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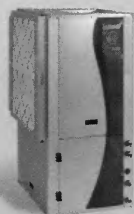
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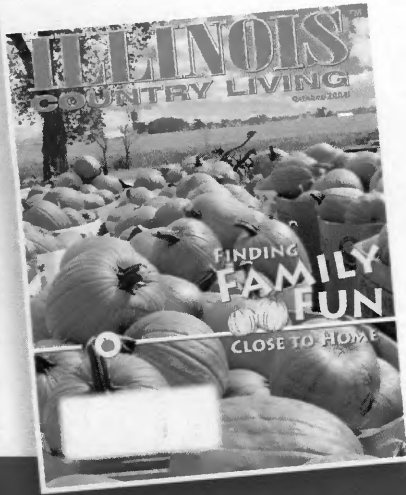


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FINDING FAMILY FUN CLOSE TO HOME

From wineries and pumpkin patches to Christmas tree farms and pick-your-own orchards, it's the time of year when farmers put out the welcome mat for visitors of all ages to explore.

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Volume 66, No. 6, October 2008

COMMENTARY 4
 Cooperation among cooperatives - in times of crisis cooperatives pull together.

CURRENTS 6
 Read about an electric co-op that helped save endangered peregrine falcon.

SAFETY & HEALTH 14
 Safety is a life skill, and 4-H youth learn safety skills with each project.

YARD & GARDEN 16
 Learn easy steps for fall clean up.

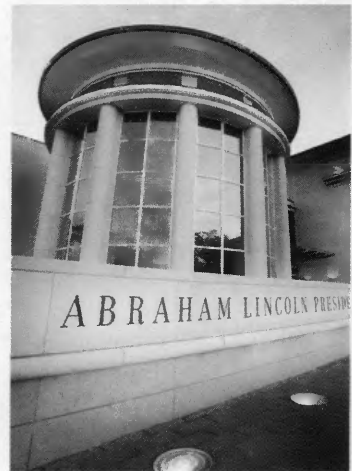
ENERGY SOLUTIONS 18
 Find out how you can get warm winter floors.

BRIDGING THE GAP WITH NATURAL GAS 20

MARKETPLACE 25

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT, SKY LIGHTS 28
 Skylights can improve lighting, aesthetics and save energy.

FINEST COOKING 22 **DATEBOOK** 29



Touchstone Energy[®]
 www.touchstoneenergy.com

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and 25 Illinois electric cooperatives are members of Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of 660 electric cooperatives. Touchstone Energy cooperative employees adhere to four core values — integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

In times of crisis cooperatives pull together

Cooperatives across America celebrate the role, accomplishments and contributions of our nation's cooperatives each October. The theme this year is "Stronger Together – Go.coop." One of the principles of cooperatives is cooperation among cooperatives. It is that old-fashioned, neighbor helping neighbor principle that is a key ingredient in the success of every type of cooperative.

The power of that principle was once again demonstrated in September when we activated our emergency work plan and Illinois electric cooperatives began sending personnel, trucks and other equipment from across the state to the Baton Rouge, La. area. Our sister cooperative members at Dixie Electric Membership Cooperative (DEMCO) were devastated by Hurricane Gustav. Everyone was without power.

Seven other Louisiana electric cooperatives were affected by the hurricane and an estimated 200,000 co-op members were without power at the peak of the outage. So far, cooperatives from 13 states have sent help in what could be a six-week rebuilding effort.

Another looming crisis where cooperatives across the country are cooperating is the energy crisis. Our future energy supply is one of the most important issues facing our country. If you watched the national Democratic and Republican conventions they addressed a lot

of issues, but front and center is energy. Where are we going to get the supply? And how are we going to control costs?

Renewable energy and energy conservation will be a big part of the energy platform presented by both parties. We

already have an Illinois cooperative that has built its own wind turbine. Two more co-ops are in the process of building wind turbines. Some co-ops are buying wind energy from other wind farms. And one is planning to build the state's first renewable energy biomass plant.

You can have a role in helping cooperatives meet this energy crisis. If you've been to your co-op's annual meeting this year you've heard your cooperative manager speak about what you

can do. You can take small steps such as installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, or following your co-op's energy efficiency advice that is often printed in this magazine each month. Small energy efficiency steps can really add up and be a part of the solution.

Another part of this energy crisis is what is happening on Capitol Hill and the debate on energy legislation. This legislation may include an energy tax, either a carbon tax or a carbon cap and trade system. Either way, it is going to impact the cost of energy for you. But you can be a part of that debate through our national cooperative network's Our Energy, Our Future e-mail campaign.

The Our Energy, Our Future e-mail campaign asks three very basic questions of our leaders. Where is the energy supply going to come from in the future? Will you help us fund the technology we need to meet that demand? And finally what will this legislation cost? Just go to www.ourenergy.coop and you can help us start this dialogue with our leaders.

Also, this is an election year and if you have a chance to be at a town hall meeting or a political rally and see your representative or senator, let them know about your concerns about the cost of energy. We need a balanced approach, a cooperative approach to controlling carbon emissions and the cost of energy.

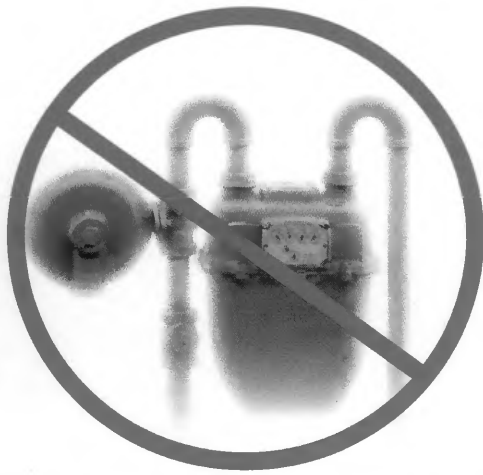
The answer to our energy crisis can't stand on just one answer. It should be like a four-legged stool with a balanced approach that addresses climate concerns, the need for energy supply, increased energy efficiency and more energy research and development.

With Cooperative Month in mind we are once again asking you to step up and be a part of the solution. Help us get our message out to our elected officials. Your voice can make a difference. There is no better time than now to talk to them about your concerns and our energy future. ■

"Just go to www.ourenergy.coop and you can help us start this dialogue with our leaders."

N. Duane Noland is the President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Springfield. He is a former state senator, active on his family farm near Blue Mound and a member of Shelby Electric Cooperative.





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Illinois Co-op Linemen Lend a Hand in Louisiana

Twelve Illinois electric cooperatives sent 52 linemen in early September to repair the devastation left by Hurricane Gustav in Louisiana. Packing clothes, bottled water, their tools, wire splices and other line material, they headed for Dixie Electric Membership Corporation (DEMCO) in southeast Louisiana near Baton Rouge where every member of the co-op was without power after the hurricane winds blew through.

DEMCO is a Touchstone Energy® electric cooperative providing electric service to more than 96,000 members. Seven other Louisiana electric cooperatives were affected by the hurricane and an estimated 200,000 co-op members were without power at the peak of the outage.

The Illinois co-op linemen joined roughly a thousand other co-op linemen from 13 states at the Louisiana co-op's recently erected tent city.

Mike Bergeaux, Director of Safety and Loss Control for the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, said Gustav, which hit almost three years to the day that Hurricane Katrina made landfall, had the highest sustained winds ever recorded in the area. The sustained winds of 61 mph and gusts of 91 mph eclipsed those of Hurricane Betsy that hit in 1965. Katrina hit the coastline harder with the most powerful storm surge, but Bergeaux says Gustav was more of a wind event that ripped through the middle of the state.



This is not the first time Illinois co-op linemen have responded to the needs of electric cooperative members in other states. In 2004, the cooperative sent men to assist with restoration efforts from Hurricane Ivan and in 2005, Hurricane Katrina.

"We feel blessed once again to benefit from the willingness of other cooperatives to send help in our time of need," said Randy Pierce, Executive Director of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives. "With the determination and expertise of our co-op personnel and of the skilled linemen who are here to help, we hope to restore power to our members as safely and expeditiously as possible."

