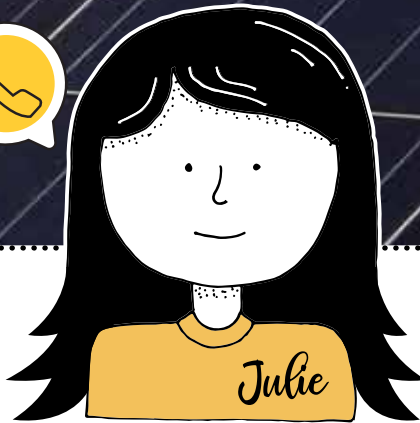
You'll need to install an app on your phone that's compatible with the smart plug of your choosing. From the app you will be able to control the power to the plug and schedule on and off times. Additionally, some apps support energy monitoring.

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.

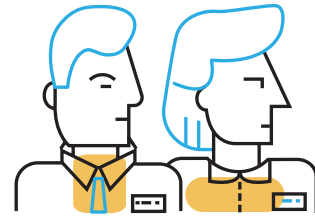
*For more energy-saving tips, contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at 800-637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).*



# Steps to Solar Commissioning



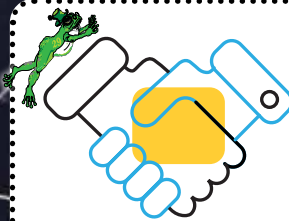
Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com) for our information and commissioning packet.



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



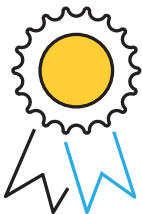
After your one-line diagram is approved by Southwestern Electric, you'll receive a \$500 invoice to cover the installation of your new dual register electric meter, a system inspection, and your array's interconnection to the grid. If your installer will be paying this invoice on your behalf, we'll send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



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



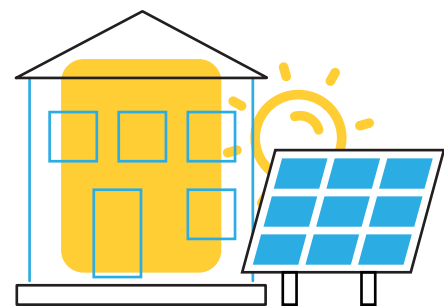
Our commissioning team will visit your site. We will inspect your system to verify it meets our safety specifications. A team member will review a memorandum of understanding with you. You'll sign this document for our files. Note: If you won't be present for commissioning, please schedule a meeting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



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

# *Snow Going*

## *Tips for Winter Travel*

You know how to deal with winter weather — especially when it hits the road.

You keep your senses tuned to the environment. You work to anticipate the actions of others. And you employ defensive driving techniques.

But safe travel starts before you sit behind the wheel. These tips will help you get where you're going, whatever the season.

### **PLOT AND PLAN**

Before you leave, check the weather along your route. You'll find Illinois road condition and construction reports at [gettingaroundillinois.com](http://gettingaroundillinois.com).

Travel with a fully charged cell phone. Tell a family member, friend or co-worker where you're going and when you expect to get there. When you reach your destination, call in to confirm you've arrived.

If you're venturing through unknown areas, travel during the day. Carry maps with you, and make sure you have your ID, and registration and insurance information for your vehicle.

Before you leave, fill your gas tank. And remember to dress for the weather, not your destination.

### **NEVER SKIMP ON SAFETY**

During mild weather, being stranded is an inconvenience. In winter it can become life-threatening. Make sure your maintenance is up to date. Ask your mechanic to check your vehicle's battery, antifreeze, wipers and fluid, ignition, thermostat, lights, exhaust and heater.

Regularly check wipers, tires, lights, and fluid levels throughout the season. Make sure your brakes and transmission are working properly. When it comes to wipers and wiper fluid, buy the best you can afford. All products are not created equal, and you'll notice a difference in performance.



## VEHICLE OPERATION

Brush snow and ice from your windows, license plates and lights, and clear snow from your vehicle's hood, roof and trunk — snow and ice clinging to your car present a hazard to other drivers.

Go slow and wear your seat belt. Over a short distance, road conditions may vary depending on exposure to the sun, shade or pavement materials.

Watch for slick spots under bridges, on overpasses and in shaded areas. If the pavement is snow- or ice-covered, start slowly and brake gently.

Begin braking early when you come to an intersection. If you start to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you regain traction, then straighten your vehicle.

When you approach a snow plow from behind, pass with care and only when you can see the road ahead of the plow. Don't try to pass in blowing snow — there may be a vehicle hidden in that cloud of white.

