

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2020 • VOLUME 72 • ISSUE 2

Energized for the Future

**VANDALIA SUBSTATION BUILDS
RELIABILITY INTO THE GRID**

**KASKASKIA
FUNDRAISER**

**HOLIDAY SHORES
PAYMENT OPTIONS**

**SCHOLARSHIP
DEADLINE
APPROACHES**

SOLAR SEMINAR

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Empty nest.

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!



ON THE COVER

Crews move a 25-ton transformer into place at Southwestern's new Vandalia Substation. See our story on page 10.

On Account: If your account number is 46020001, call us within 30 days to receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill.

CO-OP REMINDERS

February 10

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.

February 14

Southwestern scholarship application deadline.

Pole Position

I've told this tale before, but it bears repeating—particularly since rain and snow have made driving difficult in recent weeks. A few winters ago, I went for an evening run on a Madison County Transit system trail. South of New Douglas, the path offered sweeping views of farmland, and after sunset, headlights moving on snow-slickened roads. Drivers were rightfully cautious—except for one. A pair of headlights gained ground on the others, then surged ahead. He made it a quarter-mile before he found ice, lost the pavement, and ended up in a field.

A moment later, doors slammed. Voices carried. Someone produced a flashlight. They circled the truck, assessing the situation and checking for damage.

The following week found me on the same route. On my way to the trailhead, I passed the field where the truck had come to rest. The marks in the mud had melted, but the signs were still clear. He'd missed a utility pole by about four feet.

I thought of the slamming doors, the voices, the driver and his passenger climbing from their vehicle into the cold, and considered how the scene might have played out had they hit the pole—how they may not have made it home that night.

When you hit a utility pole, the impulse to leave your car and look at the damage when you can't clearly see your surroundings, can kill you. Stay in your car. The collision may have jarred a power line from the pole. Lines that can be difficult to see by day become virtually invisible at night. An energized line may be hanging on or near your car, or charging the ground outside your door. Stepping out of your vehicle could be a fatal mistake.

Stay in your car. Dial emergency services for help. And wait.

It could save your life.

For more winter travel safety tips, see page 16.

Joe Richardson, editor
joe.richardson@sweci.com

525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
Phone: (800) 637-8667. Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Visit us on the Web at www.sweci.com.

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CEO

Bobby Williams Chief Executive Officer

The Southwestern

Joe Richardson Editor
e-mail: joe.richardson@sweci.com
Mike Barns Art Director
e-mail: 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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Southwestern Supports Kaskaskia College Foundation Fundraiser



Southwestern contributed \$1,500 to the Kaskaskia College Foundation’s Winter Gala fundraiser. Pictured are (l-r) Jeff Brown, director of public safety for Kaskaskia College and Winter Gala planning committee member, Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams, and George Evans, president of Kaskaskia College.

Kaskaskia College students will benefit from improved access to the arts and technology this year due in part to funds raised by the Kaskaskia College Foundation’s Second Annual Winter Gala. Held Dec. 7, 2019, at the American Farm Heritage Museum in Greenville, Ill., the event raised more than \$41,000—including a \$1,500 contribution from Southwestern Electric Cooperative.

Proceeds will support the acquisition of new and emerging technologies, physical improvements on campus, and provide additional opportunities for students to explore visual and performing arts.

“A strong regional economy is dependent upon an educated, skilled work force,” said Ann Schwarm, president of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. “Kaskaskia College plays an important role by providing educational opportunities right here at home for young people, those re-entering the work place, and working adults.”

Schwarm said the college also provides local businesses with a pool of skilled potential employees who’ve demonstrated a commitment to working and living in Southwestern Illinois.

“On behalf of Southwestern Electric Cooperative, I want to congratulate the organizers of the Winter Gala, which supports Kaskaskia College and its mission to serve our region,” she said. “We are proud to be partners in progress.”

Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams noted Kaskaskia College has a long tradition of helping students build careers in important, often overlooked fields. “By offering training in healthcare and the trades, KC equips its students with skills vital to our communities,” he said. “Southwestern Electric’s board is pleased to support an event that furthers this mission, and benefits our students and our region.”

In addition to community sponsorships, the Kaskaskia College Foundation’s Winter Gala raised funds through ticket sales, on-site auctions and a raffle.

Since 1965, the Kaskaskia College Foundation has served as a resource for Kaskaskia students raising funds for projects and programs not funded by local, state or federal monies. Funds are administered for the benefit of Kaskaskia College students in cooperation with the college’s board of trustees and administration.

Holiday Shores Payment Location Closing February 12

First National Bank of Staunton is closing their Holiday Shores branch office at 7301 St. James Drive in Edwardsville this month. “Many of our Holiday Shores members are accustomed to paying their bills at that location,” noted Leslie Frandsen, Southwestern Electric’s vice president of billing. The bank won’t accept payments after Feb. 12, Frandsen said. “As an alternative, we’re encouraging those members to use our online billing center or the SWEC IL App to make payments. You’re also welcome to pay over the phone with your credit or debit card, or by eCheck,” she added, noting that the eCheck option is unavailable for Pay-As-You-Go accounts.

Members may also pay by mail, or in person at the cooperative’s St. Jacob office, located at 10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281.

You can find a link to Southwestern’s online billing center at www.sweci.com. The SWEC IL mobile app is available for smart phone and tablet on the App Store and on Google Play. For more on the app, please see page 8.

Members with questions are encouraged to call Southwestern Electric at (800) 637-8667 or send email to billing@sweci.com.



Deloitte asked more than 35,000 consumers from 20 countries their opinions on emerging automotive technologies. According to the 2020 Deloitte Global Automotive Consumer Study, driver interest in alternative engine technology is growing rapidly, with 41 percent of U.S. survey respondents saying they would prefer alternative powertrain technology—hybrid, EV or other—in their next vehicle.

2020 Deloitte Global Automotive Consumer Study



From the CEO

I'm an electrical engineer by trade. We build things to last. But even the most resilient machines wear out or break down in time. During my years in your co-op's engineering department, I spoke to many members who'd lost power due to faults in the electrical lines connecting their home to our distribution system. They understandably believed that if an electrical line was outside their home, it was owned by Southwestern Electric and the co-op would repair it.

That's not always the case.

External electrical components that connect your home to the cooperative's distribution system—the weatherhead, insulator, riser, meter base or loop, and service entrance conductor—are owned by the member. When those elements fail, you find yourself facing unexpected bills. Those repairs can be expensive, and if the problem is related to aging parts and normal wear and tear on the system, your homeowners insurance may not cover the cost. That situation left a lot of our members in a difficult position.

Last year, we found a solution to that problem. We partnered with HomeServe.

HomeServe offers home warranty plans that cover external electric line repairs. Their plan will pay for repair or replacement of member-owned electrical system components when they fail due to normal wear and tear.

Over the last few months, we've spoken with many of you regarding HomeServe. We've helped you decide if a HomeServe warranty was worth considering in your situation. Sometimes the answer was yes. Sometimes no. The answer depends on the age and configuration of your electrical system. If you'd like to know if a HomeServe warranty plan is a good option for you, please call us at (800) 637-8667. We can help you decide if the plan is a worthwhile investment or more likely to be an unnecessary expense in your circumstance.

Keep in mind, HomeServe covers more than outdoor lines. They have warranty plans for just about all of your home's systems, including heating, cooling, plumbing, water and sewer, interior electrical wiring and external electrical lines.

I welcome your questions and comments regarding any aspect of your cooperative. Please email me at bobby.williams@sweci.com.

Thank you for your time and attention. I'll check in with you next month.

Bobby Williams, CEO

bobby.williams@sweci.com

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

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

All rebates will be applied as a bill credit upon receiving the completed rebate application and proof of purchase. Rebate forms are available on our website at sweci.com. You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to julie.lowe@sweci.com, or mail it to: Julie Lowe, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. You're also welcome to drop off your materials at our Greenville office.



