

Tips to know when choosing areal Christmas tree, page 16

# ILLINOIS<sup>TM</sup>

## COUNTRY LIVING

December 1999

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Published by  
Association of Illinois  
Electric Cooperatives

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Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of 21 locally owned, not-for-profit Illinois electric cooperatives. More than 160,000 families receive the magazine as part of their electric cooperative membership. Monthly columns and stories provide information about topics and issues that affect the quality of their lives.

Illinois Country Living (USPS number 258-420) is published monthly and is the official publication of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 South Sixth Frontage Road, Springfield, IL 62707. The cost is \$2.40 plus postage per year for members of subscribing cooperatives and \$5 per year for all others. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Illinois, and additional mailing offices.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, Illinois 62708.

**CO-OP MEMBERS:** When requesting an address change, please include the name of your cooperative. Telephone: (217) 529-5561

Advertising and editorial inquiries should be directed to Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, Illinois 62708. National advertising representative: The Weiss Group, 14826 North 54<sup>th</sup> Place, Suite 101, Scottsdale, AZ 85254. (602) 482-8844

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## COVER STORY

### 10 Yule love these Christmas craft ideas!

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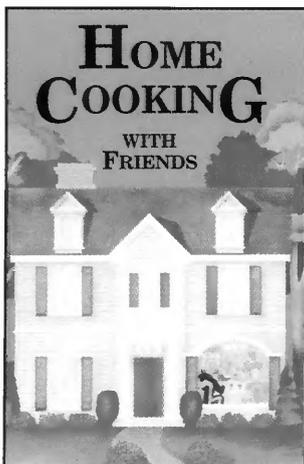
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Sweep your loved-one off for a romantic evening and enjoy Christmas by Candlelight Dinner Theater in Elgin, or bring in your New Year at the Crown Plaza in Springfield.

# Illinois COMMENTARY

## Youth programs make a lifetime of difference

While a student at Winchester High School, I was involved in everything! I was in the senior play, on the student council, in the Prom Court, 4-H Federation president and an officer in the FFA. My parents never forced me to be a participant, but they did encourage and support me. I had chores on the farm and a part-time job. I certainly wouldn't qualify myself as an overachiever, but I was a "doer."



Cyndi Young

I have a very dear friend who was the complete opposite: he took ag classes because his teachers told him he'd need vocational skills to get a job when he graduated. He turned his work in late, if at all. He didn't care or take much pride in his appearance. Kevin and I met in college, so obviously, he did continue his education. He began to care about himself and his appearance, and after completing his bachelor's degree, went on to get his MBA. They told him he couldn't, so he did. I, on the other hand, was voted most likely to succeed. So, who had it the hardest? He, who was pressured to fail, or she who was pressured to succeed?

There were things along the way that Kevin didn't try because he thought them hopeless. I'm sure there were opportunities I missed for fear of failure, but the foundation built by a childhood of involvement gave me the courage to try, and the simple knowledge that not succeeding did not condemn me to a life of failure.

You cannot force a child to be someone or something they are not. But you can offer them opportunities. Have the kindness and the foresight to bet on their future.

My high school English teacher and a friend's father who worked at Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative

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*Cyndi Young is regional farm director for the Brownfield Network. A Farm Broadcaster since 1985, Young has traveled extensively nationally and internationally, covering agricultural news. She was named Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 1997 for her professional accomplishments and devotion to the agriculture industry.*

*The opinions and views of guest commentators are their own and may not represent those of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives or the electric co-ops of Illinois.*

encouraged me to write an essay for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives "Youth to Washington Tour." That award offered me the chance of a lifetime to visit both our state capital and Washington, D.C. That trip further developed the sense of citizenship that had been instilled in me from the time I was a small child.

FFA and 4-H opened doors to me that after 20 years, I continue to walk through! I'll never forget the frightened yet excited ten-year-old girl standing in front of a crowded auditorium with knocking knees and sweaty palms, introducing the next act in the 4-H Share-the-Fun competition. We learned respect for people of other cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds not only through books, but through culinary and people-to-people projects. We gained a stronger sense of community by spending volunteer hours reading to residents and entertaining at the local Nursing Center. We learned to manage our time and our finances by caring for and keeping records on livestock projects.

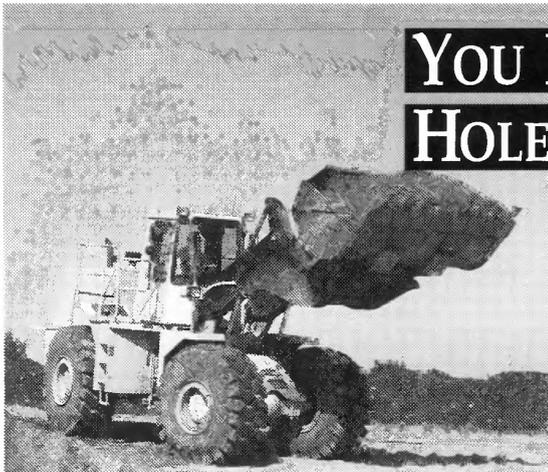
We learned to voice our opinion and to communicate more effectively by judging livestock and giving reasons. We learned to work together with other youth to accomplish a common goal, whether it was building a fire at 4-H camp, or building a picnic table to raise money for FFA. We learned respect for our environment. We learned to recite the FFA Creed, but more importantly, we believed in it. We learned the proper way to fold Old Glory and all the words to "The Star Spangled Banner." We learned about boundaries and rules, and accepted the consequences of breaking those rules. We learned that voting is a privilege and a responsibility.

We learned to work hard and play hard. We learned about balance. We learned to compete fairly and lose gracefully. We learned humility. We developed our character through our experiences: that character which becomes our destiny.

I was blessed with good role models. Both my parents and grandparents were active in volunteer organizations in my community. They influenced many other young people outside of the family.

The greatest influence you can have on a young person is to set a good example. They listen and they learn from your actions much more than they learn from your words.

Youth involvement in 4-H, FFA or any other orga-  
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## YOU NEED A GEOTHERMAL HOLE IN THE GROUND...

## LIKE YOU NEED A HOLE IN THE HEAD.



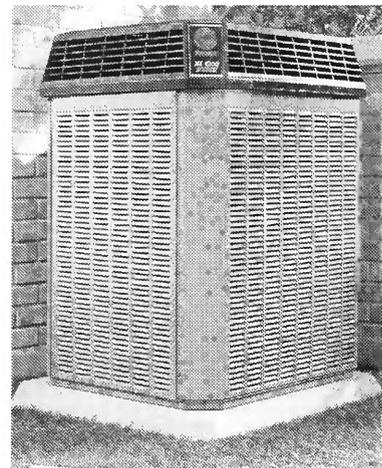
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## Rep. Shimkus defends co-ops

U.S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-20, Collinsville) spoke out in defense of consumer-owned electric co-ops during a recent debate over federal deregulation legislation. Rep. Shimkus asked the other members of the U.S. House of Representative's Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Power to drop amendments that would have increased rates for electric cooperative members. For example, one proposed amendment would have raised the rates electric co-ops pay to federally-owned power marketing authorities. Another amendment attacked the tax status of not-for-profit electric co-ops and another would have limited the ability of electric cooperatives to bring new services to their communities through subsidiaries.

H.R. 2944, the Electricity Competition and Reliability Act, was approved by the subcommittee in late October after more than 30 hearings. While the electric co-ops of Illinois hope that deregulation will benefit rural consumers, there are still some concerns over this national legislation. For example, the legislation limits utility merger review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). It also repeals the Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUHCA). PUHCA was enacted in 1935 to stop market power abuses in the utility industry at a time when only eight holding companies controlled 67 percent of the country's power generation. Co-op leaders are concerned that a concentration of market power by large electric utilities could diminish competition. If Congress repeals PUHCA, new consumer protection measures should be enacted that allow consumers to guard against market power abuses and ensures that consumers are not denied the benefits of competition.

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) will continue to keep the Subcommittee members aware of issues that could impact electric co-op members. The AIEC will also continue to work closely with the Illinois municipal utilities in protecting the interests of consumer-owned utilities in Illinois.

U.S. Rep. Tom Bliley (R-Virginia) has indicated that the full committee will begin work immediately on the legislation and hopes to complete action on the bill by spring.



## COMMENTARY

*continued from page 4*

nization does not guarantee a "charmed life" but it does open doors to opportunity beyond comprehension! I never in my wildest dreams imagined that I would travel with a trade mission to Argentina, Russia, Jordan or Belgium. I never imagined having the opportunity to shake hands with the president of the United States in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, or walk the halls of Congress and be recognized by lawmakers and cabinet members. I never imagined staying up all night editing interviews and writing stories

about the impact of the export market on the farmers in my community.