## STRANDED

If your vehicle breaks down, pull off the road, getting as far from traffic as possible before you call for help. At this point, the greatest threat to your safety is being hit by another vehicle.

It may be a while before help arrives. Stay in your vehicle. When you feel cold, move around in the vehicle, clap your hands, shake your legs, and stomp your feet.

If you're in a vehicle with others, sit close together and cover up with blankets or extra clothing to conserve body heat. Don't permit everyone to sleep at once.

If the engine will start, run it and the heater for short periods. Partially open a downwind window to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the exhaust pipe is free of obstructions and that the windows aren't frozen shut.

Resist the temptation to accept a ride from a stranger. If you're stranded in an area with no cell signal and someone offers help, ask him or her to notify the police.

## SURVIVAL KIT

Equip your car with a winter emergency survival kit. You may want to include:

- Ice scraper, snow brush, rags and paper towels.
- Jumper cables, a basic tool kit, antifreeze, and no-freeze windshield washer fluid.
- Shovel, traction mats or old rugs, tire chains, salt, cat box litter or sand.
- Blankets and extra clothing including hats, socks, waterproof boots, coats and gloves.
- Bottled water and non-perishable, high-calorie food.
- Candles, waterproof matches and a metal container (coffee can) in which to melt snow into water.
- Flashlight with extra batteries, flares or roadway reflectors, and a "Call Police" sign.
- A basic first aid kit and a fire extinguisher.
- A backup power source for your cellular phone.



# BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER FOR FEBRUARY CENSUS

**CITIZEN SCIENTISTS HELP ORNITHOLOGISTS UNDERSTAND THE BEHAVIOR OF THINGS WITH WINGS**

**T**hey call it citizen science. It's the practice of outsourcing data collection or analysis to large numbers of people who possess a passion for a topic. We see it in meteorology, astronomy, ecology and agriculture. This month, you can see it in your backyard.

From February 16-19, you can become a citizen scientist as you turn your eyes to the sky — or your lawn — to help ornithologists understand the behavior of birds. During those four days, birders around the world will take to woodlands, wetlands and windows to participate in The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), an annual event led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners assisting.

The GBBC invites birders to count the number and variety of birds they see. Counts may be brief, 15-minute windows, or span hours over the course of the GBBC. Participation is free.

You can count birds anywhere you like. Your backyard, a local park, a national wildlife refuge — reports from any and all venues are useful and welcome.



You can report findings using the Merlin Bird ID, eBird Mobile app, or at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Your findings paint a portrait of the number, distribution, habits and habitat of the world's avian species, and your work offers researchers at Cornell and Audubon insight into how birds are faring, and how to protect various species and their habitats.

Last year, more than 236,000 checklists were submitted by GBBC participants in the United States. Bird enthusiasts from California logged the most checklists, at 21,585. Illinois ranked 13th with 6,578 entries.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the GBBC was first held in the U.S. and Canada, with the intent of gathering population data before the onset of spring migrations — hence the winter count.

## A BIRD IN THE HAND

### *App acts as ID cheat sheet*

Can't tell a Northern Cardinal from an Evening Grosbeak? No problem—there's an app for that. The Merlin Bird ID App With Photo ID is a free app for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin has a Photo ID feature that helps identify a bird in an image. Merlin can help you identify more than 10,000 species in North America, Central America and Europe, and includes ID tips, photos and sounds. You can read more about Merlin at [birdcount.org/participate](http://birdcount.org/participate). Merlin Bird ID with the Photo ID feature is available at the App Store and on Google Play.

In 2013, GBBC went global, integrating its census with eBird — an online checklist developed by Cornell Lab and Audubon.

Last year, 555,291 watchers worldwide logged 7,538 species on 390,652 checklists. They added 151,479 photos, videos and sounds to Macaulay Library, the world's premier archive of natural history audio, video, and photographs.

### BIRDERS OF A FEATHER LOG ON TOGETHER

Expensive equipment, spotting scopes, glossy field guides and a thorough knowledge of avian behavior — you don't need any of it to contribute. All you really need are 15 minutes and a view — and the Merlin Bird ID, eBird app or internet access, because the data is entered and stored electronically. Getting started is easy.

- Go to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Click "How to Participate" and follow the instructions. If you created an account for last year's GBBC or you're registered with eBird or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, use your existing login information.
- Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC. Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like.
- Submit your results using Merlin Bird ID, the eBird app or at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). The apps are convenient. They'll allow you to upload your GBBC data from anywhere and are available for iOS and for Android.

