

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2017 • VOLUME 71 • ISSUE 12



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ON THE COVER

Winged victory stands atop the Lovejoy Monument at Alton City Cemetery. On December 14, more than 500 veteran graves in adjoining Alton National Cemetery will be decorated with balsam wreaths (backdrop photo) for the holiday season. See the Wreaths Across America entry on page 25 of our event listings.

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Made to scale.

On Account: We've hidden a member-account number in this issue (mailing label excluded). If the account number belongs to you, contact us within 30 days and we'll take \$25 off your electric bill. Good luck!

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Shop Talk

“Who owns the EV?” It was a Wednesday evening and Starbucks was nigh empty. I’d noticed the Tesla with Missouri plates on my way in. No surprise. Once you start looking for electric vehicles, you see them everywhere.

A guy who didn’t realize he’d taken my chair (the one by the window under the reading light) looked up, a little alarmed. “I didn’t hit it,” I told him. “I just wondered why you bought it.”

That’s usually all it takes.

Ask an EV owner a question and you fall into a 20-minute conversation about range, response, power, the environment, and the future of the automobile. Tonight was no exception. He liked the idea of softening his environmental footprint, he said, and the price was right. But it was the test drive that sold him. “I just liked the way it handled,” he told me. I’ve spoken with a half-dozen people at shops, parks, events and restaurants, and received as many answers to the question, “Why an EV?”

The most surprising response came from a bicyclist. He’d plugged his Tesla into a charger at Edwardsville Township Community Park while he pedaled an out-and-back on the Nickel Plate Trail. “Utah,” he told me. “I was in Salt Lake City, up in the mountains, and I saw a few of these.” He nodded at the Model 3. “They were getting around in the snow with no trouble.” He test drove one shortly after. Owned one shortly after that. “I’ll never go back,” he said. “Never drive another internal combustion engine.”

The EV driver at Starbucks said the same. “I’m EV from now on. Electric cars are the future. You looking to buy?”

Soon, I told him. Maybe a car. Maybe a truck. Whatever it is, it’ll run on battery. “But I’ll haggle with you on one point. I’m not sure EVs are the future.”

“No?” He glanced out at his car, considering. “What makes you say that?”

“I think they’ve already arrived.”

Joe Richardson, editor
joe.richardson@sweci.com



CO-OP REMINDERS

December 9

Payment processing systems will be unavailable from midnight to 4 a.m. while we perform system maintenance. No payments will be processed during this time. We will resume processing payments at 4:01 a.m.

December 24

Offices close at noon for Christmas holiday.

December 25

Offices closed for Christmas holiday.

December 31

Offices close at noon for New Year's holiday.

December 31 & January 1

Southwestern Electric Cooperative's online billing center will be unavailable from noon Tuesday, December 31, through 1 a.m. Wednesday, January 1, while we perform system maintenance. The billing center will resume operation at 1:01 a.m., Wednesday, January 1.

January 1

Offices closed for New Year's holiday.

January 1

Operation Round Up grant application deadline, first quarter 2020.



Members Make the Most of E-cycling Opportunity

In late summer and early autumn of 2019, Southwestern Electric hosted its second annual electronics recycling drive. We invited you to bring your obsolete electronics to our collection sites in Greenville, St. Elmo and St. Jacob—and you accepted the invitation with enthusiasm!

Over the course of three hours on three separate occasions, you made the most of an opportunity to give your old electronics new life, filling our collection trucks with enormous TVs, tiny tape recorders, tarnished coffee pots, hand-me-down PCs, hopelessly entangled holiday lights, and all manner of electronic devices between.

The electronics were collected and recycled by a regional, EPA-approved recycling center. Electronics recycling—or e-cycling—is the process of refurbishing, redistributing and reusing electronic devices and components, rather than discarding them. It extends the lifecycle of electronics and lowers their overall environmental impact.

Thank you for making our follow-up e-cycling drive a success! We're already in the planning stages of next year's drive. When we've established our times, dates and locations, you'll find them in *The Southwestern*.

Holly Thiems (top), IT Technical Support for Southwestern, coordinated the recycling drive and assisted members on site. Thaddius Intravaia (right), director of IT, greeted members and directed traffic.



Gusewelle and Jennings Represent Southwestern at NRECA Regional Meeting

Two Southwestern Electric directors participated in National Rural Electric Cooperative Association workshops during a regional meeting held Sept. 9-12, in Milwaukee, Wis. Board members Richard Gusewelle and Bill Jennings shared their insights and experience with directors from throughout the Midwest at the conference, which was designed to cultivate cooperative leadership skills. Gusewelle and Jennings attended sessions addressing decision analysis and member-focused planning, among other topics.

Jennings was recognized for completing the first segment of NRECA's three-part Director Education Program and earning his Credentialed Cooperative Director Certification. He also served as the voting delegate for the CFC Region 5 nomination committee. Southwestern's directors provided feedback during breakout sessions, sharing observations on the curriculum and course content with NRECA instructors.

A senior member of Southwestern's board, Richard Gusewelle has served as a director since 1984. Gusewelle, who served as vice president of the board of directors from 1996 to 2009, is active on Southwestern's Emerging Technologies Committee, Member & Community Engagement Committee, and the co-op's Scholarship Committee. He earned Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certifications from NRECA in 2001 and 2003 respectively. A member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative since 1966 and a lifelong resident of Southwestern Illinois, Richard Gusewelle and his wife, Joyce, reside southwest of Hamel.

Bill Jennings was elected to the board in 2018. He was elected to serve as treasurer by Southwestern's board in September 2019. Jennings chairs the cooperative's Member & Community Engagement Committee and serves on the Executive Committee and Cyber Security Committee. He has been a Southwestern Electric member since 1993. Bill Jennings lives northwest of Alhambra with his wife, Patty.



Photo courtesy Dana Kelroy, Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Assn.

Director Bill Jennings (left) was recognized by NRECA CEO Jim Matheson during the NRECA Region 5 meeting held Sept. 9-12 in Milwaukee, Wis.

Co-op Offers New Rebates for High Efficiency Heat Pumps, Electric Water Heaters, Smart Thermostats

You spoke, we listened! In response to survey comments collected earlier this year and at last year's annual meeting, we're offering a new rebate program. This program will honor the replacement or new installation of air source heat pumps, geothermal systems, electric water heaters and smart thermostats purchased after February 28, 2018.

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.

SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2020



Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power for Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$256,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award \$10,000 in scholarship money to 10 students in spring 2020 for use in the fall 2020 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 or picked up from the co-op's office at 525 U.S. Route 40 in Greenville. 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 2020 and students who graduated from high school in previous years.

The completed application and supplemental materials—including a cover letter, academic transcripts, attendance records and financial information—must be delivered to Southwestern Electric's headquarters (525 U.S. Route 40 in Greenville), in a single envelope, by 4:30 p.m. on **Friday, February 14, 2020.**

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The applicant (or the applicant's parent/legal guardian) must be an active member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Southwestern Electric board members, 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 2020.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, February 14, 2020.