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

Low Shares Cogen Information at Enertech University Solar Seminar

As Southwestern Electric Cooperative's energy manager, Julie Lowe has acted as both student and teacher—sometimes in the same day. Lowe actively researches the latest information involving energy efficiency, cogeneration, electric vehicles, and utility-related technology. She acts as a resource for co-op members and Southwestern staff, and serves as a liaison between the cooperative and the region's solar technology installation technicians.

In November, Lowe shared her co-op expertise with more than 20 solar technicians as a guest speaker during a two-day solar technology seminar in Greenville. Hosted by Enertech Global, the workshop attracted industry technicians from throughout Southern Illinois.

"Cogeneration interconnection is relatively new to Southwestern Electric," said Lowe. "We're working hard to let everyone know what it takes to safely and efficiently connect an array to our distribution system. It's important to reach out to us early, and to keep those lines of communication open at every point in the process," Lowe said. "So we were really pleased when Enertech invited us to speak."

During a Nov. 21 seminar session, Lowe explained Southwestern's cogeneration safety and technical standards and answered follow-up questions from the group. "Installation technicians are a vital part of the communication process, and the people I met in November were experts in the field. They asked great questions. What they learned during the workshop, they'll apply," she said.

"Our members will hear important information from us and from their installers. We want those messages to simplify the process, make the steps



Julie Lowe, energy manager, shared key points regarding the cogeneration interconnection process with technicians from throughout Southern Illinois. Lowe's session was part of a two-day solar seminar hosted by Enertech Global, Greenville.

clear, and paint an accurate picture of what our members should expect when everything is complete."

Based in Greenville, Ill., Enertech, Inc., was founded in 1996 by Steve and Karen Smith as a geothermal heat pump distributor. As the energy industry evolved, so did Enertech. Today, Enertech Global focuses on producing innovative geothermal products, accessories and complimentary products—including photovoltaic solar technology.

During the training, Kyle Smith, Enertech solar manager, emphasized the importance of building relationships with utilities. "We want to show the expectations and reality of how dealers can work with utility companies to create consumer expectations on kilowatt hours and savings, review energy consumption before determining solar array sizes, and creating a smooth interconnection process," he said. "What we focus on is more than energy consumption, but about clean energy production. By working together, we can achieve much more for the future of whole home and building electrification."

The company offers installers on-site product delivery, assistance with solar designs and quotes, and training,

including the fall Enertech University solar seminar which featured Lowe as a guest speaker.

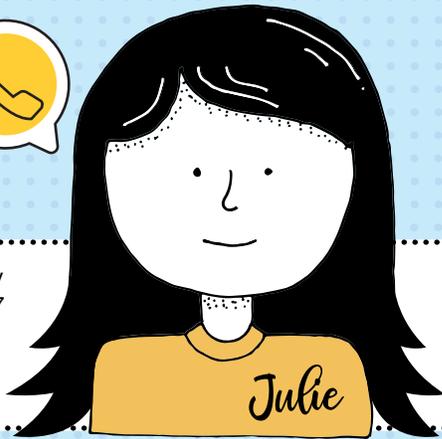
At present, 151 cogeneration systems are connected to Southwestern Electric Cooperative's distribution system—more than double the number of systems commissioned when Lowe was named energy manager in February 2018.

"Before you hire an installer, you want to call us," she said. Lowe can explain the commissioning process and the documentation Southwestern needs to connect an array to the cooperative's distribution system. "We can give you your monthly, daily, and hourly usage data. That's going to help your installer size the system correctly for your needs."

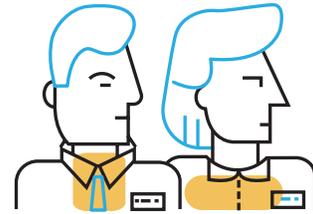
While Southwestern can provide a member with their home's energy data, most questions about a cogeneration system are best answered by an installer. The installation technician can address technical details about the array and questions regarding the return on investment.

For more information on Southwestern Electric Cooperative's cogeneration program, call Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or email her at julie.lowe@sweci.com.

Steps to Solar Commissioning



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



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



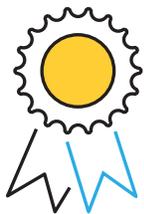
As your installation nears completion, call us. We'll discuss the commissioning timeline. You'll receive a \$500 invoice to cover the installation of your new dual register electric meter, a system inspection, and your array's interconnection to the grid.



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



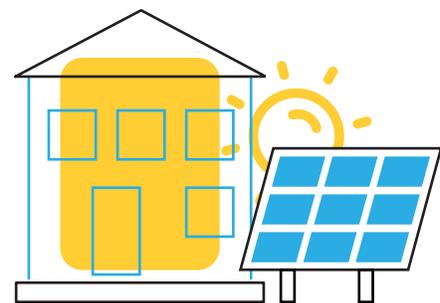
Our commissioning team will visit your site. An engineer will inspect your system to verify it meets our safety specifications. A team member will review a memorandum of understanding with you. You'll sign this document for our files. Note: If you won't be present for commissioning, please schedule a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



We'll send you a certificate of completion, which you'll submit to your installer to receive your solar renewable energy credits, or certificates (SRECs).



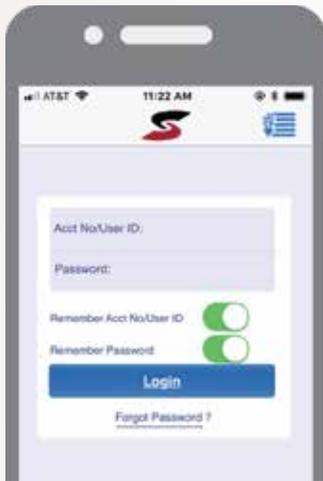
Each year, you'll submit documentation to confirm you've renewed your insurance.



Every three years, we'll visit your system to confirm it's connected properly, well-maintained, and that your safety signs are in place.

Swipe & Type

Report your outage in seconds with the SWEC IL app



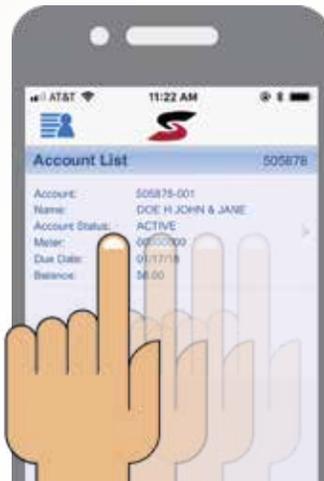
1

Download the app

Download the app free on Google Play™ or from the App Store®. Enter your account number and password.

Don't have a password?

Create one using the My Account tab at sweci.com or call us at (800) 637-8667.

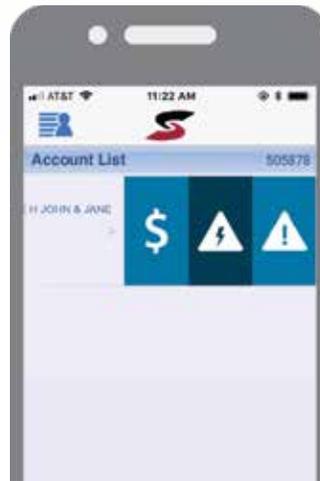


2

Swipe

Swipe your account info

Swiping left across your account information will reveal three icons.

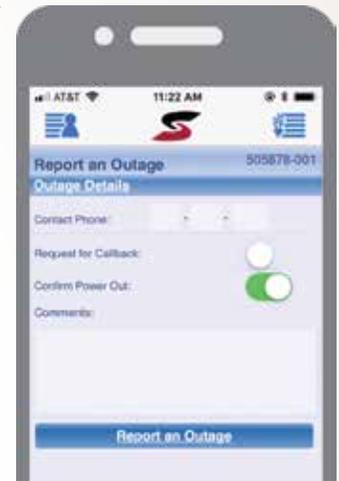


3

Tap

Tap the center icon

Tapping the center icon (the lightning bolt in a triangle) will take you to the outage reporting screen.



