

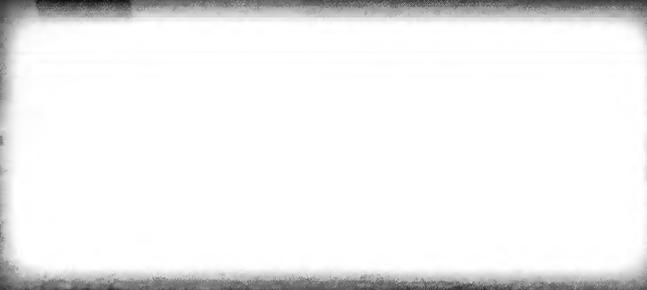
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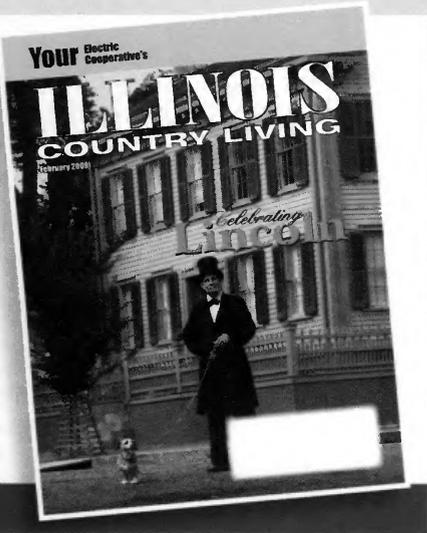
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CELEBRATING LINCOLN

Relive a little of Abraham Lincoln's past. Read about special tourist attractions and impersonator events planned to mark Lincoln's 200th birthday. *Cover photo by Terry Farmer*

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ILLINOISTM COUNTRY LIVING

Volume 66, No. 10, February 2009

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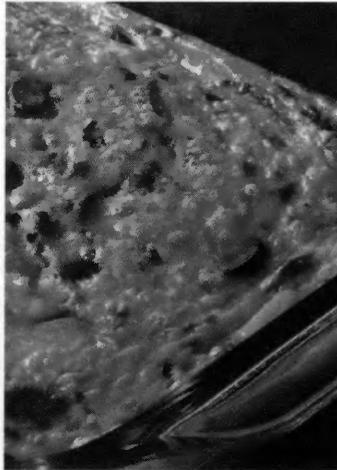
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In Iraq and Illinois Democracy Can Work

We are blessed by democracy but it takes an involved electorate

Illinois has arguably been at the center of both the best and the worst of the American political system. From the high of President Obama's election to the low of federal charges filed against Governor Blagojevich, Illinois has held the nation's attention.

My experiences as a member of the Illinois General Assembly and as a Marine who recently completed a tour of duty in Iraq have given me a unique vantage point from which to comment.

History will note the significance of Barack Obama's election as our nation's first African American president, yet little thought will ever be given to something fundamental to democratic governments - the peaceful transition of power.

It's difficult for the average American to appreciate this peaceful transition. When we go to the polls there's no threat of violence. We assume that we'll be able to vote, the votes will be tallied and the victor peacefully sworn in.

From the resources the Iraqi government spent preserving ballot integrity, to those spent on voter security, it was my experience as Governance Chief and Liaison to the Anbar Provincial Council for the first Marine Expeditionary Force, that everything about the voting process was different in Iraq.

In fact, a very strong argument could be made that the biggest difference between our two countries is voter apathy. In Iraq, despite the threat of violence, voter turnout was more than 70 percent. In Illinois, the citizens elected Rod Blagojevich as Governor twice.

This is in no way meant to cast dispersions on our political system; rather it's the opposite. As I witnessed the Iraqis struggle to build their version of democracy, I couldn't help but think how lucky we are.

Two Chairmen of the Fallujah City Council were assassinated in the span of 12 months. During my deployment, one Anbar Provincial Council member and his 11-year-old son were killed in a suicide bombing and another council member was severely wounded in an assassination attempt. The current Governor of Anbar survived several assas-

sination attempts. And despite the violence, those Iraqis continued to move the ball forward. Such experiences put things in perspective. I only wish more of my colleagues had similar experiences, as I think our system would benefit from such an eye opener.

Here we have established local, county, state and national governing bodies with corresponding district representatives. The citizens of Iraq are not so fortunate. We have standard rules of order governing each elected body. The leaders of Iraq are not so fortunate.

In short, we take our democratic system for granted. Whether it's the election of our nation's president every four years, or the decisions made at a quarterly meeting of a democratically-elected cooperative board of directors, or even the hiring of a superintendent by a locally elected school board, we simply give little thought to how blessed we are.

I must admit that I, too, took those things for granted until I began my tour in Iraq. Try to imagine building such a system from scratch. Try to imagine explaining the need for detailed by-laws to a provincial council chairman who lacks the experience of a representative form of government - someone who has never voted for a co-op director, school board member and certainly never a president.

As I climbed the stairs in the capitol to attend my first session in nearly eight months, I realized how fortunate we are. And as the scandal surrounding our current governor began to unfold, I realized that we are blessed to have a system that will take care of even this ugly situation. Yes, the public is justifiably shocked by the alleged corrupt practices, but in the end our system, based on the separation of powers and checks and balances, will work and the guilty will be punished.

In Iraq, we began every mission by asking

(Continued on page 6)

"As I witnessed the Iraqis struggle to build their version of democracy, I couldn't help but think how lucky we are."

State Representative Jim Watson (R-Jacksonville 97th District) received the Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award in 2007. He served in Operation Desert Storm in 1990-1991, and as a Marine Corps Reservist, 3rd Civil Affairs Group member, during 2007-2008.



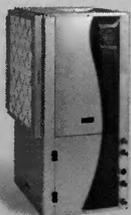
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COMMENTARY *(Continued from page 4)*

ourselves one question: What does success look like? In the end, success will be an Iraqi government that can function without U.S. assistance and that can peacefully transfer power after elections.

Since my tour in Iraq, and in light of the charges levied against Governor Blagojevich, I have often asked myself what success looks like in Illinois? I am confident that the system will work and justice will prevail, but real success will be a renewed sense of vigilance by the voter.

Voters will demand clear and direct

answers to the difficult challenges that face us - the kind that cannot be found in a 30 second commercial. Voters will demand a spirit of cooperation demonstrated by many of my Republican and Democrat colleagues who worked together to take care of my district during my deployment in Iraq.

In short, success in Illinois will be a level of voter resiliency, interest and participation similar to that demonstrated by the Iraqi people when they literally risked their lives to vote during the last round of national elections. ■

Energy Policy 101

An ever-growing list of terms and acronyms describe aspects of public policy that can have a very real impact on electric bills at home. As energy policy gets shaped through the actions of a new administration and Congress, expect to hear more about the terms below.



Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS)

Laws passed by 28 states and Washington, D.C., (as of 2008) that require investor-owned utilities, some municipal electric systems, and electric generation suppliers to add increasing amounts of 'clean and green' energy to their power supply mix by a certain date. Eighteen states call for electric co-ops to meet RPS mandates.



Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREBs)

Federal bonds that act as interest-free loans and provide not-for-profit electric co-ops with a way to invest in renewable generation. Co-ops had used \$450 million in CREBs for renewable generation projects by the end of 2008.



Production Tax Credit (PTC)

A federal tax incentive designed to support the introduction of new renewable energy sources (such as wind, geothermal, biomass, and small hydropower) by investor-owned utilities. Electric co-ops are not eligible for the PTC, but can use CREBs for the same purpose.



Cap and Trade

A system of regulating greenhouse gases (GHG), like carbon dioxide, where each source (like a power plant) has a limit placed on the amount of gases it can release—the *cap*. Those who emit less than the cap can sell their extra allowances to those who are not able to make reductions as easily—the *trade*.



Carbon Tax

A proposed tax on energy sources that emit carbon dioxide, based on the carbon content of a particular fuel, meant to curb both carbon emissions and consumption of coal, natural gas, and oil. The resulting revenue could be used to fund environmental projects, reduce other taxes, or returned to taxpayers via rebates.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

11th Illinois Products Expo – March 7-8, 2009

The “11th Illinois Products Expo ... A Food and Cooking Extravaganza” will be March 7-8, 2009, in the Orr Building, Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield, Ill. The Expo is open to the public. The cost to attend is only \$4 (children 10 and under - free).

