



# THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2021 • VOLUME 73 • ISSUE 1

## Efficiency Rebates

**SAVE ENERGY & MONEY  
WHEN YOU GO GREEN**

**OPERATIONS  
UPDATE**

**CEO STUDENTS  
TALK CO-OP  
& COMMUNITY**

**SOUTHWESTERN  
SCHOLARSHIPS**

**ENERGY ASSISTANCE**

**CELEBRATING  
SERVICE: EMPLOYEE  
ANNIVERSARIES**

## Many Happy Returns

**CO-OP RETIRES  
CAPITAL CREDITS;  
\$830,000 RETURNED  
TO LONGTIME  
MEMBERS**

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**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!



## FROZEN MOMENTS

Snowfall stills the woods and quiets the world beyond the bluff, transforming Effingham County's Rock Cave Nature Preserve into a winter wonderland.

### Ask The CEO

Have a question for the CEO? Send it to Bobby Williams at [bobby.williams@sweci.com](mailto:bobby.williams@sweci.com), or write to him at Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL. Periodically, we'll print some of your questions with his replies in *The Southwestern*. Each member who submits a question will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 bill credit. We'll draw a name each time we run an "Ask The CEO" Q&A segment in the magazine.

## FROM THE CEO

It happens from time to time. A motorist moving too fast down an icy road, a farmer who miscalculated the height of his equipment, or a time-weakened tree will bring down a pole or power line. When a line is on the ground, can you determine if it's energized?

No. You can't.

If a downed line is sparking, you know it's live. But if it isn't sparking—if there's no smoke or smell or sound—is it dead and safe to touch?

The answer, again, is no. You should never approach a downed line. You should treat every line as if it's energized, or could become energized at any moment.

At the cooperative, we're constantly working to communicate the dangers of downed and low-hanging lines. We're making progress—but we have work to do. That point was driven home recently when I reviewed a report of an incident involving a combine and our distribution system. The combine made contact with one of the telecommunications cables that are sometimes attached to our poles. The telecom lines fell onto the combine. The farmer remained in his combine and immediately dialed for help.

A police officer arrived on the scene and assessed the situation. He found the line on the combine, noted the telecommunications tag, and saw no evidence of downed power lines. He moved the telecom line off the combine and allowed the farmer to exit.

It was at this point my heart skipped a beat.

That line could have been energized. Yes, it was a telecommunications cable. But the accident could have jarred power lines loose a few spans away from the combine. Those lines could have fallen onto the telecommunications cable, energizing it. The point of contact would have been outside their field of view. An incident that began with a downed line could have ended with a fatality.

The farmer, for his part, reacted as he should have. He called for help and stayed in the combine until he was informed the scene was safe. When he exited the combine, he engaged in proper safety protocol. He bunny-hopped, feet together, until he was a safe distance away.

If you find yourself in a similar situation—if your car bumps a pole, for instance—follow the farmer's example. Stay in your vehicle. Call for help. Remain in your vehicle until you are notified it is safe to exit. And treat every downed or low-hanging line as if it's energized, or could become energized at any moment. That mindset may save your life.

I encourage you to contact me with your questions regarding electrical safety or any topic related to the cooperative. I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, stay healthy and stay safe.

Bobby Williams, CEO



bobby.williams@sweci.com



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## Coronavirus Response

# Southwestern Operations Update

**S**outhwestern Electric Cooperative will continue to keep coronavirus mitigation measures in place through January. “To protect the health and safety of our employees and members, we will extend Southwestern Electric’s current office and remote work arrangement through the end of the month,” said CEO Bobby Williams. “Our management team is monitoring information from state and local health departments, as well as the CDC. We’ll continue to assess conditions and act accordingly as we move forward.”

The co-op’s current response plan calls for lobbies and drive-up windows to remain closed through January 31. “Our employees will answer calls and questions from our membership, and our line crews will respond to outages and make repairs quickly and safely, just as they always do,” Williams said.

In November, Illinois moved to Tier 3 of COVID-19 restrictions. The state emphasized the need for Illinois residents to follow the same safety guidelines that have proven effective for Southwestern Electric in curbing the spread of coronavirus within its workforce.

“While we have had employees contract COVID, by conscientiously following the guidelines we established

early last year, we have kept each other healthy and avoided spreading the virus,” Williams said.

Social distancing, weekly disinfecting by the cooperative’s maintenance service, daily disinfecting by each employee, wearing masks in common areas and bringing forward questions about possible exposure and symptoms have proven effective safeguards for the cooperative, he said. “The safety guidelines we’ve put in place have helped us protect ourselves, our coworkers, and our friends and family,” Williams added. “We all must continue to do our part to keep each other safe.”

