

# THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

MARCH 2019 • VOLUME 71 • ISSUE 3

## Tools of the Trade

ORU GRANT HELPS HAMEL  
FIREFIGHTERS SAVE LIVES

## Co-op & Community

RON SCHAUFELBERGER REFLECTS  
ON FOUR DECADES OF SERVICE

POLE INSPECTIONS  
UNDERWAY

RIGHT OF WAY  
MAINTENANCE MAP

SPRING INTO  
ENERGY EFFICIENCY





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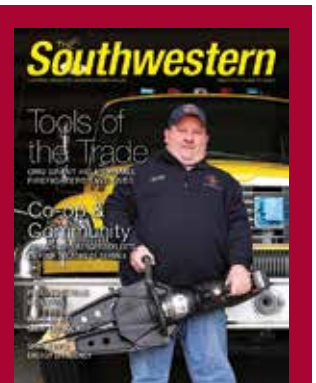
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**On Account:** We've hidden a member-account number in this issue (mailing label excluded). If the account number belongs to you, contact us within 30 days and we'll take \$25 off your electric bill. Good luck!



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Gary Bloemker, assistant chief of Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, displays the district's battery-powered spreader. Battery-operated extrication equipment helps first responders free accident victims swiftly and effectively. The department is applying a \$1,000-Operation Round Up grant toward the purchase of a ram that will round out its kit of portable lifesaving tools. See the story on page 12.

## CO-OP REMINDERS

### March 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 Monday at 4:01 a.m.

### April 1

Operation Round Up grant application deadline, second quarter.

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Bobby Williams ..... Chief Executive Officer

#### The Southwestern

Joe Richardson ..... Editor  
e-mail: [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com)  
Mike Barns ..... Art Director  
e-mail: [mike.barns@sweci.com](mailto:mike.barns@sweci.com)

#### Satellite Locations:

St. Jacob Office  
10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281

St. Elmo Distribution Center  
2117 East 1850 Avenue, St. Elmo, IL 62458

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# Tree Lines

Trees are a tremendous asset. They're also a leading cause of outages. Our forestry practices are key to keeping your family cool in summer, warm in winter, and your lights on year-round. On pages 6-7, you'll find a map that outlines our right of way maintenance plan for 2019. You may have seen the terms *tree trimming* and *right of way maintenance* used interchangeably—but they're different procedures using different tools to achieve different objectives.

Tree trimming is the work most of you are familiar with. You've probably seen Southwestern crews making small, select cuts to specific limbs that have grown near or into our lines. We trim trees to resolve a blink or reliability issue confined to a small area.

With right of way maintenance, our forestry and contract crews are *preventing* blinks and outages. We clear a corridor that spans about 20 feet on either side of our power lines. The change in landscape is dramatic, particularly in an overgrown area. But the close-cropped look is short-lived. You'll see significant change as spring and summer progress, grasses take root, and the canopy reaches into the edges of the corridor we've cleared.

Right of way maintenance has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It also offers our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

In the past, some members have requested we not clear right of way on their property. We simply can't honor that request without compromising the lines that serve you, your neighbors, and in some cases, many other members.

We appreciate the beauty trees bring to the landscape. We also understand how quickly they can compromise your comfort. Please be mindful of our rights of way when you're planting trees on your property. With planning and proper maintenance, we can enjoy summers in the shade, beautiful fall foliage, and year-round heat and light.

Joe Richardson, editor  
[joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com)





## *Pole Positions*

# *Southwestern Inspecting System, Improving Infrastructure*

**S**outhwestern Electric has contracted with Lee Inspection and Consulting Services, Joplin, Mo., to inspect and test more than 8,250 utility poles in Bond, Madison and Fayette counties. Pole inspections begin this month and are expected to be completed in late spring.

“In the months to come, members will see Lee crews examining poles and mapping improvements we can make to ensure reliability,” said Chris Botulinski, vice president of engineering for Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Botulinski said crews will examine poles near Edgewood, New Douglas and Troy. Technicians will perform visual inspections, use sound testing, and take bore samples to assess pole integrity.

The inspections are part of Southwestern’s ongoing system-wide maintenance work, which includes the installation of new poles and power lines, construction of substations in Bond, Fayette and Madison counties, upgrades to the co-op’s existing substations, and the deployment of new technology designed to reduce outage times and ensure power quality and reliability.

Lee Inspection and Consulting Services will examine more than 8,250 utility poles this spring. The work promotes system integrity and power reliability.



# Co-op Survey Underway

## Members Asked to Assess Performance, Identify Priorities

**S**outhwestern Electric is conducting a comprehensive survey to identify and address the priorities, preferences and expectations of its members. The survey touches on a wide range of topics, including reliability and outage response, co-op communications, crisis preparedness, Southwestern's commitment to renewable energy, initiatives to help members manage energy costs, and the co-op's member and community engagement activities.

"Our objective is to evaluate our performance and clearly define our membership's needs and expectations," said Bobby Williams, CEO of Southwestern Electric. "We want to know what we're doing well and where we can improve. This isn't a marketing initiative," Williams said. "We aren't selling anything. We want to identify the highest priorities of our membership, so we can effectively apply our resources to meet those needs."

The project, now in progress, is expected to be complete in April. Southwestern is working with Touchstone Energy and TSE Services to administer the survey. Over the last 15 years, Touchstone has assisted hundreds of electric co-ops with collection and interpretation of member feedback. In total, Touchstone's research team has interviewed more than 100,000 electric cooperative members.

"We're a Touchstone Energy cooperative," noted Joe Richardson, editor of *The Southwestern*. "Each year, Touchstone hosts national seminars and workshops on best practices. They're often led by co-ops who've interviewed their members, then integrated what they've learned into their operations, their programs and their approach to doing business."

Richardson said Southwestern's directors and employees frequently communicate with co-op members, but the conversations are often situational. "They're in response to our power restoration efforts after a storm, or a billing issue, or structural improvements we've made. Those discussions are important. But they don't necessarily reflect the overall thoughts and feelings of the thousands of members we don't hear from over the course of a year," he said. "Before we commit resources to programs or projects, we want data to guide those decisions. This study will give us that."

Richardson said Southwestern was extremely selective about partnering with an organization to conduct the survey.

"Touchstone is a co-op created by and for electric cooperatives. So when we say we're very protective of our relationship with the members we serve, they understand that. They know that as they reach out to our membership on our behalf, they're acting as our voice."

### Phone And Email Outreach

In order to have meaning, the survey needs to reflect the thoughts and opinions of a true cross section of Southwestern's entire membership. Valid research is vital, Richardson said. "We'll use this information to guide decisions regarding how we reach our members, and which programs and services we should pursue. We'll be reaching out to all age groups and areas."

While some members spend hours on their tablet, PC or smart phone, others prefer to communicate almost exclusively by a traditional telephone. "So we're reaching out through phone interviews and by email invitations," Richardson said.

Online surveys are convenient and economical, he noted. "Members can fill out an online survey at a time that's good for them, using the device they have handy."

"But the opinions of members who don't have internet access, or who find it challenging to respond to an electronic survey, are just as important to us," Richardson said. "So phone outreach is a key part of our effort."

### Telephone Surveys

Most phone interviews will be held weeknights between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Weekend calling will be limited to Saturday only; the study doesn't involve calls on Sundays or holidays. "If you get a call related to the survey, the words "Electric Coop" will probably show up on your Caller ID, and the calls will come from area code 336," Richardson said.

### Online Surveys

Online surveys will be offered by email invitation. The email will include a link to the survey and a unique ID code. "When you click the link, it will ask you to type in the ID number. You'll see Southwestern's logo on both the email invitation and the survey. You'll also see my name and our office number—(800) 637-8667—on the email invitation. You can reach out to me with any questions or concerns," Richardson said.

Not all cooperative members will receive a call or email. Rather, a representative cross section from throughout Southwestern's service area will be surveyed. "The survey is comprehensive. It touches on many aspects of our operation and member expectations," Richardson noted. "It should take no more than 12 minutes to complete. We realize that's a significant investment of your time, but ultimately, your responses will help us plan our priorities and improve the service we provide to you, and your friends and family. By participating, you're equipping us to invest resources in the programs, projects and technology that most effectively meet your needs," he said. "We deeply appreciate your time and consideration."

