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**For address changes contact your
local electric co-op.**

President/CEO

Duane Noland

Chairman of the Board

Larry Kraft

Editor

John Lowrey

Assistant Editor

Valerie Cheatham

Contributing Editor

Ed VanHoose

Public Relations/ Business Development Manager

Lisa Rigoni

Advertising Coordinator/ Graphic Designer

Sandy Wolske

Graphic Designers

Jennifer Danzinger, Kathy Feraris,
Chris Reynolds

Circulation Coordinator

Connie Newenham

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10 FATHER OF THE YEAR

The family of Ernie Sjuts of rural Urbana has an endless supply of words to describe this much loved Opa. From l-r, sisters Ranae and Sharolyn along with Ernie and Evelyn Sjuts and brothers Don and Rick.

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Help keep rates affordable

Illinois – and America – needs a common sense solution

On June 2, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released an approximately 1600 page series of documents, including a new 645-page proposed rule, aimed at regulating carbon emissions at existing power plants. While Illinois' electric cooperatives care very much about a clean environment, we are respectfully very concerned about the dramatic effect the new rule, if adopted, could likely have on the bills of co-op member-owners.

The EPA's new proposed rule calls for cutting carbon emissions from existing power plants 30 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. In brief, each state has been given a 2030 "Carbon Intensity Target," meaning an average rate of carbon emissions/MWh. Those carbon intensity targets vary significantly from state to state and, unfortunately, our state seems to have gotten hit pretty hard. Fortunately, the state of Illinois will play a large role in coming up with its own implementation plan, and it will have significant flexibility to meet our state's prescribed targets. In this regard, EPA has provided the states "building blocks" to obtain compliance. Those building blocks include switching fuels from coal to natural gas; improving individual power plant efficiencies; increased utilization of renewable energy, like solar and wind; and end-use (consumer) energy efficiency.

Electric co-ops are dedicated to a cleaner environment as part of their commitment to the communities they serve, and have long promoted a variety of energy efficiency measures to benefit co-op member-owners. And, our member generation and transmission cooperatives already produce power from a wide variety of sources including solar, landfill

gas-to-energy, anaerobic digesters, hydro, wind and natural gas power projects. Having said that, the vast majority of our co-op power production remains coal-fired, traditionally the most cost-effective and reliable source.

The new June 2 proposed rule on existing power plants comes on the heel of an earlier EPA regulation (released in January of this year) that would regulate carbon emissions at new power plants. That "new power plant" rule would, as a practical matter, have eliminated the construction of any new coal-fired plant by requiring the plant to utilize carbon capture and storage technology (CCS) — a technology that is both unproven at a power plant scale, and also very expensive. In fact, a U.S. Department of Energy official testified before Congress that the first generation of CCS technology would likely increase wholesale electricity prices by "70 or 80 percent."

As you are likely aware, Illinois' not-for-profit electric cooperatives support an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy, one that incorporates natural gas, nuclear, renewable energy — AND coal — to generate power. As you may also know, this strategy was initially endorsed by President Obama in his January 2012 State of the Union Address, before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was later directed to issue proposed rules for both new and existing power plants. The proposed rule for new plants that was subsequently issued in January will virtually eliminate coal from this equation for new power plants — resulting in an "all-but-one" policy. The new June 2 follow-up proposed

rule on existing power plants, if adopted, will likely result in substantially increased power costs to every Illinois co-op member whose power includes coal-fired generation — and that would be all of them.

In a cooperative there are no stockholders to share the burden of cost

increases. While we greatly respect EPA's objectives, any cost increases our not-for-profit co-ops incur must be passed on directly to the member-owners.

The EPA is required to take public comments on the new June 2 proposed rule, and I urge you to let the U.S. EPA know that you support a "common sense" energy policy to keep electricity affordable. Please visit www.action.coop to share your comments and learn more about the U.S. EPA's new proposed rule. If you previously went to the site to send a comment on the "new power plant" rule we encourage you to please visit it again and register your comments on the new — and even more important — "existing plant" rule. This grassroots effort is critical to keeping electricity reliable and affordable in the future for all of us. And, it only takes one minute to make your voice heard and to make a difference.

Thank you. ■

**"Please visit
www.action.coop to
share your comments."**

Former Illinois State Senator N. Duane Noland is the President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Springfield and a member of Shelby Electric Cooperative.





AMERICA NEEDS AN ALL-OF-THE- ABOVE ENERGY STRATEGY

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PROTECTION AGENCY NOW!**

**DON'T RAISE THE COST
OF OUR ELECTRICITY**

VISIT ACTION.COOP

Join America's electric cooperatives in demanding the Environmental Protection Agency find a common-sense solution for curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more about this issue, and how you can help, at action.coop.



Barn quilt designed to help boost area tourism

In an effort to help boost tourism in the area, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, SIEC, hung a 10-foot by 10-foot barn quilt, May 7, at its facilities in Dongola.

The quilt was hung on the side of a truck storage building. Motorists will be able to see the colorful display when they drive by SIEC headquarters in the Union County community.

The barn quilt features an image of Willie Wiredhand. The image previously had served as a logo for electric cooperatives located throughout the country.

Creation and public display of barn quilts has been underway in neighboring Alexander County. The work is being spearheaded by the Alexander County Tourism Bureau.

“We credit the barn quilt idea to the Alexander County Tourism Bureau,” SIEC Director of Communication Jerri Schaefer stated.

“We hope the more recognition we receive from the hanging of these quilts, the more popular quilts will become in our county, and tourism throughout Southern Illinois will increase as tours begin, as in other Midwestern states,” Schaefer added. ■



Electric co-op members send 500,000 comments to EPA

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Jo Ann Emerson announced that rural electric cooperative members have submitted more than 500,000 comments to the Environmental Protection Agency in opposition to the proposed New Source Performance Standards rule regulating new power plants.

“More than 500,000 Americans have united to oppose regulations that will constrain fuel types for new power plants because they’re rightly concerned about affordable and reliable electricity in this country,” Emerson said.

“Any proposal that relies on technology that is ‘technically feasible’ instead of ‘commercially viable’ belies common sense and threatens the reliability of electricity in this country. Electric co-ops operate in the real world and understand the importance of diversity for fuel sources when it comes to generating electricity.” NRECA submitted its official comments on May 9.

Now the EPA is moving on to existing coal-fired plants and has proposed new regulations that could impact energy, the economy and jobs. President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives Duane Noland says, “To combat the EPA’s aggressive new regulations on existing coal-fired power plants, we’re asking co-op members to join together and tell Washington not to impose these regulations and to keep energy costs low for hard-working consumers and their families. We’re asking you, your friends and neighbors to add your voice by signing one of the comment cards available in local co-op offices or by visiting www.Action.coop. ■



At the Menard Electric Cooperative annual meeting in June, Manager Lynn Frasco talks to a member about the need to send a message to the EPA to keep electric bills affordable. You can send your message to the EPA by going to www.action.coop today.



Get fresh and help the economy grow

Did you know that Illinois:

- leads the U.S. in processed food sales.
- is 2nd in the nation in corn and soybean production.
- is 4th in the nation for agricultural exports.
- is 5th in the nation for processed food exports.
- is 4th in the nation for the number of farmers' markets.

For several years now the Illinois: Where Fresh Is campaign has promoted Illinois farmers markets to consumers and helped local specialty growers market their produce. New to the program this year is a Buy Illinois Fresh Fruits & Vegetables Challenge. The challenge encourages consumers to dedicate \$10 of their existing grocery purchases to buying Illinois-grown produce. If every household in Illinois participates, the Illinois Department of Agriculture estimates the purchases would generate \$47



million dollars a month for local economies.