4

Type

Tap *Report an Outage*

Make sure the **Confirm Power Out** slider is activated. This is essential—it's how the app identifies your message as an outage report. Then tap **Report an Outage**. And that's it. The app will notify us that your account is without power.

Only Tap *Report an Outage* When You're Ready to Report

When you tap **Report an Outage**, your notification instantly appears in our dispatch center. There's no prompt asking you to confirm your information, and no option to recall the message once you've sent it. The app makes outage reporting fast and easy—which is exactly what you're after when the lights are out.

More Than One Account?

If you have more than one account, the app will present each of your accounts on the Account List screen. When you need to report an outage, swipe left across the account that's without power. If more than one account is affected, repeat the process for each account.

If you'd like our automated system to call you when power is restored, enter your phone number and activate the **Request for Callback** slider. You can send comments by typing them in the Comments area. You'll want to take care of those items before you hit the **Report an Outage** button.

After you've successfully registered your outage, the app will indicate your account is without power.

FINAL REMINDER: SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 14



Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power for Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$256,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award \$10,000 in scholarship money to 10 students in spring 2020 for use in the fall 2020 semester.

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

Scholarship applications may be downloaded from Southwestern Electric's website at sweci.com or picked up at the co-op's office at 525 US Route 40 in Greenville. You may also request an application by calling Susan File at (800) 637-8667.

Separate applications will be provided for high school seniors graduating in 2020 and students who graduated from high school in previous years.

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

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The applicant (or the applicant's parent/legal guardian) must be an active member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Southwestern Electric board members, employees, and their immediate families, are not eligible.
- 2) The applicant must meet all academic requirements for admission to an accredited university, college, or technical school, and be admitted to that institution as a full-time student in the fall of 2020.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, February 14, 2020.

Applications may be downloaded from Southwestern's website at www.sweci.com or picked up from the co-op's office at 525 US Route 40 in Greenville. For more information on the Power for Progress Scholarship Program, please contact Susan File at susan.file@sweci.com or (800) 637-8667.

Energized for the Future

Vandalia Substation improves reliability and reduces outage time for Fayette County members

Construction crews don't hibernate. As wind and snow sweep across Illinois this winter, Southwestern's engineering and operations teams are preparing to shift from planning and development to the execution phase of their second new substation in two years.

Located near the I-270 and I-55/I-70 interchange in Madison County, Maple Grove Substation will ensure power quality and reliability for thousands of Southwestern Electric members. Tactics and technology built into Maple Grove, which is

slated for a spring 2020 groundbreaking, will be informed by experience and insight carried forward from a major milestone of 2019: construction of the Vandalia Substation.

DESIGNED FOR TODAY, POSITIONED FOR TOMORROW

Built north of Fayette County's growing commercial district at the I-70 Vandalia exit, Southwestern's newest substation is a fusion of energy and engineering. Three feeders from the sub provide power to members in and around the commercial



Completed in 2019, Southwestern Electric's Vandalia Substation makes area homes and businesses less vulnerable to service interruptions.

district. The station’s architecture allows for a fourth feeder to accommodate future commercial and residential development. “By having more feeders, we can monitor and manage our system in a more efficient manner,” said Chis Botulinski, Southwestern’s vice president of engineering.

Multiple feeders also contain service interruptions to areas near the fault. When issues occur on one feeder, members served by other circuits are less likely to see related blinks and outages.

One feeder is designed to act as a backup power path for the commercial district. “When the plan comes to fruition, it will provide additional redundancy options for our engineering and operations teams for outage management, load balancing, and overall system operations,” Botulinski said.

EVOLUTION OF EFFICIENCY

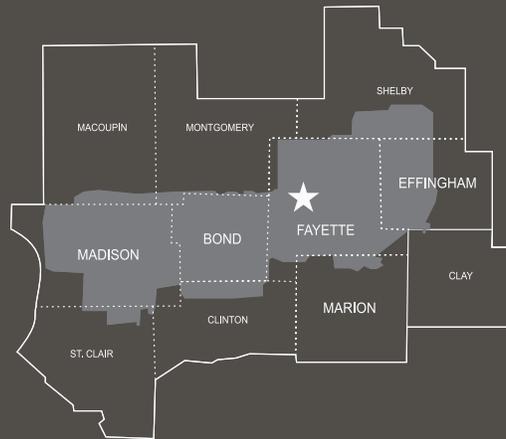
Southwestern operations and engineering personnel incorporated suggestions from co-op crews and advances in industry design into Vandalia Substation’s site plan. “In the early phases of the project, we asked our operations personnel for suggestions based on their work practices and experience. We carried that data with us as we researched advances in materials, design, cost and equipment,” said Botulinski.

“Substation design has evolved in a way that allows us to access and operate the system safely and more efficiently. At Vandalia Substation, when we’re performing operations, maintenance, or investigating issues, we can drive a line vehicle 360 degrees around the substation structure to situate equipment and personnel in the safest, most efficient location.”

To reduce maintenance-related outages, Vandalia Substation was designed with infrastructure akin to a switchboard, allowing linemen to make on-site repairs without interrupting service to members. The substation is also equipped with technology that allows co-op personnel to more effectively identify and respond to

system faults and mechanical issues. Vandalia Sub emails operations and engineering personnel when its protective devices operate.

“Those alerts allow us to quickly ascertain the scope of an event before our operations personnel arrive at the substation,” Botulinski explained. “Additionally, the system logs data that allows engineering personnel to monitor power demands and voltage characteristics, along with many other system parameters, to



“As the co-op evolves, we’ll pursue new projects and technology, but our priority will always be maintaining the system our members own.”

Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams

Feeder: A circuit that carries power from the substation to primary circuits which serve homes and businesses.

Transmission Line: A high voltage line which carries energy from a power plant to a substation.

better understand how our system is performing.”

LOCATION, LOCATION, SUBSTATION

Vandalia Substation was designed and developed to meet the unique power needs of a rural, growing area adjacent to the interstate.

“In anticipation of long-term load growth, and due to a significant load concentration south of I-70 near Walmart, we conceptualized a new substation closer to the load concentration,” Botulinski noted during an interview announcing the project.

“As new commercial development comes to the area, those businesses will find we have most of the infrastructure they need in position, and we’re ready to meet their demands,” he explained. “We’re able to support more load from the Walmart area, as well as other significant residential and commercial developments.”

LESS STRESS, LONGER LIFE

Vandalia Substation assumed roughly half the power demands previously met by Southwestern’s Shafter Substation, located on Highway 185 about five miles northwest of I-70. By reducing daily power demands on Shafter, Vandalia Substation is extending the life of its sister sub.

Vandalia Substation also allows crews to work on Shafter Sub without requiring maintenance-related member outages. “It provides us with operational flexibility,” Botulinski said. “During inclement weather or extreme events that can take one of our substations offline, we have the infrastructure in place to rapidly respond and restore power with minimal effort.”

OUTSIDE THE FENCE

Improvements related to Vandalia Sub weren’t confined to areas inside the substation fence. Southwestern built 1.6 miles of transmission line with an accompanying distribution circuit to connect Vandalia Substation to an Ameren line which energizes the sub.

Continued on next page >

“The line was built along the same path as the previous distribution circuit, with new poles, conductor and pole-top assemblies,” Botulinski said. “It should withstand all but the most severe situations Mother Nature can throw at us.”

To reduce the potential for traffic-related outages, crews removed utility poles at an intersection adjacent to the substation. “By removing the poles in that area, we have safeguarded our distribution system from vehicular interactions that could lead to significant outage and restoral times if one of the poles were damaged,” Botulinski explained.