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.

Heating Bill Payment Assistance

Available to Low-Income Families

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

Please review the income guidelines listed below to see if you qualify. The amount of the payment is determined by income, household size, fuel type, geographic location, and the amount of funding available.

Use the listing below 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 current heat and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy paid for directly).
- A copy of your rental agreement (if your heating costs are included in the rent) showing the monthly rental amount, landlord's contact information, and proof that utilities are included in the rent.
- Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.
- Proof that the household receives TANF or other benefits—such as Medical Eligibility or SNAP—if you are receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

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

If your application is accepted, the local agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf, or in some cases, directly to you. All client and vendor payments will be made by the local agency within 15 days of the application's approval. Electric cooperative members, if approved, will receive assistance in the form of a one-time payment.

Members using Pay-As-You-Go may also qualify for LIHEAP funds. Contact your local community action agency to find out if you qualify for energy assistance.

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

County	Community Action Agency	Phone Number
Bond	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	(618) 664-3309
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(618) 662-4024
Clinton	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	(618) 526-7123
Effingham	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 347-7514
Fayette	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(618) 283-2631
Macoupin	Illinois Valley Economic Development Corp.	(217) 839-4431
Madison	Madison County Community Development	(618) 296-6485
Marion	BCMW Community Services, Inc.	(618) 532-7388
Montgomery	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 532-5971
Shelby	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	(217) 774-4541
St. Clair	St. Clair Community Action Agency	(618) 277-6790

Income Guidelines

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application is at or below 150% of the federal poverty level, as shown in the chart, 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	\$1,561	Additional \$553 per person monthly income above 8 people, or \$6,630 annual. (Note 30-day income rounded up.)
2	\$2,114	
3	\$2,666	
4	\$3,219	
5	\$3,771	
6	\$4,324	
7	\$4,876	
8	\$5,429	



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

On Account: If your account number is 38352001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.



HomeServe Warranty Plans Offer Assurance, Quality and Convenience

We've all experienced home mechanical and system failures. From dripping faucets to broken bulbs to plumbing and heating and cooling problems, we've battled bothersome—and sometimes expensive—issues that come with home ownership.

When breakdowns involve exterior home electrical lines, members sometimes call Southwestern to request repairs. Many members understandably assume all electrical lines outside their home are owned by the cooperative. But components that connect a member's

home to the cooperative's distribution system—elements like the weather head, insulator, riser, meter base or loop, and service entrance conductor—are owned by the member.

When those elements fail, you find yourself facing bills you hadn't budgeted for. If the issue is related to aging parts and normal wear and tear on the system, your homeowners insurance may not cover the cost of repairs. Southwestern's management team searched for a solution to that situation—and discovered HomeServe.

WHO IS HOMESERVE?

HomeServe USA is an independent provider of home repair service solutions. They offer warranty plans that protect a homeowner's budget from sudden, often significant expenses that come with water, sewer, electrical and heating and cooling home emergencies.

Over the last 16 years, HomeServe has saved homeowners more than three-quarters of a billion dollars in repairs. The Norwalk, Connecticut-based company has partnered with more than 700 municipal agencies, investor-owned utilities and cooperatives—including Southwestern Electric—to provide consumers with home warranty options. Their partners range in size from 48 members to 5.6 million customers.

While HomeServe offers a variety of home warranty plans, including heating, cooling, plumbing, water and sewer, interior electrical wiring and external electrical lines, as well as plans for major appliances, Southwestern was



Look for information about HomeServe warranty plans in your mailbox this month. You can read more about HomeServe at www.HomeServe.com

and view nearly 80 informational videos on HomeServe's YouTube channel at [HomeServeUSATV](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...).

HomeServe is available to take emergency repair calls around the clock, every day of the year. Technicians dispatched through HomeServe are local, licensed and insured. Their work is covered by a one-year HomeServe guarantee.

drawn to the idea of external electrical line protection. HomeServe's external electrical line plan will pay for repair or replacement of items that your homeowners insurance may not cover when the components fail due to normal wear and tear.

If something goes wrong with a system or appliance covered by a HomeServe warranty, the member can call HomeServe anytime, 24/7, at (833) 334-1874. The company will dispatch a pre-screened, local repair technician to the member's home to diagnose the problem. The technician will fix the issue or replace the covered item as detailed in the warranty plan.

HOW HOMESERVE HELPS

HomeServe is available to take emergency repair calls around the clock, every day of the year. Technicians dispatched through HomeServe are local, licensed and insured. Their work is covered by a one-year HomeServe guarantee.

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

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

HELPING US HELP YOU

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

HomeServe will return a portion of the proceeds from plan sales to Southwestern Electric. The funds will be dedicated to support programs and projects like Operation Round Up and the cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program.

If you're interested in signing up for a HomeServe warranty plan, look for information in your mailbox this month. The materials in the mail will explain your options in more detail. You can read more about HomeServe at www.HomeServe.com and view nearly 80 informational videos on HomeServe's YouTube channel at [HomeServeUSATV](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1m1m1m1m1m1m1m1m1m1m1m).

Speak with your insurance agent before buying a plan to make sure the terms and conditions listed in the plan aren't already addressed by your homeowners policy.

HOMESERVE APP ACTS AS DIY ASSISTANT

Ever have trouble finding warranty information or the user manual for your home appliance or electronic device? HomeServe has an app for that—and you don't have to be a HomeServe member to use it. Whether you're a DIY virtuoso or you'd just like to recycle those maintenance manuals cluttering your kitchen catch-all drawer, HomeServe can help.

Home Library

Download the HomeServe app to your smartphone, then snap a photo of any appliance tag or electronic device label in your home, or type in the brand and model information. HomeServe populates the app with warranty information, user manuals, quick-start guides, how-to videos, and links to replacement parts for your appliance or device.

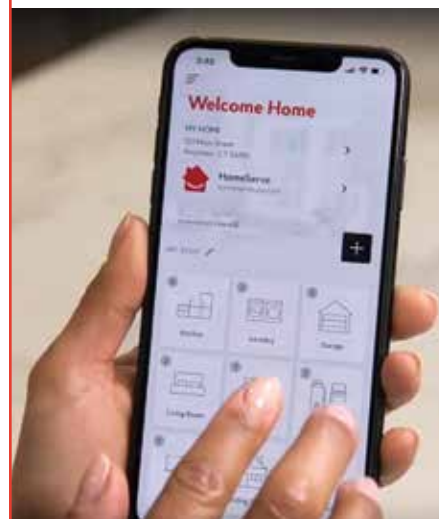
You'll also receive recall notices and maintenance reminders for products you've stored in your HomeServe App library. From electronics to furniture and appliances, the HomeServe App offers advice on how to install it, use it and maintain it.

The app also acts as a library of everyday DIY project information.

Need help lighting the pilot light on your stove or water heater? Want a little insight into changing your dishwasher or microwave filters? Need a hand identifying a specialty bulb in your bathroom vanity? The HomeServe App can help.