Television advertising, billboards and social media outlets across the state have begun promoting Illinois: Where Fresh Is, a campaign highlighting Illinois-grown produce at more than 300 participating locations, including grocery stores, farmers' markets and farm stands.

Each location is proudly displaying the Illinois: Where Fresh Is banner near its

Illinois-grown fruits and vegetables section to encourage consumers to buy local. This is the second year of the program. Several of last year's participants saw up to a 50 percent increase in sales due to their participation.

You can find a farmers market near you by going to www.agr.state.il.us/whereshis/. If you are a grower and would like to join the growing membership of the Illinois Specialty Growers Association go to www.specialtygrowers.org ■

Galena museum offers free admission to military personnel and families

The Galena-Jo Daviess County Historical Society announced their participation in "Blue Star Museums," a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense and more than 2,000 museums across America that will offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

A complete list of participating museums is available at www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums. With ID, active duty military personnel and up to five family members can participate in the free admission program.

"We're so pleased to support our military personnel and their families through this program," stated Nancy Breed, Executive Director. "Our museum and blacksmith shop are great stops for families visiting Galena."

The Galena & U.S. Grant Museum is 6,500 square feet of exhibit spaces including an authentic lead mine shaft and military history including the Civil War. The Old Blacksmith Shop, 245 N. Commerce Street, offers living history in an 1897 smithy. ■



Electric cooperatives tops in consumer satisfaction

According to the 2014 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey released May, consumer-members belonging to not-for-profit electric cooperatives are more satisfied with their utility than consumers served by either investor-owned (IOU) or municipal utilities. Touchstone Energy Cooperatives received an overall customer satisfaction score of 81 — the highest score for any electric-only utility. IOUs and municipals received scores of 75 and 76 respectively.

Consumer-members gave their electric cooperatives high marks when asked to rate the overall quality of service. According to the ACSI report, “Perceived quality rates are highest among customers of cooperative utilities with a score of 85, followed by investor-owned utilities at 82 and municipal utilities at 81. Quality is the most important driver in determining overall satisfaction with the



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customer experience.”

“These scores validate the cooperative difference,” said National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jo Ann Emerson.

“Member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives put members first and these numbers show why this business model has succeeded and why cooperatives continue to thrive even in uncertain economic times,” Emerson said. ■

A bright spot in a war torn country

For 20 years, southern Sudan made international headlines for two civil wars that killed an estimated two million people, displaced another four million and devastated its countryside before ending in 2005.

Recently the civil war has once again erupted with broken cease-fires. But during a short semi-peaceful period there was a bright spot with the starting of an electric co-op. Electrification of Yei, Southern Sudan was started with the know-how and resourcefulness of 15 American co-op volunteers, NRECA’s International Programs and funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

“When I got there, there was still a war going on,” recalled Ashley Johnson, Training Coordinator at Horry Electric Co-op, Conway, S.C., who was one of Yei’s first volunteers in 2005. “My plane landed on a dirt runway, and I saw soldiers on the runway. The whole power system had been destroyed by the war.”

Today, Yei is a transformed place. Now a self-sustaining co-op, YECO, as it’s called, serves more than 17,500 people and plans to expand. Crime rates have dropped, and locals are starting restaurants and other shops.

Paul Dow, an employee of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, has created a video documentary of the co-ops’ mission work in Yei. He has also traveled to other projects where co-op linemen have started rural electrification projects.

In Yei the impact of the new electric system was almost immediate. “It was a pretty dangerous area and people didn’t want to be out after dark,” says Dow. “But after the street lights went up you quickly saw street vendors come out and start selling food at night and kids playing soccer under the lights.”

The co-op linemen also see a great change. Dow says, “The impact on their feelings from helping make someone else’s life better really changes them. They never look at things the same, and they all realize how good we have it here in the United States.” ■





**“I’m proud to be an American
where at least I know I’m free.”**

On the Fourth of July, reach out and shake the hand of a veteran or an active serviceperson. It’s people like him and her who have spent the last 238 years protecting our rights and privileges as Americans.

*Happy Fourth of July from
your Touchstone Energy cooperative!*



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TOGETHER WE SAVE



Illinois Country
Father of the Year

So many words to describe Opa **2014 Father of the Year - Ernest Sjuts**

by Valerie Cheatham

Honorable, veteran, loving, wise, funny, compassionate, strong, supportive, generous, irreplaceable, encourager and greatest cheerleader. These are just a few of the words his grandchildren used to describe Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative member Ernest Sjuts of rural Urbana on his 80th birthday.

Sjuts is Opa (a German nickname for grandfather) to 15 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He and wife, Evelyn, referred to as Oma, have a blended family. He has four children – Mark (now deceased), Keith, Sharolyn and Don; and Evelyn has two – Ranae and Jim. Married in 1978, you would never guess who belonged to whom. That's just how

well-blended this family really is.

Ernie and Evelyn had “gone together” before either of them were first married. Life interceded, and each married someone else. Ernie had been divorced for eight years, and Evelyn had lost her husband in an accident, when they rekindled the romance two years later. He credits his son Mark for being responsible for the marriage.

With a smile, “Mark told Evelyn she needed to marry me because he wanted to move out of the house, but didn’t want me to be alone,” says Ernie.

Veteran

Ernie dropped out of high school at the age of 16 to help his father with the farming. It was common at that

time for sons to quit school to help out. They farmed 320 acres, which was a lot of land at that time. Four years later, he was drafted to serve in the Korean War and assigned to the artillery. Before he could be shipped to Korea, a truce was declared by President Eisenhower. Instead of Korea, Ernie was sent to serve in Vienna, Austria to patrol the Berlin Wall.

“Our Russian counterparts were on one side and we were on the other,” Ernie explains. “I was there for 18 months. Our objective was to slow the Russians down if they came over the wall!”

He met his best friend, Donald Barron, on one of his first days overseas. Barron, of Lewistown, Mo., was

the driver of the truck Ernie was in and they struck up a friendship. After Barron's discharge from the Army, he got a job in Danville so that he and Ernie could live closer to each other. The two have been best friends for 61 years.

Supportive

Ernie turned the management of the farm, Sjuts Farms, over to his youngest son Don at the ripe old age of 26. Don recalls that one day his dad told him he was the boss and asked him what he wanted him (Ernie) to do that day. "Most fathers won't do that," says Don. "They want to keep

their nose in it, but he's not like that. Once he turned it over, he let me make all the decisions. I've heard of others whose fathers have turned over the farm to them, and they couldn't get along. We've never had one cross word with each other. Never."

Strong

The Sjuts family has not been without its share of faith-testing challenges. On July 8, 2010, Ernie and Evelyn were at a reunion in Clinton, Iowa, when they received a call from grandson Ryan asking them if they had heard about an accident. As they started calling their children, they

learned there had been a car accident involving son Mark and grandson Chason, and one of them had passed. As friends threw their clothing back in their suitcases, Evelyn received a call from Don telling her that both Mark and Chason had passed away, but he didn't want her to tell his dad. He was worried about how it would impact their drive back.

After they were in the car, Ernie received a call from son Keith telling him the bad news. When they arrived at Don's house around 10 p.m. there were already about 50 cars in the driveway. Family and friends had all gathered to support each other.

The Sjuts family (l-r) front row: Brandt, Janna, Sharolyn, Cain, Ernie, Evelyn, Ranae, Caitlyn, Jamie, Charlie, Diana, Rylee, Ryan and Ashley. Back row: Sam, Don, Tad, Trent, Jim and Maddie. (Keith was unavailable for photo.)