In addition to removing distribution poles, crews installed an 85-foot-tall, six-ton laminate-wood transmission pole near the substation, clear of the intersection. Fashioned from Southern Yellow Pine, the pole’s composition, shape and taper equip it to accommodate the pull of heavy conductors that link the substation’s A-frame steel structure to Southwestern’s system outside the fence.

TONS OF TECHNOLOGY

At the heart of Vandalia Sub sits a 25-ton transformer built per Southwestern’s specifications to serve the area’s growing power demands. WEG Transformers in Washington, Mo., constructed the massive piece of machinery over 22 weeks. Technicians inspected and tested the transformer and major components at key stages of assembly. Southwestern personnel and WEG technicians performed final, on-site inspections before the transformer was energized. Following final inspections and testing, Southwestern

crews switched members near I-70 from Shafter to Vandalia Substation without interrupting service to members served by either sub.

Vandalia Substation is the latest in a series of system-wide infrastructure improvements carried out by Southwestern’s board of directors and management team in recent years.

“Our Vandalia and Maple Grove substations, and the accompanying improvements we’ve made to our distribution system, will serve our membership for decades,” said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams.

Vandalia Sub alerts operations and engineering personnel when its protective devices operate, allowing crews to evaluate the scope of an event before personnel arrive at the substation.



Scott Wollerman, maintenance foreman, prepares the substation for connection to the grid.

“The substations will improve reliability by helping us balance demands on our system, and reduce the duration of outages by offering our linemen options. With substations at Vandalia and the I-270 and I-55/70 interchange, our crews can reroute power in these areas, and use alternate paths to deliver energy to members during the restoration process.”

Williams said long before the co-op broke ground in Vandalia, when the Southwestern substation projects existed solely on paper and pixel, Vandalia and Maple Grove were envisioned as means to address regional growth, ensure reliability, and minimize outage time for Southwestern members.

“As the co-op evolves, we’ll pursue new projects and technology, but our priority will always be maintaining the system our members own,” Williams said. “Nothing provides a better return on our members’ investment than taking care of the distribution system, so it performs safely and reliably, as it was designed to.

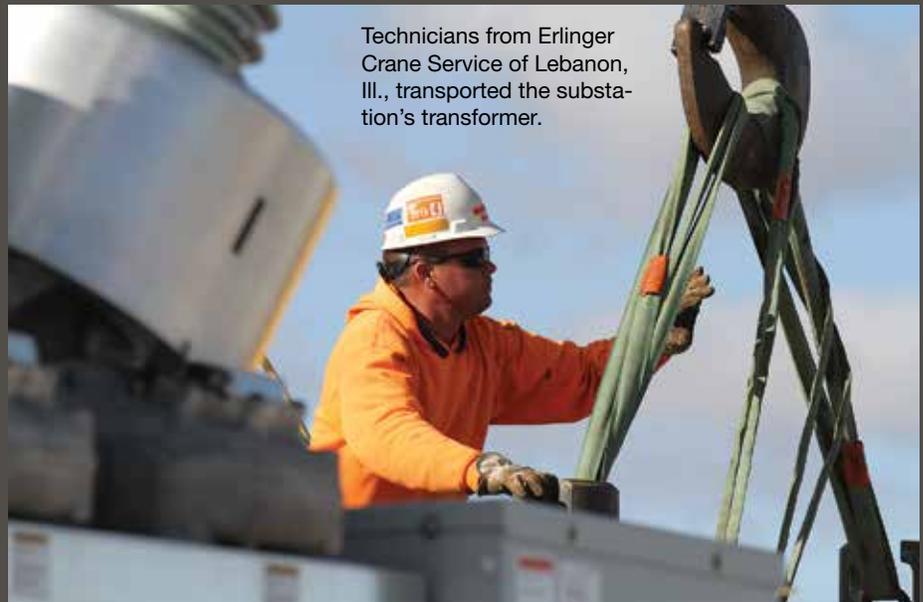
“Substation construction, transmission line upgrades, pole replacements—these are significant projects. But they’re all forms of maintenance. It’s work that ensures safe, reliable power for our members,” Williams said. “Meeting that need is what we’re here to do.” *S*

“Substation design has evolved in a way that allows us to access and operate the system safely and more efficiently.”

Chris Botulinski, vice president of engineering



Scott Fitzgerald, foreman/polyphase meterman & tester, chalks the transformer pad.



Technicians from Erlinger Crane Service of Lebanon, Ill., transported the substation's transformer.



Chris Botulinski, vice president of engineering for Southwestern Electric, directs transportation and construction crews as they lower the substation's 25-ton transformer into position.

ENERGY & EFFICIENCY

THE ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME GAME

**START
HERE**

Resolve to take small measures to reduce energy use and save money.

Read Energy & Efficiency article in *The Southwestern* and apply tips. Move ahead 2.



Home Energy Adventure

Visit www.adventure.touchstoneenergy.com and go on a home energy adventure. Move ahead 3.

Install a high efficiency heat pump. Collect \$300 rebate from Southwestern Electric. Move ahead 5 spaces.

\$300

GAME ON

Home improvements made with energy efficiency in mind can reduce your bills from 10 to 50 percent and yield significant long term savings.

ON THE BOARD

Energy efficiency is an activity for the entire family. While parents are making home improvements and building energy-savvy habits, kids can be conscientious about turning off lights and keeping vents clear of clothes and toys.

IN THE CARDS

Saving money doesn't happen by accident, and it doesn't happen all at once. A series of small home improvements—adding insulation, replacing older appliances with ENERGY STAR compliant machines, and weather-sealing doors and windows—can add up to a dramatic difference in your energy costs.

TRAPS TO AVOID

All home improvements are not created equal. If your home is well insulated, an additional layer of attic insulation probably won't affect your energy bill. Consider the return on investment before you decide which improvements are best for your home and family.

STACK THE DECK

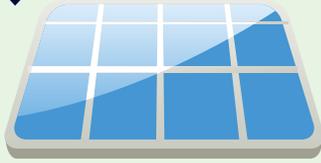
Equip yourself with information. Southwestern Electric Cooperative offers energy savings guides, available by mail, email, or by stopping by our offices. Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com. You'll find energy tips each month in this magazine. Additional energy saving strategies are available at sweci.com, togetherwesave.com and energy.gov.

WHAT'S IN YOUR GAME PLAN?

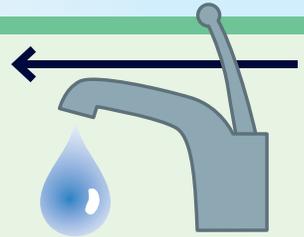
How do you reduce energy use and save money? We want to know! Send us your favorite energy saving tip or tactic. If you can snap a photo that illustrates your point, we'd love to see it. High resolution smartphone photos will work fine.

Send tips and photos to Joe Richardson at joe.richardson@sweci.com, or mail them to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Include your name, address, phone number and email address. We'll select some of our favorites for posting and/or publication in *The Southwestern*.

Call Southwestern for cogeneration information. Move ahead 4 spaces.

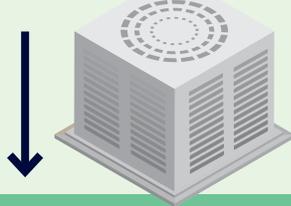


You clean or replace furnace filters, improving heating system efficiency and air quality. Move ahead 2.



Forget to repair leaky faucet. Send gallons of hot water down the drain. Fall back 1 space.

Purchase a heat pump unit sized appropriately for your home with a high **Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER) of 16 or greater**. Move ahead 2.



Caulk and add weatherstripping to windows. Move ahead 2 spaces.



FREE

You request **101 Easy Ways To Save Energy And Money** booklet from Southwestern Electric and apply tips. Advance 3 spaces.



Outdoor dryer exhaust door fails to close properly and vent hose is poorly connected to dryer. Drop back 2 spaces.



Forget to check exhaust or clean lint screen after each load of laundry. Dirty screens and exhaust increase drying time and energy usage. Lose a turn.