I have lived through the most wonderful and challenging experiences imaginable, but I've worked hard and lived for weeks on tomato soup and popcorn because the cupboards were bare, knowing that hard work would pay off in the end. My youth experiences set the stage for who and what I would become.

There is no such thing as luck. There is opportunity meeting readiness. Young people in this

## WIU Peace Corps Fellows seek sponsors, returnees

**The Peace Corps Fellows program at Western Illinois University is looking for a few good towns — and a few good people. "We're trying to locate five new sites for January, 2000 postings," says A. Lee Eavy, interim director of the Peace Corps Fellows program, "and we're also beginning the process of recruiting community sponsors for the June, 2000 class of Fellows internships."**

**In addition to towns to provide funding in exchange for economic development help, the program is also looking for returning Illinois Peace Corps veterans to take part in the program.**

**Interested towns and potential Fellows can contact Eavy at Stipes Hall 518, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390. The phone number there is (309) 298-2237; fax is (309) 298-2142. You may also contact them through E-mail at [iira@ccmail.wiu.edu](mailto:iira@ccmail.wiu.edu), and the program has a web page at <http://www.iira.org>.**

country are our finest natural resource, and our future. If we give them the opportunity today, they will be ready tomorrow!

Someone saw something in you once and had the kindness and foresight to bet on your future. That's part of the reason you are where you are today. Why not take the time to give a young person their first break by helping them get involved in something . . . anything. Make a difference. Your efforts could change that kid's future.

## Geothermal heat pumps hit pay dirt

Geothermal heat pumps use the earth's natural energy to provide heating, cooling and hot water. The Department of Energy (DOE) estimates savings of 40 percent for homes that are retrofitted with geothermal heat pumps.

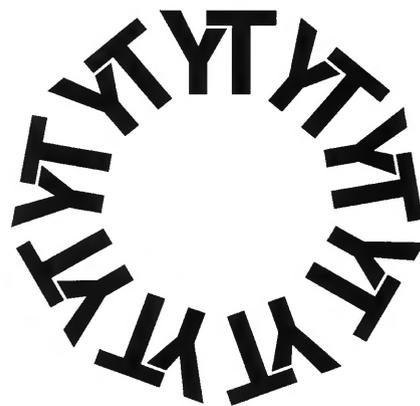
It's a simple idea, just take advantage of the earth's constant ground temperature of around 62 degrees. That stable year 'round temperature makes it easy for a geothermal heat pump to provide comfortable temperatures, stable humidity control, improved indoor air quality and all with a lower monthly energy bill. The Department of Energy also says that geothermal heat pumps create less overall air pollution than any other heating system. And they need less babysitting and fewer repairs.

DOE's Federal Energy Management Program has made geothermal heat pumps a part of the Super Energy Savings Performance Contract program. The technology will play an important role in meeting President Clinton's Executive Order 13123 to reduce energy use and significantly increase the use of renewable energy in federal facilities.

Both air-to-air heat pumps and geothermal heat pumps are taking advantage of new technology. Variable-speed compressors can adjust their output to match the heating and cooling needs. Scroll compressors reduce noise and have higher efficiency ratings at lower temperatures.

Although geothermal heat pumps cost more to install because of the ground loop heat exchanger, they typically pay for themselves in seven years or less. The payback will depend somewhat on the size of your home and the size of your family. If your present air conditioning and heating system is 10 years old or older it is worth considering replacing it with a geothermal heat pump.

To find out more call your local electric cooperative, geothermal heat pump dealer or check out [www.geoexchange.com](http://www.geoexchange.com), [www.waterfurnace.com](http://www.waterfurnace.com), [www.eren.doe.gov/geothermal](http://www.eren.doe.gov/geothermal), or [www.enertechinc.com](http://www.enertechinc.com).



## Where are they now? We are looking for Youth Tour 'alumni'

Since 1957 the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois have sponsored groups of outstanding high school students on an annual trip to Washington, D.C. During these tours, hundreds of students have witnessed the federal government "in action" and met presidents, senators and congressmen.

*Illinois Country Living* magazine is seeking information on past participants of these "Youth to Washington" trips for an upcoming feature in the magazine. The story will highlight some youth tour 'alumni' in a "Where are they now?" format.

If you or someone you know participated in one of these tours, please send a note or card to Linda Comstock, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. In the note, please provide the name of the participant, year of the tour, participants' current address and phone number, name of sponsoring cooperative, basic family information and present occupation.

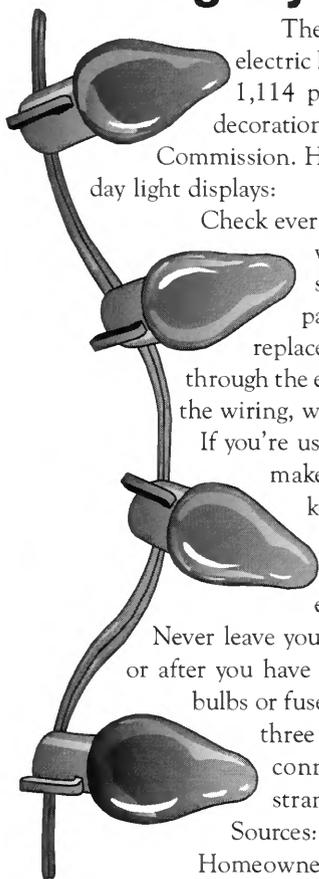
## Light your holiday safely

The holidays are coming! If you enjoy decorating with electric lights, indoors or out, be sure to do it safely. Last year 1,114 people suffered injuries related to electrical holiday decorations, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Here are some tips to help you avoid injury from holiday light displays:

Check every electrical decoration carefully for cracked or frayed wiring and plugs, and loose connections. If a light strand is damaged, don't take chances. Use approved parts from the manufacturer to repair the strand, or replace it. When you put up lights, don't nail or staple through the electrical cords. You could crack the insulation around the wiring, which could lead to shock or electrical fire.

If you're using extension cords with your outdoor decorations, make sure they are rated for outdoor use, and be sure to keep them out of water and snow. Also, check to see that your lights are labeled with a certification from a national testing laboratory or agency. Don't put electric lights on artificial trees with metallic parts. Never leave your decorations lighted while you're away from home or after you have gone to bed. Unplug light strings before replacing bulbs or fuses. As a general rule, don't string together more than three strands of mini-lights with push-in bulbs. If you're connecting strands with screw-in bulbs, the attached strands should have a total of 50 bulbs or fewer.

Sources: National Electrical Safety Foundation; Toady's Homeowner



## Hamilton, Coleman honored as co-op leaders

The electric cooperatives of Illinois make up a small part of the Illinois cooperative family, but their leaders are well represented when awards for excellence are handed out.

This year, two representatives of Illinois electric cooperatives received "Director of the Year" and "Manager of the Year" awards from the Illinois Cooperative Council. They are Archie Hamilton of Ava and James E. "Jim" Coleman of Shelbyville.

Hamilton, a 30-year member of the Board of Directors of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association (EECA), Steeleville, was named "Director of the Year" by the organization. In addition to his duties as a director of EECA, Hamilton also serves on the board of Southern Illinois Power Cooperative in Marion.

He also represents that organization on the board of directors of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Springfield. He was instrumental in the formation of the Egyptian Water Company, an organization dedicated to providing safe, clean water to area rural residents.

Coleman, who has managed Shelby Electric for 10 years,

is a 20-year veteran of the rural electrification program. He began his career at Clay Electric Co-operative in Flora, and rose rapidly through a series of more responsible jobs until being tapped for the managership of Shelby Electric some 10 years ago.

During his tenure as Shelby CEO, Coleman has been innovative in advancing the co-op, and has led it into a wide range of non-electric services and products for members and non members alike. Residents in the rural areas around Shelbyville now have access to propane, satellite television, radio communications, and cellular service due, to a large degree, to Coleman's progressive leadership.

In the interest of promoting rural betterment, Coleman was also involved in the organization and development of Lincoln Prairie Water Co. He also holds several offices in related organizations.

It is thanks to leaders like Hamilton and Coleman that the electric co-ops take home a hefty share of honors when leaders are singled out for recognition.

## Drug dealers have country cousins

It's increasingly obvious that rural areas are not immune to drug problems. For example, meth labs are often found in rural Illinois.

A common ingredient used in making methamphetamine is readily available from many farms and cooperatives and can easily be stolen or illegally purchased. The ingredient is anhydrous ammonia, commonly used as fertilizer. It is also used to produce a highly potent form of speed in one-third the normal time. Rural areas also give the meth labs better places to hide.

Meth has surpassed cocaine and heroin as the drug of choice because of its long lasting high.

Anhydrous ammonia bandits typically transfer their booty from on-farm tanks or farm supply company tanks into 20-pound propane tanks like those used for backyard barbecue grills.