Rick Polley, Emergency Work Plan Coordinator for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, notified Illinois cooperatives the day after the hurricane hit that help would be needed. ■



U.S. Wind Power Capacity Exceeds 20,000 Megawatts

The U.S. wind industry has doubled its generating capacity over the past two years, exceeding 20,000 megawatts in installed capacity, according to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA). The U.S. installed wind capacity is now at 20,152 megawatts, producing enough electricity to serve 5.3 million average U.S. homes. The industry hit the 10,000-megawatt milestone in August 2006, just over two years ago, which means that the industry grew as much over the past two years as it did in the previous two-and-a-half decades.

AWEA expects the total U.S. wind capacity to be more than 24,000 megawatts by yearend. However, the looming expiration of federal tax credits at the end of the year could cause the industry's growth spurt to sputter in 2009. ■

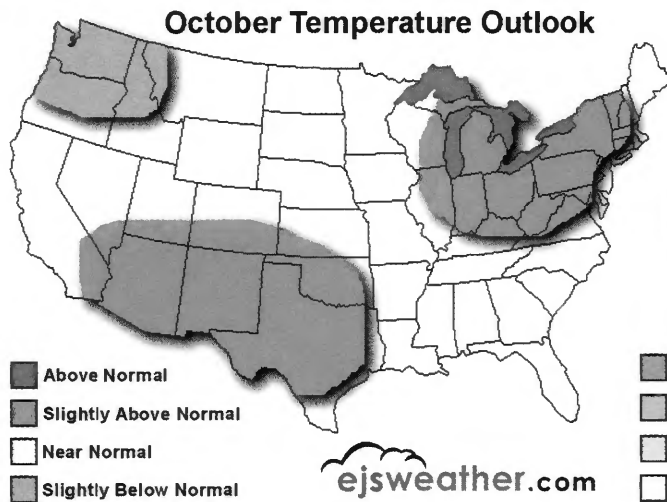
October Temps Expected to be Slightly Above Normal

The La Nina phase in the equatorial Pacific Ocean has come to an end, having lasted for almost a full year.

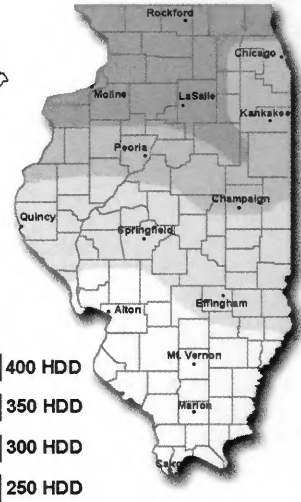
Sea-surface temperatures across the Equatorial Pacific have continued to warm over the past couple months and now on average are running closer to normal. In fact, portions of the eastern Pacific are seeing sea-surface temperatures that are a little warmer than normal, which sometimes is an early indication of a developing El Nino.

For now, the La Nina that began during the late summer of 2007 has transitioned to a more neutral phase. Looking back at past climate records reveals that during other years in which La Nina has weakened during the late summer into early fall (specifically 1986, 1989, and 2006), October across Illinois tends to be somewhat warmer than normal.

There are also some indications that the NAO (North Atlantic Oscillation) may be predominately positive during October, which would also support a milder scenario.



Average October Heating Degree Days



The Illinois map this month shows the average number of heating degree days across the state during October. Based on the slightly warmer than normal temperature forecast, actual heating degree days for this October are expected to be less than average by between 30 to 60 degrees. This should also translate to lower energy usage with respect to heating and lower early season heating costs. ■

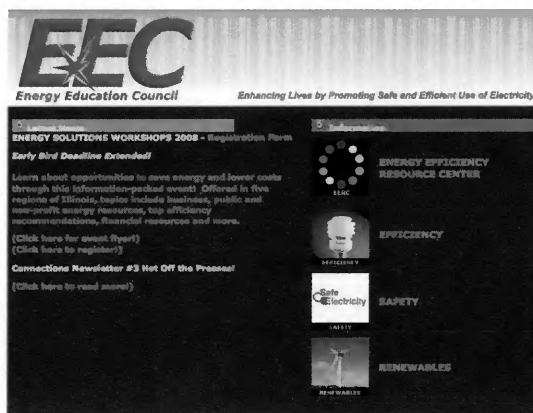
New Energy Education Council Web Site Provides Energy Saving Tools

The Energy Education Council is proud to present its newly designed EnergyEd Web site. Stop by to see all the valuable information from the previous site along with some great new tools.

The home page offers eye-catching graphics and a simplified navigation format for ease of use. Web surfers can easily see the constantly updated headlines, and click on Efficiency, Safety, Renewables, and a brand new section called the Energy Efficiency Resource Center.

You will notice two fantastic new sources of energy efficiency information, Energy Efficiency World from Culver Company, and The Power Bandit from Moore Syndication. These licensed content sites offer a wealth of universal efficiency information and fun and fact-filled games for kids and kids at heart.

Go to www.EnergyEdCouncil.org. ■



Illinois Parks and Historic Sites Slated to Close

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's office announced layoffs of up to 450 state employees and the closure of 25 historic sites and state parks. Fourteen state historic sites are scheduled to be closed October 1. Eleven state parks are slated for closure November 1.

The closures are considered indefinite but will last at least through the end of the fiscal year, July 1, 2009. Each site will have one employee on site for security and maintenance. Once entrances to state parks are barred on November 1, the public will no longer be allowed to enter the sites. Any member of the public entering the closed state parks after November 1 could be arrested and charged with trespassing. ■



Northern Illinois Electric Co-op Helps Restore Endangered Peregrine Falcon to Valley

Dairyland Power Cooperative has played an instrumental role in restoring the once-endangered peregrine falcon to the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Dairyland Power, the generation and transmission cooperative serving Jo-Carroll Energy, has for the past decade helped hatch nearly 70 chicks at nesting stations the co-op erected near riverside power plants.

The cooperative also recently helped fund a raptor education kiosk at an environmental education facility. The facility, called EcoPark, will replace a conventional zoo and house animals native to the upper reaches of North America in their natural habitats.

In March of 1994, the first falcon nest box was installed at a port 450 feet up the stack at the co-op's Alma Generating Station.

It took some time for the falcons to set up house, but on Earth Day, 1997, a pair of peregrine falcons were sighted in the nest box on the Alma Station stack. The two birds nesting in this box, named Alma and Nelson, produced three healthy offspring during 1997.

The three chicks were brought carefully down from their home 450 feet up the stack to get U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands. This was a banner moment for the project, as it marked the first successful wild hatch of Peregrines in Western Wisconsin in 25 years.

Peregrine falcons, the world's fastest birds, can reach speeds of more than 200 mph in controlled dives. You can find out more by going to www.dairynet.com. ■

USDA Awards Funding to Renewable Energy Projects and Job Projects

Illinois Rural Development Director Doug Wilson announced \$1.76 million in grants and loan guarantees for renewable energy systems or to improve energy efficiency in Illinois farm and business operations.

"This kind of investment can have a considerable impact on the environment and profitability for agriculture and small business," Wilson said. "It also has the potential to improve the economy of rural Illinois and help us take advantage of our domestic energy resources."

The grants and loan guarantees are being awarded through USDA Rural Development's Section 9006 Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program. The program provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to support renewable energy projects across a wide range of technologies encompassing biomass (including anaerobic digesters), geothermal, hydrogen, solar and wind energy. It also provides support for energy efficiency improvements, helping

recipients reduce energy consumption and improve operations.

"We are funding 17 projects with nearly \$1.8 million in grants and guaranteed loans," Wilson said. Some of the projects included energy efficient grain dryers and irrigation and barn fans. Other projects include energy efficiency improvements, a geothermal system and a small wind turbine for rural small businesses.

Two larger projects were funded. Adkins Energy, Inc., a corn ethanol refinery in Lena (Stephenson Co.), currently produces 45 million gallons of ethanol a year. The company will use \$698,000 in loan and grant funds to further expand its value-added operation to produce biodiesel from corn oil.

Adams Electric Cooperative, Camp Point, will use a \$450,000 grant to purchase and install a 900 kW wind turbine. The turbine will generate environmentally friendly power to help serve its 8,400 members in Adams, Brown, Schuyler, McDonough, Hancock, Pike and



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Fulton counties. The turbine will be built at a site in Brown County where some of the fastest wind speeds in the region are found.