In March 2020, the cooperative took precautions to safeguard the health of employees and members and curb the spread of COVID-19. Protective measures included adopting CDC health and safety guidelines, observing social distancing protocols, wearing face coverings when appropriate, and reviewing safety measures with employees. Those precautions have remained in place since last spring.

Williams encouraged members to manage their accounts, report outages and make payments using the co-op’s online payment portal, by using the SWEC IL app, or by calling the cooperative at (800) 637-8667.

For the latest information, go to [www.sweci.com](http://www.sweci.com).



# Fayette County CEO Students Host Co-op Team at November Strategy Meeting

**I**t was CEOs helping CEOs in Fayette County last November. A few days before Thanksgiving, Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams, Freedom Power Station GM Russ Gilbert and Vice President of Communications Joe Richardson visited with seven students in the Fayette County CEO Program to answer questions and provide guidance for the budding entrepreneurs. The socially-distanced question-and-answer session was held at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Vandalia. The meeting was a chance for Southwestern officials to tell the students what the co-op does and explain its place in the community.

As it turned out, the session was also a chance for the students to get feedback

from Williams about their concept for this year's class business. Williams said he was happy to serve as a sounding board for the idea, which the class will roll out in the coming weeks.

"I thought it was great," Williams said. "They put a lot of thought into it. They also put a lot of thought into giving back to the community and to the businesses that have been impacted by COVID."

That focus on community resonated with the Southwestern representatives, Williams said, as service and community are front and center for the member-owned utility as well.

"It struck me because it paralleled what we do here at the co-op," Williams said. "We are very community-minded."

Along with the co-op's relationship

with the Fayette County CEO Program, Southwestern Electric is also an investor in the Bond County CEO Program. Williams said watching the leaders of tomorrow grow and learn in the program is one of the many joys of his job.

"I really enjoy the CEO program, and seeing the kids grow throughout the year," Williams said. "We try to take every opportunity we can to work with the schools in our communities, and educate students about Southwestern Electric and the cooperative business model."

"When they carry the cooperative principles of open membership, democratic member control and concern for community, among others, into their lives and their business practices, everyone benefits."



Russ Gilbert, general manager of Freedom Power Station, fields a question from Fayette County CEO students.



Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams (far corner) explains the cooperative business model.

## Southwestern Adds Tesla Model 3 to Vehicle Fleet

**I**n the September 2020 issue of *The Southwestern*, Southwestern Electric CEO Bobby Williams announced that the cooperative would be adding an electric vehicle (EV) to its fleet in the near future.

The future is now.

After much research, deliberation and conversation, the cooperative recently purchased a Tesla Model 3. The all-electric vehicle was wrapped with the Southwestern logo and a graphic promoting the fact that it is an EV.

Southwestern Electric Energy Manager Julie Lowe began researching electric vehicles in 2019. She ultimately identified the Tesla Model 3 as the EV that would offer Southwestern the greatest value as a fleet vehicle.

"With just under 300 miles of range and a 5-star safety rating, the Tesla has 360-degree rear-, side- and

*Continued on page 26 >*



# Residential Charger Rebates Available

**S**outhwestern Electric Cooperative is offering a \$200 bill credit to the first 50 members who install new Level 2 electric vehicle (EV) residential chargers. All brands are eligible.

The rebate is part of Southwestern Electric's EV Pilot Program—an initiative launched in October 2020 that will help the co-op identify energy demand and usage patterns among EV owners and develop EV-oriented incentive rates.

Rates will be structured to reward EV owners, with margin enough to fund

infrastructure improvements.

Until incentive rates are in place, EVs will charge at a member's existing electric rate. The co-op's immediate goal



is to make electric vehicle ownership an attractive option, encouraging higher EV adoption rates among members.

“More EVs mean more power sales,” said Julie Lowe, program coordinator. “We can use that revenue to fund more infrastructure improvements while keeping our rates in check.”

Incentive rates and prime charging hours will become clear later this year as Southwestern reviews data from the EV Pilot Program. For more information, contact Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).

# Maple Grove Substation Will Go Live This Year

**S**outhwestern's newest substation will begin serving Madison County members later this year. Construction on Maple Grove Substation is “99 percent done,” says Vice President of Engineering Chris Botulinski. The aptly named substation is located on Maple Grove Road in Troy, near the interchange at I-270 and I-55/70. Once operational, the substation will provide power to thousands of members in the I-55 corridor from Troy to Edwardsville.

