

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2024 • VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 1

ON THE BEATEN PATH

*RIDE ALONG ON THE
LITCHFIELD TRAILS*

**DONATION
DRIVE**

NEW OFFICERS

CAPITAL CREDITS

SCHOLARSHIPS

CO-OP KITCHEN



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Annette Hartlieb, Secretary Vandalia
Sandy Grapperhaus, Treasurer Collinsville
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Hiking, biking, running — however you prefer to explore the Route 66 Hike & Bike Trail in Litchfield, the important part is the exploration itself.

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You didn't have any trials, or tribulations, with our

October mystery man. Will you find the sunken sculpture in this month's puzzle more difficult to place?

22 Co-op Kitchen

Saying the word "charcuterie" may be a challenge, but filling a board with delicious treats? Well, that's a decidedly easier task.

26 Current Events

If you failed to spot the eagle hidden among our pages, perhaps you'll have an easier time spying one at one of the many eagle-watching events on the calendar this month.

NEWS & NOTES

ON THE COVER

Riders, from left, Anne Schroll, Jessi Springer and Sarah Rochford take a break from traversing some of the nearly seven miles' worth of trails at the Route 66 Hike & Bike Trail along Litchfield's Lake Lou Yaeger. Our story begins on page 18.



CO-OP REMINDERS

January 1 Offices closed for New Year's holiday.

January 8 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 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.



Reader Contest

We've hidden an image 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.

This month we've hidden an eagle similar to the silhouette you see at right. If you find the eagle, 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 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 January contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by Feb. 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 March issue of The Southwestern.

NOVEMBER WINNER

Congratulations to Mike Bell of Collinsville. As the winner of our November Hide & Seek contest drawing, Mike will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thanks to everyone who participated in our November contest. You'll find Hide & Seek rules below and this month's image at left.

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 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.

- January contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by February 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

Food for Thought

Southwestern Electric holiday donation drive focuses on local food pantry

Words by Nathan Grimm | Photo by Mike Barns

As an electric cooperative, Southwestern Electric is guided by a set of seven core principles and values.

Among those is “concern for community,” the idea that cooperatives should work for the sustainable development of their communities. It’s that principle that was at the heart of the recent donation drive held by the cooperative ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

“The holiday season is a time for generosity and coming together as a community to support those in need,” said Southwestern Electric Executive Assistant Brooke Scott, who spearheaded the employee-driven initiative. “One of the seven cooperative principles is ‘concern for community,’ and for the past several years employees at Southwestern Electric have come together to support local charities that play a crucial role in our community.”

The holiday donation drive has been a part of Southwestern Electric’s charitable efforts since 2019. In past years, the donation drive has benefited local nonprofits such as Partners for Pets, Eden’s Glory and Leaps of Love. This year, Southwestern Electric chose the C.E.F.S. Fayette County Food Pantry as its beneficiary, donating numerous food items such as canned vegetables, cans of broth and soup, and Thanksgiving staples like stuffing and mashed potatoes.

“The C.E.F.S. Fayette County Food Pantry helps ensure that families in our community have access to nutritious meals, especially during the holiday season when the demand for assistance is at its peak,” Scott said. “When I heard that they needed help from local organizations to gather much-needed supplies for their holiday food drive, I knew we would be able to offer a helping hand. By participating in initiatives like the C.E.F.S. Fayette County Holiday Food Drive, we can help



C.E.F.S. Fayette County Outreach Coordinator Amy Moore, right, and Southwestern Electric Executive Assistant Brooke Scott.

address the critical issue of hunger in our community and support the well-being of our neighbors.”

C.E.F.S. is short for Christian, Effingham, Fayette and Shelby counties, the four counties originally served by the nonprofit. Today, the organization serves seven counties in total, including Clay, Montgomery and Moultrie counties in addition to the original four.

Operation Round Up, a charitable program governed, funded and supported by members of the cooperative, is another way in which the co-op gives back, in addition to the annual donation drive. For more information on Operation Round Up, visit our website at <https://sweci.com/operation-round>.

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.

In Celebration of Service

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

We'd like to begin the year by recognizing 22 Southwestern Electric employees who reached service milestones in 2023. Though their responsibilities vary, they share a single goal: providing you with the best possible service, day in and day out. You see the results of their work each time you turn on the lights, when power is restored after a storm, and when you're greeted with a kind word in our office or on the phone.

Together, the employees on this page represent more than 276 years of service to our members.

Please join us in welcoming our new employees, thanking our retirees, and in celebrating the accomplishments of people committed to serving you.

NEW EMPLOYEE



Luke Cordes
*Journeyman
Lineman*



Craig Jennings
VP of Engineering



Nikki Emerick
Dispatcher



Dustin Kemp
*Journeyman
Lineman*



Nathan Hermetz
Staking Engineer



Brad Koonce
Custodian



Brandon Jansen
*Journeyman
Lineman*



Andrea Strauch
Dispatcher

5 YEARS OF SERVICE



Lauren Schoen
*Member Services
Representative*



Jared Tebbe
*Warehouseman/
Groundman
Truck Driver*

10 YEARS OF SERVICE



DJ Haarmann
*Construction
Foreman*



Kim Jackson
Dispatcher



Julie Lowe
Energy Manager



Jimmy Revisky
*Construction
Foreman*

25 YEARS OF SERVICE



Debbie Whicker
*Member Services
Representative*

30 YEARS OF SERVICE



Susan File
*VP of Member
Services*



Barb Frerker
*Member Services
Representative*



Holly Thiems
*IT Technical
Support*

35 YEARS OF SERVICE



Dean
Schnurbusch
*Senior Staking
Engineer*



Renee Harnetiaux
*Work Order
Coordinator*

RETIREE



Mary Curry
Staking Engineer
31 years of service



Cheryl Hebenstreit
*Cashier/
Receptionist*
10 years of service



*Thank you for your service
and dedication to the cooperative!*

Co-op Board Elects Officers

During the board meeting held Thursday, Sept. 28, Southwestern Electric directors elected four members to serve as officers. The board of directors elected Jerry Gaffner as president, Jared Stine as vice president, Annette Hartlieb as secretary and Sandy Grapperhaus as treasurer. The board conducts an annual election of officers during the first board meeting following the Annual Meeting of Members. This year's annual meeting was held Saturday, Sept. 9, at Vandalia Statehouse State Historic Site in Vandalia.