More than 70 Illinois food companies (and a few non-food companies) will be exhibiting. Food companies will provide free food samples and most of these products will also be available to purchase at the Expo.

The “Illinois Wine and Cheese Garden” will once again be a featured attraction at the Expo. At least 20 Illinois wine companies will participate. They will sell wine samples (for a nominal fee) and they will sell their wine by the glass and by the bottle.

The hours of the Expo are: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday, March 7 and 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Sunday, March 8. A Weber Genesis® E-310™ gas grill (retail value-\$799) and numerous “Illinois Products” gift baskets

will be given away as door prizes.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Marketing and Promotion is coordinating the event. For more information, contact Larry Aldag, 217-524-3012, or larry.aldag@illinois.gov. ■



Clean Energy Tax Incentives Now Available

President Bush signed the \$700 billion Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (H.R. 1424) into law in October, which also extended and enhanced critical tax credits and financing relating

to renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The Energy Improvement and Extension Act of 2008, which was attached to H.R. 1424, provides a one-year extension of the production tax credit (PTC) for wind energy, keeping the credit in effect through 2009. The bill also provides a two-year PTC extension, through 2010, for electricity produced from geothermal, biomass and solar energy facilities, as well as trash-to-energy facilities, small hydropower facilities using irrigation water, capacity additions to existing hydropower plants, and hydropower facilities added to existing dams.

The act also continues the Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREBs) program. Under these provisions, the CREBs program receives a new

\$800 million authorization, with one-third of that reserved for qualifying renewable energy projects of electric cooperatives.

The act also creates a new 10 percent tax credit for certain combined heat and power systems and for geothermal heat pumps (up to \$2,000). In addition, the bill also provides accelerated depreciation for utilities installing smart meters and smart grid systems.

In terms of energy efficiency and alternative fuels, the act extends and revives a number of energy efficiency tax incentives for buildings, creates new tax credits for efficient vehicles, and extends and modifies tax credits for biofuels.

For more information go to www.energystar.gov and click on Tax Credits Under the Energy Bill. ■



If you install a geothermal heat pump, you are now eligible for federal tax incentives under the Energy Improvement and Extension Act of 2008, passed as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. The legislation offers a maximum tax credit of \$2,000. The legislation also provides a credit of 10 percent of the total investment, with no maximum credit, for commercial system installations.

Lake Land College to Host Alternative Energy Conference

Lake Land College will host the second annual Energy Innovation Conference on Feb. 25-27 on its campus in Mattoon, Ill. The Honorable Chuck Hartke, former Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture, will kick off the conference with the keynote address at 1 p.m. Wednesday. Additional highlights include a legislative panel at 4 p.m. Thursday. Everyone is invited to attend and ask state legislators questions about current or future

legislative bills concerning energy.

Attendees can choose presentations from an agricultural/residential or an academic tract. Select workshops will be open to the public. Vendors will be available to share their expertise on energy savings initiatives and products. More information about the conference is available online at www.energyconf.org or call 217-234-5215. ■

The Green Value of Keeping Old Cars

Even with the drop in gas prices you may be wondering if it's better to drive an older, well-maintained car that gets about 25 miles per gallon, or to buy a new car that gets about 35 miles per gallon?

You might be surprised to learn that it makes more sense from a green perspective to keep your old car running and well maintained as long as you can. There are significant environmental costs to both manufacturing a new automobile and adding your old car to the ever-growing collective junk heap.

A 2004 analysis by Toyota found that as much as 28 percent of the carbon dioxide emissions generated during the lifecycle of a typical gasoline-powered car can occur during its manufacture and its transportation to the dealer. The remaining emissions occur during



driving. Although recycling is great, there are environmental impacts, too, even if your old car is junked, dismantled and sold for parts.

If you simply must change your vehicle, be it for fuel efficiency or any other reason, one option is to simply buy a used car that gets better gas mileage than your existing one.

For more information on fuel efficiency or emissions go to www.fueleconomy.gov; www.trackyourgasmileage.com; www.mpgtune.com; www.mymilemarker.com
Source: EarthTalk www.emagazine.com ■

Obama Selects LaHood for Transportation Secretary

Former Illinois Congressman Ray LaHood, R-Peoria, was appointed to the Transportation Secretary post on the Obama cabinet. LaHood had already decided to step down from his congressional seat after serving 14 years. A Republican, LaHood was a leader in the efforts to make the floor of the House less partisan. Respected by both sides of the aisle, he was the presiding officer of more debates than any other member and was in the chair during most of President Bill Clinton's impeachment a decade ago. In 1999, electric co-op leaders recognized his leadership with the Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award. He will join Secretary of Defense Robert Gates as the other Republican member of the Obama cabinet. ■

Vet School Clinical Trials Offer Hope for the Future

There are few places in the world where one might find a veterinary surgeon performing a hip replacement on a dog, a student learning how to read an EKG from a race horse and a researcher helping to find a cure for bone cancer. But at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, which is one of only 28 veterinary schools in the country, it's just another day.

Dr. Laura Garrett is a veterinary oncologist at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana. She is one of approximately 100 veterinary oncologists in the country. Dr. Garrett is currently conducting a clinical trial to help

discover a better treatment for dogs with osteosarcoma, or bone cancer.

Several of the medications used in clinical trials in veterinary schools go on to become FDA-approved drugs for human use. For example, Dr. Garrett explains that, "There is currently a melanoma vaccine licensed for use in dogs and now they are looking into developing one for people."

Currently, the hospital has nine clinical trials ranging in focus from arthritis and dermatology, to rehabilitation and feline kidney disease. ■



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What Would Lincoln Say Today?



Photos courtesy of Lincoln Institute for Education, Inc

By Jonie Larson

Age is working to Fritz Klein's advantage. With each passing year, he believes he looks more and more like the man he often strives to be: Abraham Lincoln.

The storybook tale of Klein portraying Lincoln started in 1976 while living in Hawaii. He was a career landscaper who performed on occasion in community theater. One of his initial roles was an 1820s New England character, who wore a long coat and top hat. Someone saw him in that role and envisioned him as a Lincoln.

That was the beginning.

"When I tried to actually look like him, I found some striking similarity," Klein says.

He stands 6 foot 3 inches, less than an inch shorter than the real Lincoln stood. With inserts in his shoes, that puts Klein right in line with the 16th president.

But his height is the least of the many things that makes Klein a well-known Lincoln impersonator in this state and many others. Over the years he has developed a full Lincoln portfolio that finds him traveling the country.

Klein, who now lives in Springfield and has a schedule that's filling up by the day in this bicentennial year marking Lincoln's birthday, finds a lot to admire about the man who led the country so many years ago.

"Lincoln is a wonderful character. He wasn't flawless, but his good points are so (in the forefront) in the American memory," Klein says.

Klein says Lincoln was someone to look up to, much the way the Christian society finds strength in Christ. He clarified that.

"Abraham Lincoln was no way like Christ, but he is inspiring. He came from humble beginnings. If he can be that kind of person, why can't the rest of us?" Klein questions.

Klein says in his many portrayals of the 19th century leader, he likes to take the circumstances of Lincoln's day and make them relevant to present times.

With Lincoln's political career taking root in Illinois, one can only speculate what Lincoln would think about the election of Illinois Senator Barack Obama and the accusations

leveled against Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Who better to theorize on Lincoln's reaction than Klein, a man who has read and studied his many actions and reactions.

"The attorney general recently said Lincoln would be shocked by Blagojevich. My viewpoint differs. Lincoln's strength was that he was not particularly shocked by human behaviors. He worked with people who had imperfections. In his own administration, he discovered some corruption," Klein says.

So, what would have surprised Lincoln in today's society? Klein says Lincoln would have been surprised "in a good way" with the advancement of technology.

"He loved inventions ... he was the only president in history who owns a patent on his own invention" – a lift of sorts to help boats maneuver over sandbars and debris, as Klein describes it.

"No one ever bought it, but it was a great idea."

What would trouble Lincoln?

"He was very much concerned

about the exclusion of any segment of society," Klein says. Parallel to that, Klein thinks Lincoln also would have been distraught with abortion.