The HomeServe App is available on the App Store and on Google Play.

Learn more about the app's capabilities at www.homeserveapp.com.



Answering the Call

A message from Susan File & Charlotte Weber

The Operation Round Up address delivered by Susan File, Southwestern Electric's vice president of member services, and Charlotte Weber, Operation Round Up Committee chair, was a high point of this year's annual meeting of members. We felt their message of community service and the means by which small contributions grow into lasting results would resonate during this season of giving.

We've shared their address here.

From Susan File

This is the third year I've had the honor to speak with you about the charitable arm of Southwestern Electric Cooperative that you elect to support. The program I'm referring to is Operation Round Up (ORU). It's a program that is voluntarily funded by members who allow us to round their bill up to the next dollar. Your change goes into a fund that is wholly used to support not for profit organizations in and around our service territory. A committee of six members receives the applications and makes monetary award recommendations to our board of directors each quarter.

The ORU committee—our neighbors—consists of Charlotte Weber and Diane Schmid from District I, Michele McEvers and Sue Backs from District II, and Angela Reeter and Brady Kramer from District III.

Even with some of our neighbors being newer to our committee, the mission itself has remained steadfast over the past 15 years. Food pantries, community service organizations, youth-based organizations, and veterans' groups encompass many of our awards. Today we'll give you a glimpse into where some of your change has been invested.



From Charlotte Weber

In District I, we had the pleasure of recently granting both the Hamel and Worden volunteer fire departments each \$1,000 to go towards the purchase of battery-operated extrication equipment. Gary Bloemker, in the March edition of *The Southwestern* magazine, explained both battery and gas-driven units operate on the same principle, but battery powered equipment allows responders the ability to get working sooner. The time saved can be the difference between life and death.

In District II, an older but just as important need received some funding to help purchase a grain bin rescue trailer for the Mulberry Grove Volunteer Fire Department. Rescue tubes contain a trapped individual and relieve grain pressure on a body during a rescue

attempt. The project was brought to our attention by John Greenwood. The ag rescue trailer is not something each volunteer fire department may need, but Mulberry Grove firemen are happy to assist neighboring departments when called upon. More recently, the Smithboro Volunteer Fire Department received funding for portable scene lighting.

In District III, the Altamont Volunteer Fire Department was able to buy some cribbing to stabilize almost any vehicle quickly and safely. Cribbing is stronger and more effective than wood, saving critical set-up time. Cribbing can consist of step chocks, standard wedges, toters, bags, Lincoln-log kits, and more. Their first award was used to help purchase backpack blowers and a portable generator.

From Susan File

The smallest communities—those with fewer than 10,000 residents—are almost always served by volunteer departments, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Across the country and locally, small, rural fire departments like those Charlotte mentioned are struggling to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. But even where the number of volunteer firefighters is holding steady, the number of calls is

An ORU grant helped Mulberry Grove Fire Protection District (below) purchase a specialized trailer with equipment for grain bin entrapment extractions. Hamel Fire Protection District (right) used a 2019 ORU grant to buy battery-operated extrication equipment, which helps first responders free accident victims quickly and effectively.



exploding. Nationwide, the number of calls departments respond to has tripled in the last 30 years, according to the NFPA. The influx of calls influences the department's ability to answer them effectively.

Couple the increase in the number of calls with the fact that fire departments provide a community with mostly volunteer rescue, mitigation, and recovery services for fire and emergency services, and you can begin to understand why some departments are struggling to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. Fighting fires and answering calls as a volunteer requires the same training career firefighters receive. The training requires a significant time investment. Burnout can become an issue, too.

Our fire departments do so much more than assist during fires. Car accidents, lift assists, medical emergencies, water

rescues, smell of gas, and hazardous materials incidents are some of the calls they respond to. According to a study by Progressive Insurance, an estimated 52 percent of car accidents happen within 5 miles of home and 77 percent occur within 15 miles of home. Couple this with the fact that we have the Interstate 70 corridor running through the heart of our service territory, along with several other major interstates and routes, and you can see how strong, well-equipped volunteer fire departments equate to a stronger community response to just about any emergency.

Our goal today was to explain how you help these local volunteer departments and other community organizations with your donation averaging 50 cents each month through ORU. We understand that not everybody wants to ride in or drive the big, red trucks. We do know there are people

who want to give back to the community they live in, but struggle to find a way to help. Most of us would agree that when volunteer fire departments have the resources they need, all our communities benefit.

So many of you here today have helped grow ORU into what it is today. Some of you here today may have received help from one of these departments or another first responder at some point in your life. In closing, please take a few seconds to think about those who have cared for you, wanted what was best for you, or helped you in some way. How pleased they must be to know the difference they have made in your life. Let's continue to help our first responders turn incidents into rescues, not recoveries. They answer our calls. Won't you answer theirs if you're able? Thank you.



YOUR SMALL CHANGE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES



When you sign up for Operation Round Up, Southwestern Electric will round up the amount due on your monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar. Your donations stock food pantries, fund youth activities, provide lifesaving equipment for first-responders, and support veterans programs and many other community causes and local projects.

To enroll in Operation Round Up, complete this form and return it with your bill payment.

PRINT YOUR NAME _____

SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC ACCOUNT NUMBER _____

- Over \$147,050 donated since 2005.
- Donations average \$6 annually per account.
- All donations stay local.

Illinois Electric Co-ops Talk Safety At 66th Annual Farm Progress Show

Nearly a dozen electric cooperatives from Illinois partnered to share messages about electrical safety, energy efficiency and the cooperative service ethic during the 66th Annual Farm Progress Show, Aug. 27-29 in Decatur, Ill.

With more than 600 exhibitors, the Farm Progress Show, which shifts annually between Decatur and Boone, Iowa, is the nation's largest outdoor farm event. The show equips agricultural producers with the latest information about cutting-edge ag equipment, technology, products and services. Exhibitors and producers from around the world share technology and techniques and discuss solutions to challenges.

"Our agricultural roots run deep," said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams. "If it weren't for America's farmers, electric cooperatives wouldn't exist. Southwestern's service area has become more suburban over the years, but our work ethic, the way we treat people, our ability to be resourceful and resilient and adapt to change—you can trace all of that to our rural roots and early ag producer ingenuity."

Southwestern partnered with 10 other Illinois electric cooperatives, as well as the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Springfield, Ill., to share safety tips, offer energy efficiency information, and explain how co-ops work with their communities to build economic opportunity.

In addition to Williams, representing Southwestern Electric at the Illinois Electric Cooperatives exhibit were Becky Jacobson, chief financial officer, Chris Botulinski, vice president of engineering, Mike Barns, art director, Joe Richardson, editor of *The Southwestern*, and Julie Lowe, energy manager.

Lowe, who coordinated Southwestern's participation in the event, said show attendees learned valuable electrical safety lessons from live line demonstrations offered by Corn Belt Energy, Bloomington, Ill. "The demonstrations attracted a large crowd, and we counted a lot of kids in the tent," she said. "Those are lifesaving lessons that stay with people."