Jerry Gaffner, President

A Southwestern Electric member for more than 20 years, Jerry Gaffner served on the cooperative's Nominating Committee for three years before being elected to the board of directors in 2018.

He served as president of the Illinois Milk Producers' Association from 2002-2008 and as an elder on the Greenville

First Christian Church board from 2003-2010. He also chaired the board of HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville and served on strategic planning committees at the University of Illinois and Bond County Community Unit School District #2.

He chairs the co-op's Executive Committee and serves on the Scholarship Committee and Emerging Technologies Committee. Gaffner resides on his farm northwest of Greenville with his wife, Sherri. They have three children, Jonah, Abby and Hannah.



Jared Stine, Vice President

Jared Stine's commitment to community prompted him to pursue a seat on Southwestern Electric Cooperative's board of directors in 2018. In the years since, he's played a key role in the cooperative's strategic planning sessions, contributing experience and insight to shape Southwestern's vision for the

future. Stine chairs the cooperative's Scholarship Committee and serves on the Executive Committee and Emerging Technologies Committee.

In addition to his Southwestern Electric service, Stine has served on the boards of St. Elmo Community Unit School District #202 and the St. Elmo Christian Church. Members since 2009, Jared Stine and his wife, Krista, live with their children, Sydney, Anna and Wade, south of St. Elmo, where with other family they operate a sixth-generation family farm.



Annette Hartlieb, Secretary

For Annette Hartlieb, being involved in Southwestern Electric Cooperative is a family tradition. Hartlieb, who grew up on a farm north of New Douglas, was raised on Southwestern Electric lines and started attending co-op annual meetings as a child with her parents.

A director since 2017, she serves on the co-op's Executive Committee, Cyber Security Committee, and Policy & Bylaws Committee.

Hartlieb earned the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Credentialed Cooperative Director certification in 2019. She is the assistant regional superintendent of schools for the Regional Office of Education (ROE) #3, which serves Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette and Montgomery counties.

Annette Hartlieb and her husband, Dennis, live southwest of Vandalia with their children, Alexi, Bryce and Mason.



Sandy Grapperhaus, Treasurer

A lifelong local resident, Sandy Grapperhaus has been a member of Southwestern Electric for more than 30 years. She's served as a director since 2011, acted as board secretary from 2013-2018, served as vice president 2018-2022, and as the co-op's treasurer since 2022.

During her tenure, Grapperhaus has pursued an aggressive regimen of coursework, earning a Credentialed Cooperative Director certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

She serves on the cooperative's Executive Committee, Emerging Technologies Committee and Scholarship Committee. She is the executive assistant at Korte Construction Co. in Highland. She also helps her husband, Dan, with their small farm between Troy and Collinsville.

Capital Credits

Amidst Power Market & Policy Changes, Co-op Returns \$1 Million in Patronage Capital to Longtime Members

Southwestern Electric Cooperative closed out 2023 by returning \$1,002,074 in capital credits to 7,354 longtime cooperative members. The total represented the balance of margins from 1995 not returned in the 2022 retirement.

The cooperative returned the capital to active members as a bill credit. Inactive members — members who no longer live on co-op lines — received a check.

A total of 5,184 members received bill credits. The co-op mailed checks to 2,170 inactive members.

Through 2020, Southwestern Electric retired capital credits year by year, on a 30-year schedule. In 2021 and 2022, the co-op returned credits for multiple years, advancing the general retirement schedule to include part of 1995.

In 2023, the board retired the remaining capital credits from 1995, staying ahead of the traditional 30-year retirement rotation while keeping capital in reserve to address changes in the power market, and to accommodate a new capital credits policy which allows for adjusted early payouts.

Member capital mitigates the need for Southwestern to raise rates or borrow money to address increases in wholesale power costs, infrastructure improvements and other business expenses.

In 2022, driven by the changing power production landscape in the Midwest, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Planning Resource Auction closed at exponentially higher rates, resulting in a dramatic increase in the cooperative's cost of power.

Southwestern also experienced increases in transmission and capacity costs.

Members were sheltered from those increases by an all-requirements energy contract negotiated by Southwestern's board of directors, which became effective in 2021. With the change in the power market, the heat rate call option attached to the contract no longer proved beneficial, and in November 2022, the board voted to buy out of the option.

While the decision impacted the co-op's debt level, it also protected Southwestern Electric from an unpredictable power market and the potential for millions of dollars in added energy expenses.

Like other utilities, Southwestern has experienced across-the-board increases in business costs, the most significant being materials, including poles and power line, substation components, and other distribution system elements.

Despite these challenges, in 2022 the cooperative invested more than \$9

million in infrastructure construction and improvements — including \$2 million in right of way maintenance — without raising rates.

In 2023, Southwestern Electric's board of directors updated the co-op's decades-old approach to returning member capital.

As of Jan. 1, 2024, members may apply for an adjusted early payout of capital credits if they're terminating their membership or if they're the executor of an estate with capital credits. In the past, the cooperative didn't offer the option of adjusted early payouts.

Capital credits go unclaimed when Southwestern Electric can't confirm a current address for a member who has left co-op lines, or when an estate executor doesn't notify the cooperative of a member's death. Presently, about \$5.4 million in patronage capital remains unclaimed.

For more information about the co-op's new capital credits policy, see page 9. To search for unclaimed capital credits in your name, go to Your Service at sweci.com and click on Capital Credits. You'll find a listing at the bottom of the page. Need help? Call us at (800) 637-8667.

Moving? Keep in touch!