"I think he would have worked on behalf of unborn children, but that's a wild guess," Klein says.

He adds to the dimension of Lincoln by reminding us that Lincoln was very concerned about the advancement of the system – that his early focus wasn't on slavery, as so many might think. Klein said Lincoln believed that slavery was on a natural course of extinction, which would occur as the country developed. Because of that belief, Lincoln was first focused on many other things plaguing the country – all time highs in public intoxication and immigration and a banking crisis. Of course, all of that changed as the Civil War became a reality.



Fritz Klein, pictured here and on the cover, is part of a corporation that promotes Lincoln and a few other presidential impersonators. Those interested in hiring Klein can contact him through www.lincolninstitute.com

A schedule of Klein's upcoming appearances appears on www.icl.coop.



Traveling with Lincoln

You can find a piece of Lincoln history in every corner of Illinois

By Jonie Larson

Feb. 12 marks the celebration of the 200th birthday of the 16th president of the United States. The fact that he ran as a Republican fades in the memories of most, thinking more of his valiant efforts to lead a country through its greatest internal conflict.

Thousands of books have been authored on the man, the Internet is full of lore about him, and each of us carries around his picture in our wallets and change purses.

And so, we ask, what can a magazine that circulates through the state's rural communities, tell us about this man that we don't already know? Your co-op leaders have helped provide those answers.

He stood in Galena

Let's review some of Lincoln's notable appearances starting in northern co-op land – in the picturesque town of Galena. Lincoln spoke twice in that area, once in his early years, the other just a few years before his presidency. The date of his second visit was in July 1856.

Patrick G. Keleher, Vice President of Energy Services at Jo-Carroll Energy, Elizabeth, Ill., introduced us to Steve

Repp, historical librarian in Galena. Repp provided a clipping from the Galena Daily Advertiser, which details Lincoln's visit on that date.

Lincoln stood high above the main street that day, overlooking a large crowd from the balcony of the De Soto House (pictured above). Described as being "argumentative," Lincoln retraced the history of slavery and the "consequences of permitting the curse to spread itself." He declared



Portraying Lincoln

The messages delivered by Abraham Lincoln were so powerful that they continue to resonate in 2009, not only in print, but through impersonations.

Here, is yet another man, James Keeran, known primarily in Corn Belt territory, for his portrayals. Read more on Keeran at www.icl.coop.

Persons interested in contacting Keeran about portraying Lincoln, can call him at 309-829-3640.

in his speech that greatness had been achieved because of freedom.

The balcony where Lincoln towered over the crowd still has its place at the De Soto, but is rather non-descript to the many tourists that wander the streets of the restored town. But look up next time you walk by the De Soto. A vision of Lincoln, crawling out a second story window and then leaning over the railing to address the crowds, is really rather easy to conjure up in this town of yesteryear.

Across the state line

Venture just a bit farther north where Marty Berg, Member Relations Manager for Rock Energy Cooperative, Janesville, Wisc., put us in touch with personnel at the William Tallman home, 440 N. Jackson St., Janesville. It is there, where Lincoln bonded with Tallman on Oct. 1 and 2 of 1859, star-

ting a friendship that would endure until Lincoln's untimely death.

Tina Love, Volunteer Coordinator for the historic Italianate villa mansion, provided some details about Lincoln's overnight stay with the Tallman family. She said Lincoln had spoken at the state fair in Milwaukee and was on a speaking tour in Beloit, Wisc. Like Lincoln, Tallman was an attorney, an abolitionist and an agriculturalist. Tallman sent word, asking Lincoln to stay overnight at his home.

Lincoln, once elected president, would continue his correspondence with the Tallman family, helping one of their sons earn a job in a prestigious office of government. Their daughter, who appeared to be a little smitten with the president, would write to him. He regularly answered her letters, according to Love.

The Janesville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, annually hosts a Civil War festival in July where Lincoln, Mary Todd and General Grant make appearances. This year the festival is planned for July 18 and 19.

Details on celebrations in Janesville can be accessed and verified at www.janesvillecvb.com/lincoln.asp

Man hanged after Lincoln loses case

In 1839, mid-state and far west in Carthage, Ill., home to Western Illinois Electric, a most significant Lincoln appearance took place. Lincoln, as an attorney, represented a man in a trial, lost the case, resulting in the man's hanging.

As the story is told by Brenda Pyatt, Community Development Director for Carthage, the crime centered around a fight on a riverboat, supposedly over a cigar. William Fraim, one of the parties upset in the dispute, apparently stabbed and killed a man.

In the one-day trial at the courthouse, Lincoln tried to get Fraim off, but failed. Fraim was hanged a few weeks later at a festive event, Pyatt says, noting that school dismissed for the spectacle and families brought out picnics to observe. Justice was

delivered swiftly in Lincoln's day.

Lincoln's other visits to the area occurred during the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Markers exist throughout the county, showing places where Lincoln debated.

He visited friends in Lewiston

Moving back over into the territory served by Spoon River Electric Cooperative, Canton, Ill., folks can still stop in front of a home where Lincoln often visited good friend, Major Newton Walker. The home, now a private residence, was the gathering place for the two men on many occasions. According to tourism information from the Web, Walker and Lincoln served together in the state legislature and it was in this home that Lincoln stayed and was often entertained.

See the home and read more about it on Web sites in the Spoon River Electric Co-op territory: www.lewistownillinois.us and www.fulton-countytourism.org

Attorney on the Circuit in Shelby County

Years before Lincoln would be running for the presidency, he was an attorney, serving on the 8th Judicial Circuit, which is a part of the Shelby Electric Cooperative territory southeast of Springfield. The Vice President of Media and Public Relations Kevin Bernson says Freddie Fry, Director of Tourism in Shelby County, is the go-to person on Lincoln history in the Shelby area.

Fry says Lincoln traveled the area in 1853 and 1854, debating with Anthony Thornton, an attorney and local politician. She likened the debates to today's CNN – a place people turn to get the story.

In that decade, Fry says Lincoln represented clients in 35 cases, most of them regarding debt.

In her studies, Fry has concluded that "Central Illinois was the hotbed of politics." She said while Chicago was the hub of industry and jobs, it was downstate that made decisions that would move the country westward.

Lincoln represented a slave owner

Moving on over to more easterly regions of the state, Coles and Edgar counties are home to many Lincoln connections. EnerStar Electric Co-op's Manager of Member Services Angela Griffin, helped us find the links, one of the greatest being the home of Dr. Hiram Rutherford, a man marked by history as a friend of Lincoln and someone who championed human rights.

The story, in short, is about the doctor's attempt to free some slaves that had been brought north by a Kentucky slave owner to help harvest crops. The slaves, fearing their family would be separated, fled in the night, taking shelter with Rutherford and another man. The Kentucky slave owner, General Robert Matson, sued the two for detaining his slaves.

Lincoln enters the picture at this point. Rutherford asked his friend Lincoln to represent him against Matson, but Matson had already hired Lincoln. This case, in which Lincoln represents a slave owner, has been the study of scholars for years, according to a Coles County Legal History Project.

The home of Rutherford still stands in Oakland, Ill. It is open to visitors. Other links to Lincoln sites can be found on www.icl.coop.

Lincoln at New Salem

Like Springfield, Ill., Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, is a popular tourist destination. Located about 2 miles south of Petersburg and about 20 miles northwest of Springfield in Menard Electric Cooperative's territory, it is a reconstruction of the village where Abraham Lincoln spent his early adulthood.

According to the Web site www.lincolnewsalem.com, the six years Lincoln spent in New Salem formed a turning point in his career. Although he never owned a home in the area, Lincoln was engaged in a variety of activities while he was at New Salem.

The village is home to 12 log houses. The old buildings have been reproduced and furnished as they might have been in the 1830s.

Statues of Lincoln and Douglas in Jonesboro's Lincoln Memorial Park.



Tourists can visit the 700-acre site from March 1 to Oct. 31 when it is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Hours throughout the remainder of this month will be 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. For verification of hours before visiting call: 217-632-4000.

Southern towns celebrate debates

Steps painted on this southern sidewalk by a Jonesboro resident last year continue to mark the steps Lincoln took enroute to debate Stephen A. Douglas back in 1858. The two men were vying for a U.S. Senate seat from Illinois, making the town and the area - then known as Egypt - the third site of seven debates that took place in the state.