Awareness is one of the best, and at this point perhaps the only, means of prevention. GROWMARK, Inc., headquartered in Bloomington and Fruit Belt FS, Inc. in Vienna worked with local and federal law enforcement personnel to combat the problem. Video surveillance was added. Since the stakeouts began, the vandalism and thefts have stopped.

## Buying an appliance — check out the Web

**Too many major appliance purchases are made without considering the energy-efficiency. Many times paying a little more upfront for an energy efficient model will pay off in lower utility bills for years to come. It's a good investment.**

**To find out more about energy efficient appliance the Internet provides many resources.**

**For example the Department of Energy (DOE) has a helpful Website at [www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/consumer\\_information/](http://www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/consumer_information/). DOE's Appliance Standards Program and the economic and environmental benefits of choosing and using efficient appliances are explained. The yellow EnergyGuide label is explained and a straightforward design makes for easy navigation.**

**Also included at the site is information about typical efficiency and the savings possible under the latest DOE appliance standards, tips for buying, and tips for lowering energy usage suggests practical ways to enhance energy savings during everyday use and maintenance**

**The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DOE maintain a joint Energy Star Web site at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov). It is easy to move through and provides a great detail of information about specific products and energy use. You can search each product by brand, type, or size, or do a search by model number.**

**Trade associations and some major manufacturers also have helpful websites. Check out the following sites:**

**U.S. Department of Energy - [www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/consumer\\_information/](http://www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/consumer_information/)**

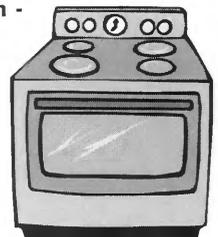
**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Energy Star Program - [www.energystar.gov/](http://www.energystar.gov/)**

**American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy - [www.aceee.org](http://www.aceee.org)**

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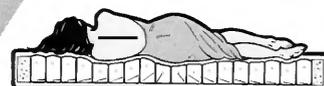
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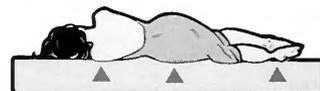
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# Yule love these Christmas craft ideas!

by Jack Halstead

As the Christmas season nears, people all over the world do different things to prepare. In some cultures, people drag in a big Yule log, while others seek out fir trees or mistletoe — or both.

Merchants hustle to display their merchandise in its best light, and put out signs reminding us of just how soon Christmas day will arrive.

Illinoisans are cranking up for the holiday season, too, in a multitude of different ways. Over in Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative's territory, co-op members Richard and Dorothy Shiley are getting ready for the rush at their place between Homer and Sidney.

Their business, Pine Acres Trees & Herbs, features a garden/antique/craft/ herb shop in their 110-year-old remodeled, heated barn, with a "U-cut" Christmas tree lot nearby.

These days, the shop echoes with the happy sounds of families looking for a special gift, and the yard is full of people looking for "that perfect tree" for the holiday season.

While the Shileys are busily getting ready for the Christmas tree harvest, they're also stocking their shop, which is home to many an-

tique, craft and furniture items that might make the ideal gift for someone special. The tree lot will be open for cutters from November 26 through Christmas Eve day. "I hope



*Ann notes that she's crocheted so many ornaments that she can make them in her sleep, now.*

*Ann Taylor likes the old-fashioned Christmas trees, with just plain lights and crocheted snowflake ornaments. She admits that her grandchildren find such trees boring.*

our friends will come out, cut a tree, and enjoy a hot beverage and some popcorn," Richard says.

Dorothy adds, "We're making gift baskets, wreaths, swags, table arrangements and Christmas decorations for sale, and we also make them to order.

"I have a workshop scheduled for Dec. 1," Dorothy says. "We'll teach our audience how to take a variety of fresh greens, ribbons and ornaments and create a two to four foot swag to use indoors or outdoors. The \$20 price includes all the materials needed."

Another workshop, set for December 17, will teach how to create a flower centerpiece for the holiday table. "We'll use fresh flowers, greens, candles and more to create individual masterpieces. The price is the same as for the swag workshop. Both start at 7 p.m."

Richard adds, "We'll have all kinds of plants available, including a good selection of herbs, perennials and annuals and we'll have a nice garden for customers to browse in and get ideas from."

While the Shileys are hosting friends and neighbors at their tree farm and craft shop, Rose Marie Lynn, who lives between Macomb and Bushnell, is finding her days hot and heavy, too.

Although some people would rather be rolling in dough, she's happy rolling it out. She makes Christmas ornaments out of the



*Ann Taylor adjusts an ornament on her tree.*

sticky stuff, and sells them all over the country. Rose Marie is a director of McDonough Telephone Cooperative, and her husband, Steve, is a McDonough Power Cooperative director.

Making Christmas tree ornaments from bread dough is a simple thing. So simple, in fact, that most people never think of it. Rose Marie tells how she got the idea.

"About 15 years ago," she says, "my church group had a cousin of mine come down from Wisconsin and show us how to make these things for a church bazaar. We made a bunch of ornaments and sold them for a couple of dollars each. I was astonished at how well they sold, and we



*Rose Marie's ornaments can be personalized, for those who want something special.*

only did it that one year."

With her church group no longer involved, and with that impressive sales record in mind, she decided to give it a try herself.

"It's a simple process," she says, "and you just make a dough of flour, salt and water, and roll it out like you'd roll out cookie dough. Then you cut the ornament out — using cookie cutters — and decorate it with food coloring. Then you bake it.

"I was impressed because you could use just plain everyday materials that you'd find in nearly any kitchen, and you could bake the things in a regular oven.

"They're really nice," she continues, and they're tough, too." As if



*Rose Marie Lynn enjoys making ornaments out of a simple flour dough. Here, she pops a batch into the oven.*

to prove her point, she bangs one on the side of a table, leaving it completely undamaged. "I've shown them to a lot of people who think they're ceramic," she adds, "but they're not."

It was that simplicity that attracted her to the ornaments at first. She literally started making them on the kitchen table, and baking them in the kitchen oven, and didn't have to shell out a lot of money for special tools or equipment.

She started selling them at craft shows and the like, and was doing quite well. Well enough, in fact, that her business outgrew her kitchen.

"We remodeled an old wash house," she says, "and I moved into it, with a couple of ratty old kitchen ranges I bought at garage sales and places like that. They don't have to be nice, and it doesn't matter if the top burners work or not. All I need is a working oven.

"As time went by," she continues, "I started a mail-order business, and I've had a full-color catalog printed. One of the attractions of these ornaments is that I can personalize them for families, pets and so on."

Soon, she was in a situation that many of us envy mightily. She was

about to outgrow her shop again. They moved the operation into a four-car garage.

The business enables her to earn an income while still having hours that are flexible enough that she can help Steve when he's in a "time crunch" with the family farm operation. And, on the other hand, he can help her when the farming is slack and she's up to her elbows in dough — literally.

"It works out well," she says, "and the operations complement each other very nicely. We have four kids, and they've all helped too, although the oldest three are pretty much out of the picture now.

Son Curt, whom the Lynns refer to as "our second crop," attends high school at Macomb Junior-Senior High School.

With most of the kids gone, Rose Marie has several friends and neighbors who help out, as well as her mother-in-law.

As might be expected, the busy season begins in August, with the really busy season starting in late October and running right into the beginning of December.

While the Shileys are getting their shop ready and Rose Marie is rolling out dough, Ann Taylor of Colchester is busily flexing her crocheting fingers, and is cranking out crocheted Christmas tree ornaments at a great rate. She's a member of McDonough Power Cooperative.

"My mother crocheted for many years," Ann says, "but I didn't. I learned to knit when I was young, but I didn't have any interest at all in crocheting."

Then she realized how much faster crocheting went than knitting, and became a convert. For years, Ann and her husband, Jim, lived in Newton, where he was superinten-



*The Shiley place looks especially pretty with a fresh coat of snow. Their U-cut tree lot is on the other side of the fence.*



*Dorothy Shiley in her shop.*

dent of schools. She crocheted hundreds of snowflake ornaments for their seven-foot trees, bringing them out each year for the enjoyment of their five children. In addition to decorating her trees, she crafted snowflake ornaments for friends and family.

"I tried to sell them one year," she says, "but they didn't sell well at all. Now, I use them to decorate my trees, and give them to friends and relatives."

With the kids grown and gone, the Taylors moved to rural Colchester, and into a smaller house. "I've got the house decorated to look really rustic," Ann says, "and the crocheted ornaments fit in really well. I don't use any other decorations in my trees, and I've crocheted the ornaments for this tree so that all are different, just like real snowflakes."

She notes that she can knock out a fairly simple ornament in a matter of minutes, but that it takes an hour to make a really intricate one.