About \$5.4 million in patronage capital remains unclaimed. When you relocate, please update your contact information. By keeping your record current, you're making sure you receive your capital credits. To search for unclaimed capital credits in your name, consult the unclaimed credits list at sweci.com.

Capital Credits Q&A

The changing needs of an evolving membership prompted Southwestern Electric's board of directors to update the co-op's decades-old approach to returning member capital. We've addressed some of the key points below. For more information, visit the capital credits page at sweci.com or call us at 800-637-8667.

Q: What are capital credits?

A: Capital credits are your equity in the co-op. They represent your share in the ownership, maintenance, construction and success of Southwestern Electric Cooperative.

The cooperative's rates are designed to bring in enough money to pay operating costs and maintain an emergency reserve. When revenue exceeds expenses, that money is later returned to members as capital credits.

The capital credits assigned to you in a year are based on the cooperative's annual margins — the revenue that exceeded Southwestern's operating costs — and the capital you contributed by paying your electric bills. The more power you use, the more capital credits the co-op assigns to your account.

Q: How does Southwestern use the membership's equity, or investment, in the co-op?

A: Your equity in the co-op is used as operating capital for maintenance and improvements, such as new substations, poles and wire. Those improvements are expected to last 30 years. Southwestern retires, or returns, capital credits to members on a 30-year schedule. The cooperative traditionally has returned capital credits during general retirements and to estates upon the death of a member.

Q: How is your policy for returning member capital changing?

A: Beginning Jan. 1, 2024, you may apply for an adjusted early payout of capital credits if you're terminating your membership or if you're the executor of an estate with capital credits. In the past, Southwestern didn't offer the option of adjusted early payouts.

Q: What prompted the policy change?

A: Southwestern Electric's board of directors revisited the cooperative's capital credit policy to meet your needs — the needs of a changing membership. You're far more mobile than you were when our policy was originally drafted in 1939. We have members who relocate five times in 10 years, eventually moving off co-op lines. Each change of address is an opportunity to fall out of touch. That can make it difficult to return capital credits to people who've earned them. Recognizing that, Southwestern's board of directors decided to offer an adjusted early payout option to the co-op's capital credit retirement policy.

Q: Why are early payouts adjusted — why don't you pay out in full, as you do with a general retirement?

A: Early payouts recognize that you withdrew your capital credits before Southwestern could realize their full value. The co-op was not able to use those funds as capital for the full 30 years as planned. If you withdraw your capital credits before they fully mature — even if you are settling an estate — they will be adjusted to the net present value.

“Southwestern's board considered the update carefully, over months. We voted unanimously to update the policy in the spirit of fairness. Fairness to people who terminate their membership when they leave our lines and fairness to those of you who have built a life here — members who want to receive safe, reliable power, from a cooperative you invested in and own.”

—Director Ann Schwarm

SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2024

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



Since 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. 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.**

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 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.

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.



Your Spare Change Can Make a **Big Difference** through Operation Round Up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

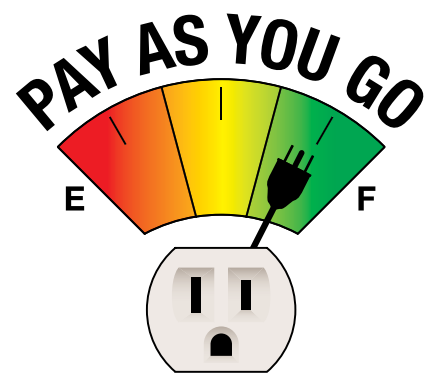
Southwestern also offers an in-home display unit (at no charge), particularly for members who don't have Internet access. The online billing system, app and in-home display allow the accountholder to view their present account balance and average daily usage.

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

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



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



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

LIHEAP Energy Assistance

The State of Illinois offers assistance to low-income families who struggle to pay their energy bills. Applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

The current LIHEAP application period is Oct. 2, 2023 to Aug. 15, 2024, or until funding is exhausted.

Applications in October were limited to priority groups.

Priority groups include:

- Seniors (at least one household member is age 60 or older).
- Disabled (at least one household member receives disability benefits).
- Families with at least one child under 6 years old.

Beginning Nov. 1, 2023, members who had been disconnected or who were in imminent threat of disconnection could apply for benefits.

Beginning Dec. 1, 2023, all other eligible members could apply.

The listings below will help you determine if you're eligible for assistance. Payment amounts are determined by income, household size, fuel type, geographic location and available funding.

Use the listing to find the agency that serves the county you live in, then contact the agency and tell them you'd like to apply for assistance through LIHEAP. The customer service representative who takes your application will explain the requirements, the type of assistance available, and your rights under the program.

When you apply for assistance, please bring the following items:

- Proof of gross income from all household members for the 30-day period prior to application date.
- A copy of your heating and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy paid for directly).
- A copy of your rental agreement (if your heating costs are included in the rent) showing the monthly rental amount, landlord's contact information, and proof that utilities are included in the rent.
- Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.

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

If your application is accepted, the 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.

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

County	Community Action Agency	Phone Number
Bond	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Clinton	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Effingham	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Fayette	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Macoupin	Illinois Valley Economic Development Corp.	217-839-4431
Madison	Madison County Community Development	618-692-8940
Marion	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Montgomery	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Shelby	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
St. Clair	St. Clair Community Action Agency	618-277-6790

Income Guidelines

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

Family Size	30-Day Income
1	\$2,430
2	\$3,287
3	\$4,143
4	\$5,000
5	\$5,857
6	\$6,713
7	\$7,570
8	\$7,775



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

ENERGY SAVING RESOLUTIONS

Small Investments Add Up To Year-Round Savings

by Energy Manager Julie Lowe

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

JANUARY

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



FEBRUARY

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



MARCH

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



APRIL

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



MAY

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

JUNE

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

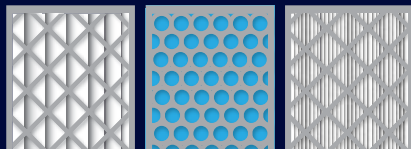
JULY

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



AUGUST

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



SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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



NOVEMBER

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



DECEMBER

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



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

Generator Safety

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

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

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

long way from your home.”