For more information about the GBBC, log on to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). If you shoot photos during your count, we'd love to see them. Email your shots to [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com). Your photo may appear in a future issue of The Southwestern.

**BIRDING**  
BY THE NUMBERS  
Backyard  
Bird Count 2023

**555,291**  
ESTIMATED GLOBAL  
PARTICIPANTS

**390,652** ✓  
CHECKLISTS ✓  
**372,905** MERLIN APP IDs

**202 Countries**  
Participated & Counted  
**7,538 Total Species**  
Observed World Wide

**674**  
Species In  
United States  
FROM 236,904 CHECKISTS  
AND 311,736 MERLIN IDS

ILLINOIS'S  
RANK  
AMONG  
THE 50  
STATES WITH  
**13TH**  
6,578 CHECKLISTS &  
5,997 MERLIN APP IDS



## WHO • WHAT • WHERE

**A**s I write this, the temperature is 1 degree — and that's an improvement. We're leaving behind a weekend of -20 wind chills and late-night outages across our service area. To our members, who were overwhelmingly patient, kind and generous in their support and concern for our crews, thank you. We deeply appreciate your words of gratitude and encouragement.

To my colleagues who spent generous portions of the past week outdoors, standing on frozen ground — or working 30 feet above it — completing difficult, delicate tasks in wind and snow and a cold so deep it would make a Minnesotan shiver, well done. You did yourselves, your co-op, and the people you serve, proud.

Right, then. Enough earnestness. On to lighter fare.

Southwestern member Flip Gephart of Brownstown presented us with the intriguing antique that served as our December puzzle. Thanks, Flip, for calling to mind a simpler day, when we



had a self-sufficient, straightforward way of addressing life.

Several of you recognized the item. We've included some of your responses below. As for our next challenge, can you identify the Olympic athlete at right? We'll run some of your responses in our April magazine.

Thanks to everyone who shared solutions for our December puzzle. And thank you for reading The Southwestern. We appreciate your time.

.....

The machine pictured in the December issue of The Southwestern is a vintage chandler hand-operated pinking machine for leather.

—Lynne & Patrick Slack, Worden

I believe the photo is of a vintage pinking machine used for cutting cloth or material for sewing.

—David Trampe, Troy

The December 2023 "What am I?" pictured is a vintage (circa 1930s) hand operated pinking machine. Pinking, cutting a scalloped or zigzag edge to fabric, is usually thought to be done with shears but back in the day there was a hand-cranked machine for that. The device reminded me of my youth when I would help my mother make sandwich spread. I'd grind up sausage and pickles using a contraption much like the one pictured.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon

**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.







# *Who am I?*



# Souped Up

## BROWN JUG SOUP

### Ingredients

- 2 quarts water
- 4 chicken bouillon cubes
- 1 cup onion chopped
- 1 cup celery chopped
- 2 cups potatoes diced
- 1 small bag California blend frozen vegetables
- 1 can cheddar cheese condensed soup
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese chopped

### Directions

1. Combine water, bouillon cubes, onion and celery and simmer for 20 minutes.
2. Add potatoes and California blend and cook over medium heat for 30.
3. Add cheddar cheese soup and cheese, cook until cheese melts.
4. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with oyster crackers.