Just last year the area of Anna and Jonesboro, towns located in Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative territory, celebrated the sesquicentennial of those debates. A Union County committee known as P.A.S.T. - Promoting Appreciation of Structural Treasures - was formed to organize the event. It also took the initiative to get a grant from the Illinois Lincoln Bicentennial Commission to help acquire two bronze statues, one of Lincoln, the other of Douglas. The figures stand in Lincoln Memorial Park in Jonesboro.

Jerri Schaefer, Director of Communications for Southern Illinois Electric, put us in touch with Linda Hileman, who co-chairs P.A.S.T. with her husband Duane. Linda Hileman said Lincoln stayed in Anna with D.L. Phillips, a friend and one of the few Republicans in that area at that time.

P.A.S.T. is hosting a 200th birthday dinner and a breakfast with Abe this month. The dinner will be at 6 p.m., Feb. 6 at Great Boars of Fire. Reservations for the dinner are being taken by phoning 618-833-8745. Cost of the dinner is \$25.

"Breakfast With Abe" will follow the next morning from 9 to 10 a.m. at the Sunshine Inn, S. Main St., Anna. Cost is \$5. Lincoln impersonator George Buss will be attending the events. Proceeds will be going to help P.A.S.T. purchase the D.L. Phillips home, a \$200,000 preservation investment for the community. Readers wishing to contribute toward the purchase, can send funds to P.A.S.T., 190 White Pine, Anna, Ill. 62906.

This is not a complete list of rural areas Lincoln visited. Other well-known tourist sites exist in Illinois. More links can be found on www.icl.coop.

Test your knowledge of Abe

What group did Abraham Lincoln head up in Illinois?

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- The Long Nine
- The Right Brothers
- The Law Journal

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All I Wanted for Christmas was a Generator

Keep the lights on with safe use of backup generators

Every time I see a friend or family member who has a home generator, I think to myself how fortunate and prepared they are in the event a bad storm knocks out their power. I've even thought about looking into the purchase of a generator for my own home in Chatham, Ill. It would be so handy to step outside, fire up my instant source of electricity, go back inside and be the electrical hero for my family.

Some co-op members should consider a backup generator if there's a medical situation that requires electricity, or if there's a business need that justifies having a backup generator.

I really do want to be the hero of my family when the power goes out, but I have come to realize that there's much more to backup generators than most of us realize. You want to size the generator to meet your needs and not kill your budget. But most importantly, there are safe practices you must observe before putting a generator into service at your home, farm or business.

I wanted to share some of the key facts I found out about generators this winter so the next time you or I are tempted to rush out and make that purchase, we'll have more knowledge in this area.

One of the most important things to keep in mind about a generator is that they produce carbon monoxide (CO) in their exhaust, which could easily asphyxiate an entire family should the fumes enter the house through a window or open vent. The CO gas, a byproduct of combustion, is invisible and odorless and can linger for some time in confined spaces, easily overcoming an unsuspecting homeowner.

According to a study of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a typical 5.5-kilowatt generator can produce as much carbon monoxide gas as

six idling cars. In fact, after a recent hurricane season, the CDC and the Florida Department of Health reported 160 hospitalizations and at least five deaths attributed to the improper use and ventilation of home generators.

Jack Campbell, a mechanical engineer, warns consumers to never operate a generator inside the home or under a porch or carport. He says best operation of the generator is done when it's

more than 10 feet away from the home, and the exhaust of the generator is pointing away from the home. If you have gas appliances in your home you should've already installed a carbon monoxide detector. But don't create a hazard with your generator, assuming your detector will save you.

Campbell says he's seen some horrendous "hookups" and misuse of power cords when used with generators, which can all lead to some serious safety issues.

The ideal situation, if you are thinking about a generator, is to have a licensed electrician look at your home, access your emergency power needs and make recommendations.

Part of your plans should include having a licensed electrician install a double pole, double throw transfer switch for your generator. This can be costly, but also is the safest way to operate your generator. The double switch is used to prevent the flow of electricity back onto your co-op's power lines. The switch is used to isolate your homes electrical system from the co-op's power lines while your generator is in use, preventing a dangerous back feed situation. It will also protect your generator from damage.

Also, to prevent the possibility of electrical shock, keep cords from sitting in water or puddles. If you have electrical cords that are damaged or are missing an outer jacket, replace those immediately.

Lastly, proper use and storage of fuel is essential! Do not store fuel in the house and do not add fuel while the generator is running. Clean up any spilled gas before restarting the generator.

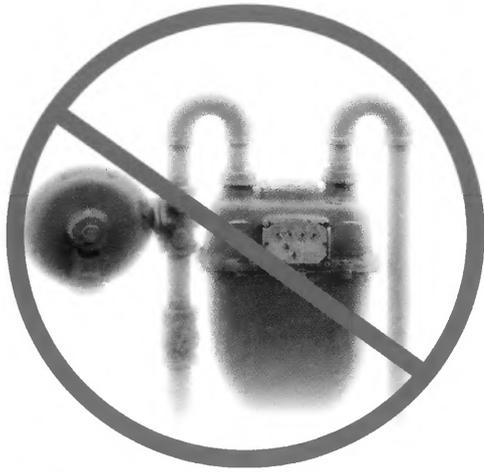
A generator can really be a life-saver during an ice outage, like several of our co-ops experienced this year, but it can also create a life-threatening hazard if not used properly.

As always, if you have any questions about generators, don't hesitate to contact your local electric cooperative. Be safe, and have confidence that your co-op linemen will do their best to keep those lights on. ■

"A typical 5.5 kilowatt generator can produce as much carbon monoxide gas as six idling cars."

Ken Macken is Manger of Safety and Loss Control for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, kmacken@aiec.coop, 217-241-7933.





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How to Start Your Own Seeds

It will give you cheaper choices and you can share

The dreary winter months are the ideal time to get a start on gardening, though lately most of us have been looking to garden centers, nurseries and big box stores to do the work for us. Maybe times are changing.

Not too long ago, the green thumbs would think nothing of purchasing seeds through a catalog company and starting their own plants for the garden. Vegetables were the primary seeds started, though some looked at flowers, while others attempted some perennials. The truly adventurous thought nothing of ordering the near dust-like petunia seeds and giving them a go.

Let's face it - starting your own seeds holds several advantages over purchasing plants locally at some store, though there are distinct disadvantages as well.

It's good to have choices

First, you can choose exactly what plants or cultivars to sow. You may desire a certain type or color unavailable locally. Let's say you rightly dislike the color pink, while others foolishly think it's the best thing since sliced bread.

Cheaper, too

Sowing seeds is also an inexpensive means of obtaining a large quantity of plants. The cost of raising 100 marigolds is much less than buying them. True, you may not need 100 marigolds. The good news is that most seeds can be saved for

several years, so you don't have to plant the entire packet in 2009.

Share with others

Or, you can work out an agreement with some others to share plants. Let's say you raise 100 tomatoes, someone else raises 100 geraniums, another grows 100 cardoon, and a fourth person produces 100 salvia. Get together over coffee in April and share three-quarters of your stock with the other, ending up with other plants. Add or

subtract the number of plants depending on the number of people in your group.



Four factors for success

Seeding success can be attributed to four factors: quality seeding medium, moisture, temperature and light.

Most homeowners use houseplant soil for starting seeds. Packaged mixes are satisfactory as long as the material is sterilized. If the mix isn't sterilized or the package has been open, sterilize the soil by placing the moistened soil in a metal pan for 30 minutes in a

200 degree Fahrenheit oven. An old meat thermometer should register between 130 and 140 degrees. By the way, cooking soil does stink. Cooking bags used for turkey are a good option to contain the smell. Opening windows is another.

Houseplant soil should be loose and well-drained. If it isn't, add peat moss, vermiculite or perlite. Some gardeners report success using individual peat pots for starting seeds. A common type is the Jiffy-7 pellet, which expands when wet. It looks like a cookie when dry, but doesn't taste like one, though there is a lot of fiber in it.

Keep it clean and cool

Make sure your starting pots or trays are clean and sanitized as well. Run them through the dishwasher, or use hot soapy water.