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

Generators also produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and deadly gas. Never use your generator indoors or in an attached garage, Richardson said.

“Run it outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area, far away from air intakes to your home.”

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

“All the standard cord precautions apply. Don’t use extension cords with

exposed wires or worn insulation. Make sure the cords don’t present a tripping hazard, and don’t run them under rugs where heat could build up and start a fire. Be selective with what you plug into your generator,” said Richardson. Overloaded cords can cause fires and damage appliances.

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



TRANSFER SWITCH AND GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

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

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 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 Southwestern Electric Cooperative Engineering Supervisor Dylan Casey. "Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute line workers."

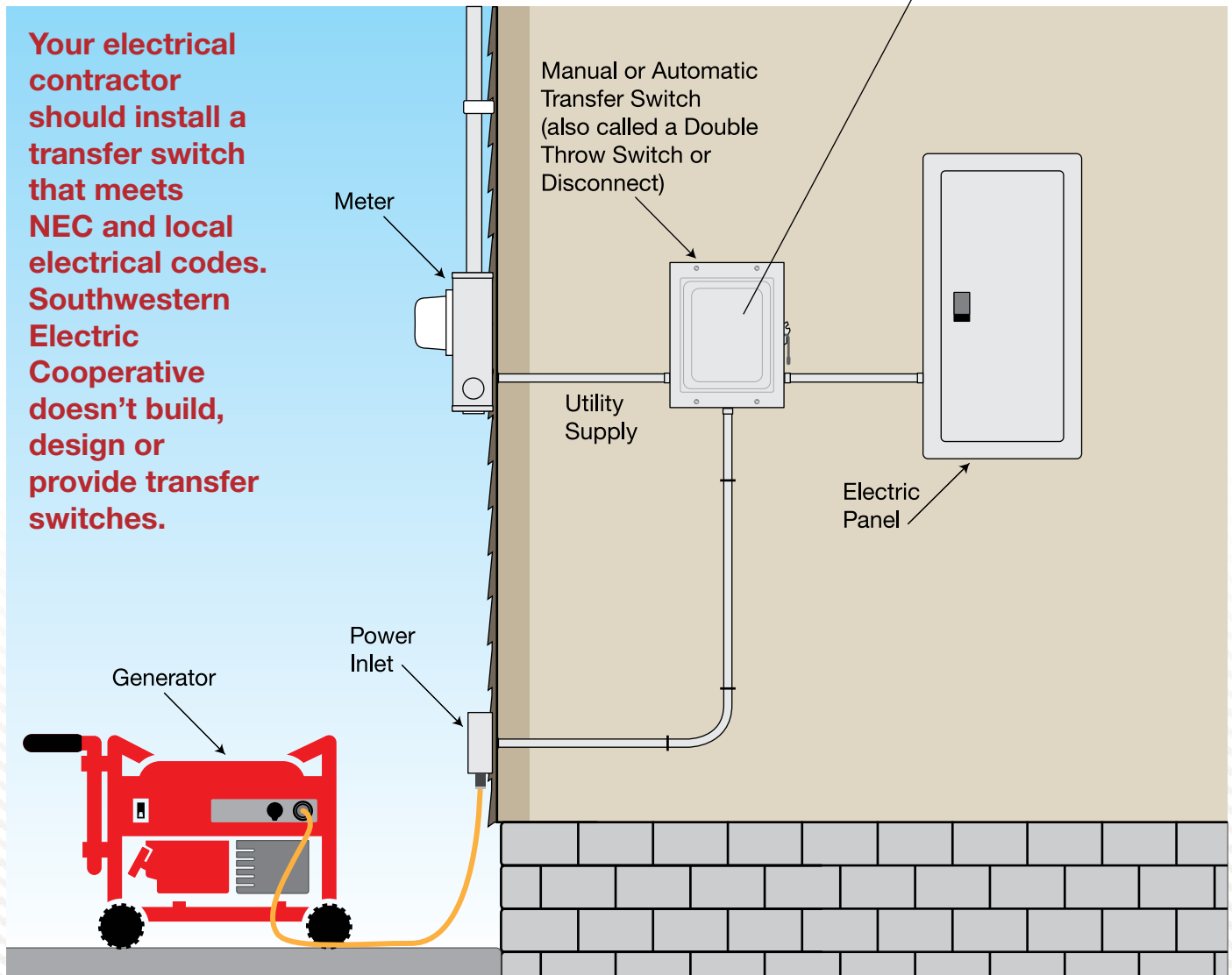
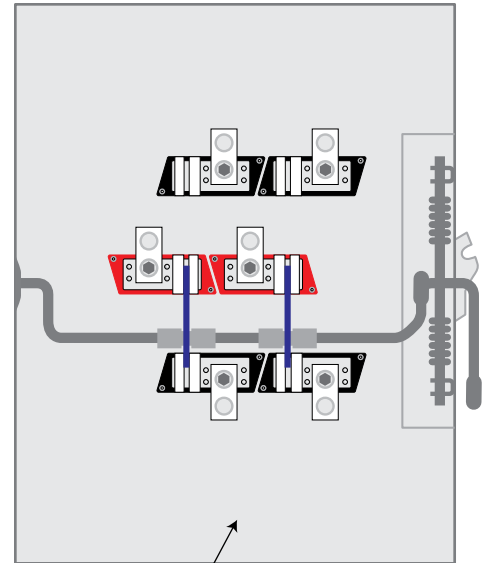
Casey said transfer switches may be manual or automatic. "With a manual transfer switch, during a power outage, you have to manually switch power from the utility to your backup source." By

contrast, automatic transfer switches detect an outage and activate without assistance from the homeowner.

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

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

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



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

On the Beaten Path

SEE ROUTE 66 HIKE & BIKE TRAIL IN LITCHFIELD AGAIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME

Words by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

In a past life, before the pandemic froze everyone in place, I worked in the tourism industry.