The new substation will reduce power demands on adjacent substations in one of Southwestern's fastest-growing regions, Botulinski said. Maple Grove will improve reliability and allow

crews to reroute power and restore service quickly during transmission line outages or after severe storms. “During inclement weather or extreme events that can take a substation offline, we have the infrastructure in place to respond effectively and efficiently, restoring power to more members in less time,” Botulinski said. “The substation is strategically located to help us do that.”

Maple Grove will also allow crews to work on other substations in the area without requiring maintenance-related member outages.

While it will certainly be a benefit to Edwardsville, Troy and Maryville members in the present, the substation was built with an eye on the future.

Maple Grove sits on roughly three acres and is larger than most of the co-op's other substations. “As the Edwardsville, Troy, Maryville metropolitan area continues to grow, Maple Grove will grow with it. We developed the site and planned the substation with that in mind,” Botulinski said. “We have the ability to add another bay and potentially change the transmission voltage. There's flexibility there.”



## CO-OP REMINDERS

### January 11

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.

### February 12

Southwestern Scholarship application deadline.

### April 1

Operation Round Up grant application deadline, second quarter.

### April 2

Offices closed for Good Friday.



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

You embraced our 2020 rebate program with enthusiasm. We're back to offer more savings in 2021. 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](http://sweci.com). You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com), or mail it to: Julie Lowe, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. You're also welcome to leave your materials in the drop box at our Greenville office.



Have questions? Call Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667 or email her at [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).

## HEATING AND COOLING

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

To qualify for our \$300 rebate, your heat pump may be installed in a newly constructed home, or replace electric resistance heat, propane or fuel oil heat. Installed backup heat must be electric, and the condenser and coil must be replaced and/or installed as a matched set.

Requirements for air source heat pumps include:

- At least 16 SEER
- 9 HSPF

Requirements for ground source (geothermal) heat pumps include:

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

## WATER HEATERS

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

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

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

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

## SMART THERMOSTATS

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

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

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

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

- Energy Star certified
- Internet-enabled

# Co-op Retires \$830,000 In Capital Credits

**M**ore than 6,100 Southwestern Electric members closed out the holidays with a bit of cooperative cheer—a check or bill credit equal to the capital credits they earned in 1989.

During the November board meeting, Southwestern directors authorized retirement of \$830,021.94 in capital credits, or patronage capital. The capital was returned to active members as a bill credit. Inactive members—members who no longer live on co-op lines—received a check.

In total, the retirement returned capital to 6,145 Southwestern Electric members.

Capital credits are similar to shares of stock. When you own stock in a for-profit company, your stock may pay dividends based on the performance of that company. As a Southwestern member, you accumulate capital credits based on the revenue you contribute to the co-op and the company’s financial condition.

Electric cooperatives rely on member capital to finance day-to-day operations. Member capital also offsets the need for a cooperative to raise rates or borrow money for infrastructure improvements.

“When you joined Southwestern Electric Cooperative, you became part owner of the company. Every time you pay your electric bill, you build equity in a company you own,” said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams.

“If we gather more revenue than we need to cover expenses, that money is returned to you. That’s one of the differences between an investor-owned utility and a cooperative,” he said. “In a co-op, what you put in comes back to you.”

In addition to general retirements, Southwestern returns capital credits to estates following the death of a member.

Capital credits remain with a member’s account until they’re claimed by the member or the member’s estate. Credits go unclaimed when Southwestern Electric can’t confirm a current address for a member who has left co-op lines, or when the co-op is unable to contact the executor of a member’s estate.

Presently, about \$3.5 million in patronage capital remains unclaimed.

To search for unclaimed capital credits in your name, consult the unclaimed credits list at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). For more information call us at (800) 637-8667.

## HOW DO PAYOUTS TO INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT MEMBERSHIPS DIFFER?

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

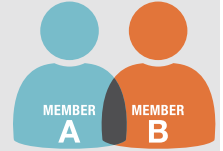


#### MEMBER DIES

**Capital credits are disbursed to the estate upon completion of claims process.**

#### MEMBER’S ESTATE

### JOINT MEMBERSHIP



#### MEMBER A DIES

**Capital credits transfer to surviving member. Membership converts from joint to individual.**



## Moving? Keep in touch!

Each time you relocate, update your contact information. By keeping your record current, you’re making sure we can return your capital credits to you.



