

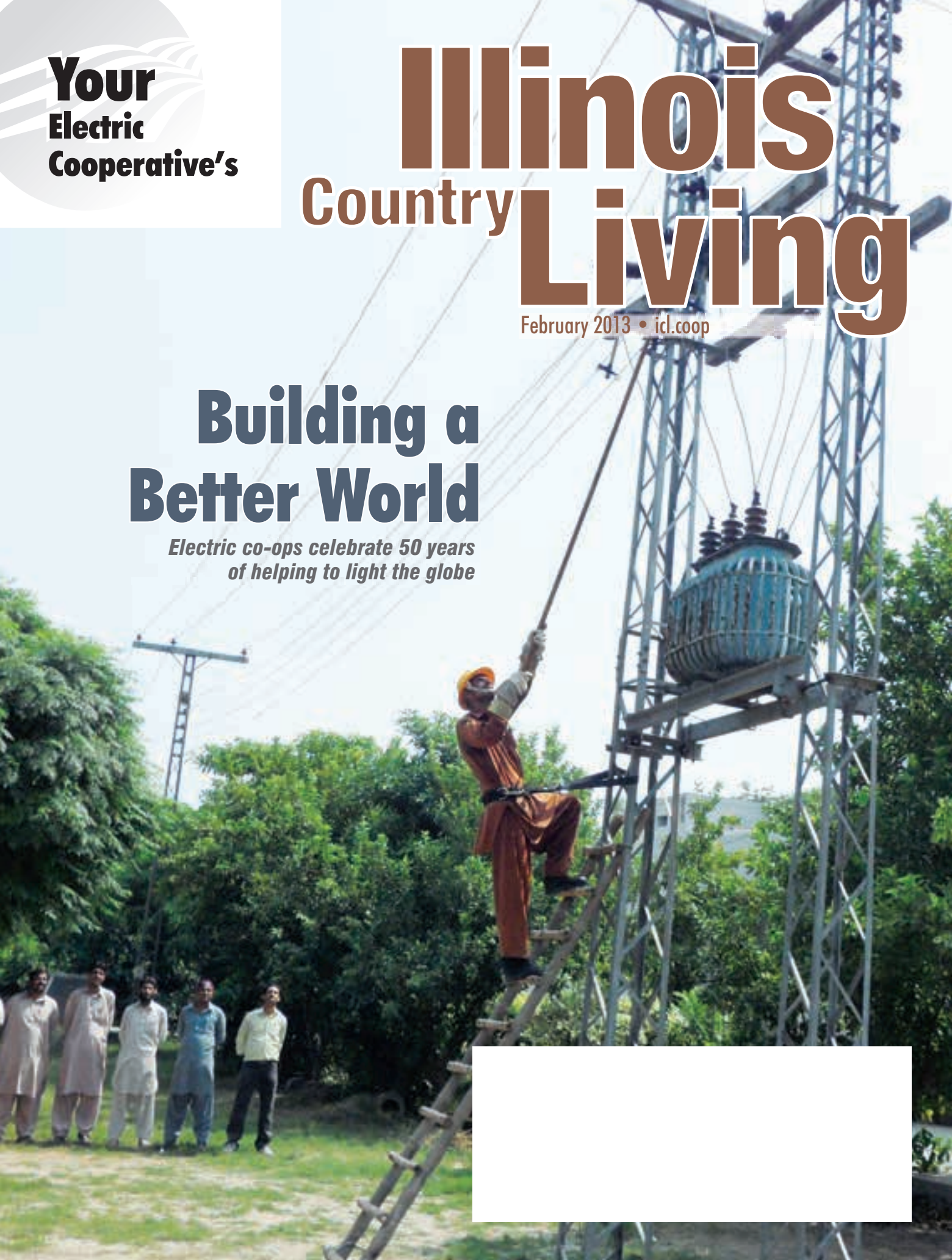
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Illinois Country Living

Published by

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives
6460 South Sixth Frontage Road East,
Springfield, IL 62712

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Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of the locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois. With a circulation of more than 181,000, the magazine informs cooperative members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

Illinois Country Living (ISSN number 1086-8062) is published monthly and is the official publication of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 South Sixth Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. The cost is \$2.50 plus postage per year for members of subscribing cooperatives and \$10 per year for all others. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Illinois, and additional mailing offices.

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

ADVERTISING: Contact Lisa Rigoni, Advertising Manager – 1-800-593-2432 or lrigoni@aiec.coop. Acceptance of advertising by the magazine does not imply endorsement by the publisher or the electric cooperatives of Illinois of the product or service advertised. Illinois Country Living is not responsible for the performance of the product or service advertised.



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A time for co-ops

New market forces and a long-term view favor co-op growth

Cooperative businesses have traditionally been formed by necessity. Private enterprise was not eager to enter marginal ventures and/or remote locations, so groups formed to supply needed goods and services. Rooted in cultural ties of history and location, and focused on the common goals of similar patrons, cooperative efforts have often been the backbone of support for many regions and purposes.

Co-ops have struggled to compete at times. Privately held businesses, with the aid of greater capital and more aggressive management, have responded with fierce opposition in the marketplace. Sometimes the very principles upon which co-ops were formed hamper them in the battle to attract and keep customer loyalty.

Co-ops have countered in various ways. The Farm Credit System has been successful by exploiting special regulatory status as a government-sponsored enterprise (GSE) allowing cheaper access to capital than banks. Other co-ops have broadened their business plans to enter more markets.

Until recently, fairly stable market shares were status quo. That may change in favor of co-ops given new global market forces at work. In fact, in many sectors, but especially agriculture, I see the future as ripe for the expansion of co-ops at the expense of publicly held companies.

Primarily this is because what was once seen as the co-op's Achilles heel is now a powerful advantage: less entanglement with Wall Street. This also applies to closely held companies, such as Cargill or Ferrero Roche, for the same reasons.

Too many public companies have been forced to concentrate on quarterly reports to meet shareholder expectations. As volatility increases

along with money flows, few boards or CEO's have the incentive to think even medium term. "Outside" money demands "outside" goals, which too often center on "What have you done for my portfolio this week?"

Well run co-ops are able to withstand market pressure to effect strategies that may return huge dividends long term, not to mention stability. There are conspicuous success stories.

Consider how two similar insurance companies, State Farm (a mutual insurance company owned by and run for the benefit of its members) and Allstate (public stock company) have handled "Flo." Flo is the omnipresent spokesperson for Progressive, which along with Geico and other Internet sellers have shaken the sleepy world of auto insurance.

Allstate has struggled, cutting costs and agents in an effort to pump up their stock price, while State Farm has been able to transition to meet the new competition with much less turmoil among agents and customers. In difficult times, longstanding relationships with patrons can provide an atmosphere of patience virtually unknown in the increasingly abstract world of hot money and algorithmic trading.

University of Massachusetts economist Nancy Folbre believes co-ops have a head start because of their mastery of teamwork, a powerful tool in a business world now too complex for a lone gifted leader to make all the difference. The model should be Google, not Galt, in other words. As public companies struggle to get owners and employees on the same page, co-ops build on a history of, well, cooperation.

Another good example is DLG, the Danish ag cooperative. By making

long-term commitments when others were maximizing short-term profits, they have grown in a few years from a small domestic co-op to one of Europe's largest ag firms.

Furthermore, co-ops are positioned to provide something in desperately short supply in agribusiness—trust. By adherence to member-centered principles, co-ops stand out as demonstrably trust worthier in an increasingly indifferent, if not hostile, marketplace.

Unfortunately, too many member-owned ventures do not understand these market opportunities. This is why co-op consolidation and failure will be every bit as furious as in public companies. Cooperation can leverage competence, but not replace it.

The co-op structure may be about to outgrow its historic role of a self-help organization for underserved sectors. By acknowledging common goals and a shared future, they have positioned their businesses and patrons to avoid many modern business headaches. And by keeping ownership "in the family" they avoid the whiplash from the whims of skittish investors. In the process, a step is taken to rebuild the foundations of efficient business practice by offering a stark alternative to examples like Enron or MF Global. ■

John Phipps is a columnist for Farm Journal, Top Producer, and the host for US Farm Report. He and his family farm 2,100 acres near Christman, Ill. and he is an award-winning speaker. www.johnhipps.com.