Evelyn and Ernie headed to Sidney for their favorite ice cream.



Granddaughter Jamie and Ernie at graduation.

Oddly, Ernie remembers talking a few weeks earlier about how he hoped he never had to bury any of his children. "And then it happened," he reflects with tears in his eyes. "It's wrong - that's the worst feeling you can have."

Three months later, on Oct. 20, 2010, Ernie suffered a brain aneurysm. Evelyn remembers returning home that day and finding Ernie inside, which was unusual. "He said he had a headache, but he never gets headaches," says Evelyn. "He asked for a couple of Tylenol and about the time he took them, he started complaining about his neck hurting."

Evelyn wanted to call the doctor but Ernie told her no. "Well, I can be stubborn, too," says Evelyn. "I called the doctor, and they told me to get him to the emergency room right away, but he wouldn't go. They had me put him on the phone and he reluctantly obliged." On the way to the hospital Evelyn tried frantically to get in touch with one of the children, but no one was answering. Meanwhile, Ernie was sweating profusely and turning gray. She wanted someone to meet her at the hospital and finally got in touch with Ranae, who met her there.

Ernie was immediately cared for by the emergency room staff and tests were ordered. The hospital didn't have a neurosurgeon there and quickly transferred him to Carle Hospital in Urbana. The only thing Ernie remembers is asking the ambulance driver if the vehicle was a Ford, because he didn't want to ride in a Chevy! Much to his chagrin, he did ride in a Chevy.

He was in the hospital for three weeks and Evelyn never left his side. She slept and showered at the hospital, and Ranae would bring her a change of clothes and take the other ones home to wash. Ernie credits the neurosurgeon, Dr. Wang, for saving his life and the family's faith for getting them through those hard times.

Encourager

In every moment, good, bad and every day, you'll find the family together. They learned the importance of family from Ernie. "You won't find a man that will do more for his kids," Don states. Ernie and Evelyn want to be around to watch their grandkids play sports or whatever they are doing. Ernie states matter-of-factly, "They only grow up one time. If you miss out

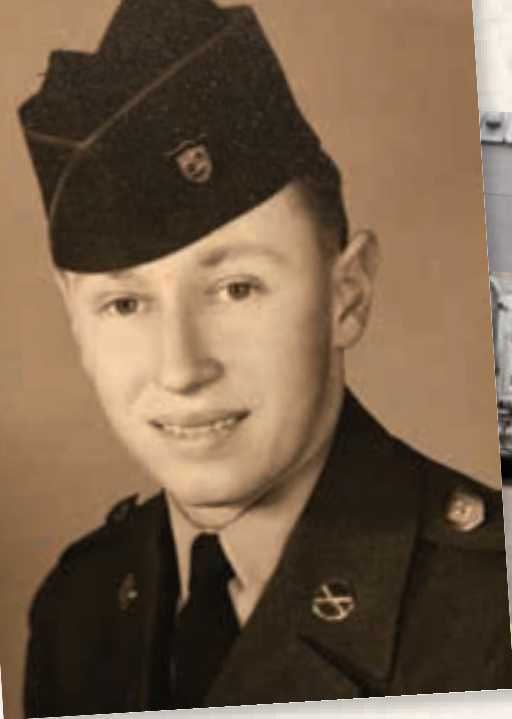
on it, you're done!"

Ernie made it a priority to be there for every chemo treatment his grandson Trent required several years ago, always by his side. Thankfully, Trent has been cancer-free for seven years.

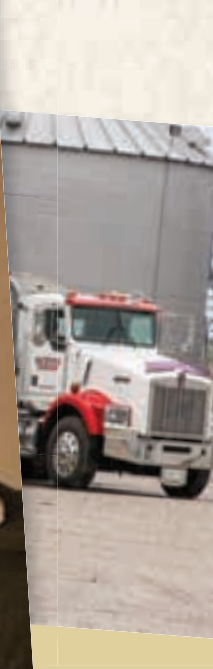
Since Ernie had to drop out of high school, he didn't have the opportunity to earn his high school diploma the traditional way. But that didn't stop him from receiving it. One of Ernie's proudest moments was in the spring of 2012 when he received his high school diploma from St. Joseph-Ogden High School alongside his granddaughter Jamie. "It was really special having my Opa there," says Jamie. "He even got a standing ovation."

Loving

When asked why she nominated him, Ranae chokes up and says, "Ernie is very special to me. If you read anything any of the grandkids have written, the consensus is that he is a great person, a great man. Although we are two families, we are one. There are some kids that don't get the chance to have a dad in their life. I guess I'm one of the lucky ones because I got two of them!"



Staff Sergeant Ernest Sjuts



What's Your Opa Word?

*As we started to plan a party,
For the man we admire so.
A thought passed through my head,
Something I needed to know.*

*This man that many call "Ernie,"
But we're blessed to call father and friend.
What would all his grandchildren say,
If this question was asked of them?*

*"If you could describe your Opa,
What one word would you choose?"
As they texted them to me one by one,
Tears rolled as I heard their views.*

*Opa is a veteran we are proud to exclaim.
He's compassionate and loving, indeed.
He's a "dandy," he's unique, yes, he's one of a kind.
We are proud to follow his lead.*

*He is honorable and wise...and funny, of course.
He's cool, and he makes us smile.
He's supportive, reliable, confident and strong,
And he's hard-working all the while.*

*He is generous and proud of his family.
He is loyal from the start.
He's loved by all of us that are here,
And those that live in our hearts.
(In loving memory of Mark and Chason)*

*Yes, Our Opa is inspiring.
He's irreplaceable, we must confess.
Our Opa is amazing!
He's OUR Opa, and HE'S the Best!
(Love...Dustin, Ryan, Trent, Traesha, (Chason), Tad,
Janna, Jamie, Corey, Brandt, Rylee, Maddie and Cain)*

Granddaughter Rylee may have said it best in an essay she wrote. "My Opa is a great role model. I love him so much. He is a great man, a hero to me and an inspiration in life."

Sharolyn passionately adds, "We are one family. Even though our parents were divorced, we are very proud that our dad and our mother Sylvia can still be friends. Our mom and Evelyn are friends too, and that helps us a lot. My mother is part of all family holidays and celebrations, and I think the fact we are all together really shows the character of the three of them. Mom and Dad look beyond what obviously didn't work as a marriage and became friends."

"Dad once said to me, 'you're a better farmer than I ever was,'" says Don. "I told him you've taught me more than farming, you taught me to be a good father. We all LOVE our kids and I think that's what he taught us, to be a good parent and there for your kids. He's stern and loving and taught us respect."

So what does Ernie do to keep himself busy? In the spring you can find him helping Don plant corn and beans, and in the fall you might see him in one of the farm's semis hauling grain. According to Ranae's letter, "He doesn't miss a beat when it comes to cheering on his grandkids at their ballgames and on most Sundays, you'll find him attending church services at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Flatville."

And, on Sunday afternoons it's likely you'll see him and Evelyn on their golf cart, along with their friends on their carts. Destination? Headed down to Sidney for a picnic lunch and a stop at their favorite ice cream shop. They simply enjoy each other's company and the peace and quiet. And the crops, he's always looking at the crops. ■

Read other letters submitted

All nomination letters can be seen at icl.coop/letters2014



Changing the rules

New EPA carbon regulations proposed for existing plants

Ever since “cap-and-trade” legislation to control CO₂ emissions failed to pass Congress in 2010, the debate has shifted to the regulatory arena. Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed strict new regulations that would virtually eliminate the construction of new coal-fired plants. On June 2, the EPA unveiled the second part of its carbon regulation plan — one designed to dramatically change the rules for existing plants.