Linemen from Corn Belt Energy, Bloomington, Ill., offered pole climbing demonstrations during the Farm Progress Show, in Decatur, Ill. Several Southwestern employees represented Illinois electric cooperatives at the event.





1



2

1) Chris Botulinski, vice president of engineering, meets a youth group. 2) Becky Jacobson, chief financial officer, tries on safety gear. 3) Julie Lowe, energy manager, explains the evolution of insulators. 4) Botulinski quizzes kids on energy efficiency. 5) Corn Belt Energy's Zach Williams offers a live line safety demonstration.

Lowe noted the value of events that bring Illinois' electric cooperatives together. "We are similar, but at the same time unique. We learn a lot from each other," she said. "Co-ops are always there for each other in emergency situations—severe storms, ice outages, events like that. But when we're brought together for a celebration—and that's what this was, a celebration of agriculture—we have an opportunity to talk to each other and the people we serve," said Lowe.

"As those conversations unfold, you see so many ways you're alike, and the many ways you're different. You appreciate the differences *and* the similarities," Lowe said. "At the end of the day, you leave with the best of both."



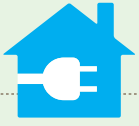
3



4



5



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!



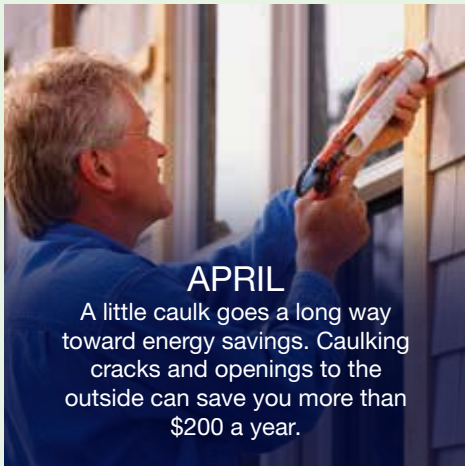
FEBRUARY

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

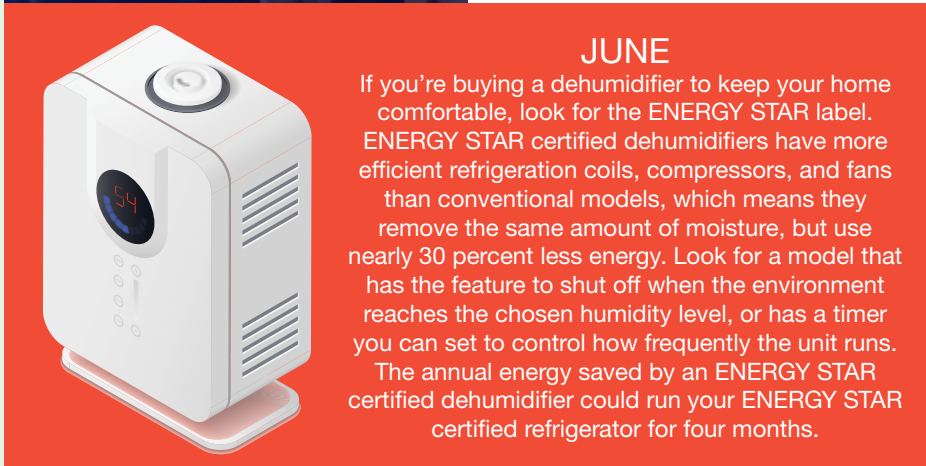
Seal leaking ducts in your basement. You'll help your HVAC system direct conditioned air where you need it, and keep more of your money where you want it—in your wallet.



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
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.



JUNE

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.

JULY
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.

AUGUST
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.



SEPTEMBER

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.



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.



HEATING HAZARDS

Supplemental warming products require proper attention

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

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

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

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

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

ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS

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

ELECTRIC BLANKETS & HEATING PADS

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

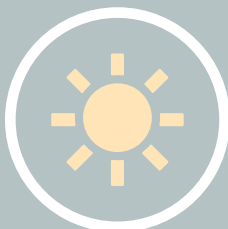


Only purchase products approved by an independent testing facility, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care of the product.

Space Heater Safety Tips

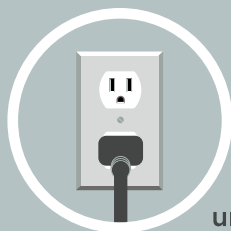
Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using a space heater doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

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

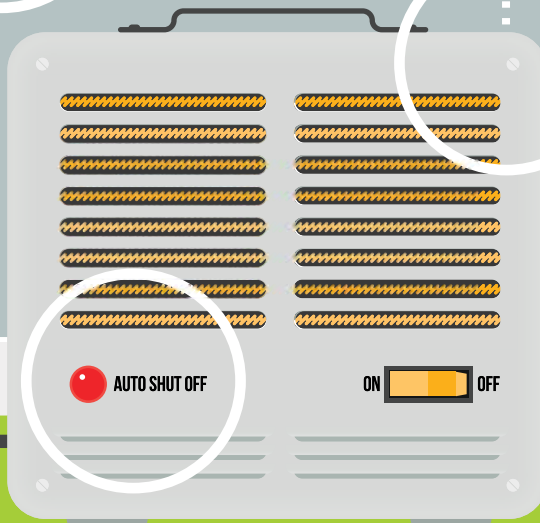


DO: Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

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



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



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

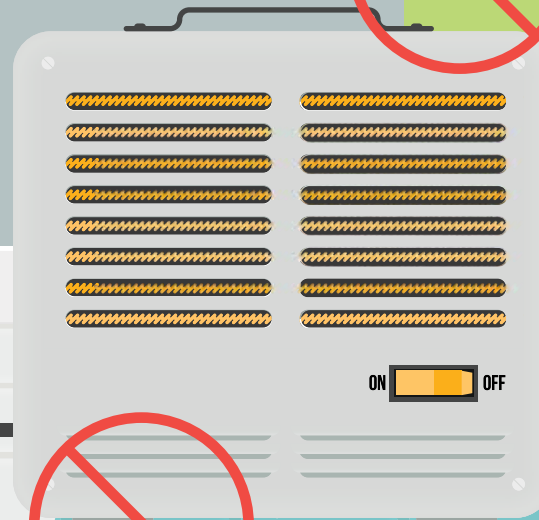


DON'T: Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



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

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



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



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



SNOW BIRDS

Riverlands And Nature Institute Offer Avian Encounters

Two local nature institutions are offering opportunities to engage with the outdoors this winter. The Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary in West Alton is host to one of the largest populations of overwintering Trumpeter Swans in the interior U.S. On Dec. 14, you can learn how Audubon and community scientists are helping to support the conservation of Trumpeter Swans in our community.