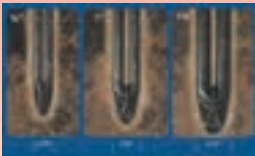
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IEMA updates 'Ready Illinois' website

The state's website for community and individual information disaster preparedness is now even easier to use. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) launched an updated Ready Illinois website (www.Ready.Illinois.gov) to help connect people with information they need to be prepared for many types of emergencies.

"The Ready Illinois website is a 'one-stop shop' for information on what to do before, during and after a disaster," said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. During the February 2011 blizzard, the site had more than two million hits in just a three-day period.

In addition to offering guidance on developing an emergency preparedness plan and building home emergency kits, the website also provides real-time emergency updates during disasters, including road closures, shelter locations and more.



Ameren President & CEO meets with Prairie Power Board

Richard J. Mark, the new President & CEO of Ameren Illinois, met with Jay Bartlett, President & CEO of Prairie Power, Inc., the generation and transmission co-op's board of directors and Duane Noland, President & CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives on December 11 at PPI's headquarters in Jacksonville. Both Mark and Bartlett agreed there were opportunities for the electric cooperatives and Ameren to work cooperatively on improving utility infrastructure and moving toward a smarter grid.

Although Ameren and ComEd have had some difficulties getting approval from the Illinois Commerce Commission for investment in infrastructure improvements such as smart metering, Bartlett said 80 percent of the cooperatives have already made the investment in smart metering.

"It fits very well with what you all are trying to build," Bartlett told Mark. "If there are opportunities where it is mutually beneficial for us to join forces, we are all for that."

Mark replied, "Ameren as well as ComEd will start gearing up those investments and rebuilding the infrastructure. What we are trying to do is make sure that we do it in a way that is smart, because the investments that we are making today in



Prairie Power, Inc. President/CEO Jay Bartlett (left) met with the new Ameren Illinois President/CEO Richard Mark (center) and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' President/CEO Duane Noland at PPI's headquarters in Jacksonville.

rebuilding the infrastructure will be the electric distribution system that our children and their children will be using 50 years from now. I'm excited about the future. We will be rebuilding a major part of our system over the next eight years or so. If there is ever any time we can partner and work together in a cooperative way just let us know."

Ameren Illinois plans to invest about \$625 million in its infrastructure in the next 10 years.

Bartlett said, "We believe that a healthy Ameren is important to us. There is a lot that can be done between the cooperatives and Ameren to help keep the lights on for all of our customers. I'm very proud to say the relationship between the cooperatives' and Ameren's operations forces remains strong. Everyone is trying to do more with less, and the cost pressures are tremendous. I hope we can continue to improve our ability to coordinate to keep service reliable for everyone."



Illinois Wind for Schools accepting applications

Now in its second year, the Illinois Wind for Schools (ILWFS) program is accepting applications from highly motivated middle school and high school teachers in Illinois public school districts. Three to five middle and/or high schools are selected each academic year as ILWFS partner schools for intensive support through on-site teacher training and classroom resources. Those who are sincerely interested in incorporating wind energy into their curriculum and providing outreach to their community are encouraged to apply by March 1, 2013. Applications are available at www.ilwfs.org. Eligible disciplines include math, science, agriculture, industrial

technology, engineering and related subjects.

According to Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs Wind Energy Program Coordinator Jolene Willis, the program offers curriculum development resources, professional development, on-site technical assistance and instructional equipment. "In addition, there are numerous education and training programs offered throughout Illinois."

For more information regarding the Illinois Wind for Schools program, contact Willis at 309-298-2835 or Matt Aldeman at 309-438-1440, or visit www.ilwfs.org to download the application.

Rep. Emerson named as next NRECA CEO

During its Winter Board Meeting on December 3, 2012, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors announced that U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.) will assume the role of NRECA CEO effective March 1. Emerson, who will become the fifth CEO in NRECA's 71-year history, will officially join the organization on February 11.

NRECA Board President Mike Guidry of Louisiana says, "Jo Ann Emerson's background as a member of Congress and a trade association executive-coupled with her extensive knowledge of the issues facing electric cooperatives and rural America-make her eminently qualified to lead NRECA and represent the interests of its members. The respect she has from both sides of the aisle and her proven ability to bridge political and policy divides and find common ground will serve us well."

Emerson, first elected to the U.S. House in 1996 from Missouri's 8th Congressional District, most recently served on the House Appropriations Committee and as chairman of the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, which has oversight of the U.S. Treasury, the Internal Revenue Service and



Source: Kyle Spradley, Rural Missouri

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.), right, NRECA CEO-designate, meets with 2011 Rural Electric Youth Tour students from the Show Me State outside House chambers at the U.S. Capitol.

various independent federal agencies, including the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the General Services Administration and the Small Business Administration. In addition, she has taken a leadership role on agriculture, health care, and government reform issues during her congressional career and won recognition for her work on energy,

including being presented with the NRECA Distinguished Service Award in 2006.

Emerson says, "NRECA is committed to the electric cooperatives of this great nation, and works hard every day to improve the quality of life for their consumer-members. I am very honored to join an outstanding organization to work on their behalf."

Consumer energy efficiency tax credit extended

The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 passed by Congress on January 3 provides extensions of energy tax credit provisions for homeowners seeking energy-efficiency improvements. Under section 25C, homeowners can claim a \$500 maximum tax credit to cover material costs of energy-efficient upgrades to existing homes for all taxable years. The credit is only redeemable if the upgrades are in place by the end of 2013.

If a taxpayer has claimed \$500 or more of this tax credit in any year prior to 2013, they may not claim any additional credit. For eligible taxpayers, the tax credit can be applied to any of the following upgrades: additional insulation, energy efficient windows, window films, home sealing (for cracks in the building shell), electric heat

pumps, natural gas, oil and propane furnaces, central air conditioning units and air-source heat pumps, natural gas, propane or oil water heaters, biomass fuel property (a stove that burns biomass fuel for heating the home or hot water).

Some other energy efficiency tax credits that went into effect in 2006 and will not expire until Dec. 31, 2016 include those for solar water heat, photovoltaics, wind, fuel cells, geothermal heat pumps, other solar-electric technologies and fuel cells using renewable fuels.

For specific requirements and limitations of the above-listed incentives, please visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) website at www.dsireusa.org under "residential energy efficiency tax credit."

Museum saves \$1,200 a month with geothermal system

A \$44,758 GeoAlliance grant was recently presented to the Savanna Museum and Cultural Center, Savanna, to help in funding the installation of a geothermal heat pump heating and cooling system. The grant program is funded by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) and administered by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC).

The purpose of the grant program is to encourage the use of clean and efficient geothermal systems to heat and cool not-for-profit and public facilities that receive electric service from Illinois electric cooperatives.

John Lecomte, Savanna Historical Society Board Trustee, said the board was surprised to learn that the building they'd selected for the museum and cultural center had extremely high electric bills. "The store's monthly bill just for heat was as much as \$1,500 per month," said Lecomte. "So, we decided to go with geothermal technology and pursued the GeoAlliance grant. Our utility bills for the entire building are now less than \$300 per month for heat



Shown at the Savanna Museum and Cultural Center GeoAlliance geothermal check presentation from left, front row, are: Heidi Weber, Jo-Carroll Energy Manager of Member Relations and Marketing; John LeComte, Savanna Historical Society (SHS) Board Member; Jeannine Mills, SHS Board Member; Nancy McDonald, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives Marketing Administrator; and Larry Stebbins, Mayor of Savanna. Pictured from left, back row are: John Scott, Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. Energy Advisor; Jean Jones, SHS Treasurer; State Senator Mike Jacobs; Gene Wright, SHS Board Member; Carol Wright, SHS Board Member; and Keith Brown, SHS Vice-President.

and closer to \$200 per month for air conditioning. We're very pleased."