The new proposed rule’s 645 pages of regulations have a goal of reducing the amount of carbon dioxide emitted from existing fossil-fuel based generation by 30 percent by 2030 when compared to 2005 levels.

National Rural Electric Cooperative (NRECA) CEO Jo Ann Emerson responded, “Americans count on affordable and reliable energy to power our communities, promote job and economic growth and keep costs in line for the basic necessities in our family budgets. New EPA regulations that add to the price of electricity have serious consequences for our communities, jobs and families.”

These regulations will likely be especially costly for electric co-op members and consumers in the Midwest.

Because it has been the least costly and most reliable generating fuel, coal currently fuels about 40 percent of U.S. electric generation, and about 70 percent of the power supplied by co-op owned generation.

One proposed solution is carbon capture and storage technology. Although progress is being made, some right here in Illinois with the



FutureGen project, the fact is the technology is not ready yet for installation on new commercial facilities, let alone as a retrofit to existing plants. It will also be very costly. Dr. Julio Friedmann, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for clean coal at the Department of Energy, told House lawmakers that the first generation of carbon capture and storage technology would increase wholesale electricity prices by “70 or 80 percent.”

“America’s electric cooperatives are naturally concerned these regulations will increase electricity prices and force power plant shutdowns, thereby harming the economy and jobs of hard-working Americans,” Emerson said. “However, there are a lot of details to work through in this proposal and additional details that will be outlined in yet-to-be-developed state plans.”

The rule sets emission reduction goals for each state and gives states the flexibility to choose how to meet the goal using a combination of measures that reflect their particular circumstances. States have one to three years to submit their final plans to EPA and 15 years to fully implement them, according to the agency.

EPA outlined measures states could take. They include installing demand-side energy efficiency, conservation and power plant efficiency programs; setting renewable energy standards;

switching to natural gas or co-generation; or using more nuclear power and renewables. Other options involve upgrading transmission, investing in energy storage and retiring fossil units.

Co-ops across the country have already been working to ramp up their use of

renewables and energy saving smart grid technology. Cooperatives have doubled their owned and purchased renewable energy capacity since 2009. The aggregated total capacity jumped from 2.9 GW in 2009 to 5.9 GW in 2014. This capacity includes power from wind, solar, small hydro, biomass, landfill gas and geothermal installations.

President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives Duane Noland said, “Illinois electric co-ops are already taking proactive steps using some of these options. For example, all but one electric co-op in our state has already installed smart grid automated meters that can be used in demand-side management programs such as conservation voltage reduction. Others have finished or have plans for large community solar installations or wind turbines. And electric co-ops have been leaders in promoting energy conservation programs and energy saving technology such as geothermal heat pumps.”

It is easy to join the more than half a million Americans who’ve already taken action because they’re concerned about access to affordable and reliable energy. Co-op members are being asked to let EPA know we need a common sense energy solution. This can be done by signing one of the comment cards available in co-op offices or at member meetings, or by visiting www.Action.coop.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Chicago, IL

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at **www.septicleanse.com** or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "ILS2", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

Hot peppers: edible and ornamental!

By L. A. Jackson

Want to add visual and literal sizzle to your garden this year? Include hot peppers. These popular plants have become staples in many vegetable gardens because, even with heat levels that, in some, seem to approach thermonuclear, it can't be denied that hot peppers will certainly spice up dull meals at dinner time.

But with such a diversity of shapes, sizes and especially colors, it seems a shame to confine hot peppers to just the veggie patch. Many of these peppers are not only very ornamental, but their colorful fruits are abundant as well as persistent. This means they are ideal plants to add extra eye-appeal to just about any landscape setting. In addition, the usual compact size of these annuals makes them excellent companion plants for flower borders and prime candidates for container gardens.

Need examples? Think of the long, bright yellow Hungarian wax peppers, or the squat, crinkled, outrageously hot Habanero, glowing in simmering shades of orange or red, mixing it up with purple basil or a dark-leaf sun coleus. Nice contrast, yes?

There are even hot peppers that create their own contrast. As Serrano and Jalapeno peppers ripen, they become a pleasing visual melody of shiny young green and mature red fruit. Not to be outdone, the Tabasco pepper sports a sassy coat of pale green, yellow, orange and red as its fruits develop in different stages.

Some hot peppers are designated as "ornamental," meaning that, although edible, they were bred more for looks than taste. Many show off multi-colored fruit, making them automatic focal points in the landscape. A good example is 'Explosive Ember' with red, orange and purple fruit all competing for attention on the same plant and



The eye-catching glow of the Habanero pepper.

Source: L.A. Jackson

nice flaunted on a background canvas of purple-tinted foliage. Other multicolored ornamental pepper showoffs include 'Marbles', 'Sangria', 'Prairie Fire', 'Aurora', 'NuMex Twilight,' and 'Bolivian Rainbow.'

Another eye-catching ornamental pepper to consider is the dusky, mysterious 'Black Pearl,' with its deep purple leaves and dark, ink-hued fruit, which would make interesting counter colors in a bed of white or pastel-flowering annuals. The silvery leaves of artemisia would also bounce boldly off 'Black Pearl.'

Two to three weeks after the last average frost date, or when the soil temperature rises to around 65 degrees F, is a good time to plant hot peppers. The more sun they receive, the better, but also make sure plants are placed in well-worked, enriched soil.

Since hot peppers are heat worshipers, a good way to get young

plants off to a fast start is to cover the ground around them with a sheet of black plastic, which will absorb and trap warmth from the sun. Ideally, this covering should be in place two weeks or longer before hot peppers are planted.

Be sure to poke holes in the plastic to allow water to reach the root zone. And when the summer really begins to simmer, adding a few inches of organic mulch over the covering will not only help even out the peppers' supply of moisture over the growing season, but it will also cut down on competition from weeds.

Any other ornamental or vegetable that is going to be included with hot peppers to complement their good looks can be added by simply cutting an "X" through the black plastic and setting the plant in the soil.

One final note: If hot peppers are to be interplanted with standard ornamentals, and you are also going to use them in the kitchen, be sure not to spray the fruits with any pesticides that haven't been cleared for vegetables. ■

Hot Pepper Sources

- ★ Pepper Gal, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (www.peppergal.com).
- ★ The Chile Pepper Institute, Las Cruces, NM (www.chilepepperinstitute.org).
- ★ Pepper Joe's, Myrtle Beach, SC (www.pepperjoe.com).
- ★ The Chile Woman, Bloomington, IN (www.thechilewoman.com).

L.A. Jackson has been a garden editor, lecturer and writer for over 20 years and has led many tours overseas through the great gardens of Europe. He lives in North Carolina.

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Cooking



Poppy Seed Ham & Swiss Slider

Blueberry Zucchini Bread (below)

3 eggs, lightly beaten
 1 c. vegetable oil
 3 tsp. vanilla
 2-1/4 c. sugar
 2 c. zucchini, shredded
 3 c. flour

1 tsp. salt
 1 tsp. baking powder
 1 tsp. baking soda
 1 T. cinnamon
 1 pt. fresh blueberries (about 2 c.)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease 4 mini loaf pans. In large bowl, beat together eggs, oil, vanilla and sugar. Fold in zucchini. Beat in the flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon. Gently fold in blueberries. Transfer to pans. Bake for 50 minutes or until knife inserted into center comes out clean. Cool 20 minutes in pans, then turn out on wire racks to cool completely.