Riverlands will offer a guided morning viewing, speaker presentations, and family activities from 8 a.m. - noon. The event will be held at Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, Missouri. Admission is free. For more information, call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

On Saturday, Dec. 28, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., bird watchers from Southwestern Illinois can visit The Nature Institute at 2213 South Levis Lane, in Godfrey, Ill., to take part in the nation's oldest ongoing citizen science survey—the 120th Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Organized by the National Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count relies on volunteers to survey bird populations on a broad scale. The project offers ornithologists insight into the health and behavior of bird populations in the Western Hemisphere.

The bird count is part of a Nature Institute activity series developed to provide area residents with opportunities to engage in citizen science—the outsourcing of data collection or analysis to large numbers of people who possess a passion for the subject matter.

“Our focus is introducing people of all ages to hands-on opportunities to gather data, the scientific process it entails, and getting people outside to learn about birds and their environment,” said Emily Ehley, TNI environmental educator.

“An amazing amount of important information has been gathered by regular people working together to document the birds around them,” Ehley said. “People of all ages and skill levels are welcome to come out to TNI to learn, share, and celebrate birds this winter.”

The Nature Institute bird count is free but registration is required. To register, go to the Institute's website at www.thenatureinstitute.org and select the count on their December events calendar. You can call The Nature Institute at (618) 466-9930 or email them at info@thenatureinstitute.org.





The Nature Institute owns and manages more than 450 acres of protected land, including the Heartland Prairie Project at Gordon Moore Park.



The Audubon Center at Riverlands



Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary is home to one of the nation's largest populations of overwintering Trumpeter Swans. Hear how Audubon and the US Army Corps of Engineers are supporting this magnificent species during the Swans of the Riverlands program, Dec. 14.



WHO



WHAT



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*.

The responses we received to our November challenge were simple, direct—and accurate. “It’s a blackpowder flask,” wrote Richard Millitello of Bethalto.

Tim Bennett of Holiday Shores seconded Millitello’s assessment. “The item featured in the November 2019 Who-What-Where challenge is the pouch portion of a leather black powder flask minus the large brass measure/spout featured on many computer images. Embossed on the pouch is the image of a hunter aiming his muzzleloader over/beside his hunting dog,” Bennett noted. “Nice find.”

Millitello and Bennett were the only readers to identify the item, which came to us by way of Southwestern director Bill Jennings. Jennings was sweeping his property in Madison County with a metal detector when the machine pinged. Jennings unearthed the flask from about six inches of soil. Who did the item belong to? How did it become buried?

We’ll never know.

We do know powder flasks were standard shooting kit through the mid 1800s. The flasks held gunpowder fed through the muzzle of aptly named muzzleloading firearms.

As weaponry advanced during and after the Civil War, muzzleloaders gave way to breechloading firearms with integrated cartridges, holding both the powder and the projectile, and powder flasks fell to the wayside.

In their heyday, the flasks came in a variety of shapes, sizes and materials. They ranged from artfully decorated showpieces to simple, flattened “powder pear” containers.

Thanks to everyone who puzzled over our November challenge. And special thanks to Bill Jennings, who unearthed a hidden bit of history, brought it into the light, and shared it with us, so we could share it with you.

Ready for the next Challenge? See if you can name the person on the opposite page. We’ve offered a few clues to help you along. Hope to hear from you soon...



WHERE



WHO AM I?

In September 1814, my grandfather and Titus Gregg made the first entries of land that would become Troy.

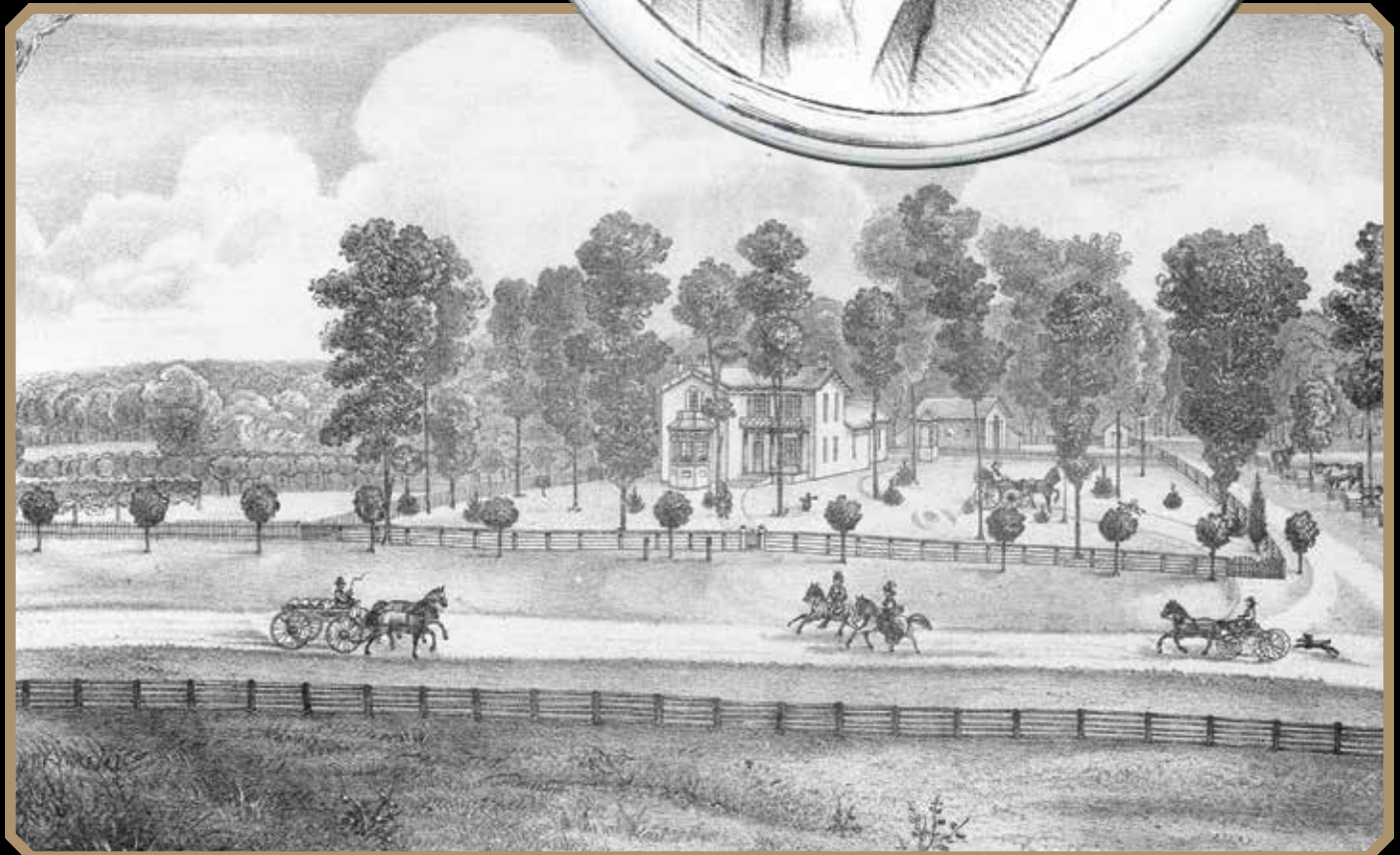
A Madison County township bears my name.