It wasn't a world in which I was well-versed when I started — similar to my experience working for an electric utility — and I remember the day I learned that Cahokia Mounds was a tourist attraction for the region.

Cahokia Mounds? The place with the big hills and dioramas where we went on field trips with our grade-school classes every year? People travel from thousands of miles away to see that?

It's a virtually universal experience, taking for granted something that's in your own backyard. You think, "Man, if I had a swimming pool I'd swim in it every day," until you have a swimming

pool, and it collects leaves. The Gateway Arch, the local drive-in movie theater, eating ice cream for breakfast — everything, no matter how interesting or enjoyable, loses its novelty in time.

I found myself thinking about Cahokia Mounds as I walked the Route 66 Hike & Bike Trail at Litchfield's Lake Lou Yaeger. As a Litchfield resident for the past five years, I'd taken for granted the well-worn paths that brush up against the expansive lake. It was time to see the trails with fresh eyes.

I'm not the only one viewing the trails through a new lens.

Jessi Springer is a Litchfield resident as well, and while she's no stranger to biking on the road or running on the

trails, she and her husband, Jake, only recently took up mountain biking.

"So fun," she said of exploring the trails with her bike. "I love it. I love that it's so close to us. I come out here and walk and run a lot on them, too. But it's been fun getting into biking."

It's a Wednesday evening in early October, and Springer is one of a small group that's gathered to ride the trails around dusk. The leader of the group is David Herschberger, president of the Litchfield Area Mountain Biking Organization. The group's Facebook page, which is open to anyone, had just 85 followers a few years ago, according to Herschberger, but now boasts more than 1,300 followers.

Continued on page 24 ►





Litchfield Area Mountain Biking Organization President David Herschberger tackles one of the trails. Top right: Riders cross a small bridge that looks out over Litchfield's Lake Lou Yaeger.



“That’s what Litchfield is known for is the fun features that we have, and the fact that it is a little bit challenging.”

—David Herschberger, President, Litchfield Area Mountain Biking Organization



GETTING THERE

If coming from the east, take Illinois Route 185 until it meets Illinois Route 127 in Taylor Springs — or take Route 127 the whole way, if coming from the Greenville area — and follow it until it turns into Illinois Route 16 after Hillsboro. Continue on Route 16 and make a right onto Yaeger Lake Trail in Litchfield. Make a left onto Park Road and follow the road to one of the four picnic areas, all four of which have a trailhead nearby.

If coming from the west or south, take Interstate 55 north to exit 52. Make a right onto Illinois Route 16 and drive three miles to Yaeger Lake Trail. Make a left and follow the directions above.

Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear — or maybe pull your 2023 calendar from the recycling bin and flip to October, when we pitched a puzzle featuring a Salem High School graduate. Whether it was the spectacles and boater hat or Smithsonian Institution Archives catalog number, many of you were able to identify our mystery figure.

For this month's puzzle, we're challenging you to name a location. Any thoughts as to where we stood when we snapped this sculpture shot? We'll share your solutions to this month's puzzle in our March issue.

Thank you to everyone who pondered our puzzles in 2023. And thanks, too, for reading *The Southwestern*. Here's hoping 2024 brings you health, happiness and ready solutions to every challenge that comes your way.

That's John T. Scopes on page 21 of the magazine this month.

I think I've mentioned this to you before (the result of a previous issue when you had a photo of the statue of



Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7091, Science Service Records, Image No. SIA2008-1121.

Wm. Jennings Bryan in Salem for the Who/What/Where), but Bryan was the lead prosecutor in Dayton during the trial, and he had spoken at Scopes' high school graduation six years earlier in Salem.

An odd coincidence, both men having a connection with Salem, then coming together six years later and hundreds of miles away, in what many consider to be one of the most notable trials of the 20th Century.

Hope all is well at the co-op.
—*Scott Beal, Mason*

The gentleman pictured in this month's Who Am I? is Mr. John Thomas Scopes. Mr. Scopes' claim to fame was the 1925 "Scopes Monkey Trial," which lasted a whole 11 days and ended with a conviction of Mr. Scopes for violating the Tennessee Butler act, which made it illegal to teach human evolution in a state funded classroom. Mr. Scopes appealed his conviction to the Tennessee Supreme Court, and won.

Mr. Scopes passed away in October 1970.
—*Mac McCormick, Holiday Shores*

I am John Thomas Scopes, commonly known in 1925 for the Scopes Monkey Trial. It's a long, interesting read that you can do on Wikipedia but here are the highlights.

Scopes became known for supposedly violating Tennessee's Butler Act, which made it illegal for teachers to teach human evolution in any state-funded school. Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100 (equivalent to \$1,700 today), but the verdict was overturned on a technicality. The trial served its purpose of drawing national publicity as to whether evolution should be taught in schools.

The (ACLU) offered to defend anyone accused of teaching the theory of evolution in defiance of the Butler Act.

They found their man and he became a pawn in this game. It was pointed out that while the Butler Act prohibited the teaching of evolution, the state required teachers to use a textbook that explicitly endorsed the theory of evolution, and that teachers were, therefore, effectively required to break the law. Does this sound familiar? Sounds like today.

—*Scott Fischer, Staunton*



The photo in this month's magazine is John Scopes. The Scopes "Monkey Trail" brought national attention with William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow battling it out in the courtroom.
—Cheryl Maguire, Maryville

The "Who am I?" that appeared in October 2023's SOUTHWESTERN is John T. Scopes. Scopes was the reluctant defendant in the "Scopes Monkey Trial" which took place in July 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee. Scopes was a high school teacher accused of violating Tennessee's Butler Act which made it illegal to teach

human evolution in any state-funded school.

Scopes was recruited for his role so the American Civil Liberties Union could challenge the law. A main exhibit at trial was that Scopes had taught using the state prescribed textbook which included a chapter concerning evolution. Time magazine called the trial "the fantastic cross between a circus and a holy war."

Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100 (around \$1,700 now). The verdict was later overturned on a technicality by the Tennessee Supreme Court.

After the trial concluded Scopes told a reporter that he was actually innocent of the charge. He admitted he had skipped the evolution chapter in the text and his students had been coached by lawyers to testify.

The result of the trial affected Scopes both personally and professionally. His public persona was mocked by the media and he was largely shunned publicly for years. He died of cancer in 1970 at the age of 70 and was buried in his native Kentucky.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon



Quick & Easy Charcuterie Board

Prepared &
photographed
by Mike Barns |
Words by Nathan
Grimm

The French word
charcuterie means, roughly,
“a collection of cold, cooked
meats.”

More informally, charcuterie boards,
which have become increasingly popular
in recent years — you’ve surely seen them
popping up at parties and holiday gatherings
more and more — are a collection of meats,
cheeses, crackers, fruits, vegetables and whatever
else might find its way onto the slab.

And that’s the beauty of it — though the busy and
brightly colored boards might seem intimidating at first
glance, there is no right or wrong way to comprise a
charcuterie board. The board is what you make it.

That said, here are a few of the things we like to
include when putting together a festive feast.

Sliced Ita

Garlic Stuffed Green Olives

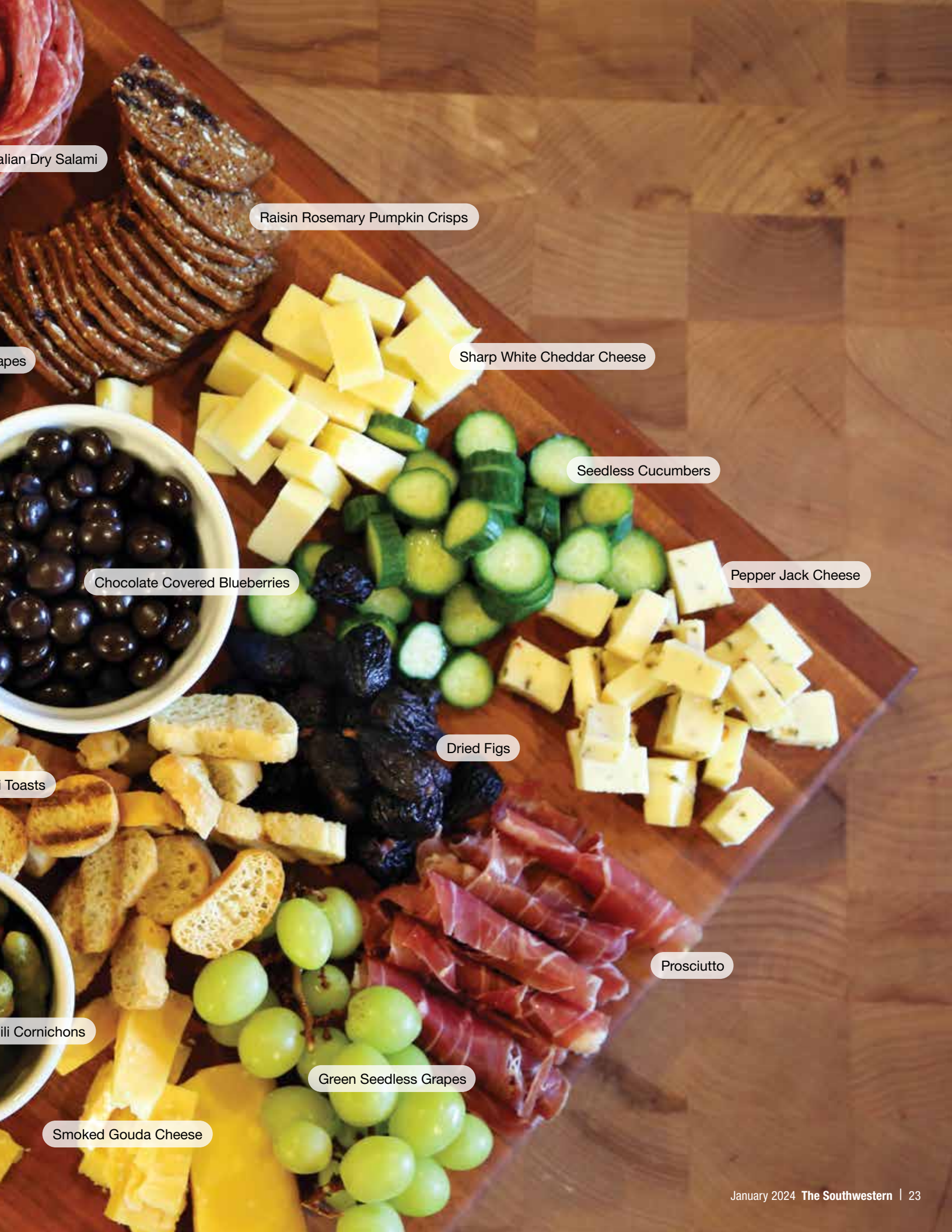
Red Seedless Gra

Brie

Chocolate Toffee Crunch Bar

Grilled Crostin

Ch



Italian Dry Salami

Raisin Rosemary Pumpkin Crisps

Grapes

Sharp White Cheddar Cheese

Seedless Cucumbers

Chocolate Covered Blueberries

Pepper Jack Cheese

Dried Figs

Toasts

Prosciutto

Chili Cornichons

Green Seedless Grapes

Smoked Gouda Cheese

► *Continued from page 18*

Herschberger, who has helped build two of the trails and led the design of the recently built Tulsa Trail, said most of the nearly seven miles' worth of trails register as intermediate in difficulty.

"When I read other people's comments about Litchfield, or they're telling their friends about it, a lot of people will say that they are good flow with punchy climbs and lots of fun features. That's what Litchfield is known for is the fun features that we have, and the fact that it is a little bit challenging."

Springer agrees.