"I used to use patterns," she says, "and you can find them in just about any needlework book, but now I just do them from memory. I've done so many that I can do them in my sleep, and sometimes do. But if I'm not careful, I'll wind up with five-point, or seven-point flakes, and I'll know it's time to stop. If they don't have six points, they're just not snowflakes as far as I'm concerned."

Ann's style is a little unusual in that she prefers ecru thread for her flakes, as opposed to snow white. "I think it fits in better with my rustic décor," she says.

She notes wryly that her seven grandchildren aren't particularly impressed with her snowflake-covered tree, and find it boring. "They like a lot of sparkle and movement," she remarks, "just like most kids."

Even so, while the idea of having a tree covered entirely with crocheted flakes and white lights and nothing else may seem a bit rustic to many, there's no denying that a few such ornaments might be a nice addition to a more heavily decorated tree. There's nothing wrong with blending the old and the new!

Interested readers can contact the SHILEYS AT PINE ACRES TREES & HERBS, 1157 County Road 2300 E. Sidney, IL 61877. Their phone number is (217) 688-2207. ROSE MARIE LYNN can be reached at 18835 N. 1300<sup>th</sup> Rd., Macomb, IL. Her phone number is (309) 769-5263, and her e-mail address is rml@netins.net. Those interested in discussing crocheted ornaments with ANN TAYLOR can reach her at (309) 776-3881.

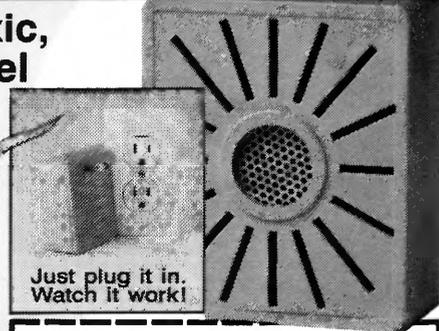
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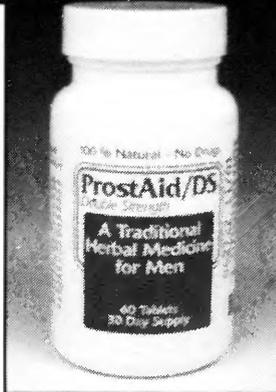
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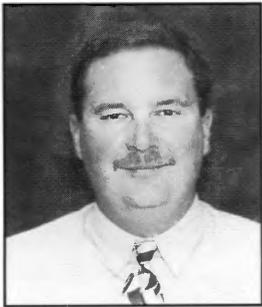
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# Safety

# AROUND YOUR HOME

## Don't get zapped by your generator

Recently, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters have taken their toll on electric systems across the country. Remember the ice storm that devastated this state in 1978? Many of us do. Being without electricity for an extended period of time is a major inconvenience not easily forgotten. Long duration power outages cause many hazards, like flooded basements, inoperable furnaces and spoiled food. In central Illinois, the most common reason for a power outage is a thunderstorm. However, most storms cause temporary problems that your electric cooperative will repair in a short amount of time.



**Doug Drake**

Whether the power outage is long or short, your co-op employees will not stop until your power is restored.

To prepare for long power outages, a commercial business or livestock operation should have a permanent stand-by generator to protect its investment. Today more and more residential customers are considering a portable generator. Unfortunately many people don't realize a generator can pose a serious safety hazard to you, your family and others. Before installing or operating a generator, these hazards should be considered.

Portable generators have capacity limits and most are designed to power selected lights or small tools. They should never be connected directly to a building's wiring. This means before you use a portable generator you must identify your needs. First, decide in advance which appliances you feel are necessary. Then determine how much electricity those items need. The appliance nameplate or owner's manual will list a wattage rating. Add the ratings of your selected items together. A generator should not operate at more than 80 percent of its rated capacity. Also, remember that appliances with motors will need up to ten times their wattage rating to start. Don't un-

dersize the generator. An overloaded generator is a safety hazard and will damage appliances.

The most common problem associated with operating a generator is back feed. Unless your generator is properly connected or disconnected it can energize the cooperative's power lines causing life-threatening hazards which employees and the public are not expecting. Opening the main circuit breaker in your breaker box is not enough to ensure that no one's personal safety or property is at risk. The only way to safely separate the two electric systems is to have a professional electrician install a double-pole, double-throw transfer switch in your home or business.

Additional problems arise from using generators. Fire is always a concern when operating a generator because most generators require the use of gasoline or diesel. The safe storage, use and care of flammables is a necessity. Always locate the generator in a well-ventilated area and never refuel the generator when the engine is hot. Let the engine cool at least ten minutes after shutting down the generator to minimize the danger of fire.

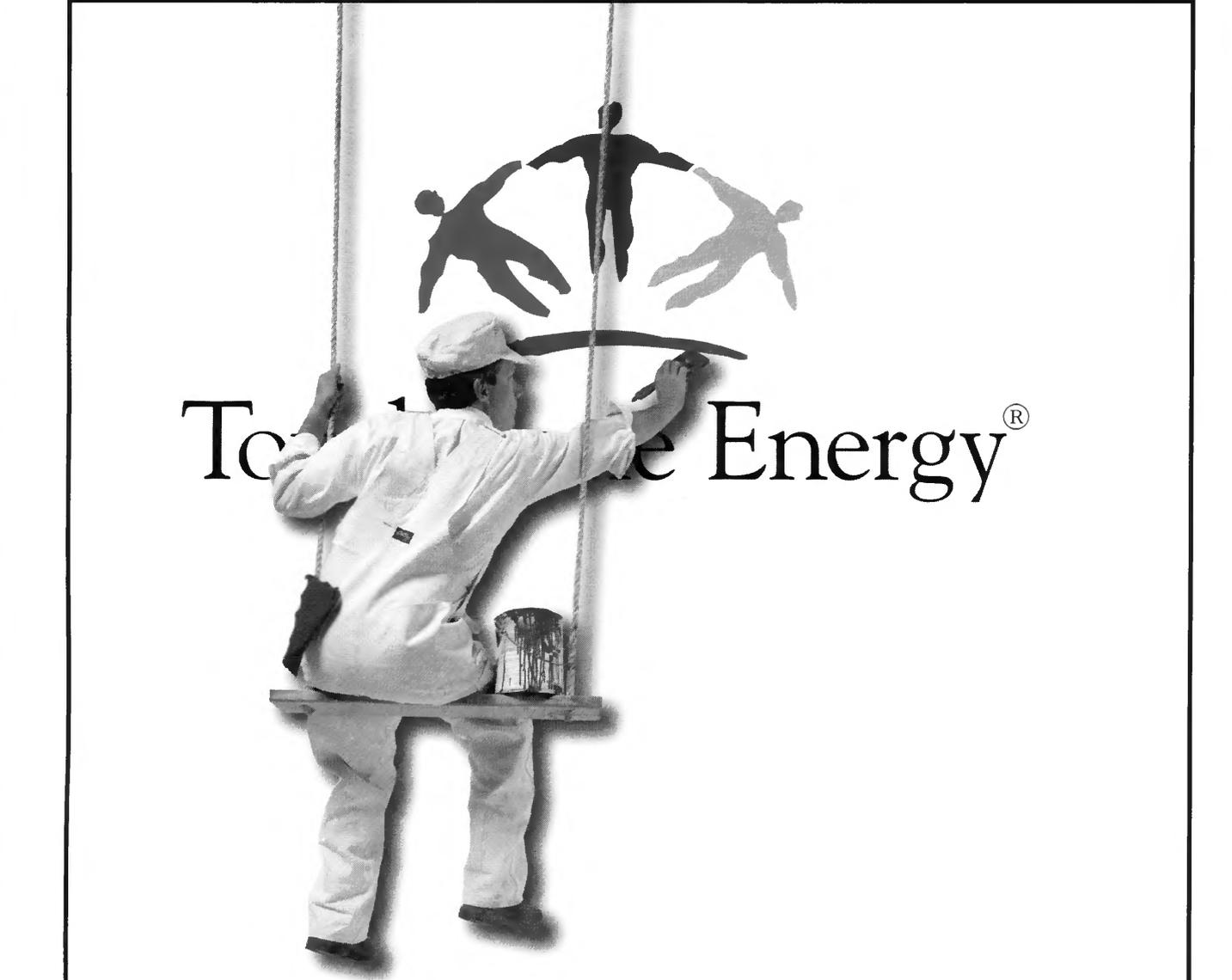
Another fire source is the extension cords used with a portable generator. Cords should be properly sized to carry the load and inspected before each use to identify any break in the insulation or exposed conductors. Never run cords under carpets or rugs where heat may build up and defects will go unnoticed. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher near the generator just in case.