During the Civil War, I was a volunteer for the Union Army. I was wounded twice and taken captive twice.

I started the first lumberyard in Troy.

I was a friend of General William Tecumseh Sherman.

My Troy home is pictured here. It still stands today.



A CHILI TRIO

BLACK BEAN CHILI



Ingredients

- 1 large sweet onion chopped
- 4 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon Lite salt
- 2 cans black beans drained and rinsed
- 1 can black beans undrained
- 14 ounces low-sodium, fat-free chicken broth
- 2 can Rotel diced tomatoes

Directions

1. In a large pot, sauté onion in small amount of cooking oil over medium heat.
2. Stir in chili powder, cumin, salt, and pepper.
3. Stir in drained and undrained beans, chicken broth, and diced tomatoes.
4. Bring to boil over medium-high heat, cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve with desired toppings.



CININNATI CHILI



Ingredients

1	quart beef broth or stock	1	15 ounce can tomato sauce
2	medium onions finely chopped	1	tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2-3	garlic cloves minced	2	tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1	tablespoon chili powder	1	16 ounce package uncooked spaghetti pasta
1	teaspoon ground allspice	1	16 ounce can kidney beans
1	teaspoon ground cinnamon	1	16 ounce can seasoned black beans
1	teaspoon ground cumin		
¼	teaspoon ground cloves		
½	teaspoon cayenne pepper		
1½	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa		
½	teaspoon salt and coarsely ground pepper to taste		

Directions

1. In large pot over medium-high heat start beef broth.
2. Crumble raw ground beef into the broth, breaking up the pieces of meat as it starts to cook. Let simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Add onion, garlic, chili powder, allspice, cinnamon, cumin, cloves, cayenne pepper, cocoa, salt, pepper, tomato sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and cider vinegar.
4. Reduce heat to low and let simmer, uncovered, for approximately 2 hours until sauce thickens.
5. During the last 30 minutes add the drained cans of beans.
6. Cook spaghetti according to package directions and transfer onto serving plates (small oval plates are traditional).
7. Ladle chili over spaghetti and serve with toppings of your choice.

LEWIS AND CLARK'S WHITE CHILI



Ingredients

3	pounds Great Northern beans (canned or bottled will work)	2	teaspoons ground cumin
2	pounds boneless/skinless chicken breast	¼	teaspoon cayenne pepper
1	tablespoon olive oil	1	teaspoon ground oregano
2	medium onions chopped	¼	teaspoon ground cloves
4	garlic cloves minced	4	cups chicken stock or broth
2	4 ounce cans chopped green chilies	20	ounces Monterey Jack shredded cheese
			sour cream and chopped jalapeño pepper (optional)

Directions

1. Place chicken in large sauce pan. Add cold water and bring to a simmer. Cook until tender (15-20 minutes).
2. Dice chicken into ½ inch cubes and set aside.
3. In pan, add oil and bring to medium heat.
4. Add onions and cook until translucent.
5. Stir in garlic, chilies, cumin, cayenne pepper, oregano, and cloves.
6. Sauté 2-3 minutes.
7. Add chicken, beans, stock, and 12 ounces of cheese.
8. Let simmer for 15 minutes.
9. Ladle into bowls and serve with cheese, sour cream, and jalapeño peppers (optional) over the top.

This month's recipes are courtesy of Edwardsville Garden Club's *Favorite Recipes* (Cincinnati chili) and Greenville Regional Hospital Auxiliary's *Home Town Favorites* cookbook (black bean chili and Lewis and Clark's white chili).



Current Events

December 1-29 CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND, Alton. Drive through Rock Spring Park to see more than 2.5 million lights throughout the park. Monday - Friday 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 5 - 9 p.m. Suggested donation of \$7 for cars and small vans; \$1 per person for 10 person or more passenger vehicles. Rock Spring Park, 2100 College Avenue. Call (800) 258-6645 or (618) 465-6676.

December 1-29 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, Shelbyville. Come out and cruise through the park to enjoy the lights. New displays are added yearly. Sunday - Thursday 5:30 - 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 5:30 - 10 p.m. Donations are accepted at the end of the park. Forest Park, 325 East North 9th Street. For more information, visit lakeshelbyville.com.

December 1-31 CHRISTMAS LIGHT WONDERLAND, Greenville. Features Christmas lights and miniature display houses with animated holiday scenes. 5 - 9 p.m. Cookies and hot chocolate served free. On Friday and Saturday nights, Santa is in the Red Barn and Hills Fort is open to view Christmas in a log cabin. Take a ride on the North Pole Express Friday - Sunday nights (weather permitting); adults \$3, children two and under ride free. Donations accepted for admission to display. American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue. Call (618) 292-4376 or visit americanfarmheritagemuseum.com.

December 1-31 FANTASY OF LIGHTS, Centralia. A drive-through Christmas light display. 5 - 11 p.m. Santa who will be at his cottage at select times to visit with children and adults. Admission is free. Foundation Park, 600 North Pleasant Avenue. Call (618) 532-3214 or visit seecentralia.com.

December 1 - January 1 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN THE PARK, Carlyle. Take a drive through the park to view the lights and tune your radio to 90.1 FM to hear the dancing trees music. 5 - 10:30 p.m. Admission is free. Carlyle City Park, 1090 Lake Road. For more information, visit carlyle-lake.com.

December 6 DOWNTOWN CHRISTMAS STROLL, Centralia. Enjoy a stroll downtown including an ornament hunt, horse-drawn carriage rides, store specials, train rides, an opportunity to meet with Santa, carolers and other musical performances, Christmas music from the carillon, hot cocoa and refreshments for purchase. Ornament hunt cards may be found in any participating business downtown and inside the Illinois Theatre. When you find all the ornaments and your card has been stamped, returned to Illinois Theatre for a drawing at 7:15 p.m. 3 - 7 p.m. Downtown at 100 South Locust Street. Admission is free. Call (618) 533-7623.

December 6 SNOWFLAKE FESTIVAL, Godfrey. The park will be lit up with twinkling lights to celebrate the holiday season. An old-fashioned festival complete with carolers, hot cocoa and pictures with Santa. Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive and will be available for pictures with a donation of a non-perishable food item for the Crisis Food Center. 6 - 8 p.m. Robert E. Glazebrook Community Park, 1401 Stamper Lane. Call (618) 466-1483.

December 6-8, 12-15 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: A TWISTED CHRISTMAS CAROL, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adults \$20; children under 18 years of age \$12. Alton Little Theater,

2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

December 6-8, 13-15 AWAY IN THE BASEMENT: A CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES CHRISTMAS, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the last Sunday showing, which is at 2 p.m. \$12 for adults; \$10 for students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification). Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For reservations, call (618) 526-2866 or visit ccshowcase.com.