More information about the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program is available by contacting Rural Development Specialist Molly Hammond at (217) 403-6210 or by email at Molly.Hammond@il.usda.gov.

USDA Rural Development also partners with electric co-ops to bring needed jobs and economic development to rural areas. For example, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative in Paxton, has been selected to receive a \$1,040,000 loan and grant combination to expand a nursing home in Gifford. This project is expected to create 10 new jobs and save 82 existing jobs.

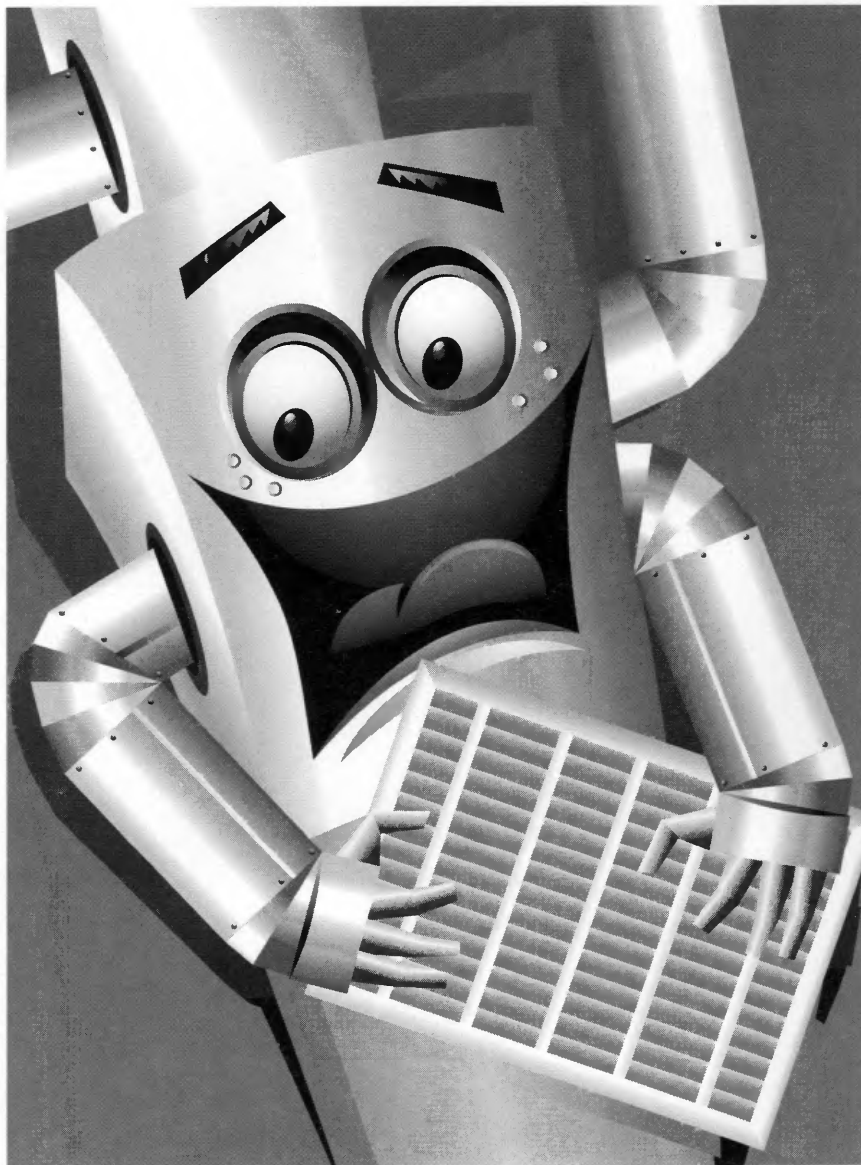
More information on USDA Rural Development is available on the web at www.rurdev.usda.gov/il. ■

How To Replace a Furnace or Air Conditioning Filter

Do you check your furnace/air conditioner or heat pump's filter each month? Probably not, but you should. Dirty air filters will reduce your furnace/air conditioner or heat pump's efficiency levels more than you think, costing you more money. Chances are, you'll need to replace your filter every other month, or even more often if you have multiple pets or smoke indoors.

You'll save more money in energy costs by replacing the filter as needed than trying to squeak by another month. Bottom line: Filters are cheap, change them often. Here's how:

1. Locate your filter. It could be in your furnace, between the air handler and return air duct, or possibly in your return air duct in the ceiling. Is it furry with dust bunnies? Then it needs to be changed. Be aware that some newer furnaces contain two filters, one serving as a backup. Make sure you locate the main filter on this type of system.
2. Measure your filter carefully. They come in all different sizes that can vary as little as 1/8-inch. The size should be marked on the old filter.
3. Determine which type of filter you need. Most filters are disposable while a few are reusable and will just need washing. Fiberglass or paper pleated disposable filters are the cheapest. Be careful when shopping for a new filter. If your system cannot handle the newer, allergen reducing, thicker filters, using one could reduce the airflow to your



unit and cut efficiency. When you buy a new filter, get several so you have them on hand.

4. Place the new filter in the unit exactly where you found the

old. Now, don't just forget about it. Check it every month.

For more information, contact your local HVAC dealer or electric cooperative.

FINDING FAMILY FUN

CLOSE TO HOME

by Michelle McNeal



This year, the Staleys have worked with EnerStar Electric Cooperative to make a corn maze in the image of Willie Wiredhand and EnerStar's 70th birthday logo.

The heat of summer is over and crisp breezes hint at the cold winter winds just around the corner. Yes, it's autumn, a favorite time of year for those who enjoy the brilliantly painted landscape, the scents of bonfires and baking apples, and the sounds of leaves crunching beneath their boots. And as farm stands, pick-your-own places and pumpkin patches open, it's a great time for families to explore the rich bounty Illinois farms offer.

Pumpkin Works

Open Sept. 13-Oct. 31. Hours vary. Visit www.pumpkinworks.com or phone 217-275-3327 for more information. EnerStar Electric Cooperative Day is October 18.

It's called agritourism - farmers who put out the welcome mat for adults and children to come and explore their farms. From wineries and pumpkin patches to Christmas tree farms and pick-your-own orchards, the variety of farms involved is great. More than just the products they produce, these farmers offer an experience to families that keep them returning year after year.

A trip to the local pumpkin patch is, for many, as much a tradition as cutting down a Christmas tree, but without the cold winter winds and the chaos of December. It's not about buying a pumpkin, something you could do at your local grocery store. It's about the experience. With hayrack rides, haunted houses and other activities, it's often an entire day of entertainment for the whole family.

Pumpkin Works in Paris, Ill. offers just that - entertainment - something they say is needed more and more in this age of higher stress levels.

"We've found that in hard times people need a break from their worries. The years that we've had money crunches and after 9-11 happened, we noticed that we provided a relief from the stress people felt and people need that kind of relief," says Sherry Staley, who, along with her husband Paul, owns and operates Pumpkin Works.

More than 40,000 visitors come to Sherry and Paul Staley's farm each year, and the couple doesn't expect attendance to decline this year - even in the face of higher gas prices and tighter family budgets.

Others in the industry agree that small agritourism farms will see steady visitors.

"I don't see gas prices causing many people to eliminate the traditional trips to the local patch or apple orchard," says John Pike, Economic

Development Educator with the University of Illinois Extension.

"Some people may choose to patronize farms or wineries closer to home rather than traveling to more distant attractions of the same type."

He says that some local farms may benefit from reduced travel patterns because of the affordability of products and the family-oriented experiences they offer.

"I think it's safe to say that with a little planning, a trip to the pumpkin patch can be just as exciting for a family, and even more memorable, than a day at an amusement park or big league ball game - and at a fraction of the cost," says Pike.

Agritourism has continued to grow in popularity the last 10 years and more and more farms are finding ways to draw visitors. For some, creating an experience is a way to escape from the rat race and move into the country.

"People move out here and buy five acres and grow something and want to market it. It's not the roots of agricul-

ture but they are producing something others can eat. It's a new type of industry," says Ross Ament, President of the Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois and Agritourism Consultant for Ament Associates.