## BROCCOLI SOUP

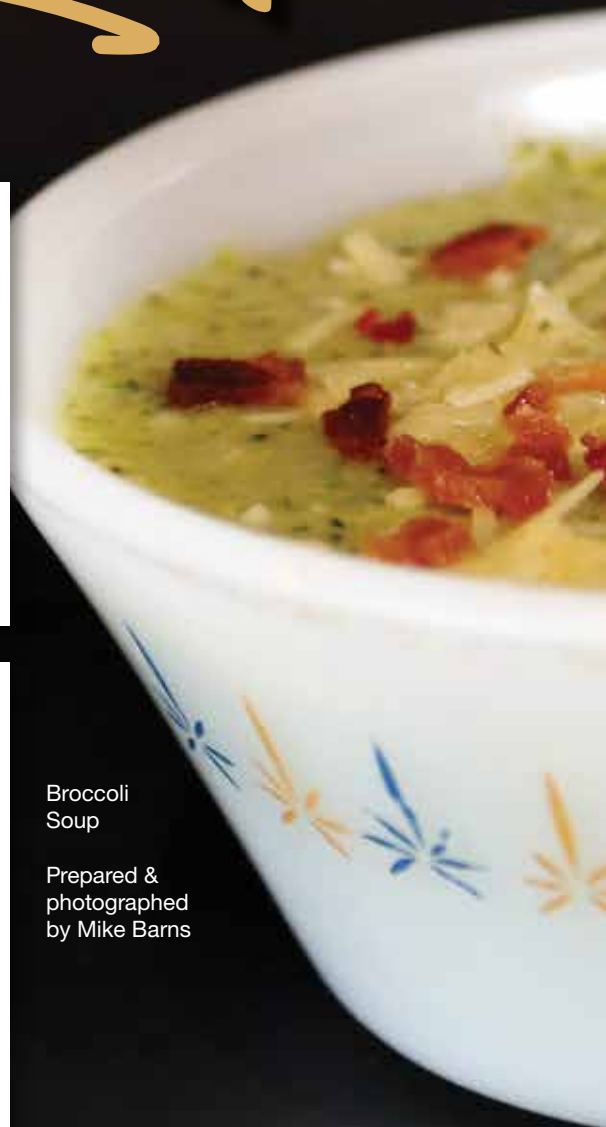
### Ingredients

- ½ cup celery chopped
- ½ cup green onions chopped
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1½ pounds fresh broccoli
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups milk
- salt and pepper
- grated Swiss cheese (optional)
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen cauliflower (optional). *If using cauliflower add with broccoli.*

### Directions

1. Sauté celery, onion, garlic and butter in large pot until tender.
2. Add broccoli and broth, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Puree in blender and pour back into pot.
4. Add milk and salt and pepper to taste. Heat until warm.
5. Sprinkle on Swiss cheese to garnish.

*We garnished with crumbled bacon.*



Broccoli Soup

Prepared & photographed by Mike Barns

## CREAMY LETTUCE SOUP

### Ingredients

- 1 quart chicken broth
- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 cucumber peeled, seeded and cubed
- 1 shallot sliced
- 1 garlic clove chopped
- salt and pepper to season

### Directions

1. Combine all ingredients together and simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Whirl in blender until smooth.
3. Salt and pepper to taste.

## CARROT SOUP

### Ingredients

- ¼ cup onion chopped
- ¼ teaspoon minced garlic
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups carrots sliced (frozen or fresh)
- ½ teaspoon fine herbs seasoning
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 dashes white pepper
- 1 cup light cream, half & half or skim milk

### Directions

1. Saute onion and garlic in small amount of butter until translucent.
2. In a separate pot combine 2 cups of the chicken broth, carrots, fine herbs, nutmeg, salt, pepper, and onions and garlic and bring to a boil.
3. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes or until carrots are tender.
4. Let cool to lukewarm, puree in a blender until smooth, and return to pot.
5. Stir in remaining cup of chicken broth and light cream.
6. Heat to simmering. Serve garnished with fresh parsley.





## CURRENT EVENTS

**February 1, 20 ROAMING NATURALISTS**, Godfrey. Monthly hike designed for adults who want to learn more about the natural world. While each hike will have a topic of focus, we will allow the interest of the group and the surprises that nature throws at us to determine what we learn on our hike. Hikes will range from 1-2 miles (rarely 3 miles) on easy to moderate terrain. We hike rain or shine. In the event of icy conditions, or excessive snow, the hike may be canceled. 9 - 10:30 a.m. Event is free but suggested donation \$5. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**February 3 & 4 HOME SHOW**, Effingham. Show features more than 60 exhibitors. Check out the latest products in the



**February 16 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. For those 6 years of age and older. Most of the program takes place indoors. 6 - 8 p.m. Members \$10; non-members \$15. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

home building and remodeling industry and receive top notch advice from 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. Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 North Keller Drive. Visit [effinghamhba.com](http://effinghamhba.com).

**February 3, 10, 17, 24 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS**, Alton. Enjoy a 45-minute guided tour of some of the best American bald eagle watching spots around the Alton area. Sites may include Clifton Terrace, Audubon Center, Maple Island and National Great Rivers Museum. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather. Shuttles are limited to 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 tickets, visit [riversandroutess.com](http://riversandroutess.com).

**February 3, 10, 17, 24 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS**, Grafton. Enjoy a two and a half hour guided tour of some of the best American bald eagle watching spots around Grafton. Sites may include Brussels Ferry, Calhoun Point and Pere Marquette State Park. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled. 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, visit [riversandroutess.com](http://riversandroutess.com).

**February 4 HEATHERS THE MUSICAL**, 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. For tickets, visit [lookingglassplayhouse.com](http://lookingglassplayhouse.com).