Install a smart thermostat. Collect \$50 rebate from Southwestern Electric. Move ahead 3 spaces.

\$50

Inspect crawl space to make sure moisture barrier and insulation is dry and in good condition. Move ahead 2.

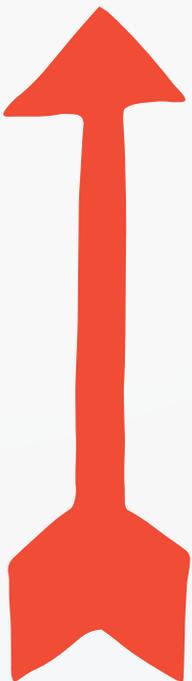


Replace an old, inefficient appliance with new Energy Star appliance. Move ahead 2.

Replace incandescent bulbs with **LEDs**. Move ahead 1.



CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU SAVED ENERGY AND MONEY!



Snow Going

TIPS FOR WINTER TRAVEL

Living in Southwestern Illinois, you learn to cope with ice and snow—especially on the road. When you're driving, you keep your senses tuned to your environment. You work to anticipate the actions of others. And you employ defensive driving techniques.

But planning for safe travel starts before you sit behind the wheel of your car. This list will help you get where you're going safely—whatever the season.



NEVER SKIMP ON SAFETY

During mild weather, being stranded is an inconvenience. In winter it can become life-threatening. Take steps to see that your vehicle is in good operating order. Make sure your maintenance is up to date. Ask your mechanic to check your vehicle's battery, ignition, thermostat, lights, exhaust and heater.

Winter takes a toll on automobiles. Regularly check wipers, tires, lights, and fluid levels (radiator, windshield washer, power steering, oil and brakes) throughout the season. Make sure your brakes and transmission are working properly.

When it comes to wipers and wiper fluid, buy the best you can afford. All products are not created equal, and you'll notice a difference in performance. Never skimp on safety.

PLOT AND PLAN

Before you leave, check the weather along your route. Road reports are available for Illinois' interstate and freeway systems at www.gettingaroundillinois.com and at terminals stationed in Interstate rest areas.

Tell a family member, friend or colleague where you're going and when you expect to get there. When you reach your destination, call in to confirm you've arrived.

If you're venturing through unknown areas, travel during the day. Print and download maps of the areas. And make sure you have proper personal identification, registration and insurance information for your vehicle.

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

SURVIVAL KIT

Equip your car with a winter emergency survival kit. We recommend the following items:

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

VEHICLE OPERATION

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

Go slow. Posted speed limits assume dry, clear conditions. Reduce your speed and add time to your commute.

When you're on the road, wear your seat belt, and be alert for changing weather and deteriorating road conditions. Over a short distance, driving conditions may vary depending on exposure to the sun, shade or pavement materials. Watch for ice and slick spots—especially under bridges, on overpasses and in shaded areas. Be prepared to react.

If the pavement is snow- or ice-covered, start slowly and brake gently. Begin braking early when you come to an intersection. If you start to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you feel your tires regain traction, then straighten your vehicle.

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

STRANDED

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

You'll have to weigh the risk of leaving your vehicle to find help against waiting to be rescued. Stand outside for a couple minutes to get a feel for the air temperature and wind chill before you decide to leave your vehicle. Even a little wind can wick away a lot of body heat, putting you in danger of hypothermia. You can suffer severe complications from exposure after walking a short distance for help. If you're not dressed for the weather, stay in your vehicle.

If you're stranded in a sparsely populated area, it may be a while before help arrives. When you feel cold, move around in the vehicle as much as possible, clap your hands, shake your legs, and stomp your feet. If you're in a vehicle with others, sit close together and cover up with blankets or extra clothing to conserve body heat. Don't permit everyone to sleep at once.

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

If you're stranded on a well-traveled road, wait for assistance from police or other emergency responders. Raise the hood, turn on the dome light and flashers to make your vehicle more noticeable and attach a cloth to the antenna or window indicating you need help. Resist the temptation to accept a ride from a stranger. If someone offers help, ask him or her to notify the police if you don't have a cellular phone or you're stranded in an area with no signal.

« A WALK IN THE WOODS »

The mid-December snowfall shouldn't have caught me by surprise. The forecast had called for a snowy Sunday since the prior Monday. What it hadn't predicted—what I should have expected—was how the snow would transform a routine trail run outside Greenville into a late-autumn adventure.

I've spent time enough on the trails of Patriot's Park that I'm blind to their beauty. The cypress sleeping away winter, the spillway alive with frogs in spring, bluebirds threading through the understory in summer, and the subtly shifting colors of fall are too often lost on me.

This was one more Sunday, one more run, one more walk in the park.

Then came the snow.

The first flakes were small, slow, tentative. They trickled through the hardwoods and vanished when you looked to the sky.

But as the miles and minutes accumulated, so did the snow. Mottled patterns formed in the mud. Footfalls that hissed and whispered in the leaves an hour earlier now crunched, treading powder into ice. The cypress that had rusted cinnamon-red in autumn were frosted now, their knobby knees snow-capped.

The trail broke from the trees. I stepped into winter.

For 10 glorious minutes I ran through bundle-up, day out of school, haul your sled to the hill, stay out 'til you numb your nose, fat flakes smack you in the face, snow.

It brought a bleak winter beauty that softened angles, painted the water, muted sound and color and sky.

I moved through a landscape strange and familiar, pausing now and then to make a photo and marvel at the change. I felt lifted by the transformation, and pained that I'd failed to see the still,

simple beauty of a Midwest woodland until now.

If nature hadn't wiped it away for a while, I'd be taking it for granted still.

This winter, when you find yourself in a familiar field or woodland, see it with eyes that are new. Study the landscape.

Appreciate the trees.

Listen.

Breathe.

And feel.

Then explore that place again at sunrise or sunset—or when it snows. Watch shifting light or snowfall change the landscape into something strange and familiar, comfortable yet new.

You may discover that little park or field in your backyard is a place of infinite wonder, and that beauty lies not only in the land you see, but in the way you see it.