For most, like the Staleys, it's a

"I think it's safe to say that with a little planning, a trip to the pumpkin patch can be just as exciting for a family, and even more memorable, than a day at an amusement park or big league ball game - and at a fraction of the cost."

way to maintain their livelihood. The Staleys started Pumpkin Works 16 years ago after they sold out of their hog business and Sherry, an art teacher, lost her job when the school's art program was cut. They had grown pumpkins as fundraisers when their children were in school and even sold some in their front yard. Taking that



Involved in or interested in Agritourism?

Jane Eckert works with farms on an individual basis to grow revenue and sales based on her experiences with her farm and with visiting other farms. She develops Web sites for farms as well. You can subscribe to her e-newsletter and learn more about Eckert Agrimarketing at her Web site www.eckertagrimarketing.com.

Ross Ament is President of the Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois. He is also an agritourism consultant that works with farms individually to help them grow their business. Learn more about him at www.amentassociates.com, by e-mailing rarent1@aol.com or by calling 630-466-8024.

John Pike is an economic development educator with the University of Illinois Extension. He specializes in alternative agriculture enterprise development, value-added agriculture and agritourism. Contact him by e-mail at jpik@illinois.edu or call 618-453-5563



Don't be afraid to let this black cat cross your path. Behind it is 15-month-old Clayton, who found plenty of activities to keep he and his parents busy all day at Pumpkin Works.

Want to Find a Pumpkin Patch or other Agritourism Experience Near You?

web.extension.uiuc.edu/agritourism/ Web site of the University of Illinois Extension listing strawberry patches, apple orchards, pumpkin patches and wineries as well as agritourism information and contacts.

www.ruralbounty.com A North American searchable database of retail based farm businesses from pick your own to lodging to all sorts of enterprises, products, animals and such. You can search by product, things to do, shopping and dining, lodging, farmers markets, wineries or farm name. The searches are detailed so you'll only find the information you're after. The site features an e-mail newsletter and event listings as well. "No other national database like this exists," says Eckert, creator of the site. "It will help people find places close to home, or if on vacation or visiting someone."

www.agfun.com A Web site by the ATPI listing Illinois attractions, Christmas trees, farmers markets, orchards, u-picks, pumpkin patches and wineries by region. They also offer a visitors guide that you can get by visiting the site's contact page or calling 217-525-7980. "We are getting hits from all over the world. It's very popular. We can tell people where to go, what the hours are and what to expect," says Ament.

experience to the next level and adding a maze and haunted house created a way for the Staleys to supplement their soybean, wheat and rye farming.

"Soon, former colleagues of mine started asking about field trips," Sherry says, and Pumpkin Works continued to grow.

Ament says a great agritourism location offers visitors four things: education, entertainment, reality and, as Staley mentioned earlier, an escape. Small farms can educate visitors on how the product is grown, what makes up a good product and the ways in which it can be used. Experiences like pick-your-own farms or pumpkin patches can teach children how important agriculture is to our society.

For example, the Staleys have added "The Old Manger Theatre" to teach about their products from planting to harvest; and through a partnership with EnerStar Electric

Cooperative, they will have information on how rural electrification changed farm life 60 years ago.

The farm has a unique tie-in with the co-op because Paul Staley's grand-

"Being able to meet the person who grows your food and ask them questions is a great value to buying locally."

father, A.E. Staley, was President of the Farm Bureau in 1939 and presided over the meeting that set the creation of the electric cooperative in motion.

"We try to be educational and good stewards of the land and we try to share that with others," says Staley.

Farmers are also able to inform customers about their safe farming practices. Jane Eckert of Eckert Agri-marketing says being able to meet the person who grows your food and

ask them questions is a great value to buying locally.

"People need to realize that we may need to pay more for food grown here rather than a tomato from Mexico but that our farming practices are safe and our farmers want to educate people on that," Eckert says.

Visitors are looking for entertainment and can find a large variety of activities throughout the state, from picking their own food and taking a hayrack ride to visiting a working winery or enjoying a music festival. With 10 mazes, a haunted dungeon, a discovery zone, a pumpkin sling shot, toddler activities, a nature preserve and three hayrides covering more than 250 acres, Pumpkin Works seeks to offer plenty of entertainment for all ages.

With other pumpkin patches in the area, the Staleys found their niche in providing entertainment for older



Knowledgeable hayrack ride drivers at Pumpkin Works, Paris, IL inform guests of surrounding vegetation and trees and tell stories to keep children and adults intrigued about their surroundings.



children, teens and adults. "No one else was doing that. High school and college kids come over and over. Parents have thanked us for providing a safe place for teens," says Sherry. Reality comes into play in this fall scene for those hosting an agritourism experience. Ament warns that small farms shouldn't try to "be the Disney of the industry." But you can't just put up a sign at the end of the driveway either. There are a lot of issues that need to be considered, including safety.

"Farming is a dangerous occupation and visitors will need to know where they can and can't go. Some visitors who have never been on a farm won't know the hazards," Ament says.

Another factor to creating a successful business is to have something you can market easily.

"Today, it seems like the opportunities and ideas of agritourism are commonly considered and utilized by farms of all sizes," says Pike. "This is very evident by the attendance at

educational meetings offered by the University of Illinois Extension and by the calls I receive for information from around the state."

Pike says that most agritourism businesses start out as a farm producing a product like pumpkins, fruits or vegetables. The tourism operation evolves as the farmer identifies they can add value to that product by incorporating an "experience."

"Over time, the most successful businesses realize that they are in the tourism business as much as they are in the farming business," he says.

Ament says the key is to make it easy for people to find small farms and to make sure that farms join together to package their entertainment in a way that the tourism industry can market the experiences.

The Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois began six years ago to find a way to do just that, as well as to help develop agritourism. Through the partnership the Illinois

Department of Agriculture, Illinois Bureau of Tourism, co-op extensions, local tourism bureaus and universities can work together for the local producers. Ament says that cooperative packaging could help some farms draw visitors from a greater distance. For example, a family who may not think it's worth it to drive three hours to visit a u-pick strawberry field, might make that drive if they find a bed and breakfast, restaurant and winery located nearby.

But whether you want to make a weekend trip out of it, or just an afternoon, you'll likely find what you're looking for not too far from your home. So, take a scenic drive to a local winery, or load the kids in the car and visit a pumpkin patch. Whatever you choose, you'll likely find a new tradition to enjoy every autumn. 🍂

Safety is a Life Skill

4-H youth learn safety skills with each project

Each October, 4-H'ers across the nation celebrate National 4-H Week. This is about the same time that they choose new projects for the coming year, a common practice for more than 100 years in the 4-H program. The specific projects have changed as our society has changed. There are now projects in robotics, geospatial technology and biotechnology, as well as more traditional projects like leadership, animal science, foods and nutrition, and visual arts.

4-H'ers learn about these topics in a process called "experiential learning" - learning by doing. They get involved with a learning activity and then participate in discussions that help them understand not only what they have just learned, but how they can use the information or skill in other situations. This unique way of learning is how knowledge, attitudes and skills are gained in every 4-H project.

Another commonality among 4-H projects is that members gain life skills while learning about a specific subject. A 4-H'er may gain public speaking skills as she gives a demonstration about getting her dog ready for show. Another 4-H member may gain leadership skills as he chairs a committee to plan a behind the scenes tour of a restaurant for the members enrolled in foods and nutrition projects.

One theme you'll find throughout the 4-H program is safety. Almost all the projects have some safety component. Some of the safety lessons are about keeping the 4-H member safe and others have to do with safety procedures specific to the project area.

Here are some examples. 4-H'ers are taught safety as they work with animals, large and small.

Learning to read a dog's body language can tell you whether it's safe to clip his toenails or whether you should get out of your car when a strange dog approaches. Besides safe handling of the animal to protect the youth working with that animal, 4-H'ers learn about keeping their animals safe from disease and other environmental hazards. Participating in crops and horticulture projects require understanding the safe use of pesticides and other chemicals.

4-H'ers enrolled in foods and nutrition projects

use kitchen tools safely and learn how to keep the food safe to eat while preparing, serving, storing and reheating foods. Those involved with outdoor cooking add safely building and extinguishing a campfire to their safety skills.

Besides learning safe practices for working with electricity, an electricity project member may learn how to test grounded outlets and make an electricity safety checklist for her home. One of the health projects includes making a first aid kit and practicing first aid skills. In the bicycle and horse projects, youth learn to use helmets and rules of sharing the road with motorists.