Emergency generators are hot-selling items these days. They can be very beneficial when the proper unit is installed and used safely. The warmth of a furnace or a refreshing drink from a well are luxuries we don't want to be without. Many co-op members are concerned about the reliability of electric service during the computer transition at year's end. I wouldn't recommend purchasing a generator because of the Y2K hype. Your electric cooperative and their power supplier have concentrated valuable time and funds to ensure that quality electrical service will continue uninterrupted into the new millennium.

If you have any questions regarding the safe installation or use of a generator contact your local electric cooperative or the Illinois Electric Council, U of I Agriculture Engineering, 1304 West Pennsylvania Ave., Urbana, IL 61801 - [www.age.uius.edu/iec](http://www.age.uius.edu/iec).

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*Doug Drake is a safety instructor for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. You can write to him in care of Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. Telephone: (217) 529-5561.*



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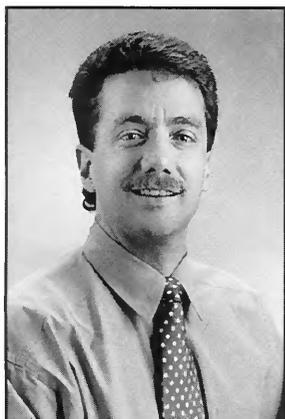
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# Your YARD AND GARDEN

There is still  
something about  
a real  
Christmas tree



David Robson

December is the time for decorations, indoors and out. People hang massive amounts of lights and evergreens all over their houses, each trying to outdo the other. Ribbons and bows are everywhere. Don't you wish you were the one that patented icicle lights?

The center of most holiday decorations is the Christmas tree. I can remember just about all the Christmas trees my family and I have had. Some were tall and narrow. Some were short and squatty and had to be elevated on a wooden box. Most of the ones growing up were blue spruces, cut from the patch on the south side of the house.

The tree I remember best was my Arizona grandparents' aluminum tree with the rotating color light wheel. There weren't any lights on the tree, just ornaments. But when that light turned, the tree and all those colors, it was fascinating to a 10-year-old.

A couple of years ago someone gave me one of those trees with all the original packaging. Finding the light wheel has been a challenge. They are elusive. For some reason, people discarded everything — probably realizing that those trees almost were the epitome of tackiness.

Today, artificial trees look more and more real. One of these days the manufacturers are going to include little bags of fake needles to put under the trees and on top of packages to fool people even more. We already have the artificial evergreen aroma. Still, there's something about a fresh tree that's exciting.

Safety should be the utmost concern on any tree shopper's mind. Steps you take when selecting, transporting and setting up the tree can mean the differ-

ence between a sound sleep and one disturbed by sirens, red lights and smoke.

Concentrate on the needles. They should be green and plentiful.

Next, smell the needles. They should smell like fresh evergreen. Also, understand that if temperatures are well below freezing, you won't get much smell.

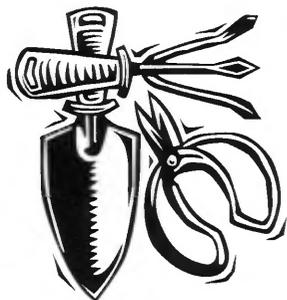
Bend the needles. Fresh trees will be as flexible as a yoga instructor. You can practically tie the needles in knots. Dry trees will just break. However, if the temperature is well below freezing, the needles will also break. Check the thermometer. Grab the tree by the trunk and give it a good shake and bounce the butt end on the ground once or twice. The needles shouldn't cascade off in sheets. You're bound to get a few needles that fall off.

There are many Christmas tree farms where you can select a freshly cut tree, and in some cases, you can cut it yourself and share the joy with the kids.

Wrap the tree tightly when transporting it. The old days of tying the tree to the roof of the car are out, since wind will dry the needles out. Minivans are great for hauling. When you get the tree home, make another inch cut on the butt end. Stick the tree in a pail of warm water for a day or so. That helps the tree start to reabsorb the water.

When the tree is set up, keep water in the basin. The tree will suck up lots of water the first couple of days and then start to absorb less and less. Watch out for cats and dogs who can use the basin as their personal water bowl.

After Christmas, remove the tree as soon as it starts to dry out. Cut the limbs and place on top of perennials and other tender plants for winter protection. Do not burn the trunk in your fireplace. You'll create a huge potential for a chimney fire, which means more sirens, red lights and smoke.



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David Robson is an Extension Educator, Horticulture, at the Springfield Extension Center, University of Illinois Extension. You can write to Robson in care of Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. Telephone: (217) 782-6515. EMail: [robsond@mail.aces.uiuc.edu](mailto:robsond@mail.aces.uiuc.edu)

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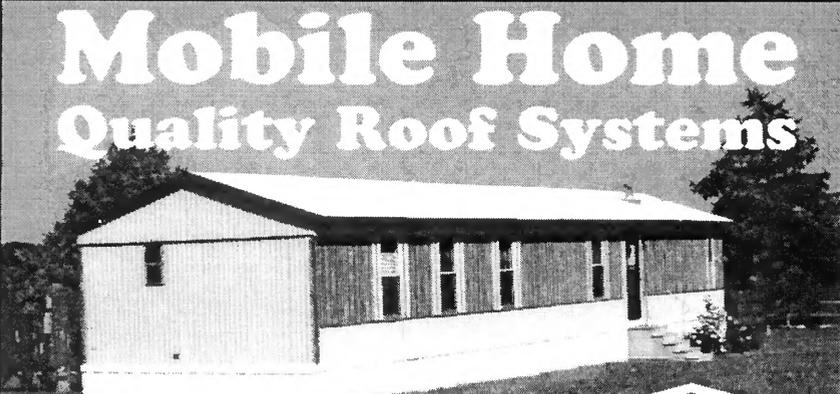
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Today's

# TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

## Improving fireplace efficiency

**Q:** We love to use our fireplace, but the room often gets smoky and our furnace seems to run nonstop. What can we do to make the fireplace heat better without smoke, yet still watch the dancing flames? - Peg D.

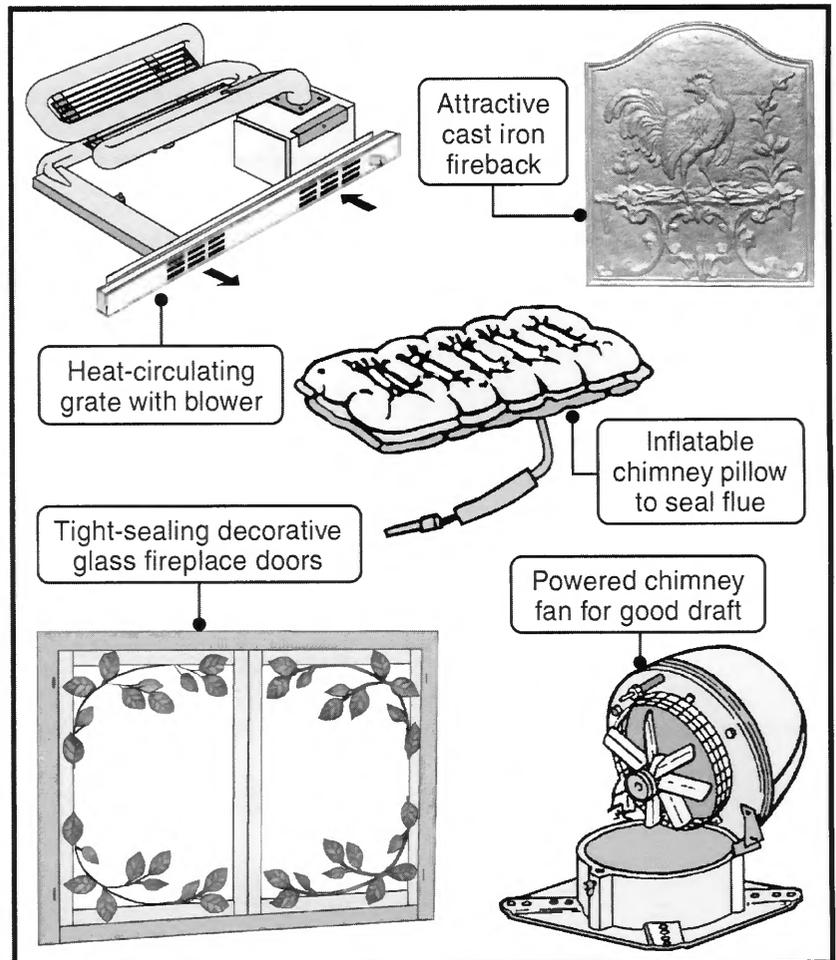
Unfortunately, the typical open hearth wood-burning fireplace is **A:** one of the major energy wasters in any home. You may feel toasty warm in front of a raging fire, but it literally sucks the heated air out of the rest of your house. This is why your furnace runs so much while there is a fire.