# *In Celebration of Service*

Southwestern Electric Cooperative celebrated 22 service milestones in the last year—including an addition to our co-op family and three retirements. Together, the employees on this page represent more than 315 years of service to our members. 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. Please join us in welcoming our new employee and in recognizing the commitment and accomplishments of people who've made it their calling to serve you.

## NEW EMPLOYEE



Nathan Grimm,  
*Media Specialist*

## FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE



Tim Atterberry,  
*Journeyman  
Lineman*



Natalie  
Goestenkors,  
*Dispatcher*



Leo Leonhard,  
*Power Plant  
Technician*



Vic Buehler,  
*Vice President of  
Information  
Technology*



Thaddius  
Intravaia,  
*Director of  
Information  
Technology*



Vincent Sanvi,  
*Staking Engineer*



Adam French,  
*Journeyman  
Lineman*



Tyler Isaak,  
*Construction  
Foreman*



Chris Schmid,  
*Journeyman  
Lineman*

## TEN YEARS OF SERVICE



Patrick Harris,  
*Warehouseman/  
Groundman Truck  
Driver, Sr.*

## FIFTEEN YEARS OF SERVICE



Mike Barns,  
*Art Director*

## THIRTY YEARS OF SERVICE



Virgil Bowden,  
*Custodian*

## FORTY YEARS OF SERVICE



Kath Lewey,  
*Staking Engineer*



Sonny Lampe,  
*Warehouseman/  
Groundman Truck  
Driver, Sr.*



Carrie Knebel,  
*Vice President of  
Human Resources*



JoEllen Logue,  
*Member Services  
Representative*



Jessica  
Whitehead,  
*Member Services  
Representative*



Marilyn  
VanUytven,  
*Payroll & Benefits  
Specialist*

## RETIREES



Ed Braundmeier,  
*Maintenance  
Foreman*  
  
*28 years of service*



Linda Haberer,  
*Cashier  
Receptionist*  
  
*22 years of service*



Steve McMahon,  
*Maintenance  
Foreman*  
  
*34 years of service*

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



## What does it mean to be a co-op member?

Having trouble paying your bill?

Call us at (800) 637-8667 or email us at [billing@sweci.com](mailto:billing@sweci.com).  
We'll suggest resources that may be able to help.

*You may qualify for energy assistance through LIHEAP.  
Find out more at [sweci.com/energy-assistance](http://sweci.com/energy-assistance).*

## It means we're here for you.



***YOUR ACCOUNTABLE ENERGY PARTNER***

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Income Guidelines

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application is at or below 200% 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	\$2,127
2	\$2,873
3	\$3,620
4	\$4,367
5	\$5,113
6	\$5,860
7	\$6,607
8	\$7,353

Additional \$736 per person monthly income above 8 people, or \$8,840 annual. (Note 30-day income rounded up.)

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



# SOUTHWESTERN ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2021



Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$266,000 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 2021 for use in the fall 2021 semester.

Scholarship recipients can apply the funding to tuition at any accredited university, college or technical school in the U.S.

Scholarship applications may be downloaded from Southwestern Electric's website at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). You may also request an application by calling Susan File at (800) 637-8667.

Separate applications will be provided for high school seniors graduating in 2021 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 12, 2021**.

## 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 2021.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, February 12, 2021.

**Applications may be downloaded from Southwestern's website at [www.sweci.com](http://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](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com) or (800) 637-8667.**

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

**P**ay 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.”

According to File, 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, 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

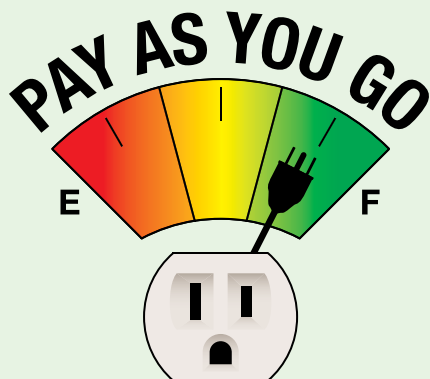
access. The online billing system, app and in-home display allow the accountholder to view their present account balance and average daily usage.

“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.”

While the cooperative’s lobbies are closed, payments on Pay-As-You-Go accounts may be deposited in the drop boxes at Southwestern’s Greenville and St. Jacob offices. Payments are also accepted 24/7 by phone, app and online at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com).

Members should allow three day’s processing time when payments are made at the St. Elmo office or Vandalia Farm Bureau.

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



- 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.