Small engine members learn how to start a small engine safely, as well as removing, sharpening and replacing mower blades. There are lots of safety lessons in the tractor project. Youth identify safety precautions around augers and power take-off shafts as well as safety with flammable fuels.

Projects are not the only part of 4-H that stresses safety. Adults and teens who want to volunteer to work directly with youth in the 4-H program must first pass several screenings. Their background is checked through Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Illinois State Police and through interviews with people who know the applicant well. Paid staff must also pass these screenings.

Once volunteers have been accepted, they attend a series of orientations to learn about their roles as 4-H volunteers and are encouraged to develop risk management plans for every activity they plan for the youth in their group. They learn ways to reduce risks of the activities by providing plenty of adult supervision, checking for and removing hazards from facilities, having access to cell phones and first aid kits, and having emergency plans should such a need arise.

Safety is important to any organization. Without utilizing safe practices, people, places and continuation of the organization can be in jeopardy. ■

"One theme you'll find throughout the 4-H program is safety."

Judith M. Taylor, Youth Development Educator, University of Illinois Extension, Springfield Center, 217-782-6515, or jmtaylor@uiuc.edu.



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Easy Steps for Fall Clean Up

Grab the kids, a few tools, trash bags and cook some compost

Getting dirty is easy. Cleaning up is harder. Few people enjoy cleaning. It seems to take hours, while making the mess takes much less time.

The same way applies to your yard and garden.

Planting is nothing. Fertilizing and watering is hardly anything. It's all the remnants of everything that nature did and we assisted that comes back to haunt us 10 fold.

Leaves fall from the trees, usually in haphazard fashion except for the glorious ginkgo that drops everything within a week. Frost kills most of the garden plants, turning once upright leaves into mush, sort of like cooked spinach.

Some gardeners tend to be procrastinators, putting off until spring what could be done now. Or should be done now.

Our excuse is that we provide seeds for the migrating or remaining birds. We provide hiding places for the ladybugs that we prefer remain outside instead of invading our homes. We mimic nature in allowing plants to decay right where they are, enriching the soil with organic matter.

And there's nothing worse than a snow-covered winter landscape that is flat. Leaving plants gives you some bumps and lumps in the yard that stimulates the brain into wondering just what was there last year.

On the other hand debris left until spring provides ideal hideouts for over wintering insects and diseases that we really don't want. Weeds can provide seeds for next year's unwelcomed visitors.

Furthermore, what you put off today will come back to bite you next year, unless of course you plan on moving.

Start by getting everything together, which includes the rakes, pruners, saws, tarps, mower and kids.

First, carefully remove the dead plants or plant parts. Encourage the children NOT to have throwing fights with rotten tomatoes and apples, though provide these words from a safe distance.

Clear out the garden of the dead plants. Chop them in smaller pieces, or throw them in the middle of the yard where a sharp lawn mower can reduce them in size.

If plants are heavy seed bearers, and you don't want seeds everywhere, cut off the dead flowers and drop them in a sack.

Leaves can be mowed to reduce in size and filter between grass blades. If you have too many to allow to decompose where they lie, mow them before bagging. The bags will be heavier, but you won't need as many.

If you're out in the rural areas, you may just allow nature to blow the leaves to another location. That's okay as long as the resting place isn't a neighbor's yard.

Most of the garden debris can be composted, though if you don't plan on turning your compost pile regularly, consider throwing diseased plants and parts into a garbage bag for disposal. Another alternative is to dig a hole and bury the diseased debris if practical.

Some folks have the ability to burn yard waste without choking out their family, friends and neighbors. If you opt for that route, consider taking the ash and applying it to the yard and garden in a thin layer. Make sure you burn just plant material.

For the rest of us, a compost pile makes the most sense, but may be impractical if space is limited. If not, all the leaves and dead plants can turn into rich compost that'll increase the organic matter content in our gardens in a year or two.

If you really want compost but not all the potential hassles, consider dumping everything in large black plastic bags, throwing in some soil, and wetting everything thoroughly. Trust me - it's easier to wet everything AFTER you have moved the plastic bags to their resting place.

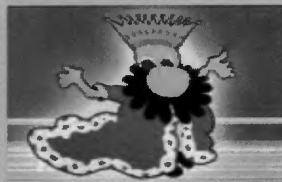
Place the plastic bags behind the garage or shed, but where they'll get the winter sunlight. If all goes well, by next spring lots of the leaves and debris will have been cooked by the winter sun and you should have quasi-compost. It's better than nothing.

And from experience, make sure the bags are marked with a big "Not Trash" sign. Otherwise, on trash day, they may be missing. ■

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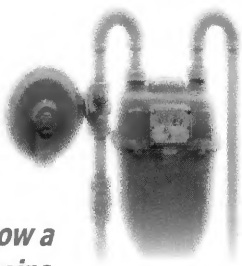
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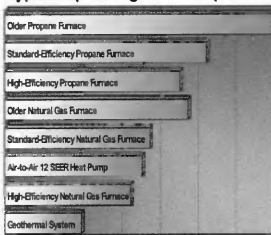
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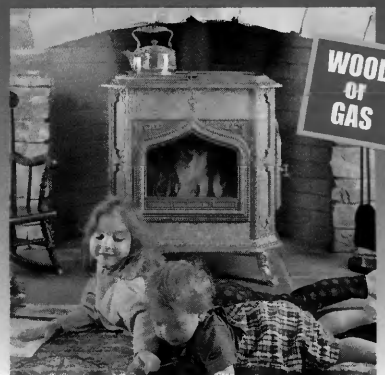
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How to warm your toes from the ground up

It feels like fall has finally arrived. Just three days ago, as I write, it was 90 degrees in the afternoon with a low of 76 in the early morning. When I stepped outside to get the newspaper, barefooted, the cool porch floor felt good. I walked back into the house and the cool floor felt good. But this morning, the low was 46 chilly degrees and when I walked outside, again barefooted, the porch felt cold, but inside the floor felt nice and warm.

You see, "cool" and "warm" are often relative terms. A 70-degree floor temperature in the summer feels cool, but a 70-degree floor temperature in the winter feels warm. Basically, everyone likes cool floors in the summer and nice warm floors in the winter.

I have never met a person who likes cold floors in the winter. Most of you would agree that it is difficult to be comfortable at any location if your feet are cold. Since winter is just around the corner, let's discuss how to keep your floors warm.

I have a rule of thumb about the cold floor problem. If you are located north of Interstate 40 (I'm talking about the entire route, which pretty much goes coast to coast), insulating floors or crawl spaces is important.

There are, of course, a few exceptions, such as Gatlinburg, Tenn., which lies south of I-40 but, because of its high elevation, has very cold winters. Flagstaff, Ariz., too, is located at a high elevation, which causes temperature extremes in the winter and summer. But, for the most part, this line is pretty accurate.

If your floor is on a slab and not properly insulated, the slab temperatures will always be a just a few degrees lower than your thermostat setting, except where it is near the exterior wall. If the exterior temperature is 35 degrees and your thermostat is set on 75 degrees, a slab temperature at the exterior wall will be about 55 degrees. Your feet will feel cold if you are sitting near that location and your utility bills will be higher as the warm air molecules rush toward the edge of the cold slab.

If you have this situation in your existing house there's not much that you can do except to wear heavier socks and not sit near the wall. However, caulking the joint where the wall touches the slab would definitely help stop the cold air. If you are building a new house, cold floor problems can be solved by the installation of 1-inch foam board, located between the cold air and the exterior edge

of the slab. Just remember your picnic ice chest is only three quarters of an inch thick and works very well. The rigid insulation can be installed in the concrete "L" block or installed vertically behind the brick veneer.



It probably is impossible to insulate the parameter of a monolithic slab. Monolithic slabs are quite common where I live in Arkansas and you can tell whether you have one by looking at the exterior wall of the house. If you don't see any concrete blocks or brick, then you probably have a monolithic slab.

Another solution, of course, would be to actually heat the slab in your new house by circulating hot water through the slab. This is usually very costly, both at installation and in operation, unless you heat water with a geothermal system. Generally, I do not suggest heating the slab in homes anywhere south of Interstate 70 (yes, I'm talking about I-70 now) and I do not really think that it is necessary to heat the slab in any home that is built according to the techniques I teach.