Fortunately, there are several simple do-it-yourself fireplace improvements to increase overall heat output and eliminate the smoke. These can make it an overall heat producer that can cut your utility bills. Efficiency improvements can also enhance the appearance of your fireplace and can make it a real focal point of the room. Some new glass doors have 24-karat gold plated trim.

The four best fireplace improvements are 1) an add-on heat circulating grate, 2) special fireplace glass doors, 3) a heat radiating fireback and 4) a chimney sealing device (when the fire is out). People often don't realize that there also is a great energy loss (room air up the flue) when there is no fire burning.

A heat circulating grate is designed to extract heat from the flames and transfer it into your home. These add-on grates have a small, quiet built-in blower (only 24 dB) that draws in cool room air. The air inlet is on one side and the heated air outlet is on the other side.

As the cool room air circulates through the mul-



Methods to improve fireplace comfort, efficiency

tle-pass tubular grate, it picks up heat and blows out into the room. The blower motor is located on the cool air inlet side so the air inside the tubular grate is under pressure. If there ever is a small leak, smoke will not get mixed in.

You can buy standard sizes or have a grate custom fitted to your fireplace. The entire unit is hidden inside the fireplace. A shallow (less than 1.5 inches high) air inlet/outlet grille is all that is exposed under the fireplace doors.

Depending on the size of your fireplace, the heat output can be as high as 40,000 Btu. Since this is continuous heat while the fire is burning, it can easily heat several rooms without your furnace ever coming on. It is often a good idea to switch your furnace blower on, to circulate this hot air throughout your home.

---

James Dulley is a mechanical engineer who writes on a wide variety of energy and utility topics. His column appears in a large number of daily newspapers.

Copyright 1999 James Dulley

For the best comfort and control, select a grate model that has a built-in thermostat and a variable-speed blower. This allows you to control heat output and sound level. For a decorative look, select one with an add-on satin brass or antique copper grille.

Tight-fitting glass fireplace doors are a must. Look for ones with special high-temperature silicon gaskets and strong latches to create an excellent seal. Some, like Wilkening Fireplaces, use cam latches that will stay closed even if large logs accidentally roll off the grate against the doors.

If you are like me and enjoy poking at the logs, select new doors with easy-to-open graphite impregnated or teflon screen slide rods. They are easy to open and close. Full-view doors eliminate the center frame section so the view is not obstructed.

A fireback is an age-old technique used often in Europe. A heavy cast-iron plate, often with decorative patterns, is set up in the back of the fireplace. This fireback gets hot and radiates more warmth out into your room.

Most fireplace dampers do not seal well and lose room air year-round when there is no fire. Try using a low-cost inflatable chimney pillow. Whenever there is no fire and the damper area is cool, push the clear plastic pillow up into the chimney. It has a long hose with a clip. Blow it up so it expands and seals off the chimney.



To reduce smoke in your room, make sure you are burning seasoned firewood. Installing a chimney fan/screen unit on top of the chimney will help. Most models have adjustable speeds to fine tune the draft. You can install one in about 30 minutes.

Always keep a window opened slightly in the room to provide make-up air when a fire is burning and especially if the chimney fan is running. You must be careful not

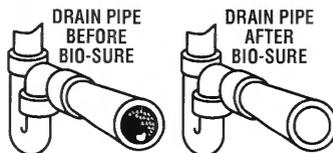
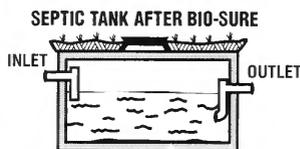
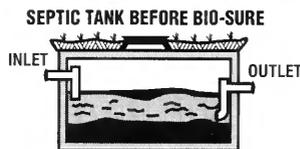
to cause your furnace or water heater flue to backdraft.

Write for (or instantly download - [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com)) Update Bulletin No. 424 - buyer's guide of 15 manufacturers of heat-circulating grates, glass doors, firebacks, chimney pillows and chimney damper/draft fans. Please include \$3.00 and a business-size SASE. Mail to: Jim Dulley, Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708.

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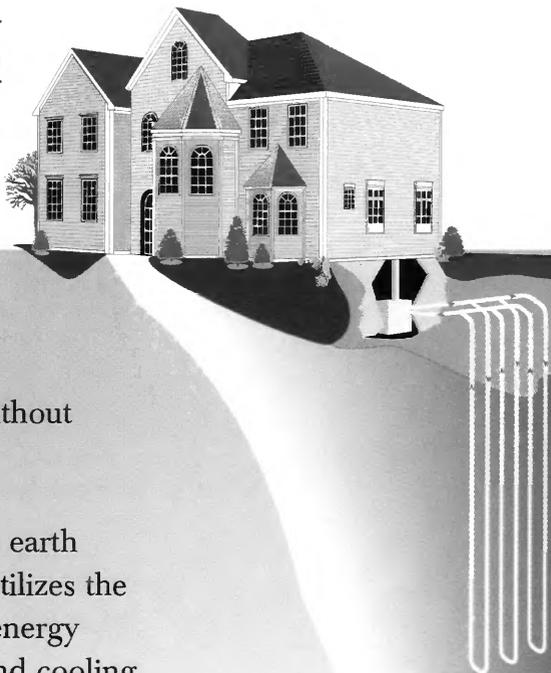
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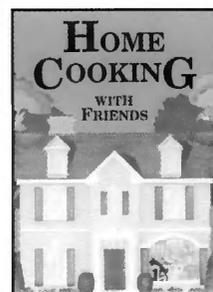


*'Tis the season*

Our thoughts are centering on holiday entertaining and gift giving. Why not consider some of our featured cookbooks for gift giving or for yourself as you plan your holiday entertaining? We showcase some of the cookbooks we featured this past year. Place your order with these shown or from past issues of the magazine.

## Friends of the Palestine Library

Friends of the Palestine Library's 1997 cookbook has 133 pages of recipes and helpful hints. Purchase the cookbook from Palestine Public Library, Attention: Sue, 116 South Main Street, Palestine, IL 62451. The cost is \$8 for one or \$7.50 for each additional with \$2 each for shipping.



### WASSAIL Betty Griffith

2 qt. natural apple cider	1 stick cinnamon
2 C. orange juice	4 T. honey
1 C. lemon juice	1 medium orange
1 orange peel, sliced thin	cloves
1 lemon peel, sliced thin	

Combine apple cider, juices, orange and lemon peel, cinnamon stick and honey in a large pot. Simmer for 10 minutes. Punch holes in the orange and poke cloves in each hole. Let orange float in hot wassail.



### CORNISH HENS Mary Swartz

3/4 C. chopped onion	3 T. honey
3/4 C. chopped celery	2 T. lemon juice
1/2 C. butter or margarine	3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
3 C. cooked rice	1/2 tsp. salt
3/4 C. raisins	1/8 tsp. pepper
1/3 C. chopped walnuts	6 Cornish hens (20 oz. each)

In a skillet, saute onion and celery in 3 T. butter until tender; remove from heat. Add rice, raisins, walnuts, honey, lemon juice, cinnamon, salt and pepper; mix well. Stuff hens. Place on a rack in a large shallow baking dish. Soften remaining butter; rub over skins. Bake, uncovered at 375° for one hour or until the juice runs clear.

## Jasper County HEA, Newton

Jasper County HEA's cookbook has past and new recipes from 1996-97 members. It has 323 pages. Order from Evelyn Holsapple, c/o Jasper County Extension, P.O. Box 31, Newton, IL 62448. The cost of the cookbook is \$12 which includes postage.



### ENGLISH PEA CASSEROLE Selma Milliman

1 stick margarine	2 cans drained English peas (can use regular size peas)
1 C. celery	1 small can water chestnuts, finely cut
1 C. onion	1 small jar pimento
1 C. bell pepper	
1 can cream of mushroom soup	

Melt margarine, add chopped fine: celery, onion and pepper. Add English peas, water chestnuts, pimento and cream of mushroom soup. Mix well and put in casserole dish. Cover top with buttered bread crumbs. Bake at 350° until bubbly and bread crumbs are brown. (May double recipe by doubling peas and mushroom soup to other ingredients. This casserole freezes well. Add the bread crumbs just before baking).

### SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE Norma Ferguson

3 C. cooked sweet potatoes, mashed	1/2 C. butter or margarine
2 eggs, beaten slightly	1 C. white sugar
	1 tsp. vanilla

Mix all ingredients well and put into buttered casserole dish.

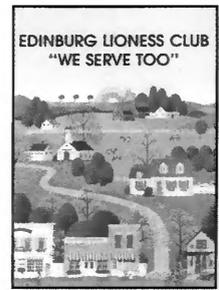
#### Topping:

1/3 C. flour	1/2 C. chopped pecans
1/2 C. butter or margarine	

Mix well and sprinkle over casserole. Bake 30 minutes at 350°.