GeoAlliance grant funding will be available until June 30, 2013, or until the funding has been depleted prior to that date. For more information about the GeoAlliance grant program,

contact your local electric cooperative. You can also call Nancy McDonald at the AIEC at (217) 241-7954 or e-mail her at nmcdonald@aiec.coop, or visit the association's website at www.aiec.coop.



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A photograph of a man in a trench, smiling and holding a power cable. The trench is dug into the earth, and there are some plants visible in the background. The man is wearing a dark shirt and appears to be working on an electrical project.

Building a Better World

Electric co-ops celebrate 50 years of helping to light the globe

By Frank K. Gallant

For 70 years, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) has represented America's electric co-ops, fighting to keep electricity affordable, reliable and safe, and improve the quality of life in rural America. But over the past half-century, the scope of its work has reached far beyond U.S. borders.

On Nov. 1, 1962, NRECA and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) - then a relatively new federal agency set up "to assist people overseas struggling to make a better life" (and resist communist expansion) - formed a partnership to carry the successful U.S. electric cooperative model to distant lands. President John F. Kennedy witnessed the signing of the agreement where he stated, "...this contract holds special promise for those countries which have realized only a small fraction of their energy potential."

In the ensuing 50 years, with the support of more than 300 NRECA

member co-ops, including many from Illinois, NRECA International has spearheaded electrification projects that have resulted in increased agricultural productivity, millions of new jobs, and enhanced quality of life for more than 100 million people in 40-plus nations.

"Building a better planet takes experience," NRECA CEO Glenn English remarks. "And no group has more experience bringing low-cost power to far-flung communities than America's electric co-ops."

One of the first projects in the late 1960s took NRECA International experts-and later volunteers from Lenoir, N.C. based Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation to Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to form Cooperativa Rural de Electrificación Ltda. CRE, as it is known, grew rapidly and has emerged as the world's largest electric co-op, with more than 450,000 members. NRECA International remains in Bolivia and

is in talks with Cochabamba Power and Light Company about line extension proposals to irrigate the isolated Cochabamba Valleys region. To date, at least 25 percent of the Bolivian distribution system development has been supported by NRECA International funding and expertise.

As NRECA International began branching out, it adopted a slogan: "Electrifying the world ... one village at a time." A 1977 pilot study in Bangladesh led to the establishment of 70 co-ops that now distribute power to 45 million rural residents.

When an NRECA International team arrived in the Philippines 40 years ago, 80 percent of the population lived in rural areas with less than 10 percent receiving central station electric service. Today, 78 percent of the South Pacific nation's dwellings have power, and 119 rural co-ops now serve 40 million consumers.

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives employee Paul Dow

has been to the Philippines, Haiti and Guatemala to help produce video documentaries on the International Program and the co-op employees that volunteer their services.

While in Haiti, Dow took follow-up video of advances made since the Haitian earthquake over a year ago. He went to Guatemala with co-op volunteers from Shelby and Adams Electric and took footage of the training taking place there. His most recent trip to the Philippines was to record NRECA involvement in that country over the past 40 years. Dow traveled to three electric cooperatives that were the Philippines “pioneers of electrification” in the 1970s. He also visited a fishing village that was electrified five years ago.

A number of other projects have been equally successful, points out Dan Waddle, Senior Vice President of NRECA International. “The four electric co-ops in Costa Rica represent approximately 15 percent of the total electric distribution market and cover roughly 40 percent of rural areas in that country. They are completely self-sustaining and have expanded the scope and range of their offerings. Costa Ricans are gung ho for democracy, so they really embrace co-ops.”

The four Costa Rican organizations, along with co-ops and rural municipal utilities in Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, make up the Smart Grid Alliance, which aims to use large commercial and industrial accounts to demonstrate advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). AMI is a comprehensive set of technologies and software applications that combine two-way communications with smart meters to provide electric utilities—using frequent meter reads—with near real-time oversight of system operations. Through the alliance, American co-ops will be able to share smart grid technology, experiences, and best practices.

“It’s a rare opportunity for these participants,” Waddle asserts. “They don’t have access to distribution

automation technology like we do. They’re small, they’re rural, and vendors don’t visit them very often except to sell products. They seldom have the opportunity for real exchange.”

Leading the charge from Virginia

Waddle leads a staff of 14 from NRECA’s headquarters in Arlington, Va. Five reside in the countries they are responsible for - Guatemala, Bolivia, Dominican Republic/Haiti, South Sudan and Bangladesh.

“I was amazed and humbled by just how little the Pakistani linemen have to safely do their work,” said Macken.

NRECA International is made up of two arms. NRECA International Foundation, a registered charitable 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1985, partners with electric co-ops in the United States to provide funding, equipment and volunteer personnel to assist foreign electric co-ops. Meanwhile, NRECA International, Ltd., provides guidance to newly formed co-ops during the initial stages of operation and offers technical help to those that have difficulties achieving sustainable operation. The organization operates offices in nine countries, with electrification projects in 13: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen.

NRECA International Foundation recruits co-op volunteers—usually line technicians, CEOs, and engineering managers—to send on two to three week assignments. While overseas, line technicians build distribution systems, wire houses and train native line crews to work more productively and safely.

Co-op managers educate administrators and board members, while engineers guide their counterparts in line design and substation construction and maintenance.

In addition, NRECA International Foundation oversees four donation programs. Dozens of co-ops contribute monetarily, while others turn over used line trucks and distribution equipment.

“Transformers and bucket trucks are especially valuable and are always in demand,” stresses Ingrid Hunsicker, NRECA International Foundation Senior Program Manager. “Co-op

employees can give to the Foundation through the United Co-op Appeal ‘Gift of Light’ program, an annual workplace fundraising campaign handled by the Cooperative Development Foundation.”

Illinois linemen help with training

From Pakistan to Guatemala to the Philippines and Haiti, Illinois supporters of the NRECA International Foundation have donated time, materials and volunteers to the effort. Every volunteer has come back with amazing stories to tell.

Ken Macken, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives Manager of Safety and Loss Control, spent three weeks in Islamabad, Pakistan for NRECA International working as a consultant with the International Resource Group to assess and analyze the safety and training program at the eight distribution companies in Pakistan. Macken traveled throughout

the country and visited four of the eight power companies and made contact with key officials who oversee the training programs within those companies.

Through an interpreter, Macken was able to speak to several groups of trainers about the importance of grounding and wearing the proper safety equipment to do their work. "I was amazed and humbled by just how little the Pakistani linemen have to safely do their work," said Macken. He said he loved the opportunity to travel

Coleman returned to Guatemala along with Mike Olson, Line Foreman at Adams Electric, and Craig Atteberry, Fleet Manager at Shelby Electric, to put the vehicles into service and train the employees in grounding and digging. Coleman and three Shelby Electric employees were also in Haiti in February to assist in rebuilding efforts.

Bill Fields, a journeyman lineman for Norris Electric Cooperative, recently spent three weeks in Caracol, Haiti where he helped to put up

network and installing service drops for 1,800 members.

Fields was humbled by how very little the people have. "The kids had nothing but were still happy and had a smile on their faces," said Fields. "The poorest person you know would be rich down there. They are a very proud people and have a very clean image. They came to work with freshly washed clothes each day, even though they had to wash them by hand."

While in Caracol, Fields helped train local linemen, who had no previous training. He instructed them in the basics like how to climb poles and install electric lines. The only available digger truck was broken so they couldn't dig any holes. Fields says, "The craziest thing was that they hired locals from the village to dig the holes by hand. They used a piece of rebar and a pie pan to dig those holes, and only got \$5 US to do it, but everyone wanted that work. Another guy was doing the tree trimming, in just a pair of shorts, no shirt or shoes, by climbing the trees and hanging onto the limbs and lopping off the branches with a machete. He was only making pennies for that job."