## MEMBERS IN FOCUS

Photos allow us to capture and recall a moment. In pictures, we relive a laugh, a smile, a winter snow or summer sun.

Members In Focus is your invitation to share those saved moments with members of Southwestern Electric.

In these pages, you can open our eyes to the people and places that mean the most to you. This is your opportunity to introduce *Southwestern* readers to everything that makes your corner of the world an exceptional place to live, work and play.

Send us your shots of life in Southwestern Illinois. We'll publish some of our favorite photos from time to time in our Members In Focus section. Your subject needn't be on

Southwestern's lines. If you've taken a great photo, and you shot it on the Highland town square instead of the Brownstown back forty, send it. We'd love to see it.

### Submission Guidelines

Please include your name, address, phone number or e-mail address, and a brief description of the photo. We'd like to know when and where it was taken, what we're seeing, and the names of any people in your shot. Digital images must be taken in high-resolution JPG or TIF format (300 DPI or greater)—and make sure the date/time stamp is turned off before you shoot.

Digital images may be sent as e-mail attachments or on a CD. Prints are also

welcome. Send photos by e-mail to joe.richardson@sweci.com or by mail to *The Southwestern*, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

If you're sending prints, please make sure they're copies you don't mind parting with, as we won't be returning them.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative interprets all submissions as unconditional permission to use the photos provided. We also reserve the right to not use photos.

Finally, if you're submitting a shot, it needs to be *your* photo—shot by you. Questions? Contact Joe Richardson at joe.richardson@sweci.com or Mike Barns at mike.barns@sweci.com, or call (800) 637-8667.

Jennifer Neuber of Troy caught the color of a July sky echoed in the pavement of Zenk Road near her home.





Karen Summers captured this crimson sky (above) from the deck of her Maryville home in March 2020.

Vickie Zanetti snapped this silhouette of a farm beneath a fall sunset (left) from her home in Alhambra. "You can almost see an angel or dove flying towards the horizon," she noted.



Mary Waters of Beecher City braved the Illinois winter cold to shoot this beautiful still life image outside her home.

Cristy Willman, wife of Michael Willman, vice president of operations for Southwestern Electric, snapped this photo of their one-year-old grandson, Beck Michael Bauer, sporting his granddad's winter gear. Beck is the son of Joey and Madyson Bauer of Greenville.

# 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](http://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.



## OCTOBER

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



## 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.

## 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.

# HOT TOPIC

*Heating products require caution and proper care*

Using electric space heaters, blankets or heating pads to fight winter's chill? While they provide comfort, they also present potential safety hazards.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters are responsible for 44 percent of home heating fires and involved in 86 percent of home heating fire deaths.

As is the case with any electric 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.

On Account: If your account number is 21486001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.

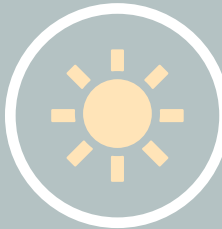


Only purchase products approved by an independent testing facility, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care of the product.

# Space Heater Safety Tips

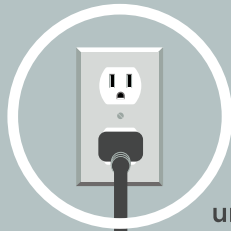
Space heaters are a great way to warm specific rooms in your home without having to crank up the thermostat, but using a space heater doesn't come without risk! Use the tips below to keep your home safe.