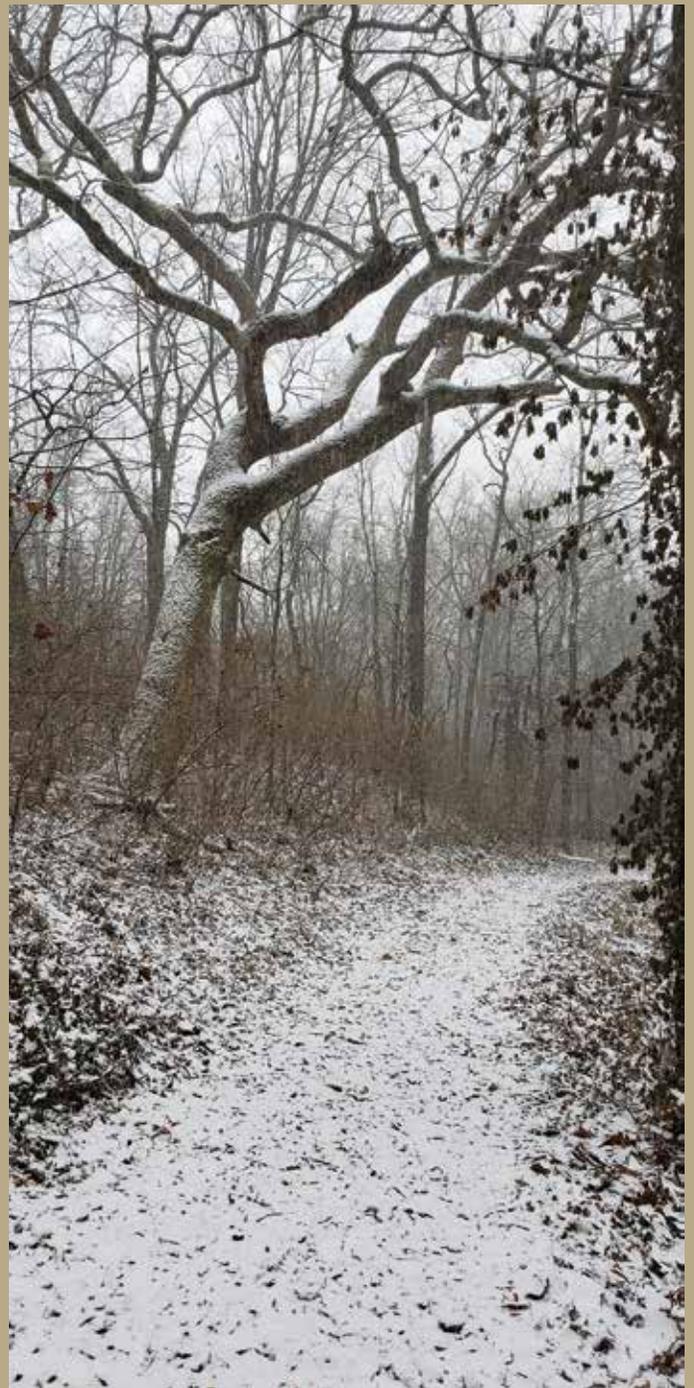


December snowfall transforms the landscape of Patriot's Park in Greenville.



GETTING THERE

Patriot's Park is located at the intersection of Highways 127 and 140, about 1.7 miles west of the Courthouse Square in Greenville.



WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Art is an act of collaboration. Nowhere is this more evident than in Belleville’s Mural Project. Launched late last year, the project offers art on a canvas accessible to all.

“In the spirit of keeping the arts alive and to boost the resurgence in our community, many of the downtown Belleville merchants and residents are looking to interject more public art into our downtown district,” the Belleville Mural Project team posted on its website. “This project will be a collaborative project including the downtown residents, building owners, local artists, the city and Belleville Main Street.”

The project was launched by young local residents who love Belleville and aim to cultivate a “walkable, progressive community with culture, art, history, and diversity,” the site says.

The Community Mural Project intends to make downtown Belleville a destination location, attracting visitors, encouraging foot traffic, and growing commerce for downtown businesses.



These are excellent goals set by talented, determined, creative people. We look forward to seeing the project develop further in 2020.

You can read more about the Community Mural Project at bellevillemuralproject.com. Thanks to Tim Thompson and Bill Malec for sharing information about the project with us. You’ll find this month’s challenge on the next page. We look forward to hearing from you.



This mural is located in downtown Belleville. The artist for this one was Jessica Kopecky. Belleville has commissioned five murals as part of the beautification and reinvention of the downtown. The city is working on getting five more approved for a total of 10. The mural featured was completed on October 11th. If you have not been to downtown Belleville lately, it is worth taking it in and having lunch at one of the great restaurants downtown.

—Tim Thompson, Edwardsville

The “Where Are We?” featured in the January 2020 edition can be found in Belleville, Illinois. The mural pictured can be viewed in all its glory at the corner of East Main Street and North Church Street. It is just one of a planned 10 downtown mural locations included in the Community Mural Project intended to showcase art in this Metro East community. More information on this project can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/bellevillemuralproject/>.

—Bill Malec, O’Fallon

Who-What-Where is a contest that challenges your knowledge of people, places and objects in and around Southwestern Electric Cooperative’s service area. Here’s how it works: Each month, we run a photo. Your job is to tell us who’s pictured, what we’ve photographed, or where we shot the photo. You can email your response to joe.richardson@sweci.com or send it by mail to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include your name, mailing address, and hometown. If you have a story about our photo topic, include that as well—we love these! The puzzle solution—possibly accompanied by a few words from you—will appear in a future issue of *The Southwestern*.



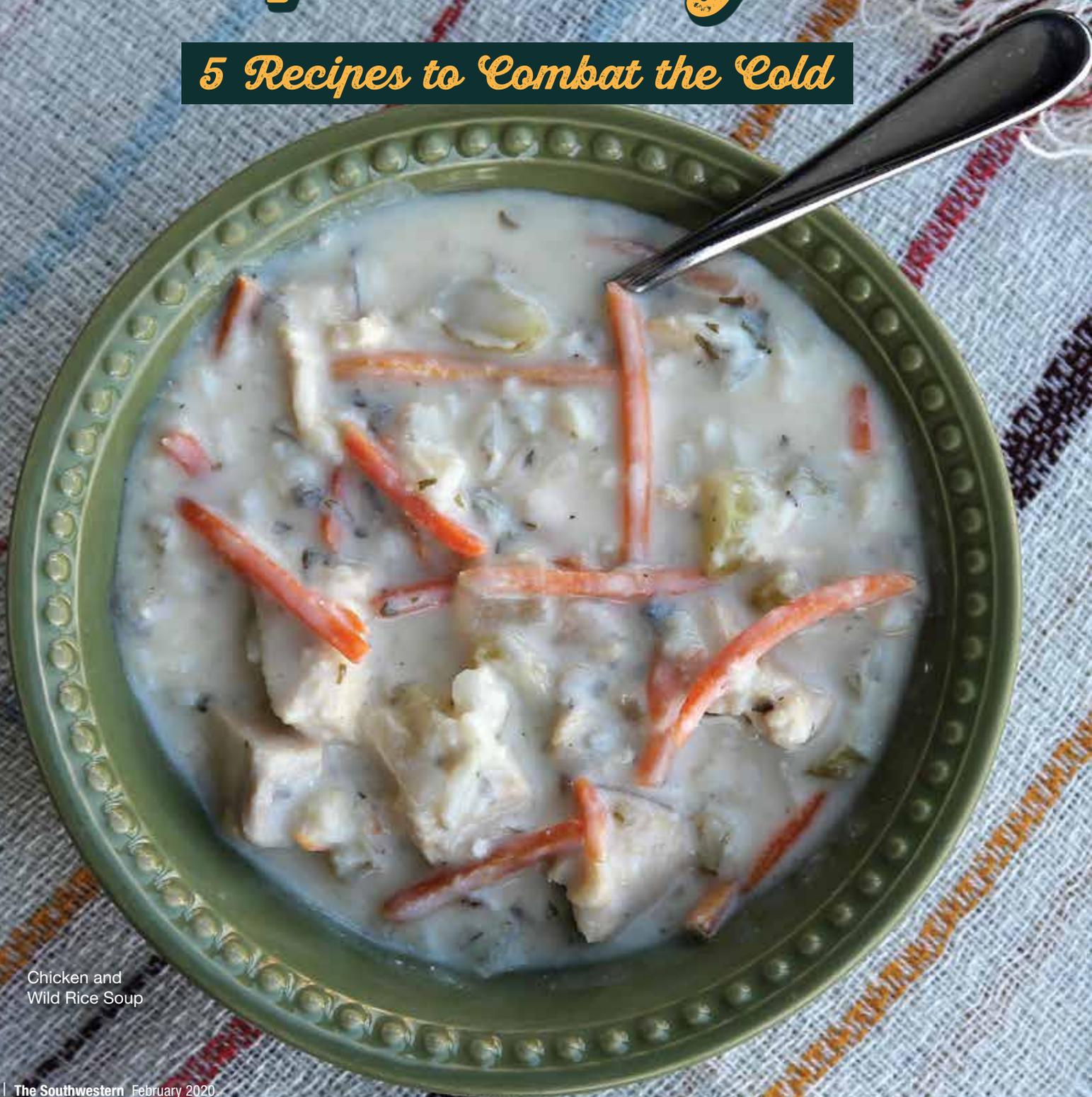
What
am I?