Fields said it was the hardest work he's ever done and he's been in the Marine Corps as well as lineman climbing school. Conditions were hard with a 107-degree heat index each day and it was hard to stay hydrated. In addition, the poles were extremely hard and after slipping down them a few times, he and the other two linemen sharpened their gaffs with a file and that made all the difference. Fields also spent the first week without his luggage, which included his tools. When the luggage finally arrived it was full of fire ants. Even though it was tough, he said it was well worth it and so rewarding.

"Everybody needs to go," said Fields. "It would really open up their perspective. People in this country don't realize what they have. The Haitians just have no opportunity and they are so happy and grateful for our



Bill Fields (l-r), lineman from Norris Electric, worked with linemen Josh Hoffman, North Dakota and Karl Brandt, Missouri on the electrification project.

to Pakistan and made several new friends on his trip.

Shelby Electric Cooperative and Adams Electric Cooperative both donated trucks, which were sent to electric co-ops in Guatemala. The Shelby Electric truck went to Huehuetenango and the Adams truck to San Pedro. In 2011, the CEOs of both co-ops, Jim Coleman and Jim Thompson, volunteered on a training trip to Guatemala. Then in August,

electric poles and lines in an area that had previously never had electricity. Field's trip was part of the Caracol Community Electrification Program implemented by the NRECA, with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the NRECA International Foundation. The program is increasing access to electricity in the Caracol area in northern Haiti by designing and constructing a new distribution



Shelby Electric Lineman Brian Chevalier explains how to use a hotstick to a Haitian lineman.

help. Being there is good for the soul. It made me even more grateful for my family, especially my wife and two children.”

The road ahead is hard and dangerous

As NRECA International embarks on its next 50 years, an enormous new mission has arisen in South Asia and Africa.

“We’ve already picked the low-hanging fruit,” Waddle comments. “For example, rural Bangladeshis live in densely packed villages, where sufficient revenue exists per mile of line to support a utility. That’s not the case elsewhere. In Uganda, only nine percent of the population has access to

electricity, and in rural areas, it’s much lower. On top of that, few people have the ability to pay for it.”

But political strife more than infrastructure hardships makes Third World electrification increasingly difficult. “Our biggest concern right now is security, and the safety of our personnel. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Uganda and Pakistan all experience severe peace-and-order problems.”

Of course, social upheaval, economic instability, and physical danger have always lurked on the periphery of NRECA International endeavors. But its dedicated contingent has never let that get in the way. They’ve negotiated with government officials, unearthed financial resources, and made sure indigenous workers and American electric co-op volunteers stay safe.

As he looks five years out, Waddle expects that Africa and South Asia

will occupy much of his section’s attention. Pakistani utilities, he explains, “must improve rural line design and construction standards, and invest in new technology. Most Pakistanis have central station power, but the distribution system is old and outdated.”

Africa likely will present the greatest challenge of all. “The needs on the continent are immense, and the situation is grim. There are two key issues: food security and water. Electricity plays a big role in both.”

Source: RE Magazine

Frank Gallant writes on electric cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service organization for the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Remember safety after the storm has passed

Winter storms can be deceptive killers—are you prepared?

Unlike a tornado dropping from a spring thunderstorm, there is usually more time to prepare for a winter storm. Paying attention to the National Weather Service and local media can help keep those in the path of a winter storm aware of impending severe weather.

Hopefully steps have been taken to winterize homes, get emergency kits together, and make emergency plans as these measures will help during storm recovery.

After a winter storm has delivered snow, ice, wind and snow drifts, along with sub-zero temperatures and power outages, do you know what to do? What steps should be taken to keep everyone safe and warm as recovery begins?

The Federal Emergency Management Association tells us that winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to storms. Many hazards can remain after the storm is gone.

Dangers that might have to be dealt with after a winter storm can include power outages, downed lines, fallen limbs and obscured hazards from snowfall, which can keep downed lines from being seen.

Here are some steps Safe Electricity recommends you take after the storm is passed:

- If you have lost power, contact your provider as soon as you are able so that they are aware of your outage. Take the time to find out now what to do during a power outage at SafeElectricity.org.
- Check on neighbors and loved ones to make sure they are safe and warm.
- If you are using a secondary heat source such as a propane or kerosene heater, or a fireplace, make sure you follow manufacturer's safety instructions and take



precautions against unintentional fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. Similar advice pertains to portable stand-by generators if using one for temporary power. Get more information on generator safety at SafeElectricity.org.

- Be on guard against hypothermia and frostbite. To avoid these, dress in layers, stay dry, stay hydrated and fed, and limit time spent outdoors.
- Stay indoors if possible and use caution when venturing outside. Remember, downed power lines could be hidden under limbs or snow, and there is no way to tell if a line is energized. If you see downed power lines—stay away, and keep others away. Notify authorities as soon as possible.
- If you need a shelter, text SHELTER plus your zip code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area.

A winter storm brings a multitude of ways to sustain an injury as snow, ice and cold temperatures might linger for days. Other ways injuries can occur after the storm is gone are car accidents on slippery roads, back injuries and heart attacks from shoveling snow, and bruises and broken bones from falls on icy sidewalks. Opportunities to get hurt are abundant after winter storms.

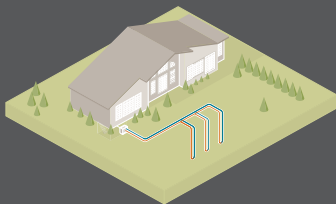
If you need more information on weathering a winter storm, visit your local electric co-op's website or SafeElectricity.org. ■

Molly Hall is Director of Safe Electricity. E-mail molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council. www.EnergyEdCouncil.org



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What is the most common Valentine's Day gift?

I suspect flowers!

According to the game show *Family Feud* - which is about the only thing on the television when you're housebound for 2 weeks with an upper respiratory infection during the Christmas holidays - women don't like getting flowers and candy for gifts, even though men think they want them.

If you watch long enough, you'll discover they like furs, money, nice cars and jewelry. I suspect they polled people in Beverly Hills and few in Illinois.

However, I wonder if the question were asked, "What is the most common Valentine's Day gift," I suspect flowers would be somewhere near the top, if not the top.

Flowers definitely won't last as long as a diamond bracelet or a BMW. But they can make just as important a statement. Of course it makes a difference what type of flowers you give your sweetie. But we want to state categorically that no flower is really bad, except maybe a bouquet of dandelions, or anything that might cause someone to break into an allergic sneezing fit.

Roses are the royalty of flowers. There are some growers that'll produce flowers as large as a liter bottle with stems 5 to 6 feet long. Of course, you'll pay one of your feet for each of the flowers, and need a crystal garbage can to display them.

Most of us are happy with fist-sized flowers and 18-inch stems.

Red tends to be the color of choice, though white, pink and yellow aren't anything to sneeze at, unless of course you have those aforementioned allergies.

The downside tends to be the cost, though like most flowers, the cost hasn't risen as much as a house or car in the last 20 years.

One of the worst things to happen



to roses is limber neck, where the flowers look great one minute and then just nod over the next as if they're going to sleep. If you lift up the sleeping head and look under the flower head, the stem is probably a little dark and shrunken.

Limber neck usually occurs because the flowers weren't conditioned properly which causes the internal vessels to collapse.

To avoid this cut an inch off the stems as soon as you get the flowers home and plunge them in warm-plus water, not too hot but not too cold - between bath water and washing dishes in the sink water. The warm water pushes up the stem, filling the neck and flower.

If the flower is drooping, you might

be able to sink the stem up to the bottom of the flower head. However, there is no guarantee warm water will do the trick.

It doesn't hurt to put the little packet of floral preservative in with the warm water.