Order your seeds and keep them cool. The refrigerator is a great place to store them, but make sure the kids realize they aren't to be sprinkled on pizza rolls, nachos or cookies. To be on the safe side, store them with the vegetables where they probably won't be found.

Next month, we'll look at the actual techniques for starting seeds. That will give you more than enough time to get your transplants ready for spring planting. ■

David Robson is an Extension Educator, Horticulture, at the Springfield Extension Center, University of Illinois Extension, P.O. Box 8199, Springfield, IL 62791. Telephone: 217-782-6515. E-mail: drobson@uiuc.edu.



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When Opposites Attract

Dealing with the differences in temperature

I bet the first thought that you had when you read the title of this column was about marriage. Well, never fear, guys! That's not the topic as this monthly column is always about energy efficiency.

I received several complimentary comments about the December column, which taught you about Delta T and the driving force. You can review that column on the magazine's Web site - www.icl.coop. At the risk of ruining a good thing, I want to go a little further with that topic because of its importance when analyzing the energy usage of a house. If you can understand these two columns, you might be ready to graduate to energy efficiency 201.

First, let's do a little review about the Delta T. Remember you learned how warm air tries to get to the cold air until the temperatures are equal. This difference in temperatures between the warm location and the cold location is called a Delta T. You also learned how humid air tries to get to drier air until they are equal. And, hopefully, by now, you have a better understanding of why some houses have "sweaty" windows and some have areas where mold and mildew are present.

A week before I wrote this current column, a dry cold front came from the northwest and collided with a large mass of warm, humid air. As a result, tornadoes developed, which destroyed hundreds of houses in Arkansas and neighboring states. Tragically, numerous lives were also lost. That is an example of a Delta T and driving force that we all could do without. By the way, if you know of families

whose homes were destroyed and plan to rebuild, ask them to call me at my office at 501-653-7931 and I will send them my new house construction video for free. I want them to build new houses that are super comfortable and super energy efficient. And, yes, I definitely suggest building safe rooms in new homes.

While some Delta T situations are awful, such as those that produced the tornadoes, not all Delta Ts are bad. Parts of the nation received much

needed rain from these storms. Our food and water supplies are also dependent on such rain. And if it were not for the Delta T phenomenon, we would have a difficult time cooling our homes in the summer.

Consider this. When the thermostat says cooling is needed, your air conditioning unit sends warm, humid air through the cold coil. The air is cooled, condensation occurs in the coil and then trickles to a drip pan and through a little pipe to the outside of the house. The larger the Delta T, the better this system works.

Geothermal systems, which use ground loops to tap the earth's constant 58-degree temperature, have an advantage with the Delta T. That's because a geothermal coil is simply colder than most other air conditioning coils, as it is working from cool ground temperatures and not the hot outside air. A regular air conditioning unit has an outside coil and on a hot summer day, the fan in the outdoor coil is pulling hot outside air across a coil in an effort to cool that coil. I have checked temperatures of that coil on numerous occasions and found it to regularly be more than 115 degrees. You can understand that the heat transfer is better using cold groundwater in a geothermal unit than hot outside air from a standard air conditioning unit.

In addition to your air conditioning units, there are other things in the house that use Delta T in a positive way. Those include refrigerators, clothes dryers and water heaters, among others.

Well, that's all for the Delta T. I do, however, have to say something about marriage after all. A really kind lady once told a nice young couple that she thought their marriage was made in heaven. The young man replied, "So is thunder and lightning."

Until next time, stay warm and enjoy the good effects of the Delta T. ■

"Heat transfer is better using cold groundwater in a geothermal unit than hot outside air from a standard air conditioning unit."

Doug Rye, the "Doctor of Energy Efficiency-the King of Caulk and Talk" can be heard on several different Illinois radio stations. Or you can go to his Web site at www.dougyrie.com, e-mail him at info@philliprye.com, or call 888-Doug-Rye or 501-653-7931. You can also sign up for a free newsletter and order his "how to" videotapes.





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Citizen Lobbyists Play a Key Role in Policymaking

By Scott Gates

On a humid summer day in Washington, D.C., a group of up-and-coming Illinois high school seniors attending the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour negotiate Capitol Hill, moments away from meeting with their U.S. Senator and Representative. At a crosswalk, a dark-suited passerby stops, recognizes the co-op T-shirts, and introduces himself with a smile: Chuck Penry, lobbyist and Associate Director of Government Relations with Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

This is Penry in his element, pounding the pavement on Capitol Hill, meeting with policymakers on their turf to explain the consumer side of energy issues.

"Government doesn't quite work the way history books tell us," explains Dena Stoner, NRECA Vice President of Government Relations. "An array of lobbyists and special interest groups are constantly vying for policymakers' attention, all pushing their way as the right way.

Efforts by electric co-op leaders like Stoner and Penry keep national energy policy debates focused on consumer concerns. These efforts work with support from the tens of thousands of grassroots voices being heard on Capitol Hill as personal letters and e-mails sent by consumers reach lawmakers. Since electric co-ops operate in a heavily regulated industry where public policy carries far-reaching impacts, consumer involvement is particularly important.

"There's no question that the plans currently being made by policymakers could double and triple electricity rates and energy costs, easily, over the next decade or so," stresses Stoner. "Consumers are speaking up before that happens, supporting our own efforts as lobbyists. The role of these concerned consumers – these 'citizen lobbyists' – is key in shaping policy in the electric industry, where the role of government is very, very high."

The term "lobby" dates back to at least the 1600s as a place in the British House of Commons where citizens could meet with their representatives. Recognizing its importance, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrined lobbying, along with freedom of religion, freedom of speech,

freedom of the press, and freedom to protest, as a basic American right.

NRECA was formed to provide electric cooperatives with legislative representation on a national level. Most local electric co-ops also belong to a statewide association that handles lobbying functions at the state level.

"When consumers wake up in the morning, they're not thinking about whether Congress could be marking up an important measure that could impact their electric bills," says Stoner. "That's what lobbyists are for. However, our efforts are greatly supported by consumers, who can explain to elected officials what their core issues are. That's the essence of grassroots: It's a powerful, persuasive force that most special interest groups just don't have."

Electric co-op lobbying efforts have recently been reinforced by "Our Energy, Our Future"™, an organized grassroots awareness campaign that puts co-op consumers directly in touch with U.S. senators and representatives. Over the past year, more than 1.5 million messages stressing the impact of energy policy on affordable electricity have been sent to members of Congress through letters, e-mail and hand-delivered notes.

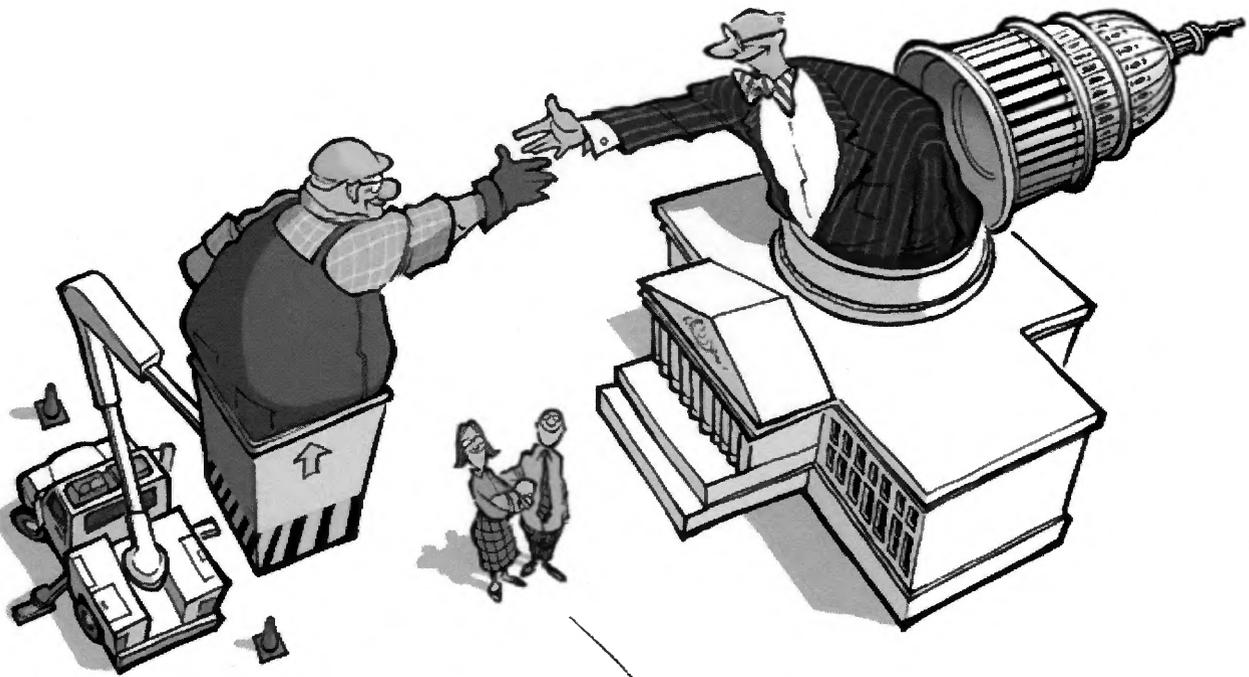
Penry credits engaged consumers for really getting through to the policy makers he meets with on Capitol Hill. State-level lobbyists – another important component of the grassroots process – also pave the way for Penry's efforts. "Without local statewide support, we wouldn't be seeing the positive response from Congress we currently have," he says.