*Questions or comments regarding the survey may be directed to Joe Richardson, editor of The Southwestern, at [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com).*



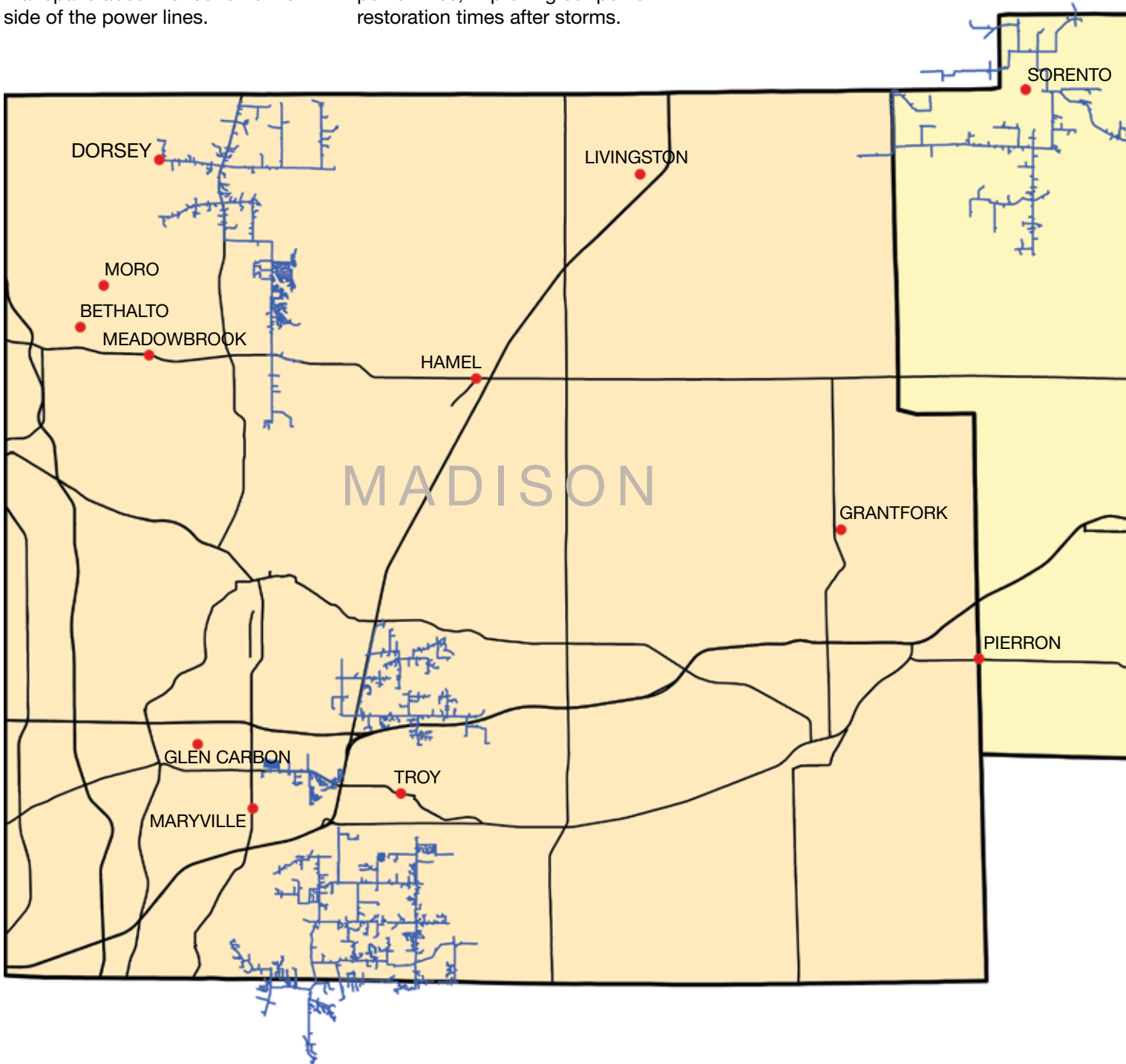
# MAINTENANCE MAP

## 2019 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The areas highlighted in blue are scheduled for right of way maintenance in the coming months. When performing right of way maintenance, our crews clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

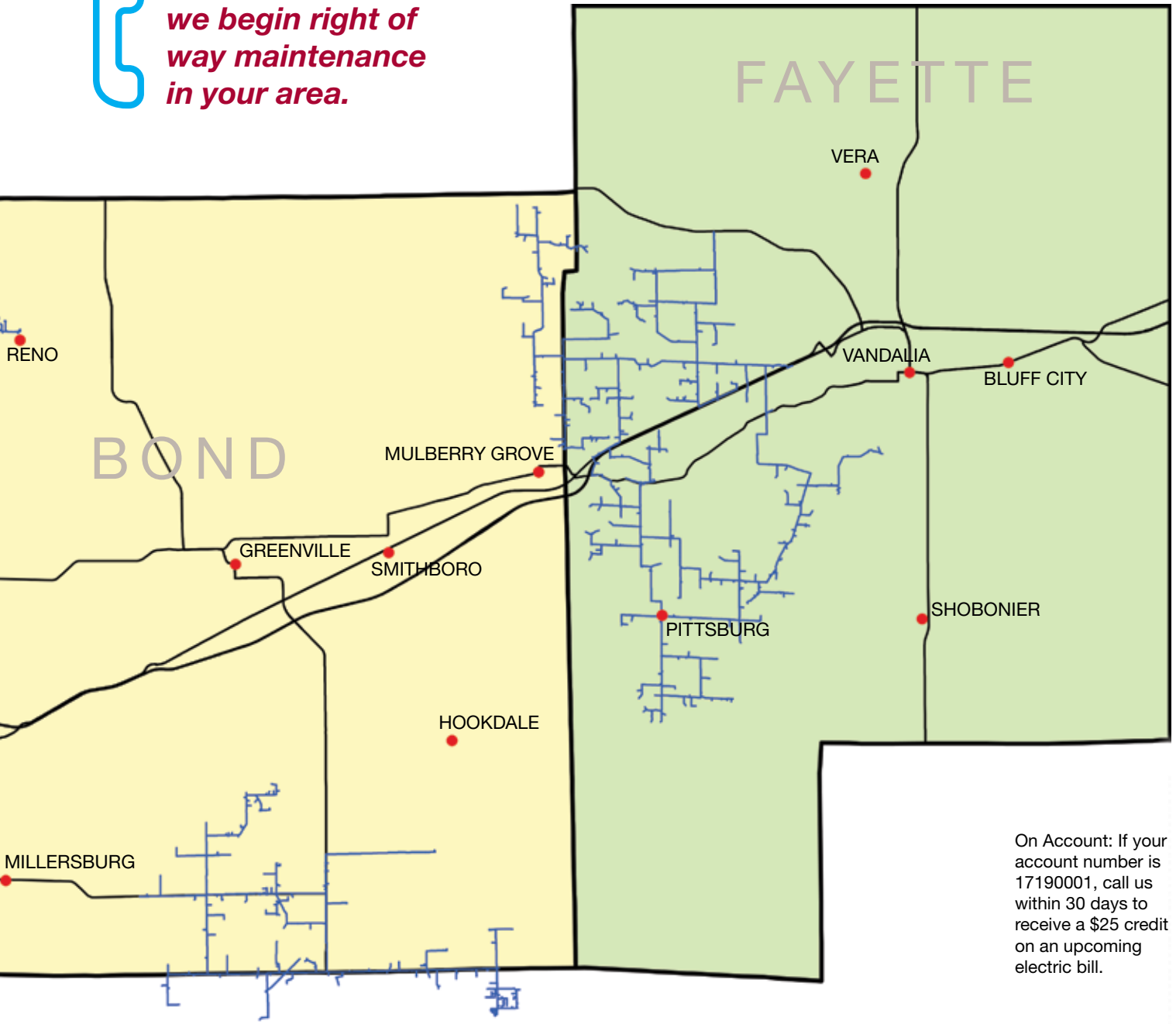
Southwestern's right of way maintenance program has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It's also offered our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

You can read more about our right of way maintenance work in the editor's note on page 3.

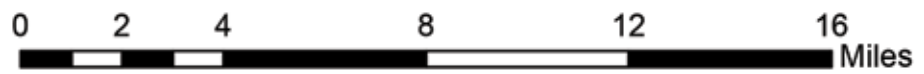




*We'll call before we begin right of way maintenance in your area.*



On Account: If your account number is 17190001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.



- 2019 Lines to Trim
- Primary Roads
- Towns

- Counties**
- Madison County
  - Bond County
  - Fayette County

# Co-op & Community

Ron Schaufelberger spent decades serving the members of Southwestern Electric. He retired from the board of directors in September 2018—but his commitment to the community is still going strong.



Pictured in a photo from 2012, Ron Schaufelberger of Greenville served on Southwestern Electric's board of directors from 1976-2018. "Southwestern was never about wires," Schaufelberger said. "It was always about people."

The seeds of a 42-year cooperative career were sown in the spring of 1976 on a dairy farm north of Greenville.

Ron Schaufelberger remembers the day. "I was working in one of the barns out on the farm. These three statesmen-like fellas came up, and I thought, 'I wonder what in the world they're doing here?'"

The statesmen were three members of Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Nominating Committee. Familiar with Schaufelberger's character and work ethic, they considered him an excellent candidate to fill the opening left by retiring board member A.J. Krummel.

"I really had not become involved with a lot of issues that electric co-ops face, but I wanted to see people be successful in their businesses and have good service at their homes. And I thought I could bring some fresh ideas and a different point of view. I thought it was worthwhile," Schaufelberger said, "and I wanted to be a part of it."

On Sept. 11, 1976, Southwestern members packed Troy's Triad High School gym, electing Schaufelberger to his first term. He was 30 years old at the time.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Ready to contribute, Schaufelberger quickly assumed an active role on the board, holding seats on various committees, most recently chairing the Business Development & Marketing Committee. He represented the cooperative at statewide utility meetings and served as Southwestern's delegate at National Rural Electric Cooperative Association conferences, giving voice to local concerns on a national platform.