Warm water and floral preservative is the course of action for any fresh flowers, whether roses, daisies, lilies or carnations. ■

David Robson is Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety for the University of Illinois. drobson@illinois.edu





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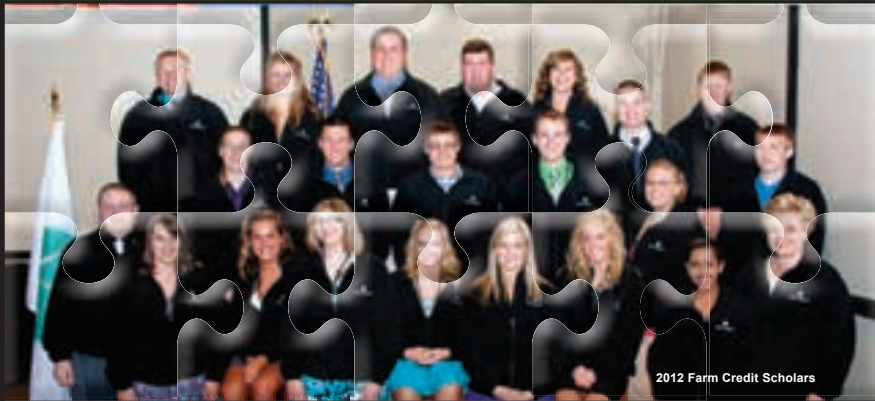
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Keeping it simple

Energy saving advice is just a mouse click or phone call away

About an hour before Professor Tom Hunt and I went on the air recently to host our weekly radio program, we were discussing our show preparation for the year. Of course, our goal is to help as many of you as possible. We have been teaching energy efficiency for more than 25 years and realize that as advancements in “building science” are discovered, there is more to teach and reveal.

We share our knowledge with you in monthly print in this magazine, with a weekly radio broadcast, scheduled seminars and individual phone calls and email responses. However, don't forget the extensive resource of energy efficiency information that resides on the co-op websites like the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas website: www.SmartEnergyTips.org. Everything Tom and I teach can be found on this website.

Also, check out your local electric co-op's website for energy saving ideas. You can also go to the Touchstone Energy website www.togetherwesave.com. If you have a smart phone there is even a free app you can download right from the website. It will give you advice on lighting, show you how much you could save switching out energy guzzling appliances and provides an energy saving tip of the day.

Each week, Tom and I receive numerous calls, letters and emails from the radio show listeners and readership of this column. Most are letters of appreciation. However, sometimes we get letters from folks who still have some questions regarding our suggestions.

Here is an excerpt of a letter I received from a listener. He said, “I added cellulose insulation in our attic and installed geothermal heating

and cooling, and my electric usage went up instead of down. I'm not happy. Please call me.”

There was a time in my distant past that I would have been nervous about returning his call. However, I was anxious to talk to him because I have learned that energy efficiency measures, properly installed, work every time. He was a little surprised that I returned his call so promptly. He made the improvements 11 months ago and had good records of electricity use. I asked him questions for about 10 minutes and didn't yet have the answer. I asked him if his previous system was a heat pump or electric resistance heat. He answered that the previous system was a propane furnace and no central cooling. Here's an “ah ha” moment!

I asked him what his monthly propane bill was in the winter months of 2010 and he said about \$130 per month. I asked him what his propane bill was so far in the winter of 2011. He said he didn't have a propane bill anymore. Then he got excited and almost shouted, “Oh wow, now I understand. My electric bill went up \$35, but my propane bill went down \$130.”

I then suggested that he have a sub-meter installed on his geothermal system so that he could know exactly how much electricity the geothermal unit uses each month. He was very appreciative and kept thanking me. This fellow had already solved his problem but just needed a little help to understand it. I think that we now have a fellow who may recommend what he did to improve his house.

Unfortunately, many folks just can't afford to make energy efficiency improvements. It usually hinges on income challenges. As one caller told



me, “I am one of those who has to choose between food, medicine and utility bills every month. I cannot afford all three.” But even in this case, I try to help in some way.

So, Tom and I decided that we would not assume that folks already know the answer, and we would always try to keep our teaching as simple to understand as possible. In these next few issues, I will continue to teach and help you understand energy efficiency, from the very basic laws of physics to the application of energy efficiency improvements for your house. I can hardly wait and hope that the information will help you.

P.S. If our radio program is not on a station in your area, you can go to www.1037thebuzz.com and hear the show live at 9:06 a.m. on Saturday mornings. Go to www.SmartEnergyTips.org to listen to previous shows and get lots of other great energy information. ■

Doug Rye can be heard on several different Illinois radio stations. You can go to Doug Rye's Web site at www.dougrye.com, e-mail him at info@philliprye.com, or call 501-653-7931.



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The General Manager of GEC is responsible for the day to day management of the cooperative and reports directly to a board of directors.

Applicants should possess a broad knowledge of rural electric cooperative distribution system management with an emphasis in the areas of long-range planning, financial management, budgeting, human resources, and fostering positive long-term relationships with the GEC board of directors, members and the public at large.

Applicants should hold a bachelor's or advanced degree from a four-year accredited college, or alternatively, have at least 10 years experience at a senior staff/managerial level. The successful candidate will have a minimum of 5 years experience in the rural electric cooperative industry sector at a senior staff/managerial level.

Please provide a complete application package, including cover letter, resume and recent salary history, along with 6 verifiable business and 3 personal references, no later than March 1, 2013 to:

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Co-ops cutting costs through innovation

Economic uncertainty drives electric co-ops to develop technologies to keep affordable, reliable electricity flowing

By Magen Howard

If treated well, your electric co-op's equipment and infrastructure—poles, lines, transformers, and the like—can last for decades. But as useful life ends for these components, reliability becomes more of an issue and co-ops are increasingly turning to innovative technologies to keep service reliable, safe and affordable.

“Electric cooperatives have been leaders in adopting technologies to improve reliability and keep costs contained,” says Brian Sloboda, senior program manager with the Cooperative Research Network, an arm of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

A good example involves system automation, a set of devices and

software programs that allows utilities to track the flow of electricity in near real time. Co-ops are leading the way in deploying and testing these devices, due to their potential to boost efficiency, reliability and cost savings.

Sloboda offers down-line automation (DLA) as a prime example. Rather than wait for an outage report to be called in, DLA can detect a problem (such as a tree branch touching a line) as it occurs and possibly fix it remotely by rerouting power sometimes before an outage even occurs.

“The goal of DLA is to decrease the duration of an outage and reduce the number of people who experience it,” Sloboda explains.

Another useful technology, called automatic vehicle location, or AVL, allows a dispatcher at co-op

headquarters to track service trucks and what equipment each truck carries. This comes in handy when a trouble report comes in. The dispatcher can route the nearest truck that has the right parts or tools to the problem site. AVL saves time, fuel and potential slow downs. AVL systems help determine the optimal route to jobs and a co-op dispatcher can easily see which lineman is close to a new outage or job site.

Co-ops are also becoming more sophisticated with geographic information systems (GIS). With GIS electronic mapping programs, a co-op can log in every asset across its service territory, and its exact location and age are available to any lineman with a GIS map on their mobile computer. GIS also helps in emergency situations, such as a storm or car

accident, by showing poles, wire sizes, and equipment used at each location. This allows a co-op to send correct replacement materials.

“Anybody who's had a dishwasher repairman come all the way to your house and finds he has the wrong parts can understand this,” Sloboda relates. “By having everything in your mapping system, you get it right the first time.”

Proliferation of smart meters

Digital “smart” meters have already been installed at the majority of Illinois electric cooperatives. Analog spinning disc meters are being replaced with “smart” models by the millions—52 million nationwide have been installed by all utilities as of the end of last year, according



The proliferation of smart meters, along with other developing technologies, helps electric cooperatives work to contain costs while improving service for consumer-members.
Source: NRECA



New technologies like down-line automation alerts personnel in a control room to potential problems and can limit the duration and extent of a power outage. Source: NRECA

to market research. Nationwide 25 percent of electric co-ops have installed advanced metering infrastructure, while seven percent of investor-owned utilities and four percent of municipal utilities have installed the new smart meters according to a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission survey.

Smart meters use two-way communications to transmit meter readings, sometimes hourly, to a co-op. This data offers more accurate reads and can allow co-ops to pinpoint spikes or dips in energy consumption, providing a boon for energy auditors. The new meters can also monitor power quality like voltage levels at the meter, track blinking light issues and help a co-op determine the scope and location of outages.