"States drive our lobbying," Penry says. "State-level lobbyists, co-op employees, and board members convey policy details to elected officials, and consumers really drive home why that policy matters. They make issues more local, and that's really what elected officials care about – their constituency."

The glue that holds it all together are the very real, personal messages from co-op consumers being sent to Capitol Hill through the "Our Energy, Our Future" initiative-dialogue that raises the co-op voice above the drumbeat of other special interest groups.



Democracy is dependent on informed and involved citizens – citizen lobbyists. Each year electric co-ops send young co-op members to Washington, D.C. to visit with their electric leaders and to learn how democratically controlled co-ops work. In 2005, this group of young leaders from Illinois visited with then Senator and now President Barack Obama.



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Our Energy, Our Future™
A Dialogue With America



**America's Electric
Cooperatives**

**Scrambled Egg Casserole
(above right)**

- 12 eggs
- 1 T. milk
- 7 strips bacon
- 1 sm. can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 (5-oz.) jar mushrooms
- 1 C. Cheddar cheese, shredded

Beat eggs and milk lightly. Microwave bacon until crisp and then crumble. Combine egg mixture with bacon, soup, mushrooms and cheese. Pour into a 9x13-inch pan and refrigerate overnight. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

Strawberry Punch

- 1 C. strawberries, blended
- 1 (6-oz.) can frozen lemonade concentrate
- 1 (6-oz.) can frozen orange juice concentrate
- 2 C. ginger ale
- 1 pkg. strawberry Kool-Aid
- 1-1/2 C. sugar
- 1-1/2 C. water
- 1 (2 liter) bottle of 7-Up

Mix strawberries, lemonade, orange juice, ginger ale, Kool-Aid, sugar and water and freeze, stirring every 45 minutes. Add the 7-Up before serving.

Mary Todd's Pecan Cake

- 1 C. butter
- 2 C. sugar
- 6 eggs, separated
- 4 C. flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3/4 lb. pecan pieces
- 1 lb. raisins, chopped
- 1 C. orange juice
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg

Lightly cream butter. Add sugar and continue to cream. Beat egg yolks until frothy and add to the sugar mixture. Combine flour, baking powder and baking soda. Dredge nuts and raisins in 1/4 C. of flour mixture. Alternately add orange juice and flour mixture. Beat well. Add pecans and raisins. Add nutmeg. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into batter. Pour into a greased and floured pan (tube, fluted or Turks mold/Bundt pan) or into two smaller round cake pans. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes.

Photos by Catrina McCulley Wagner

A. Lincoln Cookbook

Who: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

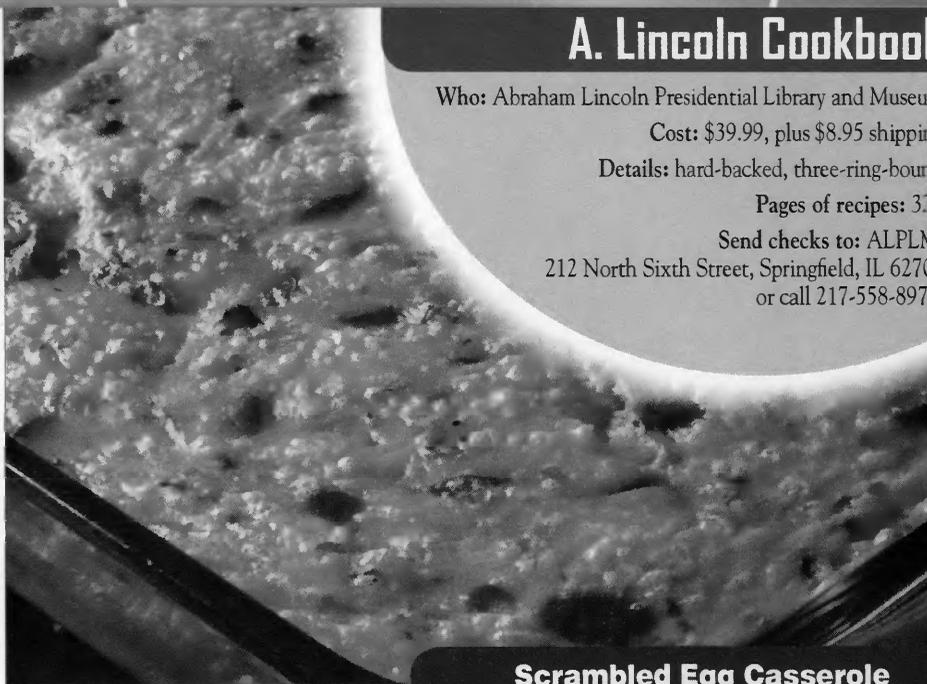
Cost: \$39.99, plus \$8.95 shipping

Details: hard-backed, three-ring-bound

Pages of recipes: 37

Send checks to: ALPLM

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or call 217-558-8974



Scrambled Egg Casserole

Sarah Rutledge's Corn Muffins (below)

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 egg | 1/2 tsp. baking soda |
| 3 T. sugar | 1 tsp. cold water |
| 1 tsp. salt | 1 C. flour |
| 1 C. cornmeal | 4 tsp. baking powder |
| 4 T. butter, melted and cooled somewhat | 1 C. buttermilk |

Beat egg and add sugar and salt. Add cornmeal. Slowly add butter. Dissolve baking soda in cold water and add to mixture. Combine flour and baking powder and sift twice. Alternately add buttermilk and flour mixture to batter. Pour batter into muffin tins or cornbread-stick pans. Bake at 375° for about 15-20 minutes.



Sarah Rutledge's Corn Muffins

Pleasures From The Good Earth

Chicken Soufflé Casserole

9 slices of bread, crusts removed
4 C. cooked chicken, diced
1 C. fresh, sliced mushrooms
1/4 C. butter
1 sm. onion, chopped
1 (8-oz.) can sliced water chestnuts
1/2 C. mayonnaise
9 slices sharp Cheddar
4 eggs, beaten
2 C. milk
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of mushroom soup
2 C. croutons

Line a large, flat buttered baking dish with bread. Top with chicken. Sauté mushrooms and onion in butter for 5 minutes; spoon over chicken with water chestnuts. Dot with mayonnaise and top with cheese. Beat eggs, milk and 1 tsp. salt together; pour over chicken. Mix together soups and pour over all. Cover with foil and refrigerate overnight. Bake at 350° for 2 to 2-1/2 hours. Add croutons for the last 20-30 minutes of baking time.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Brownies

1/2 C. creamy or crunchy peanut butter
1/4 C. butter, softened
1 C. firmly packed light brown sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 C. self-rising flour
1 C. (6-oz.) semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 300°. Coat an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a medium bowl, with an electric beater on medium speed, beat the peanut butter, butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Blend in the vanilla, then beat in the flour. Fold in the chocolate chips until well combined, then spread evenly in the baking pan. Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until golden. Remove from the oven and place the pan on a wire rack. Allow to cool completely before cutting.