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

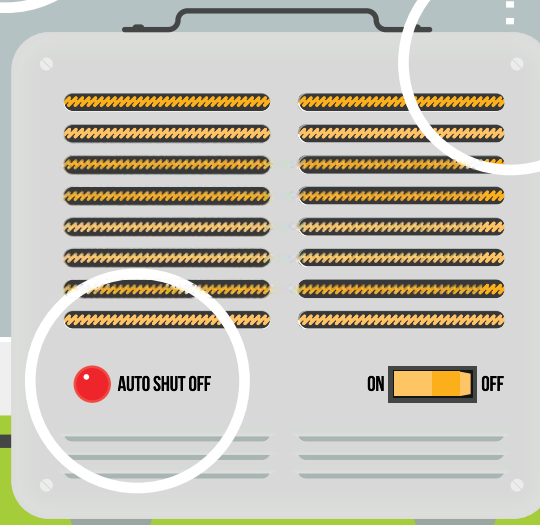


**DO:** Keep your space heater in low-moisture rooms.

**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.

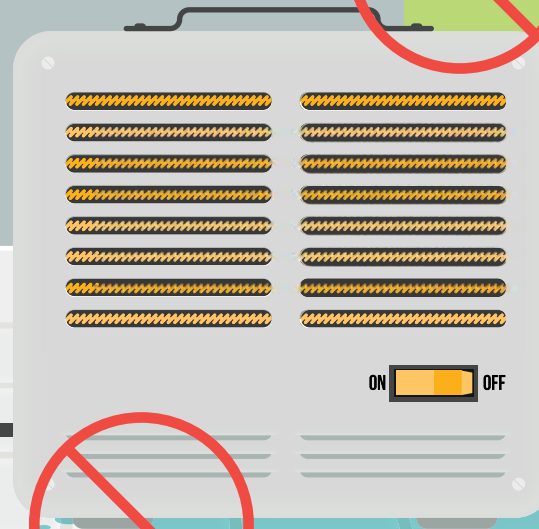


**DON'T:** Leave your space heater unattended. Always unplug it before you leave the house or go to bed.



**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.



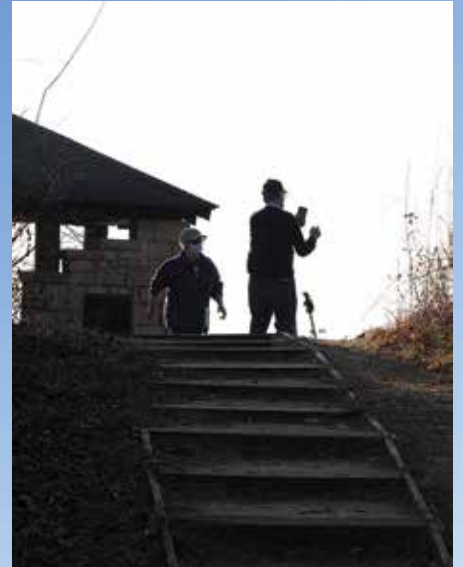
**DON'T:** Put your space heater in your bathroom. The moisture can damage the unit, which could cause it to malfunction.

OUT & ABOUT

# OVERLOOKS

*Get a bird's eye view of bald eagles from McAdams Peak & Twin Mounds*





Southwestern Illinois is blessed with an abundance of rolling hills and sprawling farm fields, but few are the places where you can walk through tall timber, stand above a mighty river, and look down on the wings of eagles. Grafton's Pere Marquette State Park offers that experience.

At a little more than 8,000 acres, Pere Marquette is Illinois' largest state park. The grounds offer a variety of outdoor experiences, ranging from trail hikes to bird watching to all-seasons photo ops and cultural heritage education.

If you visited Pere Marquette in autumn, you were treated to one of our state's best fall foliage displays. In the coming weeks, you can break out your binoculars and spotting scopes to follow eagles as they ride the wind along the bluffs below McAdams Peak and Twin Mounds. Between eagle sightings, you can watch the waters of the Illinois River flow toward a meeting with the Mississippi.

So bundle up, wear sturdy shoes, and don't forget your camera. The views are well worth remembering.



Backdrop and lower right: The view from and approach to Twin Mounds. Top: A tree snag on Dogwood Trail. Other photos were shot at McAdams Peak.



## WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Sometimes the folks who name everyday objects just flat out get it right. Case in point: the iron. You'd been hard pressed to find a more accurate, economical name for a household implement. In the early days, we used irons—made of iron—to iron. While we still iron with irons, we've graduated to more lightweight materials than iron for ironing. That said, the early iron that served as the mystery item in our December issue was made of iron.

"Flatiron," or smoothing iron, was the catchall name for an iron that consisted of a handle and a solid, flat, metal face.

"Sad irons" weighed in anywhere from five to nine pounds. According to antique dealers, sad irons weren't named in honor of the emotional disposition of the people pushing them. Rather, the name came from "sad" being an old synonym for "solid." In either case, it seems appropriate.

Before electricity became common, irons were warmed on stoves fired by wood or coal. Always looking for a competitive edge, foundries—including those in nearby Belleville—began to cast stoves with architectural features designed to accommodate multiple irons. Commercial laundries used multi-bay stoves to keep a steady rotation of hot irons at the ready.

Thanks to everyone who submitted a solution to our December puzzle. We hope to hear from you again this month. Can you identify the historical figure on the opposite page? Meanwhile, we've shared what you had to say about last month's puzzle below.

Pictured is a flat iron in the December issue of *The Southwestern*. I remember my aunt setting an iron like this one on her wood stove to warm it up as she ironed clothes. Normally she used three irons, so two could be heating as she was using one of the three.