In many cases, an acceptable solution is to install small electric heating cables under the tile in your bathroom. You can get information about this at any ceramic tile showroom.

For those of you who are wondering about crawl spaces or basements, you will have to wait until next month. In the meantime, I promise you that I'll be wearing my house shoes when I go outside to get the paper. ■

"I have never met a person who likes cold floors in the winter."

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Bridging the Gap with Natural Gas

By Scott Gates

Fossil fuels are the backbone of the nation's energy supply. Almost half of all our electricity comes from burning coal, and oil remains the dominant transportation fuel option.

A third type of fossil fuel, natural gas, is increasingly in the spotlight. In addition to its use for home heating and cooking, natural gas has surged as a way to keep your lights on amidst steadily growing demand for electricity. Some are also advocating increased use of natural gas as a fuel for our cars.

"Natural gas-fired power plants are presently an easier option than building a coal or nuclear plant," says John Holt, senior principal for generation & fuel at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). "You can manufacture the parts for gas turbines quicker, and site and build a facility more rapidly – and with less opposition. If other types of generation are ruled out, as is becoming commonplace, natural gas becomes the only alternative left for a reliable baseload power supply."

By 2012, it is anticipated that a little more than 35,000 MW of new generation will come on-line nationwide as new power plants are built to meet growing demand. Natural gas will be used to generate more of that power as plans for coal-fired plants are challenged in many states. The risk with gas, however, is that it relies on an increasingly scarce and expensive fuel source.

Natural gas emits about half the carbon dioxide as coal. For this reason, and for the relative ease of building a natural gas-fired plant, more than half of the 21,000 MW the nation's co-ops alone expect to add over the next 10 years will be gas-fired.

Utilities across the country are including natural gas generation as a bigger part of resource plans, along with

renewable energy and efficiency measures, in an effort to make up for delayed coal-fired and nuclear generation.

"If you can't build coal or nuclear, natural gas must pick up much of the slack," says NRECA's Holt. "Where it

may take six or seven years to build a coal plant after permitting and construction and 10 years or more to get a nuclear plant up and running, a natural gas generator can be brought into service relatively quickly."

Simple gas-fired turbines — similar to jet engines on blocks — can be built in around 18 months. A combined-cycle unit that creates steam for extra generation can be up and running in just two years. And because a natural gas plant can be "fired up" in a hurry and operates more cheaply than generators running on diesel fuel, they've long been the choice for "peaking plants" that are called on during times of high electricity use.

Although natural gas generators work well

as peaking plants the problem with relying on gas for baseload power is its price volatility and expense.

As demand for electricity surges, growing fuel cost concerns plague natural gas. The price of natural gas has tripled since 2002 and jumped 93 percent since August 2007 alone.

Price fluctuations in natural gas really come down to supply and demand. In 2006, the United States used 21.6 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas, with 29 percent going to electric power. Of that amount, 19 percent was imported, most of which came via pipeline from Canada. The remainder was drawn from rapidly dwindling domestic resources.

If plans for new coal and nuclear plants continue to be replaced in favor of natural gas plants over the next few decades, these imports will undoubtedly increase.



Electricity generation accounts for 30 percent of all natural gas used in the United States, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Of the remainder, 34 percent is used in industry, 13 percent for commercial purposes, and 20 percent goes to residential uses such as heating and cooking.



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Pumpkin Chicken Chowder

- 1 T. vegetable oil
- 8-oz. chicken breasts, cubed
- 1 C. chopped onion
- 1 C. chopped red pepper
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 3-1/2 C. chicken broth
- 1 (16-oz.) can of pumpkin
- 1/2 to 1 C. frozen corn
- 1/2 C. uncooked rice
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. pepper

Heat oil in a stockpot. Add chicken, onion, red pepper and garlic. Cook until chicken is done. Stir in broth, pumpkin, corn, rice, basil, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and cover. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until rice is tender.

Pumpkin Chicken Chowder

Chicken Tetrazzini

- 1/4 C. butter
- 1/4 C. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. garlic salt
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 2 C. milk
- 2 C. half and half
- 2 cubes chicken bouillon
- 1/3 C. cooking sherry
- 6-oz. mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 8 oz. spaghetti, cooked
- 1 (4-oz.) can mushrooms, undrained
- 2 C. cooked and cubed chicken
- Parmesan cheese

Melt butter. Blend in flour, salt, garlic salt and pepper. Add milk, half and half and bouillon cubes. Stir constantly until thick and smooth. Add sherry, Mozzarella cheese, spaghetti, undrained mushrooms and chicken. Pour into a 9x13-inch shallow casserole dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 375° for 25 minutes.

Cider Stew

- 3 lg. onions, sliced
- 2 lbs. beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 T. oil
- 3 T. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 tsp. thyme
- 2 C. apple cider
- 2 T. ketchup
- 3 lg. potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 4 med. carrots, sliced

Brown onions and meat in the oil. Gradually add the flour, salt, pepper and thyme to the meat and onions. Stir in the apple cider and ketchup. Add the potatoes and carrots and cook on low for 2-1/2 to 3 hours.

Jack-O-Lantern Jumble

- 1/4 C. smooth peanut butter
- 1/4 C. margarine
- 1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- 2-1/4 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 4 C. Rice Chex cereal
- 4 C. Wheat Chex cereal
- 1 C. cocktail peanuts
- 9-1/2-oz. candy corn and/or M&M's

Preheat oven to 250°. In the oven, melt margarine and peanut butter in a turkey roaster until soft and shiny. Stir in garlic salt and Worcestershire sauce. Add Rice and Wheat Chex cereals and nuts. Bake uncovered for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool before adding candy corn and/or M&M's. Store in an airtight container. Makes 9 cups.

Visit www.icl.coop to see an archive of past Illinois Country Living recipes.



Sugar Creek Reading Night Cookbook

Who: Sugar Creek Elementary School, Normal, IL

Cost: \$2, plus \$3 shipping

Details: paper-backed, comb-bound

Pages of recipes: 70

Send checks to: Sandy Dickson, Sugar Creek Elementary School,
900 Ironwood Drive, Normal, IL 61761
or call 309-454-8560.

Taco Dip

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning
- 1 can refried beans (fat free can be used)
- 1 sm. can tomato sauce
- 1 (8-oz.) ctn. sour cream (low fat can be used)
- 1 (8-oz.) pkg. shredded Cheddar cheese
- Tortilla chips

Cook ground beef, drain. Add taco seasoning, refried beans and tomato sauce. Mix well. Place mixture into a 9x9-inch pan or and dish you prefer. Let it sit for about an hour in the refrigerator. Add a layer of sour cream on top of the ground beef mixture and top with Cheddar cheese. Serve with tortilla chips.

Taco Dip

Photos by Catrina McCulley Wagner

Buttermilk Pancakes

- 2 C. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1-3/4 C. buttermilk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 T. butter, melted

In a large bowl, mix dry ingredients. In a smaller bowl, blend eggs, buttermilk and vanilla. Slowly, a little bit at a time, add wet ingredients to dry ingredients, stirring to avoid lumps. Add melted butter, stir. Cook pancakes in a non-stick pan or griddle sprayed with cooking spray (or add melted butter) over medium heat (cooking slower is better). Pour batter to desired size. Flip when batter begins to bubble. Remove when golden brown. Depending on the size of your pancakes, recipe may make more or less than recipe indicates. Top with fruit, chocolate chips, peanut butter or maple syrup. Makes 12-14 pancakes.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1 C. canned pumpkin
- 1 C. sugar
- 1/2 C. oil
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 C. flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. milk
- 1 (6-oz.) bag chocolate chips

Dissolve baking soda in milk and set aside. Combine pumpkin, sugar, oil and egg. Sift flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt together. Add to pumpkin mixture alternately with baking soda dissolved in milk. Add chocolate chips. Drop by tablespoons onto a cookie sheet. Bake at 375° for 10-12 minutes.