For 42 years, Schaufelberger acted as member representative and cooperative liaison, sharing member concerns and viewpoints with his fellow directors, and explaining cooperative policies and practices to the membership.

"We went through a period whenever a lot of members were building grain bins," he recalled. Several members requested the co-op extend three-phase lines down rural routes to their farms. "We couldn't build 2 miles of three-phase line down one road for one member. I had to explain that. It was a challenge. I could understand their point



of view and I wanted the member to succeed, but I also had to be responsible to the membership overall.”

His communication skills became key when the co-op faced rate increases associated with rising wholesale power costs and a weak economy. The difficult days brought sleepless nights. But they also delivered the satisfaction of solutions developed in a boardroom with his fellow directors.

Those ideas and approaches positioned Southwestern where it is today—diligently maintaining rights of way, replacing old poles with new, building better lines, constructing new substations, and improving power quality and reliability.

“Every organization, and every generation, has challenges to meet,” Schaufelberger said. “There’s always something new. So you have to come up with new ideas. We have not been afraid to go out of our comfort zone.”

It was the board’s ability to envision new approaches to industry challenges that brought projects like Freedom Power Station to life.

Built in 1999, Freedom was the nation’s first natural gas-fired peaking unit constructed by a distribution cooperative. Freedom’s reliability and performance have saved Southwestern millions of dollars in fees associated with moving power across the grid.

In November 2003 and 2004, Southwestern Electric offered a month of free energy to the membership, saving members about \$4.8 million. “We were able to give a free month of electricity two years in a row—that was a good feeling. I know a lot of people appreciated that.”

It sometimes took the board several meetings to come to a consensus or to decide the best way to proceed, he said, “but once a decision was made, we all went in the same direction. I think we’ve had good leadership with good ideas. We worked well together.”

***“We’re more than just a rural electric co-op. We’re part of the community. That’s what a co-op is all about. Not just delivering power. It’s about being part of people’s lives.”***



Jack Compton (left) of Greenville, then-manager of Southwestern Electric Cooperative, congratulates Schaufelberger, Richard Suhre of Alhambra, and Stuart Yagow of St. Elmo after their election to the board of directors at the co-op’s 38th Annual Meeting of Members, held Sept. 11, 1976, at Triad High School in Troy. Schaufelberger and Suhre were new directors, replacing retiring board members A.J. Krummel of Donnellson and T.E. Albrecht of Alhambra.

## COOPERATIVE & COMMUNITY

Schaufelberger attributes Southwestern’s success to cooperation among the members, employees and directors. “I think the Madison County area was just starting to build whenever I got on the board. We’ve got schools, subdivisions, businesses, the YMCA complex, and truck stops now,” he noted. “And I like the fact that we are a big part of the community in Greenville. We’ve made opportunities for good people to have really good careers.”

He’s also pleased to see a parking lot filled with employee vehicles outside St. Elmo’s Pinnacle Foods. “Every time we go by, I think, ‘That’s a part of Southwestern. We’re helping the economy in this area. We’re helping to provide good jobs for these people.’ We even have Walmart at Vandalia. These are big businesses,” he said.

“Just the fact that we’re a *part* of Walmart, we’re *part* of Love’s truck stop in Hamel—that we’re dependable and we have the capability of providing the service they need—I’m extremely proud of that,” said Schaufelberger.

“We’re more than just a rural electric co-op. We’re part of the community. That’s what a co-op is all about,” he added. “Not just delivering power. It’s about being part of people’s lives.”

Schaufelberger was a member of the team that made infrastructure investment a priority for the cooperative. “You just don’t go out and build a substation. You’ve got to plan. You talk about a substation for five years or better before one spade of dirt is turned to build it,” he said, citing Southwestern’s new Vandalia Substation as an example. “Our staff has done a really good job of looking to the future. It’s exciting to see that going in.”

## THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Schaufelberger shepherded Southwestern through eras of change in techniques, technology, members and management. “Whenever I got on the board, most of the members were people living in rural areas, even if they didn’t have farms,” he said. Now a large percentage

of Southwestern members live in subdivisions.

But nowhere is change more evident than in the tools Southwestern uses to provide power. “Technology has changed everything. When I started, you had to read your meter every month. We’ve had automatic meter reading for about 20 years now,” he said.

“We used to have paper maps, and you’d have pins on them. Now everything’s on a screen. We have tablets in the trucks. The substations send information to phones and computers. Whenever you’re talking about building lines or a substation, you can bring that area up on a screen, and visualize it.”

Schaufelberger said during his early years on the board, the co-op sometimes struggled to replace outdated equipment. “Now we’re up to date with our equipment, with our technology, and with education for our workforce. All that adds up to better service for the members.”

Though his career spanned four decades, the job never got old. It was ever changing. “You’ve got so much to learn whenever you get on the board, and you’re not going to do it in six months or a year. I was still learning whenever I got off the board after 42 years.”

The one aspect of Southwestern that didn’t change during his career? The co-op’s reason for being. “Southwestern was never about wires,” he said. “It was always about people.”

## LOOKING BACK

Not surprisingly, it’s the people—members, employees and directors—he’ll miss most. “Whenever there’s nine people on the board and you make these tough decisions, it forms a lasting bond,” he said. “You become a family.”

He’ll also miss the sense of being part of something greater than himself. “Just



Schaufelberger and fellow director Alan Libbra retired from the board during Southwestern Electric Cooperatives’s 80th Annual Meeting of Members, held Sept. 8, 2018 at Greenville Junior High School, Greenville. Schaufelberger retired after 42 years of service. Libbra retired with 36 years of service. Both directors received standing ovations from a packed gym.

feeling that you’re a *part* of something—really being a part of the community, in a broad sense,” he said. “Whenever you have success, whenever you have a new build on the line, you feel like you had a small part—not a big part—but a small part in making decisions that served the community.”

## MOVING FORWARD

It’s been six months since Schaufelberger retired from the board. But with a farm-instilled service ethic and a lifelong commitment to community driving him, he hasn’t slowed a step.

He’s chairman of the board of the Bond County Senior Center, an elder on the Greenville First Christian Church board of directors, a director on the Bond County Community Foundation board, and a member of the Bond County Gideons. He’s also an active

member of the FFA Alumni Association and assists at the Bond County Fair.

When he’s not serving on a board or assisting an association, he and his wife, Karen, are visiting their new grandson, or tending corn, soybeans, wheat or hay on their farm north of Greenville.

Schaufelberger operated a dairy farm for 40 years before turning the business over to his daughter and son-in-law in 2005. He continues to lend a hand with the operation now and then.

He said he felt comfortable retiring in 2018 because the cooperative was on solid ground, both financially and in terms of its vision for the future.

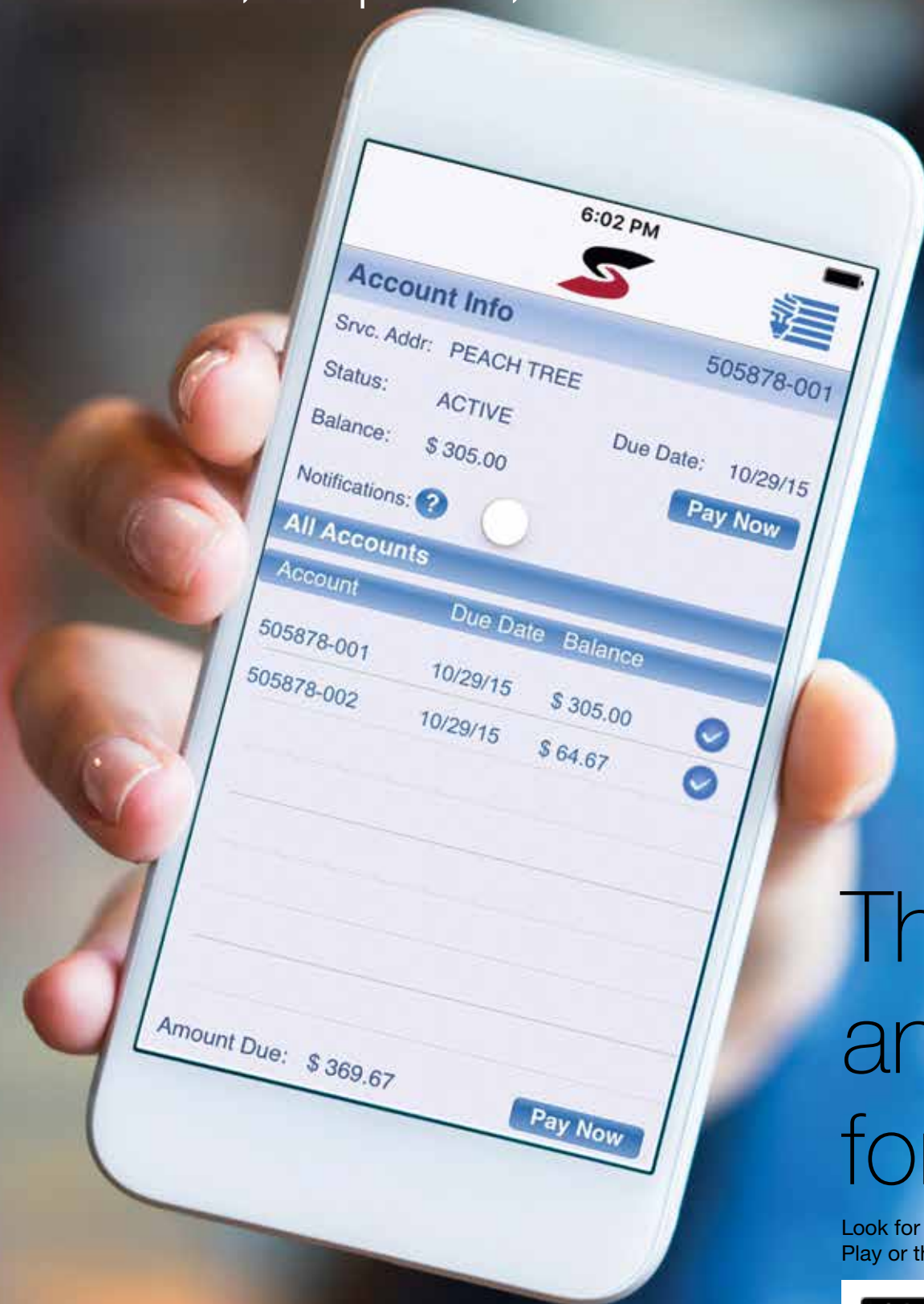
“We have good employees. Our staff’s great. The directors I served with are very capable, very dedicated. And I have complete confidence in our new board members. If I didn’t have that confidence, I wouldn’t have gotten off the board, even though it had been 42 years. It’s in good hands,” he said.