Blueberry Zucchini Bread

Heavenly Delights

Who: South Fork United Methodist Church

Cost: \$20 includes shipping

Details: Hard-backed, ring bound, includes recipe CD

Pages of recipes: 276

Send checks to: South Fork U.M.W.,
 c/o Barb Stolte, 1403 E. 200 North Road,
 Nokomis, IL 62075 or 217-820-1757 or
 email leeaumann@yahoo.com.

Poppy Seed Ham & Swiss Slider (left)

24 Sweet Hawaiian Rolls
 24 pieces honey ham
 24 sm. slices Swiss cheese
 1/3 c. mayonnaise
 1/3 c. Miracle Whip

Poppy Seed Sauce:

1/2 c. butter, melted
 1 T. poppy seeds
 1-1/2 T. dry mustard
 1 T. minced onion
 1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

In small bowl, combine mayonnaise and Miracle Whip. Cut rolls in half. Spread mayonnaise mixture on each side of roll. Make a sandwich with ham and cheese on each roll. Place rolls close together in a greased 9x13" pan until pan is completely full. For poppy seed sauce, combine all ingredients and spread evenly over tops of all the rolls. Let rolls set until butter has set up. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until cheese is melted. Rolls can be made a day ahead and stored in refrigerator until ready to bake.

Campfire Potatoes

5 med. potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/4" thick
 1/4 c. Parmesan cheese, shredded
 2 tsp. fresh parsley, minced
 3/4 tsp. garlic powder
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/8 tsp. pepper
 1/4 c. butter or margarine, cubed

Place half of the potatoes on a large piece of heavy duty foil. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, parsley, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Dot with butter. Top with remaining potatoes. Fold foil over and seal tightly. Grill covered over medium heat 30-35 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Yield: 4 servings.

What do you feed your farmers as they harvest? Send your recipes to finestcooking@aiec.coop.

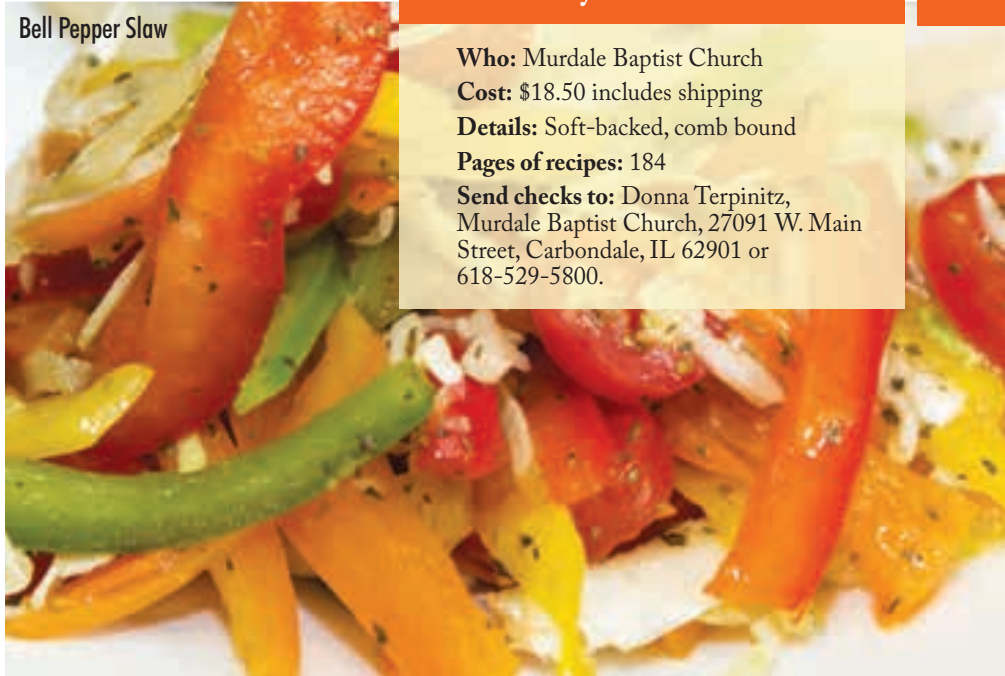
Heavenly Creations

Bell Pepper Slaw (right)

1 – 10 oz. bag slaw mix
1 lg. red bell pepper
1 lg. green bell pepper
1 lg. orange bell pepper
1 lg. purple bell pepper
1 lg. yellow bell pepper
1 ctn. grape tomatoes, sliced
1/3 c. olive oil
1/3 c. white vinegar
1 T. sugar
1 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. black pepper
2 tsp. dried basil
2 tsp. dried oregano

Seed and thinly slice all peppers. Place slaw mix, peppers and tomatoes in a large container with lid. Shake to combine and set aside. In a small bowl, combine remaining ingredients, whisking well. Pour mixture over vegetables. Close lid and shake well to coat. Store in refrigerator, covered. Best if made the day before serving.

Bell Pepper Slaw



Who: Murdale Baptist Church
Cost: \$18.50 includes shipping
Details: Soft-backed, comb bound
Pages of recipes: 184
Send checks to: Donna Terpinitz,
Murdale Baptist Church, 27091 W. Main
Street, Carbondale, IL 62901 or
618-529-5800.

Coffee-Molasses Marinated Pork (below)

1 c. strong-brewed coffee
1/4 c. molasses
6 sprigs fresh thyme
2 T. cider vinegar
1 T. Dijon mustard
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. lemon pepper
1/2 tsp. ground ginger
4 bone-in loin pork chops, 1" thick

Combine coffee, molasses, thyme, vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt, lemon pepper and ginger. Pour 1/2 cup of the marinade mixture into a large resealable plastic bag; add the pork. Seal bag and turn to coat. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Cover and refrigerate remaining coffee mixture until ready to cook. Drain and discard marinade. Grill pork on a grill rack sprayed with cooking spray. Grill or broil chops until thermometer reads 160 degrees. Spoon reserved coffee mixture over chops. Grill until glaze bubbles, 1 to 2 minutes.

Deviled Eggs

12 hard-boiled eggs, peeled
1/4 to 1/2 c. mayonnaise
1 T. dill pickle relish with juice
1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard
Smoked paprika

Slice eggs in half, remove yolks to bowl or small food processor. Add mayonnaise, relish and mustard; mix until smooth. Fill egg halves and sprinkle with smoked paprika.

Calling all cookbooks!

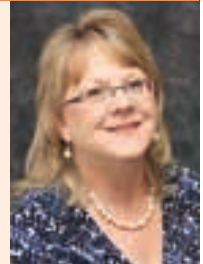
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Coffee-Molasses Marinated Pork

A magic energy moment

Finding energy saving examples in nature

My wife and I recently purchased some large Desert Rose plants to place on our west-facing front porch. This porch gets extremely hot during summer afternoons, so these beautiful plants should enjoy their new environment. Our porch doesn't look like the plant's native environments of tropical Africa or Arabia. But the direct sunlight, its reflective surface temperatures and Arkansas' humidity produce the heat, light and moisture conducive for these hardy hot-weather plants.

Each morning when we retrieve the newspaper we notice there are no blooms or color on our new plants. But when we head outside in the afternoon, we are greeted with dozens of beautiful blooms, provided the sun is shining.

We enjoy sitting on that porch during the evenings. With coffee in hand, we enjoy watching the sun set upon our neighborhood. One evening as we were sitting there, I saw a movement out of the corner of my eye. I looked to the left but saw nothing but one of the Desert Rose plants.

A minute later I saw movement out of the corner of my eye again. This time I just continued to stare at that plant. I saw one of the blooms shake like it had a chill. There was no breeze, so I thought that an insect or one of our cute little lizards was on the plant stem causing the movement. But then I saw another bloom shake, and then another, and then another. The movement continued for several minutes until all of the blooms were closed. As the sun dropped below the horizon, it seemed as though every bloom had a device that retracted the petals.