Brown Paper Bag Apple Pie

- 1 brown paper sack
- 2 paper clips

Pie

- 1 (9-inch) pie crust
- 6 C. thinly sliced apples
- 2 T. flour
- 1/2 C. sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon

Topping

- 1/2 C. butter
- 1/2 C. flour
- 1/2 C. sugar

Mix apples, flour, sugar and cinnamon together. Fill the pie crust with mixture. Mix topping ingredients together and spread evenly over filling. Place pie in brown paper bag and secure bag shut with paper clips. Make sure bag is not touching the inside of the oven anywhere! Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

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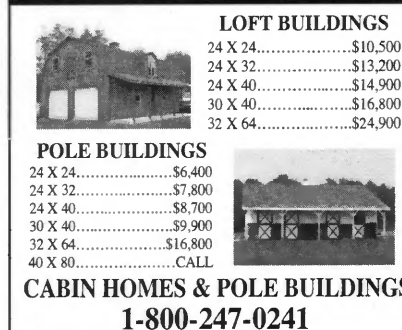
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- 4) Mail to: Illinois Marketplace, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708, by deadline.

Deadlines: December issue – October 20;
January issue – November 20.

We reserve the right to reject any advertisement. Ads postmarked after the deadline will be placed in the next available issue.

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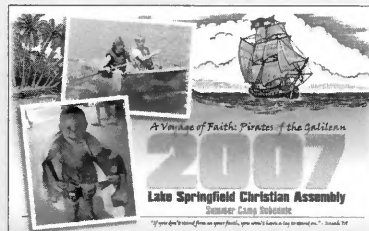
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Skylights can improve lighting, aesthetics and save energy

Q: Dear Jim: I want more natural lighting with fewer electric lights to save electricity, so I plan to install skylights in several rooms. What are the most efficient skylight designs to save the most energy? - Jon B.

A: Dear Jon: Most often, people install skylights for aesthetic reasons such as making a room appear larger than it is or providing a view of nighttime sky. And adding skylights to a room can reduce the need for lights.

Lighting is a significant consumer of electricity in most homes, so if adding skylights can reduce your need for electric lights, they will also reduce your electric bills. But, and this is a big but, skylights must be efficient or they lose or gain (in summer) more heat energy than they save in electricity. A skylight is basically just a window cut out of a well-insulated ceiling creating an insulation void.

An advantage of natural lighting is human sight is still better under natural sunlight than under artificial light at the same intensity. If you have problems reading my article in the morning under a standard kitchen ceiling light fixture, you may find it easier to read under natural light from a skylight. Colors also look much more true and vibrant under natural light as compared to light bulbs. Some of the newer full-spectrum compact fluorescent bulbs do a better job of simulating true sunlight.

Skylight design, from efficiency, style and convenience standpoints, has come a long way in the past decade or so. Today, nearly all the super-efficient true-glass glazing and frame options that are available in high-quality new windows are also available in skylights. The primary difference is the top layer of a multi-pane skylight glass is made from tempered glass for safety. Some of the hurricane-resistant skylights, which meet Florida's strict safety codes, use laminated glass similar to a car's windshield.

When selecting one, first decide whether you want a venting or a fixed type of skylight. Fixed ones are somewhat less expensive, but they do not provide ventilation, which can reduce your cooling costs and improve indoor air quality. The new weatherstripping seals make the venting ones virtually as energy efficient and leak-free as fixed ones.

If you ever use natural ventilation, even if for only a few weeks during spring and fall, selecting a venting model is your most energy efficient choice. With the skylight located in the ceiling where the warm, less-dense air collects, opening it can create a natural breeze throughout your home. For the most convenience, a remote control



This bedroom uses a combination of one venting and two fixed skylights. Mini-Venetian blinds are installed in the gaps between the multipanes.

Photo: Photo By - Veltex

electric operator can be installed, this uses a small amount of electricity and requires electrical wiring. Automatic rain sensors can be installed to close the skylight in case of a storm.

Unless there already is an electric light in the ceiling, running new wiring may make the installation project too complex for the average do-it-yourselfer to tackle. For most installations with typical-sized skylights, I recommend a removable long hand crank.

The heart of a skylight is the glazing (glass or plastic) and this has the most impact upon its energy efficiency. If you want efficiency with a good view of the sky, a multipane flat glass skylight is best. I even added a magnetic clear acrylic storm window under my low-e, argon-gas glass skylight for greater efficiency.

Since skylights tend to get dirty and covered with water spots, some manufacturers now offer special glass. It's as energy efficient as other glass options, but it has a super smooth titanium dioxide coating on the exterior pane surface. When the sunlight shines on it, it dries with very few spots and less dirt.

The following companies offer efficient skylights: Bristolite, (800) 854-8618, www.bristolite.com; Fox Lite, (800) 233-3699, www.foxlite.com; Royalite, (800) 875-9548, www.royalite-mfg.com; Velux, (800) 888-3589, www.veluxusa.com; and Wasco, (800) 388-0293, www.wascoskylights.com.

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Illinois Country Living, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.

1, Arts and Craft Fair at The Murphysboro United Methodist Church in Murphysboro. 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. More than 30 vendors will be on hand displaying unique handmade arts, crafts and gifts. A lunch stand and bake sale will also be available. Free. 618-687-2235 or pontiac@egyptian.com.

1, The 30th Annual Galena Halloween Parade on Main Street in Galena. The largest and spookiest parade in the tri-state area. Floats, costumes, prizes and treats for guys and “ghouls” of all ages. 815-777-9050 or <http://www.galenachamber.com>.

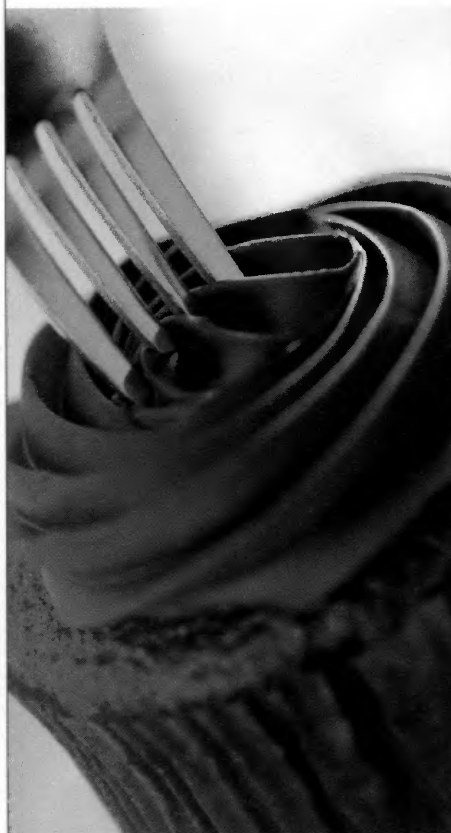
1, Fall Eagle Fest at the Convention Center in Galena. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Enjoy a live “Birds of Prey” show, environmental displays and booths, nature photography and art show, young adult art show and essay contest and more. Free. 815-594-2306 or www.eaglenature.com.

1, Christmas Ideas Day and Health Fair at the Civic Center in Benton. 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Get a flu shot, have a blood workup, check into retirement facilities and talk to representatives from many health organizations. In addition, there will be craft vendors, as well as a taster’s table of goodies, a country store with bargains and entertainment. Mr. and Mrs. Claus will be there and a special craft table will be available to entertain the children.

1-2, The 31st Annual Heritage Festival at Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg. Saturday: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sunday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Enjoy crafts, art, food, a free performance from “The Heiken Puppets” on Saturday at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the Student Center. Free admission and parking. 618-252-5400 ext. 3213 or donna.hearn@sic.edu.

7-9, Antique Spectacular Fall Show 2008 at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island. Enjoy antiques galore with something to interest every collector including: furniture, art pottery, stoneware, books, prints, primitives, jewelry, silver, signage, prints, paintings, glass, china, postcards, coins, quilts, dolls, toys, advertising, marbles, rugs, vintage textiles and period pieces. Hours Friday: 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Sunday: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Admission is \$6. 309-788-5912, info@qccaexpocenter.com or www.antiquestacular.com.

7-9, Christmas Arts and Craft Show 2008 at the Village Square Mall in Effingham. Enjoy a variety of offerings from antiques to handmade articles and everything in between. 217-347-0623.



8, Chocolate, Champagne and Candlelight at the DeSoto House Hotel in Galena. An elegant chocolate affair including two lavish buffets offering chocolate, plus a few non-chocolate desserts. Reservations recommended. 815-777-9129 or www.galenahistorymuseum.org.