**February 10 EAGLE DAYS**, West Alton. During guided hikes along the river, view eagles through spotting scopes staffed by trained volunteers. Live "All about Eagles" programs will be presented every 30 minutes by the World Bird Sanctuary. See a bald eagle up close as you learn the fascinating story behind these amazing raptors. Food trucks will be on site. Dress warmly and wear comfortable shoes for walking. No pets allowed. Registration is required. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. To register, visit [riverlands.audubon.org](http://riverlands.audubon.org).

**February 10 & 11 GATEWAY HOME SHOW**, Collinsville. Event includes home improvement and remodeling exhibits with product demonstrations and sample

interior and exterior vignettes. Friday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Register online for a free entry pass. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit [gatewaycenter.com](http://gatewaycenter.com).

**February 10 & 11 THE BEST OF THE BEST COUNTRY LOVE CONCERT**, Alton. A wonderful collaboration from a dozen of the best voices in the area and some wonderful storytelling behind favorite country hits. 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](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**February 16-18, 21-25 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: THE FOUR POSTER**, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$22; age 17 and younger \$18. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**February 17 ICE JAM AT THE DAM**, East Alton. A winter-themed festival celebrating all things icy along the river. The event will feature live music from Chris Cahill & Co., tours of the locks and dam, food and beverage vendors, park ranger campfire programs and education booths. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. Visit [mtrf.org](http://mtrf.org).

**February 17 THE TRAVELING SALVATION SHOW**, Lebanon. This up-tempo, rock-oriented

### Call to Confirm

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

### Submissions

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

tribute to the legendary Neil Diamond will have you dancing and singing along to all of the classic hits. The hard-driving band recreates the energy of Neil Diamond's live arena performances with its own rock flair. 7:30 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**February 17** TOTALLY RAD VINTAGE FEST, Collinsville. See your favorite 80s, 90s and Y2K vintage together. Shop from over 40 vintage vendors, pose at one of the throwback photo ops, play at the vintage arcade or jam to tunes spun by the vinyl DJ. Vendors focus on clothing but also have records, toys, home goods and memorabilia. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. General admission \$8. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For tickets, visit [totallyradvf.com](http://totallyradvf.com).

**February 17 & 18, 21, 23-25, 28; March 6, 8-10, 13, 15-17, 20, 22-24** UNFILTERED LENS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT, Alton. Civil rights and the Vietnam War through the eyes of Robert J. Ellison. The exhibit offers a journey through time via 100 photographs captured by the young photographer, who was killed in March 1968 at age 23, when his plane was hit by enemy gunfire in Vietnam. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday noon - 4 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway. Call (618) 462-5222 or visit [jacobyartscenter.org](http://jacobyartscenter.org).

**February 18** AN AFTERNOON OF MUSICAL POPS, Godfrey. Join us for The Sound of Music, Swan Lake Overture, Phantom of the Opera and West Side Story. Performances from the seniors of the Alton Youth Symphony and Marie Stillwell Concerto Competition Winner Aiden Moon. 3 p.m. This concert is by donation only. Please select any donation amount, or donate any amount at the door. Alton Symphony Orchestra, Lewis & Clark Community College,

Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Visit [altonsymphonyorchestra.org](http://altonsymphonyorchestra.org).

**February 23** SIPS & STRINGS, Alton. Support Alton Symphony Orchestra while sipping on wine, enjoying light appetizers, and listening to the sounds of the ASO quartet. 6 p.m. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway. Visit [altonsymphonyorchestra.org](http://altonsymphonyorchestra.org).

**February 24** HEARTS IN MOTION 5K & FUN RUN, Belleville. Race provides a fun, safe and inclusive environment for all age groups and fitness levels. There will also be an ice-bucket challenge after the race. Part of the race proceeds will go to the Memorial Foundation Cardiac Program. Part of the ice bucket challenge and additional proceeds will go to the ALS Association. 9 - 11 a.m. 5k is \$30; fun run \$20. Run will be at Eckert's, 951 South Green Mount Road. To register, visit [heartsinmotion.itsoyourrace.com/register/](http://heartsinmotion.itsoyourrace.com/register/).

**February 24** MOONLIGHT HIKE, Godfrey. Join us for a night hike on the trails of the Mississippi Sanctuary and Olin Nature Preserve. The terrain is light to moderate and appropriate for families. The hike will be about 2 miles with stops along the way. Meet at Talahi Lodge. 7:30 - 8:45 p.m. Admission is free for members; non-members \$5; children age 15 and younger are free. Registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**March 7-10, 14-17** THE EFFECTS OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN IN THE MOON MARIGOLDS, 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](http://lookingglassplayhouse.com).