“Whenever I started, I had no idea that I’d be on the board for 42 years. I know God said pride is a sin, but I’m proud of the organization I retired from as a board member last fall. I feel that we did a good job. We did some things out of the ordinary to position us where we are today. It’s such a privilege to be able to serve so long,” said Schaufelberger. “It’s been a great experience.” **S**

***“I know God said pride is a sin, but I’m proud of the organization I retired from as a board member last fall. I feel that we did a good job. We did some things out of the ordinary to position us where we are today.”***



View, pay, create, update,  
alert, report, send & receive?



There's  
an app  
for that.

Look for SWEC IL on Google  
Play or the App Store.



# Tools of the Trade

**A**t the scene of an accident, every moment matters. That's why Hamel Volunteer Fire Department is investing a \$1,000-Operation Round Up grant in battery-powered extrication equipment—to save minutes, and save lives.

To illustrate the difference between traditional extrication tools and newer, more portable battery-operated life-saving equipment, Gary Bloemker, assistant chief of Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, references an emergency call involving two districts.

“The Granite City Fire Department was called to a crash on the I-270 Canal Bridge. They have a set of battery-powered extrication tools.” A neighboring fire department also responded to the call. “Both departments arrived basically at the same time. Granite got their battery-powered extrication tools on the vehicle. They had two doors off and were getting ready to cut the top off the car before the other department had their power unit out, started, and the tools hooked up.”

The difference in response time wasn't due to training. It was a difference in the portability of battery-operated tools versus more cumbersome extrication equipment. “You grab the tool, press the button, it's on, you're working.”

Before battery-operated tools, Hamel Volunteer Fire Department relied on extrication equipment powered by a gasoline-driven hydraulic power unit.



Gary Bloemker, assistant chief of Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, displays the district's battery-powered spreader. The department is applying a \$1,000-Operation Round Up grant toward the purchase of a portable ram, also powered by battery. The portability of battery-powered extrication equipment helps first responders free accident victims swiftly and effectively.

*“You grab the tool, press the button, it's on, you're working.”*

“You haul that out, get it started, then hook up a tool and go from there. And those little gas-powered engines, they can be hard to maintain. Any homeowner that's had a small gasoline engine has had a problem with it at one time. With battery power, that's one less thing we have to worry about.”

Getting both power unit and tool to the scene of an accident is a two-person job, Bloemker said. “With battery-operated tools, one person can do it all. You can carry two tools at once. You're not going to run both at the same time—but you can have both sitting right there, ready to use.”

While the department will make good use of the equipment, Bloemker is mindful of the district's resources and budget. He's currently shopping for a battery-operated ram with a full warranty, but without the full list price of \$10,000. “We want the best equipment we can get for our district, but we also want to save as much money as we can for our tax payers,” he said.

Currently, the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department is equipped with a battery-operated spreader and cutter. But the department's hydraulic telescoping ram relies on a gasoline-driven hydraulic power unit to operate.

Both battery and gas-driven units operate on the same principle. They use a telescoping hydraulic cylinder to separate sections of a vehicle. The ram can push a dashboard up and away, or clear a steering column, freeing accident victims pinned inside an automobile.

## MORE CALLS, FEWER PEOPLE

The battery-powered ram will round out the department's set of highly portable life-saving tools—and for volunteer fire departments across the country, equipment portability is paramount.

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

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

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

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



“Like a lot of smaller town volunteer departments, during the day we’re short-staffed,” Bloemker said. “That’s a big problem for everyone. Volunteer departments are always looking for members.”

When he joined the department 32 years ago, there was a waiting list. The department’s 50-person roster was full. “Now we have 26 active members. We need volunteers to join the department.” Whereas anywhere from 10 to 15 district firefighters usually respond to an evening call, during the day, when many members are at work, only a handful of volunteers are available. “That’s where we’re hurting,” Bloemker said.

As volunteer numbers drop, the demand for their life-saving services continues to rise. “There are more people in the area—and there’s more traffic. We responded to 219 calls last year. That was a record,” he said. “Every year it’s increasing.”

In order to meet the growing need for fire protection and first responder services, Hamel works with neighboring departments to answer calls in and

around its district. “With structure fires, we’re on automatic mutual aid with Worden. Anytime we are paged out for a structure fire, they are paged with us, and we are for them. That’s worked out well,” he said. “We trained together, and we work well together. We communicate well and we’re familiar with each other’s equipment.”

#### HIGH TRAFFIC AREA

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department’s service district encompasses 50 square miles, including 9 miles along Interstate 55, and territory along Illinois Highways 140 and 157. “We see a lot of high-speed accidents on the interstate, and big truck crashes, with a lot of vehicle damage,” Bloemker said.

Which brings him back to the virtues of battery-operated life-saving equipment. “These tools are almost silent when they’re running. So our communication is a lot better.” Noise can further stress an already frightened accident victim, he said. The quieter tools aren’t as intimidating. The new tools are also versatile. The

*“We want to thank Southwestern Electric members for this grant, and the opportunity to apply for it. It’s helping us get some very needed equipment that everybody can benefit from.”*

batteries, which are easily replaced, are interchangeable among the cutter, spreader and ram the department will buy.

“We want to thank Southwestern Electric members for this grant, and the opportunity to apply for it,” Bloemker said. “Without Operation Round Up, we wouldn’t be able to get this tool to help the people who live here, or pass through our district. It’s helping us get some very needed equipment that everybody can benefit from.” *S*



## ough Operation Round Up

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



Small change.  
**Big difference.**



# Spring Into Energy Efficiency

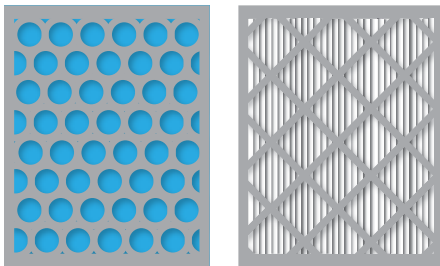
by Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

Springtime means the flowers will be starting to bloom, the weather will warm up, and your household cleaning will be in overdrive. Most of us see spring cleaning as an opportunity to clear away winter dust and grime and bring a healthy shine to our home. But while you're washing windows and sweeping out the garage, you can also save energy. We've come up with some top priorities for your spring-cleaning to-do list.

## GO WITH THE FLOW

Warm temperatures are right around the corner, which means you'll be running the A/C instead of the heat. Have you given your air conditioning unit a tune-up and made sure it's running smoothly?

One of the most important parts of maintaining an A/C unit is to routinely replace or clean the filters. Leaving the filters to become dirty or clogged will reduce the system's efficiency. Your unit's evaporator coil and condenser coil collect dirt over time. Replacing the filter will prevent the evaporator coil from getting as clogged and extend the efficiency of the coil.



However, this will not completely prevent the coil from collecting dirt. The accumulation of dirt will reduce airflow and insulate the coil, which makes it less efficient at absorbing heat. Checking the coil every year and cleaning it can help you avoid this problem.

Of course, there are times your A/C unit will need to be looked at more closely. If you notice your unit is producing lower than normal airflow, operating noisily, or not producing cool air, hire a well-trained professional to come out and take a look.

## GET INTO HOT WATER

While you may not be heating your home for much longer, you will still need to heat your water. As an appliance that is used multiple times each day, it's best to maintain your water heater consistently to extend its life and keep it running efficiently.

To avoid spending money on repairs, drain a quarter of the water from the tank once a year to remove sediment and debris. For the best efficiency, lower the temperature on your water heater to 120 degrees F.