CO-OP KITCHEN

Soup Du Jour

5 Recipes to Combat the Cold



Chicken and
Wild Rice Soup

CHICKEN AND WILD RICE SOUP

Ingredients

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken cut into bite-size pieces
- 1/2 cup wild rice uncooked
- 1 cup celery chopped
- 1 cup onions chopped
- 1 cup carrots shredded
- 3 cans (14.5 ounce each) chicken broth
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 cup whipped cream
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 4 ounces cream cheese softened

Directions

1. Place chicken in crock pot.
2. Add rice, celery, onion, and carrots over the chicken.
3. Add broth, cover, and cook on low for 6-7 hours or high for 3-4 hours.
4. Whisk flour, whipped cream, and soy sauce in bowl until blended.
5. Ladle 1 cup liquid from the crock pot into flour mixture and mix well.
6. Place flour mixture into crock pot and mix well.
7. Cover and cook on high for 20 minutes.
8. Add cream cheese, stir, cover and cook for an additional 10 minutes.
9. Stir well to ensure cream cheese is blended in and serve.

BROCCOLI CHEESE SOUP

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons onion chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- onion salt to taste
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes
- 10 ounces broccoli (fresh or frozen) cooked until soft
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Directions

1. Brown the onion in butter.
2. Add milk, salt, pepper, and onion salt.
3. Blend flour and water well and add to mixture to thicken it.
4. Add bouillon cubes and stir until dissolved.
5. Mix in broccoli and cheese and heat until the cheese is melted.

BACON AND POTATO SOUP

Ingredients

- 10-12 potatoes
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup sour cream
- 8 ounces Velveeta cheese
- 2 cans cream of celery soup
- 1 package real bacon pieces
- 1-2 tablespoons dried parsley
- salt and pepper to taste
- garnishes: bacon pieces, shredded cheese, and green onions (optional)

Directions

1. Peel and cut potatoes into bite-sized pieces.
2. Place potatoes into a large pot, cover with water, and cook until tender.
Do not drain water after potatoes are cooked.
3. Add butter, sour cream, Velveeta cheese, and celery soup.
4. Cook and stir over low heat until cheese is melted.
5. Use a potato masher to break up some of the potato pieces and to thicken soup. It is not necessary to completely mash all potatoes.
6. Stir in bacon pieces, parsley, salt and pepper. Garnish as desired.

SOUTHWESTERN BEAN SOUP

Ingredients

- 4 bacon strips
- 3/4 cup onion chopped
- 3/4 cup celery chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 (16 ounce) can refried beans
- 1/4 cup picante sauce or salsa
- 1 can chicken broth
- shredded cheddar cheese
- tortilla chips

Directions

1. Cook bacon until crisp, crumble and set aside.
2. In the bacon drippings sauté onion and celery.
3. Sprinkle with garlic powder.
4. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
5. Add beans, picante sauce, broth, and bacon. Bring to a boil.
6. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes.
7. Ladle into bowls, top with cheese, and serve with chips.

GOLDEN CARROT SOUP

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 1 small head garlic chopped
- 5 cups water
- 2 1/2 cups carrots sliced
- 1/4 cup rice
- 2 tablespoons chicken bouillon
- salt to taste
- chopped parsley for garnish

Directions

1. Sauté onion and garlic in butter.
2. Add water, carrots, rice, and bouillon.
3. Simmer 25 minutes or until carrots are soft.
4. Purée and stir in salt.
5. Garnish (optional) and serve.

This month's recipes are courtesy of Fayette County Museum *35th Anniversary Cookbook* (broccoli cheese soup) and Greenville Regional Hospital Auxiliary's *Home Town Favorites* cookbook (bacon and potato soup, golden carrot soup, and southwestern bean soup).

CURRENT EVENTS

February 1 & 2, 6-9 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: INHERIT THE WIND, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$20; children 17 years of age and younger \$12. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

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

February 3 & 4, 6-8, 10 & 11, 13, 21, 28; March 6 BALD EAGLE DAYS, Grafton. A site interpreter at Pere Marquette State Park will be present-

ing informative programs about bald eagles this winter. Visitors will learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles, what eagles eat, why they spend winter months in the area and much more. There will be a short video presentation followed by an observational drive to view wintering bald eagles. Dress warmly and have a full tank of gas. Programs will begin at the park's visitor center. 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Reservations are required. Pere Marquette State Park Visitors Center, 13112 Visitor Center Lane. Call (618) 786-3323.

February 4 MOSCOW FESTIVAL BALLET: CINDERELLA, Lebanon. The classic fairy tale comes to life in one of the world's most beloved ballets. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$28; senior \$26; student/child \$10; McKendree University students free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

February 7 "KNOW IT ALL" TRIVIA, Highland. Music, comics, movies, food, commercials, silent auction, and raffles. Prizes for first, second, and third places. Snacks are welcome or Little Caesars Pizza will be available for purchase. Drinks can be purchased at KC Hall bar. No coolers or outside beverages allowed. Check-in begins at 5:30 p.m.; round one starts at 7 p.m. Table of 10 players or less is \$100 donation. Proceeds benefit Friends of Highland Area Scouts. Knights Of Columbus Hall, 12454 Illinois Route 143. For more information or to reserve a table e-mail, Sheryl at sheryl.hess3@hotmail.com or call her at (618) 791-3154.

February 7-9 WOODWORKING SHOW, Collinsville. Show will feature woodworking presentations and tool vendors.

Friday noon - 6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is \$12 online; \$14 at the door; children under 15 years old are free with a paid adult. Active duty military, fire, and police with valid ID are free. Ticket good for all three days of the show. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information, visit thewoodworkingshows.com.

February 9-11 & 14-16 ROCK OF AGES, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the last Sunday showing, which is at 2 p.m. \$12 for adults; \$10 for students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification). Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For reservations, call (618) 526-2866 or visit ccshowcase.com.

February 14 COFFEE CONCERTS: IVAN NUMEROV, Belleville. Russian viola virtuoso Ivan Numerov will amaze you with the beautiful instrument so rarely heard in solo performance. He will play selections from J.S. Bach and Benda. 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. Admissions is \$15 (advance tickets only). Philharmonic Hall 116 North Jackson Street. For tickets, visit bellevillephilharmonic.org.

February 15 CHAMBER MUSIC SERENADE, Belleville. An evening featuring the myriad colors drawn for the orchestra. 7:30 - 10 p.m. Adult: \$20; seniors age 55 and older \$18; military \$18; youth 18 and younger are free. Union United Methodist Church 721 East Main Street. For tickets, visit bellevillephilharmonic.org.

February 15 TOY TRAIN SHOW, Alton. Check out model trail displays, buy, sell and trade from dozens of displays.

10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. Franklin Masonic Lodge, 1513 Washington Avenue. For more information, call Jackie at (618) 372-4465.

February 15 TRIVIA NIGHT, Highland. Doors open at 6 p.m.; contest will begin at 7 p.m. Admission is \$15 per person at tables seating 8 to 10. EvUCC, 2520 Poplar Street. To reserve a table, call (618) 779-3815 or (618) 402-7555

February 15 & 16 HOME, GARDEN AND BUSINESS EXPO, Centralia. Event will feature more than 70 vendors, live DIY demonstrations, door prizes, and concessions. Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is \$2. Centralia Recreation Complex, 115 East 2nd Street. Call (618) 532-6789 or visit centraliachamber.com/expo.

February 21 SUSAN WERNER CONCERT, Lebanon. Versatile Susan Werner composes skillful songs that effortlessly slide between folk, jazz, and pop, delivered with sassy wit and Midwestern charm. 7:30 p.m. Adult \$22; senior \$20; student/child \$10; McKendree University students free. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

February 23 ALTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: THE SHAKESPEAREAN SOUL, Godfrey. Enjoy music from Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, Rossini and Sibelius. Collective music from Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello and The Tempest. Special performances by the Alton Youth Symphony and this season's Marie Stillwell Concerto competition winner. 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

Call to Confirm

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

Submissions

To submit an event for consideration in our calendar, email your event information to joe.richardson@sweci.com, or mail your info to *The Southwestern*, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please use our Current Events format (as seen on these pages) to write your submission. Include a contact number or email and submit your listing at least two months prior to your event.