## Edinburg Lioness Club

The Edinburg Lioness Club's cookbook has 122 pages of recipes and helpful hints. The cookbook can be purchased from Treva Sample, 111 E. Harrison, Edinburg, IL 62531. The cost of the cookbook is \$7 plus \$1 postage.



### SHRIMP LOUIS DIP

Barb Payne

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 C. Hellmann's Light reduced calorie mayo | 1 T. prepared horseradish          |
| 1 C. sour cream                            | 1/4 tsp. salt                      |
| 1/3 C. finely chopped green pepper         | 1/8 tsp. freshly ground pepper     |
| 1/4 C. chili sauce                         | 2 C. finely chopped, cooked shrimp |

Stir all ingredients until well mixed. Cover; chill. Makes 3 cups.

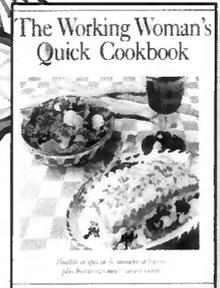
### TROPICAL PUNCH

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 (46 oz.) red Hawaiian Fruit Punch       | 1 (6 oz.) can frozen orange juice concentrate |
| 1 (6 oz.) can frozen lemonade concentrate | 3 1/2 C. chilled ginger ale                   |

Combine all ingredients except the ginger ale. Pour over ice ring in punch bowl. Resting bottle on rim of punch bowl, carefully pour in the ginger ale.

## American Business Women's Association

The American Business Women's Association's cookbook is nationally created. It is a three-ring-binder and has 229 pages of quick, healthy and taste-tested recipes. Order yours from Gwen Husek, RR 3 Box 431, Bloomington, IL 61704. The cost of the cookbook is \$15.95 which includes shipping.



### FAT-FREE TRIFLE

Vickie Chunn

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 C. skim milk  | 1 (16 oz.) pkg. each individually frozen strawberries and blackberries |
| 2 (3 oz.) pkg. sugar-free vanilla instant pudding mix | 1 (10 oz.) pkg. individually frozen raspberries                        |
| 1 (12 oz.) angel food cake                            |  |
| 4 oz. light whipped topping                           |  |

Process the milk and pudding mix in a blender until mixed. Break the cake into large bite-sized pieces. Reserve one strawberry for garnish. Layer 1/3 of the cake pieces and 1/3 of the pudding in a 9x13-inch dish. Add the strawberries. Add layers of half the remaining cake and half the pudding. Add the raspberries. Layer the remaining cake, pudding and the blackberries in the dish. Top the layers with whipped topping. Garnish with the reserved strawberry. Chill in the refrigerator for 8 to 10 hours. The berries will thaw slowly while the trifle flavors meld. 15 servings.

### PUMPKIN ICE CREAM DESSERT

Sue Alberti

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1-1/2 C. graham cracker crumbs  | 1/2 C. packed brown sugar         |
| 1/4 C. melted butter            | 1/2 tsp. salt                     |
| 1/4 C. sugar                    | 1 tsp. cinnamon                   |
| 1/2 C. chopped pecans           | 1/4 tsp. ginger                   |
| 1 1/2 C. mashed, cooked pumpkin | 1/8 tsp. cloves                   |
|                                 | 1 qt. vanilla ice cream, softened |

Preheat the oven to 375°. Combine the graham cracker crumbs, butter, sugar and pecans in a bowl; mix well. Press the mixture

### FAMOUS STORE CAKE

Fran Dillard

#### Bottom layer:

- |                                 |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 box German chocolate cake mix | 1/2 C. chopped nuts |
| 2 eggs                          | 1/4 C. oil          |

Mix by hand. Spread in bottom of 9x13-inch pan.

#### Top layer:

- |                               |                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 (8 oz.) cream cheese        | 2 eggs              |
| 1 lb. box confectioners sugar | 1/2 C. chopped nuts |

Mix ingredients using mixer until smooth. Pour evenly over cake. Bake in 325° oven for about 1 hour or until top looks like meringue.

This is a correction from the November issue.

### CRUNCHY PEACH COBLER

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pastry for double pie crust | 1/4 C. sugar              |
| 5 C. sliced peaches         | 1/8 tsp. salt             |
| 1 C. sugar                  | 1/2 tsp. almond flavoring |
| 1/4 C. water                | butter                    |
| 3 T. flour                  |                           |

Roll half of the pastry very thin and line a 2" deep baking dish. Roll and cut the other half into strips. Bake half the strips on a cookie sheet in a 375° oven until brown. Put fruit, 1 C. sugar and water in a saucepan; cook until fruit is soft. Mix flour, sugar, and salt; add to fruit. Cook, stirring until slightly thick. Stir in flavoring and cooked pastry strips (crumbled). Spoon in the crust-lined dish, dot with butter, and cover with uncooked strips. Bake at 400° until brown. Serves 8.

over the bottom and up the sides of a 9x13-inch baking dish. Bake for 8 minutes. Combine the pumpkin, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger and cloves in a bowl; mix well. Fold in the ice cream. Spoon over the baked crust. Cover and freeze until 20 minutes before serving time. Soften in the refrigerator for 20 minutes. Cut into serving squares. 16 servings.

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- All ads must be in one paragraph form. No centered copy. Maximum of four all-capital words per ad.
- **Check/cash/money order payable to Illinois Country Living and member's address label must accompany order.**
- Please type or print your ad neatly. You may use a

separate sheet if needed. Include your name, address and phone number. I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_ electric cooperative.

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CIVIL WAR ITEMS WANTED. Teacher-collector paying cash for uniforms, guns, knives, photos, flags, instruments or other war-related items. Also buying old Colt and Winchester guns. (309) 365-8131.

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COMMERCIAL SITE FOR SALE: Two-plus with high visibility, zoned B-2 on Main Street in Anna, IL with traffic count of over 17,000 per Illinois Dept. of Transportation. Call Mary Nash-Swink at Century 21 Gold Star Realtors at (800) 455-2121 for more information on 124566.

ATTN: CISTERN & WELL OWNERS. Gauge mounts in your home show how much water you have. Hellborn Innoventions, 8036 Blinds Hollow Road, Sparta, IL 62286. (888) 333-7194.

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**1-11, 1800s Christmas in Sweden** in Bishop Hill. Discover the little-known Christmas customs and rituals practiced in nineteenth century Sweden. (217) 782-4836.

**1-5, Festival of Trees** in Bloomington. More than 100 decorated trees, wreaths and centerpieces. Entertainment and special events. All proceeds benefit The Baby Fold, a child welfare agency in Normal. (309) 452-1170.

**2-4, Holiday Craft Sale** at the SIU Student Center Craft Shop in Carbondale. This annual holiday craft sale features more than 75 crafters with offerings of holiday decorations, gifts and unique items. (800) 526-1500.

**3-5, Christmastown USA** in Carlyle. A gala of events to welcome the Christmas Season, featuring a cookie walk, Santa's secret shop, a parade, a Christmas tree display, an art exhibit, candlelight home tours, tree lighting plus beautifully decorated stores for your Christmas shopping. (618) 594-4015.

**3-5/10-12, "Christmas Joy"** at the Clinton County Showcase in Breese. Times vary. (618) 526-2866.

**3-4, DuQuoin Christmas Stroll**, Downtown DuQuoin. This event features a Festival of Trees, Santa's arrival, a viewing of beautifully

decorated streets and homes, children's events, open house tours of decorated homes and many other attractions. (800) 455-9570.

**3-12, "What the Butler Saw"** at the SIU McLeod Theater in Carbondale. In this farcical romp, set in a psychiatric hospital, Dr. Prentice and his wife are carrying on behind each other's back. Before their indiscretions are discovered, we witness a series of hilarious disguises, deceptions and discoveries. (800) 526-1500.

**3-5 /10-12 /17-19, Holiday Magic** at the Brookfield Zoo. Experience the magic of the holiday season with celebrity storytellers, decorated trees, music, Santa and thousands of twinkling lights. (708) 481-0263.

**3-4, Christmas by Candlelight Dinner Theater** in Elgin. (847) 695-2500.

**4, Lights Fantastic Parade**, Downtown Carbondale. Illinois Avenue to Town Square; this annual lighted parade includes floats and marching bands from all over Southern Illinois, storefront artwork and special lighted displays, a gingerbread house contest and lighted static displays through the entire month of December. (800) 526-1500.

**4, Mistletoe Ball** at Turner Hall in Galena. (815) 777-9129.

**4, Old-Fashioned Christmas on the Square and House Walk** in Oakland. Events include "Trees and Sweets," featuring 50 decorated trees, as well as homemade goodies for sale; a Christmas Bazaar, a gingerbread house contest, pioneer reenactors and home tours. (217) 346-2653 or (217) 346-2282.