It was at that moment that I realized the closing of each bloom was



energy in action thanks to Mother Nature. It really was a magic moment for me because I started thinking of the ways that nature relates to the same energy efficiency measures and messages we have shared for years.

One of my seminar focal points is "all energy comes from the sun." Thus, a perfect example is the Desert Rose bloom. It remains wide-open to collect as much solar energy and carbon dioxide as possible for survival. The energy collected is essential and must not be wasted. So, the bloom closes at sunset and forms a thermal envelope. Sound familiar? We've been teaching about thermal envelopes for years - that is the kind used for your house.

Simply stated, if your house has minimal air infiltration and is properly insulated, you have a good thermal envelope. Furthermore, when the energy you purchase is utilized efficiently, the by-products are a comfortable home, manageable utility bills and conservation of resources.

Another example is the robin's nest

on top of my porch column. Being an architect, I enjoy a good construction project. I watched the bird build the nest using mud and straw. The nest is practically airtight, except at the top. Then, Mother Robin places her feather-insulated body over the top of the nest, keeping the eggs or hatchlings dry and at the desired temperature. This example of nature and nests is a perfect segue.

Now is a great time for humans to inspect their nests. Does your nest need more attic insulation to improve the comfort within? If you are not sure, give me a call at my office at 501-653-7931.

Until next month, I hope that you will have your magic moments, too. ■

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.



A Salute to the Red, White and Blue!

This Independence Day, Test Your American Flag IQ

The American flag is one of the most recognized symbols in the world. It may have many names—the Star-Spangled Banner, the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory—but it has one clear meaning: it stands for unity and freedom.

Our flag has earned our respect: handle it with care! In that spirit, we invite you to find out just how much you know about caring for and flying our national banner.

To determine your flag IQ, answer each of the following questions, then check below for the answers and figure out your score.

1. How do I fly the flag on a flagpole?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- When on the same flagpole, always fly the U.S. flag above any state, municipal or social-organization flag
- When on the same flagpole, the U.S. flag should be above any other nation's flag
- Raise the U.S. flag briskly and lower it ceremoniously
- When flying the U.S. flag near flags of other nations, it should be positioned on its own right

2. How do I hang the flag indoors?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- The flag may be used to cover a ceiling
- The flag can be hung horizontally or vertically
- The union, or canton (the blue field of stars), should be on the flag's right and the viewer's left
- If hung in a window, the canton should be on the viewer's left

3. When properly folded, the flag takes what shape?

- A rectangle
- A triangle
- A square
- A hexagon

4. When is a flag not flown at half-staff?

- Upon the death of a president or former president
- When the president or the governor of a state declares an official period of mourning
- On Memorial Day, honoring those who have died while serving the U.S.
- When a member of your family dies

5. How do I raise a flag to the half-staff position?

- Raise it slowly to half-staff
- Raise it slowly all the way to the top, then slowly to half-staff
- Raise it all the way to the top, then all the way to the bottom, then to half-staff
- Raise it briskly all the way to the top, then lower it slowly to half-staff



6. What should a civilian do when a flag passes by in a parade or procession?

- Salute and stand at attention
- Place the right hand over the heart while the first U.S. flag passes by
- Place the right hand over the heart while each U.S. flag passes by
- Place the left hand over the heart while the first U.S. flag passes by

7. What do I do with my flag when it's worn out?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- Burn it in a private place
- Organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Boy Scouts of America or the Girl Scouts can dispose of your flag
- Fold it, then carefully place it in the trash
- Contact your town or city officials for more information

Answers

- (b) is false. The U.S. flag should never share a pole with another nation's flag. International law forbids the display of one nation's flag above another in times of peace.
- (a) is false. The flag should never be used to cover a ceiling.
- (b) is correct.
- (d) is false. Flags are flown at half-staff only during official periods of mourning. On Memorial Day the flag is flown at half-staff until noon and then at full-staff for the remainder of the day.
- (d) is correct.
- (b) is correct. People in military uniform salute as the first U.S. flag passes; the remaining flags in the parade do not need to be recognized.
- (c) is false. When the U.S. flag is no longer in a condition to be displayed with honor, it should be destroyed in a dignified way.

Score

1-2: Not too good. Back to Civics class!

3-5: Impressive, but there's room for improvement.

6-7: Well done! Stand tall, patriot!

Presented by





**Water Recreation and
Electric Shock Drowning:**

Lucas' Story

Understand and Avoid the "Silent Killer"

Everybody who knew eight-year-old Lucas Ritz was his friend. The bright, outgoing boy was well-known to everyone in his Scappoose, Oregon marina community. He shared his parents' passion for boating and seeing new places and dreamed of becoming a boat captain.

His father and mother, Kevin and Sheryl Ritz, were very safety conscious. The kids always wore life jackets and were closely supervised, so the tragedy of that hot August 1st in 1999 was unimaginable.

"One second he was splashing, having a great time, and the next moment he's quiet, apparently unconscious,

floating on his back doing nothing," says Kevin. "Not only did he have on a life jacket, but the type that when you go unconscious, keeps your face out of the water."

Lucas had been swimming with his brother and friends at the marina. They were floating down the channel, letting the current carry them to the end of the dock where they would get out, go back up, and do it again. Sheryl was walking down the dock to keep an eye on them.

She recalls, "They went past a boat. I walked past on the other side. I saw that he was heading to the dock to get out of the water. Then all of a sudden

he screamed and rolled (back) on his life jacket. I yelled for help, then jumped in to help him, and immediately I felt like I couldn't move."

By then Kevin was on hand as both were pulled from the water. "I'm very puzzled as to why (Lucas) is unconscious. I check for respiration, there was none. I check for heartbeat, and there wasn't any. Hoping that I'm doing this wrong, I start CPR."

Lucas never regained consciousness, and the coroner ruled his death a drowning; but Kevin refused to accept that. His investigation led to the discovery that a boat docked where Lucas was heading was leaking 120 volts of



electricity into water. Lucas was killed as he entered the energized water, and Sheryl had been paralyzed when she jumped in to help.

Kevin's insistence on understanding what happened, and why, propelled him to a career as a Master Marine Technician and certified trainer for the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC). He and his family are working to raise awareness of what is now called "electric shock drowning" or ESD, the cause of multiple swimming deaths throughout the country each year. They are working with the Safe Electricity program to teach people about ESD and to prevent the kind of tragedy that took Lucas' life.

Kevin adds, "Anytime somebody drowns in a marina, like our own case, it's just called a drowning. The reality is, unless there's people, personnel, on the ground that can do a proper investigation, any drowning in a marina is suspicious from my standpoint. How many of these things actually occur? We know that the ones we capture are just tip of the iceberg."

Those who enjoy boating and water recreation should understand these safety precautions:

- Do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power.
- If you are in the water and feel electric current, shout to let others know, try to stay upright and swim away from anything that could be energized.

- If you are on the dock or shore when a swimmer feels electrical current, do not jump in. Throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection at the meter base and/or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible; then call for help.

Those who own boats should take these measures:

- Regardless of the size of boat, maintenance of the electrical system should be done by a professional familiar with marine electrical codes.
- Boats with alternating current (AC) electrical systems should have isolation transformers or equipment leakage circuit interrupter (ELCI) protection, comply with American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) standards and should be serviced by an ABYC Certified Tech.
- Fuses are rated to protect the wire, not the appliance. If a fuse blows continuously, it should NOT be replaced with a larger one just to keep it from blowing again—something else is wrong. Get it checked out.
- Have your boat's electrical system checked at least once a year. Boats should also be checked when something is added to or removed from their systems.