To save energy and prevent heat loss, insulate your tank with a water heater blanket, and insulate the piping for the water heater.

And finally, install low-flow heads in your showers.

## COOL RUNNING

Your refrigerator is used just as much as your water heater and needs to be a part of your spring-cleaning list. By properly cleaning out your fridge, you can lower its energy usage.

Cleaning your fridge doesn't just account for the inside, but the outside as well. Remember to dust and vacuum



behind your fridge to clear the dirt and dust from the coils, and to keep the air flow passages to and from the condenser coils clear.

Be sure your refrigerator is located away from heat sources, such as your oven, dishwasher, and direct sunlight from your windows. A 10-degree increase in surrounding temperature can result in 20 percent more energy consumption.

## SEAL OF APPROVAL

With it warming up outside, you'll want to keep all your cool air in. You can prevent cool air from escaping by sealing air leaks throughout your home. Pay particular attention to leaks around doors, windows, attic access panels, recessed ceiling lights, electrical outlets and switch plates.

You may consider replacing any old weather-stripping at this time.

By sealing the air leaks in your home, you can cut energy costs, help improve your home's air quality, prevent moisture problems, and prolong the life of your appliances and heating and cooling systems.



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



# Going Solar?

## Contact Southwestern!

Before you invest in a solar energy system, contact Southwestern Electric Cooperative. We'll help you prevent delays and avoid unnecessary expenses.

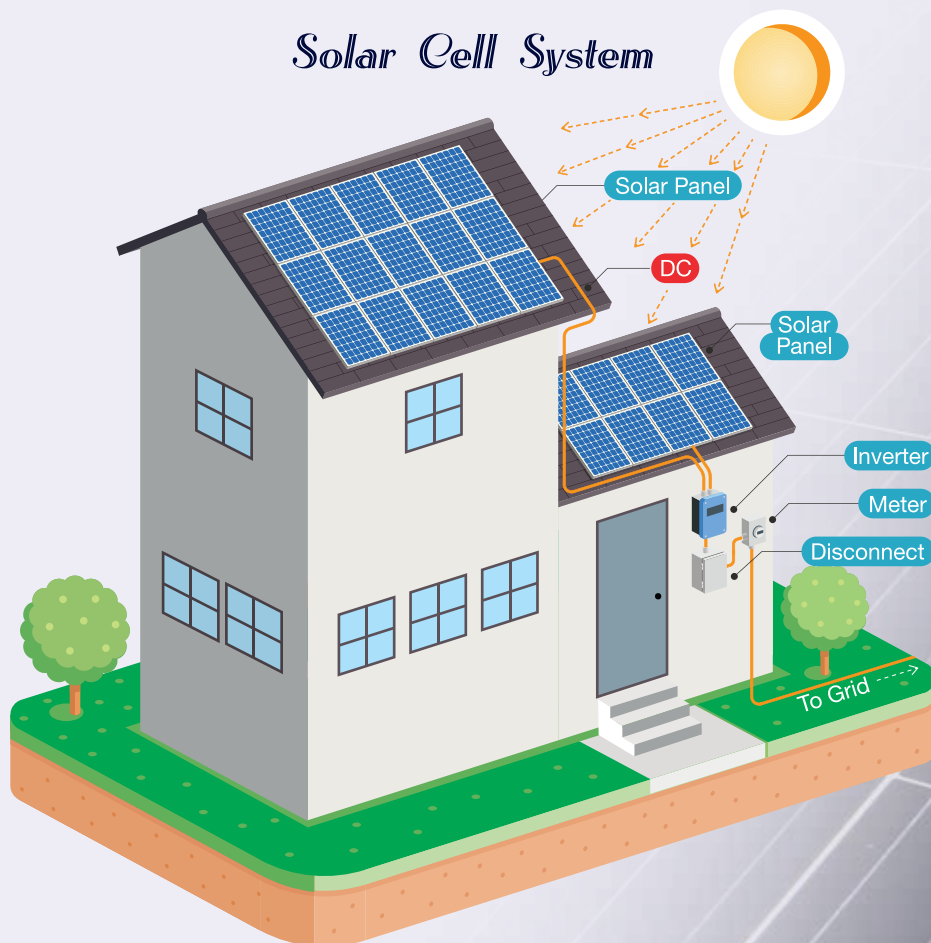
Our team will help you make informed decisions and provide documentation you'll share with your contractors and insurance agent.

You want your system to meet safety standards that protect your family, home and community. We'll help you interconnect your array with our power grid safely and efficiently.



## When should I contact the co-op?

It's never too early to contact us! If you're considering a solar array, call or email today. Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).





# National Poison Prevention Week

**U**.S. poison centers field a call every 12 seconds. During National Poison Prevention Week (March 17-23), poison centers spotlight practices to prevent poisonings. The following tips will help you avoid or respond to poison exposure.

## Be Prepared for a Poison Emergency

Put the Poison Help number, 1 (800) 222-1222, in your mobile phone and display it in your home and at work in case of emergency. You can also text POISON to 797979 to save the number in your mobile phone. Calls are free, confidential, and answered by experts, 24/7/365.

## Practice Safe Storage Habits

The following items should be stored in their original containers, in secured cabinets or out of reach and out of sight of children.

- All medicines and pharmaceuticals, including vitamins and supplements.
- Alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarette products (especially liquid nicotine).
- Laundry and cleaning supplies.
- Pesticides and insect repellents.
- Button batteries.
- Any oil or lubricant, including fragrance oils, tiki torch oils, engine oil, etc.
- Personal care products, including contact lens disinfectants and hand sanitizers.

## Read and Follow Labels and Directions

Make a habit of reviewing the label on any potentially hazardous substance or product prior to use (especially medicines). Follow usage directions as well as instructions for safe storage and disposal. If you have any questions about the directions, call your local poison control center at 1(800) 222-1222.

*For additional information on poison prevention, visit the American Association of Poison Control Centers at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org).*

If someone in your home is exposed to a poison, call the Poison Help Line at 1 (800) 222-1222.

## SAFE DISPOSAL OF OLD MEDS EASY AS 1-2-3

Ever reach into the medicine cabinet and find a bottle of medication past its expiration date? The next time it happens, before you toss that bottle in the trash, take measures to make sure the medicine doesn't end up in your sewer, water source, or in the hands of a curious toddler.

- 1. MIX** the medicines with things that bind. Take a bag of coffee grounds or cat litter and dump the medication into it. The medication will bind with grounds or litter and be less likely to leak or spill out of the garbage. This method also discourages toddlers from getting into the medication.
- 2. SEAL** the mixture in a container. Make sure your kitty litter/medication mixture is properly sealed in a plastic sandwich bag or a take-out food container with a lid before throwing it in the trash.
- 3. THROW** the mixture away. Now you're ready to throw the medication (and binder) into the trash safely. Don't flush medications in the toilet or dump them into a body of water.



## A HEALTHY DOSE

Have liquid medication in your arsenal of symptom-fighters? Don't throw away the dosing device that came with it. Over-the-counter liquid medications come with a diverse set of measuring tools. Keeping the correct dosing device with its medication can help prevent errors from occurring.



# Know the Risks: Poison Exposure & Where It Strikes



**HRSA**  
Health Resources & Services Administration

[poisonhelp.hrsa.gov](http://poisonhelp.hrsa.gov)

To contact your local poison control center, call **1-800-222-1222**

# 2,200,000 ANNUAL Human Exposure Cases



NEARLY  
**50%**  
of all exposures involved  
children younger than 6.

Older age groups exhibit  
a greater number of  
serious medical outcomes.



**93%**  
of human  
exposures occurred  
at a residence.

## Other Common Exposure Sites:



On the Job



The Great  
Outdoors

Data\* reported from the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (2016)\*\*

\* All data has been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

\*\* David D. Gummert, James B. Mowry, Daniel A. Spyker, Daniel E. Brooks, Michael O. Fraser & William Banner (2017): 2016 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS): 34th Annual Report, Clinical Toxicology.



# Lake Land



**Y**ou might overlook Lake Lou Yaeger when you're pondering area hikes, bikes and boating opportunities in Southwestern Illinois. Tucked between Butler and Litchfield, it's a bit north of our usual paths to adventure. But the lake is conveniently close to I-55 and IL-127 and its shores are well worth exploring.

At 1,357 acres, Lake Lou Yaeger is the centerpiece of Montgomery County's recreational opportunities. It's home to bass, crappie, bluegill, and catfish, and there's no horsepower limit for boat motors here.

The lake offers two marine facilities, with gasoline available at Marina #1.

The acreage around the lake includes trails for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use, as well as picnic areas, playgrounds and campgrounds (open April 1-October 31). During warmer weather, you can make use of the lake's beach.

## ROUTE 66 HIKE & BIKE TRAIL

Named in honor of the historic highway that played a part in Litchfield's development, the Route 66 Hike & Bike Trail at Lake Lou Yaeger offers 6.6 miles of adventure. The trail is an out-and-back route covering 3.3 miles one-way.

You can access the trail at picnic areas and playgrounds, and the trailheads are well-marked. From April 1 to October 31,

bathrooms are available at trailside picnic areas.