December 7 ALTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: SOUNDS OF THE SEASON, Godfrey. Tap your toes to the holiday music by Tchaikovsky, Bernstein and Holst with selections from The Nutcracker, The Polar Express, Christmas Day, Russian Christmas and more. Also featuring the winner of this year's Deborah Fox Guild Award. 7 - 10 p.m. Adults \$10; seniors 62 years of age and older \$5; children grades 12 and younger free; Lewis & Clark Community College faculty, staff, and students free. Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Call (618) 792-4002 or visit altonsymphonyorchestra.org.

December 7 BRONZE EXPRESSIONS HANDBELLS CHRISTMAS CONCERT, Centralia. Enjoy the Bronze Expressions Handbell group as they perform this Christmas concert in the gallery of the peaceful Centralia Cultural Society. 4 - 5:30 p.m. Community Arts Center, 1250 East Rexford Street. Call (618) 532-2951 or visit centraliaarts.org.

December 7 HOLIDAY DINNER DANCE, Albers. Join the St Louis Metro Polka Club as

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, or mail your info to *The Southwestern*, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include a contact number with your listing.

they celebrate the end of the year. Dinner includes fried chicken, roast beef, sides and home made desserts. The Duane Malinowski Orchestra is the featured entertainment. Tickets are \$25 and must be purchased in advance. Checks payable to St Louis Metro Polka Club. Include a self addressed stamped envelope and mail to: Shirley Langenhorst, 98 Birch Lane, Germantown, IL 62245-2002. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Dinner starts at noon. Music from 2 - 6 p.m. Admission is \$25. Albers American Legion, 600 Bertha. Visit folkfire.org/polka.

December 7 HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS HOUSE TOUR, Elsah. Join us as we open the holiday season by opening our homes. Your ticket includes a self-guided house tour, musical entertainment at the two churches, and a ride in a horse drawn carriage. Noon - 4 p.m. Advance tickets \$15; day of tickets are \$18. Prepaid ticket pickup and day of ticket purchases (cash only) will be at The Civic Center, 51 Mill Street (Old School House) starting at 11:30 a.m. For more information, to purchase tickets online, or a list of places to purchase tickets visit historicelesah.org.

December 7 MUSIC BOOSTERS HOLIDAY BAZAAR, Ramsey. Event will feature more than 30 vendors. There will be breakfast and lunch available, and a raffle with prizes from each vendor. 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Ramsey Junior High/High School, 702 West Sixth Street. For more information, call (217) 820-1291 or e-mail ramseymusicboosters@gmail.com.

December 7 SANTA'S CHOCOLATE EXPRESS, Grafton. Hop on the shuttle and travel down Grafton's Main Street. Stop in local shops to sample chocolatey holiday treats and shop the sales. Enjoy the sounds of carolers on the street and meet Santa Claus at The Grove Memorial Park. Admission includes a bag of chocolates, a holiday wine glass, free shuttle service, and a free treat at each participating business. 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. \$9 per person in advance; \$10 per person at the door. Downtown at 100 West Main Street. Visit graftonilchamber.com.

December 7 SPIRITED HOLIDAY PAST, Edwardsville. Experience an 1820s Christmas at the Stephenson House. The site will be decorated for the holiday season and offering tours of the home. Historically garbed docents discuss our rich history with visitors. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Colonel Benjamin Stephenson House, 409 S. Buchanan Street. Call (618) 692-1818 or visit stephensonhouse.org.

December 7 & 8 OLDE ALTON ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR, Alton. Crafters display their wares at this event that benefits the music program in the Alton School District. Breakfast and lunch available. Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday admission \$2; Sunday admission \$1; children under 12 years of age are free. Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Road. Call (618) 474-6996 or visit abob.net.

December 7 & 8, 14 & 15, 21 & 22 CHRISTMAS VILLAGE,

Bethalto. Take a stroll through Central Park, with decorated, lighted Christmas-themed cottages, live music, food, a visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, holiday vendors and crafters, live nativity scene, children's craft area, petting zoo, and barrel car rides. The 75 live trees used to provide a beautiful backdrop at the event will be given to families in need afterwards. 5 - 8 p.m. Admission is free. Bethalto Central Park 213 North Prairie Street. Call (618) 377-8051.

December 7, 21; January 4 TRAIN SHOWS, Glen Carbon. The Metro East Model Railroad Club will host free open houses from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at their club house located at 180 Summit Street (the old Glen Carbon Firehouse/City Hall). Visitors are welcome to view the club's trains running on their 18 x 27 foot HO Scale model railroad. Admission is free. For more information, call Bob at (618) 476-9228 or Bill at (618) 531-1589, or visit trainweb.org/memrc.

December 8 CHRISTMAS AT WILLOUGHBY FARM, Collinsville. Santa will be here along with cookies, hot chocolate, crafts and bell ringers. The barn will be decorated with a beautiful 20 foot tree. 1 - 3 p.m. \$3 per person; family \$10; age 2 and younger free. Willoughby Heritage Farm and Conservation Reserve, 631 Willoughby Lane. Call (618) 346-7529 or visit willoughbyfarm.org.

December 8 HOLIDAY FESTIVAL, Grafton. Help us spread holiday cheer like never before with our first Lodge Christmas Festival. Sip hot chocolate, gaze at our wondrous Christmas tree, enjoy live music, and cross off that Christmas shopping from your "to-do" list. We will have numerous vendors and the best holiday cheer in town. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Call (618) 786-2331 or visit pmlodge.net.

December 12-15 A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Lebanon. A Looking Glass Playhouse yearly tradition. This is one of Charles Dickens' most beloved classics, and it's retold here. Thursday - Saturday shows at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. with an encore performance at 5 p.m. Doors open one hour before each show, and the house will open 30 minutes before the start of the show. Tickets are \$5 each starting December 2 at 1 a.m. online. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. Call (618) 537-4962 or visit lookingglassplayhouse.com.

December 13 & 14 THE NUTCRACKER, Lebanon. Holiday classic features local dance talent and principals from leading professional companies. Friday at 6:30 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Adults \$25; seniors \$22; students and children \$10, McKendree University students free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

December 14 HISTORIC LUMINARY WALK, Belleville. The streets will be lined with candle-filled luminaries. There will be carolers and choirs singing on the route, serving hot cider, s'mores, candy canes, and ginger bread, horse drawn carriage rides, Saint Nicholas, the Koerner House with a quilt exhibit and the Garfield Tavern will be open for snacks and choirs and geocache activity for kids. 5 - 9 p.m. From Main Street to Garfield and Garfield to Mascoutah Avenue. Visit belleville.net.