"They're definitely challenging for me," she said. "Starting on one of the beginner trails, there were a couple of little obstacles that got me every time. Once you can finally clear them, it's so

exciting. You want to hit them all. But it's exhausting. You really do have to work for your miles."

On a Monday afternoon a few days later, I've mostly got the trails to myself. As Don Henley lamented — nobody on the road, nobody on the beach.

I parked in Picnic Area 4 and walked across the street to the trailhead, one of multiple throughout the trail system. It's one of the big perks of carving out a trail system at an already-popular site — bathrooms, parking and picnic areas are plentiful, and if you ever do have a need for civilization, it's never far away.

I'm reminded of that fact as I walk the Santa Monica Loop. Like most of the trails, this one is easily traversed, with a well-defined dirt path cutting

through trees and plants. There are some of those aforementioned punchy climbs, as well as one or two "flow busters," as Herschberger described them — the sensation of going downhill only to turn quickly and be headed back uphill in short order — but overall, it's not bad for a scenic walk.

It doesn't hurt that this trail is one that goes right up to the edge of the water. There, a porch swing has been placed and positioned in such a way that it looks out over the water, and as I approach the curve, I see a couple sitting on the bench. I almost feel bad as I pass; it's the kind of view that shouldn't be interrupted or obstructed by a writer in gym shorts, a t-shirt and a backwards Coca-Cola hat, even if only for a second.

The duo accounts for the entirety of my human interaction for the afternoon. Nearby at Marina 2, a few boats are being put in or taken out of the water, but not like it might have been just a few weeks prior.

I feel it in the air — the summer's out of reach.

The Santa Monica Loop is one of four classified as "black," or very difficult,



Left: Jessi Springer, right, and Anne Schroll surmount a ramp. Above left: Schroll gets horizontal around a curve. Above: Mason LaChance pops a wheelie.


by the mountain biking website Trailforks.com.

The trails really do have something for everyone, though. Of the 14 trails rated by Trailforks, seven register as “blue,” or intermediate. Yet another three are labeled as “green,” denoting easy trails. Herschberger said the trail he helped design, the Tulsa Trail, was “designed mostly to allow beginner riders to have a little bit more of a less challenging ride.”

“We consider these mostly ‘blue,’ even though on Trailforks some of them show up as ‘black,’” Herschberger said of the Litchfield trail system.

As far as what to bring, the usuals — water, food, appropriate shoes for the terrain, bug spray, sunscreen — are encouraged but up to the individual. And if you’ve got a dog that loves to tag along, they’re welcome, too, but on a leash.

In that previous life as a tourism promoter, it might have been my job to tout the trails — viewing them clinically as a means to an end, and not the end themselves. Encourage others to trace their curves rather than trace them myself.

Instead, I saw them from a new perspective. And I enjoyed the view. 



Herschberger and some fellow riders battle the terrain.



After a long afternoon of riding, some members of the Litchfield Area Mountain Biking Organization (LAMBO) pause to enjoy the view.

CURRENT EVENTS



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

January 1-7 CHRISTMAS IN CARLYLE LIGHTS, Carlyle. Take a drive through City Park to view the lights, animated features, and dancing trees. Tune your radio to 90.1 FM for dancing trees music. 5 - 11 p.m. 1096 Lake Road. Visit carlylelake.com.

January 4, 16; February 1, 16 ROAMING NATURALISTS, Godfrey. Monthly hike designed for adults that 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.

January 6 EAGLE ICE FESTIVAL, Alton. Get a bite to eat, see a live eagle from the World Bird Sanctuary, take an eagle-

watching tour, and enjoy fun winter activities for all ages. The celebration will take place at FLOCK Food Truck Park, 210 Ridge Street and the National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Event is free. Visit riversandroutess.com.

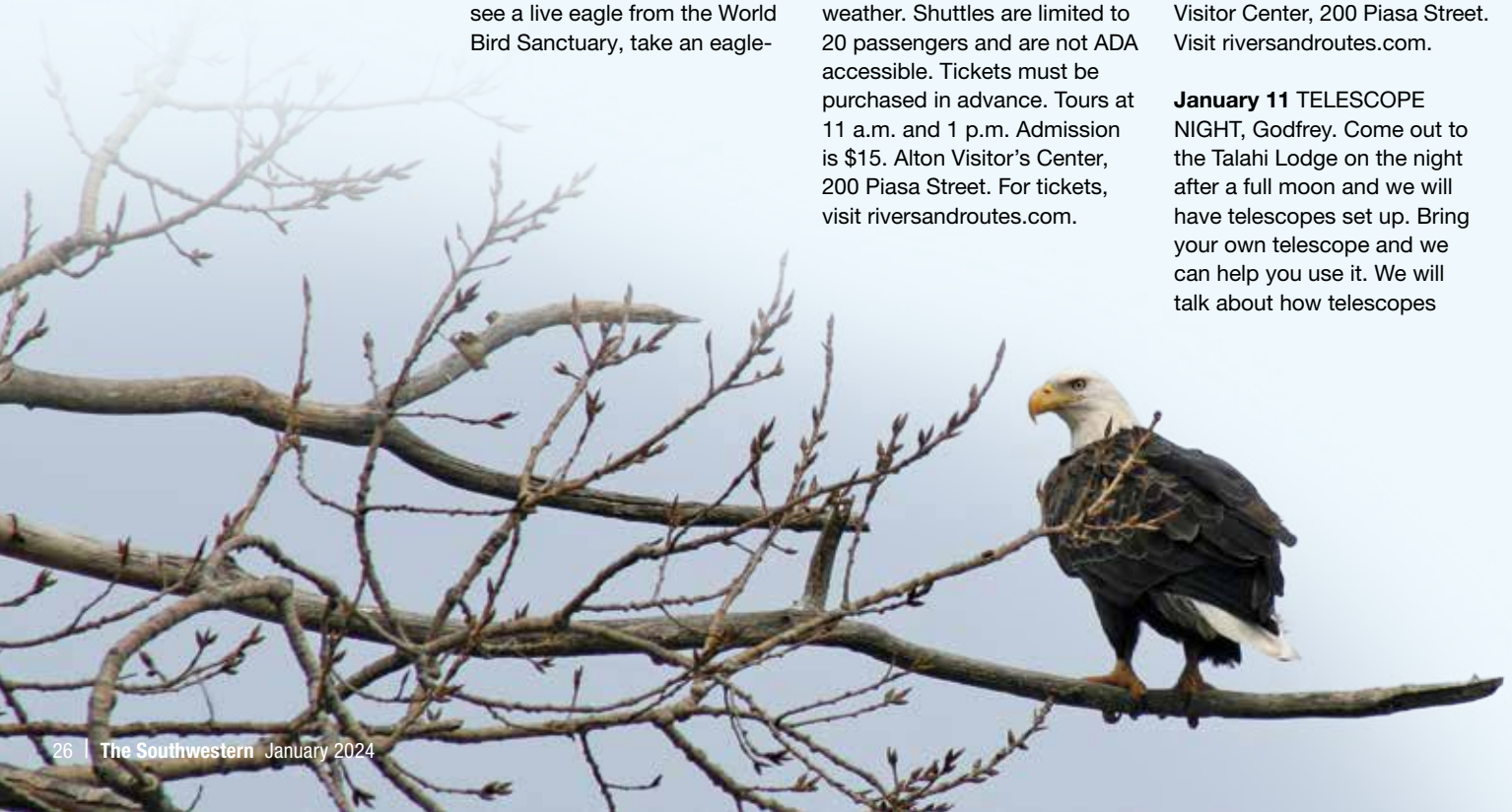
January 6 EAGLE ICE FESTIVAL ART MARKET, Alton. Jacoby Arts Center is hosting a free to the public art market in our main gallery, as a part of the Eagle Ice Festival. Stay warm and shop cool local arts, crafts and handmade goods. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway. Call (618) 462-5222 or visit jacobyartscenter.org.