Smart meters require a communications network, just like a computer network in a business. All of the smart meter installations at Illinois

electric co-ops utilize the power lines for the communications network back to substation nodes. From the substations, however, a broadband connection is necessary. In some cases several Illinois co-ops have built their own wireless broadband network to fill this communications gap. The side benefit has been the expansion of rural broadband service to members and non-members in the rural areas served by these co-ops.

What's next?

Smart meters also open the door for consumers to better control their electricity use. Through in-home displays that respond to price signals, online portals that show meter readings with tips on how to use less, and the opportunity to participate in demand-response programs, co-op members can use electricity more efficiently and help their not-for-profit electric providers delay the need to buy additional power or construct

new generating plants.

“Electric co-ops were created because there was a need that wasn’t being met, and rural people took it upon themselves to get the job done,” says Duane Noland, President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. “That pioneering spirit still exists. We’re on the forefront of technological advancements, and we will continue to work hard so our members’ needs are met. Reliable, affordable, safe electric power—that’s what it’s all about.”

Sources: Cooperative Research Network, NRECA Strategic Analysis, U.S. Energy Information Administration, IHS

Magen Howard writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. Angela Perez contributed to this article.



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Unbaked Chocolate Cookies

Unbaked Chocolate Cookies (above)

- 1/2 C. butter
- 3 T. cocoa
- Pinch of salt
- 2 C. sugar
- 1/2 C. applesauce
- 3 C. quick-cooking oats
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 C. nuts, chopped (opt.)

In a heavy 2-quart pan, melt butter over low heat. Stir in cocoa. Add salt, sugar and applesauce. Stir often until mixture comes to a boil. Remove from heat immediately so it does not caramelize. Add oats and vanilla. If not using nuts, add more oats so cookies hold their shape. Drop by heaping tablespoons onto wax paper. Allow cookies to cool and dry before storing. If sticky, roll in powdered sugar. Makes 2-3 dozen.

Party Potatoes (right)

- 2 sticks butter
- 1 (8-oz.) ctn. sour cream
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 (8-oz.) pkg. shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 (32-oz.) pkg. frozen hash browns
- 2-3 C. corn flakes, crushed

Melt 1 stick of butter. Stir in sour cream, soup and cheese. Add hash browns. Put in a 9x13-inch pan and spread evenly. Melt the other stick of butter and add corn flakes. Blend well. Add more corn flakes if needed. Sprinkle flakes over potato mixture. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 45 minutes, or until flakes are brown and potatoes are bubbling.

Stuffing Baked Chicken

- 1/4 C. mayonnaise
- 1/4 C. butter, melted
- 1 T. yellow mustard
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 (8-oz.) box herb stuffing mix

Thoroughly mix mayonnaise, butter and mustard in a small mixing bowl. Dip chicken breasts (all sides) in mixture. Place stuffing in a separate bowl, coating all sides of breasts. Place breasts in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Remove foil and bake 10 additional minutes.

Chocolate Praline Cake

- 1/2 C. butter
- 1/4 C. whipping cream
- 1 C. brown sugar
- 3/4 C. pecans, chopped
- 1 box chocolate cake mix
- 1-1/4 C. water
- 1/2 C. vegetable oil
- 3 eggs

In a small heavy saucepan, combine butter, whipping cream and brown sugar. Cook over low heat until butter is melted. Pour into a 9x13-inch baking pan; sprinkle evenly with pecans. In a large bowl, combine chocolate cake mix, water, vegetable oil and eggs until moist. Carefully spoon half the batter around the edges and remainder inside. Bake at 325 degrees for 50-60 minutes or until cake springs back when touched. Cool 5 minutes, then invert onto a serving platter. Cool completely.



Party Potatoes



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Chicago Italian Beef (above)

- 5 lbs. rump roast (do not substitute for a different type roast)
- 2 cans beef broth
- 1 pkg. Good Seasons Italian seasoning
- 1/2-1 jar pepperoncini peppers with juice
- 1/2-1 jar giardiniera
- 3-5 sweet green peppers
- 1 loaf French bread or Hoagie rolls

Put roast, broth, Italian seasoning, pepperoncini peppers and giardiniera in a crockpot and cook on low for 18 hours. Turn meat over at the 6th and 12th hour intervals. At the 17th hour, slice sweet green peppers lengthwise and cook in water on low heat until soft. Pull roast apart with two forks to shred. Serve piled on your choice of bread, laying green peppers on top.

Cream Cheese In Puff Pastry With Preserves

- 1/2 pkg. frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 1 (8-oz.) pkg. cream cheese
- 1/8 C. toasted almond slices
- 1/4 C. apricot or raspberry preserves

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. Roll pastry out slightly. Place cream cheese in the middle. Spoon preserves on top of the cheese. Bundle puff pastry up and around the cheese. Bake for 20-25 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes before serving.

Chicken and Sausage Jambalaya

- 4-6 cooked boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, cut into 1-inch strips
- 4 C. cooked rice
- 1 lb. smoked sausage, sliced
- 1 (14-1/2 oz.) can diced tomatoes with garlic and onions
- 1 med. green bell pepper, chopped
- 3-4 tsp. dried Cajun seasoning
- 1 tsp. hot sauce
- Sour Cream
- Shredded Cheddar cheese
- Green onions, chopped

Combine chicken, rice, sausage, tomatoes, pepper, seasoning and hot sauce together in a skillet and allow to simmer until all flavors are combined. Serve topped with sour cream, shredded cheese and green onion.

Reply Online

Tried a recipe?
Tell us what you think at icl.coop
Click on *Finest Cooking*

Photos by *Catrina McCulley Wagner*

Chicago Italian Beef

Italian Sausage And Tortellini Soup

- 1 lb. sweet Italian sausage, casing removed
- 1 lg. onion, chopped
- 2 lg. cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 5 C. beef broth
- 2 C. diced, peeled tomatoes, canned or fresh
- 1 (8oz.) can tomato sauce
- 1 med. zucchini, chopped
- 1 lg. carrot, thinly sliced
- 1 med. green bell pepper, diced
- 1 box frozen, chopped spinach
- 1/4 C. dry red wine (opt.)
- 2 T. dried leaf basil
- 2 T. dried leaf oregano
- 8-10 oz. fresh cheese tortellini
- Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Sauté Italian sausage in a heavy kettle or Dutch oven over medium-high heat until cooked through, breaking up with the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer sausage to a bowl. Pour off all but 1 T. fat from the pan. Add onion and garlic to the pan and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Return sausage to pan. Add beef broth, tomatoes, tomato sauce, zucchini, carrot, bell pepper, spinach, wine, basil and oregano. Simmer until vegetables are tender, about 35 minutes. Add tortellini and cook till done. Season the soup with salt and pepper, to taste. Ladle soup into bowls and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Locating broadband services

Cooperative broadband service offerings were featured in last month's magazine, and since then many of you have contacted me asking a variant of the same question, "If my co-op doesn't offer broadband services, then where can I get service?" Unfortunately, the answer isn't very cut and dried, but I'm going to try to give you some resources to find the answer.

The truth is there are portions of Illinois that, for one reason or another, simply do not have adequate broadband coverage. Let me qualify that statement by saying that for the most part, you should be able to get satellite Internet, with only a few exceptions. But depending upon your location, installation costs may be prohibitively high, or latency may make the service undesirable. So, if satellite doesn't work for you, how can you find service in your area?

Your best bet is probably living next door to you. Ask your neighbors, members of your church or your family. Even in this digital age, word-of-mouth still remains the best way to find a provider you can trust. Ask them for their experiences, both negative and positive. You may find that there's a provider near you that just had not come up in a previous conversation.

Your local library is another resource. These days, most libraries even offer computer services you can use while you visit. Ask the librarian to tell you what company provides the service.

If you have access to Internet, even dial-up, you can also use some of the online search tools that have been developed as a result of the stimulus package.

The National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA), in collaboration with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offers an online national mapping program you can use to search for service in your area.



You can find the tool online at www.broadbandmap.gov.