December 14 SWANS OF RIVERLANDS, West Alton. Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary is host to one of the largest populations of overwintering Trumpeter Swans in the interior U.S. Learn how Audubon, partners, and community scientists are helping to support the conservation of Trumpeter Swans in our community. Guided morning viewing, speaker presentations,

and family activities. 8 a.m. - noon. Self-guided viewing from 3 - 5 p.m. Admission is free. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

December 14 WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA, Alton. This national program began some 15 years ago in an effort to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach our children the value of freedom. All 530 veteran graves in the Alton National Cemetery will be decorated with balsam wreaths for the holiday season. Take part in an emotional ceremony sure to bring pride and joy to those in attendance. 11 a.m. Alton National Cemetery, 600 Pearl Street. For details, call (618) 474-2005 or visit wreathsacrossamerica.org.

December 14 & 15 ARRIVAL AT CAMP RIVER DUBOIS, Hartford. This annual event commemorates the day William Clark and the men of the detachment arrived at the confluence of the Riviere a Dubois, Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Event will feature members of the detachment portraying military life, reenactors recreating the civilian population, and demonstrators. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Site admission is free; donations are appreciated. Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, One Lewis and Clark Trail. 3500 New Poag Road. Call (618) 251-5811 or visit campdubois.com.

December 14 & 15 GREAT RIVERS CHORAL SOCIETY CONCERT, Alton. GRCS presents "A Soliloquy of Wintertide: Escapade," a selection of songs honoring Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and the winter season. Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. Admission is free. St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, 717 State Street. For more information, visit grcs-sing.org or call (618) 292-4742.



December 15 HOLIDAY FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS, Centralia. Holiday musical selection from the Centralia Philharmonic Orchestra, Philz Harmoniks Suzuki Violinist, Centralia Cultural Choral Society, and Bronze Expressions Handbell Ensemble. 2:30 - 5 p.m. Community Arts Center, 1250 East Rexford Street. Call (618) 532-2951 or visit centraliaarts.org.

December 20 & 21 SING ALONG WITH SANTA, Alton. Sing along with your favorite jolly fella and the Alton Little Theater. Enjoy prizes and laughs as the audience participates. 7 p.m. Admission \$10 and includes hot chocolate and prizes. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

December 22 WINTER SOLSTICE SUNRISE OBSERVANCE, Collinsville. Meet at the Woodhenge reconstruction at 7 a.m., for an observance of the Winter Solstice. An archaeologist will give an explanation of the importance of Woodhenge to the Mississippians and its relation to the mounds. The Woodhenge reconstruction is about 1/4 mile west on Collinsville Road, from the



January 23 GATEWAY WEDDING SHOW, Collinsville. Meet vendors who can personalize and plan every aspect of a wedding. 5 - 9 p.m. Admission is \$5 online and \$7 at the door.; free admission for pre-registered brides and grooms; children age 12 and younger are free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. To register, visit gatewaycenter.com.

Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. Call (618) 346-5160 or visit cahokiamounds.org.

December 28 CITIZEN SCIENCE: CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, Godfrey. A series developed to provide people a chance to learn and participate in local monitoring programs that help collect data and share information. Please dress appropriately to spend time outdoors and don't forget to bring your reusable water bottle. 10 - 11:30 a.m. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit thenatureinstitute.org.

December 30; January 7, 10, 25, 27 & 28, 30; February 3 & 4, 6-8, 10 & 11, 13, 21, 28; March 6 BALD EAGLE DAYS, Grafton. A site interpreter at Pere Marquette State Park will be presenting informative programs about bald eagles this winter. Visitors will learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles, what eagles eat, why they spend winter months in the area and much more. There will be a short video presentation followed by an observational drive to view wintering bald eagles. Dress warmly and have a full tank of gas. Programs will begin at the park's visitor center. 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Reservations are required. Pere Marquette State Park Visitors Center, 13112 Visitor Center Lane. Call (618) 786-3323.

January 3-5 LET'S GO FISHING SHOW, Collinsville. There will be a wide variety of fishing gear, 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 letsgoshows.com.

January 4 AUDUBON EAGLE ICE FESTIVAL, Alton. See a live bald eagle, watch ice sculptors create works of art, and

let the kids enjoy cold weather games. Then head across the river to the Audubon Center at Riverlands to see finished ice sculptures, view eagles and Trumpeter Swans with the center's viewing scopes and take a shuttle ride to look for eagles. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa Street. Shuttle tours are \$5 per person. The Eagle Festival activities are free. For more information, call (800) 258-6645.

January 4, 11, 18, 25 EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Alton. Celebrate all things eagle related and see an American Bald Eagle up close and personal. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa Street. For more information, call (800) 258-6645.

January 4, 11, 18, 25 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS, West Alton, Mo., and Alton. Take a 45-minute shuttle to spots along the Mississippi River to spot eagles with stops at Maple Island, Heron Pond, and Ellis Island. A guide on board the shuttle will provide tips on how to eagle watch this season. January 4 pick up and drop off will be at the Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. January 11, 18, and 25 pick up and drop off will be at the Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa Street. Shuttle departs at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. Admission is \$5. For details or to receive a free eagle watcher's guide, call (800) 258-6645.

January 5, 12, 19, 26; February 2 BIRDS OF WINTER EAGLE SUNDAYS, West Alton, Mo. World Bird Sanctuary will have a live bald eagle inside the center for you and your family to observe. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. For more information, call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 11, 18, 25; February 1 BIRDS OF WINTER RAPTOR SATURDAYS, West Alton,

Mo. Treehouse Wildlife Center will have a live raptor inside the center for you and your family to observe. It could be an owl, hawk, or falcon. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. For more information, call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 18 LUMINARY WALK, Shelbyville. Enjoy the 500 luminaries on the trail that light up 2.5 miles and over 200 luminaries will be hanging in the trees. Hot chocolate and hot cider can be found near the huge bon fire. In addition, you will find illuminated ice, a six foot tall luminary that you can autograph, s'mores, and floating luminaries on the lake. 6 - 8 p.m. At Dacey Trail in Forest Park, 325 East North 9th Street. For more information, visit daceytrail.org.

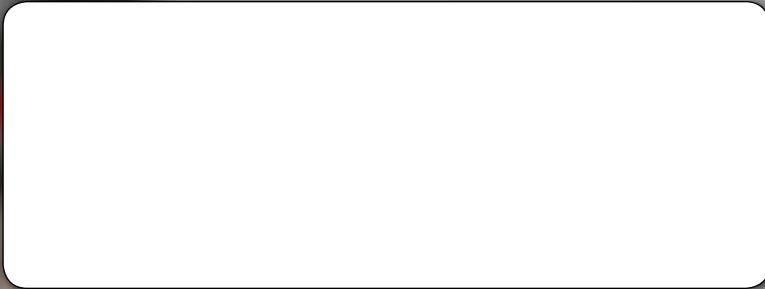
January 18 & 19 GATEWAY SPRING HOME SHOW, Collinsville. The goal of the Home Show is to inspire, motivate and excite you for your upcoming home improvement—whether it's a minor renovation or a major remodel. Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewayhomeshow.com.

January 23-26, 30 & 31, February 1 & 2 A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER, 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.

Linemen from Norris Electric Cooperative, Newton, Ill., offer a pole climbing demonstration during the Farm Progress Show in Decatur, Ill.



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