—Corey Rabe, Vandalia

It's a sad iron. I can remember my grandma using one.

—Linda Durbin, Brownstown

That is an iron you put on a cook stove to heat, and iron clothes with. I was in an antique shop in November, buying things for Christmas for my son, and saw an iron like this and bought it, not knowing you'd have a picture of an iron in the December *Southwestern* magazine!

—Kate Jennings, Beecher City

**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](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com) or send it by mail to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include your name, mailing address, and hometown. If you have a story about our photo topic, include that as well—we love these! The puzzle solution—possibly accompanied by a few words from you—will appear in a future issue of *The Southwestern*.



## WHO AM I?

I was the governor of Illinois after Shadrach Bond and before Ninian Edwards.

I was a neighbor and friend to Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe.

I served as secretary to President James Madison.

I campaigned to prevent the legalization of slavery in Illinois.

As Register of Lands, I shared an office with Benjamin Stephenson on Main Street in Edwardsville.

# Bread & Breakfast

## MICROWAVE ENGLISH MUFFIN BREAD

### Ingredients

- 5 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 packages dry yeast
- 2½ cups milk, warmed in microwave

### Directions

1. Mix 3 cups of flour and the rest of the ingredients until smooth.
2. Mix in the remaining 2 cups of flour. *The batter will be stiff.*
3. Cover and let rise until batter doubles in size.
4. Stir down and put stiff batter into two greased loaf pans.
5. Cover with plastic wrap that has been sprayed with cooking spray and let rise until the dough is at the top of the pans.
6. Microwave one pan at a time for 6½ minutes.
7. Wait 6½ minutes before removing bread from the pans.

## TWISTY STICKS

### Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- ½ cup shredded Gruyère cheese
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 package Pillsbury bread sticks
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

### Directions

1. Mix together salt, rosemary, and cheeses.
2. Coat each bread stick with oil and roll in dry mixture.
3. Bake as directed on package of bread sticks.

## GRANDMA'S HOMEMADE BREAD

### Ingredients

- 1 cup warm water
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 package yeast
- 10 cups flour
- 4 teaspoons salt
- ½ cup oil
- 2 cups water
- melted butter

### Directions

1. In a small bowl mix 1 cup warm water and ⅓ cup sugar until sugar dissolves.
2. Sprinkle yeast over top of water and sugar mixture.
3. In a large bowl mix flour and salt together.
4. Make a hole in the middle of flour mixture. Put yeast mix and oil in the hole.
5. Add two cups of water and mix with hands molding dough into a round ball.
6. Rub top with melted butter and cover with wax paper.
7. Let rise in warm place until it doubles in size.
8. Divide dough into 4 equal parts and kneed each into oblong shape.
9. Set into greased loaf pans, rub with butter and cover.
10. Let rise until double in size.
11. Bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until golden brown.
12. Let cool for about 5 minutes, take out of pan, and rub butter on top.

## MONKEY BREAD

### Ingredients

- 4 tubes refrigerated biscuits
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1½ cups chopped nuts
- 1 cup sugar
- ¼ cup evaporated milk
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¾ cup margarine

### Directions

1. In a plastic bag, combine cinnamon and ¾ cup of sugar.
2. Cut biscuits in quarters and shake in cinnamon mixture.
3. In a greased 10 inch tube pan or bundt pan layer nuts and biscuits alternately in pan.
4. Bring to boil the 1 cup of sugar, evaporated milk, brown sugar and margarine.
5. Boil 5 minutes and pour over biscuits.
6. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes.
7. Cool a few minutes in pan, invert onto plate, and serve.

This month's recipes are courtesy of 4-H House Alumni Association's *Nurture the Future @ 805 4-H House Anniversary Cookbook* (monkey bread), Bond County *Habitat for Humanity Cookbook* (Grandma's homemade bread) Edwardsville Garden Club's *Favorite Recipes* (twisty sticks), and Fayette County Museum's *35th Anniversary Cookbook* (microwave English muffin bread).



Monkey Bread



➤ *Continued from page 5*

forward-facing cameras and displays your surroundings on-screen,” Lowe said. “These cameras detect nearby cars and construction zones, and are helpful when parking. You can use your smartphone as a key and use the app on your phone to access the driver controls—allowing you to adjust the temperature, charging times, and all other controls remotely,” she said, noting the Tesla is a sporty, spacious, fun car to drive.

Why purchase an EV?