Cheesy Artichoke Dip

1 (14-oz.) jar artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
1 (8-oz.) pkg. Mozzarella cheese
1/2 C. Parmesan cheese
1 C. mayonnaise

Mix artichoke hearts, cheeses and mayonnaise together. Pour into a small casserole. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve with crackers.

Who: United Methodist Church of Anna

Cost: \$7.50, plus \$3 shipping

Details: soft-backed, comb-bound

Pages of recipes: 161

Send checks to:

Cookbooks – United Methodist Church Anna,
P.O. Box 607, Anna, IL 62906
or call 618-833-2234.

White Chili (above)

1 lb. Navy beans, soaked overnight	1/2 tsp. salt
1 lg. onion, chopped	1/2 tsp. white pepper
1 stick butter	2 sm. cans chopped green chilies, drained
1/4 C. flour	5 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cooked and chopped
3/4 C. chicken broth	Sour cream (opt.)
2 C. half and half	Monterey Jack cheese (opt.)
1 tsp. Tabasco sauce	
1 tsp. ground cumin	

Sauté onions. Set aside. In a large stockpot, melt butter. Add in flour, stirring until a golden brown paste forms. Add chicken broth and half and half, stirring constantly until thickened. Add onions, Tabasco sauce, cumin, salt, pepper, green chilies, chicken and beans. Heat to a boil, then turn to low and simmer for 30 minutes. Serve with sour cream and Monterey Jack cheese.

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

A Healthy Heart to Love

February is a time to think about hearts. Not just the Valentine's Day kind, but also the hearts that beat inside our chests, keep us alive and allow us to spend more precious time with our loved ones.

Heart disease is our number one killer, and one in three adults suffer from heart attack, stroke or other forms of cardiovascular disease.

Since 1963, Congress has required the president to proclaim February American Heart Month. And in Illinois, it's also Women's Heart Disease Awareness Month, thanks to a new state law. So, celebrate this month by taking a brisk walk, learning CPR or trying out a new heart-healthy recipe like the one below.

Chicken Breasts Stuffed with Ricotta and Goat Cheese



Vegetable oil spray
4 (4-oz.) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, all visible fat discarded

Stuffing

1 (7-oz.- ctn. fat-free or reduced-fat ricotta cheese
2-oz. soft goat cheese
2 T. snipped fresh parsley or
2 teaspoons dried, crumbled

1 T. snipped fresh chives or chopped green onions (green part only)

Sauce

1 (8-oz.) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
2 tsp. salt-free Italian herb seasoning
1-1/2 tsp. chopped fresh oregano or
1/2 tsp. dried, crumbled oregano
1 med. garlic clove, minced
1/4-1/2 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper

Directions: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly spray a 1-quart casserole dish with vegetable oil spray. In a small bowl, stir together the stuffing ingredients. In another small bowl, stir together the sauce ingredients. Put the chicken with the smooth side up between two pieces of plastic wrap. Using a rolling pin, lightly flatten the breasts to a thickness of 1/4 inch, being careful not to tear the meat. Spoon about one quarter of the stuffing down the middle of each breast. Starting with the short end, roll up the breast jellyroll style. Place the breast in the prepared casserole dish with the seam side down (no need to secure with toothpicks). Repeat with the other breasts. Spoon the sauce over the breasts. Bake, covered, for 40 to 45 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink in the center.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

Calories 236
Total Fat 5.5 g
Saturated 3.5 g
Polyunsaturated 0.5 g
Monounsaturated 1.5 g

Cholesterol 81 mg
Sodium 481 mg
Carbohydrates 7 g
Fiber 1 g
Protein 36 g

5 Ways to Love Your Heart

1 Start! Movin' - Studies show that for every hour of regular, vigorous exercise, you could add two more hours to your life. Walking is an easy way to take advantage of that two-for-one deal. To learn more, visit www.heart.org/start.

2 Get the 411 - You know your phone number, your social security number, even your PIN number, but do you know the numbers that can save your life, like your cholesterol levels or blood pressure? Get your numbers from your doctor, and then try the free online heart checkup at www.goredforwomen.org. Learn your risk, and help protect yourself from heart disease and stroke.

3 Stop Smoking - The health benefits start almost immediately, and within a few years of quitting your risk of stroke and coronary artery disease are similar to non-smokers. For tips on how, visit www.heart.org/quitsmoking.

4 Raise healthier kids - A recent study found that the neck arteries of obese children and teens look like those of 45-year-olds! This fatty buildup of plaque within arteries feeding the brain can lead to heart attack and stroke. Considering that one in three kids in the U.S. are overweight or obese, this is an issue we all need to be concerned about. Learn more about childhood obesity at www.healthiergeneration.org.

5 Get involved - You don't have to be a doctor to save lives - just an advocate with the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association. Go to www.yourethecure.org to learn more about how you can support important health legislation.

For more healthy tips,
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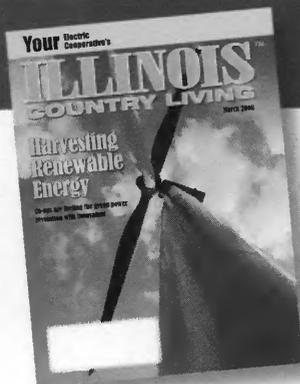
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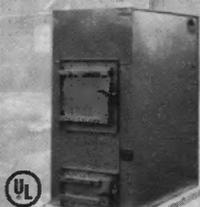


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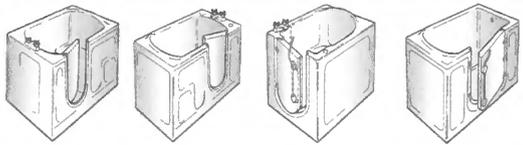
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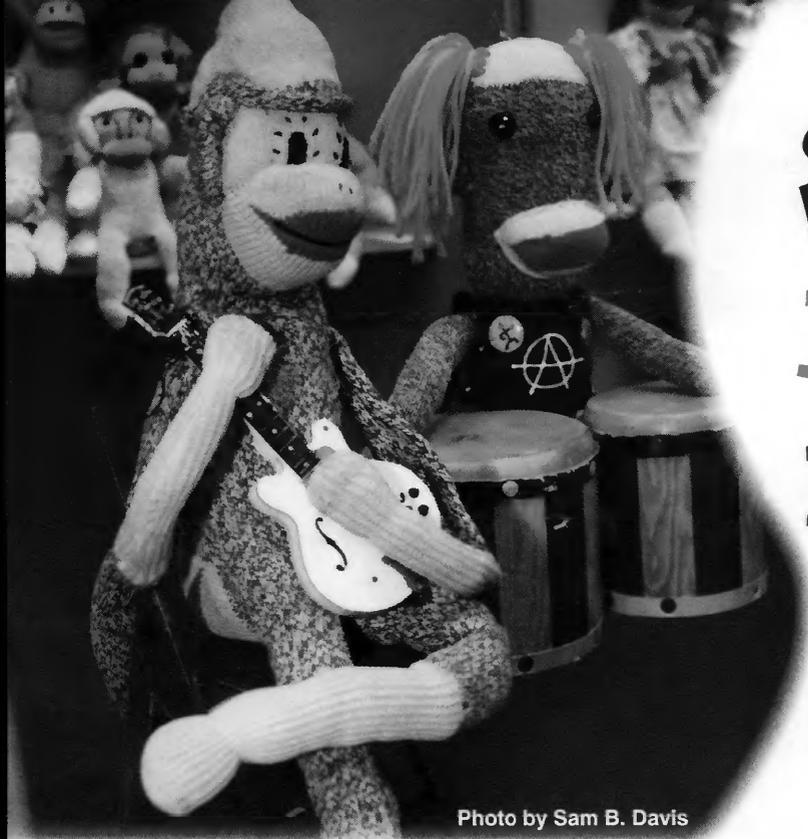


Photo by Sam B. Davis

SOCK MONKEY MADNESS!

Rockford, Ill. Celebrates a Cottage Industry

By Jen Danzinger

This March, more than 1,500 people from across the United States will arrive in Rockford to celebrate a unique part of America's history: the sock monkey. The Midway Village Museum hosts an annual weekend-long festival where crafty fans, young and old, can participate in themed events about the beloved stuffed animal.