February 15 & 16 MAS-TERS OF THE SKY, Alton. Come see eagles, falcons, owls and other birds of prey at this educational and informational program. Show times at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. Adults \$5; children 12 years of age and younger \$3; children age 3 and younger are free. Only 10 tickets per person. National Great Rivers Museum, 2 Lock and Dam Way. Call (618) 462-6979 or visit mtrf.org.



students free. Alton Symphony Orchestra, Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. Call (618) 792-4002 or visit altonsymphonyorchestra.org.

February 24 ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Lebanon. St. Louis Symphony Orchestra College Connections Chamber Concert with special guests the USAF Band of Mid-America. Starts at noon. Admission is free. Reservations recommended. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

February 26 THE EMPTY BOWL, Collinsville. Come have lunch and help the hungry. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission is \$10. All proceeds go to Collinsville Food Pantry. Tickets may be purchased the day of the event at Gateway Center. Tickets are available for purchase in advance of the event at the administration office at

Gateway Center during 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information, call Barb at (618)-910-1646.

February 28 SUPERHEROES FOR SUPERAGERS TRIVIA, Edwardsville. Cash prizes for first and second place. 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and audience participation games. Recognition for best costume and best decorated table. Guests may bring food for the table. No outside beverages allowed. Doors open at 6 p.m.; trivia begins at 7 p.m. \$200 per eight person table or \$25 per person. 10 mulligans available for \$10 per table. Free mulligans if team registration is received and paid by February 7. Moose Lodge, 7371 Marine Road. For more information, call Beverly at (618) 656-8092.

February 29; March 28 UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SHUTTLE TOUR, Alton. Alton's 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 Underground Railroad sites on a shuttle tour with J.E. Robinson Tours. The two-hour guided shuttle tours will stop at 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 Piasa Street. For more information, call the Great Rivers and Routes Visitors Bureau at (800) 258-6645.

March 7 GREAT PIANISTS OF THE WORLD: FANYA LIN, Belleville. A native of Taipei, Taiwan, Fanya Lin has delighted worldwide audiences with dazzling and heartfelt performances with orchestras, at festivals, and has garnered top honors at international piano competitions. 7:30 - 10 p.m. Adult \$20; seniors age

55 and older \$18; military \$18; youth 18 and younger are free. Philharmonic Hall 116 North Jackson Street. For tickets, visit bellevillephilharmonic.org.

March 14 FFA ALUMNI DINNER & AUCTION, Edwardsville. In addition to dinner, the event includes live auction, silent auction, and raffles. Proceeds support the Edwardsville High School and Middle School FFA programs enabling members to receive scholarships, attend state and national conventions, and participate in educational contests and awards. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6 p.m. \$25 for adults and \$12.50 for children age 5 to 12. Advanced bidding on specific auction items can be made online by texting the word AUCTION to (210) 321-9710. Moose Lodge, 7371 Marine Road. To order tickets, contact FFA Adviser Jaci Jenkins at jjenkins@ecusd7.org or call (618) 656-7100 Ext. 20680.

March 16 SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS PRESENTS CYMBELINE, Lebanon. One of Shakespeare's final plays - and one of his greatest achievements - Cymbeline is a romantic adventure story on an epic scale. 6:30 p.m. General public \$10; McKendree students, faculty and staff \$5. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. Call (618) 537-6863 or visit thehett.com.

March 20-22, 27-29 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: HOLY LAUGHTER, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Adult \$20; children 17 years of age and younger \$12. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

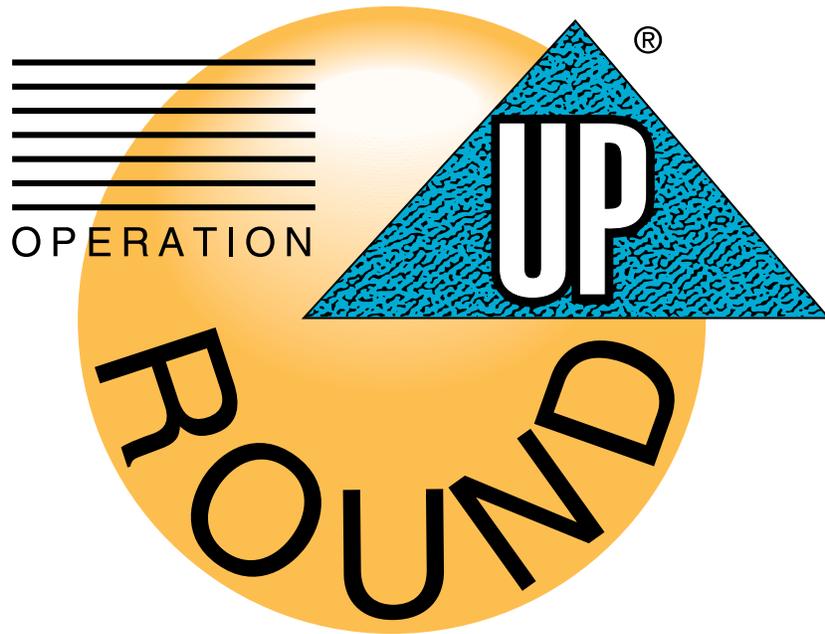
March 22 GREATER ALTON CONCERT ASSOCIATION: Mark Trammell Quartet. Enjoy the music of gospel singer Mark Trammell. 3 - 6 p.m. Adult \$25 in advance and \$30 at

the door; student \$10. Lewis & Clark Community College, Ann Whitney Olin Theatre, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For more information, (618) 468-4222 or visit greateraltonconcertassociation.org.

March 22 SPRING EQUINOX SUNRISE OBSERVANCE, Collinsville. Meet at the Woodhenge reconstruction for an Equinox Sunrise Observance where a talk will be given about the significance of Woodhenge. 6:45 a.m. Woodhenge is located about 1/2 mile west of Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center on Collinsville Road. Call (618) 346-5160 or visit cahokiamounds.org.



March 21 ALTON HALF MARATHON & 5K, Alton. Enjoy the scenic views of the Mississippi River and historic areas of Alton. Route also includes crossing the famed-Clark Bridge. Starts at 8 a.m. \$55 for half marathon; \$20 for 5k. Liberty Bank Alton Amphitheater, 1 Riverfront Drive. E-mail altonhalf@gmail.com or visit altonhalf.com.



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

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

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

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

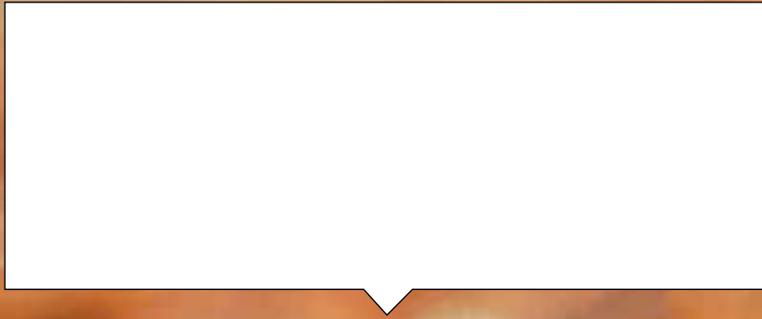
Ready to get started? To join ORU today, just check the enrollment box on your electric bill or online, or contact Southwestern Electric Cooperative at (800) 637-8667. For more information about Operation Round Up, visit sweci.com.



A close-up photograph of a hornet's nest hanging from a bare, snow-dusted tree branch. The nest is a textured, brownish structure, partially covered in a layer of white snow. The background is a soft-focus, greyish-white, suggesting a winter forest setting. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

With the onset of winter, a hornet's nest at Patriot's Park loses its sting.

THE FINAL FRAME



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