**March 10** OLD TIME RADIO SHOW WITH MASTERWORKS CHORALE, Lebanon. Music from the age of Swing and more, performed by the Masterworks Chorale and Jazz Ensemble and emcee, broadcaster Steve Jankowski. The Masterworks Chorale is an ensemble of auditioned singers who enrich the cultural environment of the Metro East with outstanding performances of significant choral literature. The membership represents a seven-county area in Illinois and Missouri and includes a wide variety of professions and musical backgrounds. 3 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**March 10** TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Want to look at the universe through a telescope, but don't own one? Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have some set up. Bring your own telescope and we can help you use it. We will talk about how telescopes work and look at the moon and other night sky objects. 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**March 15-17, 20-24** ALTON LITTLE THEATER: ALABAMA STORY, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$22; age 17 and younger \$18. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).



**March 15-17** ILLINOIS PREHISTORIC ARTIFACT SHOW, Collinsville. Only authentic prehistoric or pre-1900 historic Native American artifacts may be displayed or sold. Friday 3 - 7 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission \$5. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Call (800) 289-2388 or visit [gatewaycenter.com](http://gatewaycenter.com).

**March 16** FROG WALK, Godfrey. Join guest naturalist, Paul Shetley to search for frogs and toads on the preserve. The program will begin with an indoor presentation about frogs and toads of Southern Illinois, followed by an outdoor search for amphibians at the pond. Flashlights and waterproof boots are encouraged. 6:30 - 8 p.m. \$5 for members; \$15 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**March 23** GIORDANO DANCE CHICAGO, Lebanon. Considered jazz dance royalty, the electrifying performers of America's original jazz dance company invariably run on high-octane fuel and generate a similarly high-powered response from their audience. 7:30 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

► *Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment continued from page 8* aren't required to provide a credit history or make a security deposit. With Pay As You Go, you're not subject to fees for late payment, delinquency, or reconnection of service.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to help eligible low income households pay for winter energy service. For more information on this program, visit [IllinoisLIHEAP.com](http://IllinoisLIHEAP.com) or call the toll-free hotline, (877) 411-WARM.

For more information about levelized billing or Pay-As-You-Go, call our billing department at 800-637-8667. A member services representative will be happy to help you.

## ENERGY-SAVING TECHNOLOGY

Your cooperative also offers rebates on energy-efficient technology, including heat pumps, water heaters and smart thermostats.

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.

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. One rebate is allowed per home. On-demand water heaters qualify for this rebate.

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 and internet-enabled.

For more information about technology rebates, call 800-637-8667 and ask for our Energy Manager, Julie Lowe. Or you can email Julie at [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).

Finally, each month we offer strategies for conserving energy and saving money in the Energy & Efficiency pages of our magazine. You can review past issues of The Southwestern at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). 

► *Improving Reliability continued from page 11*




damage, changes in the power market, operating effectively during COVID — have driven that point home."


Williams also recognized the value of Southwestern's relationships with local, state and national vendors. "We had a lot of the materials for our Pocahontas upgrades in stock, but not at quantity. We had underground cable — but not 9,000 feet. We had conduit in the pole yard, but not miles of it," he said. "A couple years ago, it might have taken months to get those materials. In December, we placed our order and had the materials in days. Everything we purchased was sitting in a warehouse in Kentucky and shipped here by one of our vendors. They had it in stock. Being able to get the materials we need when we need them, that's invaluable. In a storm situation where you deploy large quantities of materials and want to immediately restock, it's reassuring to know you have partners you can rely on."

## IMPROVING RELIABILITY

Williams pointed out that Southwestern's overall system reliability tops 99 percent. "For our members served by Pocahontas Substation, I'm sure it doesn't feel that way. We're doing everything we can to correct that," he said.

"Our objective is for members to take our reliability for granted. To achieve that, we can't be complacent — not even for a day. We have to stay on top of preventive maintenance and system improvements. We want to retire poles and lines and aging components before they fail," he said. "At Pocahontas Substation, we didn't achieve that. We're addressing that today, and we'll continue to address it in weeks to come, as we replace existing equipment with new and better materials," he said. "I appreciate our members' patience as we work through this problem to make our Pocahontas Substation more reliable for them in the future." 





Winter loosens  
its grip on  
blooms at  
Edwardsville's  
Watershed  
Nature Center.

## THE FINAL FRAME