I am including a screenshot of the landing page, so you will know you have hit the right place when you visit the site. To use the tool, just enter your address in the box, and then click the "Find Broadband" button. You can enter your entire address, or as little as your zip code.

Depending upon the speed of the connection you're using to conduct the search, it may take the tool a few moments to come back with results. Once it does, you should see a screen that lists the providers for your area. Keep in mind that the information provided only reflects what has been reported to NTIA, so it's possible there's a provider in your area that isn't listed. I know that Illinois is doing its best to make sure everyone is listed, but this is a massive undertaking, so it's entirely likely that some will get missed.

Also, you should know the information displays by census block. That means in order for you to be totally certain a service is offered at your address, you will need to directly contact the providers listed.

If you click on a providers name in the results window, you should see it expand and give you more

information. There may also be a link entitled, "Link to Website." If you click that link, you'll be taken to the website of record for that specific provider.

Again, these sites may or may not be totally accurate. In fact, some of them may even be missing. In the case of missing links, you can probably find contact information for the provider you seek by simply entering the company name into your favorite search engine, i.e. Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.

If all else fails, don't hesitate to contact me. Many of you have already done so, and I am glad to help you figure this out. At the very least, if you're one of those who has no real alternatives, I would be happy to pass along your address to providers so they know you're actively looking for a solution.

Reply Online

Visit www.icl.coop and click on **Powered Up**.

Ed VanHoose is the Digital Communications Administrator/IT Manager for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield.



evanhoose@aiec.coop

4' white pine trees, delivered, planted, mulched. \$64.50 and 4' Norway Spruce \$79.50 per tree. Buy 10 get 1 free. Call for other sizes, varieties or shades. Price may vary depending on geographical location. www.atwoodtrees.com. Call 217-886-2316

For Sale: 25 acres, 3 Bdrm home, 2 bdrm caretaker house - 2 car garage, 5 acre lake, 2 docks. NW Shelby Cty. Golf, fishing and hunting. 217-971-1839. *(In the January issue, the acreage was inadvertently listed as 2.5 acres. ICL apologizes for the error.)*

First Street Restaurant Equipment used slicers, tenderizers, grinders, meatsaws, ss sinks, tables. New and used cooking equipment, pottery wheels and kilns. 2615 So. First, Springfield, 217-522-3934, 217-971-8592.

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Illinois Country Living

Go to our website for past issues of Illinois Country Living

www.icl.coop

How to place an ad:

- 1) Type or print ad neatly.
- 2) Count words. Cost is \$30 for up to the first 20 words. \$1.50 each additional word. Ads with insufficient funds will not be printed.
- 3) Prepayment is required. Include check or money order with ad for amount due. Also include address label from Illinois Country Living or other proof of Illinois electric cooperative membership. Only members of Illinois electric cooperatives may place Marketplace ads.
- 4) Mail to: Illinois Marketplace, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708, by deadline.
Deadlines: April issue – February 20;
May issue – March 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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Nominate a mother for Illinois Country Mother of the Year

While every mother is special, some are just extraordinary in their willingness to help their families and others. If your mom or another mom in your community is deserving of this honor, nominate her. Tell us in 500 words about that special mom, what she does and why she deserves to win the title.

Just go to our website at www.icl.coop to fill out an entry or email your essay to vcheatham@aiec.coop. Be sure to include the information from the form below. Or, complete the following form and send it along with your essay.



2009 recipient Doyne Miller with nominator and daughter, Janet Ramey.

Her Name

Address

City

State

Zip

In which Illinois electric cooperative territory she resides

Organizations to which she belongs

Person nominating her

Relationship to the nominee

Your phone number with area code

Nominee's phone number with area code (we would contact her only if she wins)

Rules: The contest is open to any mother served by an Illinois electric cooperative. No purchase is necessary. The winner will be selected by committee, and included in the May edition of the Illinois Country Living magazine.

All nominations submitted will be published in May on Illinois Country Living's Website at www.icl.coop.

**What will the Illinois
Country Mother of the
Year win?**

**\$100 gift certificate
and other prizes**

**Illinois
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DEADLINE TO SUBMIT:

Entries must be emailed or postmarked by March 4, 2013

**Mail to: Valerie Cheatham, Illinois Country Living,
P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708-3787**

Green jobs for sustainable careers

Education, training – important aspects of energy/green industry

By Lisa Rigoni

According to the Illinois Green Jobs Survey conducted by the State of Illinois' Department of Employment Security green jobs continue to be on the rise. Businesses and organizations are making sure their dealers and employees are well educated and even certified to ensure the appropriate measures are taken to accommodate their customers, whether residential or commercial. Green jobs are increasing energy efficiency, producing renewable energy, preventing pollution and best of all producing sustainable career paths.

The department added a sixth section to the survey to detail the higher education requirements of green employment. In its findings the following are the dominating green jobs in Illinois today: agriculture and natural resources, architecture and construction, energy utilities and waste management, manufacturing, transportation and distribution, and even in university and college education.

Interestingly, some of the key findings of the survey revealed that more than 115,000 green jobs existed in Illinois in 2011. In addition, construction was shown to have the largest proportion of green jobs at 27.1 percent. It comes as no surprise then, that HVAC installers come in at 4.75 percent, carpenters at 4 percent, electricians at 3.6 percent and laborers at 3.2 percent for the occupations with the highest number of green jobs.

The survey also noted: "Skills expected to increase in demand over the next two years included those associated with the solar, wind and geothermal industries as well as energy efficiency and LEED certification." Businesses associated with the electric cooperative industry strive to provide the necessary education and training to keep on top of the trends, regulations

and efficiency for their customers. For example, a number of geothermal companies are leading the way in education and training.

Geothermal energy training

Enertech Global, based in Greenville, provides training through its Geothermal University. The curriculum is developed from Enertech's history and current position in the geothermal heating and cooling industry.

Brendan Riley, Technical Services Manager with Enertech Global says, "We continuously work to advance our training program to give technicians and sales representatives the edge in the geothermal industry. Any dissatisfaction is taken seriously, and the issue is targeted for improvement. Enertech's Geothermal University curriculum is constantly being updated with equipment and industry information to help us raise the bar for geothermal training."

Enertech provides training through classes and also on job sites depending on the need, and they have in-house computer-based education, as well.

For additional information on Geothermal University contact: Chris Smith, Illinois Territory Manager at 618-664-9010 or via e-mail at chris.smith@enertechgeo.com.

Connor Company, with headquarters based in Peoria, is near completion on its new training facility and has already offered a number of classes to dealers. The training center opened on Sept. 1, 2012. In November, Nick Lavin, Matt Sheets and Justin Carley gave me a tour of the new 4,000 sq. ft. addition. They were quick to say it was a team effort, but that Jeff Hurst, Connor Company Geothermal Product Manager, was instrumental in moving the project forward. Within the training area they have everything from tankless water heaters to geothermal



units, all working units so dealers can gain real, hands-on training.

Training is delivered in a number of ways ranging from in-house computer labs to hands-on product training. Computer-based classes are offered in Connor's Smart Classroom complete with 24 computer stations. The trainers are typically vendors or Connor Co. staff, according to Carley, Marketing Manager/Purchasing Agent at Connor.

For additional information, contact General Manager Nick Lavin at 309-681-2424 or via email at nlavin@connorco.com.

Water Furnace also offers training for dealers, and, in fact, runs a couple of ads that boast the fact. One reads: "WaterFurnace knows that training matters." The other reads "Before our dealers make a commitment to you ... They make a commitment to us." WaterFurnace requires ongoing training and education for their dealers. It's an integral part of the business.

For additional information on WaterFurnace contact: Josh Huite at Josh.Huite@waterfurnace.com.

Habegger Corporation stands firm in investing in continuing education of dealers and contractors in its communities. A few of the training options include Bryant Academy and Carrier University, two of the company's major brands.

Industry-related associations continue to offer programs to members and associates. For example,

the Geothermal Alliance of Illinois (GAOI) has its own accreditation program. Tests are administered annually at the Illinois Geothermal Conference and by request at other times as need warrants.