"The Sock Monkey Madness Festival has enriched the Rockford region by educating the public regarding this special part of forgotten local history, thus giving the city national attention as 'The Home of the Sock Monkey,'" says Mark Herman, Curator of Education at the Midway Village Museum.

What brings the sock monkey enthusiasts, Herman says, "is a combination of nostalgia because this is something that's been going on for generations. They might have had one as a child, or their grandmother made them one. It's unique to Rockford and has a little touch of history to it. People are coming back to the roots of where it all started."

From 1932 until 1992, Rockford was home to the Nelson Knitting Company, the only manufacturer of Red Heel Socks (necessary for the signature red mouth and behind of the sock monkey). While sock dolls had long been a

staple of Americana folk art, it was the inclusion of the official pattern with every package of Red Heels that made the sock monkey a national star in the 1950s.

"The interest in creating a uniquely American handmade doll is still around to this day," Herman says.

Since many of the sock monkeys from the 1950s were designed as clowns and acrobats, "Under the Big Top," was chosen as this year's theme. Circus-themed monkeys, as well as other animals, such as the sock elephant, will be in their element under indoor tents and surrounded by circus decorations and music.

Highlights include an international film festival, featuring short movies starring creatures of the sock persuasion. Sick monkeys in need of repair can get a free check up at the Sockford General Hospital. A new event this year is book signings by several authors of sock monkey books.

Monkeys of all ages (and their owners) are welcome to show off their personalities, talents or good looks in the Mr/Ms Sockford Pageant. Last year's youth division winner was Monkey Jackson, "with a great dance number to the song 'Billie Jean,' complete with moon walking, a fedora hat and a

single silver glove," recalls Herman.

One of the most popular items on the weekend agenda is the "Make-A-Monkey" workshop. Guided by expert Midway Village "Monkey Mavens," participants will learn how to make their very own sock monkey from scratch.

Not up to the challenge of sewing one together in the matter of a couple hours? Fully-formed sock monkeys manufactured from official Red Heel Socks will be for sale, along with many accoutrements, such as hats, clothes and sock monkey themed items hand crafted by visiting vendors.

Don't miss your chance to monkey around at the Midway Village Museum!

5th Annual Sock Monkey Madness: Under the Big Top

March 7-8, 2009

Admission: \$7 for adults
\$4 for children and students
Free for museum members

Midway Village Museum
6799 Guilford Road
Rockford, IL 61107

<http://www.midwayvillage.com>

2/27-3/1, Country Treasures Craft Show at the Keller Convention Center in Effingham. Dozens of crafters exhibit their creations. 217-347-5115.

2/27-3/1, RV and Camping Show in Rock Island. The latest in RV and camping from dealers all over Illinois. Exhibits for all of the extras in RV and camping supplies. Friday, 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$6 for adults, \$1 for kids ages 6-16, free for children younger than 6 years. 309-788-5912.

3, Forefathers of Russian Music in DeKalb. The Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra will provide you with colorful and powerful music from 19th century Russia. The orchestra will take you through a musical journey with composers who helped create Russian nationalism. 815-756-3728 or www.kishorchestra.org.

4-5, The 20th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Peoria. The conference is sponsored by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn and Rural Partners. www.IIRA.org or 800-526-9943.

4-14, Effingham Arts Guild's 15th Annual Fine Art Show at the Rosebud Theatre in Effingham. Professional and amateur artists display their work. 217-540-2787 or suzgra@juno.com.

5-8, Lake Sara Boat Show at the Village Square Mall in Effingham. See what's new in boat selections. 217-342-6344, lakesaramarina@lsmboats.com or <http://lsmboats.com>.

6-8, Antique Spectacular at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island. This show will be overflowing with a wonderful collection of fine antiques and collectibles for sale. Featured will be select antique dealers with unique merchandise from around the world. Show hours are Friday, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$6 and is good for all three days. 712-326-9964, info@qccaexpoctr.com or <http://www.qccaexpoctr.com>.

Visit our Web site, www.icl.coop.



7-8, Sock Monkey Madness: Under the Big Top in Rockford. Rockford is where the famous sock monkeys got their start. Midway Village Museum is planning a day of monkeyshines to celebrate, including workshops, film festival, Ms./Mr. Sockford monkey pageants, sock monkey collections from around the country and more. 815-397-9112 or www.midwayvillage.com.

7, Home, Lawn and Garden Day at Central Catholic High School in Bloomington. 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. Enjoy a keynote speaker, many classes, handouts, lunch, snacks, exhibitors and door prizes. 309-663-8306.

7-8, The Seventh Annual Spring Home Improvement Show at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds in Kankakee. This event features local and regional vendors for siding, windows, heating, remodeling and more. Come see what they can do to make your home better! Demonstrations and raffles are held by various vendors throughout the day. 815-482-4131, info@visitkankakeecounty.com or <http://www.visitkankakeecounty.com>.

13-14, Dinner and a Murder! in Galena. Halloween. Seance. Murder! Friends and relatives will be decked out in their Halloween costumes to witness the reading of the will and to unmask the killer of Madame Gaze. Friday night reception, dinner and murder on Saturday night. <http://www.bestofgalena.com>.

15, The 27th annual Farm Toy and Antique Tractor Show in Sublette. Walk through five buildings with more than 300 tables of farm toys including a full range of cast iron, plastic and metal toys. The show also includes exhibitors from throughout the Midwest showcasing their displays of semi-tractors, baseball cards, trains and crafts. A pancake breakfast will be served from 7 a.m. – 12 p.m. 815-849-5242.

15, Bunny's Birthday Party at Miller Park Zoo in Bloomington. 1 – 3 p.m. Celebrate Bunny's birthday with crafts, face painting by the Zoo Crew, games and birthday cake. This event will take place indoors and is free with admission to the zoo. 309-434-2250 or www.millerparkzoo.org.

20-29, To Kill a Mockingbird at the Alton Little Theater in Alton. The novel, written by Harper Lee, deals with Civil Rights and racial bigotry in the segregated southern United States of the 1930s. Told through the eyes of the memorable Scout Finch, you learn about her father, Atticus, an attorney who hopelessly strives to prove the innocence of a black man unjustly accused of rape, and about Boo Radley, a mysterious neighbor who saves Scout and her brother, Jem, from being killed. 618-462-6562 or <http://www.altonlittletheater.org>.

21, Ambassadors of Harmony at Anne Witney Olin Theatre in Godfrey. The Ambassadors of Harmony is a world-class a cappella chorus of more than 100 men, headquartered in St. Charles, Mo. They've won numerous awards for their talents, including the International Chorus Championship and Barbershop Harmony Society International Chorus Competition. 618-468-4222 or edmar@pisanet.com.

27-29, Flower and Garden Show at QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island. Upon entering, you will be assured that spring is truly just around the corner! Professionally decorated display gardens lead the way to the beautiful waterfall. The flowers, street lights, patios and trees add a fragrant scent to the air to bring out spring fever. A great shopping venue for purchasing garden items, outdoor landscaping, decks, fences and sunrooms. More than 100 exhibitors! Admission is \$6 for adults, \$1 for kids ages 6-16, free for children under 6 years. 309-788-5912 or www.qccaxpo.com.

28, An Evening of Sweet Deals at Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa in Galena. Dinner and sweet deals, including five rounds of silent auctions, a live auction and a Celebrity Chef Competition. 815-235-8777 or www.gsgreenhills.org.



19-22, The 14th Annual John Deere Two-Cylinder Tractor Show at the Village Square Mall in Effingham. Enjoy a display of two cylinder tractors. 217-347-0623.



26-29, Galena Wine Lovers Weekend at various locations throughout Galena. Enjoy a grand tasting and wine auction, wine dinners and wine, spirit and beer tasting, cooking demonstrations and brunches all weekend. 815-777-3938 or www.wineloversweekend.com.

27-29, Wine Lovers Weekend at Massbach Ridge Winery in Elizabeth. 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. Winery tours and barrel tasting of locally grown, award winning wines. Sample Massbach wines paired with chocolates and local cheeses. \$5 tasting fee. 815-291-6700 or www.massbachridge.com.

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: January 15 for April Events, February 15 for May Events Mail to: Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708 E-mail to: cwagner@aiec.coop



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