For docks, follow these steps:

- All electrical installations should be done by a professional electrical contractor familiar

with marine codes and standards and should be inspected at least once a year.

- Have a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) breaker installed on the circuit(s) feeding electricity to the dock. A GFCI will trip the circuit and cut off power quickly if there is a problem.
- The metal frame of docks should be bonded to connect all metal to the AC safety ground at the power source.
- Neighboring docks can also present a shock hazard. Make your neighbor aware of the need for safety inspections and maintenance. Marinas should comply with the National Electrical Code (NEC) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes.

"Every time we have to go back and think about and talk about what happened, it's tough," says Sheryl, "but the reason that we do it is we keep tracking this stuff, and it's still happening. People don't know, and that was us 14 years ago."

Kevin adds, "You don't want this to happen to you. That hole will never be filled, and it's so simple to resolve."

Help prevent ESD. Learn more and see the video of Lucas' story at SafeElectricity.org.



Child safety with mobile technology

Speaking as a father, I have always struggled with finding a balance between ensuring my children have access to technology, while also maintaining a healthy amount of “outside time.” After all, my generation grew up without phones, computers and tablets, and we somehow survived. Still, parents these days find themselves faced with the dilemma of making sure their children don’t fall behind in technology.

After all, these skills will someday impact their ability to enter the workforce. In other words, I want my children to have a certain ease when using technology, but I also still want them to be safe and able to put the technology down and have a face-to-face conversation.

To that end, this month let’s spend some time looking at the parental control features available on the iPhone. I chose the iPhone because it’s arguably one of the most popular phones out there right now. However, many of these same features are available on other phones as well. So, even if you don’t have an iPhone, you may still be able to enable the features discussed here using your own phone’s operating system.

Most parents find they do not wish to allow unfettered access to in-app purchases. There are several horror stories going around on the net about children purchasing massive amounts of in-game currencies, only for their parents to receive bills at the end of the month totaling in the thousands of dollars. So, turning off in-app purchases, while not exactly a safety issue, can indeed be of benefit to a parent allowing a child the use of a phone.

So, how do you enable restrictions?

First, on the home screen tap Settings, and then General. From here, you should see a button labeled Restrictions. Tap that button and then you see a button labeled Enable Restrictions. In order to enable



restrictions, you will need to provide a passcode. Note that this passcode is different than the one you may have set up in order to unlock the phone. Because these codes can be different, you can still allow your child to lock her phone, without sharing the passcode you set up for restrictions.

Also, be careful you choose a passcode you will not forget. If you should lose the passcode, then you will have to restore the phone to factory condition in order to reset it. That means you will lose all data on the phone. So, choose wisely!

Once you have the passcode set up, you should see another screen with several options available to you. For example, you can now choose whether or not your child can install or delete apps, as well as whether or not they can use FaceTime or Safari. More importantly though, you have access to the settings for content.

You should see a section entitled “Allowed Content.” If it’s not already set, then select United States for your rating system. Once that is done, you may now choose, based upon category, the level of exposure your child should have to content while using their phone. It works much the same way

our television and movie programming ratings work. For example, if you click on TV Shows you will be able to select from a variety of very familiar looking ratings. Alternatively, you can completely disallow television shows if you so choose.

Take a moment and explore each of the areas and categories available to you in the restrictions section. Once you have them all set the way you like, simply close the window by pressing the home button (big round button at the bottom) and your preferences will be saved.

Reply Online

Have a technology issue and want some advice? Visit www.icl.coop and click on Powered Up to respond. Your response might even be included in a future column.

Ed VanHoose is the
EVP/GM at Clay Electric
Cooperative, Inc. in Flora



edv@ceci.coop

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A family tradition of cooperative public service

Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL 17) grew up in Springfield, but her family roots run deep in rural Illinois. Her family connection with electric co-ops and public service starts with her grandfather Joe Callahan, a hog farmer from Milford, Ill., who was a state representative during some of the most turbulent times for Illinois electric cooperatives.

Rep. Joe Callahan was pictured on the cover of the May 1965 Illinois Rural News, this magazine's predecessor. Bustos' grandfather helped pass in a bipartisan manner the Illinois Electric Supplier Act, which was landmark electric utility legislation.

"I actually have that original magazine cover framed and in my Congressional office in Washington," says Bustos.

She says she got to know her grandfather well since he would stay at their home in Springfield when the General Assembly was in session. "What I remember about my grandpa was he was tough, he had a great sense of humor, smoked, and always carried Juicy Fruit gum and butter-scotch hard candy. He was a big man, but more than anything, I remember my dad's stories about his dad and what a strong man he was and how he stood up for the right things. My dad said my grandfather had a 100 percent voting record on issues that were important to electric co-ops."

Bustos heard many of the stories about when the REA lights were turned on from her father Gene Callahan and uncle, Myran Erdman, a dairy farmer from Chenoa, Ill., who served on Corn Belt Energy's board of directors for 20 years.

"My dad remembers the first thing my grandpa bought was an RCA push button radio. He bought it that same day that the electricity came on because he loved the news. My dad's sister Neta, who is Myran's



Rep. Cheri Bustos says she had to get out of her "comfort zone" to run for Congress, but was motivated by a family tradition of trying to make a difference and a passion for public service. Her sister Lynn Riddley (l-r) mother Ann and father Gene Callahan were there when she was sworn in.

wife, remembers having to do her chores before she could listen to Little Orphan Annie on the radio."

Both Bustos and her father were newspaper reporters before moving on to political service. Her father served as chief of staff for Paul Simon when he was lieutenant governor and also for U.S. Senator Alan Dixon. Callahan has always had a passion for sports, especially baseball. He was the lobbyist for Major League Baseball when Congress was threatening to strip the league of its anti-trust exemption. Bustos' brother, Dan Callahan was also passionate about baseball and served as Southern Illinois University's head baseball coach until he lost his battle with neurotropic melanoma in 2010.

Bustos learned a lot from her father — life lessons about teamwork, building relationships, hard work, and showing respect to others. For example, he was well known for always, always returning phone calls.

Showing respect and gratitude were lessons she and her sister and brother learned early says Bustos. "It was more than just words from my mom and my

dad. My parents are nice people, but believe me my dad is tough. He has very, very high expectations. If we varied from that path of treating people with respect in any way there was no tolerance for that."

In addition to always returning phone calls, Bustos learned as a reporter that listening is also an important skill as well as a way to show respect. She carries that life lesson into her current job. For example, in August she will be conducting a 14-county listening tour she's calling her "Backyards and Backroads" tour.

So what life lessons does she pass on to young people? Bustos says, "At a recent commencement address I talked about getting out of your comfort zone, things that are hard to do, or uncomfortable to do, or you just don't think you can do it. You've got to do it. That's where the magic happens — outside your comfort zone. Obviously running for Congress is not the most comfortable thing to do when your life is exposed and there is public criticism, but it has been an amazing experience and I hope at the end of the day they will say I made a difference."

Protecting animals for future generations

National Zookeepers Week: July 13-19, 2014

By Marilyn Jones



By definition, a zoo is a garden or park where wild animals are kept for exhibition; a collection of living animals usually for public display. And a zookeeper: one who maintains or cares for the animals in a zoo. Without a zoo there would be no zookeeper and without a zookeeper there would be no zoo.

Every year, the third week of July is designated National Zookeeper Week; the perfect time to ask the question: What does a zookeeper do?

At Niabi Zoo, Head Zookeeper Mandy Turnbull says there is no such thing as a typical day. The zoo, located in Coal Valley, is situated on 40 acres and is home to more than 330 animals representing more than 140 species from around the world.