**4, Holiday House Tour** in Lebanon. Tour several distinctive homes decorated for the season. (618) 537-8420.

**4, The Main Street Christmas Festival** in O'Fallon. Start the festivities with the 10 a.m. Jingle Bell Rock-N-Run followed by a chili-fest cook off, live music, waitress/waiter races, hot pepper eating contest, a parade at 6 p.m. and merchants open until 9 p.m. (618) 624-4503.

**4-5, Lunch with Santa on the Train** at the Old Wabash Depot in Monticello. Ride a real train and have lunch while visiting Santa. Reservations required. (800) 952-3396.

**4-5, Christmas on the River** in Chester. Crafters of all descriptions will greet you inside the Randolph County Courthouse. Enjoy tea at the Cohen Mansion and take the leisurely house tour. Santa Claus arrives at the Chester riverfront by boat. All day activities. (618) 826-4187.

**4, Santa's Hunt** at the city hall in Columbia. (618) 281-7144.

**4, Christmas in Petersburg**. This event offers a variety of fun, including home tours, crafts at the high school, a cookie walk and retail merchants. (217) 623-7705.

**4-5, Country Christmas Stroll and House Tour** in Okawville. Pick out your favorite of the 40 theme decorated trees, enjoy the Live Nativity Pageant and browse through the 45-plus craft table area. Your highlight will be the extraordinary house tour, which includes four private homes, three museums and a church all in holiday decorations. (618) 243-5694.



4/11, "I'll be Home for Christmas" at the Midtown Theater in Wood River. Step into the music parlor for our hometown renditions of all the old favorite Christmas tunes from yesteryear along with a visit from Santa. (888) 841-4142.

5, Christmas Tea in Freeport. Party like it's 1899 - Celebrate Christmas at the Turn of the Century. (815) 232-8419.



5, "Messiah," a free production put on by the Methodist church in Greenville. (618) 664-2800.

5, An Old Fashioned Christmas Live Vaudeville Acts and Organ Concert at the Lincoln Theater in Belleville. (618) 233-0018.

5-31, Recalling Christmas in Edwardsville. Madison County Historical Museum displays a beautiful and fond Christmas past with Christmas trees, greenery, poinsettias, antique ornaments, toys and dolls. (618) 656-7562.

5, Downtown Old Fashioned Christmas in Effingham. (217) 342-4147.

6 - 1/2/00, Victorian Christmas at the St. Clair County Historical Museum in Belleville. (618) 234-0600.

8-31, Dana Thomas House Christmas in Springfield. Holiday tours and live music. (217) 782-6776.

9-23/27-30, Holiday Lights at the Henson Robinson Zoo in Springfield. (217) 753-6217.

10-12, "A Christmas Carol" at the Looking Glass Playhouse in Lebanon. (618) 537-4962.

10-12/17-19, "A Christmas Carol" at the Lawford Theater in Havana. (309) 543-4777.

10-11, Lucia Nights at Bishop Hill. Festival of Lights. "Lucias" serve coffee and sweets in museums and shops. Carolers stroll the village walks. (217) 782-4836.

10-12, The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual "Nutcracker Ballet on Ice" in Evanston. Over 200 ice skaters recreate Tchaikovsky's beautiful ballet fairy tale. (847) 328-9401 or (847) 328-9400.

11, Holiday Open House at the Vandalia Statehouse State Historic

Site. For a rare experience nothing is better than visiting the oldest existing Illinois capitol building arrayed in its Christmas finery. Surrounded with decorations and the aroma of fresh greenery, fruits and nuts, flickering candle-light and the sweet sound of period music, you can almost see and feel the presence of past ladies and gentlemen gliding around the ballroom. Enjoy the tour of the statehouse. The first 100 families will receive a handmade Christmas ornament. (618) 283-1161.

11-12, Christmas House Tour in Nashville. This tour offers you a rare view of Nashville's stately, well-maintained homes, churches and civic buildings in their beautiful Christmas attire. A variety of homes highlighting the architectural styles of Nashville are included on the tour. (618) 327-3700.

11, Victorian Christmas Walk in Geneseo. Geneseo's Victorian spirit sparkles downtown with Christmas magic in the air. Each of the storefront windows will have family, friends and even some ani-

1-5, Once Upon a Holiday in Bloomington. This event includes carriage and trolley rides; tours of historic, holiday-decorated mansions; Festival of Trees, featuring decorated trees and wreaths; holiday art exhibit sale; professional puppeteers, candy cane hunt and other family activities; holiday band concert; live music and professional entertainment at numerous sites; parade, costumed characters and more. (800) 433-8226.



*Illinois Country Living publishes event listings as space allows, giving preference to events of regional or statewide interest. Event listings are provided by the event sponsors and the Illinois Bureau of Tourism. The magazine assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of information submitted for publication and advises calling ahead to confirm dates and times. To be considered for inclusion, send listings and photographs (If sending photographs please include self-addressed stamped envelope) to Illinois Datebook, Illinois Country Living, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708-3787. The deadline for submission is 45 days prior to the publication date.*

mals depicting Victorian scenes from a time long ago. Enjoy chestnuts roasting, ride a horse-drawn carriage and bring back memories from a time past. (309) 944-2686.

**11, Make Your Own Gingerbread House and Breakfast with Santa** at the Eckert's Country Store and Farms in Belleville. (618) 233-0513.

**12, "Christmas Wonders,"** a production presented by the Afternoon Belleville Philharmonic Orchestra at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville. (618) 235-5600.

**12, Christmas Home Tour** in Geneseo. See for yourself the beauty that exists inside of some of Victorian Geneseo's most beautiful and unique homes - each decorated to the hilt for the holiday season. (309) 944-2686.

**18, "An Elvis Christmas"** at the Midtown Theater in Wood River. Come out and have a blue hoo hoo Christmas with "The King" as rendered by Mr. Steve Davis. (888) 841-4142.

**19, Christmas Evening of Days Gone By** in Pontiac. Early 1900s Christmas evening at Yost Mu-

seum, and a late 1800s evening by lamplight at the Jones House. (800) 835-2055.

**25, Julotta** at Bishop Hill. Candlelight nondenominational service in the Colony Church. Service conducted in English and Swedish. Coffee and rusks served following the service. (309) 927-3899.

**27-30, The Secret Lives of Teddy Bears** in Belleville. Come and see over 200 furry, cuddly teddy bears along with their doll cousins in life-like scenes and help them celebrate their grand return after two years of hibernation. (618) 234-0600.

# Millennium Madness

**31, New Years Eve Celebration** at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville. A prayer service and celebration welcoming the new Millennium. (618) 397-6700.

**31, Pipe in the Millennium Concert** at the Lincoln Theater in Belleville. (618) 233-0018.

**31, Millennium Celebration** at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Elgin. New Year's Eve package with a ballroom party, dinner, dancing, entertainment and overnight room. (847) 488-9000.

**31, First Night Evanston** in Downtown Evanston. Ten indoor venues, music, theatrical performances and children's activities. (847) 328-5864.

**31 - 1/1/00, Millennium New Year's Celebration** at the Chicago Marriott in Oak Brook. This package includes a luxurious room, music and dancing with the Al Sophia Orchestra, a midnight balloon

drop and a bountiful breakfast buffet. (630) 573-8555.

**31 - 1/1/00, First Night Aurora 2000**, Downtown Aurora. A celebration of the visual and performing arts that offers a wide variety of entertainment for everyone. Spectacular fireworks display at midnight. Parking nearby with shuttle from outlying area. (630) 844-3640.

**31, Millennium Celebration** at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Springfield. New Year's Eve package with a ballroom party, dinner, dancing, entertainment, dessert bar at midnight, overnight room with a complimentary bottle of champagne and glasses and morning brunch. (217) 529-7777.

**31, First Night Springfield** in Downtown Springfield. Hundreds of performers ring in the New Year with a celebration of the arts. Be at the State Capitol at midnight for song and fireworks. (217) 753-3519.

**31, First Night Pontiac**, Downtown Pontiac. Celebrate New Year's Eve with music, dancing, magic, ice sculptures, horse and buggy rides and fireworks at midnight. (800) 835-2055.

**31 - 1/1/00, Celebrate 2000 in Decatur**. Children's activities at Decatur Civic Center during the day. "Times Square Ball Drop" at the Barnes Building and fireworks at midnight. (217) 422-7300.

**31 - 1/1/00, The 2000 Minute Party** in Chicago. (312) 742-2001.

**31, First Night Bloomington-Normal** in Normal. Count down 1999 and ring in 2000 at the biggest New Year's Eve Party in town. First Night is a safe, wholesome and alcohol-free New Year's Eve celebration providing entertainment, activities, fun, food and a huge countdown to midnight and special grand finale fireworks display. (309) 829-4250.

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