As Williams noted in his “From the CEO” column in September, the best perspective from which to gain insight into EVs—their advantages, their limitations, even their quirks and features, like those detailed by Lowe—is the driver’s seat. By owning and operating an electric vehicle, Southwestern can be a resource for members considering a similar purchase.

Some of the advantages are already known. While the upfront cost might be higher than buying a traditional gas-powered vehicle—although that gap is closing—maintenance and day-to-day costs are lower. EVs are quieter and better for the environment because they have no emissions. They also help reduce the dependence on finite natural resources, relying instead on renewable resources.

In the months to come, the cooperative will report its findings on the Tesla’s performance, reliability, efficiency and more. Stay tuned.



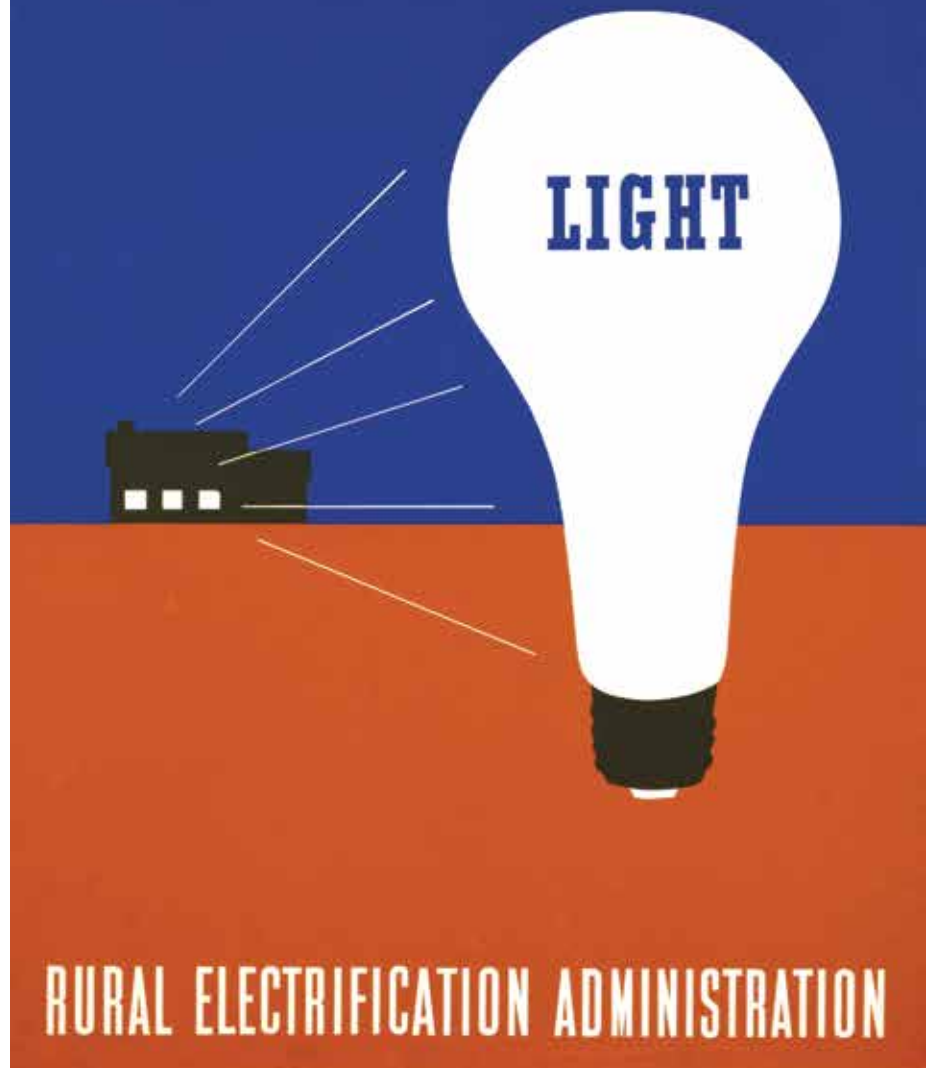
# Remember When?

**Do you remember when the lights came on?**

**When the poles went up and the lines came through?**

If you weren’t there, did you hear stories from your parents or grandparents about the days before electricity lit our way? We’re interested in hearing about the early days of electrification. We’d like to know how electricity changed life in your home, on your farm, or at your school. Please send your stories to Joe Richardson at [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com) or via traditional mail to 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

RETAIL





Trees tangle  
above Dogwood  
Trail at Grafton's  
Pere Marquette  
State Park.

## THE FINAL FRAME



**S**outhwestern  
Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