Turnbull says her day starts by meeting with other zookeepers to share any animal and exhibit news from the previous day. “We then go to our assigned animal areas to do health checks and head counts, exhibit checks and any opening duties,” she said. “All of us are responsible for the daily feeding, watering, enriching, training, medical assessment and exhibit cleaning for a wide variety of animals.

“We [also] perform husbandry training which means that we train behaviors that ultimately reduce the stress of medical exams or transport,” she explained. “For example, if we can train a lion to present its paw, then if we suspect that it has an injury we can ask for that ‘paw present’ rather than having to perform a medical sedation. We can also train an animal to enter into a carrier on its own which eliminates the need to capture it.”

Silverback gorilla Kwan leads his groups at Regenstein Center for African Apes, mirroring the gorilla social setting of the wild. Lincoln Park Zoo has long been a leader in preserving this endangered species.

Environmental Enrichment is another major part of a zookeeper's duties. "We care for animals in a captive environment, and we want those animals to have opportunities to make choices about that environment," said Turnbull. "We want them to exhibit natural behaviors whenever possible.

"To that end we will give them objects to play with, different scents to follow or different perches to sit on," she explained. "We [might also] change the mode by which they receive their diet so they are engaged in thinking about their food."

A zookeeper for 11 years, Turnbull says her favorite part of the job is watching the animals being playful. "I also love talking to people and helping them understand how cool animals are. A lot of visitors want to learn about the animals or have questions about why I'm doing something in an exhibit."

To become a zookeeper, Turnbull graduated from college with a degree in biology and interned at Niabi Zoo. "A lot of the preparation for being a zookeeper is research about the different animals and on-the-job training. You can know all about the biology of a specific species of animal, but each facility has its own protocols for working around the animals and each animal has behaviors that may be unique."

Although trained to be able to take care of all the animals at the zoo,



The polar bear window is one of the most exciting destinations for zoo visitors. The big bear loves to swim up to the window and surprise her audience.

Turnbull says she mostly works with the elephants, large carnivores and reptiles.

One thing that surprises Turnbull is when she hears someone say zoo animals belong in the wild. "There is not much 'wild' left in the world, and those animals in the wild are being killed or taken for the pet trade at an alarming rate. The ivory trade, palm oil production, bushmeat trade, exotic pet trade and traditional medicines have absolutely decimated wild animal populations that were already declining due to habitat destruction.

"One of the most important jobs that a zoological institution can do is to foster a positive connection between visitors and animals," she says. "If I can get a visitor excited about an animal, my hope is that they keep that excitement and channel it into an effort to learn more about that species and its plight in the wild.

"The more visitors are informed, the more they can make positive changes in the world. My part in all of this is to take care of the animals at Niabi Zoo with the highest standards possible and to help the public care about conserving the animals' wild counterparts," she adds. "It is a role that I am excited about and proud to have."

As the need to protect and preserve our wildlife and vanishing habitats has increased, our role as educators and wildlife ambassadors has become essential. During the third week of July each year, celebrate National Zoo Keeper Week; both you and your animals deserve the recognition.

—American Association of Zookeepers



Niabi ZOO

If you go:

Niabi Zoo is located at 13010 Niabi Zoo Road in Coal Valley. For more information call (309) 799-3482 or check the website at <http://niabizoo.com>.

Giraffes are a favorite at Niabi Zoo. Photo courtesy Niabi Zoo

Illinois is well represented in the world of zoos, aquariums and animal sanctuaries. For a list of other Illinois zoos go to www.icl.coop/zoo.

- 1-2 Cobden Peach Festival**, 117 S. Appleknocker Dr., Cobden. Celebrate the local peach harvest, sponsored by the Cobden Lions Club. Join us for fresh peaches from local orchards, carnival rides and games, homemade food and peach cobbler and pie. Free admission. www.cobdenil.com or 800-248-4373.
- 8-10 Oblong Annual Antique Tractor & Engine Show**, Crawford County Fairgrounds, 2352 Highway 33, Oblong. Antique and pedal tractor pulls, farm toy show, flea market and view actual working antique tractors and engines. www.theonlyoblong.com or 618-546-5615.
- 9-10 47th Annual Willow Folk Festival**, Willow United Methodist Church, 6522 S. Willow Rd., Stockton. Amateur and professional bluegrass, country and spiritual singers perform with acoustic musicians from a hay wagon or on a country church lawn. Home cooked food is available. 815-947-3789.
- 10 Annual Bluegrass Jam**, Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, 402 S. Lincoln Highway Rd., Lerna. Musicians from Illinois and Indiana will converge at the site for a day of jamming with informal groups playing along the creek throughout the day. Site volunteers will be serving hamburgers, hotdogs and more and proceeds benefit the historical and interpretive programs at the site. From 11 a.m.-5 p.m. www.lincolnlogcabin.org or 217-345-1845.
- 15-17 Balloon Fest**, 600 N. Pleasant Ave., Centralia. A fun-filled family weekend with more than 40 hot air balloons, balloon glows Friday and Saturday, entertainment throughout each day, fireworks, car show, craft fair, children's activities and more. www.balloon-fest.com or 618-532-6789.
- 19 Hummingbird Festival**, Rock Springs Conservation Area, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur. Join host Vernon Kleen to learn about hummingbird species, habitats and what plants attract them. Then, you can adopt a hummingbird, witness the banding process and hold it in your hand to release it back into the wild. Come for part of the evening or stay the entire time. 4-7 p.m. Festival attendance is free, hummingbird adoption is \$5. Register online by 8/18 at www.maconcountyconservation.org.
- 22-23 Old Capitol Blues & BBQ**, 5th and Washington, Downtown Springfield. Two days of award-winning BBQ with local and national Blues talent. Free children's activities and an entertainment-filled weekend for everyone. 217-544-1723 or www.downtownspringfield.org.
- 22-24 Erin Feis Annual Irish Festival**, 200 NE Water St., Peoria. This 3-day event showcases Irish heritage through song, dance, food, drink, cultural exhibits and much more. Don't miss the talented Irish bands and musicians on multiple stages, vendor marketplace and more. So put on your favorite green outfit and head down to the River-Front – everyone is a little Irish. www.erinfeispeoria.com or 309-494-6713.
- 23 Astronomy Jamboree**, Friends Creek Conservation Area, 13734 Friends Creek Park Rd., Cisco. Enjoy this perfect chance to roast marshmallows and gaze at constellations, planets and possibly some meteors with guest speaker Bryan Maple. Come up early and BYO picnic supper to enjoy. 7-9 p.m. Free. A full service campground is also available and reservations can be made by calling 217-423-7708. www.maconcountyconservation.org.
- 30-31 Rock Island Grand Prix**, Downtown Rock Island Arts & Entertainment Dist., 3rd Avenue & 18th St., Rock Island. The world's best drivers come to compete for one of go-karting's largest cash purses with payouts through ninth place. Festival week includes nightly outdoor concerts, driver's parade, fan autograph session and special Sunday post-race awards ceremony. Food and merchandise booths, kid's activities and other race-related activities also available. Free admission. www.ridistrict.com or 309-788-6311.
- 31 Rib Festival**, Hill Prairie Winery, 23753 Lounsbury Road, Oakford. It's time to wrap up another great summer season and enjoy fresh grilled ribs, along with live entertainment. Add your favorite wines and drinks to the mix and you'll have a great afternoon of fun in the sun. Noon-5 p.m. www.hillprairiewinery.com or 217-635-9900.

 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: July 1 for September events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. **E-mail to:** datebook@aiec.coop.



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