8, Altrusa Bazaar and Craft Show at Macomb High School in Macomb. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Peruse more than 100 booths of hand crafted and commercial vendors. Free. 309-837-9105.

8, The GFWC Savanna Woman’s Club Annual Christmas Craft and Gift Fair at the West Carroll Primary School in Savanna, Ill. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Crafts and gifts of all types available for sale. Space is still available. Woman’s Club lunch stand on sight with hot sandwiches, homemade desserts and more. \$1 donation at the door. 815-565-0255 or 815-273-7376.

9, Second Sunday Celtic Music at White Owl Winery in Birds. Join us the second Sunday of each month for the turbulent and tantalizing strains of Irish music. Enjoy wine tasting and toe-tapping music! Bring your friends! This event is free. 618-928-2898.

9, Birds of Prey Program at Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington. 1 p.m. See several of the zoo’s birds of prey up close and learn how they hunt, survive in the wild and thrive at the zoo. This event will take place indoors if weather is inclement. Free with paid zoo admission. 309-434-2250 or millerparkzoo.org.

13-16, Country Christmas at Rock Run Peddler in Rock City. Enjoy the Christmas spirit at Rock Run Peddler’s Christmas Open House with their collection of primitives, antiques, unique Christmas folk art, gifts, fresh Christmas trees and wreaths. Also enjoy Christmas hammered dulcimer music, plus refreshments. 815-865-5969, stephcvb@aeroinc.net or www.stephenson-county-il.org.

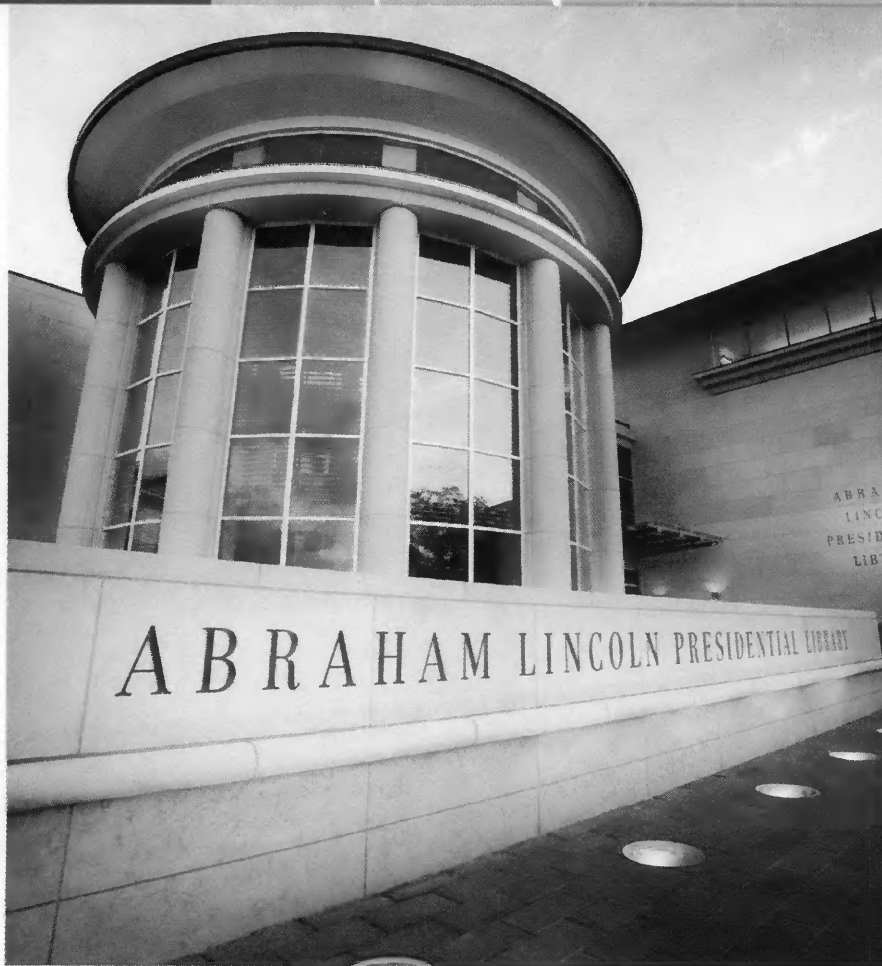
14, Christmas Open House in Downtown Golconda. 618-683-2109.

14-16, Home for the Holidays at Lincoln Land Community Center in Litchfield. Enjoy the Sixth Annual Festival of Trees, a winter parade and a holiday walk for local businesses. 217-324-8147 or www.cityof-litchfieldil.com.

15, Beautiful Hats at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum’s Lincoln Reception Room in Springfield. 2 p.m. A breathtaking presentation of the history of ladies’ and men’s hats through the ages. Hats from the 1860s to the 1920s are displayed and modeled. A visual delight! Wearing your own hat is encouraged but not required. Tickets are \$35. 217-558-8934 or www.presidentlincoln.org.

15-16, Persimmon Party at Christian County Historical Museum in Taylorville. Enjoy a free tasting of persimmon foods and/or purchase cookbooks, baked goods and frozen pulp available. 217-824-6922.

20-22, Pope County Deer Festival in Downtown Golconda. 618-683-6286.



19-1/09, Sam Fink's The Gettysburg Address at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. To celebrate the anniversary of the Gettysburg Address the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library will exhibit the original art created for the book, *The Gettysburg Address*, illustrated by master calligrapher and artist Sam Fink. 217-558-0143.

21-22, Nouveau Wine Festival in Galena. Galena Cellars celebrates the release of its Nouveau wine with luncheons, horse-drawn wagon deliveries on Main Street and wine and cheese parties at various downtown locations. 815-777-3330 or www.galenacellars.com.

21-23, Santa Fest in Freeport. Visit Barbara Buck's studio to see a large gallery display featuring museum quality, one-of-a-kind Santas, Angels and Nativity sets. 815-443-2785.

21-1/1/09, Victorian Splendor Light Festival at Forest Park in Shelbyville. Come and enjoy this beautiful drive-thru display that has been rejuvenated to include all the displays from years past. 217-774-1342.

22-23, Festival of Arts and Crafts in St. Charles. Handcrafted original art and crafts including floral designs, painted windows and glassware, watercolor paintings, calligraphy, jewelry, clothing, home decorations and outdoor yard accents. 847-301-8543 or www.stepestercraftshows.com.

27-1/1/09, Avenue of Lights at Moorman/Wavering Park in Quincy. Enjoy a two-mile holiday display of animated lights. 217-222-7980 or www.quincychamber.org.

28, A Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer at the Stephen Sargent Farm in Lerna. Explore the Thanksgiving traditions of the 19th Century. 217-345-1845 or www.lincolnlogcabin.org.

28, Old-Fashioned Christmas 2008 in Downtown Effingham. Enjoy buggy rides, visits and photos with Santa, hot chocolate, coffee and more. Donations accepted. 217-342-4147.

28-30, Christmas of Yesteryear in Downtown Richmond. Celebrate the magic of Christmas! Visit historic downtown and shops and streets trimmed with garland and lights reminiscent of times gone by. Enjoy shopping, a visit from Santa, horse wagon tours and carolers. 815-678-4040 or www.richmond-il.com.

28-30, Julmarknad - Christmas Market in Bishop Hill. Enjoy decorated shops and museums. Encounter Swedish folk characters roaming the village, special music Swedish foods and unique gifts. 309-927-3345, bishophill@winco.net or www.bishophill.com.

28-12/26, Mattoon Lightworks at Peterson Park in Mattoon. Enjoy the lights of the season with more than 50 magnificent light displays, many of which are animated. 217-258-6286 or www.mattoonillinois.org.

29, Light Up Streator City Park in Streator. An annual celebration that marks the lighting of the city park for the holiday season. This daylong festival includes a marketplace throughout the day with the lighting at 6:30 p.m. 618-673-1708.

**For more datebook
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To be considered for inclusion, please submit events in the format used above. Preference is given to events sponsored by non-profit entities. Submitting an event is not a guarantee of publication. Photos are welcome, but will not be returned unless a self-addressed and stamped envelope is provided. Events are subject to change, so please contact the event sponsor for confirmation.

Deadlines: October 15 for January Events, November 15 for February Events **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708 **E-mail to:** cwagner@aicc.coop

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