January 6, 13, 20, 27; 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.

January 6, 13, 20, 27; 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.

January 6 & 20 EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Alton. The World Bird Sanctuary will bring a bald eagle for up-close viewing. Be sure to bring your camera. After this personal encounter you can pick up an official All Around Alton Eagle Watcher's Guide and set off along the Great River Road to see eagles in their natural habitat. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. January 6 will be at FLOCK Food Truck Park, 210 Ridge Street and January 20 at Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa Street. Visit riversandroutess.com.

January 11 TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have telescopes 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. 5:30 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.

January 11-13, 18-21, 26-28
ALTON LITTLE THEATER: THE ACTOR'S STUDIO SERIES, Alton. Three new plays done in rotation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Two Rooms by Lee Blessing January 11 - 13; Red Jasper by Michael Madden January 18 - 21; The Elephant's Graveyard by George Brant January 26 - 28. 7:30 p.m. All three shows for \$25 or \$10 for a single show. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit alton-littletheater.org.

January 13 & 27 EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Grafton. The World Bird Sanctuary will be bringing a live bald eagle for the public to view up close. Be sure to bring your camera. Take a photo with one of the handsome birds and learn interesting facts about eagles and their conservation. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Grafton Visitor Center, 950 East Main Street. Visit riversandroutess.com.

January 20 KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS PANCAKE AND SAUSAGE BREAKFAST, Greenville. In addition to breakfast, there will be sausage links for sale. 7 a.m. - noon. Adult \$10; children 5 - 12 years of age \$5; children under age 5 are free. Saint Lawrence Catholic Church Hall, 512 South Prairie Street. For more information, call Joe at (618) 292-4519.

January 20 WINTER TREE ID, Godfrey. Learn to ID trees from their bark, buds, and branching at this naturalist led public

program. 1 p.m. Program runs between 1 - 1.5 hours. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

January 25 U.S. NAVY FAIR WINDS, Lebanon. Fair Winds is a versatile woodwind ensemble with a repertoire consisting of a variety of styles including classical, military marches, and patriotic compositions. This small chamber group performs for military engagements, public concerts, recitals, and educational clinics and performs for audiences throughout the Midwest, supporting Navy recruiting missions. 7 p.m. Admission is free for friends and the public but tickets are required. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit thehett.com.

January 25; February 24 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. Meet at the Talahi Lodge. 7:30 - 8:45 p.m. Admission is free for members; non-members \$5. Registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

January 25 - 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 identifica-



tion). Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. For tickets, visit lookingglass-playhouse.com.

January 27 CANDLELIGHT WALK, Shelbyville. Come and enjoy the 500 luminaries on the trail and over 200 luminaries hanging in the trees that light up 2.5 miles of walking path. 6 - 8 p.m. Visit daceytrail.org.

January 27 SAUSAGE SUPPER, Alhambra. Drive-Thru from 1 - 7 p.m. All meals will be in carry-out containers. There will be separate parking for those that wish to dine-in. Seating will be available in the upper parish hall. All meals are \$13. Salem United Church of Christ, 1117 West North Street. Visit salemuccalh.org.

January 27 WINTERFEST HAMFEST, Collinsville. The Midwest's largest Hamfest offers more than 30,000 square feet of convention space with 180 vendors, 240 tables and 1,000 attendees. 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information or tickets, visit winterfest.slsrcc.org.

January 28 BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL, Grafton. See our nation's majestic symbol up close and enjoy live music, restaurant favorites, drink specials, unique vendors, face painting and live bird shows. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Visit pmlodge.net.

January 25 GATEWAY WEDDING SHOW, Collinsville. Meet vendors who can personalize and plan every aspect of a wedding. 5 - 8:30 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit 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 alton-littletheater.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.

February 17 ICE JAM AT THE DAM, East Alton. An outdoor, winter-themed festival to promote outdoor recreation and celebrate all things icy along the river. The event will feature live music from Chris Cahill & Co., tours of the locks and dam, warm food and beverage vendors, park ranger campfire programs and education booths, and more. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. Visit mtrf.org.

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.