You can hike the length of the trail, explore shorter sections that connect picnic areas, or hike one of the loops. The trails cover uneven wooded terrain typical for Southwestern Illinois, so you're looking at a mix of slightly sloped paths, flat terrain, and more pronounced grades.

## SHOAL CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

When you're exploring Lake Lou Yaeger, don't miss the Shoal Creek Conservation Area. Located on the lake's southeast shore, Shoal Creek Conservation Area's 266 acres of oak and hickory woodland are home to deer, bats, 70 varieties of butterfly, and 70-some species of birds—including the Bald Eagle.

If you're a fan of flora as well as fauna, with 10 types of oak and 700 plant species overall, Shoal Creek is a must-see. The area is accessible year-round. The nature trail is open sunrise to sunset.

The Conservation Nature Trail offers two loops with a combined distance of about a mile. Loop A passes through inland prairie and woodlands with mostly flat terrain and slight grades. Loop B covers steeper ravines and opens into views of Lake Lou Yaeger.

There are no restrooms at the conservation area, so plan accordingly.

## GETTING TO SHOAL CREEK CONSERVATION AREA OR THE BEACH

From I-55, take Exit 52 and head east on Route 16/Union Avenue through Litchfield. As you're passing Elmwood Cemetery (on your right), look for Yaeger Lake Trail on your left. Turn left on Yaeger Lake Trail and follow it for about 3.5 miles. Turn left on Rainmaker Trail. Follow it about 0.7 miles until you come to Rocky Hollow Lane. Turn left onto Rocky Hollow Lane and go a tenth of a mile.

Look for a parking lot and signage for Shoal Creek Conservation Area on your left.

From the east, follow 127 north through Hillsboro to Butler. As you're passing through Butler, look for Rocky Hollow Trail. Turn left onto Rocky Hollow Trail and follow it

for about three miles. It becomes Rocky Hollow Lane and will lead you into the conservation area.

If you're looking for the lake's beach area, it's on the west shore. As you're following Yaeger Lake Trail north, after you've been on it for a half mile, look for Roberson Road. Turn left. Follow it about a mile north until you come to Beach House Trail/County Road 1350 N. Turn right and follow the road east a little over a mile.

If you need more assistance, please contact Marina 1 during normal operating hours at (217) 324-5441 or, in the off season, the Lake Superintendent at (217) 324-5832.







# WHO



# WHAT

**Y**ou were well ahead of us. While James Newton Matthews only recently came to our attention, it's clear many of you were familiar with the Effingham County poet and physician. Our February challenge drew more replies than any puzzle of the last year.

Your responses were as interesting as they were varied. Thank you for deepening our appreciation of a man who was dedicated to both his community and his pursuit of the perfect poem.

We hope you'll give this month's puzzle a go. Meanwhile, here are some of the responses you shared with us last month.

.....

The "Who Am I?" in the February issue of *The Southwestern* is Dr. James Newton Matthews, whose family came to live just north of Mason in 1860, when James Newton Matthews (Jimmie Newt, as his cousins called him) was just a young boy. What



Photo courtesy University of Illinois

I have learned of the 'Poet of the Prairie' came from the book "Grandpa Gibson's Letter & Early Historical Notes of Mason, Illinois." Thanks to J.D. Eident for all the time spent researching and compiling that book. A very informative, excellent book to read.  
—Karen Siddens, Mason

Dr. Matthews of Mason, Ill., was a lifelong resident and very dedicated physician. He corresponded with many literary figures of the times. A few of the old timers of Mason said there was a photograph of Dr. Matthews and Mark Twain taken in the middle of Mason.  
—Mike Robertson, Mason

The photo in this month's magazine is Dr. James Newton Matthews. He was born 1852 and came to Mason with his parents. His father was Dr. William Matthews, and his ancestor, Sam Matthews, was a colonial governor of Virginia.  
Matthews graduated from U of I 1872. He studied medicine in St. Louis. In 1878 he opened a practice in Mason, Ill. He married and had three sons, William, James Jr. and Courtland.

Matthews wrote verse and prose. His poems were published in Midwest newspapers. The *Lute of Life* was a collection of his poems published 1911.

In 1888, on the lawn of his home, many distinguished men came to honor him for his literary work. A few were James Whitcomb Riley, Gen. Lew Wallace and Eugene Field. Matthews died 1910 and is buried in Mason Cemetery.

My grandfather, Howard Bolin, grew up in Mason. He was born 1904. His brother Gerald was a historian. I've heard and written down all the stories of Mason and its inhabitants that Gerald told me about. He took me on tour and we stopped at the Matthews home. It is

still there today. Gerald had a book of Matthews' poems which he passed to me. I've been back to Mason many times where the Bolins lived and usually drive by the Matthews home. Gerald also knew some of Matthews' sons.

—Cherie Kuhn, New Douglas

I use the internet very little, but when I read your Who~What~Where clues, it came to me to go to the internet. I found out James Newton Matthews was the first University of Illinois student. In 1868, 50 enrolled—all male students. Matthews was among the founding editors of the *Student*, that is today the *Daily Illini*.

—Anna Jean Rhodes, St. Elmo

The gentleman pictured is Dr. James Newton Matthews. At the age of 16 he became the first student in an all male class of 50 at Illinois Industrial University.

Matthews was born in Greencastle, Ind., in 1852. He died of a heart attack in 1910 at age 57. The "country doc" was stricken after walking over 5 miles through a snowstorm to attend to a patient.

The "Poet of the Prairie" is buried in Mason, Ill. The last stanza from his poem, "The Old Country Road," published posthumously in 1911, is especially poignant considering the circumstances of his passing:

"The old country road!  
I can see it still flow  
Down the hill of my  
dreams, as it did long  
ago, And I wish even now  
I could lay off my load,  
And rest by the side  
of the old country  
road."

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon



# WHERE





# Meat Loaf M



## MINI MEAT LOAVES



### Ingredients

- 1 pound extra lean ground beef or turkey
- 1 6 ounce package Stove Top stuffing mix
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup shredded cheddar cheese

### Directions

1. Mix together meat, stuffing mix, and water.
2. Press into 12 greased muffin cups.
3. Bake at 375° or until cooked through.
4. Top with cheese and bake for 5 more minutes.

*To change the taste add ½ cup of ketchup or Country Bob's to the mixture.*

## MEAT LOAF



### Ingredients

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 pound hamburger         | ¼ cup ketchup             |
| 1 egg                     | 3 tablespoons brown sugar |
| ½ cup onion chopped       | 1 tablespoon vinegar      |
| 1 teaspoon dried oregano  | ¾ teaspoon mustard        |
| ½ teaspoon dried basil    | ¼ teaspoon nutmeg         |
| ½ cup corn flakes crushed |                           |

### Directions

1. Mix together hamburger, egg, onion, oregano, basil, and corn flakes.
2. In a separate bowl, mix together ketchup, brown sugar, vinegar, mustard and nutmeg (this is the sauce).
3. Mix in ¾ of the sauce in the hamburger mixture.
4. Shape into a loaf in baking dish and top with remaining sauce.
5. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

# March



## 30 MINUTE MEAT LOAF



### Ingredients

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound ground beef	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup soft bread crumbs
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	1 6 ounce can tomato sauce divided into 4 and 2 ounces
$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper	1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 tablespoon dehydrated onion flakes	2 teaspoons parsley flakes
1 small egg slightly beaten	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

### Directions

1. Combine ground beef, salt, pepper, onion flakes, egg, bread crumbs, and 4 ounces of the tomato sauce.
2. Shape into 4 loaves, place in baking dish, and bake at 450° for 15 minutes.
3. While loaves are baking mix the remaining sauce, brown sugar, parsley, and Worcestershire sauce.
4. After 15 minutes, pour off grease, pour sauce over loaves, and bake another 5 minutes.

## DUTCH MEAT LOAF *for microwave*



### Ingredients

$2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds ground beef
$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups cubed day old bread (cube bread and let sit uncovered overnight)
1 cup shredded cheddar or American cheese
2 teaspoons salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper
$\frac{1}{2}$ green pepper chopped
1 onion chopped
2 eggs
1 cup ketchup
1 tablespoon mustard (optional)
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce (optional)

### Directions

1. Mix all ingredients together and shape in a microwave dish.
2. Make a hole in the center and microwave on high for 20 minutes.

## LITTLE CHEDDAR MEAT LOAVES



### Ingredients

1 egg
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup quick cooking oats
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup onion chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1 pound lean ground beef
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup ketchup
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar packed
$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons prepared mustard

### Directions

1. Beat together the egg and milk.
2. Stir in cheese, oats, onion, and salt. Add beef and mix well.
3. Shape into eight loaves, place in a greased 13 x 9 inch baking dish or pan.
4. Combine the ketchup, brown sugar, and mustard, and spoon over the loaves.
5. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

This month's recipes are courtesy of Fayette County Museum 35th Anniversary Cookbook.





# Current Events

**March 1 - April 26 FISH FRY & TACOS**, Madison. Every Friday evening except April 19 (Good Friday) 5 - 8 p.m. Cod sandwich \$4, taco \$2. Shrimp, chicken strips, onion rings, fries, coleslaw, and drinks. Eat-in or carryout. Polish Hall, lower level, 826 Greenwood Street. For more information, visit [folkfire.org/polka](http://folkfire.org/polka).