GAOI offers testing for dealer-contractors and mechanical contractor, loop installation/drilling contractors. GAOI members can find on-line training programs through the organization's website at: www.gaoi.org/gaoi-accreditation-and-training. Geothermal Installer curriculum was debuted at the Illinois Geothermal Conference in 2012. The 2013 conference is slated for March 12-13.

Building Performance Institute training is also offered at varying times through GAOI, and is led by Brian Kumer of Thermal Imaging Services. For additional information on training opportunities through GAOI, contact: Kristin Banks at 217-241-7924 or via email at kbanks@aiec.coop or Executive Director John Freitag at 217-241-7973 or via email at jfreitag@aiec.coop.

Electric co-op training

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) hosts a plethora of training and education in all areas of the business. From leadership to board of director training and management skills, Certified Key Account Executive (CKAE) certification, cooperative financial professional certificate programs to personal time management, CPR/AED and first aid training.

"One of the seven cooperative principles is 'Education, Training and Information,' says AIEC's Safety/Education Services Coordinator, Mary Zitek. "Cooperative board members, CEOs and their staff need to be kept current on Federal and State regulations, and issues affecting their membership so that they can perform their job duties to the best of their abilities and also keep up with the fast pace of technology. The importance of safety training is at the top of the list, not only for the safety of the cooperative employees, but their

members and the general public."

Besides training for cooperatives and employees, the AIEC offers training and safety education for linemen. Lineman schools have been offered through the AIEC since the early 1970s. Training is led by Roger Larkin, Manager of Lineworker & Apprentice Development. Safety training is offered by Larkin, Zitek, Ken Macken, Manager of Safety & Loss Control and Safety Instructor Jim Miles.

If you are interested in learning more about the courses and certification opportunities offered through the AIEC, contact: Mary Zitek at 217-241-7934 or via email at mzitek@aiec.coop.

Illinois Green Economy Network – a community college partnership

If you are looking for green job education options a good place to start is with the Illinois Green Economy Network (IGEN), a consortium of Illinois community colleges. IGEN was created to establish and share sustainable best practices, promote energy efficiency and clean energy and drive growth in the green economy in Illinois.

In April 2008, IGEN (formerly known as the Illinois Community College Sustainability Network, or ICCSN) received a \$490,000 start-up grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). With six centers successfully underway and a growing vision

for centers on all 48 campuses in the Illinois Community College system, the IGEN founding presidents pressed for both state and federal funding to increase the number of Sustainability Centers across the state.

In October 2011, IGEN obtained a three-year, \$19.4 million U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCT) grant to fund the IGEN Career Pathways Initiative. Now a group of 17 Illinois community colleges are developing, sharing and implementing more than 30 online-hybrid associate degrees and certificates, which will combine classroom instruction, interactive online training, and hands-on exercises.

For more information on the IGEN community college partnership go to www.igence.org.

Many training programs are offered through colleges and universities, both degree and certificate programs. In calling your local higher education institution, ask about its Green Programs, which could include education and training on sustainability, green business, water and energy conservation, waste reduction and recycling and local and organic foods. They might offer more trades oriented courses, such as HVAC, as well. No matter what professional or vocational field you choose, education and training can help provide the resources and knowledge you need to succeed.

Results from 2011 Illinois Green Jobs Survey

State of Illinois, Pat Quinn, Governor

Department of Employment Security, Jay Rowell, Director

The definition of green job for the purpose of the survey is a job in which the work is essential to products or services that improve energy efficiency, expand the use of renewable energy or support environmental sustainability.

Top five skills expected to increase in demand:

1. Energy efficiency skills (3.0%)
 2. Computer skills (2.9%)
 3. Engineering (1.6%),
 4. LEED certification (1.5%),
 5. Environmental skills (1.2%)
- Notable differences from the skills required for current green jobs are the additions of solar, wind, and geothermal skills and the higher placement of energy efficiency skills. LEED certification also moved up on the increasing in demand list.*

1-2 17th Annual Midwest Elvis Presley Impersonators Competition, 700 E. Adams Street, Springfield. The King Lives! This 2-day extravaganza features music we all remember. Elvis Tribute Artists from all over the U.S. perform the most loved music by the King of Rock n Roll. (217)753-3733, www.pietalent.com.

1-3 24th Annual Illinois Horse Fair, State Fairgrounds, Springfield. Top national clinicians and equine educators join vendors offering everything for the experienced equestrian to the horse curious. Join recreational horsemen and professionals representing all horse breeds and disciplines. "Horses through History: Past, Present and Future" is the theme for this year's fair. Friday through Sunday, gates will open at 8 a.m. with shopping in the Exhibition Hall, clinics and demos starting at 9 a.m. Tickets are \$10 daily and kids under 8 accompanied by an adult are free. www.horsemenscouncil.org.

1-3 Central Illinois Recreational Show, Peoria Civic Center, Peoria. This year promises to be bigger and better with more RVs, boats, ATVs and campgrounds. Admission is \$8 adults, \$3 kids 6-12, 5 and under is free. Fri., 1-7 p.m., Sat., 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Sun., 11 a.m.-4 p.m. (309)692-6465, eventsltd@comcast.net.

2-3 St. Louis Regional Gun & Knife Show, Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive, Collinsville. Display guns and knives from hundreds of Midwestern dealers come together to display and sell a huge variety of antique and modern day guns and knives. All Illinois gun laws are adhered to when purchasing guns. Admis-

sion is \$6 for adults, \$3 ages 16 & under. (800)289-2388, www.gatewaycenter.com.

15-16 Monster Truck Nationals: Monsters and Magic Tour, Sears Centre, 5333 Prairie Stone Parkway, Hoffman Estates, IL. The roar of more than 40,000 pounds of rumbling, jumping, car-crushing monster trucks at the Sears Centre. Attendees will have a chance to see the monster trucks up close and meet the drivers for photos and autographs at a special pit party before each performance. (847)649-2222, www.searscentre.com.

21 Distinguished Speaker Series: J.R.Martinez, The Hett, 701 College Road, Lebanon. Critically wounded during the Iraq war, the actor, spokesman, retired soldier – and winner of "Dancing with the Stars" – now tours the world to speak about his recovery and to share his inspirational message of resilience and optimism. Free admission. (618)537-6863, www.thehett.com.

22-24 Country Treasures Craft Show, Belle Clair Expo Center, 200 South Belt East, Belleville. Handcrafted furniture, garden décor, florals, jewelry, wearable art, gourmet foods, candles and more. Admission is \$3. (618)233-0052, www.bcfairgrounds.net.

22-24 Springfield RV & Camping Show, Prairie Capital Convention Center, Springfield. The show draws customers from Quincy and parts of Missouri to Champaign and eastern Indiana. Fri., 1-7 p.m., Sat., 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Sun., 11 a.m.-4 p.m. (309)692-6465 or eventsltd@comcast.net.

23-24 Easter Egg-Citement, Eckert's Country Store & Farms, 951 S. Green Mount Rd., Belleville. Hop on down the bunny trail and fill your baskets with fun! Eckert's Annual Egg Hunt, baby chicks and bunnies, face painting, the Easter Bunny, plant a seed and savor a yummy Easter treat. Easter Egg hunts will take place at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. each day. No advanced registration is required. Admission: \$10 per child, \$5 for photos with Easter Bunny. (618)233-0513, www.eckerts.com.

31 Easter Champagne Brunch, Bretz Wildlife Lodge & Winery, 15469 State Route 127, Carlyle. A champagne brunch buffet to celebrate Easter. (618)594-8830, www.wildlifelodgeandwinery.com.



Visit our website, www.icl.coop



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.

Deadline: February 15 for May events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. E-mail to: datebook@aiecoop.

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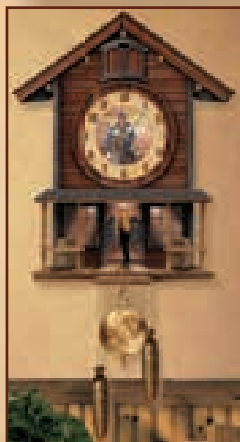
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