**March 1-3, 7, 9 & 10 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: THE GLITTER GIRLS**, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adults \$20; Youth \$12. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).



**March 16 BOND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUILT SHOW**, Greenville. Special entry theme is Celebrations. More than 100 quilts on display, vendors, door prizes, viewer's choice awards, raffle, and block contest. Quilt project/technique demonstrations at 11 a.m., noon, and 1 p.m. Antique quilt bed turning program sessions at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Featured quilters are Ginny Ennen, Georgianne Tompkins, and Janice Tompkins all of Pleasant Mound. Show hours are 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is \$3. Free Methodist Church, 1367 Illinois Route 140. For more information, call (618) 664-0575 or visit [bondcountyhistorical.org](http://bondcountyhistorical.org).

**March 4, 8 BALD EAGLE DAYS**, Grafton. A site interpreter will present informative programs about bald eagles. Visitors will learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles, what eagles eat, why they spend winter months in the area and 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.

**March 6 THE EMPTY BOWL**, Collinsville. Have lunch and help the hungry. 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. \$10 admission and all proceeds go to Collinsville Food Pantry. Tickets are available the day of the event or in advance of the event at the administration office at Gateway Center 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday - Friday. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information, call Barb at (618) 910-1646.

**March 7-10, 14-17 PETER AND THE STARCATCHER**, 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. Adults \$10 on Thursday and \$12 Friday - Sunday; students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification) \$9 on Thursday and \$11 Friday - Sunday. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. Call (618) 537-4962 or visit [lookingglass-playhouse.com](http://lookingglass-playhouse.com).

**March 9 FFA ALUMNI DINNER AND AUCTION**, Edwardsville. In addition to dinner, the event includes live auction, silent auction, and various raffles. Proceeds support the

Edwardsville High School and Middle School FFA programs. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; dinner at 6 p.m. Adult \$25; children 5 - 12 years of age \$12.50. For tickets, call FFA adviser Jaci Jenkins at call (618) 656-7100 ext. 20680 or e-mail [jjenkins@ecusd7.org](mailto:jjenkins@ecusd7.org). Edwardsville Moose Lodge, 7371 Marine Road.

**March 9 & 10 FACES AND FIGURES IN WATERCOLOR**, Swansea. Internationally recognized watercolor artist Alicia Farris will share her studies of the human face and figure in this workshop presented by Gateway East Artists Guild. Learn techniques to portray the personality and emotion of the human face or subject. There will be demonstrations, discussion, and critiques. Class intended for the painter who has at least a basic command of the watercolor medium. Maximum class size is 18 students so register as soon as possible. 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. both days. GEAG members \$110; non-members \$160. Carlington Place Clubhouse, 3901 Essex Boulevard. To register, visit [geag.net](http://geag.net).

**March 10 SAUSAGE & SAUERKRAUT DINNER**, Troy. Buffet includes grilled pork sausage, sauerkraut, green beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, applesauce, coffee, tea and dessert. 11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Adults, carryouts and curb service, \$10; children 5-10 years of age \$5; children 4 years of age and younger are free. Call (618) 667-6535 for curbside service. Friedens United Church of Christ, 207 East Center Street. For curbside service, call (618) 667-6535.

**March 16 & 17 QUILT AND NEEDLEWORK EXHIBITION**, Elsah. Exhibition will celebrate the hand-crafted art of quilting and a variety of needlework.

## Call to Confirm

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

## Submissions

To submit an event for consideration in our calendar, email your event information to [joe.richardson@sweci.com](mailto:joe.richardson@sweci.com), 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.

Saturday noon - 4 p.m.; Sunday 1 - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Farley's Music Hall, 37 Mill Street. For more information, call Deborah at (618) 374-1684.

**March 17 SAUSAGE & PANCAKE BREAKFAST**, New Douglas. All you can eat sausage (Ron's recipe), pancakes, scrambled eggs, biscuits, gravy, homemade donuts, and drinks. Serving from 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. Adult \$10; children 5 - 10 years of age \$5, children 4 years of age and younger free. Advance sausage orders, link or bulk sold in 5-pound packages for \$18. Advance orders due by March 5 with pick up on March 16 from 9 a.m. - noon or day of breakfast. New Douglas Volunteer Fire Department, 105 East Allen Street. To order sausage in advance, call Dan at (314) 393 0415 or e-mail [newdouglasfire@gmail.com](mailto:newdouglasfire@gmail.com).

**March 23 ALTON HALF MARATHON & 5K**, Alton. Jog or walk into spring and enjoy scenic views of the Mississippi River and historic areas of Alton. Route also includes crossing the famed-Clark Bridge. Starts at 8 a.m. Admission fee varies depending on when you sign up. Liberty Bank Alton



Amphitheater, 1 Riverfront Drive. For more information, visit [altonhalf.com](http://altonhalf.com) or e-mail [altonhalf@gmail.com](mailto:altonhalf@gmail.com).

**March 23 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: COMEDIAN BOB NELSON, Alton.** A comedic presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. Admission is \$25. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**March 23 FLINTKNAPPING CLASS, Collinsville.** Well known area flintknapper Larry Kinsella will teach a beginning flintknapping class. All materials, tools, and safety equipment will be furnished. Noon - 4 p.m. Class fee is \$30 per person and open to students 14 years of age and older. Fee should be paid to the instructor at the start of class. All students should wear long pants to prevent leg injuries. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Interpretive Center, 30 Ramey Street. To reserve a place for this workshop, call (618) 346-5160 and ask to be placed on the roster. For more information, visit [cahokiamounds.org](http://cahokiamounds.org).

**March 23 LEGS FOR LIFE 5K, Centralia.** Sign up now to run or walk to benefit The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. This USATF certified road course contains some short hills through a beautiful park. Awards given for each age division and overall. Tech shirts to all pre-registered participants. 8 - 10:30 a.m. \$20 until March 8; \$25 after March 8 and at the door. Foundation Park, 600 North Pleasant Avenue. Call Shannon at (618) 367-0003 or e-mail [legsforlife@gmail.com](mailto:legsforlife@gmail.com).

**March 23 SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND, Alton.** Features Doug Raffety, Matt Taul, Fritz Beer, and Hope Mader. Doors open at 6 p.m.; show 7 - 9 p.m. Admission is \$10. Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway. Call (618) 462-5222 or visit [jacobyartscenter.org](http://jacobyartscenter.org).

**March 23 & 24 INDOOR LANDSCAPE PAINTING WORKSHOP, Swansea.** An indoor landscape painting workshop by Shawn & Dave Cornell presented by Gateway East Artists Guild. They will teach the principles of plein air painting, composition, color, value, and edges. Any medium may be used. May be held indoors or outdoors depending on the weather. 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. both days. GEAG members \$70; non-members \$90. Carlington Place Clubhouse, 3901 Essex Boulevard. To register, visit [geag.net](http://geag.net).

**March 23 & 24 SPRING ART SHOW, Maestown.** 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Preservation Society Rock Mill and Museum, 1113 Mill Street. For more information, call 618-580-5875 or visit [maestown.com](http://maestown.com).

**March 24 BEST OF MARYVILLE ART CONTEST & SHOW, Maryville.** Contest is open to anyone. Public is invited to attend and view artwork. 1 - 3 p.m. Maryville Community Center, 500 East Division Street. For more information or to enter artwork, visit [vil.maryville.il.us](http://vil.maryville.il.us).



**March 30 TRAIN SHOW, Glen Carbon.** Visitors are welcome to view several trains running on the club's 18 x 27 foot HO scale model railroad. The Metro East Model Railroad Club clubhouse, 180 Summit Street (old Glen Carbon Firehouse/City Hall). 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call Bob at (618) 476-9228, Bill at (618) 531-1589, or visit [trainweb.org/memrc](http://trainweb.org/memrc).

**March 24 CHICKEN DINNER, Edwardsville.** Join us for chicken dinner served family style. 11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Adults \$10; children 6 - 9 years of age \$5; carry-outs \$10. Immanuel United Church of Christ, 5838 Staunton Road (1½ miles south of Hamel). Call (618) 633-2277 or visit [iucchamel.org](http://iucchamel.org).

**March 24 POLKA DANCE, Madison.** The St. Louis Metro Polka Club monthly dance. The featured band is St. Louis Express. 3 - 6:30 p.m. Polish Hall, 826 Greenwood Street. For more information, visit [folkfire.org/polka](http://folkfire.org/polka).

**March 24 SPRING EQUINOX SUNRISE OBSERVANCE, Collinsville.** Meet at the Woodhenge reconstruction at 6:45 a.m. for an informational talk given by an archaeologist about Woodhenge and the significance of the Equinox. The Woodhenge reconstruction is about 1/4 mile west of the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center on Collinsville Road. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. Call (618) 346-5160 or visit [cahokiamounds.org](http://cahokiamounds.org).

**March 29 KARAOKE NIGHT, Grafton.** Be a rock star or just sit back and listen. 7 - 10 p.m. Admission is free. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Call (618) 786-2331 or visit [pmlodge.net](http://pmlodge.net).

**March 29 ONLY FOOLS RUN AT NIGHT 5K RUN & WALK, O'Fallon.** The race starts at 9 p.m. and ends with awards and festivities. Prizes go to the top male and female finishers as well as top finishers in each category. Hats guaranteed to the first 125 participants. For ages 13 and up. O'Fallon Sports Park, 301 Obernuefemann Road. To register, visit [ofallonparksandrec.com](http://ofallonparksandrec.com).

**March 29 & 30 BUNKER HILL KNIFE CLUB KNIFE SHOW, East Alton.** Show will have about 50 dealers featuring new and antique fixed blade and

pocket knives. Friday 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Adults \$3; children 12 years of age and younger are free. Julia's Banquet Center, 101 Eastgate Plaza (7 miles north of Route 270 on Route 3). For more information, call Tim at (618) 531-0011 or email at [tbryant40@yahoo.com](mailto:tbryant40@yahoo.com).

**March 30 5K AND 1 MILE RUN-WALK, Greenville.** The 5K starts at 9 a.m.; 1 mile run-walk at 9:15 a.m. Proceeds benefit Bond County Senior Center Meals. For more information, call (618) 664-9844, ext. 104.

**March 30 MAKE-A-WISH CHICKEN & BEER DANCE, O'Fallon.** Chicken, rolls, draft beer, soda, coffee and tea provided. Bring your own side dishes to share among your group (no alcohol can be brought in, a cash bar will be available). Dance and enjoy the live music, auctions, raffles, and 50/50 drawing. There will also be a "wish child" guest speaker who will talk about the impact the wish had upon him/her. All proceeds to benefit Make-A-Wish® Illinois to provide magical wishes for children with life threatening medical conditions. Doors open at 5 p.m.; chicken served at 5:30 p.m.; live music at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each or \$200 for a table of 10; \$30 per ticket the night of event. Fountains Conference Center and 4 Points Sheraton in the Illinois Grand Ballroom, 317 Fountains Parkway. For tickets or more information, visit [chickenbeerdance.com](http://chickenbeerdance.com).

**March 30 OLDE ALTON VENDOR & CRAFTS FAIR, Alton.** The Alton Band and Orchestra Builders is hosting a wide variety of crafters selling their best wares. Chris Cakes pancake and sausage breakfast will be available from 8 - 10:30 a.m. for \$7 per person. All proceeds benefit the instrumental music program in the Alton School District.

8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Admission is free. Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Road. For more information, call (314) 690-8520 or visit abob.net.

**March 30** SPRING FLING FIESTA CRAFT SHOW, Strsburg. There will be a lunch special of burritos, taco salad, and nachos. Carry out will be available. 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Strsburg Community Center, 105 E Commercial Street. For more information, call 217-644-3209

**March 30** WINTER LECTURE SERIES: IL HISTORIC TAX CREDITS, Alton. Bonnie McDonald will discuss the state of Illinois' historic tax credits. 10 - 11 a.m. Admission is free. Hayner Public Library: Genealogy & Local History Library, 401 State Street. Call (618) 462-0677.

**March 30; April 27** UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SHUTTLE TOUR, Alton. Alton's riverfront location along the Mighty Mississippi played a vital role in helping slaves make connections to the freedom of the northern U.S. Buried beneath the streets of Alton and Godfrey, remnants of this period in history still exist. Learn about local sites with J.E. Robinson Tours. The two-hour guided shuttle tours will stop at some of the sites that were part of the Underground Railroad system including Rocky Fork Church and Enos Apartments. Morning tour 10 a.m. - noon; afternoon tour 1 - 3 p.m. Admission is \$25. Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piassa Street. For more information, call the Great Rivers and Routes Visitors Bureau at (800) 258-6645.

**March 31** ALTON LITTLE THEATER: BROADWAY & CHOCOLATE, Alton. Pianist Mat Conway and a dozen of Alton Little Theater's best singers will provide an afternoon of Broadway classics and duets served with a side of scrumptious chocolate treats. 2 - 4 p.m. Admission is \$20. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets,

call (618) 462-3205 or visit [altonlittletheater.org](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**April 6** ANNUAL COMMUNITY SALE, Ramsey. Presented by Ramsey Lions Club. Bidding begins at 9 a.m. but you are encouraged to arrive early. Admission is free. Food available on site. Lions Park, one block west of U.S. Route 51. Call (618) 267-6012

**April 6** GREATER ALTON CONCERT ASSOCIATION: RONAN TYNAN, Godfrey. A member of the Irish Tenors since 1998, Ronan Tynan is known for his versatile repertoire, from Nessun Dorma to Over the Rainbow, and everything in between. Adult \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door; Students with I.D. \$10. 7:30 - 10 p.m. Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For more information, call (618) 468-4222.

**April 6** DICKENS FEST, Lebanon. Commemorates Charles Dickens' stay at the Mermaid Inn in 1842. Family fun with carriage rides, costume contests, and activities. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. West Saint Louis Street. Visit [lebanonil.us](http://lebanonil.us).

**April 6** LAKE SARA DAM RUN, Effingham. A Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Illinois. Choose from an 8-mile run, 5K run or 5K walk. Half marathon starts at 9 a.m.; 8-mile run, 5K run and walk start at 10 a.m. Proceeds will benefit Special Olympics in Illinois. Lake Sara Dam, 9352 East Park Avenue. For more information or to register, visit [lakesaradamrun.com](http://lakesaradamrun.com).

**April 6 - August 4** PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT, Elsah. Amateur and professional photographers will display photographs of the Village of Elsah and the immediate area in every season, in an exhibit entitled "Joy and Discovery in Elsah." Exhibit opening April 6 from 1 - 4 p.m. Museum hours are Saturday and Sunday from

1 - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Village of Elsah Museum, 26 La Salle Street. Call (618) 374-1565 or visit [escapetoelsah.com](http://escapetoelsah.com).

**April 7** ALTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: AMEN, Godfrey. Concert experience designed to combine the orchestra with the voices of our audience as we sing hymns that have survived generations and brought peace and hope to so many. 3 - 5 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. Alton Symphony Orchestra, Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Call (618) 792-4002 or visit [altonsymphonyorchestra.org](http://altonsymphonyorchestra.org).

**April 8** TENTHING CONCERT, Lebanon. Norwegian soloist Tine Thing Helseth leads a 10-piece, all-female brass ensemble that is equal parts virtuosity and fun. The ensemble's diverse repertoire spans Mozart to Weill, Grieg to Bernstein, and Lully to Bartok. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$20; senior \$18; student/child \$10; McKendree University students are free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**April 13** PRUNING CLASS, Collinsville. Learn how to prune different types of bushes and trees. 1 - 3 p.m. Willoughby Heritage Farm and Conservation Reserve, 631 Willoughby Lane. Call (618) 346-7529 or visit [willoughbyfarm.org](http://willoughbyfarm.org).

**April 14** PICKER'S MARKET, Litchfield. This open air market specializes in items prior to 1980, including vintage, antique, collectible, and repurposed items. Every second Sunday of the month through October. Entertainment and food available. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Beginning on the corner of Route 16/Union Avenue and State Street. Use 400 North State Street for your GPS.

For more information, go to [visitlitchfield.com](http://visitlitchfield.com).

**April 17** PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY, Lebanon. Great modern works of the past and outstanding works by today's leading choreographers are presented along with the Taylor Company's own vast repertoire. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$26; senior \$24; student/child \$10; McKendree University students are free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**April 26-28** SPRING INDIAN MARKET DAYS, Collinsville. Indian artists and vendors display and sell their hand crafted artwork, crafts, clothing, jewelry, and pottery. Friday noon - 5 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Event is free. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. Call (618) 346-5160 or visit [cahokiamounds.org](http://cahokiamounds.org).

**April 26-28; May 3-5** SPAMALOT, 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. For reservations, call (618) 526-2866 or visit [ccshowcase.com](http://ccshowcase.com).

**April 27** ALTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA, Godfrey. Enjoy the music of John William along with "William Tell Overture" by Rossini, and "Light Cavalry Overture" by Von Suppe. 7 - 10 p.m. Adults \$10; seniors and children \$5; Lewis & Clark Community College faculty, staff and students free. Alton Symphony Orchestra, Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Call (618) 792-4002 or visit [altonsymphonyorchestra.org](http://altonsymphonyorchestra.org).

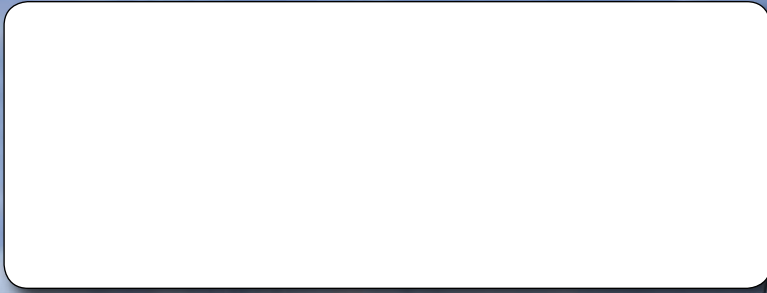


The Port of Grafton Lighthouse stands bright against the shades of winter in Grafton, Ill.



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